



Report of
A COMMON ENDEAVOUR
A conference held at Liverpool Hope
University
1st February 2011



The first stage in the Catholic Bishops'
Programme
A Call to Deeper Social Engagement



The Impetus for 'A Common Endeavour'



This seems to be a moment in time when the Church's call for a compassionate and just society, re-invigorated by the words of Pope Benedict XVI in his address to Civil Society at Westminster Hall, and the present Government's call for a new culture of social responsibility, offers the opportunity for a meaningful and on-going conversation.

His Holiness suggested "that the world of reason and the world of faith - the world of secular rationality and the world of religious belief - need one another and should not be afraid to enter into a profound and ongoing dialogue for the good of our civilization." He propounds "the legitimate role of religion in the public square."

The Prime Minister, in his farewell, responded to Pope Benedict's words by saying "faith is not a problem for legislators to solve but rather a vital part of our national conversation. And we are proud of that."

This comes against the backdrop of economic crisis, new government initiatives and much debate over the role that charities, volunteers and faith groups should play. Crucially the current economic situation will affect both those who are served by Catholic social action organisations (due to factors such as rising unemployment and cutbacks) as well as the organisations themselves (due to factors such as potential cessation of contracts and the reduction of public services.)

The conversations which are taking place in this context call us to be clear ourselves as to the riches and insights of our heritage in Catholic Social Teaching. This formed a thread of the conference in Liverpool, and will continue to be at the heart of the events to follow.

Taking up the opportunity and the challenge of this moment, the Bishops' Conference statement *A Call to Deeper Social Engagement* set in motion a long-term programme. The conference *A Common Endeavour* was the first step in this process which also includes:

- A theological seminar (held on 9th February)
- A discussion with civil servants and parliamentarians (to be held on 6th April)
- In-depth research into Catholic social action to be undertaken by Caritas Social Action Network (CSAN)
- The CSAN Conference (to be held 9th -10th June)

The importance of this process is underscored by the tremendous range of Catholic social action being undertaken throughout England and Wales (reflected by the audit results later in this report). It is therefore very important that Catholic organisations have a 'voice at the table' when decisions affecting the charity sector are made, and more importantly, that they can advocate powerfully for vulnerable and marginalised people when policies and legislation which affect them are being developed.

Helen O'Brien

Helen O'Brien – Chief Executive

Caritas Social Action Network



The Bishops' Statement of November 2010 on Deepening Social Engagement



The present economic situation creates immense challenges for everyone in our society. We are very conscious of the hardship and stress felt by many individuals and families at the present time, as well as the difficult task facing the government, the charitable sector and the country at large.

During his visit to the UK the Holy Father spoke of the ethical foundations of democracy: "The inadequacy of pragmatic, short-term solutions to complex social and ethical problems has been illustrated all too clearly by the recent global financial crisis.... Just as "every economic decision has a moral consequence" (Caritas in Veritate, 37), so too in the political field, the ethical dimension of policy has far-reaching consequences that no government can afford to ignore." In his address to the Bishops at Oscott College, Pope Benedict XVI emphasised the need for Christians "to take a lead in calling for solidarity with those in need. The prophetic voice of Christians has an important role in highlighting the needs of the poor and disadvantaged, who can so easily be overlooked in the allocation of limited resources."

We appreciate that extremely difficult decisions are being taken by central and local government, but we urge those responsible not to lose sight of the moral imperative of caring for those most in need, while acting fairly and impartially. Catholic social teaching reminds us that the key to social development lies in placing the good of the human person centre-stage. In that perspective marriage, family life, and the dignity of work are vitally important. The future of society crucially depends on the nature and quality of family life. A society where human dignity will flourish is one where the dignity of work is recognised and valued. We urge government - both central and local - to keep these priorities at the heart of their decision taking.

Besides the severe economic issues facing us, there are also serious social ills. Many yearn for a richer community life, a society characterised by stronger social bonds and a greater acceptance of our mutual responsibilities. Reaching for this is both urgent and necessary. But it demands a conversion of mind and heart which cannot be achieved by government or policy initiative alone. If it is to succeed, this project must be taken beyond party politics to become a common endeavour owned by society as a whole.

Creating a new culture of social responsibility demands that we all learn from the lessons of recent decades and put a genuine commitment to the good of others ahead of self-interest. It means that



the Church must avoid becoming inward-looking or distanced from broader social needs. In his recent visit, the Holy Father consistently emphasised the mission of the Church to proclaim afresh the life-giving message of the Gospel. The Church does not exist for her own sake, but for the healing and flourishing of humanity. In coming months we will be seeking to strengthen our work in partnership with other Christians, other religions and with central and local government to help promote a more compassionate, fair and just society.

In particular we will be engaging in a programme to enable the Catholic community to contribute as fully as possible to the new culture of social responsibility called for by Pope Benedict XVI and by the Prime Minister in his farewell speech at the end of the Papal Visit. This will include:

- A conference on 1st February 2011 to underline both the relevance of Catholic social teaching and the practical contribution of the Church to defining and building a new culture of social responsibility
- During 2011, subject to securing sufficient funding, surveys to gather information about emerging social needs within local communities, and the contribution currently being made by the Church
- Action, led by Caritas Social Action Network, to identify ways in which we can better assist local initiatives and promote the further engagement of the Catholic community at every level
- Looking forward to a major conference to draw together the results of this work, the progress made, and the challenges then facing us.

You can read more statements from the Bishops' meeting on the Catholic Bishops' Conference website:

[www.catholicchurch.org.uk/
Catholic-Church/Events/
Events-archive/Bishops-Conference-
November-2010](http://www.catholicchurch.org.uk/Catholic-Church/Events/Events-archive/Bishops-Conference-November-2010)

Further Background Reading:

Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church (Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace-2004)

Available from www.vatican.va

Caritas in Veritate

(Pope Benedict XVI's Encyclical on Catholic Social Teaching -2009)

Available from www.vatican.va

Choosing the Common Good (Catholic Bishops' Conference pre-election document- 2010)

Available from www.catholic-ew.org.uk

Pope Benedict XVI's Westminster Hall Speech

(to leaders of British civil society -2010)

Available from www.thepapalvisit.com



Address by Archbishop Vincent Nichols

The visit of our Holy Father Pope Benedict in September touched the whole country with extraordinary grace and joy. I doubt if there is a single one of you in this hall who does not have striking memories of how much it meant to you personally.

The Holy Father's Visit can act as a spur for us to serve Christ better. Grace must bear fruit in our lives, in our prayers and in what we do as Catholics living in Britain.

At the Bishops' Conference meeting in November 2010 we reflected deeply on the wonderful graces which the visit of the Holy Father brought to our Church and our country. And we set out to find ways in which we, as a Catholic community, could respond to the challenge posed by the Holy Father and by the times in which we live.

Today's event marks the launch of a major project for the Catholic community in England and Wales. I am very grateful for your participation.

In his address to the Bishops at Oscott College, Pope Benedict XVI emphasised the need for Christians "to take a lead in calling for solidarity with those in need. The prophetic voice of Christians has an important role in highlighting the needs of the poor and disadvantaged, who can so easily be overlooked in the allocation of limited resources."

At the end of our meeting last November we made a statement which I would like to quote from today as it sets out the basis and reason for our gathering here today. We said this:

"The present economic situation creates immense challenges for everyone in our society. We are very conscious of the hardship and stress faced by many individuals and families at the present time. We appreciate that extremely difficult decisions are being taken by central and local government, but we urge those responsible not to lose sight of the moral imperative of caring for those most in need, while acting fairly and impartially.

"Catholic social teaching reminds us that the key to social development lies in placing the good of the human person centre-stage. In that perspective marriage, family life, and the dignity of work are vitally important. The future of society crucially depends on the nature and quality of family life. A society where human dignity will flourish is one where the dignity of work is recognised and valued. We urge government - both central and local - to keep these priorities at the heart of their decision taking.

"Besides the severe economic issues facing us, there are also serious social ills. Many yearn for a richer community life, a society characterised by stronger social bonds and a greater acceptance of our mutual responsibilities. Reaching for this is both urgent and necessary. But it demands a conversion of mind and heart which cannot be achieved by government or policy initiative alone. If it is to succeed, this project must be taken beyond party politics to become a common endeavour owned by society as a whole.





“Creating a new culture of social responsibility demands that we all learn from the lessons of recent decades and put a genuine commitment to the good of others ahead of self-interest. It means that the Church must avoid becoming inward-looking or distanced from broader social needs. In his recent visit, the Holy Father consistently emphasised the mission of the Church to proclaim afresh the life-giving message of the Gospel. The Church does not exist for her own sake, but for the healing and flourishing of humanity. In coming months we will be seeking to strengthen our work in partnership with other Christians, other religions and with central and local government to help promote a more compassionate, fair and just society.

“In particular we will be engaging in a programme to enable the Catholic community to contribute as fully as possible to the new culture of social responsibility called for by Pope Benedict XVI and by the Prime Minister in his farewell speech at the end of the Papal Visit.”

