

REPORT TO BISHOP MARCUS ON THE WORK OF CARITAS LEEDS

A. Caritas Leeds Terms of Reference:

'Caritas', the loving service of those in need, is an indispensable part of what it means to follow Christ and to be Catholic. Caritas organisations exist to help us put this into action.

The Vision for Caritas Leeds, launched in September 2017, is to create a forum where all charities, agencies, projects, services, groups (defined as having at least a simple structure and organisation) that are involved in social action or social care in the Diocese of Leeds, whose work is inspired by the Gospel and operate in accordance with Catholic doctrine and social teaching, can meet together on a regular basis.

It is not a service delivery body nor a top-down organisation or a directional institution.

What does Caritas Leeds do?

- Provides a strong and coherent voice at the service of the Bishop, on important social issues and policies for the Diocese of Leeds.
- Develops on-going formation for members in Catholic Social Teaching.
- Identifies areas of need within the Diocese of Leeds and discusses how best to work to satisfy those needs.
- Shares and celebrates ideas and projects.
- Encourages the development of and supports good care practice.
- Arranges joint training where this is appropriate / requested.
- Reflects on the Catholic foundation of the work the members undertake.
- Encourages and promotes social action wherever possible and encourages partnership across the Diocese in the service of the poor.

How have these Terms of Reference been and are being implemented?

In 2016, I carried out a basic audit across the parishes, chaplaincies and Catholic Associations operating in the Diocese to get an overview of the social action activities, how many people are involved etc. The findings were shared at the Formal Launch of Caritas Leeds in September 2017 and information placed on a distinct section of the website: [Map | Diocese of Leeds](#) This audit will need to be revisited/updated.

Developed a distinct section on the Caritas Leeds website on Catholic Social Teaching. <https://www.dioceseofleeds.org.uk/caritas/foreword-from-bishop-marcus/> This online resource includes:

- An Introduction which makes reference to three of the Terms of Reference and in Bishop Marcus' words this resource: *'I believe that this on-line resource can serve to achieve the above stated aims. It offers individuals and/or groups from parishes, Chaplaincies, Schools and Catholic Associations across our Diocese an opportunity to deepen our understanding of Catholic Social Teaching with the aim of helping us to offer a stronger spiritual dimension to the charitable activities /social action we are currently involved in and support adult formation. It is intended to be dipped in-and-out as required rather than working through it in a systematic order, if this is the preferred approach. This resource also allows for a critical look at what we are currently engaged in with the aim of sparking off new initiatives and perhaps more importantly to adopt a more collaborative approach with other parishes within the deaneries and between parish groups and Catholic Association/Chaplaincies. Details of existing groups may well encourage individuals who are willing to engage in charitable activities /social action but perhaps are not aware of how to go about it'*
- On overview of Catholic Social Teaching

- A section each exploring the following fundamental/formational principles: Dignity of Human Person, the Common Good and Subsidiarity, Solidarity, Priority of Labour over Capital, Participation, Option for the Poor, Gift of Life and Creation.
- Each principle is explained; guided to specific scripture readings, key Church documents, a Saint whose charism is linked to that particular principle, local and national groups, a focused prayer and questions for personal /group reflection,
- Section on Call to Action which unpacks the ‘See, Judge and Act’ framework and link to the ‘Love in Action’ framework developed by Caritas Westminster.

B. Criminal Justice Inquiry

The Inquiry began at the *Faith in Action: Joy and Challenge* gathering, organised by Caritas Leeds to mark the 2nd *International Day of the Poor* in November 2018. A group of clergy and lay Catholics discussed the priorities for social action in the Diocese and put these ideas to the vote. One of the areas chosen as a priority was prisoners and their families.

The above led to forming an inquiry over a three-year project (2018-21) of exploring the criminal justice system within the Diocese of Leeds. The purpose was to investigate what the experiences of the people involved in the criminal justice system are, and to look at how the Catholic Diocese at all levels can act to support the people within.

The Inquiry was an action research project that aimed to:

- Increase Catholics’ knowledge and understanding of the United Kingdom’s criminal justice system and the experiences of people in our Diocese who encounter it.
- Explore and reflect on approaches to restorative justice.
- Encourage Catholics to take more action to support people encountering the criminal justice system and address the injustices they may face.
- Make practical recommendations for change and action.

