Helping the angels of Angell Town to build a better future

David Cohen reveals how a pioneering alliance between residents and this newspaper can bring about change on the troubled Brixton estate

IT STARTED with an outlandish idea: what if we tried to empower the positive change-makers on one of the most notorious housing estates in London? What if we created a programme backing local heroes seeking to raise up their own community?

Our investigation into Angell Town revealed its people were passionate about displacing turf war as the estate’s main extracurricular activity – if only their ideas could be given a chance.

Angell Town, its residents told us, was an estate where 4,000 people lived with “no community centre, no place to hang out, nothing to do”. It was, they added, “an island of the dispossessed cut adrift from mainstream Brixton” in need of “a release valve”. Yet there was also a sense of optimism that this estate was on the cusp of change – that they just required some outside help to “light the blue touch paper”.

After months of painstaking work behind the scenes, we are launching a £150,000 pilot programme to try to refl oat Angell Town and make it a place where community life can flourish. Citi, the global banking group, has agreed to be our “angel investor” and has backed us with £100,000, and we have used £50,000 from the evening standard dispossessed Fund. It is one of the most unusual ventures contemplated by a British newspaper and our most ambitious since we launched the dispossessed Fund five years ago.

James Bardrick, head of Citi in the UK, said: “We are excited to partner with the standard to invest in the future of Angell Town. At Citi, we make it our job to support progress-makers: individuals and communities striving to make good the challenges of our times. Angell Town obviously has many challenges, but it also has a great asset in its people. We are delighted to support them.”

Sarah Sands, editor of the evening standard, said: “As London’s paper, we want to open a debate on the state of our city’s estates and how we might improve life for Londoners living there and we start by showing what might be achieved on a flagship estate. As far as I am aware, no British newspaper has ever tried anything like this. I say this not out of hubris, but rather out of a sense of how daunting this project is, fraught with obstacles from gangs to bureaucracy.”

The money raised will be used to “love bomb” the estate to try to transform it as a place to live, work and play. New projects will be launched to enrich the lives of residents with all ages and gender accommodated, but with an emphasis on the young. Our approach has been to identify the local change-makers – the angels of Angell Town, as it were – and to empower them with the funding to give their ideas lift off.

Grants totalling £85,577 have been approved by The London Community Foundation, the charity that holds and manages the Dispossessed Fund. The initiatives we have backed are listed above. The allocation of the remaining funds will be announced in the coming weeks.
Fewer drugs, less stress and more affordable than conventional IVF
Please join us at our open event on Saturday 17 October
More info: Call 020 3819 3282 or email naturalcycle@thebridgecentre.co.uk to book your place.
1 St Thomas Street, London SE1 9RY. Less than 5 mins from London Bridge station.

INITIATIVES WE’RE BACKING – AND THE LOCAL HEROES BEHIND THEM

New 3G Astroturf football pitch PLUS football training
Delivered jointly by Football Beyond Borders and Lambeth Tigers
Grant: £30,296 (£18,796 for the pitch and maintenance, £11,500 for training)
This project is in response to a petition by Angell Town resident Timon Dixon, above, and his friends to revamp the estate’s old concrete and rubber football pitch. It has raised more than 1,000 signatures. The old pitch will be ripped up and 3G Astroturf laid. When the new pitch is ready, two charities – Football Beyond Borders and Lambeth Tigers – will each deliver two training sessions a week run by FA-accredited coaches. Lambeth Tigers is co-headed by David Marriott, who grew up on Angell Town and whose brother Adrian was murdered in 2004. Timon, 21, a youth worker, also suffered tragedy when his brother Ogarra was shot dead this summer. Timon and his friends are supported by Football Beyond Borders. He said: “The new pitch is a massive positive statement to the younger generation that things are finally changing on Angell Town.”

Business start-up training
Delivered by Tree Shepherd
Grant: £12,940
Founded by Colin Crooks, right, this social enterprise will provide start-up training for up to 25 people – prioritising Angell Town residents (all ages welcome) – with business ideas and giving £500 grants to five candidates. Colin, 54, said: “This estate used to be a dark, foreboding place, but it is on the verge of change and we are thrilled to be part of its rebirth.”

