



Who is my neighbour?

St Vincent de Paul Society England & Wales
Annual Report 2008

President's report



For members of the St Vincent de Paul Society (SVP) love of neighbour is manifested in practical service or, as our logo indicates, “turning concern into action”.

The Christian definition of neighbour is a broad one. It extends beyond the man or woman who lives next door, or to those who live in the same street or town. It even extends beyond national boundaries. There is nothing parochial about the concept of “neighbour”, rather our neighbours are our brothers and sisters with whom we share a common humanity.

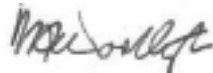
In this report you will see how members of the SVP seek to extend the hand of friendship and provide practical assistance to their neighbours at home, in the wider community and abroad.

Through the activities of the Society we reach out to our neighbour in many guises. We find our neighbour in the elderly, in the lonely, in the sick, in the bereaved, in the homeless, in the indebted, in the offender and in the asylum

seeker. To each and every one we offer friendship and practical support which varies according to the need.

This is only possible through the dedication of our members who give so generously of their time and of themselves and our dedicated employees who work in our projects. I would like to take this opportunity to thank members and staff alike for all of their endeavours, as well as those who have helped fund our work in the last year. Without the generosity of individuals, trusts and corporate donors, much of what we do would not be possible.

The work of the Society is varied and those we help have many different stories to tell, but all share a common humanity and all are our neighbours. To those readers of this report who may not yet be involved, I ask you to support us whether that is in terms of time, funds or prayers.



Mike Worthington, SVP National President

“Love your
neighbour as
you love yourself”
Luke 10:27



I would like to embrace
the whole world in a
network of charity

Frederic Ozanam

*Founder of the St Vincent de Paul Society
1813-1853*

The St Vincent de Paul Society (England and Wales) is a registered charity forming part of an international organisation founded in Paris in 1833. Today the Society exists in 142 countries and has over 600,000 members worldwide. The SVP in England and Wales has been active since 1844 and currently has just under 10,000 members.

The aim of the SVP is the same today as it was at its inception in the 19th century: to tackle poverty in all its forms through befriending and the provision of practical assistance to those in need. All members are volunteers who agree to undertake visits to those in need and provide support and assistance where they can, as well as meeting together regularly to discuss their work and reflect on the Christian faith which motivates them.

Members join local groups called Conferences. In England and Wales the SVP has 1,250 such local groups which constitute 23 regions (Central Councils).

In England and Wales the work of the SVP takes two main approaches: person to person visiting in private homes, in residential care, in hospital or in prison, and special projects in the wider community which can address specific needs.

“Extend your mercy towards others, so that there can be no one in need whom you meet without helping. For what hope is there for us if God should withdraw His Mercy from us?”

St Vincent de Paul



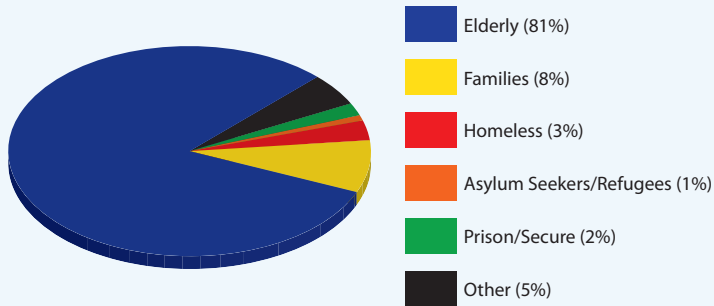
...through our visits

The core work of the SVP is visiting people who need support and assistance, whoever they are, wherever they are from and whatever their religion or beliefs.

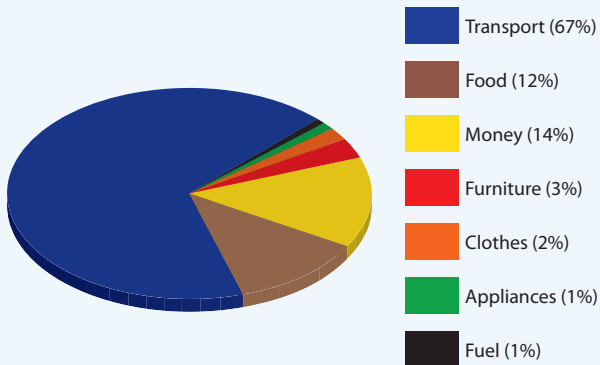
SVP members across England and Wales visit those in need in their local community, providing a sympathetic ear, lending a helping hand where required and offering friendship.

