

Questions and Answers

During our recent webinar we received a number of really constructive questions and helpful comments from participants, especially from those of you who were able to send feedback through our online survey after the presentation. This is really useful to us and we hope to develop this further in the future. Those questions posed during the panel discussion and answered by either an individual or group response have been listed at the bottom of this page. You will find the answers in the video link to our webinar.

Please be mindful that these responses are general reflections and not 'official views' offered to give an impression of the approach Caritas staff are taking to just a few of the vital social and moral issues facing us today.

Q: In this time of responding to change and re-imagining the future there is a national shortage of foster carers and 78,000 young people in care nationally. In this time of working together what can the Catholic community and parishes do to contribute to responding to this great need?

A: We certainly recognise that the need for foster families is increasing and in particular for older children and teenagers. There are a good number of things the Catholic community and our parishes can do in response.

Firstly, parishes can commit to becoming "fostering friendly" and be supportive of any families who foster in the parish. They can raise awareness by putting up posters (which can be provided by Caritas), publicising contact details for information on fostering in their newsletters and on social media (drafts available through Caritas), and retweeting and commenting on Caritas Fostering posts on Twitter or Facebook. Our Caritas Fostering team would welcome the opportunity to come and speak to parishioners after Mass to explain about the crisis in more detail and give an overview of the requirements to become a foster carer. Our schools can also host a talk.

Perhaps the most important thing we can all do, in addition to prayer, is to ask ourselves and our families and friends if we could offer a safe haven to a young person ourselves.

Q: I think we recognise we must find a new normal and a genuinely successful caring society. What is the single most important thing each of us can do to influence those around us? How do we convince others a simpler, more inclusive society is the way forward?

A: Caritas Salford cannot answer for all panel members but our immediate reflection is with two quotations.

The first is attributed to St Francis of Assisi: "Preach the Gospel at all times; use words if necessary." We must be an example to others through the choices we make, the way we conduct ourselves and then by the things we say.

The second is from St Teresa of Calcutta: "If you can't feed a hundred people, then feed just one." Each of us may not have the material resources to end hunger or cure poverty but what matters is that each of us take action, no matter how small it is and in doing so be a model for others.

Q: How do you see Caritas supporting women in the Church and community, and coming together for the Common Good within the Church's theological remit for women?

A: Caritas Salford continues to acknowledge and celebrate the role and extensive contribution of women in the Church. Caritas Salford's mission is rooted in the social teaching of the Church and

*believes **everyone** has a contribution to make in working for the Common Good within our parishes and local communities. Bringing people together in solidarity cannot happen effectively without the skill and commitment of women!*

At Caritas, we endeavour to offer equal opportunities to all for the good of all. Incidentally, we are pleased to say that the current Salford Diocesan Representative on the National Board of Catholic Women is a member of our Caritas team.

Q: Please can you ask how well international charities are prepared for responding to the spread of Covid-19 through the Global South? – ref. International Rescue Committee David Miliband warning of a billion infections and three million deaths.

A: While Caritas Salford is not directly engaged with providing support at an international level, being focused more on domestic issues in our home diocese, we are very mindful of being part of the international network of Catholic charities working to ensure an end to poverty and promoting social justice.

For more information on preparedness, we would encourage you to visit the webpage of CAFOD, the Catholic Agency for Overseas Development from England and Wales, and also that of Caritas Internationalis <https://www.caritas.org/>

Q: In a Church with a lot of emphasis on pious practices and devotions, is there one bit of advice that can encourage it to be more socially active? I'm personally finding it a big challenge.

A: Echoing the calls for justice found throughout scripture, Pope Francis's message is loud and clear in that he wants a "Poor Church for the poor" and encourages parishes to be outward-facing, led by missionary disciples. This clearly puts social action very high on the agenda and his actions have repeatedly emphasised this call.

Many parishes are fully engaged at the front line of their local communities, others are only at the start of that journey. It can be scary. It involves us getting our hands dirty. One way, as we heard in the webinar from Sr Judith, is to let the young people lead us. Our schools are finding that increasingly our young people are passionate and wish to engage in social action and stewardship. We only need to look at Greta Thunberg! They don't necessarily link it to putting faith into action until they learn about Catholic Social Teaching and realise that is what they are putting into action. There is so much to be gained by parishes linking closely to their schools, especially high schools.