Boxing training and job readiness
Delivered by Dwaynamics
Grant: £17,341
Founded by single mother-of-seven Lorrainie Jones, Dwaynamics will offer boxing training for males and females, as well as job fairs, health workshops and job skills training (see Pages 6&7). It was set up from scratch by a Dispossessed Fund grant and is backed by a dynamic group of young people. It builds on the work of Lorrainie’s son Dwayne, 20, who started a boxing club on the estate to divert people from gangs before he was stabbed to death last year. It has built strong relations with Lambeth police, who have provided temporary premises. Lorrainie, 42, said: “The desperate needs of the youth propel us forward. There is such talent here. Now we have the chance to show it.”

Outdoor gym and fitness sessions
Delivered by Block Workout
Grant: £15,000
Set up by former gang member Terroll Lewis, below, who grew up on Angell Town before a spell in Belmarsh Prison led him to reassess his life, Block Workout will install permanent outdoor gym equipment on the estate and deliver two fitness sessions a week, one each for males and females, as well as informal mentoring. Block Workout already operates in Brixton and has pioneered a method of training that deploys calisthenics, everyday items and the built environment. Terroll, 25, said: “This is my dream because I am going back to my roots. With a couple of pull-up bars, we can transform the energy on the estate.”

Passionate: Kamiku Nathan keeps children entertained at Angell Delight, the estate’s sole community hub

Pictures Matt Writtle

days. The local heroes are our modern-day “catchers in the rye” whose work has the capacity to change lives. They include Lorraine Jones, 42, who has brought together young people to start a boxing club in memory of her son Dwayne, 20, who was killed last year. And there is Timon Dixon, 21, whose brother Ogarra, 24, was shot dead this summer, and who put aside his loss to petition to revamp the football pitch. Out of death they seek rebirth and a new start for Angell Town. @cohenstandard

Editorial Comment Page 14
Lorraine Jones’s son had turned his life around and started a boxing club to keep others out of gangs when he was killed. A £17,000 grant means Lorraine can relaunch the project, she tells David Cohen

In memory of Dwayne: ‘Now we can carry on my son’s work’

Lorraine Jones’s son had turned his life around and started a boxing club to keep others out of gangs when he was killed. A £17,000 grant means Lorraine can relaunch the project, she tells David Cohen.

In memory of Dwayne: ‘Now we can carry on my son’s work’

Lorraine Jones’s son had turned his life around and started a boxing club to keep others out of gangs when he was killed. A £17,000 grant means Lorraine can relaunch the project, she tells David Cohen.

In memory of Dwayne: ‘Now we can carry on my son’s work’

Lorraine Jones’s son had turned his life around and started a boxing club to keep others out of gangs when he was killed. A £17,000 grant means Lorraine can relaunch the project, she tells David Cohen.

In memory of Dwayne: ‘Now we can carry on my son’s work’

Lorraine Jones’s son had turned his life around and started a boxing club to keep others out of gangs when he was killed. A £17,000 grant means Lorraine can relaunch the project, she tells David Cohen.

In memory of Dwayne: ‘Now we can carry on my son’s work’

Lorraine Jones’s son had turned his life around and started a boxing club to keep others out of gangs when he was killed. A £17,000 grant means Lorraine can relaunch the project, she tells David Cohen.

In memory of Dwayne: ‘Now we can carry on my son’s work’

Lorraine Jones’s son had turned his life around and started a boxing club to keep others out of gangs when he was killed. A £17,000 grant means Lorraine can relaunch the project, she tells David Cohen.

In memory of Dwayne: ‘Now we can carry on my son’s work’

Lorraine Jones’s son had turned his life around and started a boxing club to keep others out of gangs when he was killed. A £17,000 grant means Lorraine can relaunch the project, she tells David Cohen.

In memory of Dwayne: ‘Now we can carry on my son’s work’

Lorraine Jones’s son had turned his life around and started a boxing club to keep others out of gangs when he was killed. A £17,000 grant means Lorraine can relaunch the project, she tells David Cohen.

In memory of Dwayne: ‘Now we can carry on my son’s work’

Lorraine Jones’s son had turned his life around and started a boxing club to keep others out of gangs when he was killed. A £17,000 grant means Lorraine can relaunch the project, she tells David Cohen.

In memory of Dwayne: ‘Now we can carry on my son’s work’

Lorraine Jones’s son had turned his life around and started a boxing club to keep others out of gangs when he was killed. A £17,000 grant means Lorraine can relaunch the project, she tells David Cohen.

In memory of Dwayne: ‘Now we can carry on my son’s work’

Lorraine Jones’s son had turned his life around and started a boxing club to keep others out of gangs when he was killed. A £17,000 grant means Lorraine can relaunch the project, she tells David Cohen.

