

ST VINCENT'S CENTRE, LEEDS

St Vincent de Paul Society

England and Wales

Turning Concern into Action

St Vincent's Leeds

Overview

Food

- 83 Pantry Members
- 2,964 trays of food diverted from landfill
- 1255 food parcels
-

Education

- 13 ESOL classes per week
- 15 poeple gained employment
- 6778 hours of education delivered
- 3 trips to the Dales
- 961 items of clothing given to people seeking asylum

For more info, contact:
hello@svp.org.uk

Activities

- 1 Christmas Performance
- * Easter Eggs eaten
- 53 children visited the seaside
- * plants planted
- 2291 people attended activties

Trading

- 157 families received furniture
- 9040 clothing donations recycled
- 1500 free meals
- 13158 people used our shop
- 8241 people used the cafe

Centre Manager's Report

Impact in Action

This is my fourth year as Centre Manager in Leeds, and each year brings new challenges.
This year has been no exception—but what has stood out is the sheer depth of need. We are now supporting around 3,000 people each month with a team of just 19 staff, which speaks to both the scale of demand and the commitment of the team.

By the time someone arrives at our door in crisis, they have often exhausted every other option. This means the situations we encounter are rarely simple. Supporting someone facing homelessness can take days of focused advocacy helping them navigate systems, speak to services, and find a pathway to safety. For those fleeing domestic abuse, the stories are often harrowing, and the need for compassion, time, and trust is critical. towards stability.

What we can offer is more than practical help. We take the time to listen, to understand, and to walk alongside people at what is often the most difficult point in their lives. Whether it's providing food, advice, or simply a safe space, our goal is to help people move from crisis towards stability.

The impact of this work is profound.
In many cases, it is not just life-changing, but life-saving. And while the challenges are growing, so too is our determination to meet them with care, dignity, and hope.



Caroline Kelly

Chair's Report

This is my final report as chair of St Vincent's, Leeds. I took over the role from the long-serving George Skalski, just as COVID hit us in 2020; now, 6 years later I am ready to hand over the reins.

The Centre has gone from strength to strength over the last 6 years, overcoming all kinds of challenges, under the fantastic leadership of Caroline who is ably supported by a wonderful team achieving small miracles every day. None of their brilliant work would be possible without the amazing support we receive from the national SVP organisation, the Central Council of the Leeds Diocese, the numerous SVP conferences, our corporate sponsors and numerous volunteers – I extend my heartfelt thanks to all of you.

I am very proud of the many awards the Centre has achieved over the last 12 months: The Community Support Award for the north of England; a Defra Award for environmental and community work in the park project, and individual staff have received prestigious nominations for the National Excellence awards (Luke, Basharat, Andrea, Hannah, Michelle, Vicky and Julie) Well done to all of them – the committee are incredibly proud of you all.

We have been delighted to welcome onto the management committee Clare Conboy, who is the new President of the Leeds Central Council for SVP, and also Curtis Johns (professional name 'Kuill') who is assisting already in helping plan some exciting events. The management committee oversees the work of the centre, particularly looking at how it operates and utilises networks; how it works within our catholic ethos, paying close attention to catholic social teaching; how it demonstrates Vincentian values, and critically, the overall financial health and strategic direction of the centre. We have streamlined our operations in 2026 which has reduced some of the time commitment in meeting attendance; it is truly rewarding work and if you would like to make a contribution in this way, please contact me through our centre

Ros McMullen

Community Cafe & Shop

Leigh Bradley

The Trading team at St Vincent's Leeds has continued to grow its reach over the past year; however, this expansion reflects a concerning rise in need across the community. Demand for low-cost clothing, food, and furniture has increased significantly, as more individuals and families struggle to meet basic living costs. The team has responded by maintaining a steady supply of affordable, good-quality items, including essential clothing and furniture to support safe and stable homes.

Referrals exceeded 200 during the reporting period, supported through strong partnership working with Leeds City Council and other local agencies. While these relationships have strengthened service delivery, they also underline the increasing number of people requiring support. Shop sales reached £91,000, demonstrating growing reliance on affordable retail options.
There has been a notable rise in demand for everyday essentials.

Lsuch as toilet rolls, shampoo, and cleaning products. These basic items are now a critical area of need, and the team has prioritised keeping them accessible and affordable.

The Community Café generated £38,000 while providing home-cooked meals in a welcoming environment, including over 1,500 free meals for volunteers and people in need. The café has also supported fundraising efforts through events such as beer and curry nights, helping to generate additional income while bringing the community together. This work would not be possible without our dedicated volunteers, whose commitment ensures people feel welcomed, valued, and part of a supportive community.