That was the Bishops’ statement of intent. Today’s conference is the first major step in this programme. Its purpose is to listen and discern together - to identify and explore emerging needs and the challenges and opportunities for the social engagement of the Church in the coming years. If we are to have a real impact, of course we need a full understanding of the issues posed by today’s economic and social environment. But most crucially we also need a realistic assessment of our own capabilities, of the things that prevent us doing more, and indeed of our own potential to contribute more clearly to the good of our society.

You do not have to look far to see the difficulties and troubles in our society – and this city of Liverpool has probably known as much as any. We are all acutely conscious of the great hardships which are now being faced by very many families. Many of us know this at first hand. There are immediate and pressing needs. But this project we are embarking on together is not about a short term response to particularly difficult economic circumstances.

It is about the long term and how we conduct ourselves to bear lasting fruit. So today is about our teaching and our action.

In the coming months there are great opportunities to engage in the public debate about the future of civil society. In the social doctrine of the Church, particularly as expressed in Caritas in Veritate, we have a source of practical guidance and profound wisdom relevant to all who desire to recover a stronger sense of a more humane civil society. There are many people in our society of explicit faith or not who recognise that we need to escape from the dominant culture of consumerist materialism which has so come to pervade our society. The social teaching of the Church, with its wisdom and insight into the nature of humanity and what integral human development actually requires, has a great deal to offer, a route map towards a life of wholeness and integrity for each of us and for all in our society.

Our Church, as you know, is present throughout the country, and Catholic social action takes place quietly and on a much greater scale than many realise. The present juncture offers a particular opportunity to re-imagine and re-invigorate the work we do. We have at the heart of our theology a word which beautifully describes this practical expression of Christian love - Caritas. My hope and prayer for the work we are doing together today and in the coming months is that this idea of Caritas will become more visibly the shared inspiration for Catholic social action in England and Wales. For it is a common endeavour at the service of those in need, and always to the glory of the One in whose name we are called to that service.



Address by Archbishop Patrick Kelly

After the utterly undeserved visit of the three spirits, Ebenezer Scrooge, born again, declares: "I will live in the Past, the Present and the Future!" and such a people are we: Christ has died: Christ is risen: Christ will come again.

And it is good to welcome you to a city and region which offers the opportunity to see, judge and act about the past, the present and the future.

See on the side of the Mersey the biggest tobacco warehouse in the world; see the buildings at the Pier Head: see the massive houses around Sefton Park and ask: why such a warehouse; where such wealth: see the signs and judge the values of a hideous triangle: slaves from Africa to the Americas, raw materials to Liverpool, finished products back to Africa. Raw material: tobacco: hence British American Tobacco; sugar: hence Tate & Lyle; cotton: hence Courtaulds, Horrocks; wood: hence Waring and Gillow. And ask with Archbishop Charles Palmer Buckle from Ghana, can we understand the depth of the recent financial turmoil without pondering on what foundations such wealth was based.

And wonder: is it wise to speak about returning to the way things once were as if they were normal times. Perhaps they were abnormal, absurd indeed and could not stand.

See, judge and then act: about a past when 80% of world trade came through this port; when one million people lived on the strip between Lime Street and the River and now the whole city is some 450,000; ponder issues of infrastructure: parks, indeed churches and schools.

Go and see death registers at St Anthony's, Scotland Road: 25 funerals each day as Ireland's starving, sickly poor came and found priests who literally died serving them – 10 in a single year. And ask what made those thousands come?

See still spaces where bombs once rained down, and perhaps standing up to a different racism than the slave trade tens of thousands gave their lives, especially in the Merchant Navy between 1939 and 1945. But see the new gaps because the population may well still be in decline.

But see also the developments that speak of co-operation between the private sector, the city council, the Universities, the Churches and Faiths and such agencies as the North West Development Agency, not least near the Metropolitan Cathedral; see buildings and works of art. See this place: the Present.

Perhaps above all see two works of art: in St John's Gardens, the statue of Fr James Nugent who immersed himself in the complex needs of the poor: issues of hunger, housing, sewage, schooling, borstals, alcoholism and prostitution. At his death a memorial was erected by public subscription.



He saw, judged and acted.

And in Hope St. see Stephen Broadbent's monument, again funded by public subscription to Archbishop Worlock and Bishop David Sheppard, in recognition of their commitment to the well-being in body, mind and spirit of all in this city's more recent dark days. See their book portrayed: Better Together. But the statue has a third space where Stephen says each one of us must choose to stand to continue their service to all. That is why the Liverpool participants today come from across the Churches and Agencies: for the future will be better together.

A quotation from Dickens' A Christmas Carol, as true today as it was in 1843.

"There was once a boy and a girl. Yellow, meagre, ragged, scowling, wolfish... Where angels might have sat enthroned, devils lurked and glared out menacing... This boy is Ignorance. This girl is Want. Beware of them both and all of their degree, but most of all beware this boy, for on his brow I see that written is Doom, unless the writing be erased," cried the Spirit, stretching out his hand towards the City. "Slander those who tell it ye. Admit it for your facetious purposes, and make it worse. And bide the end!"

But we meet in a place named Hope; Hope is not optimism: optimism means restoration of the past; hope is about resurrection; hope is about Holy Saturday and waiting "for who knows what tomorrows might be born out of God's own fresh possibilities."





Presentation Slides from CEO, CSAN

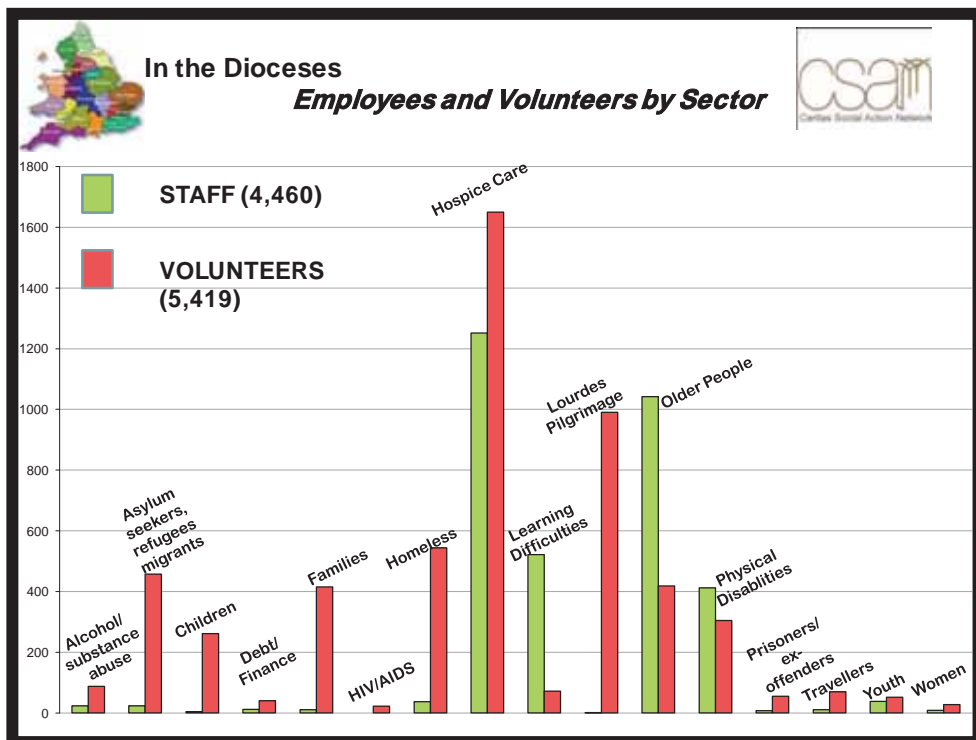
These are the key slides of the presentation by CSAN Chief Executive Helen O'Brien, examining the results of CSAN's Social Action Audit.

