

Reaching Out

Older people and Catholic parishes – making memories together



The Embrace Project

A national initiative of Caritas Social Action Network, 2017-18



“How I would like a Church that challenges the throw-away culture with the overflowing joy of a new embrace between young and old! This is what I ask of the Lord today, this embrace!”

Pope Francis, 2015

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Foreword by Rt Rev Terence Drainey, Bishop of Middlesbrough and Chair of Caritas Social Action Network

One sign of social progress in this country is that people can expect to live longer on average than at any other time in our recorded history. The number of people aged over 65 is expected to double by 2050, and the number aged over 80 is expected to double by 2030. But alongside this progress, we also see rising loneliness - among people of all ages.

For some, isolation occurs slowly; for others it may be a sudden change. Some find it harder to move around and use transport. For others, family members and friends have died or moved away. Those caring for parents and elderly partners often experience isolation. Many older people who want to meet others have no-one to go out with. Many do not know where to find support. Many find few opportunities even for an informal chat with others in their communities.

Studies indicate that people who remain lonely are less likely to exercise, eat and sleep well, whereas reducing loneliness can prevent or delay more serious ill-health. When we can talk face-to-face and do things together regularly, we are likely to have more energy, to develop social skills and to feel happier.

Older Catholics in England and Wales undertake a lion's share of organised activities in their communities. They hold before us some patterns recounted in Luke's Gospel:



of the elderly Anna declaring boldly the good news of Jesus in the city of Jerusalem, and of Mary who, having proclaimed God's love of preference for the poor, treasured and pondered lifelong the mystery of Christ in her heart.

Through parishes and groups, many Catholics are already assisting older Catholics to travel to Mass, visiting older people at home, providing lunches, and organising other activities. Each time we do this, engaging with the strengths and truly human hopes of everyone involved, we live out two principles of Catholic Social Teaching: human dignity and participation.

I am grateful for the work of Catholic parishes and charities described in this guidance. While its focus is on outreach and activities with older people, the underlying aim is that more people in our parishes will find it easier to reach out in their wider community, beyond the parish setting.

Foreword by Dr Philip McCarthy, Chief Executive, Caritas Social Action Network

‘Reaching Out’ offers dedicated guidance for parish groups wanting to connect older people with group activities that they would like. It draws on recent, real life work by Catholic parishes. In 2017, with grant funding from a charitable trust, we commenced a national initiative, entitled the Embrace Project. Three Catholic diocesan charities, with around 400 years’ combined specialist experience, explored in greater depth how groups in parishes and deaneries could support older people well and at minimal cost, to enjoy more of the social connections people would like in their neighbourhoods:

- Father Hudson’s Care in the Worcester Deanery of the Archdiocese of Birmingham;
- Catholic Care (Diocese of Leeds) in the Keighley and Skipton Deanery of the Diocese of Leeds, and
- Caritas Diocese of Salford in Greater Manchester.

These areas included rural, suburban and urban settings, and varied levels of affluence.

Each charity employed a grant-funded development worker to facilitate activities in a deanery or at least in four parishes. They worked with the strengths, and at the pace of, each local church and its wider community. The grant funding for the workers ran for two years from January 2017 until December



2018, with the expectation that parishes and deaneries would be able to sustain activities begun with older people.

Over the two-year period, local groups developed a variety of approaches, with support from their development worker. Some extended previous activities, and some started new ones. In total, they reported 18 activities engaging with over 1,000 participants across the country. They supported 92 regular new volunteers, and many more informal helpers, to set up and deliver these activities. The diocesan charities adopted different approaches for recruiting and supporting volunteers.

It is important to consider safeguarding when setting up activities for older people who may also be vulnerable. Care must be taken to ensure that activities are organised so as to reduce the risk of harm to all participants and to create spaces of genuine welcome.

Within a parish, the Parish Priest, in conjunction with the Diocesan Safeguarding Commission, has responsibility for the pastoral care of the community with special regard for those most vulnerable. Each parish should have a Safeguarding Representative who should be consulted about parish activities that involve children or vulnerable adults. From the outset, please make sure you involve them in your plans.

Parishes can find it difficult to know where to start on reaching out to older people who may be isolated and lonely. I hope this toolkit will help you make a difference in your community. This toolkit is one fruit of our learning together, and we hope it will encourage more confident action in local churches. Please tell us how you get on – see page 60 for contact details.

Before reading further...

Intended audience

This guidance is aimed at Catholic parishioners, priests, deacons and members of religious orders interested in organising, or simply participating in, group-based social activities with older people living in their local area. We hope it is helpful for people of all faiths and none.

A rich variety of work for and by older people already takes place in parishes, communities and Catholic schools and colleges. Our guidance:

- Complements existing work, offering inspiration and practical tips on further activities.
- Focuses on older people who want to be involved in a group activity; they could be living alone or with others. It includes people who might struggle to have a conversation, for example because of long-term conditions, and/or would benefit from help with transport.

- Has no fixed age bands in mind.

Each section covers a stage of developing new activities. In practice the stages might occur in a different order or concurrently. The guidance is in a format to enable you to drop into individual sections and pull out information in your own time and place. The final section gives further information on key areas for action, should you decide to proceed with establishing a new activity. The process of building good relationships is key to successful activities: Sections 1-3 will help you lay good foundations together before choosing an activity. Occasionally one or more people may be able to get an activity going very successfully just by advertising a clear opportunity, but this guidance is for parishes that want to view potential activities within overall parish development.



Using this guidance

If you have gathered a few like-minded and like-souled members of your parish community together, this guidance can be used within your meetings. In particular, we recommend exploring the ten local stories from the Embrace Project, and watching the Making Memories film which relates to the story on page 39:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=7L3-W93fEX8

Each example is rich and represents lived experience. You might want to discuss as a group:

- How is this like your situation?
- Would a similar group or activity be possible in your situation?
- What other information would be helpful? Underneath each story we have provided contact details if you would like to discuss it further, though we cannot offer personal advice to enquirers.
- Could any of the stories form a basis for further exploration in your own parish community?

- Agree some actions following on the discussion and sharing.

Appendix 1 offers a summary checklist of small steps you can take, arranged as questions that may help you work out whether you are ready to proceed, and what might benefit from further attention. You could use this as an individual or in discussions with others.

Throughout the guidance, we have presented examples of local activities developed in the Embrace Project. Although these activities were facilitated by a paid development worker, the guidance is relevant for parishes without a paid worker. The local stories are specific to places, times and individual relationships made. Results achieved in one place might look very different elsewhere, for example in rural and inner city parish activities.

You can edit the templates in the Appendices for use in your own parish. Each is available to download from Caritas Social Action Network at www.csan.org.uk/embrace.

Section 1:

Building relationships with your parish community and older people

Introduction

“As an older person myself, I have felt the desire to engage in a conversation with you. I do so first of all by thanking God for the gifts and the opportunities which he has abundantly bestowed upon me up to now.”

Pope St John Paul II, Letter to the Elderly, 1999

One of the most distinguishing features of faith-based community work is its foundation on prayer. It is through prayer that the Holy Spirit guides our direction; it is in prayer that we receive encouragement to face the most challenging obstacles, and it is through prayer that we offer thanks when all goes well. Praying about what we should do and ask in our church community, and praying for the work we participate in, expresses our dependency on God for all that we hope for.

Catholic Social Teaching emphasises the dignity of the human person at all stages of life. This has very important, practical implications for parish conversations about social activities, especially for particular groups in the community. A dignified approach is not on the lines of, ‘What can we do to/for old people (as objects of pity/charity/service)?’ It is co-operative: at all stages of forming activities, our focus is recognising and accepting the gifts and participation of each person towards the common good.

We recognise ageing as a natural process that does not diminish a person’s worth. We seek to ensure no-one is deliberately left out. We reject projects and processes that reduce people to passive dependence. For more information on Catholic Social Teaching, and for reflections on the vocational responsibility of Christians for social action, see the Additional Resources section.

If this work is to flourish, engaging others is key, to find:

- Older people who want more social connections, and support to organise or participate in them.
- Other people in the parish (including older people) with the interest and time to explore more opportunities with and for older people.

Engaging with older people

“The Christian community can receive much from the serene presence of older people.”

Pope St John Paul II, Letter to the Elderly, 1999

Engaging with older people, and organised social activities, tend to more be successful when:

- Older people are active participants at all stages of identifying, developing and delivering an activity.
- Publicity materials do not use the word ‘lonely’ – but see the guidance from page 33 on asking about loneliness.
- Activities increase participants’ sense of having a purpose that motivates them to continue.
- The activity includes people facing similar situations (e.g. recently bereaved) and/or common interests.

- Flexible for the participants: local, easy to get to, and affordable.
- Activities are group-based and can be repeated as often as the group wishes.
- Rooted in the place where people live.

It is important to listen to the stories that older people can share: what they care about, their skills and motivation. Who is committed to a leadership role, or has been in the past? Listening will make it easier to work out areas of shared interest. You may be able to pull together a small group of people who have skills to lead any next steps.

Engaging with the parish

“In short, it is not just a question of doing something for older people, but also of accepting them in a realistic way as partners in shared projects — at the level of thought, dialogue and action.”