Debt Advice

Luke Dennison

The Leeds Debt Advice Team has faced an incredibly challenging year, with demand for our service continuing to grow. We have supported 420 clients, many dealing with complex and overwhelming situations including rent arrears, fuel debts, council tax, and a range of other financial pressures. For many, the weight of these debts has had a serious impact on their mental health.

This year, we've written off a record £1,990,396 in debt, almost £2 million that our clients had no realistic prospect of repaying. Removing this burden has been life changing, giving people the space to breathe, improve their wellbeing, and begin to regain control of their finances.

Our impact goes far beyond financial outcomes. We've stood alongside vulnerable clients at county court repossession hearings, ensuring they are represented at some of the most critical moments in their lives.
We've supported individuals who had previously tried and failed to engage with other advice services, helping them finally reach a positive outcome

We've also helped clients challenge incorrect disability benefit decisions, supporting them through appeals and tribunals that many would not have been able to navigate alone. By helping people clearly explain their circumstances, we've secured essential financial support for those who need it most.

The year ahead looks equally, if not more difficult. Demand remains high and many people are still in need of support. However, we remain committed to being there for our community, providing practical help, strong advocacy, and the support people need to move forward.



Food & Support

Ceila Hansley-Wilkinson



Food Provision

Over the last year, we distributed 481 food parcels, supporting 904 adults and 351 children and helping to reduce food insecurity across our community.

We currently have 83 registered members, with an average of 21 accessing the service each week.
Over the past year, we have evolved our model to promote greater autonomy. Members can now browse and select their own items, creating a more dignified, shop-like experience. Feedback on this change has been overwhelmingly positive.

Case Studies

Gillian came for food support and found friendship. She later disclosed debt to a loan shark; we supported her and connected her with Stop Loan Sharks. Her debts were cleared, she accessed further advice, and is now in a more stable position. Following this, Stop Loan Sharks donated £4,000 to support our Christmas panto.

We also supported a mother in a difficult and abusive situation, providing ongoing emotional and practical help. While her circumstances remain challenging, her heartfelt thanks at Christmas highlighted the value of this support.

A young man with no recourse to public funds came for help and revealed he had been without glasses for over a year. We provided glasses, food, and ongoing support. He has since secured employment in the Midlands and remains in touch, often reflecting on the vital role St Vincent's played.

Mini Vinnies

We welcomed nine Mini Vinnies groups, engaging young people in charitable activities and nurturing compassion, service, and community awareness. At Christmas, one group helped wrap gifts, gaining a meaningful, real-time sense of their impact.
We also delivered three events to strengthen connections within St Vincent's mission:

- Summer Party to celebrate achievements, especially for those moving to secondary school
- "Tea with the SVP", an intergenerational event bringing together Vincentians and pupils from three schools
- Christmas Party to recognise and celebrate the children's contributions



Volunteers

We welcomed two new pantry volunteers. Joe supports every Monday, stocking shelves while building confidence and skills toward future employment; we're also supporting his social interaction and routine, as he finds this challenging due to autism. Chris now volunteers each Thursday, having progressed from a men's group service user to a valued member of the team.
We also delivered volunteer training (developed with Leigh), introduced monthly catch-ups to strengthen communication, and organised a bowling outing to bring trading volunteers together.

Corporate Volunteering and Donations

We have been fortunate to work alongside 39 teams of corporate volunteers. Through these partnerships, we have received over £2,000 in cash donations, alongside thousands of pounds worth of gifts during the Christmas period. A new initiative we introduced at the end of 2025 in asking for financial support in exchange for corporate volunteering has seen some success which we hope to continue growing.
In addition to financial contributions, we have also received large quantities of food donations, further strengthening our ability to respond to community need.

Counselling & Wellbeing

Stewart Barlow



During the past year, our free counselling service continued to provide vital emotional and mental health support to individuals and families across our community support centre. At a time of increasing financial pressure, isolation, and anxiety, demand for accessible counselling remained high.

Over the year, we delivered more than 850 counselling sessions and supported 140 individuals experiencing challenges including bereavement, stress, trauma, relationship difficulties, and poor mental wellbeing. Our team of qualified counsellors and volunteers created a safe, confidential environment where people could access support regardless of income or circumstance.

Feedback from service users showed significant improvements in confidence, emotional resilience, and day-to-day wellbeing. Many individuals reported feeling less isolated and more able to cope with personal challenges after engaging with the service. One client described the support as “life-changing”, explaining that counselling helped them regain stability and reconnect with family and community life.
Partnership working with local organisations, GP services, and community groups helped us reach individuals who may otherwise not have accessed support.

Our green initiative has also gone from strength to strength as we secured funding to employ a Green Engagement Officer to develop work with local schools and Centre service users. We were further supported by Groundwork Trust; being designated as a Green Community Hub for 2025, one of five in the Northern Network.