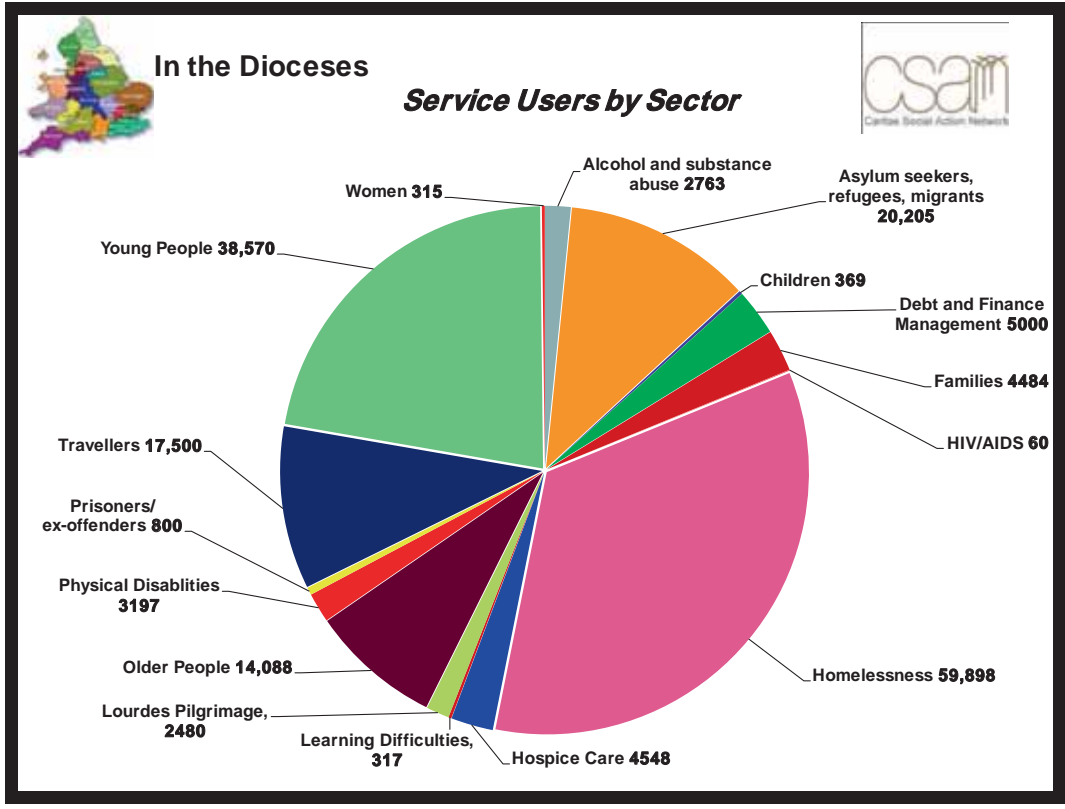
The process of the audit aimed to identify those projects and groups known to the Diocese. The slides firstly illustrate the work undertaken by local and diocesan groups and then the work of CSAN members, national organisations and agencies. The figures on the last slide are a summary.

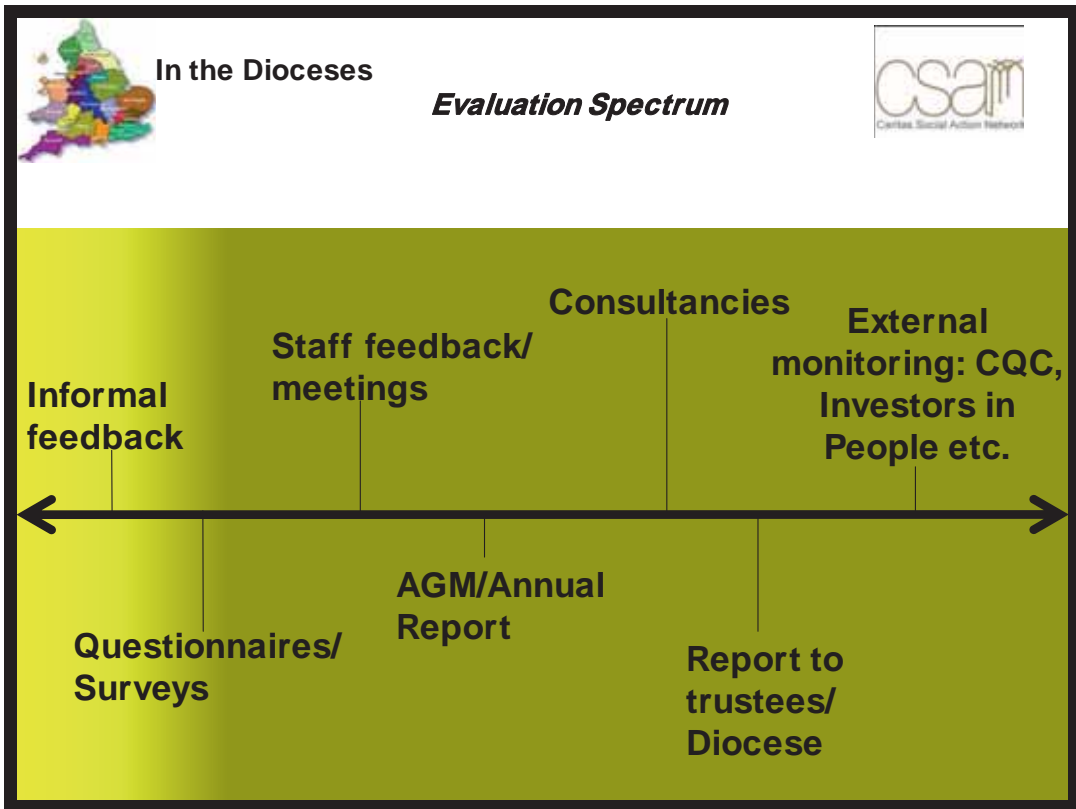
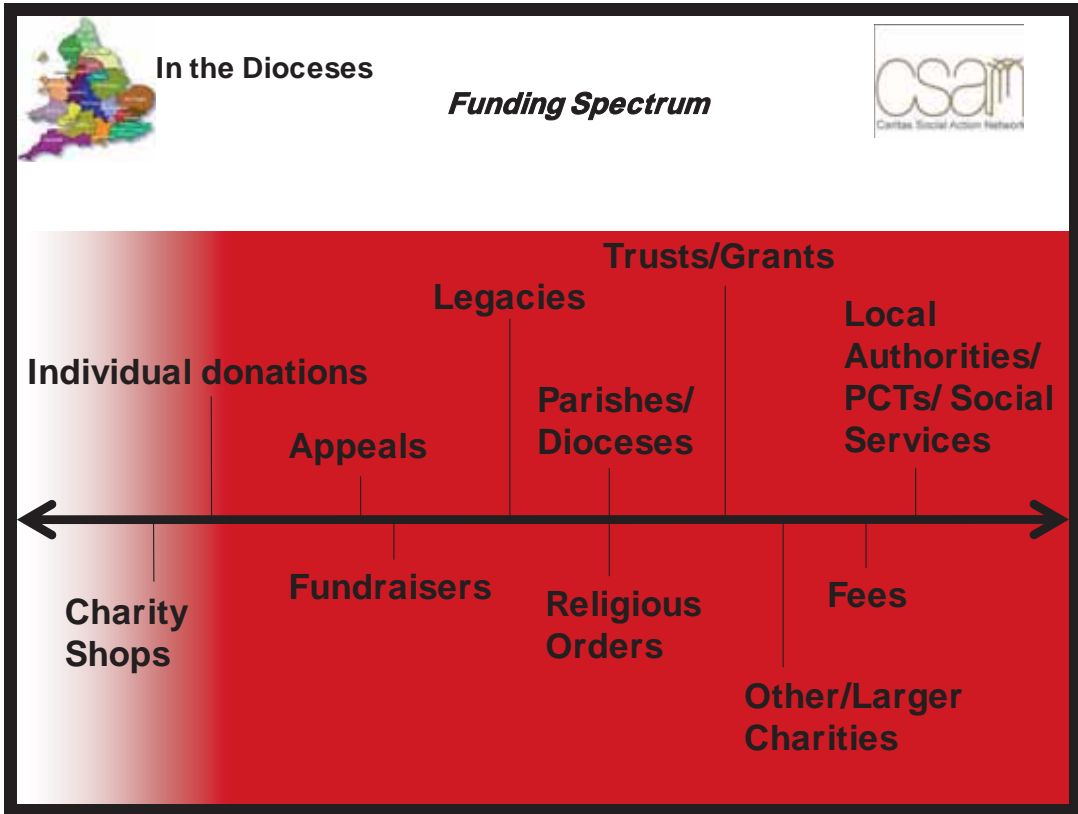
Whilst the findings provide a valuable snap-shot of Catholic social action throughout England and Wales, they are by no means a comprehensive or complete picture. They exclude much of the wide-ranging ecumenical and inter-faith work, and most of the social action projects sponsored by religious orders. It is intended that wider and deeper research this coming year will produce a clearer overall picture in addressing issue of the current social and work and need, including unmet need.

