

# SOCIAL ACTION

## Statistics for Mission 2019



February 2021



THE CHURCH  
OF ENGLAND  
Diocese of Manchester

CHURCH  
FOR A  
DIFFERENT  
WORLD



***"Serving is about transformation, changing lives, and creating a different future together. This means being present for all, speaking and acting prophetically for justice, and providing pastoral support, especially to the vulnerable, deprived and excluded."***

**Our Strategy 2020-2030**

## **Social action survey**

In 2017 the annual Statistics for Mission survey asked churches across the Church of England about social action and community outreach in relation to nine project types. Churches were asked whether they ran projects, hosted them, worked in partnership with other organisations, or supported projects in other ways. They were also asked about other forms of social and community activity in which they were involved.

The 2017 survey, the largest to date of the extent of the Church of England's work with some of the most vulnerable in society, identified 33,000 social action projects involving 80% of churches. These included 872 projects in Manchester Diocese involving 84% of churches. Two years churches were asked again about their involvement in social action across the same project types (see Box 1).<sup>1</sup> Based on more than 13,500 responses the 2019 survey found that:

- Churches across the Church of England were involved 35,000 social action projects.
- 77% of churches that responded were involved in one or more types of social action.

This report presents the findings for Manchester Diocese based on responses from 300 churches (i.e. those submitting a full or partial Statistics for Mission return for 2019). It examines both the projects and the extent of church involvement. Together the findings capture the commitment to social action just before Covid-19, providing a baseline for measuring change as churches and seek to serve communities in a post-pandemic world.

### **Box 1 – Project Areas**

*Community café*

*Food bank*

*Holiday/ Breakfast/ After-school clubs for children*

*Lunch club, coffee morning, or similar hospitality for older people*

*Money matters & debt advice*

*Night shelter or other homelessness provision*

*Parent/carer and toddler group or play group*

*Pastoral provision for the wider community (e.g. Street Pastors, counselling/support, befriending schemes)*

*Youth work (for wider community)*

*Other community activity (please specify)*

<sup>1</sup> A minor change was made to the lunch club category (from "lunch club or drop in") in order to give a better match to the categories on the Church Urban Fund social action survey.

## Social action projects

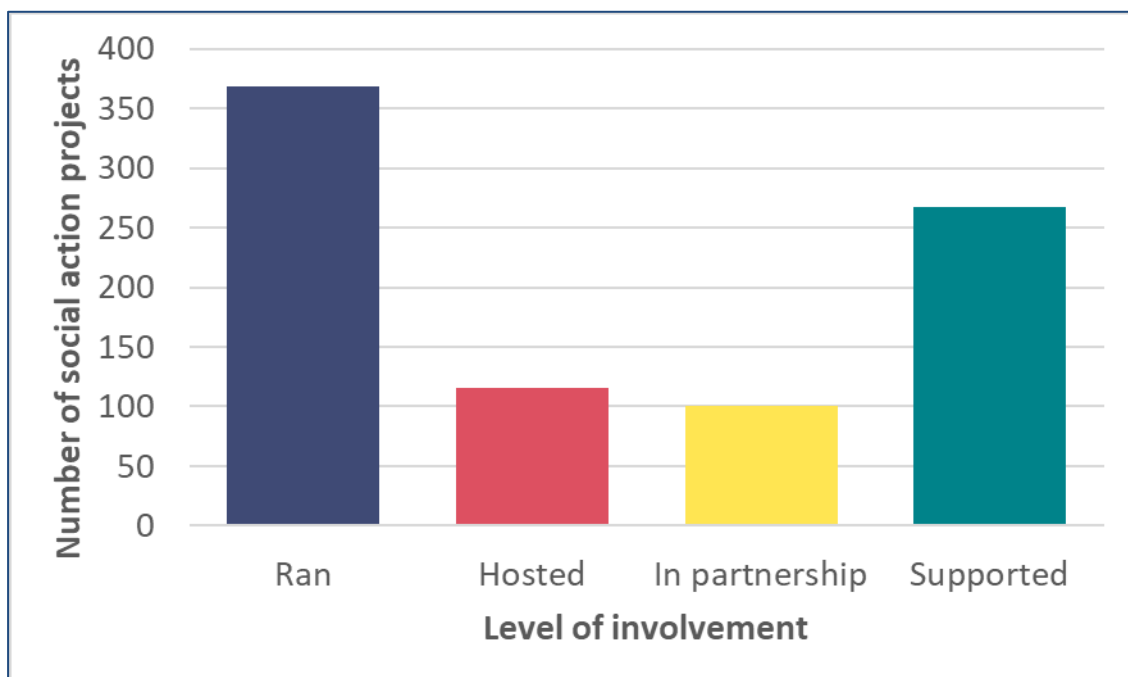
The 2019 survey identified 851 social action projects run, hosted, developed in partnership or supported by Manchester churches (only slightly fewer than in 2017).