Pope St John Paul II, Message to the Second World Assembly on Ageing, Madrid, 3 April 2002

Your parish may well already have a busy schedule of activities, run by volunteers who may consider that they are stretched and do not want to take on more. Consider what will motivate people in the parish to engage. This could include improving the range and quality of existing outreach by the parish, evangelisation, social justice, and/or contributing to wider community development in the local area.

At an early stage, it is beneficial to discuss with the parish priest, deacon, religious (depending on the pastoral leadership arrangements in your parish) and parish administrator if appointed, your plan to consult others on the scope for new activities. They are key figures and can often help to achieve the goals you and others seek. In particular, the parish priest has responsibilities for parish funds and property, under the oversight of the bishop. Talk about their experience of, and vision for, the parish. They will also have a good idea of who would be open to supporting any development in the parish. In our experience, the support and expertise of parish priests, deacons and members of religious

communities are enabling factors for these projects. You will still have to undertake most of the relationship building with parishioners and others yourselves.

It is vital to establish contact with others in the local Catholic community who are already serving older people. These may include:

- Union of Catholic Mothers / Catholic Women's League.
- Local SVP group.
- Parish home visiting group and/or Eucharistic Ministers within the parish.
- Existing parish groups or associations of older people.
- Members of the parish who were formerly involved in parish older people's groups.
- Members of the parish whose daily work may involve working with older people.
- Catholic schools and colleges (see also Section 5).

To reach interested people who are already part of parish life, arrange with the priest to put

a notice in the parish newsletter (and social media if used) – see the example at Appendix 7 which could also be used as a flier - and ask him if a request can be made at Sunday Masses so they can make themselves known to you. Any new work or developments ought to build on what is already happening in the parish, not compete with it. It may even be that what is already there simply calls for more support, because those who have been involved may no longer be able to continue or are looking for others to take on the leadership, after many years of service.

Beyond the Mass, plan to bring people together just to get to know each other. The goal is to inspire parishioners to discern and start their own activities and for people to realise for themselves that parish development can be fun, achievable and worthwhile.

There may be a formal agency in your diocese dedicated to supporting the Church's charitable activities in the local area, under the auspices of the diocesan bishop. This may be known locally as a diocesan Caritas organisation. It should be listed on the diocese's website or you can check through www.csan.org.uk – see the link to 'Our Members'. If there is a Caritas diocesan agency in your area, check if they can offer any support and pointers. You may also find it helpful to find out about relevant activities in neighbouring parishes and your deanery.

The two stories following are rich, inspirational examples of what is possible. Both started with people building relationships, sometimes within the parish, sometimes between churches. Some started for one purpose and then changed, added extra activities, or evolved to include other groups.

Bringing a group of parishioners together: Friendship and skills exchange on Tuesdays, Holy Spirit Parish, Manchester

Celia came along on the first evening of the newly formed friendship group in the local parish. She had been widowed for some years and felt very lonely and isolated. Celia's confidence grew over the weeks as the group increased in number. It emerged that she was a skilled seamstress in her earlier years. Celia endeared herself to the group generously sharing her skills in knitting and sewing.

Through the encouragement from Celia over time the group began to share other activities in the parish setting. Celia realised that she could make a positive contribution to the group.

Celia, with others, helped to bring about interaction with young mums in the parish who felt uninvolved and isolated themselves. Deep friendships have been formed with the younger people learning from the wisdom and skills of the older members.



This has since widened to the whole parish, drawing in people from the three churches which have been amalgamated to form one parish. The parish community is delighted with the outcome.

The group, averaging 15 people per session, is now a listening ear for others, a resource group and a skills group. Through the mutual trust, respect and care for each other which initially Celia experienced and was in turn willing to share with others, the group has nurtured new friendships.

Contact: Please email info@caritassalford.org.uk, marking your enquiry for the attention of the Older Persons Manager.

“The word of God encourages us to remain close to the elderly, so that we can benefit from their experience: “Stand in the assembly of the elders. Who is wise? Cling to him... If you see an intelligent man, visit him; let your foot wear out his doorstep” (Sir 6:34.36). In every case, the long years they lived and all they have experienced in life should make us look to them with respect: “You shall rise up before the hoary head” (Lev 19:32). For “the glory of young men is their strength, but the beauty of old men is their grey hair” (Prov 20:29).”

Pope Francis, *Christus vivit*, March 2019, 188

The Big Breakfast Club, Skipton

Building relationships was particularly important when creating a pub-based friendship group in Skipton. The group was set up to be inclusive and is based in a community location. This is particularly important here as the church had no available facilities.

Firstly, the call to action came from St Stephen's church to set up an older men's group. A church presentation drew initial interest, followed by a call out through Skipton Churches Together and local older peoples' groups.

A venue was then chosen to suit everyone including men from any or no religion. The pub idea came from The Welcome Project in Keighley that used their 'local' as a social hub, mainly because it needs very little resource to organise – not even any volunteers in the case of the Keighley group as the attendees themselves run the group! It is self-sustaining once friends are made! Club members pay for their own breakfasts at a discounted rate negotiated by the development worker.

From a core group of local church attendees in Skipton, the group then grew to include people with dementia and their carers. On some occasions one man brought his wife who was living with dementia, whilst on other occasions the wife/daughter/carers accompanied him. This took place as a result of connections that were made with Skipton Dementia Friendly Communities.

As a result of the group being inclusive, the group then started to be active in



A great start to the day in Skipton

supporting local dementia awareness raising events. They organised an inter-schools football tournament to raise funds for The Alzheimer's Society and to raise awareness in schools.

One of the members said, 'The project has been a life-saver for me. It's made me feel included and has given me a voice. Because I've got dementia, that means such a lot to me, I feel supported as part of the local community again'.

Participants also attend a Sporting Memories group which meets at the local NHS Surgery: www.sportingmemoriesnetwork.com/who-we-are

As they say, variety is the spice of life! It all makes for an interesting life in which Big Breakfast Clubbers feel more part of their community and more active in local older people's issues.

Contact: Manager, Older People's Community Groups, Catholic Care (Diocese of Leeds) – 0113 388 5400.

"...so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others."

Romans 12:5



“It is beautiful to be elderly! It is necessary to discover in every age the presence and blessing of the Lord and the riches it contains. We must never let ourselves be imprisoned by sadness! We received the gift of a long life. It is lovely to live also at our age, despite some “aches and pains” and some limitations. On our face there must always be the joy of feeling ourselves loved by God, never sadness.”

Pope Benedict XVI, November 2012

Section 2:

Finding out what's going on for older people here and now

Introduction

Before making any plans to run an activity, it's sensible to find out what's going on in your local area for older people. You can do this by looking for published information, and by contacting local organisations. Contacts you have made in the parish (see Section 1) might offer leads too.

Local sources of useful information:

- Leaders of other local Christian communities and those of other faiths.
- Unitary and County Councils might run an Older People's Forum and may have mapped out activities for older people in the area. Their website might give more information, or you could contact a local councillor to check.
- Local libraries.
- Residents' associations and wardens of assisted living developments.
- Care home managers.
- NHS General Practices and Medical Centres – try the Practice Manager initially.
- Police Community Support Officers.
- Local Fire and Rescue Services.
- Dementia Friendly Societies/Communities.
- Local community and voluntary service organisations, e.g. local Age UK.
- Reminiscence activities and groups.
- Local schools.
- Post Offices.
- Supermarkets' community outreach.

It may also help to look more widely at the resources available locally, such as venues, skills, and transport.

“Making the elderly happy – that is what counts!”

Attributed to St Jeanne Jugan

“A people that does not have care for [the elderly], that does not treat them well, has no future: such a people loses its memory and its roots.”

Pope Francis, September 2014

What resources might be available in your local area?

“Charity, furthermore, cannot be used as a means of engaging in what is nowadays considered proselytism. Love is free; it is not practised as a way of achieving other ends.”

Pope Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est*, 2005

- Parish meeting rooms and halls. Recent research among churches in parts of London found that church halls were often under-used.
- Local community centres and halls.
- Local school hall or rooms.
- Parish Ministry Teams - e.g. Extraordinary Ministers of the Eucharist) will have an awareness of the housebound and isolated.
- Parishioners, other local individuals, and groups. What skills and knowledge do they each have, that they are willing to share in identifying and developing new activities? What exactly could people commit? The parish might already have information on skills and interests that you can review, perhaps from a survey or parish registration forms.
- Minibuses owned by the local parish, school and other local organisations.
- Training – see Additional Resources section.

Record what you find out. You could start a physical or electronic folder where you and other parishioners can add details of organisations helping older people locally. As well as helping to decide on activities, it could also be used for signposting any older people to other support in future.

When discussing ideas and how people could get involved, make notes of any conversations. If you want to talk and consult with larger numbers of people, then carrying out a survey could also be useful.

Building effective relationships takes time – possibly a long time - and patience. It should not be rushed.

If you meet people in other organisations and places, ask about their challenges, what opportunities they would value, their advice and how they might wish to be involved or stay in touch. Some will be aware of isolated older people and might be willing to refer them to you if the parish can help to establish activities.

Beyond the parish, Catholics are called by baptism, and within their skills and circumstances, to take a part in shaping the

Did you know?