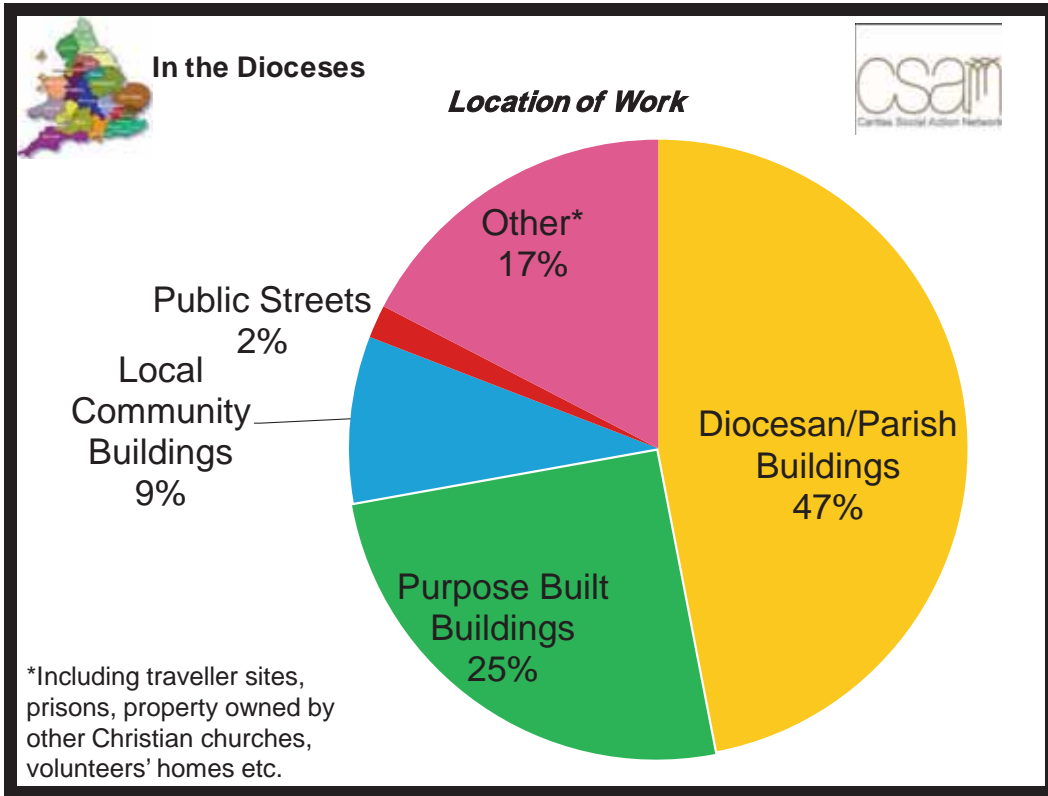


Information from Diocesan Groups

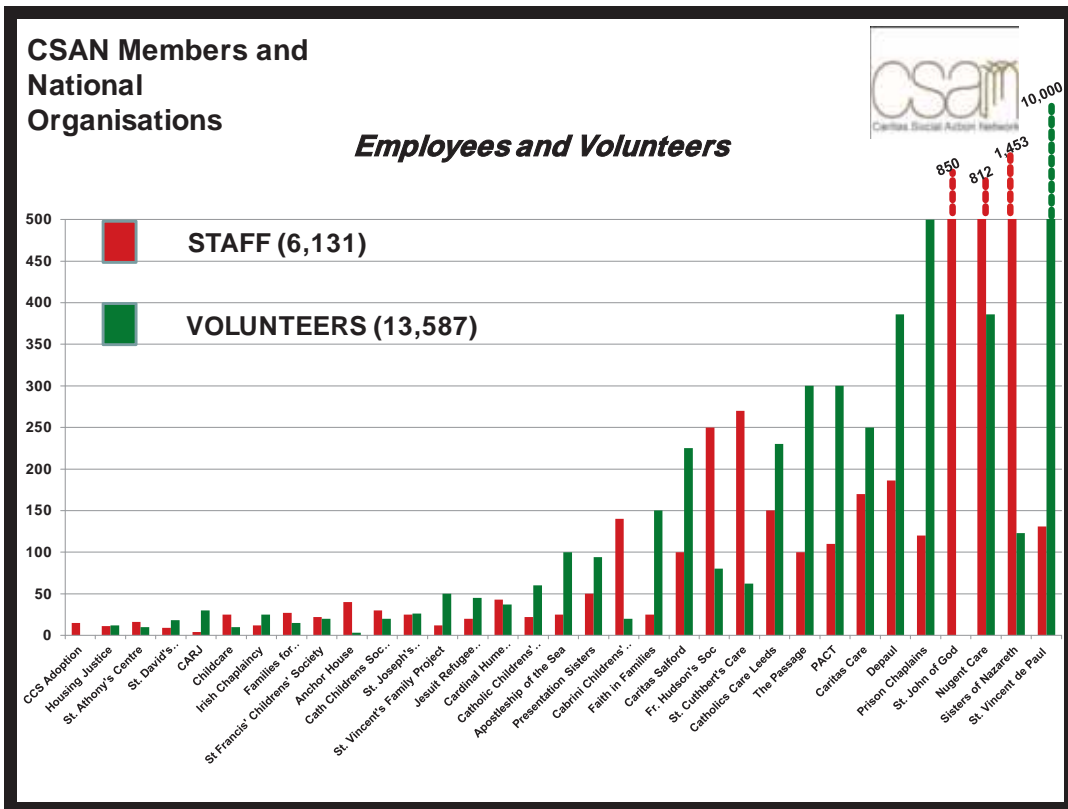








Information from Members/National Groups/Agencies





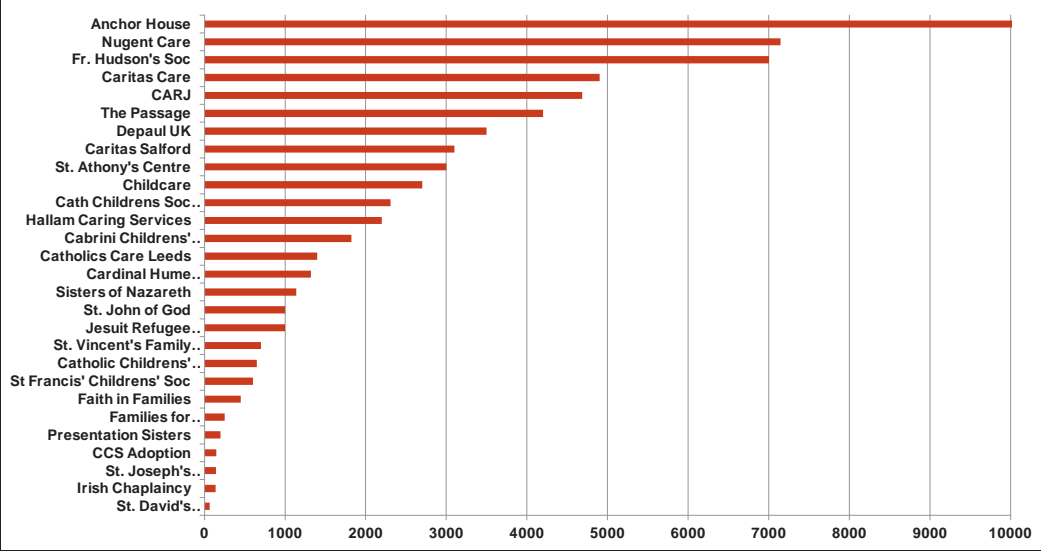
CSAN Members and National Organisations



Service Users

Apostleship of the Sea	200,000
PACT	102,000
SVP	100,000
Prison Chaplains	100,000
St. Cuthbert's Care	40,000

