

Actions on the ‘Housing Crisis’ in England and Wales

The following case studies were collated alongside the ‘Abide in me’ report. CSAN sought out relevant examples of social action – particularly community-led initiatives - that might stimulate deeper engagement by Catholics and supporting charities.

To produce these case studies:

- We looked within and beyond the Catholic tradition and organisations in Caritas Social Action Network, through a combination of desk research, discussion with members of CSAN’s housing task group, a high-level roundtable, and contacts with our sister Caritas agencies in other European countries.
- We obtained more information from those responsible for the projects. The case studies are in the words of those who provided them.
- We considered, with support from the Centre for Theology and Community, the extent to which the projects appear to be replicable in the context of local Catholic churches.

We hope that this collation of case studies will inspire new bids and collaborations in the Catholic Church.

Case Study 1 – Nightstop (Depaul UK)

Nightstop is a same-night emergency accommodation service that links young people aged 16-25 in crisis with trained and vetted volunteer hosts in the community who accommodate them in their own home. Depaul UK oversees the network of Nightstop services.

Over 65% of young people who use Nightstop become homeless because of family or relationship breakdown. Others have left care, have financial difficulties, or experienced violence. A young person is hosted for approximately eight nights on average by Nightstop and the team then works to find safe and sustainable places for the young person to move onto, and if appropriate, restore family relationships to enable a return home.

The services operate across the UK in over thirty towns and cities. In 2017 over 11,000 safe nights were provided for over 1,400 young people in over 500 volunteer homes.

The first Nightstop service was set up in Leeds in 1987 as a response to the Archbishop of Canterbury's 'Faith in the City' report and was then developed by a group of churches. Many of the current hosts and other volunteers involved in delivering Nightstop are recruited through presentations to church groups. Nightstop volunteers surveyed in a recent piece of research said that they gave young homeless people a bed for the night because of their faith, with respondents stating they were "responding to God's generosity", or because they considered it to be "a biblical principle". Sarah, who hosts with her husband Greg in Nottingham, explains: "When we started Nightstop we wanted to play our part in changing outcomes for young people. We believe God changes lives and can turn around difficult situations in people's lives. By opening our homes to young people at Nightstop, we hope to play a part in helping a young person."

Case Study 2 – Supported Lodgings

In supported lodgings schemes, members of the public offer their spare room, often for six months or longer, to a person who would otherwise be homeless.

Hosts build a personal relationship with the person they are hosting as well as providing practical help and advice. Additional support and the matching of hosts and people who need somewhere to stay is provided by an external agency such as Depaul UK, and usually commissioned by a local authority. Government guidance in 2008 showed that supported lodgings deliver better employment, education, substance misuse, family relationship and mental health outcomes for young people than other types of supported accommodation. Depaul delivers supported lodgings for young people in various parts of England. Young people who have used the schemes tell Depaul that they appreciate staying somewhere that feels like a home and having the chance to build a supportive relationship with a dependable adult. Depaul and other providers are keen to extend the number of areas covered by this type of accommodation.

Case Study 3 - Home for Good (The Passage, London)

The Home for Good project uses structured befriending and community support to reduce social isolation, build resilience and thereby prevent return to the streets.

Home for Good is a London-wide scheme supporting people who have experienced homelessness and have recently moved into a new area, and/or are experiencing isolation and other struggles. Most people supported by the scheme have complex histories. The Passage trains and supports volunteers to be partnered with someone in their local area. They meet regularly (for example, an hour per week for up to a year), in a public place, to offer support and companionship, with a goals-focused approach. There are currently around 40 active partnerships. Many of the individuals applying to join Home for Good are from churches with which the Passage has strong links.

Louisa and Con

Louisa and Con have been on the programme for ten months. In Louisa's 'day job' she runs a career mentoring programme for university students. Con has a busy schedule including volunteering and attending various groups. He has faced many challenges with physical and mental health and substance misuse, and a period of rough sleeping in 2015. He is looking for paid work and studying for qualifications.

They approach their coffee meetings in a structured manner, discussing Con's goals and planning ahead for future sessions. They have worked together on budgeting and employment searches: they now plan to start running together.

Con describes having a Home for Good volunteer as a "motivation, a conscience. An excuse to get out of bed (I isolate a lot). Someone to explore with and reignite my interests". His confidence in several areas has grown. Louisa says: "I am really enjoying volunteering on the Home for Good programme. It doesn't feel like volunteering or work, it's just an enjoyable couple of hours. Through the Group Supervision sessions, I am learning lots more about issues related to homelessness, for example, the effect that alcohol/withdrawing from alcohol can have on a person. I also like the community element, as I am quite new to the area and we try to explore different places together".

