

History of Open Blue

Excerpts from Open Blue website, <http://www.openblue.org.uk/>.

In December 2001 the Project was initiated to address issues of rural poverty and exclusion within Wiltshire. By the end of 2002 £30,000 was raised to launch project and Dayspring Church underwrites the Director's salary to 2005. In September 2002 Andy Weeds begins part-time to research with the brief to initiate and establish a mobile community centre for North Wiltshire. By January 2003 the decision was taken to focus on three areas in initial phase: team & confidence building in secondary school, parent and toddler groups in more remote communities with facilities for adult education, detached youthwork in areas where there is no present provision.

By March 2003 a double deck bus was purchased and conversion work begun and volunteers for the conversion work recruited. In May 2003 The Open Blue Trust gained charitable status. Then in June & July 2003 Contacts with Sure Start, Social Services, Young Peoples Support Service and the Youth Service were made and volunteers for schools and youth programmes began to be recruited.

For the last decade, Open Blue has reached thousands of rural dwellers, some briefly but for many others developing long term relationships and building confidence that creates access to transformative opportunities. Programmes across much of Wiltshire from Malmesbury to Salisbury and from Corsham to Calne and Swindon have created a platform for a wide range of social agencies: fire, police and health services; housing associations; churches and education services among others. Open Blue has gained local credibility in innovative community development, winning the Community Group of the Year Award from Wiltshire Life as well as being shortlisted by Faithworks for a national Community Innovation Award.