TOTAL: 607,745

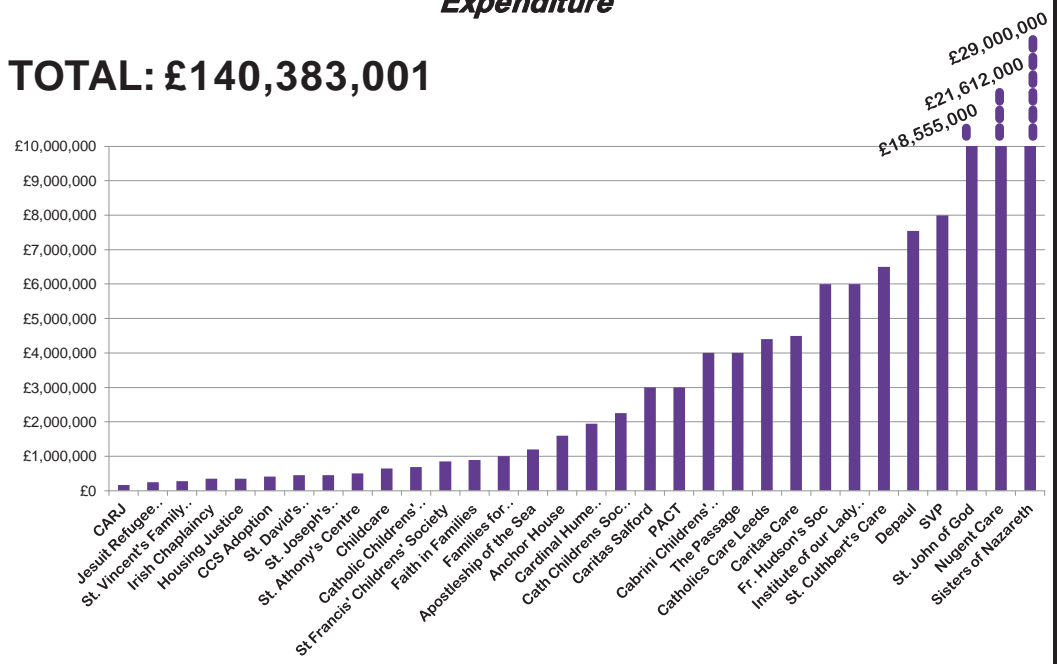


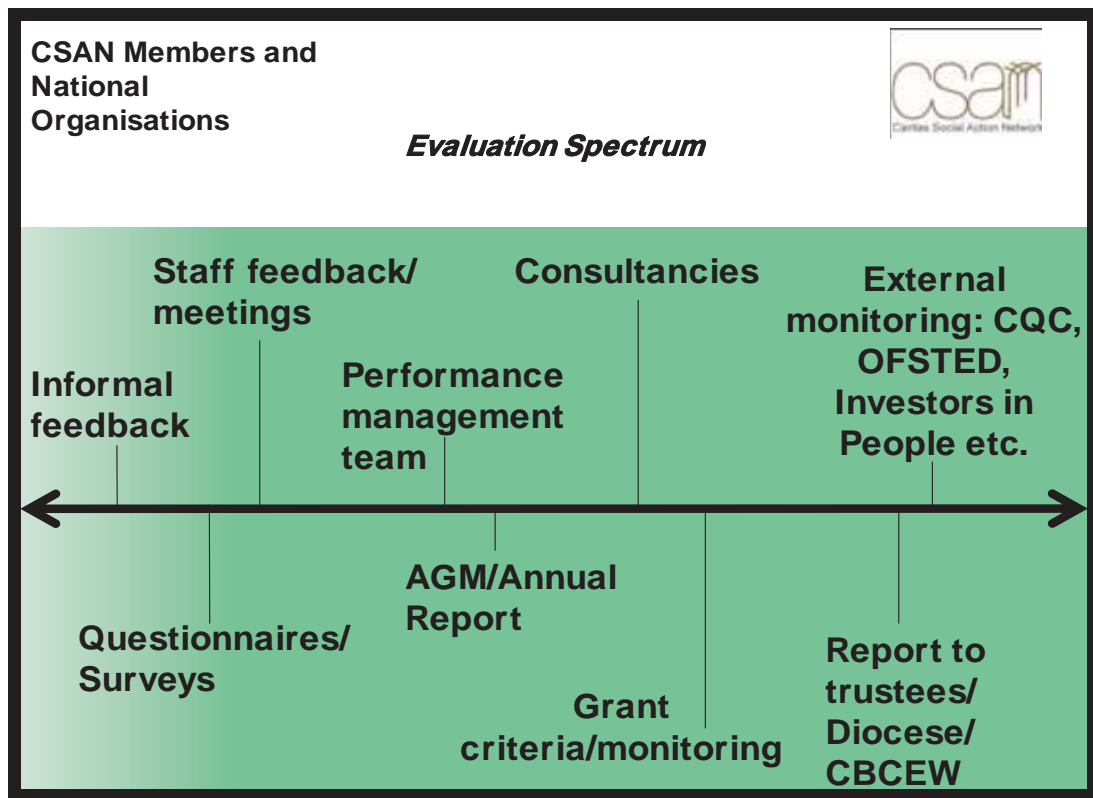
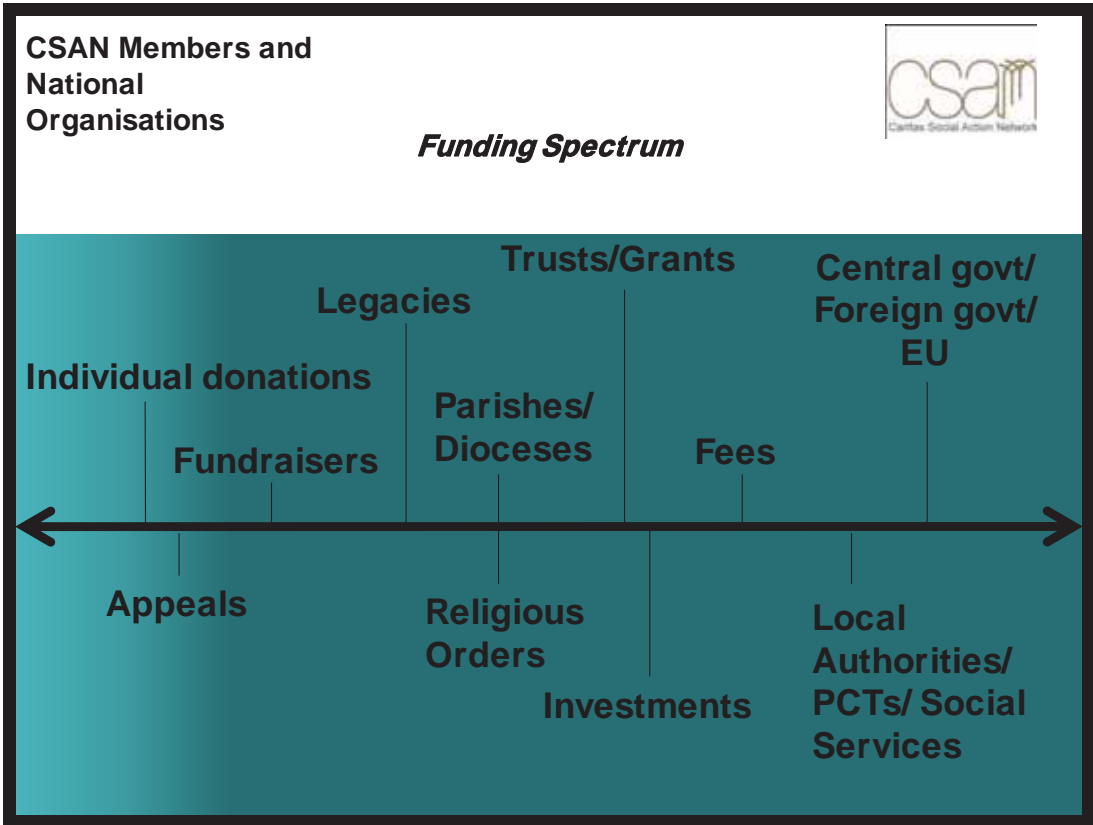
CSAN Members and National Organisations



Expenditure

TOTAL: £140,383,001



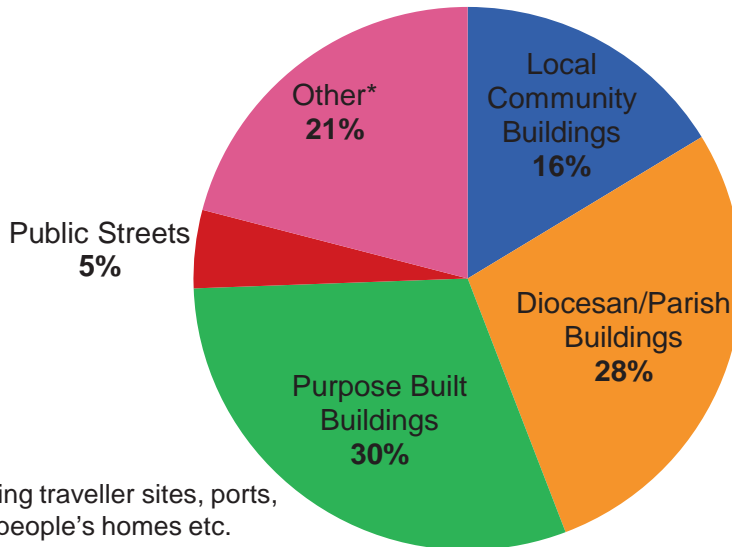




CSAN Members and National Organisations



Location of Work



*Including traveller sites, ports, boats, people's homes etc.

9,000 Employees

19,000 Volunteers

£170,000,000 Expenditure

800,000 People Served

For an electronic copy of these slides please e-mail cari.tas@cbcew.org.uk



Liturgy

INTRODUCTION and PRAYER *Archbishop Patrick Kelly*

SCRIPTURE READING *Luke: 4 16-22 (King James Authorised Version)*

REFLECTION

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father, who art in heaven,
Hallowed be thy name,
Thy kingdom come,
Thy will be done,
On earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day, our daily bread,
And forgive us our trespasses,
As we forgive those who trespass
against us,
And lead us not into temptation,
But deliver us from evil.

HYMN

Firmly I believe and truly



Challenges and Opportunities

Table discussions were held to identify key challenges and opportunities arising from the current situation, in fourteen areas relating to Catholic social action. These discussions are captured in the detailed reporting below.

These will form key elements of the discussion which will take place at the London conference on 6th April, where a number of delegates from this conference will be participants.



The Challenges

1. Closer working relationships

One major challenge raised is for groups engaged in Catholic social action effectively to develop partnerships with one another as well as with other organisations in ecumenical spheres, inter-faith spheres and wider society.

The pooling of resources and ideas could produce far more beneficial results for service users - and joint applications for the limited funding available could increase the likelihood of success. However, heightened levels of competition and a 'closed shop' mentality, combined with a dislocation between what is happening locally and nationally, pose major hindrances to this.