A group of commissioners was formed with a wide variety of expertise from the criminal justice system, such as barristers, former deputy chief constable, a retired magistrate, a prison chaplain, a prison visitor, a chief executive of a charity linked to a local prison and volunteers within local Youth Justice Services.

Outputs from the Inquiry: <https://www.dioceseofleeds.org.uk/caritas/inquiry-homepage/>

- Designated section on the Caritas Leeds website
- Formal Report: ‘Justice and Mercy’ (October 2020) which was widely circulated to Local MPs, Heads of Council, Police Chief Constables, third sector agencies across the Diocese and to the Bishops of England and Wales.
- A set of recommendations for action
- Recording of the on-line launch event in October with input from the Bishop of Leeds, the then Police and Crime Commissioner of West Yorkshire, an ex-offender, a CEO of West Yorkshire Community Chaplaincy Project, a prison chaplain and a restorative justice practitioner.
- A local directory of services
- General information about the criminal justice system, police forces, prosecution services, prisons, the probation services, youth services.
- Run four on-line workshops on the following topics:
 - Overview of the Criminal Justice System
 - Life in Prison
 - Life After Prison

- Restorative Justice
- Held another public event in October 2021 with input from the Bishop of Leeds, Bishop Moth from the Catholic Bishops' Conference for England and Wales, Yvette Cooper MP, then Chair of the House of Commons Home Affairs Committee, Beverly Adams, Principal Engagement Officer for the West Yorkshire Police and Alison Lowe Deputy Mayor of the West Yorkshire Combined Authority. Main focus of this event was to bring together agencies working within the criminal justice system and to launch the Faith Works Framework. This framework consists of 4 workshops which were delivered on-line between December 2021 and March 2022 focusing on:
 - Impact of Early Childhood Experiences.
 - Exploitation of Children and Vulnerable Adults.
 - Violence including domestic violence.
 - Call to Action.

Each workshop consisted of input from an expert within that field and links with specific principles from Catholic Social Teaching. The 4th Workshop focuses on suggested processes to implement 'A Call to Action' based on the model of 'See, Judge, Act' framework. Edited recordings of these workshop will soon be accessible through the website with the intention of encouraging schools and parishes to use them.

- Developed stronger links between the two Police Forces covering the area of the Diocese and the Diocesan Schools with the aim of preventing crime and highlight the services available through the police forces concerned. So far two from the five Academy Trusts are engaging with the process.
- Held a joint workshop with PACT on supporting prisoners and ex-offenders.
- Pushing the specific needs and challenges of older prisoners through Christians on Ageing and a promising link with the NGO Justice.
- Developed links with the National SVP section focusing on prisons.
- Holding meetings with local MPs to gain their support for the campaigns stated in the 'Justice and Mercy' report.
- Developed and disseminated a briefing paper regarding the 'Ban the Box' campaign.

C. Diocesan Youth Leadership Group: The Twelve

Started at the back of the Open event marking the Day of the Poor in November 2018, referred to above, which also resulted in the start of the work which led to the Criminal Justice Inquiry

Recruitment

- Diocese of Leeds Youth Service worked with parish youth group leaders and lay chaplains to identify young Catholics to join the inaugural team.
- The first group of young people were Catholics aged 11-18, with some track record of commitment to service in their parish, school or another Catholic agency.
- Parental consent was sought for all participants.
- Care was taken to ensure as much diversity of location across the Diocese as possible.

Formation

- The group initially met with Caritas Leeds, the Diocesan Youth Service and Leeds Citizens for team building, prayer and leadership training. They were also given an overview of the structure of the Diocese.
- The Twelve were formally commissioned by the Bishop on the Feast of Christ the King (Education Sunday) in 2019 to recognise their role and boost their profile locally.
- Letters were written to each participant's parents, head teacher and parish priest to inform them of their appointment.

- The names of The Twelve were listed on the Caritas Leeds section of Diocesan website and a separate section about this group was included in the Diocesan Youth Service website.
- The second formal commissioning of members is scheduled for 20th November 2022.

Key Roles

- Collaborating with the Bishop in formulating a vision for the diocese. The Twelve will have dedicated meetings with the Bishop at regular points throughout the year to discuss ideas, share the views of young people or gain deeper understanding of the work of the diocese to aid effective consultation with young people.
- Giving voice to young people in diocesan decision making

The Twelve are provided with a structured programme of ongoing participation in diocesan governance and decision making.