Asset-based Community Development (ABCD) challenges a traditional approach of, first, focusing on the needs and deficiencies of individuals and neighbourhoods, and secondly developing service provision that tends not to be owned by the community. Instead, ABCD demonstrates that local assets (people, physical assets etc.) and individual strengths are key to ensure sustainable community development, and that people have a life of their own choosing. Though not explicitly Christian, it offers a powerful approach enabling you to build on what is already happening in your local area. The Church Urban Fund has published an introduction to this approach:

www.cuf.org.uk/learn-about/publications/a-theological-reflection-on-abcd

wider community. You could look to become more active in local issues and civil society, which in turn will draw you closer to topics that you are interested in. For example, attending community meetings and talking with local people and agencies will help you understand local politics and who is making changes already. You might have lived in the area for some time, but having an open mind is useful in identifying what activities you could start.

You can develop a broader understanding of what other groups are doing and thinking about in your neighbourhood – it can be easier to work with people you have something in

common with rather than as a solitary voice. Sometimes, what you learn from individuals in the parish and community will uncover hidden causes of loneliness arising from the effects of public policies. You might find that members of your community become keen to speak up about these issues – the Additional Resources section offers some pointers to training.

There is always more to learn about your local community. Talk to as many people as you can. It is useful to know who makes the decisions, who supports your aims and what parish people are passionate about.

Parish Treasure Hunt event in Worcester

Three local parishes in Worcester, supported by Father Hudson's Care, organised a Parish Treasure Hunt event in Worcester to bring people together and learn more about the community. The event enabled links to be built among individuals and groups. It was an opportunity to celebrate what was already happening in the community and talk about what could happen in the future.

Parishioners attended a series of 'organising meetings', which were promoted through talking at Mass, the parish newsletter and word of mouth. We have found planning an event of this kind is best begun at least 8 weeks in advance. The group identified the 'treasures' of the community including the churches, schools, libraries, parks and local charitable organisations. We used Google Maps to create a map and route. Activities included an obstacle course, archery, a quiz and famous landmark spotting.

24 people volunteered on the day with over 100 people participating. A multi-cultural parish picnic followed the treasure hunt, where people had the chance to meet new people and share their experiences. All participants completed an evaluation form to inform learning for future activities.

Sofia, a local parishioner, said, 'The treasure hunt was very well organised. We particularly liked talking about how to be neighbourly and volunteering in the community. We will definitely continue to support events such as these.'



Two residents getting involved in the Treasure Hunt

The event was a real success in bringing many people together and starting some new conversations about how parishioners could reach out to older people. As a result of the event, a monthly walking group and a parish vegetable garden project have been set up.

Contact: Deputy Community Projects Manager,
Father Hudson's Care, telephone 01675 434000,
or email enquiries@fatherhudsons.org.uk

"I can do things you cannot, you can do things I cannot; together we can do great things."

St Teresa of Calcutta

Talk to me Worcester event



Organisations working in partnership for the Talk to me Worcester event

There may be local community initiatives which your parish can link into and get involved with. One example of this is 'Talk to Me' in Worcester. The initiative, led by various local charities including Father Hudson's Care, with Worcester City Council, aimed to encourage residents to talk to their street neighbours more, to reach out to older people.

The campaign promoted street level events to enhance friendship and social support. It was centred on a competition for the most innovative and inclusive street event. Father Hudson's Care involved local Worcester parishes by talking at Masses and promoting the initiative in newsletters and in local groups. Parishioners were encouraged to celebrate their neighbour relationships

and to foster new connections with people in their streets. Some of the great ideas included having a cuppa and cake on the driveway, games afternoons, a Neighbourhood Cinema, making a play area for children and Toy and Game Swap.

Parishioners found it was a great opportunity to meet up with neighbours that they rarely see in their busy lives. Those living in new build homes felt particularly pleased that they got to know people better and are looking forward to the next event.

Contact - Please search online for 'Talk to me Worcester' to find out more, or email enquiries@father-hudsons.org.uk



Section 3:

Discerning opportunities to build on what is already available

Introduction

If you know your local area, and who you can work with, you are more likely to be able to create a realistic plan of action. A new parish-led activity with older people is only one option. Working appropriately with other bodies is vital in the Church's social mission. You may find more than one of the following points is relevant in your situation.

If you have found there are already activities in the local area

On its own, the fact that another organisation is delivering a voluntary activity nearby should not preclude you from starting something similar. It may be prudent to seek to learn from each other, to build on good practice and understand mutual intentions. Beyond exchanging information, if you work together

more actively, you can sometimes both achieve more than you could on your own. For example, with support from those in existing activities, you might together address unmet demand, for example through more venues or extra times.

Evaluating possible joint activities and funding with other organisations

Each local organisation is likely to have its own purpose, objectives and ways of working. You should consider whether and how working with other bodies would align with the Church's mission, for example to promote the dignity of each person's life, participation in the community, and fulfil any pastoral plans

in the diocese. Some external funding for local projects may introduce conditions and approaches that sit uneasily with the voluntary nature of most parish activities. Your diocese may be able to offer more advice before you enter into any formal agreements. See also page 43 on insurance.

If it looks like new activity is needed

Local conversations may have revealed a new area of activity that local people want to see. In that case, discuss with community leaders how this would build up community life or not – who might be excluded? Can that be addressed

well? What impact would you anticipate on the parish/group? You may also find the Checklist for Reflection in Appendix 1 helpful, together with any pastoral plan that might exist in your parish/deanery/diocese.

“The parish is not principally a structure, a territory, or a building, but rather, “the family of God, a fellowship afire with a unifying spirit,” a “familial and welcoming home”, “the “community of the faithful”. Plainly and simply, the parish is founded on a theological reality because it is a Eucharistic community. [...] There are many other places and forms of association through which the Church can be present and at work. All are necessary to carry out the word and grace of the Gospel and to correspond to the various circumstances of life in which people find themselves today.”

Pope St John Paul II, Christifideles Laici, 26

Being realistic

A survey of churches of various denominations in Middlesbrough, including Catholic parishes, found some common themes in church-based action to reduce loneliness and isolation, which we have reproduced in the table below. In our work with Catholic parishes through the Embrace Project, we encountered the same

patterns. We list them here because, if at times the work seems hard, you should know that you are not alone. Many churches have found ways to build on their strengths and come to terms with their limitations, to establish activities that work in their own contexts.

Strengths	Limitations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sense of mission and calling to serve the community. • Culture of hospitality and welcome. • Understanding of the community they serve. • Loyal volunteer base. • Strong friendships in and out of church. • Potential for sustainability - most programmes are time-limited due to staffing or funding constraints, but churches are a constant in the community, and rely on volunteers, keeping costs low. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of space or equipment, or equipment of insufficient quality. • Limited funding. • Resistance from church members to taking on further activities. • Difficulty reaching the very isolated. • Limits on what volunteers can do: the majority are older people themselves, and by nature most activities for older people take place during working hours, stopping those still of working age from being able to help.

Did you know?

Vintage Communities is an organisation that delivered a project in two London boroughs enabling older people to transform their communities. They took the approach of asking people, 'What would you like to see happening here?' and listening to their answers. They learned this type of approach takes time, patience and perseverance but real relationships are formed that will last long into the future. They also learned there is an appetite for community involvement but this willingness and leadership potential has to be stimulated and nurtured.

www.deborahklee.org.uk/VintageCommunities

Nurturing discernment and action

Very often, individuals and families have deep roots in, and commitment to, the place where they live. They may want to get more involved in the community, but unsure how, or just need to hear that they 'have permission'. In other words, parish-based action doesn't just happen on its own - it needs stimulating and nurturing on an ongoing basis. You may want to consider two aspects to this: how you go about nurturing, and what resources might be helpful.

- How - The Joseph Rowntree Foundation has produced a loneliness resource pack which includes tools for building confidence in groups, to start community action. While not specific to churches, it offers many useful tips and points to consider. See www.jrf.org.uk/report/loneliness-resource-pack and in particular the guide, 'Working with your community to address loneliness'.

- Resources – For more pointers see Section 2 of this guidance, and examples of activities listed in Section 4, set up by parishes involved with the Embrace Project.

Relationships of trust and respect between people matter more than the 'start date' of a new activity group. Once you are having conversations about improving opportunities in the community, you have already started in some way to realise more community life. The more you get to know what motivates people and what they can do, the clearer you will be about realistic prospects for action together. You will also be more able to recognise and work through any occasions where a change of focus is needed.

St Malachy's Parish, Collyhurst, Manchester

Margaret came to the attention of her neighbours through her overgrown garden. She had remained inside the house for over three years with the curtains closed to avoid seeing the garden herself.

A conversation evening was held at the local parish hall led by Caritas Salford. At this meeting participants identified the strengths of, and hopes for, the local area. Some of the people present from the parish talked about times when they felt lonely and isolated. Some young people who said they could be bored on Saturdays offered to help.

Immediately Margaret was approached to see if she would like help with her garden. She was overjoyed. A group of about six young people worked on the garden over a weekend clearing all the overgrown grass and weeds. They cleaned the paving and it looked so much better.

As a result of this encounter Margaret has made new friends, some of whom visit her regularly now. One of the young people has gone into full time employment with a local gardener. This demonstrates the value of matching local resources with local need. This approach also builds a vibrant community of mutual help for the future.