2. Engagement within the Church

There is also a recognised need for greater engagement *within* Church structures and the Catholic population at parish, diocesan and national level.

Many conference delegates express the view that when it comes to Catholic social action, both awareness and participation amongst churchgoers is far lower than it could be and that there are numerous issues regarding communication and coherent involvement. Hopes are also expressed for closer cooperation between Catholic social action organisations and the Bishops' Conference.

3. Bureaucracy

Bureaucratic measures are cited as presenting a hindrance or threat to social action work. Closely tied to this issue is the imposition of unrealistic timescales that can be detrimental to the quality of services provided.

4. Financial Sustainability

Delegates noted serious concerns around sustainability in the current economic climate. Difficulties in procuring funding and securing tenders pose long-term dangers to organisations, particularly given that current circumstances are seen often to favour the private sector.



5. Social issues arising from economic climate

Current economic circumstances and government policies are cited as factors in exacerbating social problems, thus increasing the burden on social action organisations. High numbers of people have been forced into destitution whilst many more do not understand their rights and welfare entitlements, leading to a proliferation of reliance upon the social action sector. In

combination with challenges to sustainability and the imposition of restrictive bureaucracy it is therefore becoming increasingly difficult to provide help to those who need it.

6. Disconnection with government policy and societal trends

Some delegates expressed concern about a lack of knowledge within social action organisation concerning rapidly changing government policy. The difficulties relating to this are enhanced by regional inconsistencies and differing approaches by local authorities.

Some table discussions also pointed to the dangers of groups falling 'out of touch' with societal trends; for example those operating in the family sector may run the risk of assuming there is a 'normal' model of family.

7. Identity/Catholic Social Teaching

Several delegates were keen to see a re-rooting of Catholic social action work in Catholic Social Teaching and saw it as a challenge to ensure that the particular message of the Church and the focus on individuals and their dignity is not lost.

However, concerns were also expressed that designation as 'Catholic' organisations can sometimes be problematic, raising issues over access to state funding and adding to voluntary funding challenges given the common conception that the local Catholic Church (and by association Catholic organisations) are wealthy when in fact they are not

8. Volunteers

The current economic climate is seen to create dangers with regards to the number of people volunteering. It is conceivable that as people prioritise their own and their families' financial and physical needs, fewer will opt to volunteer- significantly hindering the work of social action organisations. A broader issue was identified concerning counter-productive tensions that often exist between staff and volunteers. This is viewed as something that organisations must address.

The Opportunities

1. Diocesan Caritas networks

An opportunity that was recurrently identified is the potential of strengthening the Caritas Social Action Network (CSAN) through the establishment of diocesan Caritas networks that would feed into a cohesive national structure.



2. CSAN's Campaigning and Advocacy Role

Delegates were also keen to see development of CSAN's campaigning and advocacy role. At a time when the government is claiming to prioritise society, families, vulnerable people etc. it is seen as important to have a unified voice on behalf of Catholic social action organisations to hold decision makers to account.

CSAN could play a significant role in bringing grass-roots issues to the fore and providing a voice for those who would not otherwise be heard.

3. Influencing perceptions

Beyond influencing those in power, it was emphasised that Catholic social action organisations have the ability to change media and public perceptions of marginalised groups such as refugees, migrants and prisoners. This is an area where it is felt that tangible and effective progress can be made to the distinct benefit of social action work.

4. Audit

A desire for a further, more comprehensive audit and mapping exercise was expressed, promoting a deeper understanding of Catholic Social Action in England and Wales, particularly concerning issues such as the contribution of volunteers which was only loosely addressed in the initial audit.

It is also felt that a more holistic picture of the contribution made by Catholic social action organisations will strengthen our 'voice' when engaging with the government.

5. Churchgoers

The vast base of people and skills in the Church is viewed as offering many opportunities for the enhancement of Catholic Social Action.



Young people were specifically cited as a group with whom the Church has significant connections but who could be offered more opportunities and support for becoming involved in social action work.

6. Church Property

The amount of property owned by the Church is cited as providing valuable opportunities, not only in terms of providing administrative operational bases but also for innovative uses such as the provision of shelter to the homeless.

7. Church Calendar

It is felt that specific days in the Church calendar (e.g. Prisoner Sunday) could be better utilised to engage parishioners in social action work, to educate people about particular issues and to promote the work of Catholic social action organisations.

8. Policy

The current government's 'Big Society' concept does not inform the main opportunities identified by conference delegates and there is a degree of scepticism concerning its party-political connotations.

However, it is generally viewed as something that Catholic social action organisations should engage with and there is a strong feeling that specific elements of policy and legislation involved in it should be addressed. This opportunity extends to broader policy developments - such as the government's green paper on prisons - which provides the Church and Catholic social action organisations with the chance to develop a strong, unified public voice.

9. Public Services

It is felt by some delegates that the enormous value and quality of work that Catholic social action organisations produce with relatively few resources, puts them in a prime position to provide some public services - offering 'more for less'.

Linked closely to this, some table discussions suggested that services should be specifically tailored to fit funding opportunities and gaps in state provision.



Reflections by John Battle

We are living in an increasingly complex and fast changing world. Schumacher's advice "think global and act local" is inadequate for our twenty-first interconnected century in which we need to think and act locally and globally at the same time, and in which with migration the tensions and conflicts of the whole world can be replicated in the terraced streets and cities in which now over half the world's population lives. I recall bumping into a professor of philosophy who had travelled widely speaking and lecturing, and mischievously asking him "what was the meaning of life". He replied that after a lifetime of researching, writing and travelling he had come to learn that "the most important thing in life was rediscovering his own home address". The local is now global and vice versa and the task is to try to live where we are.



Once at election hustings the youngest person in the audience asked of the parliamentary candidates "I am just a human being, what as my MP are you going to do about it?" It is a fundamental question that echoes deep within Catholic social teaching and should govern all political, social and economic action.

The paradox is that as more and more people crowd together, living in mega cities, a characteristic of the modern city is social isolation. According to a British survey by the Young Foundation 7 million people in the UK experience isolation and 1 million have no one to turn to. As more and more people cluster together, practically supporting relationships has become the greatest challenge, and rebuilding basic communities a priority task.

Our Church actually has a track record second to none in supporting people through voluntary and charitable works and in building up local communities. For example, in my own neighbourhood it is mainly the Catholic laity from our parish who carry out and sustain the huge organisation of elderly support that is the charity "Bramley Elderly Action". But for all our great work under the umbrella of Caritas and throughout the Church's formal and informal organisations, the scale of support in our society is small compared with the service provisions of local and national government which cannot easily be replaced. A single local authority may lose in one annual budget of cuts more than the whole Caritas budget.

But the Church is not just an alternative (and free) service provider. As Pope Benedict puts it in *Caritas in Veritate*, "As our society becomes ever more globalised it makes us neighbours but it does not make us brothers and sisters" and sharing a common parent "Our Father" we are called to become brothers and sisters. As the theologian William Kavanagh puts it, we are not called to just be citizens but "disciples" -followers of Jesus expected to go the extra mile, to share with the poor and needy, and to temper "justice" with "mercy" in our actions, public and private.



Again, as Pope Benedict reminded us in *Deus Est Caritas* "Within the community of believers there can be no room for a poverty that denies any other what is needed for a dignified life", and as Professor A H Halsey once spelt out "if some and not others are rich how can we call ourselves a society of brothers and sisters?" We are therefore obliged to champion and open space for a voice for the poor. At the present time we need to work to protect the poor, to contribute to the analysis of the deep seated causes of poverty and to act as representative and advocate for the voiceless poor. We are well positioned as "listening ears", tuning in from our work alongside and in our organisations. We can hear and relate from our privileged contact experience what the poor are up against. And we should not lose confidence in our Church role as "prophetic voice"; challenging the powers. Archbishop Oscar Romero suggested that the task of the whole Church was basically twofold ; to accompany the people and to tell the truth about reality. Perhaps now more than ever we need to hold these twin tasks together and work at them at all levels in our Church, mindful of the final words of St Vincent de Paul when asked what should others do to imitate his good works. He simply replied with one word "more!" As we leave Mass on Sunday after the "dismissal", "go in peace to love and serve the Lord", perhaps we all need to be more practical about how we translate that particular instruction into actions in our own neighbourhood before we return to our parish Mass the next Sunday.



