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# ***Holistic Mission***

*Social action and the Church of England*

*James Noyes and Phillip Blond*



**ResPublica**  
*changing the terms of debate*

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*The Research by Design survey, specifically commissioned for this report, can be downloaded at:  
[www.researchbydesign.co.uk/cofe](http://www.researchbydesign.co.uk/cofe)*

## About ResPublica

*ResPublica is an independent, non-partisan UK think tank founded by Phillip Blond in November 2009. In July 2011, the ResPublica Trust was established as a not-for-profit entity which oversees all of ResPublica's domestic work.*

*We focus on developing practical solutions to enduring socio-economic and cultural problems of our time, such as poverty, asset inequality, family and social breakdown, and environmental degradation.*

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# Foreword

*Tom Jackson, Chief Executive,  
Resurgo Social Ventures*

*“Local churches are distinctive in their geographic spread across the country, their commitment to social service and their ability to catalyse a local network of volunteers. Churches therefore provide a critical platform for deep social transformation and could generate even greater social impact with bolder vision, resourcing and leadership.”*

A dynamic presence reaching deep into neighbourhoods and transforming lives. A long-established social service provider with the potential to multiply its social impact today. Such are the key findings emerging from this report on the role churches play in communities up and down Britain. When it comes to the week-in-week-out task of helping people through the challenges of life, local churches generate a form of personalised, holistic support that is both distinctive and profoundly valuable to our national life.

This is nothing new or surprising to Resurgo. Over the past decade, we have sought to leverage the unique and vital contribution churches make to the re-imagining of local society and individual wellbeing. As in past centuries, the church continues to demonstrate an impressive record of tackling issues such as educational failure, housing poverty, unemployment, substance abuse, relationship breakdown, debt and youth disengagement in an entrepreneurial and person-centred way.

Local churches are distinctive in their geographic spread across the country, their commitment to social service and their ability to catalyse a local network of volunteers. Churches therefore provide a critical platform for deep social transformation and could generate even greater social impact with bolder vision, resourcing and leadership.

The question then is how to unlock and release this greater potential for the wider good. Part of the answer is by helping the Church engage with policy changes in welfare. Another is by helping to capacity build the most innovative, transformative and emergent models to spread their impact more widely. And a third is by

investing financially in this growth. Resurgo exists to achieve these goals in partnership with the Church and wider community. Our mission is to help outstanding church-based social ventures grow in scale and impact. In particular, the recent launch of Resurgo Investors helps us achieve this by providing social investment to accelerate the reach of such ventures for present as well as future generations.

We are sincerely appreciative of and thankful to all those we are privileged to work with on this journey. In particular, we are absolutely delighted and grateful to be a partner with ResPublica in the publication of this important and timely report.

# Executive Summary

*“Institutions are crucial to brokering the future of a country. Without both enabling and mediating institutions that leverage people into education, skills and shared prosperity, a nation cannot progress...”*

*We need to create, recover and restore new transformative institutions that can genuinely make a difference to people and their communities.”*

## **Britain needs both new and renewed institutions.**

Institutions are crucial to brokering the future of a country. Without both enabling and mediating institutions that leverage people into education, skills and shared prosperity, a nation cannot progress. We are now in the UK at a point of institutional miscarriage. Both state and market have failed us. The NHS has been implicated in massive scandals of appalling care and resultant cover-ups. Our banking system has been the province of vested and rent-seeking self-interest. In the UK, social mobility is stagnating and inequalities are both rising and embedding; all of this despite massive expenditure by the state and vast amounts of contracting out to the private sector. We need to recognise that doing more of the same will only deliver more of the same. We need to create, recover and restore new transformative institutions that can genuinely make a difference to people and their communities.

## **Renewing public services: holistic, personal and local.**

One reason that our public services are failing is that they have been constructed without true regard to the individual needs of people. Our services have centralised, standardised and delivered their outreach through silos and along departmental lines. As a result, people's true needs are never met. Since all human beings differ in what they need, delivering through a one-size-fits-all mentality ensures that those who most need help do not receive it. Instead services must be bespoke and personal, they must be holistic and tailored to people's specific needs. They must be delivered in a local manner that reaches and helps difficult

groups and also deals with all others according to their true needs.

## **The Church can help to meet this need and fill this gap.**

Perhaps surprisingly to many, we argue the Church has the potential, the experience and the capacity to become one of the foundational enabling and mediating institutions that the country so desperately needs. We do not deny the right and ability of other organisations to offer the holistic, personal and local social care and action that we require. Indeed we ask for other organisations to be created or restored to their more radical foundation. In respect of the latter, ResPublica has already called for housing associations to fulfil their more transformative and visionary foundation and become the type of enabling organisation that we are calling for. However, we believe that among all available organisations the Church is uniquely positioned to create a radical new offer on the basis of an ancient institution that can provide universal access and standards combined with local variation and innovation.