A total of 92,444 individuals were helped by SVP members during 2007–2008 and members gave just under 1 million hours to the work of the Society.

The majority of these visits were made to the elderly, but families, the homeless, prisoners and asylum seekers were also befriended through our visits.



People visited by SVP Members in 2007-2008



Material Assistance given by SVP Members in 2007-2008

...helping with essentials

Limited material assistance can also be provided by the SVP to those visited as required.

SVP members may be able to provide assistance with:

- Transport
- Food
- Furniture/White goods
- Clothes
- Limited financial assistance

In 2007–2008 the provision of transport, as in previous years, was the most common form of practical assistance provided.

As well as visiting those in need in their place of residence, the Society reaches out to those in the wider community through its special projects which address specific needs.

Furniture Projects

SVP Furniture Projects received referrals from over 200 different agencies across the country as well as individual referrals made as a result of visits by SVP members.

In 2007-2008 the SVP operated 14 Furniture Projects providing quality second-hand furniture and household goods at little or no cost to 6,729 individuals and families. A total of 9,173 collections and 6,453 deliveries were made.

Community Shops

In 2007-2008 the SVP operated 32 Community shops in areas with high levels of deprivation. The shops provide affordable second-hand clothing and household items to people in need in the local community and are often the first point of contact with the local SVP for befriending and other forms of practical support.

Support Centres

The SVP operates three Support Centres in Leeds, Newcastle and London. In 2007-2008 10,799 individuals visited the Centres and accessed a range of services including debt advice and general counselling, basic numeracy and literacy skills training, help with job seeking and form filling, information and advice, access to hot food, clothes, household items and travel vouchers.

Holiday Provision

The SVP's 8 holiday caravans gave 133 families the opportunity for a holiday they would otherwise not be able to afford. The SVP also ran six summer camps for disadvantaged children, providing a much needed holiday for 2,075 young people. In addition 1,366 people benefited from a break at the SVP's Ozanam Centre in Snowdonia

Residential Services

In 2007-2008 the SVP managed three residential homes for different client groups, offering accommodation and support for 76 service users. The Society also operated two Home Office Approved Premises for 142 offenders on probation.

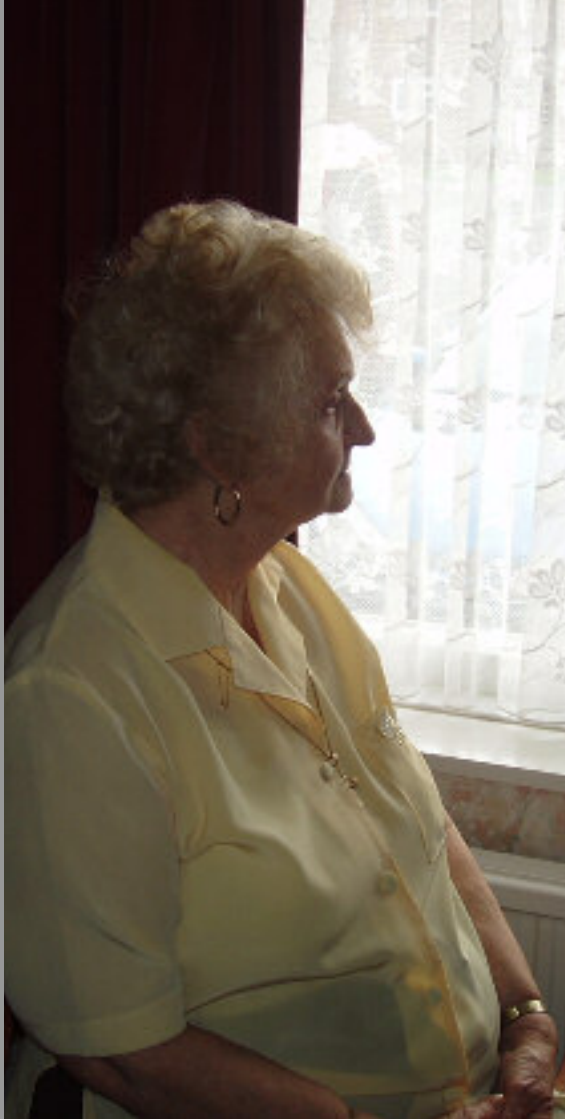
Soup Runs

The SVP operated 3 soup runs in London, Brighton and Clacton on Sea, co-operating with groups in other locations, offering a sympathetic ear to 32,384 homeless and disadvantaged people and signposting clients to other services and agencies.

