



PRISON WEEK 2021 – EVENT REPORT

A Call to Action

Almost 60 people from three Diocese participated in an event on 12th October 2021 to raise awareness of the challenges facing prisons and prisoners, and how we can reach out.

Bishop Mark O’Toole opened the event before the staff of Prison Advice and Care Trust (PACT), and the National Catholic Chaplain for Prisons discussed those challenges facing those in prison and on release, giving examples of how we can help. Andy Keen-Downs, Chief Executive of PACT, highlighted the numbers of people incarcerated with mental health issues. He also stressed the “*hidden sentence*” imprisonment brought to prisoners’ families. The speakers also commented on the growing importance of a “*rehabilitation culture*,” to promote better life chances for people on release and highlighted a number of ways in which parishes can play a role.

Canon Paul Douthwaite (National Chaplain) underlined the importance of offering the sacrament of reconciliation. He broke down a Prison Chaplain’s work into “the three Cs, Cell (pastoral care), Class (faith formation), and Chapel (a place where all feel equal).”

Members of St. Vincent de Paul (SVP) noted ways in which we can help our prison communities. These ranged from prison visits, to buying bibles, providing clothing and other materials.

The following were some of the key points mentioned:

Prisoners inside

- Imprisonment of parents has a serious impact on families. Helping PACT to support Supervised Play Areas for visits, can help keep those families connected.
- It is important to keep in contact or encourage others to stay connected to those in prison: a link to the outside world can help with mental health.
- Most prisoners in the UK are convicted of non-violent crimes, and we should address the stigma often associated with being an ex-prisoner.
- We can offer to help our local Prison Chaplain - the parish priest can provide contact details. From attending Mass in prison (when possible) and bible study, to prison visits - we can all do our part.

Prisoners on release

- Almost half of people with convictions return to prison in less than a year. We can help prevent this by keeping families connected and offering practical support. SVP can provide information about what support they are offering in your local prison.

- People often have little or no possessions when they leave prison and may not have clothing suitable for the weather – local parishes can help with this.

Work With Us

If you would like to get more information on any of these issues, please use the links below. If you have any questions for Caritas or want to be involved with any new events, please contact us. We can also provide a full copy of the PACT presentation and a recording of the event.

Diocese of Plymouth: caritas@prcdtr.org.uk 01364 645421

Diocese of Clifton: stephendhicks@hotmail.com 07477 781517

Diocese of Arundel & Brighton: admin@csan.org.uk 020 7870 2210

Useful Links

PACT Community Support programme <https://www.prisonadvice.org.uk/family-support>

Support for Prisoners on release <https://www.southwestcc.org.uk/making-new-start-possible>

Supporting people with Convictions in the Bristol area <https://www.sixty-one.org/>

Getting involved in Wessex <https://www.sixty-one.org/>

Supporting people with Convictions to connect with religious communities

<https://www.welcomedirectory.org.uk/>

St. Vincent de Paul Charity supporting people <https://www.svp.org.uk/>

Prisoners' families support line <https://www.prisonersfamilies.org/>

Prayer of Dedication by Alan Paton (shared by Deacon Nick Johnson)

O Lord, grant that we may not be conformed to the world, but may love it and serve it.
Grant that we may never shrink from being instruments of your peace because of the judgement of
the world.

Grant that we may love you without fear of the world,
grant that we may never believe that the inexpressible majesty of yourself may be found in any
power of this earth.

May we firstly love you and our neighbours as ourselves.

May we remember the poor and the prisoner and the sick and the lonely, and the young
searchers, and the tramps and the vagabonds, and the lost and lonely, as we remember Christ,
who is in them all.

May we this coming day be able to do some work of peace for you.