John Battle writes a weekly column in *The Universe* where you can read more of his views

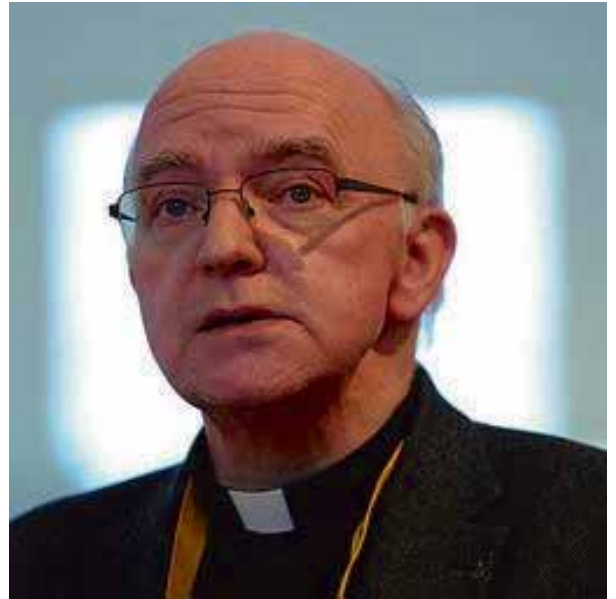


A Commentary by Rev. James Hanvey SJ.

It seems to me that there are two important principles of Catholic Social Teaching (CST) which are relevant to the current state of things: Subsidiarity and Solidarity. If we grasp something of their meaning we can then begin to see how they offer both a critique of current policy and the thinking which underpins it.

Central to policies inspired by the notion of the Big Society is the recognition of need to recover a flourishing civil culture. Policies directing at achieving this have seen the 'shrinking of the State' with corresponding devolved responsibility to civil society. On the surface this looks like the practical implementation of subsidiarity, however we need to approach it with some degree of critical caution before we embrace it as the implementation of an important normative principle of CST.

Whatever subsidiarity is, it is not privatisation. Its meaning is drawn from the Latin word for help or assistance '*subsidium*' – from which we get the word subsidy.¹ It has both a positive and a negative force. Positively, it is the recognition on the part of a higher authority of the legitimate competence of a lower authority. It is not, therefore, a delegation of power but the recognition of a power or competence that already exists.² With this also goes an obligation on the higher authority to assist – in whatever way is necessary – the lower authority to exercise its competence for the social good. Practically, this will often entail the provision of economic as well as administrative and legal resources. Negatively, Subsidiarity means that the higher authority e.g. National Government will not abrogate to itself the competence and work of the lesser authority. In this way the principle of Subsidiarity articulates a vision of the relationship between the State and civil society in which the former is always ordered to the latter, thus preserving the realm of civic freedoms and initiatives. It must also, to some extent, help to protect the civic and personal realm from political and economic exploitation. In other words, Subsidiarity attempts to ensure that national Government does not 'rule' but serves the social body.³ Subsidiarity must also entail a commitment to participation in the political process and in all those means for creating and sustaining the multiple goods of society which enable human flourishing. This means that subsidiarity requires us to look at all those factors and causes of social exclusion. It requires us to address the issues of social and economic justice for the most vulnerable.



¹ It receives its authoritative formulation in the Church's CST with Pius XI, *Quadragesimo Anno*, 1931, § 79.

² John Mahoney, *The Making of Moral Theology. A Study in the Catholic Tradition*. (1987) pp. 169-170. Oxford, Clarendon Press.

³ Pp. 101-104 David Hollenbach SJ, *The Common Good and Christian Ethics*. (2002) Cambridge University Press.



If the State is genuinely committed to the support and development of a thriving civic realm, then it cannot simply devolve its responsibilities and activities to it because it finds it economically or politically convenient to do so. If it does proceed in this way, then for all the talk of a new anthropology and social vision, we are continuing with the old logic of the market. But as we have seen, the market is a brutal and morally unaccountable instrument, not essentially concerned with people except in so far as they are of use.

The government must support and resource those institutions from which civil society thrives. It needs to look at what structures – social, political, economic and spiritual – exclude and inhibit participation in the goods of society. Civil society cannot be artificially generated but is developed through natural structures of commitment, need and interest. In all of these things, it is clear that the Church has a powerful, creative presence in the civic sphere. It is the one institution which has, demonstrably, remained faithful to the protection, growth and flourishing of civil society which is the realm of freedom and human flourishing.

Another principle which no society can thrive without is that of solidarity. If it is to be more than just a Hobbesian contract born of fear and survival then it requires that we think not only in terms of 'me' but also in terms of 'we'.⁴ It not only recognises the social and inter-personal reality of the human person, it goes beyond a utilitarian interdependency to the expression a profound moral vision. In this respect, it requires of us more than a simple intellectual or social assent but a moral conversion. It is the commitment to the good of all, not just a personal, group, or national good.⁵ If solidarity is to be real, it requires us to address those issues which generate and sustain injustice and unjust inequalities. It requires us to address the structures of social division, and exploitation for there can be no solidarity where the human person, or any group with society, is made the means of another's end. No less than subsidiarity, solidarity asks us to reshape and reorder the structures of power within society, especially those which are embedded within financial, political and educational life. To borrow a theological and scriptural word, solidarity holds out to all, whatever their status, ability, race or age, a genuine '*koinonia*' – *communio* or fellowship - in the goods of society. Far from being an ideal, it is a reality which is already there in embryo when we abandon the 'exchange of goods' for a mutual sharing of goods which is itself a good.

This happens in a whole range of human activities: families and friendships, education and leisure. Every time we participate in activities with others, where each profits through the mutual sharing of their gifts which allows their capacities to be realised. The good of being part of a team or group is in excess of any particular success in a task; the performance does not exhaust the joy of singing in the choir or the victory the other gains of being in the squad.

The sharing and participation in goods, is also a necessary part of any sustained development.⁶ Solidarity is a fundamental desire for everyone to participate in the goods of society in so far as they are able; it also recognises and seeks to guarantee their right to do so. It requires that we see wealth creation as a fundamental service of society. Too often the reverse has been the case. The

⁴ The classic statement of this conversion to solidarity is found at the opening of *Gaudium et Spes*, §1. Vatican II. Cf. *Populorum Progression*, §43.

⁵ *Comp. Soc.* §192 ff.

⁶ Pope John Paul II. *Laborem Exercens*, § 32.



moral intention and genuineness of the markets is to be measured not in terms of profit but in terms of the total range of goods that it actively generates and supports. Solidarity means we will seek to create opportunities for all not only to participate in these goods but the means by which they too may generate them. So, solidarity makes us vigilant to those structures and situations which leave people disabled, alienated and marginalised. It does not allow us the luxury of moral dismissal or blame because it requires us to see that where some are excluded from the goods of society, then none of us can fully enjoy them.

To some extent we are familiar with a notion of solidarity which recognises a claim based on a common humanity or a common need. But I think CST introduces another and less obvious dimension, 'indebtedness'.^[3] There are ways in which this can be, and has been, used negatively to accuse individuals or groups of not 'paying their debt' to society. In this sense it can also be used to give some spurious moral legitimacy to their social exclusion or harassment. Obviously, this is not how it is used in CST. Rather, positively, it is the principle of gratuity: that we live and flourish from resources that we alone could not create or sustain. This notion of gratuity while attractive can seem strange even questionable in a world so dominated by the values of capitalism. Is it getting something for nothing? Does it mean that something can be claimed without being deserved? In some sense that answer has to be yes, but rather than undermining our values and relationships, gratuity is the condition of their very existence. Within the Catholic tradition, gratuity is what characterises the very nature of what is good – goodness communicates itself, it is characterised by the dynamic of gift (*Bonum diffusivum sui*)^[4] The good is, then, not an object which we can possess and pass around, it is a reality which creates us and moves us to share it. From the first moment we enter life, we are both gift and the recipients of gifts we need but cannot claim. Thus, gratuity, although it must ultimately reflect the Divine Goodness, is, in fact built into the very fabric of our world and its life.

The Christian will experience this gratuity in so many different dimensions of life but perhaps it is most directly encountered in the Eucharist. The Eucharist is the great school of gratuity. Christ's act reveals the very heart of being and life – everything lives from gift and is realised in the act of giving and being given. This is because everything carries within it the trace of its cause who is God. In the Eucharist we also see into the inexhaustible depth of God's own Trinitarian life. Understood in this way, Christ's action is not just a symbolic gesture within a particular historical moment; it is grounded in the relationships of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. In a sense, we may see that the whole Incarnation has this Eucharistic form. It is the salvific gift of a Love. Now we can grasp that neither goodness nor love are abstract things, they are personal and come to us in the person of Jesus Christ. As this self-giving love is nothing less than the God's own life, it transcends the normal logic of gift as exchange and contract; it is an absolute gratuity. It opens up for us a new economy of freedom teaches us the mystery of gift as sacrifice, the gift of self which is self-transcending the sake of the other, "Whoever loses his life shall gain it." No matter how small or unseen, every act of

[3] Comp. Soc. § 195.

