



Exercising the ministry of charity

Strategic Plan 2019 – 2025 (updated Jan 2024)

Introduction

*from the Right Reverend Mark O'Toole,
Bishop of Plymouth*



I am delighted to recommend to the whole Diocese, the Strategic Plan of Caritas Plymouth. I know it will provide fresh impetus to put the new command of the Lord into practise; “Love one another as I have loved you’, (John 13:34-35).

In his Encyclical on Charity, Pope Benedict XVI wrote: “The Church’s deepest nature is expressed in her threefold responsibility of proclaiming the Word of God, celebrating the Sacraments and exercising the ministry of Charity. These

duties presuppose each other and are inseparable.” Pope Benedict realised that the ‘Ministry of Charity’ needs organisation if it is to be an ordered service to the community. Thus Caritas agencies have been established at international, national and diocesan levels as a means of giving motivation, direction and support to the Church’s ministry. Pope Benedict asked that these agencies should be a witness to the Gospel by encouraging and supporting Catholic social action, and integrating it into the structures of the Church. Pope Francis has taken the lead, through his teaching and deeds, in putting the Gospel imperative of love and mercy into action. He also asked, at the end of the Year of Mercy, that Dioceses’ should establish a legacy to this year, and I believe that our establishment of Caritas Plymouth is a most fitting response to that call to mercy.

You will see from the strategic plan that Caritas Plymouth will work with organisations already existing, to put the Church’s Social Teaching into action, and will provide a network in which good practice can be shared. It will also encourage new initiatives. There are so many ways in which our parishes, schools, charities, groups and individuals are already responding to Jesus’ example and teaching. We must build on these in the service of the most poor and vulnerable.

I want to thank all those who have worked so hard to put this strategic plan together. May Caritas Plymouth give us all new opportunities to proclaim our faith, in deeds as well as in words. You will know this is a vitally important part of being a ‘missionary disciple’. May the Lord help us to see Him more clearly in the lives of all of our brothers and sisters, and so draw closer to Him.

Bishop Mark O’Toole

Bishop of Plymouth



*The Church's deepest nature is expressed
in her three-fold responsibility:
of proclaiming the word of God,
celebrating the Sacraments
and exercising the ministry of charity.*

Pope Benedict XVI

Vision

'To live the Gospel by following Christ's command to love our neighbour as He loved us.'

The Caritas Diocese of Plymouth Vision is a network of parishes, charities and services engaged in charitable work in the name of the Church; striving to live out the Gospel by supporting people in vulnerable situations in our local communities. Tackling poverty and exclusion will be at the heart of our work.

Mission

Caritas Plymouth shares in the mission of the Catholic Church.

We support the network of social action charities, schools and parishes within the Diocese of Plymouth, working in partnership with them to help those in need.

Values and principles

Our values are formed from the Gospel and Catholic Social Teaching.

Our values and principles are set out in the Memorandum and Articles of our Charity available on the Charity Commission Website (Charity number 1205486).

Overarching Aims

Each of the priorities – the areas of core work – will contribute to seven aims.

These are:

To tackle poverty in all its forms through the provision of practical and (where appropriate) spiritual assistance to those in need

To increase mutual support amongst the Caritas Plymouth network.

To promote the more active involvement of parishes, schools and communities in social and environmental action.

To increase access to resources through enhanced communication between diocesan structures, parishes, faith and secular charities.

To enhance education and formation within the Christian community.

To create opportunities for the appropriate sharing of faith and evangelising.

To disseminate the benefits of being part of the Caritas family and mission of the Catholic Church.



*The only thing that counts
is faith expressing itself
through love.*

Galatians 5:6

Core Work:

Education, Formation and Development

This is an overarching area of work which covers all the other five strategic priorities. It seeks to encourage and integrate Catholic Social Teaching and initiatives across Catholic charities, schools and parishes and link with other agencies.

In keeping with our Vision to live out the Gospel it also prioritises people in need, whether affected by ill health (both mental and physical), disability, poverty, bereavement, family breakdown, addiction, global conflict or environmental change. It has particular regard for integral ecology and our duty to ensure that care for our common home and environmental stewardship underpins all our activities.