Case Study 4 – St George-in-the-East, London

The story of the Anglican parish of St George-in-the-East (in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets) shows how the physical assets of the parish can be used to strengthen both the life of the congregation and its social engagement.

In addition to its clergy accommodation, St George's has four flats. Those who criticise the church for holding on to physical assets while there is a housing shortage might wonder why these flats were not given over to affordable housing. The parish decided instead to use them to house four lay workers, who engaged in a daily rhythm of public

prayer with the clergy and people of the church and were trained in community organising - to develop lay leaders within the congregation and reach out together into the neighbourhood.

In three years, as well as increasing the size and level of participation of the congregation, the lay workers have helped the parish to work with its Muslim neighbours to secure 40 units of affordable, community-led housing on a disused railway yard near the church. By good stewardship of the assets entrusted to it, the church has won ten times as much affordable housing as it owned - and developed a team of local people who are committed to winning more.

The successful campaign for a Community Land Trust has also strengthened relationships in the wider neighbourhood. As in Barking, housing allocation has in the past been a source of inter-communal tension in Tower Hamlets, and the participation of local churches in a broad-based campaign has helped to develop relationships of trust and solidarity - itself strengthening the “human ecology” of the area.

Likewise, the “Open Table” project at St George’s is developing relationships between parishioners with homes and those who live locally who are homeless - around the shared cooking and eating of food. The development of such mutual relationships with homeless people prevents them from being reduced to the status of “clients” receiving a professional service from either the government or charities, complementing that vital support with the sharing of food as equals. The project is led by members of the church and their Muslim neighbours, with the emphasis on a common table flowing from the daily gathering of that Christian congregation around the altar.

Case Study 5 – The Malachi Project, Redbridge (Salvation Army)

The Malachi Project in Redbridge, developed by the local Salvation Army with partners in other denominations and faiths, offers a striking example of the agency of the very poorest in securing affordable housing.

The project is building supported housing for people who are currently homeless – with an integrated social enterprise refurbishing bicycles. The rough sleepers who will live and work on the site have been at the heart of the campaign to secure the land, funding and planning permission.

Case Study 6 - Mission Housing Association Ltd

Mission Housing is a privately financed charitable housing association, which provides a range of housing solutions for Christian key workers in London.

The housing association supports key workers of London-based churches to access housing. In most cases, these workers are paid by their Church. Key voluntary workers are also considered, depending on their ministry involvement of the Church. The association does not provide general needs housing or housing for those who are homeless.

As at 2018, there were around seventy schemes in operation, over about fifty properties. These included rooms in houses of multiple occupation/community houses (mostly attached to a specific church or project for their volunteer workers); shared ownership, and tenancies with rents typically 50% below a commercial level.

Mission Housing receives support from churches and their members. This normally takes the form of financial equity support to help purchase a suitable property.

Steve and Meena

<p>Mission Housing helped Steve and Meena buy a property close to Sanderstead Evangelical Church in south Croydon by providing a fixed sum of capital as well as raising funds through external investors. “The team were immensely helpful and supportive throughout the process of buying a home” says Steve, who took on leadership of the Church with Meena in 2012. “The support of Mission Housing is absolutely essential to our ministry. Through them God has made it possible for us to stay long term in one place for the duration of our time in south Croydon”. A key part of Steve and Meena’s involvement with the church and local community has been their need for a home. Not only do they need somewhere to live but also a context in which to minister to people. “Some of these folks we meet have experienced disappointments in life such as divorce and failed relationships, and many require regular hands-on-support from myself and Meena - hospitality in our home is a crucial part of our ministry to them”.</p>
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Case Study 7 – Hosting Toolkit (NACCOM network)

The NACCOM Hosting Toolkit is a how-to guide helping members of the public provide spare rooms to migrants experiencing destitution.

The toolkit contains practical advice on setting up a hosting scheme, including recruiting, training and supporting volunteers, alongside case studies of schemes in operation, showing the impact hosting has made, both to their guests and the wider community. Beneficiaries are generally people who have had their asylum support suspended or stopped, but who are unable to leave the country. Other examples include those have been granted refugee status but face homelessness due to delays with accessing state support, housing and employment.