Contact: Please email info@caritassalford.org.uk, marking your enquiry for the attention of the Older Persons Manager.

“The Church is a perpetual construction site.”

Cardinal Henri du Lubac

Lunch at the Lion, Silsden



Lunch at the Lion in action!

Silsden is a very close-knit community in West Yorkshire with thriving Churches Together and Dementia Friendly groups. The community runs both the town hall (as an activity venue – see www.silsdentownhall.org.uk) and the library. There are plenty of social groups for people aged over 50. The Later Life Cobbydale network meets at the GP Surgery to promote activities and funding opportunities for local initiatives. Catholic Care in Leeds found out that there was not an older men's group in the town. So the project then contacted Churches Together and consulted the Later Life Cobbydalers to propose an ecumenical men's group who would meet in a local pub.

After making presentations to the churches, a location and time were set trying not to clash with other activities in the town. The group grew slowly from being just a men's group to a male carer bringing a family member. For some

reason the group attracted an unusually high number of wheelchair users, prompting a search for a community-based pub with 'local people' at its heart. The group worked with a pub owner who was willing to make his pub wheelchair accessible!

It has also been worthwhile to promote the lunch to residents at local care homes. For the past 6 months the group has gone out on a monthly basis to a care home and engaged with people living with dementia. It has also helped that the group is co-hosted by the local Vicar to keep it ecumenical and open. Numbers vary from week to week, but the most important thing is that it's a meeting and a resting place for people who want it.

Contact: Manager, Older People's Community Groups, Catholic Care (Diocese of Leeds) – 0113 388 5400.



Section 4:

Getting new activities going

Introduction

It is important to be creative in getting new activities off the ground. You can be an encouraging facilitator, who brings people together to catch a vision of what they want to do, and helps them move through the practicalities of how an activity can be set up.

Can you bring parishioners together, including older people, perhaps over a tea and a cake, to talk about ideas?

Can you bring people from the wider community into the discussion?

Can you work out together how people's varied wishes, skills and resourcefulness could shape the activity?

Leadership in the local area comes in many forms. On one level, leadership might be demonstrated by someone standing in front of a group of people to encourage them to get involved. At the same time, many people demonstrate leadership skills in many other ways. An individual might be very good at encouraging individuals on a one-to-one basis to get involved, which is just as valuable. It is beneficial to bring together a team of people who have complementary skills.

Sharing ideas, skills and resources are all important factors in preparing for a new activity. Look at who the participants will be, and where would be best to locate the new activity – consider accessibility and the timing of other established activities – you don't want to clash with them! Encourage people who may well be participating in the activity to be part of the planning and operating team: they will know what they really want to do – they may be willing and able to lead on it.

If there is a group of you, you may wish to set out responsibilities for each role in the group and discuss how you make use of skills and experience within your group.

Did you know?

Originating from an Australian idea, 'Men's Sheds' are now popular in this country too. The aim is to tackle some of the issues affecting older men like loneliness, social isolation and loss of purpose. It can help individuals regain self-confidence after an illness, retirement or bereavement. Tea and bun sit-down socials don't suit everyone – more activity choices may increase appeal to a wider audience.

For more details see UK Men's Sheds Association: www.menssheds.org.uk/

“Practical activity will always be insufficient, unless it visibly expresses a love for man, a love nourished by an encounter with Christ. My deep personal sharing in the needs and sufferings of others becomes a sharing of my very self with them: if my gift is not to prove a source of humiliation, I must give to others not only something that is my own, but my very self; I must be personally present in my gift.”

Pope Benedict XVI, Deus Caritas Est, 2005

First Tuesday's Friendship Group, Silsden

Volunteers who had been running different church activities in Silsden in West Yorkshire were interested in setting up a new Friendship group. There was no existing similar activity in the church here so the group had plenty of scope, capacity and energy for taking on new ideas.

At the first meeting with Catholic Care (Diocese of Leeds), the parishioners supported the idea to start up a friendship group once a month. They organised activities and speakers to come to the church hall with tea and cakes.

With the support of Catholic Care, the two lead coordinator volunteers had DBS checks, first aid and safeguarding training and certificates. This is very important in any community work today. They kept registers and oversaw cash and other administration. Having clear responsibilities is just as important. There were 8 other people who were designated 'helpers' as they didn't want to become formal volunteers [See Section 6 for more information]. Finding ways of utilising all offers of help but at the same time ensuring good safeguarding is one of the challenges of this work today.

One that this group clearly addressed.

A volunteer said, 'both my husband and I got made redundant at the same time. It was devastating, supporting this project has been our saviour'.



Yorkshire Day at First Tuesday's Friendship Group

The group formed a 'working party' to meet quarterly to talk over issues and progress and join in with any Catholic Care volunteering events. The group agreed Terms of Reference for itself and held interactive feedback sessions. The individuals involved were already active in the local parish before the group was formed and so, as a result, the Friendship group is now self-sustaining, able to grow and develop into the future.

Contact: Manager, Older People's Community Groups, Catholic Care (Diocese of Leeds) – 0113 388 5400.

“You are never too old to set a new goal or dream a new dream.”

C.S. Lewis

What activities can you initiate?

Once you have listened to each other in your parish and to the wider community, the ideas for activities will just start to flow. Parishes involved in the Embrace Project set up a range of activities with a range of lead times up to a year, including the following examples:

Type of activity	Frequency	Location	Number of older people participating	Number of volunteers participating
Intergenerational film project	Mainly achieved in four half-day monthly sessions	Church halls, out and about	38	6
Breakfast Club	Weekly	Pub	10 for 6+ months	3
Friendship Club	Monthly for 1½ hours	Church hall	35 on average per session for 6+ months	2 with 8 helpers for 6+ months
Lunch Club	Weekly	Pub	8 for 6+ months	1 for 6+ months
Friendship group	Fortnightly for 2 hours	Care home	17 for 6+ months	4 for 1-6 months
Friendship group	Monthly for 2 hours	Theatre coffee shop	9 for 6+ months	2 for 1-6 months
Friendship group	Monthly for 2 hours	Church meeting room	25 for 6+ months	9 for 6+ months
Singing group	One-off	Church hall	9	22
Coffee mornings	One-off led to monthly	Church hall and individuals' homes	32	8
Treasure hunt	Fortnightly for six months	Churches, community, hall	14	24
Pen pal scheme	Fortnightly	Retirement villages, care homes, schools	60	12
Knit and natter	3 hourly sessions on average	Church hall	15 for 6+ months	8 for 6+ months

Other activities you might wish to consider include -

- Phone and telephone befriending.
- Reminiscence café.
- Bereavement support group.
- Walking group.
- Gardening group.
- Craft activities.
- Intergenerational project.
- Trips to places of interest.
- Activities to give people new skills and/or education.
- Activities for women only or men only.
- Activities for people with disabilities.
- Spiritual and religious activities.

Basic guidance on what's involved in setting up these activities is freely available online from many sources. You could use a search engine term like, 'setting up a lunch club', perhaps with the name of your city/county (and add UK if you get lots of search results from overseas).

Please note:

- Some people experiencing loneliness say activities that are one-off, or short-term with a sudden and unpredictable end, leave them dissatisfied and even feeling worse.

- For some activities, calling on external expertise may be necessary. This could well be available in the local area, e.g. a counsellor if you are starting a bereavement support group.
- Technology and one-to-one befriending can have a key part to play in establishing connections, but face-to-face group activities are especially helpful in reducing isolation.
- Groups with an educational element are also likely to be particularly effective in reducing loneliness - for example, activities exploring the arts and creative processes, such as computing and film-making skills. Consider with those interested whether different entry levels would be helpful and viable.
- Physical care, such as bathing, and professional support for long-term health conditions, is beyond the scope of our guidance and is likely to be inappropriate for parishes to organise.

“Be kind, especially with the infirm. Love them well ... Oh yes! Be kind. It is a great grace God is giving you. In serving the aged, it is he himself whom you are serving.”

Attributed to St Jeanne Jugan

Tips on running a community event

Whether you want to get together with your neighbours over a cup of tea, organise a meal together or something different, Eden offers some advice on areas to consider for organising a great community event:

www.edenprojectcommunities.com/stuff-you-can-do

Safeguarding

We recommend that any organised event with people you don't know well is held in a public place. It is probably best not to hold activities in people's homes. Building relationships with all people, including vulnerable people, is vital, but bear in mind that personal care activities and looking after people's money goes beyond neighbour support. For more information on this, please go to the safeguarding section in Section 6.

Plan a place to have your event

With permission from the owner/occupier, you may be able to hold a street-party-style event in your church grounds or in another location locally such as a communal, private or pub garden; café; a local park; driveway or school playground. You should check with your local Council what permissions are required to use a park, public building or space for your event. If you're thinking of having a street party and you want to close the road, it's best to make enquiries with your council as soon as possible as it may take time to organise.

For more information, see the Government's guidance:

www.gov.uk/organise-street-party

Think about how you are going to record who comes to your event

It is really useful to know who comes to your event. This will enable you to get feedback from them on what they thought of the event. You will also be able to invite them to future events and activities. For a one-off event, maybe an exploratory meeting, you might opt to just have a registration form that you ask each participant to complete. For ongoing, regular events you might opt for a register. You must ensure people consent to their personal information being kept by you and that you are not collecting any more information than necessary. For more information on this, please go to the Data Protection section in Section 6.