Community Minibuses

SVP Community minibuses in Westminster, Rushden and Jarrow provided essential transport to 4,570 elderly, housebound or disabled people in 2007-2008.





...helping older people

Older people represent the largest group of people visited by SVP members. In 2007–2008 over 75,000 older people were visited in their homes, in residential care or in hospital. Whilst some of them are in financial distress, the majority are simply lonely. For many older people the SVP visit represents their only human contact for the week.

Often the visit may be supplemented with day trips to local places of interest or other organised activities such as luncheons or specially organised parties.

Elizabeth is typical. She is 90, housebound and lives alone. She has no living family and SVP members visit her regularly. Elizabeth has had to go into hospital on several occasions and the SVP has maintained contact with her throughout these periods, providing a sense of continuity and a friendly face in a strange environment.

...helping families

Over 7000 families were visited by SVP members in 2007-2008. The issues facing these families are diverse and the SVP responds in whatever way it can to alleviate the need.

In one instance a mother with young children was referred to the local SVP group. Her partner had recently been imprisoned and she was trying to cope alone and had become depressed. The house the family was living in was only partially decorated with stripped walls and little furniture. The SVP members were able to arrange for a decorator to come and finish the job, as well as supplying a few items of furniture. This simple but practical response provided an improved living environment for the family and helped Mum to get back on her feet again and feel more positive about the future.

Even a week away can make a real difference to a family who are struggling:

I'd just like to say a very big thank you to everyone at the SVP. We are very grateful at being given the chance to have a week's holiday in this beautiful caravan at Sandy Bay. Everyone was brilliant and helpful and there was loads of stuff for the kids, who had a great time and didn't want to leave. . . . If it hadn't been for the SVP we wouldn't have had a holiday so once again we would like to say a very big THANKYOU so very much!!



...helping those in debt

Economic poverty is an issue for many of those who seek the SVP's help. Debt is a growing problem which affects people from all walks of life. In 2007-2008 SVP debt advisors in Leeds and Newcastle helped 536 clients.

SVP members who visit those in financial difficulty give what limited support they can to alleviate the immediate problems.

For example, one family who contacted the Society had reached crisis point after their business collapsed. Previously affluent, their house was repossessed and the children had to be removed from their fee paying school. The family faced rapidly escalating debts which meant that eventually they could not even afford to put food on the table. Local SVP members were able to assist the family by securing places at a local school for the children and helping with the purchase of uniforms and transport costs.

...helping those with disabilities

SVP members often visit people with disabilities and they offer friendship and support as required. For example, members in Nottingham take disabled guests on an annual boat trip down the river Trent. The vessel is a specially designed boat which has been constructed to carry disabled, elderly and people with special needs including those in wheelchairs.

The SVP deaf centre in Newcastle provides a social outlet for around 300 members. The Centre hosts a range of clubs such as chess, sewing, jewellery making and digital photography as well as organising numerous events and outings for the local deaf community.

The SVP "Talking Newspaper" service is a CD of audio newspaper articles regularly produced in Hull by a local school and distributed nationwide for the visually impaired. This service had 88 subscribers in 2007-2008.



...helping offenders & ex-offenders

In 2007-2008 SVP members were involved in visiting and other voluntary work in 59 prisons across England and Wales. Typically, members spend time talking to the prisoners and offering a friendly ear to any problems they might have. They can also provide practical support such as assisting with letter writing or helping to fill in forms where literacy is an issue.

The SVP Approved Premises accommodate offenders on statutory orders. By providing a structured supportive environment and engaging with residents, SVP staff seek to reduce their likelihood of re-offending and resettle them back into the community.

The SVP also works with the National Probation Service to provide a variety of ways for offenders to serve their Community Service orders on SVP projects. This benefits the SVP and the public generally through the non-judgemental opportunity to carry out visible reparational work in the community. In some cases offenders have returned once their Community Service hours are complete to volunteer with us permanently.



...helping those seeking asylum

Asylum seekers have little means of financial support and are likely to be marginalised and treated as strangers in the communities into which they are placed. The SVP seeks to extend the hand of friendship and visits are made to asylum seekers either at home or in detention centres, as required. As well as friendship, SVP members provide practical support where they can, including lobbying MPs and providing letters of support when leave to remain cases are under consideration.