Churches and faith-based groups are particularly engaged with hosting projects. Some work as night shelters, or as group hosts.

The toolkit, which is accessible online, brings together expertise from NACCOM (a network of accommodation providers) and Homeless Link (a national homelessness charity) and aims to encourage the development of hosting as a practical response to rising migrant destitution.

Case Study 8 – Caritas Habitat (Secours Catholique – Caritas France)

Caritas Habitat is a real estate company which mobilises social investments for the poorest and most vulnerable. As a social enterprise, the aim of Caritas Habitat is to acquire buildings for the purpose of leasing.

Caritas Habitat (founded by Caritas France – Secours Catholique) in 2015, works with partners across France. The company purchases and renovates properties, which are then rented and managed by partner charities and associations. In this way, the organisation enables the provision of social housing for people in different kinds of need. This includes the provision of supported housing, social housing, emergency accommodation, ‘solidarity room-mates’ (*colocations solidaires*)¹ and ‘collective flatshares’ (*logement très social*, i.e. ‘very social housing’). The network of partners that makes up Caritas Habitat is open to any association or social action project accompanying the poor at local or national level, as long as its vocation is consistent with the actions and principles of the Caritas France Network.

Founded by, and a Member of the Caritas France – Secours Catholique Network, Caritas Habitat often works with the ‘Association des Cités du Secours Catholique’ as well as other faith-based structures and organisations. However, it is not intended to be a Christian tool, because the organisation benefits from public funding.

Caritas Habitat is restoring an old sheep pen, close to a supported housing project with 16 places, owned by the Caritas France Association of Cities (ACSC) in Lourdes. Caritas Habitat will purchase and transform the sheep pen into six furnished and equipped studios and a common room, which will be offered to people in difficulty. The ACSC will manage the residence. The total amount invested will be 575,000 Euros.

Case Study 9 – Stepping Stones Project (Habitat for Humanity GB Homes)

Habitat for Humanity partner with corporations to secure the funds needed to send volunteers to build and renovate homes in London and in the UK.

The Stepping Stones Project, at the Friends Meeting House in Tunbridge Wells, is a 3-way partnership between Habitat for Humanity GB Homes, West Kent Quakers, and West Kent YMCA.

Local Quakers carried a vision for many years to convert their under-used Friends Meeting House hall into supported move-on accommodation for local youth (aged 16-24) who have formerly been homeless and are currently housed at Ryder House, a 37-bed YMCA supported housing facility close by. Tunbridge Wells Borough Council

¹ Forms of co-housing, e.g. for people with disabilities, mental ill-health, single mothers, young professionals intergenerational roommates, and older people.
https://translate.google.com/translate?hl=en&sl=fr&u=https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Colocations_solidaires&p_rev=search

have long identified a need for supported housing for these young people and supported the project with a £250,000 grant from Section 106 commuted sums from local private development, subject to the accommodation remaining affordable and being managed by West Kent YMCA or a similar provider. The building has been converted into 3 shared flats providing 9 generously-sized bedrooms between them (3 in each), with shared kitchen/diners and bathrooms. This model allows flexibility for how the flats are used in the future as needs evolve. The works began in April 2017 and completed in April 2018.

Through this facility, provision is made for young people (aged between 18-26) identified by the local YMCA as ready to move-on from Ryder House who will be supported in these shared flats for between 1 and 2 years. The rent is set at Local Housing Allowance (LHA) with service charges on top which is affordable for the new tenants who are in receipt of this housing benefit. It is hoped that in this way, a virtuous cycle is created whereby much-needed spaces are freed up in the YMCA Ryder House for vulnerable and homeless young people to be nominated or referred, and spaces become available at the new move-on facility as these young people, with support from the YMCA, step-on into new employment and skills and hopefully new affordable accommodation locally – hence the name... “Stepping Stones” Project.

All three partners in the project have Christian ethos, values and foundations with varying community-focused missions. They have been united on the project by their common concern for providing decent and affordable homes for local young people that desperately need them. Each partner has also invested financially into the project (development cost of £710,000), with an additional loan being secured from Big Issue Invest to support the funding gap not met by donations, S106 grant and other grants.

The Quakers have received a newly refurbished section of the building for their weekly worship and activities, and hence will continue to have a Christian presence on location and be good neighbours to the scheme. Habitat for Humanity hold a 49-year lease for the residential part of the building and are engaging West Kent YMCA on a full-management lease. This arrangement ensures that all three organisations continue to stay invested and involved in the long-term future of the facility.