Figure 1 shows that 368 projects were run by churches. 53 churches reported that they ran more three or more projects. Ten churches each ran five or more projects.

In addition to running projects themselves, churches hosted another 116 projects; a further 100 projects were carried out in partnership with other organisations; and an additional 267 projects were supported by churches in other ways.

In keeping with the findings across the Church of England projects were most likely to be run by churches or supported by churches in other ways. They were less likely to be hosted by churches or delivered in partnership. However, as in the 2017 survey, projects in Manchester were more likely to be hosted by churches, whereas across the Church of England projects were more likely to be delivered in partnership.

**Figure 1 – Number of social action projects in which churches were involved, 2019<sup>2</sup>**



*Note: Figure 1 is based on 300 responses.*

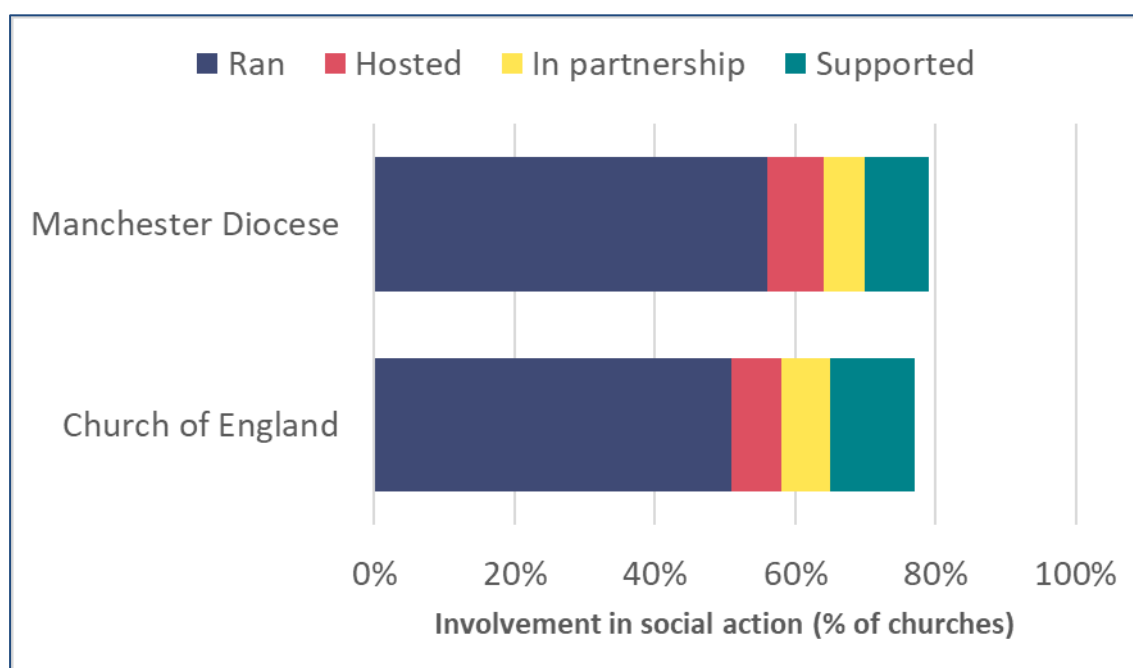
<sup>2</sup> Churches may be involved in projects in multiple ways, for example running, hosting and providing volunteers. To minimise double counting, the Church of England Research and Statistics Unit treats types of involvement hierarchically so that the red bar in Figure 1 represents churches that did not run but hosted a project.

