The Poverty Task Group, established following the “poverty” Synod in September 2013, defined:

- four areas of concern
- welfare and benefits reform
- food and poverty
- personal finance and debt
- children and poverty

and four elements to the task:

- encouraging direct action
- generating connections
- raising awareness
- speaking out

This report gives an update of progress:

- the issues form, like poverty itself, a complex integrated web (see the attached diagram)
- we have a baseline snapshot of poverty awareness and emerging actions from the February 2014 telephone interviews with clergy.
- our discussions and activities have tried to balance the need for “sticking plaster” with the greater need to see the bigger picture.
- we believe in the special position which the Diocese holds in loving and serving all sections of society.
- we recognise the differences in demand between urban, market town, coastal and rural needs, seek different solutions depending on context and challenge “urban solutions for rural problems”.
- we acknowledge that, as we cannot do anything effective on our own, we try to work creatively with all organisations.
- we need to ask ourselves the question, “When have we reached the end of our task?”

We have helped to shape projects:

- involvement in Credit Champions project
  - seeking funding to create a post which links with the Archbishop of Canterbury’s Task Group and the Church Urban Fund
  - designing more integrated strategies than solutions to “micro-problems”
  - includes but does not entirely rely on Credit Unions as the best or only answer

We have championed some individual initiatives:

- Holiday Hunger scheme (including Christmas period) at St Michael’s Byker
- Sunday food van at Angelou Centre – Muslim Community action
- Time Banking scheme at Alnwick
- Atkinson Road – packed lunches within holiday playscheme supported by Elswick Lodge Trust
We are actively working with wider organisations

- NETS – in relation to bringing together individual, different and sometimes isolated Food Banks
- Money Advice sessions – assessing and advising on training
- CAB Newcastle – in their work with personal finance and debt
- Newcastle Voluntary Sector – in establishing an agenda for pre-election social justice hustings to be held in the run-up to May 2015
- Involvement in national campaigns (eg Children’s Society)

What are our next moves?

Exploring:

- Community Organising – Citizens UK: exploring issues around Living Wage
- Tyne Gateway – mentoring in financial literacy for families aimed at supporting children throughout mainstream education

Conclusion

- Recognising the extent to which poverty makes people feel helpless
- We have enough material to want to create conversations at local levels – for example the Food for Thought initiative we are sponsoring for Epiphany 2015

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