



St Vincent
de Paul Society

England and Wales

Turning Concern into Action

Upper Room with Middlesbrough SVP

The journey

The beginnings



The original Upper Room

Ready for our guests on the top floor of the building.



Some of the original team



Sad news in February 2020

The much-loved John Paul Centre, which has been a hub for the Catholic and local community and voluntary services in Middlesbrough for many decades, is to close for safety reasons.

What happened next?

- ▶ Early in March that year the covid pandemic hit with people told to isolate if they had fever and cough.
- ▶ 16th March citizens were advised not to go to social venues and financial measures were put in place to support businesses

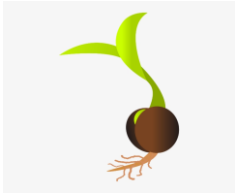


During Covid

How did things
change for
charities?



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December 2023

a shoot from the original seed

Some 24 or more people in the Catholic community in Middlesbrough discussed how they could restart the Upper Room project, but where?

It needed to be in the centre of town, but we had no suitable buildings, and the Bishop was adamant the diocese should not buy more property.

Through an interfaith forum on homelessness, it was seen that there was little provision at weekends.

The Salvation Army offered a room at half price on a Saturday; They ran a drop in there on a Tuesday.

The venue at the Salvation Army Citadel was agreed

- ▶ Middlesbrough Diocesan hierarchy were approached but they had concerns
 - ▶ Who could oversee the project?
 - ▶ What needed to be put in place and by whom.
- ▶ Why the SVP?



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Monsignor Gerard Robinson, Vicar General



- ▶ The Vicar General knew of my involvement with the SVP when he was Dean of the Cathedral in Middlesbrough.
- ▶ Through SVP events, and during Covid when the Cathedral was the only place we had weekday Mass, I had come to know him.
- ▶ Our interactions were not always positive as he refused to allow us to set up an SVP group amongst the three parishes.

Next steps

1. What needed to be in place for agreement within the diocese and the SVP
 1. Discussion with the safeguarding office in the diocese
 2. Discussion with national about compliance and other issues
 3. Meetings with Sheena and Bev about where the project fitted in the SVP
2. Sources of finance
 1. One of the team immediately provided £150
 2. The Cost of Living fund gave us £500 which enabled us to buy the limited equipment we needed to provide ourselves initially
 3. We knew we needed to go much further particularly as we would have to pay rent for the room and food on a weekly basis but that was a start.

Funding sources

- ▶ The Caritas group were pushing for the money from the sale of the original building to be used for the poor and established the St John Paul II fund. Groups could apply for up to £5000 - a good start but it took 5 months!
- ▶ We needed startup money and had £500 from the SVP within a week
- ▶ A grant of £2000 was given by the Tees Valley Community Foundation.
- ▶ Other donations were received from individuals, Lent soup lunches etc and these generated more interest.

The process for A Special Works project

- ▶ We had more than 25 willing volunteers but needed a bank account, not least for applications for grants
- ▶ A local conference treasurer agreed to let us use their account, along with support from a member of the team.
- ▶ Any money for the project would be restricted income in their returns.
- ▶ 3 conferences agreed to sign auxiliary members who would then become part of the final team
- ▶ We contacted Bev and discussed Special Work status as this was where the project fitted best within the society.



SVP SPECIAL WORKS – a definition

Works of charity which provide a particular service(s), whether to a defined group or in response to an identified need, on a regular or periodic basis, and which correspond to criteria approved by the Trustees, may be designated as Special Works.

Special Works are usually developed when an activity grows and takes the Conference away from their usual day to day Conference services.

Documentation we needed

- ▶ The application form was downloaded and completed
 - ▶ Safeguarding was done through the SVP
 - ▶ License agreements for the premises were attached
 - ▶ We applied for DBS for some volunteers although existing members had this - not everyone needed one- we needed sufficient in each team.
- ▶ The special works was added to the civi database
 - ▶ Existing members were transferred along with auxiliaries and then volunteers through Giulia Fabricotti using notification forms
- ▶ The bank account was set up with forms from the website
 - ▶ A retired accountant agreed to act as treasurer
 - ▶ 4 credit cards were ordered

The Special works process

- ▶ Most of the necessary documentation is in the procedures section of the website including risk assessment forms.
- ▶ Local documents such as contracts for premises were needed
- ▶ SVP has a very soft touch approach as opposed to many diocesan trustee groups and SVP Staff very helpful

SVP Policies and Procedures

Running our project

- ▶ There are 36 members and volunteers on the database
- ▶ The core team of 4 team leaders, treasurer and I meet monthly but keep contact in between.
- ▶ We keep a log each week and that can form the basis of discussion along with requests - toiletries, hygiene products and razors etc are something we are often asked for but need to be sensitively handled.
- ▶ We have approached the Catenians and Knights of St Columba for more male volunteers







- ▶ Safeguarding with module from Catherine Kerr based on the SVP training was delivered by our diocesan trainer Susan Gardiner
- ▶ Food hygiene certificates obtained for those in the kitchen
- ▶ Naloxone training for those willing to undertake it
- ▶ First aid training for specific volunteers
- ▶ Conflict resolution training for specific volunteers

About our guests

- ▶ Between 25-40 come each Saturday
- ▶ They are very grateful and respectful
- ▶ There is a community spirit among the regulars who know one another
- ▶ They welcome new visitors and invite them to eat with them
- ▶ If someone is missing, they show concern and let us know the next week what has happened.

Forgotten Feet members visit every 6 weeks



Involving our young Vincentians

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FULFILLING POTENTIAL*



SVP SPECIAL MEETING

Year 7 and 8 SVP met up with the Middlesbrough Conference to plan their latest campaign. The group also presented the Middlesbrough Conference with flowers in recognition of their kind support since September. Well done everybody!

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LAST CALL FOR SVP HOMELESS BAGS



Students with a selection of donated clothes and gifts for the homeless.

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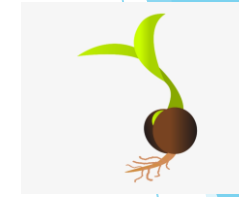
Continued funding

Grants are the main source of income but take time

- Tees Valley forum groups have lots of advice about how and where
- Diocese can be a source but take time and persistence
- Private, gift aided donations have amounted to £1500
- Other donations have come through publicity in the Catholic Voice - Brigit nominated us for a £300 donation



What I've learned



- ▶ There must be a need but more importantly some passionate and energetic people who want it to work - it would not be possible to decide on a project, even if there were a need, just with the seed of an idea - it needs gardeners who will water and feed it.
- ▶ Some roles need specific expertise but luckily, we had many professionals on the team to take these up.
- ▶ My role has been purely a researcher and adviser with knowledge of the SVP and able to spend the necessary hours on the paperwork for the proposals, claims for finance and volunteer documentation.

Thank you to Vicar General
Monsignor Gerard Robinson