SVP projects provide a further means of support. Fadzai, a former asylum seeker from Zimbabwe, received practical help including food parcels and winter clothes for herself and her baby from the St Vincent Support Centre, Leeds. She also received Maths tuition at the Centre before going on to complete a degree in Social Work, during which she had the opportunity to return to the Centre as part of a work placement.

“Through my own experience, I have managed to offer help to those who pass through St Vincent’s doors. I found out that I was in a better position to understand their feelings and knew how best I could offer assistance. In some cases, the only help we could offer was just listening and talking, but, to the service users, they really appreciated it saying it made them feel much better. . . I am living proof that things may change for the better for them. I am very grateful for the support that I was offered by the St Vincent Centre in my times of trouble, and now.”

Fadzai, former asylum seeker



...helping those in need overseas

With SVP in 142 countries, groups in developing countries are “twinned” with groups in wealthier countries. England and Wales is twinned with India, Romania, Sudan, Granada and Guyana. Through the twinning relationship SVP members provide vital financial support for over 1700 SVP groups overseas and £210,000 was sent in twin to twin payments in 2007-2008. Twins also correspond and pray for each other.

In addition the SVP in England and Wales provides financial support for special projects overseas. In 2007-2008, 1513 students were sponsored in India through vocational and technical training schemes, while 2960 children orphaned by the tsunami were given financial support. A further £88,000 was sent to support over 100 small community projects in India and Guyana.

In Sudan the SVP continued to support feeding, training, medical and other projects, working in camps for the displaced. In 2007-2008 £208,000 was spent on these projects. In addition the SVP Fund provided over £78,000 in emergency aid to disasters worldwide.

...helping young people

The SVP runs two volunteering programmes to enable youth and young adults to befriend and support their neighbour. In 2007-2008 the Youth SVP Programme enabled 2,600 young people, between the ages of 11-18, to volunteer in their local communities through 125 groups based in schools and parishes.

The SVP 1833 programme for young adults operated in 14 universities and one parish. SVP 1833 groups are engaged in a variety of activities including soup runs, work with asylum seekers and visiting residential homes.



“Through the SVP I feel that I am able to give my love and joy and time to those who need it...sharing our stories and our lives and helping the people and communities who need our help.”

SVP 1833 Member



Financial highlights from 2007/2008

Our total income for 2007/2008 was £7.7 million (previous year £7.5 million). Income included:

- Donations, legacies and voluntary income - £3.2 million.
- Income for charitable projects - £3.5 million.

Total expenditure for 2007/2008 was also £7.7 million (previous year £7.3 million). Expenditure included:

- Direct project expenditure £7.5 million (97% of total).
- Fundraising costs - £150,000 (2% of total).
- Governance costs - £90,000 (1% of total).

Our full set of accounts for the year is available on our website or by contacting our national office (see back page).



How you can support the SVP...

You can support the Society in a number of different ways:

Donate Money: as a charitable organization we require ongoing financial support.

Donate Time: become a member, volunteer at a community project, commit to local fundraising.

Gift Aid: this could increase the value of your donation by almost 30%.

Donate Goods: there may be SVP projects in your local area which accept donated goods.

Leave a Legacy: ensure that others will continue to benefit from the work of the SVP when you are no longer here.

Become a Friend: for those who cannot spare the time but would like to regularly support the work of the SVP in a financial capacity.

Please visit www.svp.org.uk for further information.

Our special thanks go to...

Trusts:

- Mary Strand Charitable Trust
- The Sobell Foundation
- Church Burgesses Trust
- The Beale Trust
- The Triangle Trust
- The Fitzwilliam Trust
- Nationwide Foundation
- The D & G Young Trust
- The Draper's Company
- Beatrice Laing Trust
- Sheffield Town Trust

- Give As U Rent Appeal
- J G Graves Charitable Trust
- Hyman Winstone Foundation
- Harry Bottom Charitable Trust
- Burngrave New Deal
- Mrs L D Rope 3rd Charitable Settlement
- The Derwent Charitable Consultancy
- Henry Smith Charitable Trust
- Derwent Charitable Trust
- HBOS Foundation
- The Haremead Trust

- The Bisgood Charitable Trust
- The Tudor Trust

Other donors:

- Art in Design
- St Anne's Church
- St Peter's March Mothers Union
- St John Fisher Catholic High School
- Catholic Women's League
- Alpha development
- St John Fisher Church

For more information about the work of the SVP or for details on how to get involved or support us, please contact us at the address below:

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