Q: Some dioceses have supported Church-led social action and others have ruled it out. Are there lessons here for the Bishops Conference for the future? What does this say about the place of social action in the Church and the way senior leaders examine their approaches to risk and to mission?

A: See our response to above.

In the past, the charitable role of the Catholic Church in providing support to those most in need was clear and unique. In recent history, due to a number of factors including the increase in charitable organisations nationally and locally, it could be argued that the role and influence of the Church has diminished and become less defined, and perhaps this has made it difficult to find how the Church can best provide leadership.

There are now 17 dioceses in England and Wales that have in recent years committed to the Caritas model. At the same time, each diocese in England and Wales does lead social action in its own distinct way and local setting, subject to the resources available, including the availability and commitment of local parishioners to support their efforts. During the pandemic, many Catholic

parishioners have volunteered locally, some but by no means all, explicitly through Church-led structures.

Q: At the moment 'be kind' is one of the popular mottos of the pandemic. How powerful that message would be with just a simple crucifix. The Catholic Church desperately needs a rebrand. Our image is conservative, aged and somewhat out of touch.

A: There is a fine line, isn't there, between being current and on trend without diminishing the sacredness of the message and example of Jesus? Certainly "be kind" could have come straight from St John's Gospel. It is the responsibility of us all to make what the Church stands for as accessible and attractive to all, the latter probably being an impossible aim. At Caritas Salford we have endeavoured to do this through various programmes, including our Caritas Ambassadors project, which works with school children and their teachers to help them understand Catholic Social Teaching and how it applies in the 21st Century. Perhaps you have seen some of the illustrated versions of the Beatitudes, which have been reworked for children and young people with the pandemic in mind and have been shared on our social media?

Q: We need to ensure the safety for both helped and helpers in the pandemic. But responses to need for social action from dioceses in England and Wales has differed quite considerably.

*A: Yes, it is a given that the safety and safeguarding of the helped and helpers is paramount especially at this time of crisis when it would be very easy to slacken our policies and procedures. Although the response to social action may differ from diocese to diocese depending on local resources and need, everyone should be adhering to their **own** safeguarding policies and Risk Assessments.*

CSAN and SVP have produced a useful pack for parishes at this time to help them to respond safely: <https://www.caritassalford.org.uk/coronavirus-response/>

Q: The situation in China is reportedly reverting quickly to a pre-Coronavirus situation, as for example, pollution levels are rising exponentially. How do we influence government so that our rediscovered community and social values remain and we also do not revert to type?

A: Here we need to use our voices and advocate that we do not return to old habits that are detrimental to humanity as a whole but especially on the poor. Harnessing the passion of our young people is helping to get the message across in a powerful way. In other ways we can write to our local MP. We can contact our local Metro Mayor. We can also feed into our local UK Citizen's chapter who will listen to what is important to local people and then take those issues forward to people in leadership.

Q: Can we think about ways that church property (churches, land, schools, accommodation) can be more widely used to serve the community?

A: This is something Caritas has been working on in Salford Diocese with properties that are no longer in use. There are big challenges in doing this but they are not insurmountable. A current example is the conversion of St John's presbytery in Rochdale into accommodation for the destitute. Incidentally, the Rochdale project has been a great opportunity for ecumenical and inter-faith collaboration. And we're currently working on another former presbytery for a similar use.

As part of the Hope in the Future programme, Bishop John has encouraged parish communities to take responsibility of the administration of their local assets and consider putting them to social use. As we contemplate the future post-coronavirus, we would echo the bishop's call and invite parishes to work

in collaboration with the professional support available from Caritas and the Diocese to re-purpose facilities and develop projects that can enhance the social mission of the Church.

Q: Do Caritas now need to develop further partnership working with other faith-based organisations, other charities, funders and others to continue to deliver much needed services for vulnerable people and families?

A: Caritas Salford is already doing these things and is proud of our various partnerships but yes, there is a need for increased collaborative working for the common good.

Q: Bishop John, isn't it time for the Diocese of Salford to take the opportunity of COVID-19 and publicise Pope Francis's wisdom and his social thoughts and advice through interfaith activities?

A: There is much to be gained from inter-faith collaboration. Pope Francis, through his encyclicals, addresses his messages to "People of all faiths" and has much wisdom to share. Caritas Salford already work in collaboration with other Christian groups and representatives of other faiths in order to ensure the best support is available to those who are in need.

