

## Sheffield Church Action on Poverty

Update - March 2021

### Chair's Welcome

Can I take this opportunity to welcome you to the latest edition of our Update, and to thank those who have contributed to it and especially Robert Carrack for producing it. These are difficult times for Sheffield's Church Action on Poverty owing to the lockdown restrictions and the impact they are having on our work. However, we are making the best use of the Zoom internet facility until such times as we can, once again, meet up in person. In this respect, our forthcoming Zoom meetings on 18th March 2021 on the *Living Wage Campaign* and on 22<sup>nd</sup> April 2021 on *Covid-19 and Social Security* are intended to keep us focused and up-to-date on key aspects of our work, and the work being done by others that connects to our purpose and values. I hope you can join us for these meetings.

Joe Forde

### The Living Wage Campaign

On **18<sup>th</sup> March at 7pm**, we are holding an open meeting about the Living Wage Campaign. We are delighted to welcome Val Barron, a community development worker in Durham Diocese. Over the last three years Val has been working on the Living Wage and Just Change campaigns with Tyne and Wear Citizens. She is also researching the role social enterprises can play in Christian social action. Val will bring us the story of the Living Wage and share a short film, then encourage some reflection.

If you would like to join us, please contact the secretary by email for the Zoom link.

**The Joint Public Issues Team (JPIT)** is made up of the Baptist Union, the Church of Scotland, the Methodist Church and the United Reformed Church, working together for peace and justice.)

#### Politics in the Pulpit

In weekly episodes, JPIT ask how reclaiming the justice issues present in the biblical texts helps us to be good news in the world today. Each week, a different guest, will be invited to discuss and discern the political dimensions present in the Scriptures and reflect on how they connect with the week's current news and our role in the Kingdom of God.

Episodes will be released weekly, on Tuesday mornings. Put the following address into your browser.

<http://www.jointpublicissues.org.uk/politicsinthepulpit>

**1.9 million people rely on cash for nearly every transaction they make. And 8 million people would struggle in a cashless society.**

Small business owners some people on benefits particularly those living with disabilities, rural and isolated communities, people who



#### 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 have not already done so and you are able, please go to the page and like it.**

Recent posts on the page include: Link to Poverty Sunday Service hosted by Church Action on Poverty North East if you missed it

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*You are welcome to share this update with your Church/Networks*



have to live on tight budgets such as pensioners, rely on cash But, the way we pay for things is rapidly changing. From cash to card, online to using a smart phone. Banks and ATMS are disappearing. The following link highlights how Covid has accelerated this change that could leave some people disadvantaged. To read the article put the following address into your browser:

<https://www.theguardian.com/business/2021/jan/19/uk-shoppers-paying-cash-covid-19-crisis>

## **Update on the Big Issue North**

With the return to stricter national lockdown measures, we have again been required to close, and vendors are once again unable to sell the magazine. This is hugely challenging for them, as it has been throughout, but now compounded by the time of year, with the extra costs this brings.

As with previously lockdowns, we will do what we can to support the vendors through this difficult time and are currently making efforts to build up the vendor hardship fund, which, during the first lockdown, paid £500 per day to vendors across the organisation. We were overwhelmed with the support we received from readers and members of the public last time, and the amount of concern for vendors' welfare demonstrated.

In the same way as last time, the public can support vendors by donating to the hardship fund directly, buying a magazine from a Sainsbury's, Co-op, McColl's or Booths (either in store or online), or visiting our online shop. Details on all of these options can be found at [www.bigissueinthenorth.com](http://www.bigissueinthenorth.com).

Once again, thank you for all your thoughts for the vendors, and for your support.

Ben Stevenson  
Team Leader  
Big Issue North

**The following articles are the personal views of the people submitting the item and may not necessarily reflect the views of the committee of Sheffield Church Action on Poverty**

## **COVID 19 and Social Security**

At the request of the St Mark's CRC Online website, I have written a paper on this subject. The paper presents the following argument:

The Covid 19 crisis caused most havoc among those who were already vulnerable. Among other things, it highlighted weaknesses in the UK's social security system. Food bank usage, which was already increasing, soared. Before the pandemic, extreme poverty, including destitution, was already increasing significantly. This appears to be a result of the social security policies pursued in the 2010s, such as Universal Credit, the freeze in the level of benefits from 2016-19 and an oppressive sanctions regime for benefits. Policies have been driven by austerity, neo-liberal slimming of the state and a desire to crack down on welfare dependency. In the Second World War, influenced by Beveridge and Temple, public opinion demanded a much fairer post-war society. Similarly, the pandemic offers an opportunity for us to develop an unstoppable movement towards greater equality and the elimination of poverty.

If you would like to read the complete paper, including the supporting evidence, please go to [www.crconline.org.uk](http://www.crconline.org.uk)

David Price

**We are holding a meeting on at 7 pm on Thursday 22 April to discuss this paper. If you would like to join us, please contact the secretary for the Zoom link.**

## **Right Wing and Left Wing Christian Attitudes to Poverty**

It seems likely that a typical supporter of Church Action on Poverty will be left wing rather than right wing in political attitudes to poverty, but we should not assume that a socialist approach is the only possible one. In this article Nick Jowett describes the typical attitudes which left-leaning and right-leaning Christians have on this subject, what difficulties those positions face and how they are justified, especially from the Bible and Christian Tradition. He concludes that both approaches are important, but neither has yet come near solving the issues of poverty and inequality. To read the full article go to-

<https://www.church-poverty.org.uk/right-wing-and-left-wing-christian-approaches-to-poverty/>