Principal Objectives

To encourage liaison across the Caritas Plymouth network.

To encourage volunteering and befriending across Catholic parishes.

To prioritise people who are facing challenges in life.

To support Catholic Social Teaching in Catholic schools and parishes.

To identify hidden and disguised need – both practical, emotional and spiritual.

Integrating the ministry of charity (Caritas) with the ministry of proclaiming the word of God (Evangelising).

Principal Activities

Identify what is already happening in parishes by regularly mapping existing activity and need.

Share information across the diocese and provide co-ordination of key dates and events.

Provide signposting to information and support available and liaise with other agencies.

Develop a central source of information focusing on issues such as Community Sponsorship, Cost of Living Crisis and Children and Family Life.

Encourage integration between parishes and schools.

Establish mechanisms for sharing good practice amongst parishes.

Investigate the possibility of Caritas Friends in schools and parishes.

Provide practical formation on how Caritas initiatives and evangelising will be naturally combined.

Raise the profile of the annual World Day of the Poor.

Core Work:

Children and Family Life

This strategic priority will build on the work of the local Catholic Children's Society providing material and moral support to families in need.

Support will also be provided through parishes, schools and other charities.

Principal Objectives

To provide a safety net to families of all faiths and none.

To provide practical and emotional support to parents and carers

To provide support to families affected by challenges such as ill health, disability, bereavement and those caring for children with additional needs.

To move towards a fair, living wage.

To support Community Sponsorship schemes for families coming to the UK as refugees.

To support the Pro-Life message that man and woman is uniquely created in the image and likeness of God and deserves respect from the first moment of biological development to its natural end.

Principal Activities

Provide grant funding for families in need.

Provide a non-judgmental, friendly and accessible contact point for parents and carers.

Provide diocesan support for catechesis for children with additional needs.

Support the diocesan campaign to ensure a fair, living wage for staff and those working for our suppliers.

Fundraise for and support Community Sponsorship schemes for refugee families.

Liaise with charities and agencies supporting vulnerable life in the womb.



*Aspire not to have more,
but to be more.*

St Oscar Romero, Patron Saint of Caritas



Make hospitality your special care.

Romans 12:13

Core work:

Refugees and Migrants

Through this priority the Caritas network will explore how the Gospel imperative to 'Welcome the Stranger' can be translated into practical action. It will be informed by the work of the Apostleship of the Sea (Stella Maris) supporting seafarers worldwide and the Catholic Bishops' Conference document 'Love the Stranger'.

Principal Objectives

- To put into practice** Pope Francis' teaching that we should 'Welcome, Protect, Promote and Integrate' refugees and migrants.
- To support** the resettlement of vulnerable people fleeing conflict focusing on the Community Sponsorship scheme
- To increase** outreach to those seeking asylum in our Diocese.
- To report** on the feasibility of re-purposing unused presbyteries, religious buildings and diocesan properties to house people in need.
- To increase** understanding in parishes and schools about the Government schemes to resettle vulnerable people fleeing from conflict and increase links with other agencies.
- To identify** ways to support the victims of Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking.

Principal Activities

- Offer formation** on CST including the 'Love the Stranger' document from the CBCEW and how its recommendations can be implemented in our Diocese
- Provide** information on Community Sponsorship to every interested parish and undertake information activities.
- Identify** parishes interested in becoming a Community Sponsor or supporting ecumenical initiatives.
- Identify** suitable empty buildings and analyse the feasibility of using them for resettled families or other people in need.
- Identify** how best to support the Apostleship of the Sea (Stella Maris) in their work with the seafaring victims of modern slavery and migration.
- Identify** how to provide more support for the victims of Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking, in conjunction with the Santa Marta Group.
- Explore** new ways to support people seeking asylum.