## Church involvement in social action

80% (239) of Manchester churches were involved at different levels across a range of social action projects, slightly lower than in 2017 but slightly higher than the national figure (77%).

Figure 2 shows that 56% (169) of churches ran at least one project compared with 51% of churches across the Church of England. An additional 8% (25) hosted at least one project; an additional 6% (19) worked in partnership on at least one project; and an additional 9% (26) supported one or more social action projects in other ways.

**Figure 2 – Percentage of churches involved in social action projects, 2019<sup>3</sup>**



*Note: Figure 2 is based on 300 responses for Manchester Diocese and 13,503 responses for the Church of England.*

## Church involvement by project type

Manchester churches were involved across all nine specified project types. Figure 3 shows that, as in 2017, church involvement was highest with food banks (65%). Lunch clubs, coffee mornings or other hospitality for older people (43%), ranked fourth in 2017, ranked second.<sup>4</sup> Parent and toddler groups (39%), ranked second in 2017, ranked third.

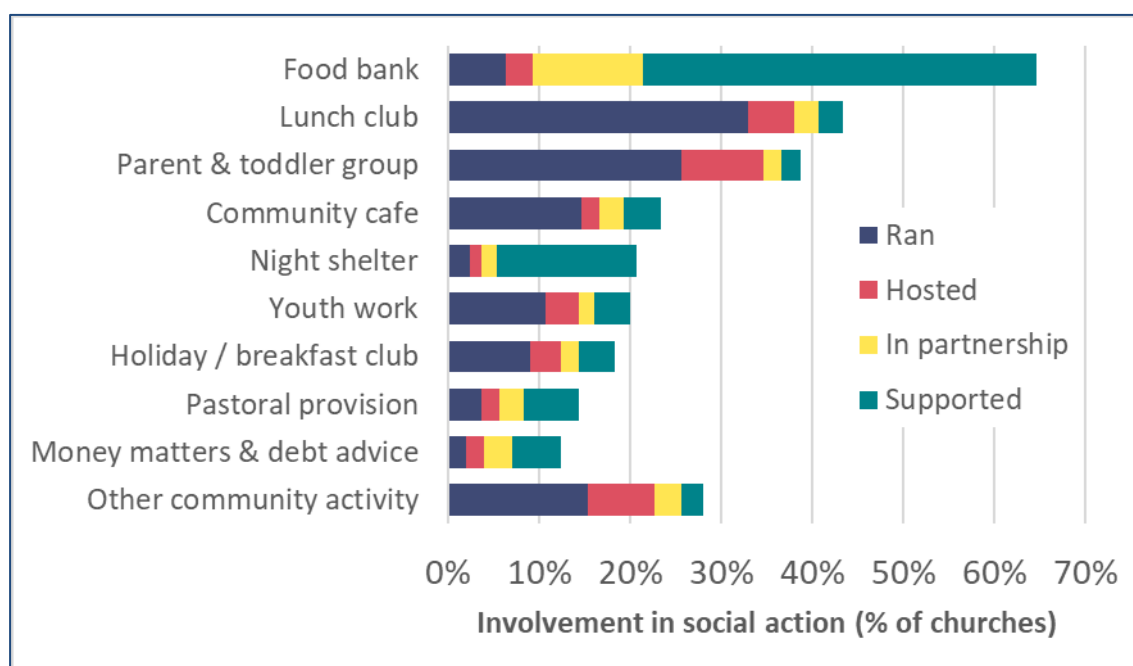
<sup>3</sup> Churches may be involved in projects in multiple ways, for example running, hosting and providing volunteers. To minimise double counting, the Church of England Research and Statistics Unit treats types of involvement hierarchically so that the red bar in Figure 2 represents churches that did not run but hosted a project.

<sup>4</sup> This may reflect the change in definition from "lunch club or drop in" in 2017.

Figure 3 also reveals differences by level of involvement. It shows that Manchester churches are:

- most likely to **run** lunch clubs (33%) and parent and toddler groups (26%).
- most likely to **host** but not run parent and toddler groups (9%) and lunch clubs (5%).
- most likely to **do in partnership** but not run or host food banks (12%).
- most likely to **support** but not run, host or do in partnership food banks (43%) and night shelters (15%).