Other local, and some not-so-local Christian groups, churches and community groups have been supportive of the project and inspired by the partnership model.

Case Study 10 – Real Lettings Property Fund (St Mungo’s/Resonance)

The Fund sources appropriate properties for the specialist Real Lettings Property Fund team which houses those who would otherwise have no viable access to quality, private sector accommodation.

Resonance is a social impact investment company which works with social enterprises and charities by offering advisory services or help to raise capital from like-minded investors.

The creation of impact funds by Resonance, such as the Real Lettings Property Fund, delivers financial return and targeted social impact. The Real Lettings Property Fund is the largest social impact residential property investment fund in the UK. Real Lettings, a social letting agency and part of homelessness charity St Mungo's, works mostly with people over 18 referred from local authorities. Services span London, Oxford, Bristol and Milton Keynes: Real Lettings currently manage around 650 properties, housing over 1,400 occupants, including children. Tenants are offered good quality, private rented sector housing. The aim is to offer people a period of stability and access to services and advice, enabling them to be in a position to move on independently after about two years. The team provides personalised coaching and support for tenants to prepare them for a successful and planned move into independent accommodation.

Case Study 11 – Housing Pilot Projects (Commonweal Housing)

Commonweal works with expert partners to deliver new models of social housing and support tailored to client groups with particular needs.

Commonweal supports a range of people by partnering with expert charities to support and run various projects. Some of the causes supported include women fleeing domestic violence, young adult carers, people leaving homelessness, women exiting prostitution and sexual exploitation and refugees and immigrants with no recourse to public funds. Commonweal works with charities such as Solace Women's Aid, Quaker Social Action, Elmbridge Rentstart, Thames Reach and Praxis Community Projects.

As an independent action learning charity, Commonweal works to investigate, pilot and champion housing-based solutions to social injustice. Using charitable resources, Commonweal provides experts and partner organisations with the opportunity to trial and test new approaches designed to enhance housing equality and justice. Each project is independently evaluated, and the learning is used to inspire new thinking. Through the replication of what works and the lessons from what doesn't, Commonweal is able to influence changes in policy and practice.

Case Study 12 - The Dispossession Project (Mission Theology Advisory Group)

The Dispossession Project is an ecumenical project developed by the Mission Theology Advisory Group² to provide mission resources on social justice topics such as 'Home and Homelessness'.

The resources are freely accessible and downloadable online. Resources are arranged in learning styles: word-based; activity-based; liturgy-based; spirituality-based. The object is to get Christian groups to engage with the topic of dispossession deeply, through their preferred mix of learning styles, and to move from study, prayer

² A partnership between the Church of England and Churches Together in Britain and Ireland.

and engagement to action, change and transformation. The idea of personal and communal dispossession is central. The project addresses three themes:

- What do we need to let go of to encounter God's purpose for us more clearly?
- What can we give away or offer to others?
- What do we need to abandon as being unhelpful to our growth as human beings beloved by God?

Feedback from individuals, groups and churches using the project has shown a real desire to do something and to follow up the suggestions about transformation and change in communities. The juxtaposition of reflection on 'home' and its meaning and the situation of homeless people has been especially important in the project. This reflection has challenged perceptions of homelessness and highlighted the human dignity of homeless people. Users have also highlighted becoming more aware of the difficulties elderly and vulnerable people have in keeping their homes and looking after them.

Case Study 13 - 'A place to call home?' (Joint Public Issues Team in collaboration with Housing Justice and Scottish Churches Housing Action)

'A place to call home?' is a set of six bible studies for small Christian study group discussions focusing on a range of issues around housing. It is designed to stimulate reflection and discussion on how attitudes and actions towards the home, housing and homelessness might be influenced by faith.

The project offers a biblical and theological framework for Christians, both as individuals and congregations, to be stimulated to consider their responsibilities as a gospel people in the face of housing issues. For some this might be through the combined endeavours of the faith community, for others by seeking to reflect the priorities of God's kingdom through their day-to-day working lives.

The sessions combine icebreaker activities, biblical reflections, discussion and suggestions for action. They require a willing host, facilitator and group to meet over six sessions in a private home or church venue. Reflections cover the following topics: 'Faith At Home', 'Coming Home', 'The quality of housing', 'Housing we can afford', 'A relational community', 'A place to call home?'