Get film or photography consent

If you are taking any photos or films of your project or event to share with the general public or any third parties, then you must get written consent from everyone being captured on film. For more information, downloadable posters and consent form templates, see www.edenprojectcommunities.com/make-it-happen/get-film-and-photography-consent Please see the section on Data Protection in Section 6.

Risk assessment

It is important that you identify the hazards in your event environment. This is about common sense and shows that you have thought about the safety of participants. All hazards should be identified including those relating to the individual activities and any equipment. A hazard is something with the

potential to cause harm. It is important to think about how vulnerable people such as children, people with disabilities and older people can be safeguarded. There is a risk assessment template that may be useful to you in Appendix 6. For more information, see www.resourcecentre.org.uk/information/risk-assessments/

Funding your activities

Funding should never be what prevents you from carrying out an activity. Your activity may be free to deliver. If costs are involved, then there are funding opportunities to consider:

- Donations of goods and ‘in-kind’ support: can the venue be provided free of charge? Will local people or a local company provide donations of refreshments or food?
- ‘Self-funded’ activities - activity attendees pay a ‘sub’ each week to cover any costs incurred, such as refreshments or booking a singer.
- Fundraising activities: these can be organised locally and could include raffles, dance nights, community meals for special occasions, a book/plant sale etc.
- Parish funding - the parish may decide through the parish priest and parish committee to fund the activity directly.
- Grants: you could seek grants from local grant-giving organisations and charitable trusts, applying either through the diocese or a local parish as a constituted group with its own bank account. If you need help writing an application, your diocese, other local charities, the local Voluntary Sector Council, and parishioners may have experience to share.

Advice for when an activity is not a ‘success’

Preparation is an important part of setting up a successful community/parish activity. Find out what is happening already in your area. Talk with others in your parish and neighbouring parishes to find out about local needs. If you discover that there is not an interest or attraction to your activity, you may want to carry out more research on other

ideas, including the options of starting small and/or teaming up with other parishes rather than having no activities at all. If you have done your planning and checked there is not a core show of interest or base number of participants, then you may decide to either change or discontinue the activity.

It is wise to consult regularly with your volunteers and those accessing your activities, to understand evolving expectations, and discuss plans. If people attend an initial event, but numbers reduce in future sessions, then go back and ask people why and what they would engage with. Check again that there is a need for what you are doing and that it is something people want to take part in. Remember that things can take time to establish.

Pastoral changes can have a decisive impact on starting and stopping local parish activities,

regardless of prior support. As each priest has unique skills and has a special responsibility in the parish, a new parish priest might take a different approach from his predecessor towards supporting activities. Where a diocese has been reorganising parishes, in some instances we have found that parishioners may not be keen on starting new activities around a period of change. But in other cases, discerning and starting activities in the new parish structure was effective in binding together people from previously separate parishes.

Exploring whether activities are making a difference

Our guidance has focused on activities to reduce loneliness. When you engage with older people individually, you might ask, 'How often do you feel lonely?' and note whether the answer is often/always; some of the time; occasionally; hardly ever, or never. If you ask this question around the time the older person starts to become involved in activities, and again every six months or so - if the person remains participating regularly in an activity - you might start to build a basic picture of general feelings of loneliness in a group over time. As the relationship between your activity and how lonely people feel day-to-day may be limited, beware making a firm link either way! If you are keen to find out more on measuring loneliness, the What Works Centre for Wellbeing has published guidance at www.whatworkswellbeing.org/product/brief-guide-to-measuring-loneliness/.

Seeking to understand whether activities are helpful, in a way that respects the dignity of those involved, is another way of caring for people's welfare. If you find out about how an activity is progressing and what people think of it, you are also likely to be better informed about any adjustments that may be helpful. As a starting point you could use a simple survey, asking for example, 'What does the group mean to me?' and 'What does joining in with [name of activity] mean to me?' You could develop a story board with the whole group, including photographs and quotes from attendees (with their explicit consent). This can be participant led, and from a group perspective: the group chooses the picture and the quotes, and what event or activity they want to highlight.

Afternoon Tea Dance and Friendship at St Brigid's, Bradford (Manchester)

When Caritas Salford staff engaged with St Brigid's parish in Bradford, they were told, "We have nothing for our older members here, what can you do about it?" Three parishes had recently amalgamated. There was a lot of unease: parishioners from each church were faced with the challenge of co-operating with each other for the smooth running of the new parish.

It was in this context that a new monthly lunch club was born to bring people together. A large proportion of parishioners were over 65. Initially Caritas Salford drew together some key women from each Church within the new Parish and we held our first lunch after Christmas in January 2017. We had music, dancing, games, and time for a chat.

Three members of the group prepared some delicious food. They began the friendship group soon after the first Lunch.

The Knit and Natter friendship group was formed soon after the first lunch with the aim of keeping the momentum alive of fostering growth and trust among the members of the newly formed Parish.

The Friendship group has become such a success that other parishes have asked if they could experience the same enrichment. It is wonderful to see the real sense of community now between the three different groups of parishioners as a result of a simple activity of gathering for lunch within the Parish.

Contact: Please email info@caritassalford.org.uk, marking your enquiry for the attention of the Older Persons Manager.

"I know God won't give me anything I can't handle. I just wish he didn't trust me so much."

St Teresa of Calcutta



“What matters in life is not great deeds, but great love.”

St Thérèse of Lisieux

Section 5:

Younger and older people learning together - intergenerational activities

Introduction

A common trend is that due to life pressures such as family breakdown and parents moving for work, grandchildren are seeing their grandparents less, leading to a disconnection between generations. Where younger and older people have opportunities to work together, they can form mutual support, a joint sense of purpose and better understanding between generations. One way that older people continue to have meaningful, productive activity is through engagement in intergenerational projects.

Bishop Terry Drainey was inspired by the addresses of Pope Francis at the 2019 World Youth Day in Panama. The Pope emphasised that the Christian life involves perseverance in relationships and is never about treating ourselves or others as projects or objects:

Only that which is embraced can be transformed. The Lord's love is greater than all our problems, frailties and flaws. He always, always, always embraces us whenever we fall: he helps us to get up and get back on our feet. Because the worst fall, and pay attention to this, the worst fall, that can ruin our lives, is to remain down and not allow ourselves to be helped up. Don't stay down.

It is impossible for us to grow unless we have strong roots to support us. And here is a question that we older people have to ask ourselves: What roots are we providing for you, what foundations are we providing for you to grow as persons?

Dreaming of a future means learning how to answer not only the question what am I living for, but also who am I living for, the one who makes it worthwhile for me to offer my life? And that is something we, older persons, must facilitate by providing work, education, community and opportunities. Would you older persons like to look at young people with God's eyes?

Jesus reveals the now of God, who comes to meet us and call us to take part in his now of 'proclaiming good news to the poor... bringing liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, setting at liberty those who are oppressed, announcing the year of the Lord's favour' (Lk 4:18-19). It becomes present with Jesus: it has a face, it is flesh. It is a merciful love that does not wait for ideal or perfect situations. In Jesus, the promised future begins and becomes life. When? Now. You, dear young people, are not the future. No, you are the present, you are the now of God.

Brothers and sisters, the Lord and his mission are not something temporary, they are not only for World Day of Youth, they are our life today, our life of journeying ahead!

“How awful is the cynicism of an elderly person who has lost the meaning of his testimony, who scorns the young and does not communicate the wisdom of life! How beautiful, however, is the encouragement an elderly person manages to pass on to a young person who is seeking the meaning of faith and of life! It is truly the mission of grandparents, the vocation of the elderly. The words of grandparents have special value for the young. And the young know it.”

Pope Francis, March 2015

Go back to your parishes and communities, to your families and your friends, and share what you have lived, so that others can resonate with the strength and concrete enthusiasm that is yours. And with Mary, keep saying ‘yes’ to the dream that God has sown in you.

Many parishes already have links with the best resource for this inter-generational engagement – their local primary or secondary school.

The Making Memories filming project in Keighley illustrates how enthusiastic schools are to join in with intergenerational work. It not only provides long-term friendships between young and old, but shows how important it is for young people to become dementia-aware at school age.

Top tips to help younger and older people to learn together

- Take a long-term view. This will nurture growing relationships between individuals but also relationships between organisations that support the young and old.
- Acknowledge the mutual benefits that everyone will gain when talking to schools, retirement villages and care homes.
- Devise sessions in which activities are not strenuous or require too much concentration. Allow enough time to enable people to participate as fully as they can.
- Consider group activities that can be held in safe spaces, to promote safeguarding of young and older people. See Section 6 for further guidance on safeguarding.
- Schools may welcome ideas and materials combining CST and community activities, which can contribute towards evidence for diocesan education inspections.

Top tips to get schools and parishes working together

- Schools are often keen to get involved with parish activities. Bear in mind that schools have tight term-time schedules. Planning needs to be organised many months ahead to fit in.
- School fetes are often good places to engage with the wider parish community. Many parishes already have joint fetes. Think about having a stall to raise awareness of parish development and collect ideas around a shared parish vision.
- Make links with your local church schools. They may be able to arrange for you to meet with Mini Vinnies, the pupil/student council, pupils preparing for Confirmation, Health and Social Care classes, and Vocations Days.
- Think about ways that parish activities can link in with the school curriculum. One useful area is the Religious Education syllabus on topics of charity, care for others, volunteering, respect and tolerance of diversity.