Q: The Catholic Social Teaching principle of Subsidiarity has to be seen to empower parishes and lay-led organisations if vital resources need to be shared. What grants are Caritas offering to lay organisations especially for faith-based work often excluded by other funds?

A: As a charity ourselves, the current focus of Caritas Salford is on providing services that materially support those in need and so we don't necessarily act as a provider of grants to other organisations. That said, we continue to work in developing relationships with grant providers and other trusts who do focus on this and we would be happy to support local parish groups or others within the diocese.

Your point about subsidiarity is an important one if the laity are to be empowered as you say. We are always looking for ways to connect with our parishes and support their work within the local community. One way of doing this will be through a programme designed by Together For The Common Good (T4CG), which we hope to be able to offer to parishes shortly to enable them to begin to connect meaningfully and initiate dialogue with different groups from the local community.

Q: The Government has introduced "temporary" legislation to allow doctors to prescribe the two abortion pills to be self-administered by women at home. How can we ensure that after the crisis, things can return to safeguard lives? Or is there a danger of this becoming the "new normal"?

A: You raise an important point that despite everything that is currently happening, we must not take our eye off the ball in terms of fighting protect the Dignity of the Human Person and all other aspects of the Church's social and religious teaching. There is always a danger of the new normal not being in line with how we want the world to be, so it is the responsibility of all of us to be "Gospel Activists", to quote Sister Judith, and stand up for our beliefs.

Q: I believe abortion in the UK is the biggest crisis we face. What will Caritas do to remove this culture of death?

A: In all its projects and services, Caritas Salford strives to keep the Dignity of the Human Person as our number one priority, with all that entails. Caritas will always cherish human life in all its forms, protecting the God-given dignity of every individual. Amongst its many services, Caritas supports two young parent homes providing safe accommodation (largely to young mothers and their children). There we hope to provide a nurturing environment promotes respect for the dignity and sanctity of life.

Q: Appreciate the discussion of equality for women. Might we have the same discussion for people of colour?

A: Absolutely. We are working for a fair, just and equal world for all. It is a work in progress and we all need to work harder to put into practice what we preach.

Q: How will we, in the 'new normal', be seen to be putting 'people and planet' first – the current situation shows how inextricably connected they are – and not just talking about it?

A: It is the responsibility of all of us to care for our common home and to shout loudly so our leaders and politicians can hear us. Pope Francis's encyclical Laudato Si has shown us the way and with the help of organisations like CAFOD, led in this country by Bishop John Arnold, the Catholic Community is an important voice in keeping the country and the world on task. By becoming members of your local Chapter of UK Citizens, parishes can also influence local leaders in terms of tackling the issues that are most important to us. We reiterate the importance of harnessing the energy and passion of our young people in caring for our planet. Finally, at a personal level each of us has to change our mind-set in this regard and we need to take personal responsibility to ensure that in our own lives and 'business' activities protect the dignity of the person, which is intrinsically linked to God's creation. We take steps to reduce or eliminate the damage done to the environment.

Q: People often want to volunteer but sometimes need direction and options. Do you see any feasibility in utilising tech – similar to the Good Sam App that has been used by the NHS – to mobilise people in parishes to volunteer for Caritas and other Catholic charities on an ad-hoc basis?

A: The pandemic has shone a light on the weaknesses in our systems. We absolutely recognise the need to have joined-up systems of communication in place so that volunteers in parishes can be identified and mobilised quickly. We would like nothing more than have a wide team of Caritas volunteers in our parishes. Many parishes already have a Caritas Representative and we are very grateful to them for all they are doing. Of course many parishes have SVP teams and other charitable social action groups. While we are obviously working with the systems we have we are already planning for the future and are looking at our options, including the necessary technology – hence our exploration with the webinar!

Q: How would the panel suggest we engage our young people – currently not in school – and involve them in social action?

A: Let's ask them! Caritas Salford are at the moment trying to gather in stories of what our schools have been doing to keep social action on the agenda for pupils in a safe way. Already we know that some have been writing letters to the lonely, baking cakes for the NHS, collecting items for their local foodbanks and making PPE equipment. Well done to them all! We will keep you posted!

Q: As a SEND teacher all that the government deemed important was suddenly cancelled (exams, standard test etc.) How can we make this experience a real time for change? How can we support our CYP when they return to schools?

