



Sheffield Church Action on Poverty

Pilgrimage Update

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You are welcome to share this update with your Church/Networks. Apart from sharing electronically please consider if you or your Church could print off copies to share with those without access to electronic communication.



Sheffield Church Action on Poverty Facebook page.

Details of campaigns and updates are put on this page regularly and can be shared with your networks, friends, and Churches. If you haven't already done so and you are able, please go to the page and like it.

Each year Sheffield Church Action on Poverty, part of the national ecumenical Christian social justice charity committed to tackling poverty, Church Action On Poverty, organises a Pilgrimage which raises awareness and understanding of how poverty is affecting people in different areas of Sheffield and how Churches/Projects and organisations are endeavouring to reduce its impact.

On past pilgrimages, people from different churches and faith organisations across the city have visited Churches, projects and organisations that are playing an important role in alleviating poverty, to learn about their work.

This year, for understandable reasons, we cannot stage the usual walk, but, given that the challenges for people facing poverty are, if anything, greater than ever we are keener than ever to spread the word about the work Churches/projects and organisations are doing in the city.



Instead of the usual walk we are organising a "Virtual Pilgrimage", comprising a series of short videos covering the work of places we would, in more normal times, wish to be visiting in person.

We will be hearing from:

- PXI (Parson Cross Initiative)
- Manor Church and Community Project
- Help us Help

On **Wednesday 7th October** we will be hosting a Zoom Meeting to enable a discussion around issues raised by these videos. Zoom meetings can be accessed both electronically and by telephone.

Links to the videos and the Zoom meeting will be provided later by email.

THE IMPACT OF CORONA VIRUS IN SHEFFIELD

On 28 August I joined in a zoom conference on the State of Sheffield 2020 organised by Sheffield City Partnership, with an opening message by its Chair, Lord Blunkett. The main object was to publicise a valuable report on the impact of coronavirus on the City. Some of the key points emerging were:

- During lockdown numbers on Universal Credit doubled to 44,000 - mainly not Council tenants. Nearly 18% of employees were furloughed. This means that the withdrawal of furlough support over the next few months could increase unemployment considerably.
47% of businesses were expecting to scale down their operations in the next 3 -6 months. All this is an alarming prospect and I feel the Government is not doing enough to tackle it.
- The lockdown 'exacerbated inequalities'. As has been found nationally, those most adversely affected by the virus and the lockdown were the more vulnerable, including those in poverty, disabled people and BAME. It was suggested that there has been 'a lack of community engagement with BAME communities
A Race Equality Commission is being set up to look into these kind of issues in Sheffield.
- There seems to have been quite an impressive response by the Council and by the Voluntary sector. The Council set up seven local Community Response Teams. The Foodbanks responded well to unprecedented demand. According to the Report we now have 27 'food bank sites'.
- While the voluntary sector, described as one of Sheffield's strengths, did much invaluable work during the lockdown, a South Yorkshire Community Foundation survey showed that many small to medium voluntary bodies were only saved by the furlough scheme and now face a very uncertain future. Andy Buck as Chair of Voluntary Action Sheffield promised to look seriously into this.
- Digital exclusion proved a big issue. There are organisations in the City trying to tackle it.
- Surveys showed high levels of stress and anxiety and worsened mental health in the Sheffield population.

Readers of this Update are recommended to read the full report which is to be found at <https://niftyfoxcreative.wixsite.com/stateofsheffield>

David Price

Digital Exclusion

For the past four years, the Cambridge Centre for Housing and Planning Research (CCHPR) at the University of Cambridge has been researching digital exclusion. While it is a well known fact that many older people are not online, the Centre's research highlights that digital exclusion is not just a generational **issue**.

Extract from the report:

Digital exclusion is another facet of the deep inequalities which run through the social fabric of the UK, and is more widespread than many people are aware of. One thing is clear: the public health crisis currently gripping the UK stands to make the impacts of digital exclusion worse for the millions of people affected, and the poorest will be hit the hardest.

As an aspect of deprivation in the UK, digital exclusion cannot be overlooked. The likelihood of having access to the internet from home increases along with income, such that only [51%](#) of households earning between £6000-10,000 had home internet access compared with 99% of households with an income of over £40,001. The link between poverty and digital exclusion is clear: if you are poor, you have less chance of being online. For these people, it will be impossible to use emails, to order groceries, to apply for jobs, or even to access essential health guidance and benefits information and online applications. In addition, they are denied the financial benefits

of being able to use comparison sites and access deals on the Internet and their children suffer from lack of educational opportunities afforded by the internet.



We must as a society take digital exclusion seriously

To read the full report- www.cam.ac.uk/stories/digitaldivide

Disabled People Against Cuts (DPAC)

Disabled People Against Cuts (DPAC) was formed by a group of disabled people after the first mass protest against the austerity cuts and their impact on disabled people in 2010.

DPAC is for everyone who believes that disabled people should have full human rights and equality.

Follow the link below for information on DPAC's work and proposals for change:

<https://www.youtube.com/c/DisabledpeopleagainstCutsDPAC/videos>

Gathering on the Margins

National Church Action on Poverty monthly Zoom meetings start again on 22 September at 2pm. The virtual gathering lasts for 60 minutes and each month has a different theme, with speakers and contributors who have relevant expertise. You can find the link to the meeting on the website:

<https://www.church-poverty.org.uk>