Core work:

Ageing Society

The population of the UK is ageing – in 2022 19% of the UK population was over 65 years of age and this proportion is set to increase. 8.6% of the population are over 75. In the Diocese of Plymouth this trend is even more marked. It is also exacerbated by the rural/coastal nature of much of the diocese. Older people are living on their own in areas without many services or access to transport.

This priority aims to encourage volunteering by and engagement with older people in particular through intergenerational encounter. We will support St Vincent de Paul Society to strengthen their representation in parishes to offer meaningful activities and reach out to those in need. It will support and empower the charitable work of the Catholic Women's League, the Catenians and other groups in parishes engaging and supporting older people.

Principal Objectives

To help expand befriending and volunteer opportunities for older people.

To support outreach to those who are sick, lonely, or suffering from addiction.

To help Catholic charities and parishes access diocesan resources.

To become part of the wider secular and ecumenical network focused on ageing.

Principal Activities

Empower and support parish priests to take forward initiatives to value and support people in our communities who are older.

Encourage parish engagement with nursing homes or GPs to offer support for older people who may be isolated, including through intergenerational linking.

Support every Diocesan school to develop an intergenerational link and to encourage parishes to do the same.

Provide guidance on how parishioners might identify and look out for older or isolated people and offer inclusive opportunities including to those living with dementia.

Help people in need access sources of support.



*A new command I give you:
love one another.
As I have loved you,
so you must love one another.*

John 13:35



*The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has
anointed me to bring good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives
and recovery of sight to the blind,
to let the oppressed go free,
to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour.*

Luke 4:18-19

Core work:

Homelessness

Homelessness is a human rights crisis. Many people have no place to call home or live in insecure accommodation. Those who are homeless are affected by negative stereotypes, stigma and shame.

This priority will build on the existing Parish initiatives supporting local Homeless charities. Where possible, diocesan financial support from restricted funds for such activities will be used to add value.

Principal Objectives

To look for opportunities to re-purpose unused presbyteries and religious buildings as 'Move On' properties where former rough sleepers integrate with the community in partnership with homelessness charities.

To create a culture of appropriate outreach to people with a background of homelessness.

To work for the alleviation of homelessness among refugees and those seeking asylum in our communities.

Principal Activities

Promote a culture of encounter with those who are facing homelessness through guidance and information.

Create links with the other agencies and charities.

Help parishes work with homelessness charities to broker positive activities and opportunities for encounter.

Partner with established charities to raise awareness of issues affecting those who are homeless or vulnerably housed, to challenge stereotypes and promote appropriate outreach and engagement.

Core work:

Poverty

This priority underpins other areas of work and focuses on promoting a culture of reciprocity and neighborliness. The poor are persons; they have faces, stories, hearts and souls. They are our brothers and sisters, with good points and bad, like all of us, and it is important to enter into a personal relation with each of them. Faith teaches us that every poor person is a son or daughter of God and that Christ is present in them. “Just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me” (Mt 25:40).

Principal Objectives

To promote encounter with and a culture of listening to those living in poverty

To increase capacity of our parishes and schools to signpost people affected by the cost-of-living crisis to access local sources of support.

To build on the existing support aiming to have a Food Bank collection, or similar, in every parish.

To pilot and share new ways in which parishes can tackle poverty and reach out to those in need both material and spiritual.

Principal Activities

Encourage parishes who don't already have a Food Bank collection, or similar, to start one.

Help parishes share resources with regard to local collections for Food Banks or similar initiatives.

Support parishes with setting up Warm Spaces and other opportunities for people to access help and advice.

Identify and promote new opportunities for parishes and schools to support those who are struggling.

Promote advocacy campaigns to tackle the root causes of poverty and inequality.

increase
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assist
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map

In Chapter 2 of his letter to the Philippians Paul writes:

*“Make my joy complete by being of a single mind,
one in love, one in heart and one in mind.*

*Nothing is to be done out of jealousy or vanity;
instead, out of humility of mind everyone should
give preference to others, everyone pursuing not
selfish interests but those of others.*

Make your own mind the mind of Jesus Christ.”

Philippians 2: 2-6



caritas
diocese of plymouth

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