**Figure 3 – Percentage of churches involved in different types of social action projects, 2019<sup>5</sup>**



*Note: Figure 3 is based on 300 responses.*

## Other church involvement

In addition to the nine project types, the survey asked churches about their involvement in other areas of social action. Figure 3 shows that 28% (84) responded: 15% (46) ran other social action projects; an additional 7% (22) hosted projects; an additional 3% (9) worked in partnership; and an additional 2% (7) supported projects in other ways.

<sup>5</sup> Churches may be involved in projects in multiple ways, for example running, hosting and providing volunteers. To minimise double counting, the Church of England Research and Statistics Unit treats types of involvement hierarchically so that the red bar in Figure 3 represents churches that did not run but hosted a project.

Churches were invited to describe their involvement and more than one third (103) responded. Their write in responses identified the following broad areas of activity:

- Health and well-being (including exercise and fitness classes, dementia support, and groups for those struggling with addictions).
- Activities designed to address isolation within the community (including Places of Welcome).
- Work to support refugees, asylum seekers and victims of human trafficking (including language classes and hospitality).
- Environmental action (including community litter picking, gardening and churchyard projects).
- Arts-based activities (including film nights, community choirs, dance, drama and crafts).
- Uniformed organisations for children and young people.
- Support for community venues (including residential care homes, schools and retail chaplaincy).
- Hosting and networking for multi-agency groups (including councillors, GPs, community police officers and job clubs).

## Commentary

The 2019 survey shows that, as in 2017, the commitment to social action in Manchester Diocese is strong. Four in five churches engaged in different ways across a total of 851 projects. These included projects across every specified survey category, so demonstrating the capacity of churches to respond to a wide range of community needs.

Covid 19 and successive lockdowns in 2020 have changed the landscape in which the projects captured in the 2019 survey operate. Some, due to factors beyond their control, have not been able to provide their hospitality and services. Others, for example the food banks supported by 65% of Manchester churches, have been able to provide community support throughout the pandemic.<sup>6</sup> Projects have also developed new ways of supporting individuals and communities. For example, given their communal nature and the high-risk status of the virus, night shelters were not considered safe to run. Yet weekly sessions supporting those who have been temporarily accommodated are offered through churches working in partnership with Greater Together Manchester.<sup>7</sup>

Other examples of churches and projects demonstrating resilience, flexibility and creativity in lockdown have emerged.<sup>8</sup> As yet it is only possible to speculate about their future. However the 2019 statistics of social action in Manchester Diocese are encouraging, providing a baseline from which to ensure that communities are served.

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<sup>6</sup> <https://www.churchofengland.org/resources/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-churches#na>

<sup>7</sup> <http://greatertogethermanchester.org/homelessness/>

<sup>8</sup> For examples see the testimonies from the videos prepared for the Virtual Clergy Conference:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yyLnVsjuj7s>  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BvUsww6yBsk>

## Appendix – Supplementary Data

**Table 1 – Social action projects by level of involvement, 2019<sup>9</sup>**

	Church is responsible for running this activity	Church hosts this activity in its own building(s)	Church does this activity in partnership with others	Our church supports this activity in other ways (e.g. volunteers, donations)
Community cafe	44	6	8	12
Food bank	19	9	36	130
Holiday/ Breakfast/ After-school clubs for children	27	10	6	12
Lunch club, coffee morning, or similar hospitality for older people	99	15	8	8
Money matters & debt advice	6	6	9	16
Night shelter or other homelessness provision	7	4	5	46
Parent/carer and toddler group or play group	77	27	6	6
Pastoral provision for the wider community	11	6	8	18
Youth work (for wider community)	32	11	5	12
Other community activity (please specify)	46	22	9	7
	<b>368</b>	<b>116</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>267</b>

<sup>9</sup> Churches may be involved in projects in multiple ways, for example running, hosting and providing volunteers. To minimise double counting, the Church of England Research and Statistics Unit treats types of involvement hierarchically so the figures under column headed “Church hosts activity within its own building(s)” represent churches that did not run but hosted a project.