The Making Memories Project, Keighley

The best way to learn about this film project, which involved over 600 people over the course of 18 months, is by watching the film (23 minutes) at: www.youtube.com/watch?v=7L3-W93fEX8

A senior leader at Holy Family School set the scene for an intergenerational project with the school: 'I wanted the project to speak to our students so I could see the healing power of words: the way that God's love as expressed through our Year 9 students work could bring happiness and peace to our elderly generation.'

Student participation was encouraged by support and time to engage in dementia friendly sessions and for a monthly get-together. End of year Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE) presentations were held on the work, with a showing of the completed film documentary to illustrate our relationship building journey.

Older parishioners came from the Keighley Catholic Centre Social Group. Some already had experience of an earlier bridge-building project with a local primary school. There was already familiarity with church and community building.

The project was planned to share fun, food and fellowship through different activities in different locations, some of which you can see in the film. The group focused on enjoying each other's company and stretching each other to small challenges, such as being involved in the filming and film editing. The exciting add-on was the



Keighley making memories

involvement of a student film crew who followed around and took footage – the idea of creating the full film was born!

Michelle, the Volunteer Coordinator for the project said, 'The project was a great opportunity to see what can be achieved with a little determination. It heightened my awareness of those in different age ranges and has made me think more carefully about the needs of my neighbour. There is so much more work to be done in this area – it's only the beginning!'

The little challenges then grew into the development of an intergenerational and dementia friendly roadshow to other churches and schools. This gave more purpose to the project – and enabled engagement with dementia friendly groups in the locality.

Contact: Manager, Older People's Community Groups, Catholic Care (Diocese of Leeds) – 0113 388 5400.

Pen pals project, Worcester



An afternoon writing letters together

Primary schools play a key role in the local community and are a great resource for parish development. Father Hudson's Care brought together schools in Worcester and isolated older people in the community, retirement villages and care homes. Pen pal projects benefit children and older people by creating lasting connections and fostering writing skills, supporting school curriculum targets. Pupils were linked as pen pals to an older person and encouraged to write once a month. In some cases, older people needed help writing the letters due to shaky handwriting and dementia related conditions. Care Home Activity Workers and Age UK volunteers were a great source of support in helping people write the letters. People were encouraged to use first names in line with good practice on to safeguarding and Data Protection. The schools dropped off and picked up the letters at the day centres, care homes and retirement villages.

Edith, a Pen Pal, said, 'I have been involved with the pen pal scheme and I have enjoyed getting to know the younger generation, as I have no grandchildren myself. I would like to write to my pen pal as long as he wants.' Seeing the world through younger eyes has helped the older people to become invigorated and improve their health.

Pupils found it easier to write their letters when they were linked to school curriculum topics. When studying World War 2, pupils learnt a great deal from older peoples' experiences of this period. Some schools arranged for the children and the older people to meet as a group and are now looking at other activities and ways to bring generations together e.g. pupils singing at an afternoon at the care home.

Contact: Deputy Community Projects Manager, Father Hudson's Care, telephone 01675 434000, or email enquiries@fatherhudsons.org.uk



“The Lord wants me to say that there should be an alliance between the young and the old. This is the time when grandparents must dream, so young people will see visions.”

Pope Francis for the preface of *Sharing The Wisdom of Time*,
Loyola Press, 2018

Section 6:

So you want to find out some more?

Introduction

This section highlights some key points that organisers need to address in parish activities, and where to find more information. We recommend that in the first instance you contact your diocese to find out what support is available for establishing community activities and work with older people.

Safeguarding

Safeguarding and protecting everyone, including people at risk of harm, is everyone's responsibility. Ensure you are aware of the safeguarding procedures in the diocese and any organisation you are working with. Every diocese has a safeguarding policy and lead officer. Many parishes have also designated a safeguarding representative. Please involve them in planning and reviewing your activities with older people. Parishes should make use of the free online training for parish members and volunteers, access to which is available through the diocese.

The Catholic Safeguarding Advisory Service (CSAS) is responsible for improving

safeguarding practice throughout the Catholic Church in England and Wales. Its primary role is one of co-ordination, advice and support in respect of safeguarding children, young people and adults at risk across the Church. The CSAS website (www.csas.uk.net) provides:

- Safeguarding resources, such as information sheets on what constitutes abuse in adults and safer recruitment of volunteers
- Forms such as volunteer registration forms
- A policy and procedure writing handbook
- CSAS also offers an enquiry line – 0207 901 1920

Safety

Whether you are organising a community event or putting on a lunch club session, it is vital you ensure that you, your group or your organisation are not putting anyone at undue risk.

Before any activity, it is important that a risk assessment is completed to identify any

risks and action can be taken in advance to minimise these risks. The risk assessment process will ensure that you are considering the health and safety of everyone involved in your activities. A risk assessment template is provided at Appendix 6.

Insurance

Whether your activities have paid workers or volunteers, make sure that you have insurance to cover public liabilities and employment. Your diocese is very likely to have longstanding arrangements with an insurer to cover day-to-day activities common to all parishes in the diocese, such as Mass, and for the parish's own activities, both on parish premises and other locations.

If you plan to hire out a church hall/meeting room to another organisation, you should

ensure that organisation has up-to-date public liability insurance. Damage arising from use of church facilities without the parish priest's consent, even by another keyholder, is unlikely to be covered by the church's insurance. In completing your risk assessment, if you have identified anything unusual about the activity such as use of special equipment, contact your diocesan finance team for guidance: they may need time to liaise with the insurer on your behalf.

Data Protection

It is also important that you are responsible about the data you hold on participants as well as what you do with photos and media content on them. Under GDPR (the General Data Protection Regulation), people must actively consent to their personal information being kept by you and you must ensure that you are not collecting any more information than you need. You can find more information here: www.ico.org.uk/

In line with GDPR, it is also important that participants are given the opportunity to actively consent to photos or videos of them being used by you or your organisation. This website gives some useful tips on how to do this: www.edenprojectcommunities.com/make-it-happen/get-film-and-photography-consent

Volunteers

Speak to your local diocese regarding the volunteer processes and procedures in place for parishes. In some areas, such as the Archdiocese of Birmingham, all parish volunteers must register centrally with the Archdiocese, which will provide and process

the registration forms. You are required to follow any procedures of your own diocese, including for references and DBS (criminal records checks). As well as any diocesan processes, consider what local procedures you have in place. Just like employees, volunteers

should be recruited in a fair way, inducted into their role and supported on an ongoing basis.

In addition, if you do not currently have parish volunteers you may want to explore an option where a local organisation can support your volunteers on your behalf. It would be beneficial to have a formal agreement to support this and your local diocesan Caritas organisation, where established, may be able to help: a contact list is provided at www.csan.org.uk – see ‘Our Members’ A-Z, and click the filter for ‘Diocesan Caritas Agency’.

Helper or volunteer?

A common question you may hear from parishioners is, ‘When am I a helper and when do I need to be a registered volunteer?’

National guidance from CSAS (www.csas.uk.net/) is for all people offering their time to help in an organised activity to be registered as a volunteer. This includes activities organised by parishes, Caritas organisations and other Catholic groups. As detailed in the section above, where the volunteer is registered and whose procedures are followed depends on who is organising the activity.

Some individuals may have been ‘helpers’ for many years and not want to change this. Some people may feel put off by any paperwork to become a volunteer, whilst others welcome and feel more comfortable with structure, checks and formalities. However, being

For each volunteering role it is good practice to have a role description. You should request references and you may choose to insist on the candidate going through the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) process if they will be working with children or adults at risk of harm. You can find more information on this at www.dbs.services. We have included sample role descriptions and a Volunteer Application Form template in the Appendices.

registered as a volunteer can be a very simple process.

Ensuring that everyone helping with activities has completed a safe recruitment process for volunteers, including references and where required a DBS check, is part of safeguarding people at activities and volunteers themselves. Many older people can be at relatively greater risk of harm. Each of us has a duty of care to ensure we have done what we can to safeguard everyone involved in an activity from any kind of abuse.

Having a register of who is helping with an activity, and a list of what each of their roles are, can help prevent future conflict, for example when things are not done, or there is duplication. These arrangements also help practically, to plan who is doing what and to

identify gaps or very significant risks that need to be addressed.

Another important point is that some activities are legally classified as 'regulated activity' for people with care and support needs, requiring enhanced DBS checks. These activities include organising a shopping service for older people and taking older people to healthcare appointments.

There are various examples in parishes and in the community when someone does not

need to be a formal volunteer, when they are being 'neighbourly' and helping those in their community as an individual, but not as part of an activity organised by a parish or other organisation. Examples include checking on parishioners or neighbours they know to ask if they are okay; giving friends lifts; helping friends with shopping and having refreshments with people they know who may be lonely.



