



Diocese of Newcastle
Poverty Task Group
Report to Diocesan Synod 29 November 2014

Poverty . . .
 not a
 lifestyle
 choice

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

continues over

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

Task Group Report Team:

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18 November 2014