A: Appropriate closure and transition are so important to all pupils but especially those with additional needs. A lot of resilience is being asked of those pupils who are moving on to the next stage of their lives. Schools are doing an amazing job communicating safely with pupils during lockdown and this will need to continue. Once pupils return to school or their new setting, time will need to be given so that they can process what has happened and express their feelings (staff too!). As you point out, however, this is a huge opportunity to implement positive changes too, so involving pupils in an exciting vision

for the future is essential. Some things that were thought impossible previously might now prove to be possible. Be brave and think big!

Q: How do we use the growth in community action and engagement (outside the church) into the wider vision and mission of the Church? CSAN is vital in this. Are they resourced enough as an important arm of the church in this task going forward?

A: As Bishop John said, it is the people who are the Church. New relationships have been established in our communities through this pandemic from those of all faiths and none. This has got to be a great way forward with huge potential. UK Citizens is a great model of how many disparate groups can be mobilised into taking community action.

Q: Pope Francis spoke during his morning Mass this week of the need for a universal basic salary. In the light of Catholic Social Teaching do you feel this would be worth supporting?

A: We are on the same page as the Holy Father. The Living Wage is something Caritas Salford has been pressing very hard for through GM Citizens, successfully securing Salford as the first Living Wage city. Both the Diocese of Salford and Caritas staff are paid the Living Wage.

On a similar note, one of our committed DiSAN partners has submitted a proposition for a National Employment Scheme embodying the Dignity of Work for all. Again, we are looking to move this forward through our partnership with GM Citizens.

Q: In a post-virus environment, is there greater need and impetus for Caritas to link more closely and effectively with the Diocese's schools/parishes/communities to sustain our services?

*A: Yes! We are always looking for ways to continue developing our connections with schools, parishes and communities. Fundraising aside, we should not work in isolation as the social action face of the Church. We need to develop future leaders in social action (through our Caritas Ambassadors programme), help schools to embed Catholic Social Teaching and inspire young people to care about their community and common home (through the **Caritas in Action** cross-curricular resource). We also need to encourage all parishioners in their journey to becoming outward-facing, missionary disciples (with the help of Caritas Parish Reps).*

Q: Schools make great moves in encouraging children, especially seen in the response to Laudato Si. However, many parents look inwards. How can we educate parents to support the school work and look outwards to support our new world?

A: Many parents have reported that they are learning from their children during this period of home-schooling, so this is a great opportunity to engage parents in the issues that matter, including social action. Familiarity takes some of the fear away. Maybe we can direct some resources especially to parents? Perhaps pupils can create resources for parents? Caritas Salford would be happy to hear from any schools wishing to work together with us on this!

Q: As well as the principles and philosophies of the change that we will all face, what does the panel think are the most important practical imperatives for any transformation of Caritas Salford?

A: We need to be brave but safe, relevant, informed, connected, accessible, timely, resourced, financed, trained but most importantly, we must never move away from our spiritual roots in the mission of the Church.

Q: A mother on County Lines: "If Local Authority social workers can't do their job and the police can't do their job, how can I do my job as a Mum?"

A: It must certainly be difficult for any parent to cope with a child embroiled in County Lines. There is usually a complex history behind the reality. To face this whilst perceiving a lack of support from the police and local authority is a very difficult mountain to climb. Caritas Salford are seeking to engage with schools and the wider community to raise awareness of the scourge of County Lines recruitment amongst vulnerable young people. It is an individual and collective responsibility of huge importance.

Q: What can Caritas and Salford Diocese do in our diocesan schools to help GMP Challenge, Prepare, Prevent, and Protect.

A: We can do much through a cross-curricular approach to these important issues. Delivering the message often and in many forms is part of the answer and inviting young people to think about how they can be part of the solution. School teams including Caritas Ambassadors can lead the way.

Q: Why has CBCEW given such cautious advice about how local churches can respond?

A: These are unprecedented times and knowledge about the virus, how it is spread and who is most affected only continues to emerge as scientists and medical professionals learn from investigation and experience. Protecting the dignity of human life also includes ensuring that we do not deliberately increase the risk of harm by transmitting the virus to those who are most vulnerable in society. If a cautious approach was followed, it is perhaps only right in the circumstances to ensure our common welfare. At the same time, in accordance with the best advice from government and specialists local churches have responded in prayer, solidarity and practical assistance either financially or providing resources to support those most in need.

Q: Is there still a role for the volunteer in delivering the kind of service that Caritas develops?