“Most commendable then are all those social programmes enabling the elderly to continue to attend to their physical well-being, their intellectual development and their personal relationships, as well as those enabling them to make themselves useful and to put their time, talents and experience at the service of others. In this way the capacity to enjoy life as God’s primordial gift is preserved and increases. Such a capacity to enjoy life in no way conflicts with that desire for eternity which grows within people of deep spiritual experience, as the lives of the saints bear witness.”

Pope St John Paul II, Letter to the Elderly, 1999



Appendix 1

Checklist for reflection

This checklist can be used at any point while you are planning and delivering activities. You may find it particularly useful for reflection after reading any of the sections in the guidance.

- ☐ Have you checked whether there is a Catholic agency with capacity to support your parish? See:
 - www.csan.org.uk/member/?member_focus=diocesan-caritas-agency
 - www.csan.org.uk/member/?member_focus=older-people
 - www.csan.org.uk/map-of-members/
- ☐ Has your parish prayed together over the work?
- ☐ Do one or more older people say they would benefit from the proposed new activity?
- ☐ Are you clear about the purpose of the activity and what people want to achieve from it?
- ☐ Is the activity being provided by anyone else locally?
- ☐ Is there a venue to meet up at? Does it have accessible toilets, chairs, tables, kitchen facilities, crockery/cutlery?
- ☐ Can people reach the venue by timely, accessible public transport, and/or with help from volunteers?
- ☐ Is a telephone available to allow people to arrange transport (in case someone does not have a phone)?
- ☐ Is the venue and activity 'dementia friendly'? See links to Dementia and Mental Health resources in Appendix 2.
- ☐ Are you familiar with the fire safety and evacuation procedures?
- ☐ Do you have a plan for how you are going to go about setting up the activity?
- ☐ Do you have a way of promoting your activities locally?
- ☐ If you plan to have volunteers, who are they and how will you recruit them? Do you have a plan on how you will support them effectively in their roles?

Can the parish, activity group or new fundraising cover the potential costs you may incur:

- ☐ Volunteer DBS administration costs, if not recruited via the diocese or another organisation
- ☐ Venue hire
- ☐ Publicity
- ☐ Travel and subsistence expenses for volunteers
- ☐ Insurance
- ☐ How are you going to check if what you are doing is effective? See Section 4 – Monitoring Progress.

Appendix 2

Additional Resources

Developing parishes in transforming neighbourhoods

Love in Action is designed to introduce your parish, youth, school or faith-sharing group to the principles of Catholic Social Teaching (CST). This 6-week programme is delivered through the weekly Sunday Mass homily and associated liturgies, followed by more focussed parish workshops using the model of 'See, Judge, Act' as a lens for forming a parish response to the deepest hopes of the wider local community. 'Reaching Out' can be used independently of 'Love in Action' but does not cover the same ground on how to deepen parishioners' familiarity with CST. *Love in Action* is an online open resource and an initiative of Caritas Westminster and Caritas Social Action Network. www.stepforwardinlove.org

Just Church: Local congregations transforming their neighbourhoods - This booklet, from the Centre for Theology and Community, helps

local churches of all denominations work with and for their neighbours. It includes accessible theological reflection and four parish case studies. www.theology-centre.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/CTC-2013-report-cover-v51.pdf (PDF, 56 pages)

Here: Now: Us, from Together for the Common Good (T4CG), is a one-day introduction to the common good, designed to empower and equip people from across the Christian traditions to help strengthen civil society and build community. It is rooted in Catholic Social Teaching. If you have facilitation experience you can lead it yourself using the full training pack, or you can book a facilitator through T4CG. www.togetherforthecommongood.co.uk

For more on Catholic Social Teaching, see www.catholicsocialteaching.org.uk.

Addressing loneliness and isolation among older people

Welcoming Older People: Ideas for and from parishes is available from Growing Old Gracefully, a charity operating in the Catholic Diocese of Leeds. www.growingoldgracefully.org.uk

Joseph Rowntree Foundation's **Loneliness Resource Pack** includes practical guidance on starting community activities. www.jrf.org.uk/report/loneliness-resource-pack

The Missing Million, from The Campaign to End Loneliness, explains in more detail how to identify loneliness, and how to hold conversations with older people who may be experiencing it. www.campaigntoendloneliness.org/resources

Linking Lives is a Christian charity supporting churches to set up community activities and befriending schemes with older people. www.linkinglives.uk

Dementia and Mental Health

Dementia and spirituality online toolkit –

produced by Welcome Me As I Am and Caritas Social Action Network, this resource reflects on how to accompany those whose lives have been touched by dementia in their spiritual journey – how to understand and nurture the God-given ‘ME’, and so enable deepened practice of our faith.

www.welcome-me-as-i-am.thinkific.com/courses/its-still-me-lord

Tips for a more welcoming and supportive

faith community – produced by Faith Action.

www.faithaction.net/working-with-you/health-and-care/our-projects/friendly-places

Catholic Mental Health Project – offers support, practice resources and small grants to local Catholic communities. An initiative of the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of England and Wales.

www.catholicmentalhealthproject.org.uk

Safeguarding

The Catholic Safeguarding Advisory Service

has published a wide range of resources for Catholic organisations and activities. The Service can also be contacted for advice on safeguarding

within the Catholic Church, policy and procedures and DBS processing. Their advisory telephone line is 0207 901 1920. www.csas.uk.net

Further guidance for running voluntary and community groups

The Resource Centre in Brighton has put together a wide range of practical guidance at www.resourcecentre.org.uk/information.

If you are thinking about including food at an event, you may find it helpful to read ‘*The role of food in building connections and relationships*’: www.ageingbettermiddlesbrough.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/The-Role-of-Food-in-Building-Connections-and-Relationships-FINAL.pdf

Appendix 3

Examples of checklists for new activities

Steps to organise a friendship group or lunch club

1. Identify a parish leader or bring together a group of leaders keen to set up a Friendship Group. Ask the Priest for any names or approach existing local groups.
2. Choose your venue - If you are thinking big, is a church hall or community centre available? Think about access for people with mobility issues.
3. Invite everyone - We lead busy lives, but even if someone can't make it, it's great to be included. To get the word out, consider speaking at Mass, the parish newsletter, posters, e-mail, text messages, card invitations or a combination.
4. Finances – Making parish friendship groups free or low cost is a good way to make sure that no-one is excluded due to financial issues.
5. Involve parishioners – Make a list of the jobs that need to be done. Ask for help with hosting, transport, baking, serving refreshments, answering the door and welcoming. These are much easier and more fun with a team.
6. Focus on activities that people want. Involve those who attend in any programme of activities - if it is led by those involved, they are more likely to want it and engage.
7. Get ahead - On the day, have everything ready well before the start, this way you will feel calm and be able to greet your guests.
8. Arrange with the group the next meeting, taking into account when most people are free and the venue availability. We have found monthly groups the most sustainable.
9. Say thank you - Last, but not least, thank everyone: your guests for coming, bakers, helpers, washer-uppers, coffee pourers, door opener, transporters etc.

Steps for organising a Pen Pal scheme

1. Meet with local primary school head teachers to see whether they are keen. Be aware that often schools organise term activities 6 months in advance, so plan for this.
2. Do you know local parishioners who would benefit from a pen pal scheme? Meet with older people and housebound charities, retirement village wardens, care home managers to check interest and ability to get involved.
3. Arrange meetings between participating head teachers and care home managers and wardens to discuss start dates, frequency of letters and dates for young people meeting older people.
4. Obtain a list of older participants from referring organisations and give this to schools. The children write the letters and organise how these will be delivered to the older people.

5. Liaise with aged care organisations around letter writing. Organise a referral if people need help writing letters because of health conditions.
6. A meeting of pen pals can encourage bonding; we have found a meeting within the first month works well.
7. Evaluate regularly with head teachers and organisations you are working with, and address issues.

Steps to organise street level parish activities

1. Bring together those in the parish who want to lead and get involved – create a planning group.
2. Research and meet with local partners to discuss collaboration, what you share in mission, and shared resources.
3. Planning group to decide on the dates of the event.
4. Arrange promotion including talks at Masses, the parish newsletter, flyers, social media and posters.
5. Think about health and safety and safeguarding – see the previous sections in this guide for further information.
6. Talk to the council if you are using the local street or local communal areas.
7. Evaluate event, and plan for next year!

Source: Father Hudson's Care

Appendix 4

Examples of volunteer role descriptions

Example 1 – Community Group Volunteer

Role Description – Volunteer, [Name of Parish]

Purpose

[Name of activity] aims to provide a safe, caring and enjoyable place that supports those of all faiths and none, to grow in confidence and to make friends and break social isolation.

Working with other volunteers, you will help to create an atmosphere of fun and friendship for everyone involved in the activity, undertaking practical tasks as detailed below.

Main tasks and responsibilities

As a volunteer we may ask you to:

- Help to set up the venue e.g. erecting and positioning tables and chairs, setting the tables with cloths, cutlery, serviettes etc.
- Mark the register and take monies for subscriptions.
- Chat to and interact with the older people attending the group, be a friendly face.
- Organise the raffle.
- Help / join in with activities e.g. exercise or games.
- Help to prepare / cook lunch.
- Help to serve lunch / refreshments.
- Clear away after lunch / refreshments.
- Wash and dry crockery, cutlery etc; load / unload the dishwasher.
- Ensure the venue is left clean and tidy.
- Escort people on community transport or in taxis if necessary.
- Shop for supplies for the group.
- Organise fundraising activities.
- Keep the storeroom organised/stocked.
- Organise group excursions.

