



St Vincent
de Paul Society

England and Wales

Turning Concern into Action

Social Policy at the SVP

Alessandra Sciarra – Head of Policy,
Communications and Public Affairs

Why Social Justice?

Where injustice, inequality, poverty or exclusion are due to unjust economic, political, or social structures or to inadequate or unjust legislation, the Society should speak out clearly against the situation, always with charity, with the aim of contributing to and demanding improvements.

"You must not be content with tiding the poor over the poverty crisis; you must study their condition and the injustices which brought about such poverty, with the aim of long term Improvement."

Blessed Frédéric Ozanam

International Society of SVP

The Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales said in its latest document 'Love the Stranger' *"Recognising the practical contribution that our Church can make, we support the work of Catholic organisations such as Caritas, the Jesuit Refugee Service, and the St Vincent De Paul Society, as well as parish and diocesan initiatives, in upholding the human dignity of migrants and refugees"*

Elements of our Social Justice work

- Advocacy and influencing
- Campaigning and mobilisation
- Research and insight
- Training and building capacity

Social Justice and Catholic Social Teaching (CST)

Social Justice is the *result* of Catholic social teaching applied in the world, the end goal being promoting social change in institutions or political structures.

DIGNITY

SOLIDARITY

SUBSIDIARITY

THE COMMON GOOD

OPTION FOR THE POOR

Our policy areas

- Cost of Living and social security reform
- In-work poverty
- Refugees and Asylum seekers
- Regional inequalities and Levelling up



What we achieved so far

- National campaign with CAFOD ahead of the general election
- Regular MP visits to our Centres and Conferences
- Thought Leadership roundtable
- Parliamentary advocacy
- Submissions to parliamentary inquiries
- Media coverage of our work on BBC, Sky News and more
- Attend Parliamentary networks and groups
- National Advocacy on Borders Bill, Write to your MP action
- Letter signed by over 100 Faith leaders
- Launched 'From the frontline' Cost of Living and other
- Joined the 'Guarantee our Essentials' campaign by Trussell Trust and JRF

Meetings with MPs





Events

Research and Publications

- From the frontline: Tackling regional inequalities
- Reflections and recommendations on resettlement
- Stories from the frontline
- Monthly Policy briefings
- Briefings for Ministers and MPs
- Budget response



**The real price of the
cost of living crisis**

Helping members to take action

Using our Catholic voice to tackle poverty

URGENT: Write to your candidates and ask them to tackle poverty

The Church tells us that “...All citizens ought to be aware of their right and duty to promote the common good by casting their votes...”. But in order to arrive at the polling station as well informed as possible, it's important to know our prospective MP's views on the things that matter to us.

As Christians, we have a long tradition of being actively involved in the big issues of our time. For this reason, the SVP and CAFOD are inviting parishes to reach out to their local candidates ahead of the next election. We want to strengthen community participation as a local faith group and practice the culture of encounter that Pope Francis talks about.

With over five million Catholics in the UK, the next general election is an opportunity to bring attention to the big issues of our time.

Please email your candidates today

**A Year of
Encounter**



Find your local candidates

First name *

Last name *

Email address *

Address 1 *

City *

Postcode *

I would like to stay up to date with the Year of Encounter initiative *

☐ Yes ☐ No

Next

Last night we joined parishioners from St Anthony's, Preston, at the hustings at @UCLan, and highlighted key issues that matter to us as people of faith in this general election.

@CAFOD @SVPEnglandWales @blogpreston

See details of our parish campaign ↴

cafod.org.uk/campaign/campa...



Building SVP's voice



Lift the Ban and make a real difference to people's lives

by Hollie Scorer

INSPIRED by two dedicated volunteers at St Vincent's Newcastle, local business owner Jez Davidson joined thousands calling on the government to lift the ban on asylum seekers' right to work in the UK.

Made up of over 250 businesses, trade unions, charities, think tanks and faith groups, the Lift the Ban coalition challenges the government's exclusionary permission to work policy. It argues that the government must support refugees who have fled violence and persecution, give them agency over their own lives and create a more diverse workforce which is more beneficial to communities throughout the country.

According to current statistics from Refugee Action, the ban has meant that vulnerable individuals and families are left to struggle on as little as £5.85 per day while waiting months, sometimes even years, to hear back from the Home Office on their cases.

In a bid to eventually secure full-time employment for St Vincent's Newcastle volunteers Mohammed and Nawaf at his own cafe, One Kitchen and Social, Jez has been working closely with national charity Asylum Matters to support Lift the Ban and ensure the best possible outcome for both volunteers.

Jez, who recently won St Vincent's

dignity. The kindness and determination of the centre's staff and volunteers is what inspired Nawaf and Mohammed to join the team and give back to their community.