In memory of Dwayne: ‘Now we can carry on my son’s work’

Lorraine Jones’s son had turned his life around and started a boxing club to keep others out of gangs when he was killed. A £17,000 grant means Lorraine can relaunch the project, she tells David Cohen.

In memory of Dwayne: ‘Now we can carry on my son’s work’

Lorraine Jones’s son had turned his life around and started a boxing club to keep others out of gangs when he was killed. A £17,000 grant means Lorraine can relaunch the project, she tells David Cohen.

In memory of Dwayne: ‘Now we can carry on my son’s work’

Lorraine Jones’s son had turned his life around and started a boxing club to keep others out of gangs when he was killed. A £17,000 grant means Lorraine can relaunch the project, she tells David Cohen.

In memory of Dwayne: ‘Now we can carry on my son’s work’

Lorraine Jones’s son had turned his life around and started a boxing club to keep others out of gangs when he was killed. A £17,000 grant means Lorraine can relaunch the project, she tells David Cohen.

In memory of Dwayne: ‘Now we can carry on my son’s work’

Lorraine Jones’s son had turned his life around and started a boxing club to keep others out of gangs when he was killed. A £17,000 grant means Lorraine can relaunch the project, she tells David Cohen.

In memory of Dwayne: ‘Now we can carry on my son’s work’

Lorraine Jones’s son had turned his life around and started a boxing club to keep others out of gangs when he was killed. A £17,000 grant means Lorraine can relaunch the project, she tells David Cohen.

In memory of Dwayne: ‘Now we can carry on my son’s work’

Lorraine Jones’s son had turned his life around and started a boxing club to keep others out of gangs when he was killed. A £17,000 grant means Lorraine can relaunch the project, she tells David Cohen.

In memory of Dwayne: ‘Now we can carry on my son’s work’

Lorraine Jones’s son had turned his life around and started a boxing club to keep others out of gangs when he was killed. A £17,000 grant means Lorraine can relaunch the project, she tells David Cohen.

In memory of Dwayne: ‘Now we can carry on my son’s work’

Lorraine Jones’s son had turned his life around and started a boxing club to keep others out of gangs when he was killed. A £17,000 grant means Lorraine can relaunch the project, she tells David Cohen.

In memory of Dwayne: ‘Now we can carry on my son’s work’

Lorraine Jones’s son had turned his life around and started a boxing club to keep others out of gangs when he was killed. A £17,000 grant means Lorraine can relaunch the project, she tells David Cohen.

In memory of Dwayne: ‘Now we can carry on my son’s work’

Lorraine Jones’s son had turned his life around and started a boxing club to keep others out of gangs when he was killed. A £17,000 grant means Lorraine can relaunch the project, she tells David Cohen.

In memory of Dwayne: ‘Now we can carry on my son’s work’

Lorraine Jones’s son had turned his life around and started a boxing club to keep others out of gangs when he was killed. A £17,000 grant means Lorraine can relaunch the project, she tells David Cohen.

In memory of Dwayne: ‘Now we can carry on my son’s work’

Lorraine Jones’s son had turned his life around and started a boxing club to keep others out of gangs when he was killed. A £17,000 grant means Lorraine can relaunch the project, she tells David Cohen.

In memory of Dwayne: ‘Now we can carry on my son’s work’

Lorraine Jones’s son had turned his life around and started a boxing club to keep others out of gangs when he was killed. A £17,000 grant means Lorraine can relaunch the project, she tells David Cohen.

In memory of Dwayne: ‘Now we can carry on my son’s work’

Lorraine Jones’s son had turned his life around and started a boxing club to keep others out of gangs when he was killed. A £17,000 grant means Lorraine can relaunch the project, she tells David Cohen.

In memory of Dwayne: ‘Now we can carry on my son’s work’

Lorraine Jones’s son had turned his life around and started a boxing club to keep others out of gangs when he was killed. A £17,000 grant means Lorraine can relaunch the project, she tells David Cohen.

In memory of Dwayne: ‘Now we can carry on my son’s work’

Lorraine Jones’s son had turned his life around and started a boxing club to keep others out of gangs when he was killed. A £17,000 grant means Lorraine can relaunch the project, she tells David Cohen.

In memory of Dwayne: ‘Now we can carry on my son’s work’

Lorraine Jones’s son had turned his life around and started a boxing club to keep others out of gangs when he was killed. A £17,000 grant means Lorraine can relaunch the project, she tells David Cohen.