Safeguarding

Our parish acknowledges the responsibility to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and adults at risk regardless of gender, ethnicity, disability, sexuality or beliefs. We are committed to

safeguarding in line with statutory responsibilities, government guidance and best practice. All volunteers are expected to adhere to this commitment.

Confidentiality

It is expected that all volunteers will understand how information collected in the role, such as personal details, may be confidential and subject to Data Protection provisions. Your obligations to maintain the confidentiality of any information

gained during your time as a volunteer continue indefinitely after your volunteering has ended. All approaches by the media or other third parties must be referred, unanswered, to the parish priest.

Values and Practice Principles

The person who holds this position is expected to be familiar with and have regard to the ethos of the Catholic Church. He or she must be prepared to respect this ethos and ensure that people of all denominations and faiths have their spiritual needs respected.

Source: Catholic Care (Diocese of Leeds)

Appendix 4

Examples of volunteer role descriptions

Example 2 – Volunteer Befriender

Role Description – Volunteer Befriender, [Name of Parish]

Purpose

It is important for older people to feel part of the local community and the wider world, but not everyone has family or friends who can visit them regularly. Volunteer befrienders will support people in a care home, either to share a specific activity, spend time chatting, or share a skill or hobby with a small group of residents, or an individual. Volunteers should be willing to befriend a vulnerable person, assist them to access their local community, and willing to offer support and guidance where appropriate.

What does this role involve?

A volunteer befriender will:

- Be fully registered with [name of parish].
- Undergo a DBS check.
- Be understanding and respectful to people they are befriending.
- Adhere to confidentiality, Health and Safety and other relevant policies.
- Respect and value their friends' knowledge, experiences and opinions.
- Report any concerns to [amend as appropriate

- e.g. their supervisor/the parish priest] as soon as possible.

- Ensure attendance at trainings, meetings and events when possible.
- Ensure the claiming of expenses is carried out on a regular basis.
- If using their car, the volunteer should ensure it is adequately insured.

A volunteer befriender will not be asked to meet any personal care needs.

What attributes/skills do I need?

- Friendly and approachable.
- Flexible.
- Good communication skills.
- Be committed to the role for at least six months.
- Understanding of and empathy with the needs of vulnerable people.
- Reliability, patience and sensitivity.

What benefits can I expect?

- Meet new people and work in a friendly, supportive environment.
- The appropriate induction and training.
- Support from managers and staff.
- Valuable experience of volunteering that you can add to your CV.
- Work references if required.
- The satisfaction of knowing that you are helping a vulnerable person in your community.
- You can claim previously agreed out of pocket travel expenses.
- A chance to make a real difference to someone's life.
- Invite to volunteer events and widened circle of friends.

Time commitment:

Flexible, based on volunteer's availability and mutually agreed time.

How much time do I need to commit?

2 – 3 hours, once or twice a month for a minimum of six months.

What support will I be given?

- Initial induction and training.
- Continuous on-going advice, guidance and support in your role.
- Regular supervision.
- Invitation to Volunteer Network Meetings to meet other volunteers, share experience and contribute to development of our volunteering experience.
- Invitation to staff team meetings.
- Additional personal/professional development training when possible.

Source: Father Hudson's Care

Appendix 5

Volunteer Application Form Template

Application to volunteer at [Name of organisation]

First name:	Surname:
Home address:	
Telephone no: (day)	Telephone no: (evening)
Email address:	

Please tell us a little bit about yourself and why you would like to volunteer:						
Previous experience (paid or unpaid):						
Any other information relevant to the post:						
Do you have any support needs? (Please specify.)						
Days/hours available:						
Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday

How did you hear about our organisation?
--

References

Please supply the names and addresses of two referees who know you well. This may be a previous or current employer, neighbour, GP, dentist, head teacher or a previous volunteering project. Please note that a referee cannot be a relative.

Name	
Relationship to referee	
Position	
Address	
Telephone number	
Email	

Name	
Relationship to referee	
Position	
Address	
Telephone number	
Email	

Please sign to confirm that the details contained in this form are true and accurate

Signed by Volunteer:	Date:
Signed by Volunteer Manager:	Date:

Please return your application form to:

Confidentiality and Data Protection:

[Name of organisation] complies with General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and its related principles. The above information will not be shared with any third party for marketing or other purposes.

Appendix 6

Risk Assessment Template

Risk assessment

Date completed:	
Name of assessor:	
Location/activity covered:	
Date for review:	

				If high or medium risk rating then complete below:				
What are the hazards?	Who might be harmed?	What are we already doing?	Risk Rating (L, M, H)	Action taken to control risk?	Who will action?	By when?	Reassess: Has risk been lowered	Date completed

Appendix 7

Example of publicity material for activities

WORCESTERSHIRE EMBRACE



Why are we here?

For a growing number of older people loneliness defines and devastates their lives. The need for action is increasingly understood, but it's less clear how we can most effectively respond to such a personal problem.

Can we help?

- Reducing the loneliness and social isolation of older people.
- Increasing the capacity of parishes to take positive action in response to the needs of older, isolated and vulnerable people in our communities.

Together we will

- Recognise we have strong communities.
- Support existing parish and community groups and activities.
- Spend time understanding the nature of an individual's loneliness and create activities that are meaningful and offer valuable conversations.
- Support lonely individuals to belong again and be part of their community.

Call me, [name] – in [name of parish]

Would love to hear from anyone for any reason "Just want to chat" "How can I help" "I have a good idea to support our parish" "Please can you"

[telephone number / email address]

Source: Father Hudson's Care

Invitation to readers

If you have used this resource as part of discerning and organising activities, the national team of Caritas Social Action Network would like to hear about groups that have been established or renewed, and how useful you found the guidance.

You can write to us at:

Caritas Social Action Network
Romero House
55 Westminster Bridge Road
London
SE1 7JB

Or send an email to admin@csan.org.uk.

Please note the national team does not offer advice related to this resource.



About us

Inspired by the Catholic faith, Caritas reaches out to the poor, vulnerable and excluded, regardless of race or religion, and giving people the tools to transform their own lives. The love of Christ, and the deep moral and spiritual principles of dignity, justice, solidarity and stewardship, urge and guide us on. Caritas organisations serve on the ground in 165 countries. In England and Wales, each Catholic bishop has already set up, or is working towards, a diocesan Caritas structure.

Caritas Social Action Network (CSAN) is an agency of the Catholic Bishops of England and Wales, extending the depth and reach of Catholic charitable activities, and offering a coherent Catholic voice for the common good. We bring together over 40 Catholic charities and dioceses, to build up community life for everyone, with a special concern to address many kinds of destitution and misery, in England and Wales.

Caritas Diocese of Salford supports the most vulnerable children, families and older people locally to reduce barriers and help them to fulfil potential. Our vision is that people should be free from poverty, disadvantage and discrimination. Our services are open to all and based on need. Service areas range from those commissioned by local authorities to volunteer-led community projects which enable communities to get involved in their own neighbourhoods.

Catholic Care (Diocese of Leeds) was founded in 1863 to care for orphaned children. Its work expanded in the 1980s to care for vulnerable adults. Many things have changed since our foundation, but one constant is that society still poses a challenge to those who are disadvantaged, vulnerable and marginalised. We respond by offering practical services regardless of a person's faith. Our services include a children's home, homes for adults with learning disabilities and mental health issues, social work and wellbeing services in schools, and community services reaching out to older people, pre-school children, mothers and babies, asylum seekers and refugees, young carers, women prisoners and a holiday hunger project.

Father Hudson's Care is the social care agency of the Catholic Archdiocese of Birmingham, established in 1902. We offer services to anyone in need, without discrimination or favour, to improve lives: in Staffordshire, Worcestershire, Warwickshire, the West Midlands county, Oxfordshire north of the Thames and Caversham. We provide residential care, supported living and day care for older people, specialising in dementia, and adults with learning disabilities and complex care needs. Our New Routes fostering agency and Family Support Workers support children and families who are experiencing difficulties. We work collaboratively with parishes and wider local areas, to enable people to develop their own community projects that meet local needs. Young at Heart in North Staffordshire provides social support for older people including a specialist men's project, and collaborative projects in Wolverhampton and Kingstanding provide lunch clubs and befriending.

Many people want to meet others and take part in social activities regularly. Some people find as they grow older that it is more difficult to do so, for example because of changing health and access to transport, and when friends and family are no longer around.

‘Reaching Out’ is for Catholic parishes looking to reach out to older people in their neighbourhoods. It is suitable for discerning and planning activities for the first time, and for reviewing existing activities.

In 2017-18, the four Catholic charities behind this resource – Caritas Social Action Network, Caritas Salford, Catholic Care (Diocese of Leeds), and Father Hudson’s Care - collaborated under the title of the ‘Embrace Project’. We explored in greater depth how groups in parishes and deaneries could support older people to enjoy more of the social connections people would like. Over the two-year period, local groups developed a variety of approaches, with support from a development worker. Some extended previous activities, and some started new ones.

This toolkit is one fruit of our learning together. We hope it will encourage more confident action in local churches.