Although both have been faced with extensive waiting times and uncertainty as the Home Office considers their cases, they remain determined to share the kindness they have received from the St Vincent's centre with others in desperate need of support.

Mohammed and his family were forced to flee President Assad's horrific war in Syria, experiencing the devastating loss of loved ones and the breakdown of their society.

Mohammed has a strong desire to work full-time and be the best possible role model to his children.

Volunteering at St Vincent's and speaking with Jez has given him much-needed hope and has helped to pave the way to a brighter future in the UK.

Mohammed says: "I am over the moon to be a part of St Vincent's as a volunteer and to stay busy instead of sitting home and feeling nervous and depressed as the Home Office takes such a long time to consider cases such as mine."

Before starting a new life in the UK over a year ago, Nawaf was an unemployed nomad Bedoon in Kuwait and suffered inhumane treatment, including false imprisonment.

"I feel very sad that I am yet to hear from the Home Office regarding my

www.northerncross.org.uk

Northern Cross
April 2023



Q Mohammed and Nawaf, left, both volunteer at St Vincent's Newcastle but would love to work full-time to support their families. Below is Mohammed in the kitchen with Jez Davidson, a local cafe and restaurant owner who supports the Lift the Ban campaign.

ment for the volunteers, says: "We have seen the amazing energy, commitment and kindness from volunteers who have come to the UK seeking sanctuary, and we have benefited hugely from folks like Nawaf and Mohammed who are so keen to contribute to our community."

"If we look at lifting the ban on those seeking asylum being able to work in purely economic terms, these people have a myriad of skills, knowledge and experience which they want to use, and businesses across the UK are struggling to recruit into so many roles, particularly health, social care and hospitality. We know that work gives a sense of value to the individual, as well as contributing to social cohesion, which benefits us all."

Jez continues to collaborate with Asylum Matters to support the Lift the Ban campaign and Mohammed and Nawaf in the hope that he can make a real difference.

"The recruitment market in hospitality is the toughest I've known in 20 years and I believe that allowing skilled refugees to work legally would help them and this country in equal measure," he concludes.

Holocaust survivor's plea on migrants pg 21

Friday 28th April 2023

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Million reasons to act as SVP warns of rise in food bank use

Trussell Trust report lays bare scale of problem as food banks forced to extend opening hours to accommodate working parents in desperate need

Andy Drendak

Catholic social charity St Vincent de Paul (SVP) has joined the Trussell Trust in sharing emergency food parcels as record numbers of emergency food parcels are being handed out amid a sharp increase in food bank users.

A record near three million emergency food parcels were handed out at food banks from April 2022 to March this year, with the number provided for children tripling a million for the first time.

Trussell Trust say this is a 37% increase compared to the previous year, and that many of the latest recipients of help are working parents, who simply "cannot make most."

SVP CEO Elizabeth Palmer said the Trust's figures reflected the experiences of SVP workers around the country. "Our

Some 1.235,553 parcels were distributed for children, up from 855,879 the previous year and a rise from less than 100,000 in the 2017-2018 year. More than 760,000 people used a food bank in the network for the first time.

Elizabeth Palmer said it was a heart-breaking situation: "Our regional centres support thousands of people each month, and have stepped up their support due to rising demand."

She cited examples such as the St Vincent's centre in Newcastle, which provides a hot meal to an average of 150 people every week. "The number of people accessing this service are increasing each year," she said.

The Trussell Trust said the problem is "not a regionalised issue" with an increase of at least 20 per cent in each area of the UK, but the highest rise is in



Working with Faith groups and Churches



Elizabeth Palmer
CEO, St Vincent de Paul Society



St Vincent
de Paul Society

England and Wales

Turning Concern into Action

Campaigns

A Year of Encounter

**USING OUR
CATHOLIC VOICE
IN THE GENERAL
ELECTION**



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Using our Catholic voice in the general election

"...All citizens ought to be aware of their right and duty to promote the common good by casting their votes..."

Gaudium et Spes, Vatican II, 1965, #75

1. Contact the candidates

As part of our *A year of encounter* initiative, we are inviting you to contact your candidates together as members of your faith group. As Christians, we do things in community, as it is in relationships with others that we flourish and explore new ways of building a better society for the benefit of all.

YOUNG PEOPLE MIGHT BE PARTICULARLY INTERESTED IN BEING PART OF THIS INITIATIVE

Reach out to them! You can contact the CAFOD Education or the SVP Youth team for support.

cafod.org.uk/families



2. Attend a hustings

Even if your parish has already sent questions to your candidates, it's still very important to encourage parishioners to attend local hustings. Asking questions at a hustings is a unique opportunity to bring the issues that we care about to the attention of local candidates, as well as to other people or groups from your community who are attending.