Ideas for this group could include:

- Representatives on key diocesan committees and/or forums
- Meetings with key staff in different departments
- Shaping and reviewing the Youth Service Strategic Plan
- Presentations at Deanery meetings
- Listening exercise with young Catholics in parishes and schools to identify key issues and develop proposals.
- Contributing towards key events and activities aimed at young people.
- Planning, promoting, and participating in appropriate liturgical events.
- Organising youth retreats and gatherings
- Promoting Faith in Action Awards
- Organising intergenerational actions

Key highlights of outputs so far:

- Involved in seeking the views of other young people on their own personal faith and the Church.
- Held meetings with the Diocesan Bishop
- Held numerous team-building events and focused on leadership formation with input from Leeds Citizens
- Involvement of group members in selecting new members of the group
- Discussions with the Diocesan Director of Communication, the Diocesan Justice and Peace Commission, the Coordinator of Caritas Leeds, the Diocesan Coordinator of CAFOD and SVP
- Produced a podcast about this group which featured in an international virtual conference in April 2021 under the Title 'A Politics Rooted in the People' facilitated by the Centre for Theology and Community, the Catholic Campaign for Human Development and the 'Katholische Hochschule für Sozialwesen' in Germany. However, there was a strong presence and input from people with a community organising background (people active in Citizens UK, for example) but also from Ireland, Italy, Portugal, and the United States of America. The video can be accessed here: <https://youtu.be/0WK0dif6unw>
- Contributed to the Synod in 2022 at a diocesan level.
- Held a residential retreat at Savio House in June 2022.
- Set up a specific Instagram and the Leeds Diocesan Youth Service social media pages.
- Moving towards having specific action plans to address their priorities of social action and communication.

D. Disabilities Group

Agreed the following Terms of Reference:

- To promote the integration of people living with disabilities into the life of the Catholic Church underpinned by the principles of inclusivity, collaboration, and valuing.
- To provide/signpost spiritual help to families with children and young adults who have physical, mental or sensory disabilities.
- To raise the awareness of all parishioners in the Diocese of Leeds to issues of disability.
- To encourage the Catholic community to respond positively to people living with any form of disability, their carers and families so that they can play a full part in the life of the parish/associations/diocese.
- To disseminate information on disability and disability organisations to all parts of the diocese.
- To provide access to education on disability to all in the Church.
- To ensure that every parish in the Diocese carries out an inclusion and accessibility audit regularly starting in 2019.
- To support existing groups focusing on the needs of specific disabilities such as 'Faith and Light', 'Dementia Friendly Diocese', Deaf community etc.

What has been achieved by this group?

- Developed a distinct section for this group on the Caritas Leeds website. <https://www.dioceseofleeds.org.uk/caritas/disabilities-forum/>
- Recorded and published a number of personal testimonials from individuals living with disabilities and/or carers.
- Short papers focusing on: Good Practices –Disabilities and Catechesis, the Sacrament of Confirmation for children with learning difficulties, sight loss: best practice, Mass Tool kit to enhance engagement of people living with disabilities, Resources for clergy and religious ministering people living with disabilities.
- Good relationships with the Diocesan Catechists group providing specific input on the resources developed for preparation of children for the first sacraments.
- On-line directory of services supporting people living with disabilities and carers.
- Developed Disability Awareness Resources for Primary Schools of our Diocese covering key stage 1-2 with a specific focus on celebrating the gifts of children living with disabilities.
- Developed a comprehensive audit tool focusing on Inclusion and Accessibility for the use of parishes, groups and associations. A small number of lay faithful are taking the lead in completing this audit for their parish.
- Negotiating specific input for clergy about issues relating to disabilities
- Held a number of liturgical and social events to mark Disabilities Week
- Secured financial support from the Diocese to pay for the signer during the Mass at the Cathedral once a month and a social gathering afterwards.
- Working with Catholic Care to appoint a link worker for the deaf community in the diocese.
- Set-up a designated email for people who have queries and issues they would like to raise in regard to people living with disabilities.
- Promoting the Cupertino Mass, once a month, for families with children living with various forms of disabilities.