In memory of Dwayne: ‘Now we can carry on my son’s work’

Lorraine Jones’s son had turned his life around and started a boxing club to keep others out of gangs when he was killed. A £17,000 grant means Lorraine can relaunch the project, she tells David Cohen.

In memory of Dwayne: ‘Now we can carry on my son’s work’

Lorraine Jones’s son had turned his life around and started a boxing club to keep others out of gangs when he was killed. A £17,000 grant means Lorraine can relaunch the project, she tells David Cohen.

In memory of Dwayne: ‘Now we can carry on my son’s work’

Lorraine Jones’s son had turned his life around and started a boxing club to keep others out of gangs when he was killed. A £17,000 grant means Lorraine can relaunch the project, she tells David Cohen.

In memory of Dwayne: ‘Now we can carry on my son’s work’

Lorraine Jones’s son had turned his life around and started a boxing club to keep others out of gangs when he was killed. A £17,000 grant means Lorraine can relaunch the project, she tells David Cohen.
gangs and ended up in prison — and how he had reformed his life only to die trying to save a friend from being stabbed. Before he died, Dwayne had started a boxing club to help divert young people from gangs, and Lor-
raine and a group of Dwayne’s friends had decided, she said, to relaunch the boxing club in his name.

They called it Dwaynamics and although they had two qualified box-
ing trainers and a nutritionist, they had no money to pay them and no proper premises. It was the start of a long and moving journey. The Standard — partnered by The London Community Foundation, fund-hold-
ers and managers of the Evening Standard Dispossessed Fund — began to work with Dwaynamics, first to fund the registration of their com-
munity interest company through the Dispossessed Fund, then to lobby Lambeth council to give them a base on the estate.

Lambeth Police Borough Com-
mander Richard Wood and his deputy Sean Oxley had also visited Lorraine and been moved to help. “I asked my officers to see if we could assist with equipment and to arrange a tempo-
rary venue until she could sort a per-
mance venue on the estate,” said Commander Wood. “To me, Lorraine is a hero. I have three children of my own and I can’t imagine the pain she has gone through. I also happen to think that boxing is an excellent way to divert youngsters from gangs.”

Dwaynamics began running boxing sessions twice a week under a Network Rail arch a mile from the estate that has been given to them temporarily by Lambeth police. They also lobbied local MP Helen Hayes, who met Lorraine and her youth management team. “You are the rea-
son I got into politics,” she told them. “I will be your voice in Westminster and I will meet with Lambeth council-
lors to see how we can help you find premises to operate on the estate.”

L
AMBETH council officers told the Standard they would do their best to help, but when Dwaynam-
ics applied to the council to rent a vacant shop unit on Angell Town, they were outbid by an evan-
gelical church group that had no links to the estate. Lorraine’s frustration was palpable. “The council should be help-
ing us, but instead they just give it to the highest bidder so they can maxim-
ise their income,” she said.

When we told Lorraine that we had decided to launch a pilot programme on Angell Town funded jointly by the Dispossessed Fund and Citi banking group, and that we wanted to sup-
port Dwaynamics with one of the grants, she burst into tears.

“IT IS LIKE LIGHT HAS FINALLY COME TO ANGELL TOWN,” she said. It would mean she could pay their boxing coaches Errol Christie and Richard Davis, as well as fitness expert and nutritionist Denise Jones, and that she could put Dwaynamics on a sus-
tainable footing.

Citi representatives met Lorraine and some of her youth management team — headed by ex-gang members Shanice Miller and Barfah Joo — and were impressed by their acumen and passion. Nobody, least of all Lorraine, is under any illusions as to the scale of the challenge but, from today, Dwaynamics will have a grant of £7,341 to spearhead a potential new dawn on Angell Town. It is one of six grants approved for the estate so far as part of our £150,000 initiative, and there will be more grant opportuni-
ties announced in the days to come.

“I feel as if Dwayne is right beside me on this journey,” said Lorraine, her eyes welling up. “The day he died, his friends called me to say he had been stabbed, and I ran past the church and across the green until I saw him lying on the road and being attended by medics on a stretcher. His hand,” her voice wavered, “his hand was drooping over the side, and the way it was hanging, lifeless, I knew he was gone. That was the moment my life just...” She used her

Her eyes brimmed with tears but she was also beaming. “I get waves of sorrow and these days I don’t sleep much, but I am so grateful for the opportunity to finish what Dwayne started.”