COMMON PLACES WHERE HUSTINGS ARE ADVERTISED:

- The social media pages of the individual candidates or local political parties (eg Twitter, Facebook or Instagram).
- Local newspapers, magazines, and radio
- Community centres and libraries
- Local Authorities webpages



Cost of Living

The cost of living crisis is pushing increasing numbers of people into poverty. Almost 2 million people used a foodbank in 2022, and almost 3 million emergency food parcels were provided to people and families in the last year.

In 2024, there are over 14 million people living in poverty. Six in ten low-income households are not able to afford an unexpected expense and over seven in ten families are going without the essentials.

At the SVP we have seen a 49% increase in requests for help in the last year.

Tackling regional inequalities

The UK has some of the highest regional inequalities in Europe, and this is leaving many people behind. The impact on people's lives is significant, with some regions seeing stark and growing rates of poverty.

Our Government needs to commit to tackling regional inequalities and help improve social and economic outcomes for left behind areas.

We are calling on policymakers to work more closely with local and regional stakeholders including charities like the SVP, who are experts in the communities they work in, and can help identify local solutions to local problems.

Migration and asylum

The past year has seen more people lose their lives as they try to cross the Channel to seek sanctuary in the UK.

Those who arrive in the UK face a long wait for a decision on their claim, are housed in unsuitable and unsafe accommodation while they wait and are isolated from the communities they could be a part of.

We want to see an asylum system based on principles of compassion, humanity and dignity. It is vital that the right to seek asylum in the UK is reinstated.


Materials and support for parishes

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"...with our faith we must create a 'culture of encounter,' a culture of friendship, a culture in which we find brothers and sisters, in which we can also speak with those who think differently,"
Pope Francis

"...As far as possible citizens should take an active part in public life..."
The Catechism of the Catholic Church



INTRODUCTION

Why are we called to promote the common good?

The common good is reached when we work together to improve the lives of people both in our local community, and in the wider world.

The Church tells us that "...All citizens ought to be aware of their right and duty to promote the common good by casting their votes..." But in order to arrive at the polling station as well informed as possible, it's important to know our prospective MP's views on the things that matter to us.

For this reason, the SVP and CAFOD are inviting parishes to reach out to their local candidates ahead of the next election. This is not about political affiliations, but rather about strengthening community participation as a local faith group and practicing the culture of encounter that Pope Francis talks about.

As Christians we have a long tradition of being actively involved in the big issues of our time. The lives of many saints show us that the greater their devotion to the Lord, the deeper their commitment to addressing the big problems of their time: during a period of violent crusades, St Francis of Assisi went all the way from Europe to Africa to engage the Sultan

of Egypt in true dialogue; St Catherine of Siena played a vital role in negotiating peace amongst republics of what is today Italy. And St Vincent de Paul, moved by the plight of peasants in 1600s France, started a mission to reach out to those on the periphery in a spirit of justice and solidarity.

With over five million Catholics in the UK, the next general election is an opportunity to bring attention to the big issues of our time.


This booklet has been jointly produced by CAFOD and the SVP to provide some easy steps on how to reach out to your local candidates. And hopefully you will meet other parishioners in your area and have some fun in the process too!

1 Gaudium et Spes, Vatican II, 1965, #75

A Year of Encounter

USING OUR CATHOLIC VOICE IN THE GENERAL ELECTION

svp.org.uk/encounter
cafod.org.uk



The Church tells us that "All citizens ought to be aware of their right and duty to promote the common good by casting their votes."

Alongside other parishioners, do you want to attend this hustings?

Thursday 19 September at 7pm, Town Hall

*If you would like to join other parishioners contact **YOUR NAME** at **AN EMAIL ADDRESS** or **TELEPHONE NUMBER** to find out more about the ear of Encounter Initiative and how to prepare for the Hustings*

[Blank space to be filled in by you]

As Christians we have a long tradition of being involved in the big issues of our time: The lives of many saints show us that the greater their devotion to the Lord, the deeper their commitment to

307

People have taken action

54

**Constituencies where an
action took place**

255

**Candidates have received
an email**

Other campaigns and initiatives

- Essentials Guarantee
open letter
- In-work poverty survey
- Social Justice blog



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Turning Concern into Action

Supporting our social justice and policy work

Ways to get involved with our SJ work

- Take part in our Year of Encounter initiative
- Help us gather insight and case studies to inform our policy work
- Become an MP champion (email your MP three-times a year, or invite them to visit your Conference or project)
- Contribute to our Social justice blog



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Questions?

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