E. Dementia Group

The terms of reference for this group are more or less reflected in those agreed for the Disability Group. This group was originally an off shoot from another Diocesan Charity called 'Growing Old Gracefully'. Its original aim was towards getting accredited as a Dementia Friendly Diocese and worked through an action plan to work towards getting this status.

What has been achieved by this group?

- Developed a designated section on Caritas Leeds website which includes copies of the resources developed and directory of services: <https://www.dioceseofleeds.org.uk/caritas/dementia-friendly-forum/>
- Record of a virtual workshop held in 2021 to mark Dementia week. This virtual workshop had the title of 'Dementia: Awareness and Action'. It starts with setting the scene by focusing on themes from Catholic Social Teaching. A powerful liturgy follows inspired by the Feast of Pentecost. We then heard powerful testimonials from two men living with different stages of dementia and two carers. This recording then shows feedback from the facilitators from groups considering the following topics: types of communication for people living with dementia; faith and dementia; advanced care planning. What does this mean and why is this needed? The last section focuses on current campaigns.
- Held three short Dementia Friendly Carol Services with a social gathering in three different parishes.
- Produced short information leaflets covering the following topics: What is dementia? What is a Dementia Friend? Personal testimonies from carers, Visiting people with dementia, Praying with People living with Dementia, Dementia Friendly Eucharist, Dementia and the Sacraments of Healing, Dementia and Reconciliation for Clergy.
- Collaborated with Dr Pia Matthews from St Mary's University Twickenham in producing an edited book due out in March 2023.
- Group has a strong link now with Growing Old Gracefully at Trustee level.

F. Asylum Seekers and Refugees

<https://www.dioceseofleeds.org.uk/caritas/refugees-and-asylum-seekers-group/>

The Diocese had a Diocesan Refugees and Asylum Seekers Group before Caritas Leeds was formed. This group functioned under the auspices of Catholic Care. So, Caritas Leeds' involvement has been through membership of this Diocesan Group. Since the addition of Caritas Leeds to this membership there has been a conscious effort to raise awareness of issues relating to asylum seekers and refugees through educational materials and engagement with diocesan schools. Another strand of work was through the Community Sponsorship Scheme targeting Syrian families and it is understood that two families are now living in the Diocese.

Caritas Leeds specific input in this area:

- Links with St Monica Housing who manage together with the Diocesan Justice and Peace Commission 2 homes in the Diocese.
- Promoting the work of the West Yorkshire Destitute Asylum Seekers Network (WYDAN) which essentially consists of faith communities offering shelter to a group of male destitute asylum seekers on their premises. This arrangement involves quite a lot of preparatory work, safeguarding checks and practical issues of food etc and the services of numerous volunteers. However, this took place once in the parish of John Henry Newman and three times in the Cathedral Parish using Wheeler Hall as a base.
- Produced written information on the Plague of Human Trafficking.
- Supporting the promotion of the services provided by LEDAS.
- Provided links for supporting Ukraine refugees.

G. Wider links/streams of work carried out with agencies outside the Diocese of Leeds

- Regular contributions to fora facilitated by Caritas Social Action Network (CSAN) which operates on behalf of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales i.e. Directors' Forum, Eastern Hub Group of Diocesan Caritas, Criminal Justice Forum and some task and finish groups.
- Collaborated with CARJ on running some on-line workshops and developed a comprehensive on-line glossary of terms.
- Collaborating in a strand of work facilitated by Leeds Citizens and commissioned by the Diocesan Justice and Peace Commission on racism which includes plans to engage with some of our diocesan schools on racism.
- Contributions to the Leeds Citizens Leadership Group
- Produced a simple guide about Universal Credit
- Produced a framework for individuals or groups on how to engage with their Local Authority /Members of Parliament about their concerns.
- Responded to a number of public consultations especially the Borders and Nationality Bill (2022) and consultations with all our local MPs on this and similar issues.
- Links with the Leeds Church Institute.
- Provided on-line links to the latest Report on Poverty in the UK by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation.
- Provided a framework for parish groups and associations to review their mission and work undertaken.
- During the COVID 19 lock-down and afterwards customised the use of the tool kit which I helped CSAN to develop, providing advice and resources. Contact was maintained with parish groups and provided them with links to prayer resources, cultural activities, support groups etc.

Rev Dr Joseph D Cortis

Coordinator of Caritas Leeds

24th October 2022