[4] Cf. Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gent.* 1.37' for a general treatment of the Good, cf. ST 1.1. q5. Esp. Art.4. For a discussion of the *Bonum Diffusivum Sui*, Bernard Blankenhorn, *The Good as Self-Diffusive* in *Thomas Aquinas. Angelicum* 79 (2002) 803-837



gratuity bears this mark of the cross, both blessing and sacrifice. It is a silent triumph over death whatever its form.^[5]

Solidarity is the way in which we live in history and through which we realise the historical dynamic of our personal and social existence. We live from the generosity of others not just in the present but also in the past. The principle of gratuity and its corresponding moral disposition of gratitude, reminds us of our responsibility to honour the generosity and sacrifices of those who have gone before us. It requires us to consider our responsibility to those who will come after us; whose future life, its quality, capacity and fruitfulness, depends on the goods we pass on.⁷

Not only does the principle of solidarity in all these dimensions resist the collapse of society into short term individualism, it keeps us conscious of the historical nature of society and human culture. Without recognition that we have responsibilities to the past, present and future the moral quality of society is impaired. A society which denies this responsibility leaves itself open to a false Messianic claim that projects an illusory future or it is free to distort the past to justify its actions in the present. Worst of all, a society which has abandoned any sense of its accountability in history, disenfranchises its entire people and devalues their lives, effectively instrumentalising them to serve the immediate needs of the present and preventing any consideration of future consequences. It denies all existence but its own and thus it regards itself a free to impose its own will and ravage resources for its own unrestrained needs. There is no greater tyranny than the imperialism of the present. In an age that sees history only as a burden and regards cultural amnesia as liberation, the principle of solidarity is an important guarantor of an open society that values its members.

Whether we are seeking to enfranchise the Big Society or create the Good Society, the principle of solidarity needs much deeper consideration by both. In this respect, CST has much to offer.⁸

^[5] A seminal contemporary essay on the nature of gift, cf. Jacques Derrida, *Given Time: 1 Counterfeit Money*. (1992) ET, Peggy Kamul. University of Chicago Press. Derrida's analysis of the paradoxes, dangers and risks in 'gift' starts from Marcel Mauss, *The Gift: The Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies*. Gift is part of the way in which we bind, or put others under an obligation. For Derrida even gratitude for the gift functions as payment in return. He argues that we cannot escape the circle of exchange which the gift binds us into. My point here is that God as gift breaks this logic and opens up the possibilities of genuine gift and giving which we experience as grace. This in turn offers us a way of giving beyond expectation of return.

⁷ Pope John Paul II, *Laborem Exercens*, § 13.

⁸ For a fuller examination of solidarity cf. David Hollenbach SJ, *The Common Good and Christian Ethics*, chapters 6-8.



Conference Feedback

Nearly two hundred delegates attended the conference and feedback was overwhelmingly positive.

The main benefit cited was the opportunity to network with others involved in Catholic Social Action; to share ideas, establish new relationships and build upon existing ones. The diversity of organisations participating – in terms of size, field and structure, further enhanced this experience, providing an encouraging image of how broad our activities are.

Other highly praised aspects of the Conference included the addresses by Archbishop Vincent Nichols and Archbishop Patrick Kelly; and the reflections from Rev. James Hanvey and John Battle (all of which are included earlier in this report). Many delegates found these powerful and inspiring reflections upon both the theological and practical basis of Catholic Social Action.

You can still give your feedback online at www.surveymonkey.com/acommonendeavour

The table discussions generated a wider range of responses- with the vast majority of participants finding them immensely valuable, but several reflecting that the practical constraints of time, size and noise posed challenges.

The location of the conference also split opinion – with several delegates specifically noting the benefits of hosting a major event outside London (especially when it covers issues applying to the entirety of England and Wales) but others finding that transport links posed problems.

Overall delegate satisfaction with different aspects of the Conference is displayed below on a scale of 1-5 (with 1 being the lowest and 5 being the highest). Caritas Social Action Network and the Catholic Bishops' Conference will review this, along with all specific and qualitative feedback, to improve and enhance further events.





IS.....



Anchor House – a hostel and life skills centre, based in East London, for homeless adults.

www.anchorhouseuk.org



British Province of the Society of Jesus
www.jesuit.org.uk

&

the Jesuit Service
www.jrsuk.net



Cabrini Children's Society- a charity providing wide ranging services to children, young people, families and to adults with learning difficulties.

www.cabrini.org.uk



The Cardinal Hume Centre – a centre working with homeless young people, badly housed families, refugees, asylum seekers and migrants.

www.cardinalhumecentre.org.uk



Caritas Care – a charity based in the North West of England providing a wide range of services to children, vulnerable adults and communities

www.caritascare.org.uk



Catholic Care -The Social Care organisation the Diocese of Leeds- acts to support all those in need of its services, especially people experiencing disadvantage and poverty.

www.catholic-care.org.uk



Catholic Children's Society (Shrewsbury)- works for children and families in Shrewsbury Diocese through provision of training, guidance, advice and practical support.

www.cathchildsoc.org.uk



Catholic Children's Society (Westminster)- provides social work services, counselling, play therapy, psychotherapeutic and mediation services to support children and families in need.

www.cathchild.org.uk



Catholic Safeguarding Advisory Service (CSAS) – provides co-ordination, advice and support in respect of safeguarding children, young people and vulnerable adults.

www.csas.uk.net



CCS Adoption- a small, supportive, independent adoption agency based in Bristol and covering the surrounding areas.

www.ccsadoption.org



Childcare (Brentwood Catholic Children's Society) - provides counselling for children and young adults up to the age of eighteen, regardless of their beliefs, together with their families.

www.bccs.org.uk



Depaul UK -helps young people who are homeless, vulnerable and disadvantaged through 42 varied and complimentary projects based around the UK.

www.depauluk.org



Faith in Families- offers a wide range of services for children in need across the East Midlands which include adoption, school social work, bereavement services, positive parenting a domestic violence program.

www.faithinfamilies.org



Families for Children- an independent fostering organisation based in South East England.

www.families-for-children.co.uk



Family Care Society – provides a range of adoption and fostering services in Northern Ireland.

www.familycaresociety.net



Frances Taylor Foundation- comprises the social, pastoral and health care services of the Poor Servants of the Mother of God; including several residential care homes.

www.ftf.org.uk



Father Hudson's Society- the social care agency of the Archdiocese of Birmingham; including community projects, adoption services and care for vulnerable adults and the elderly.

www.fatherhudsons.org.uk



Housing Justice-An umbrella group for Christian organisations working in the field of housing and homelessness.

www.housingjustice.org.uk



Institute of Our Lady of Mercy- a religious order working in numerous social action spheres including work with the elderly, prisoners, homeless, children and women.

www.ourladyofmercy.org.uk



Irish Chaplaincy in Britain- provides services and support to excluded, vulnerable and isolated Irish emigrants in Britain

www.irishchaplaincy.org.uk



Presentation Sisters- a religious order involved in a range of community and social action projects.

www.presentationisters.co.uk



St. Antony's Centre for Church and Industry- works with organisations, churches and individuals on community projects especially related to industrial and economic issues.

www.stantonyscentre.org.uk



St. Cuthberts Care- a charity working with children, the elderly, people with disabilities and people with learning difficulties in the North East of England.

www.stcuthbertscare.org.uk



St. David's Children's Society- provides locally based adoption services across all of Wales and Herefordshire.

www.stdavidscs.org



Nugent Care –provides a diverse range of services in the North West of England including specialist schools and care homes, befriending projects, material aid and community work.

www.nugentcare.org



Prison Advice and Care Trust (Pact) - a charity providing practical and emotional support to prisoners' children and families, and to prisoners themselves.

www.prisonadvice.org.uk



Caritas Salford – an umbrella agency serving several charities in the Diocese of Salford, which also provides services to support children and families, vulnerable adults, older people and community projects.

www.caritassalford.org.uk



Sisters of Nazareth- a religious order, running several residential care homes across the UK.



Society of the Holy Child Jesus- a religious order active in secular society. Works in a range of educational, pastoral, social, legal and spiritual ministries.

www.shcj.co.uk



St. Andrew's Children's Society - a voluntary adoption and foster care agency based in Edinburgh and operating within a 60 mile radius of Scotland's capital city.

www.standrews-children.org.uk



St. Francis' Children's Society- provides adoption services as well as commissioned services for local authorities and schools.

www.sfcs.org.uk



St. John of God Hospitaller Services - part of the Province of Saint John of God; supports a range of vulnerable, elderly and disabled people.

www.saintjohnofgod.org



St. Joseph's Pastoral Centre- a London based centre working to enable people with learning difficulties to participate fully in the life of their church and community.

www.stjoseph.org.uk



St. Vincent De Paul Society- a Christian voluntary organisation dedicated to tackling poverty and disadvantage by providing direct practical assistance to anyone in need.

www.svp.org.uk



St. Vincent's Family Project- supports families especially where there are difficulties relating to issues of parenting, child welfare and social exclusion.

www.svfp.org.uk



The Passage –provides shelter, accommodation and support for homeless and vulnerable people in London.

www.passage.org.uk

For more information about membership of Caritas Social Action Network please visit the members page of our website at:

www.caritas-socialaction.org.uk/pages/our_members.html