We remain committed to ensuring that compassionate, accessible counselling continues to be available to those who need it most. We thank our staff, volunteers, funders, and community partners for their ongoing support.

Immigration & Education

Julie Linely



In the last year, with a team of 32 volunteers, we have worked to ensure that everyone can have a voice and can actively participate in our community. Through our community learning classes, activities, volunteering opportunities, immigration advice and wider support, we have seen lives and our community positively changed. This year, there were 15 weekly classes taught by trained volunteers that took place across 3 terms. The classes ranged from ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages), IT, Help into Work, reading and more. Last year, the classes were attended 3,389 times; this is more than a third more than the year before! 100% of learners attending classes said their confidence has improved. One learner said, 'At first I was really shy about speaking English with people but now you've encouraged me, so even though I don't speak it well, I am trying my best.' Another learner said, 'I like freedom, learning and work.' 82% of learners said that they feel more positive about finding work now. As the classes continue to increase in numbers and passion for learning, we continue to seek new volunteers to further enhance the provision.

The immigration and wider support services worked in an increasingly hostile environment to help even more people in crisis, address immediate concerns and work to prevent problems. Through prioritising helping people be seen, heard and have hope at the same time as working to challenge injustice, the immigration and advice sessions supported 1,189 in the last year. A volunteer said, 'Volunteering at St Vincent's was the best work experience I could have asked for before getting a job as a law graduate. It helped me strengthen my confidence, administration and client care skills through hands-on experience under the guidance of the immigration advisers.' A service user said, it's a 'really friendly place and they really helped me with my matter which I was struggling for a long time.'



Activities

Tim Dawtry



Over the past year, our activities have made a meaningful difference in reducing social isolation, improving wellbeing, and building confidence among some of the most marginalised members of our community. By offering free, inclusive sessions, we have created safe and welcoming spaces where people feel valued, connected, and supported.

Our programmes have helped individuals develop new skills and rediscover talents, from performing on stage and playing music to writing creatively and learning practical crafts. Participants regularly report increased confidence, stronger social networks, and a renewed sense of purpose. Group-led elements, such as the Friday quiz and performances, have also encouraged leadership, ownership, and peer support.

The Monday Help Desk has provided essential, practical impact—supporting individuals to navigate complex systems, access services, and overcome barriers, while addressing digital exclusion through the distribution of over 550 SIM cards.

Our children's and family activities have offered vital opportunities for enjoyment, learning, and togetherness, particularly for families facing financial hardship or challenging circumstances. These experiences often provide moments of joy and normality that might otherwise be out of reach. Volunteers have also benefited, gaining skills, confidence, and a sense of contribution, while strengthening the community as a whole.

Overall, our activities programme has not only provided enjoyable and engaging sessions but has played a crucial role in improving wellbeing, fostering connection, and empowering individuals to move forward with greater confidence and hope.



Volunteers

Caroline Kelly





Our centre is supported by a remarkable community of 72 regular volunteers who generously give their time to support some of the most vulnerable people in Leeds. Their contributions span a wide range of areas, including education, resilience support, kitchen services, the charity shop, practical environmental projects, and counselling many of whom are working towards gaining valuable therapeutic practice hours.

This breadth of skills is truly unique and brings colour, diversity, and energy to the centre. Volunteers play a vital role not only in delivering services but in shaping a welcoming and inclusive environment where everyone can thrive. Many of our volunteers demonstrate exceptional commitment, with service ranging from five to over twenty-five years.

Volunteering at the centre offers opportunities for skill-building, knowledge-sharing, and a strong sense of purpose.

People come to volunteer for many reasons: some begin as service users and are inspired to give back to the support they once received, others seek practical experience, and many are motivated by a desire to serve their community.

Whatever their journey, all volunteers are valued and welcomed. Their dedication and compassion are at the heart of what makes the centre what it is today.

Annual Stats:

1255

People recieved a food parcel



30

Years of Service in LS9

850

Counselling Hours

111 Christmas meals
237 people involved in the Christmas Performance
937 Christmas presents
1 visit from Father Christmas

£1,990,396

Debt written off

1500

Free meals

THANK YOU

To everyone who has supported the centre

SHADOW BREWING

EQUIFAX

COMMUNITY FUND



BURBERRY

STOP LOAN SHARKS
Intervention . Support . Education

GROUNDWORK

British Gas

Wade's Charity
AT THE HEART OF LEEDS

Donate Here:

It costs £832,568 to run our centre

£5 Pays for a hot meal and pudding

£20 Provides a weekly support group to vulnerable men & women

£10 pays for a child to visit the seaside

£17 Provides a three day food parcel

£37 to support each person in the centre

SVP St Vincent's

growing people, changing lives