A: Volunteers are the backbone of our essential services and in many ways are the epitome of service so there will always be a place for volunteers within our Caritas Salford operation. However, a more co-ordinated approach will help us in future to put the right people with the right skills in the right place.

Q: Together For The Common Good believe the pandemic represents a 'kairos' moment of opportunity to reset society and rebuild communities. What can Caritas do to promote and support an upscaling of the work of TFCG to equip Catholic leaders to go out and light the spark within their own communities?

A: Caritas Salford recognises the valuable work of T4CG and hosted a Train The Trainer Day for interested parties in September 2019. Resources permitting, we would like to reconnect parishes with Catholic Social Teaching through T4CG materials and empower them to reach out to other groups within their communities and "light the spark" as you say.

Q: Has coronavirus led us to identify vulnerable people differently and if so what are the implications for Caritas services?

A: The answer is yes. Individuals and families new to poverty are reluctantly presenting themselves at our centres, in need of help and provisions. The need is not going to go away any time soon. Caritas will continue to respond but resources will be stretched and without continued generous donations we may have to limit what we can offer. There is a strategic piece of work to be done about which services are our priority moving forward.

Q: Does Caritas have a preventative role and post-coronavirus, can Caritas extend the volunteering approach within the community?

A: The answer to part one is yes, in that by working with the most marginalised, needy and vulnerable, we have an important advocacy role to lobby for society changing for the better. This takes a variety of forms but one example is our work to support the Living Wage campaign through our partnership with UK Citizens, which will help to prevent poverty. As part and parcel of our work with the vulnerable, we look out for signs of exploitation or potential exploitation and take preventative action.

Please see previous answer for part two. We would love to extend our volunteering approach but this needs to be managed in a way that is workable for all. There have to be defined roles in place, and policies and procedures to ensure the safety of all. This takes time and requires a co-ordinated approach.

Q: What are Caritas's intentions with regard to Cornerstone Day Centre, please?

A: During the pandemic the nature of our services has changed in line with social distancing measures but we have continued to provide food and support. At the time of writing we are providing packages of freshly made 'takeaway' food for between 50 and 60 people a day. We continue to provide emergency accommodation for those who are destitute.

While we appreciate our ability to have the centre fully open during the pandemic is impeded, the demand and our commitment has not diminished. We have been undertaking works to enhance the facilities and support offered before the start of the lockdown.

Q: COVID-19 showed that wellbeing of us all depend on the wellbeing of the most vulnerable people. This has been highlighted as the preferential option for the poor and vulnerable in Catholic Teachings. How does Labour plan to learn from COVID-19 lessons and advocate for a post-COVID welfare change?

- Answer given during webinar

Q: I have the impression that Caritas tends to care more about (financially) poor and homeless people. What is Caritas's approach to professional and well-paid people, many of whom are under pressure to achieve/succeed more and more?

- Answer given during webinar

Q: The language of Mercy and Justice that we are used to hearing as Christians has become the unself-conscious everyday language of politicians and the media. Has this tiny virus succeeded where the Church has failed?

- Answer given during webinar

Q: The panel is made up of five white men and only one religious sister. Does this represent a wider lack of diversity in the leadership of Caritas? How can Caritas ensure a broader voice is heard from amongst their communities to build back better?

- Answer given during webinar

Q: The need is dire regarding unemployment, debt and the pressures on families. Are there opportunities for us to help those most in need and who live outside the areas where we currently have strongholds? Are there ways to help families to access Credit Unions and help free them from debt?

- Answer given during webinar

Q: Pope Francis has invited every RC Parish to offer a home to a refugee family. Caritas Salford, Portsmouth and Westminster plus CSAN are leading on Sponsoring Refugees – how do we build on this radical practical action and spread it across the UK?

- Answer given during webinar

Q: As an Anglican who has worked extensively with Caritas and CSAN, especially with refugees and displaced people, I wonder what thoughts people have about post COVID-19 ecumenical projects, especially around the displaced and Laudato Si. A greater emphasis of Together for the Common Good?

- Answer given during webinar

Q: Since many of our overstretched parish priests are in the vulnerable age category of this virus, is it timely for the laity to progress their 'forward in faith' role by running the parishes, with priests just administering the sacraments but doing little else?

- Answer given during webinar

Q: Should Caritas get involved in bids for funding from govt, local and national.

- Answer given during webinar