## **The Church has the people.**

In the research commissioned for this report, we have found striking evidence that the Church has enormous experience and even greater potential. Levels of social action are considerably higher amongst Church attendees than the general population. 79% of Church congregations engage in some formal voluntary action compared to just 40% of the general population, whereas 90% are involved in informal voluntary activity as opposed to 54% of the general population. Two thirds of those doing voluntary action state

## Executive Summary

that it is through the Church, one fifth of those doing such work support those with disabilities.

### **The Church has the experience.**

As this report amply demonstrates, the Church has a wealth of in-depth and varied experience across most fields and in many areas. From helping women recover from prostitution, to mental health, to work experience and training to homelessness and drug addiction and prisoner rehabilitation, the Church is already doing it all and in many cases it is delivering a greater level of care than the state and the market were ever able to. Moreover, the Church is characterised by a high level of education and managerial ability of its attendees, the experience of its staff and the enormous range of assets it currently brokers for the good of all. Thus, the ability and potential of the Church is beyond any reasonable doubt.

### **The Church has the intention and the will.**

Fears of proselytising appear ill-founded, as 88% of respondents to our questionnaire agree that they are comfortable helping people who have different values or religious beliefs with 65% strongly agreeing with this. Faith is clearly not for Church of England congregations a motivation for partisanship and sectarianism. But faith is the source for people wanting to get involved: 81% agree that they help others because of their faith. And an overwhelming majority say that their voluntary action is vital, as other public and private institutions do not do enough to help other people.

### **The Church has to make itself fit for purpose.**

If the Church is to fulfil its purpose and its potential, it has to substantially upgrade its internal and external structures. It has to adapt to the governance demands for accountability and standards by the state whilst at the same time allowing its localities to innovate and create. It needs to create co-ordinated structures to realign its provision from excellence in some places to entirely absent in others. It should develop an 'at scale' corporate

offer that can leverage all the distinction and variation of its current provision into a more truly universal service which can change the lives and outcomes of the people and localities it serves. Crucially, over 80% of respondents said that organisations involved in social action need more support and guidance. This is itself a marker that much, much more needs to be done.

### **The Government has to create the opening, the incentive and the encouragement.**

The Government has to accept that the current model is broken. Neither nationalisation or privatisation can save the poor from their fate and secure the middle classes in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. We need government to build on its reform agenda and think meaningfully about institutional innovation. We need the government to encourage the Church to partner with it in a way that is consistent with the Church's vision and beliefs to help create an institution that can transform our lives and our communities through holistic and personal forms of service delivery that care for the whole human person. Government needs to help the Church become procurement and delivery ready, and the Church needs to help the government by telling them what people really and genuinely need.

## **Summary of Recommendations**

### *To the Minister for Civil Society*

- 1. The Cabinet Office** should introduce a new Unit or taskforce, specifically to explore how Government can better work with the Church and church-based social ventures. It needs to help open doors for the Church to enter public service delivery and to do so in a manner wholly consistent with the Church's vision, beliefs and holistic approach. In short, the Government should facilitate competition *between* as well as within public service models.

### *To the Archbishop of Canterbury*

We recommend to the Archbishop of Canterbury that a growing universalisation of Christian social action be one of the key projects of his primacy. It will only succeed if it is governed and led by him. Internally, this would mean a rigorous assessment of what is needed to get the Church better ready and able to deliver, and how it might not only broker in itself, but other faith groups, in meeting national and local needs. It will require national, regional and local Church administration to adopt the structures needed to make it possible to deliver services in every locality. Externally, this would require the Archbishop meeting with the Government and the Cabinet Office to discern what is needed to allow the Church to enter the market for procuring, delivering and grouping public services in holistic provision.

- 2. The (Resource) Strategy and Development Unit of the Archbishops' Council and Church Commissioners** should set up a national 'Social Commission' which is tasked with setting-out a vision for the future of the Church's social action and role in delivering public services – both statutory and voluntary. Specifically, the Social Commission should include a strategy for how the Church can prepare, resource and implement this vision.

## Recommendations to Government

3. The **Cabinet Office** should explore the possibility for a new White Paper on Public Service reform to investigate the principles and potential impact of holism and personalism in public services. In effect, the government is already trying this with its approach to troubled families, but these are lessons that could and should be applied more widely. Once the benefits of an interpersonal and holistic approach is recognised, the current Open Public Services Programme and White Paper can be augmented by an approach that no longer breaks down the public sector in order to contract it out.
4. As recommended by the APPG for Faith and Society, a '**Faith and Localism Charter**' should be introduced to ensure trust and transparency between commissioners and faith-based organisations when preparing to commission services from them.
5. The **Cabinet Office** should ensure that representatives from church-based organisations which are currently, or are looking to, deliver a public service should be invited to participate in the Government's Commissioning Academy.
6. The **Cabinet Office** and their major stakeholders (including Big Lottery Fund) should support the growth of a social venture platform which focusses on capacity-building church-based social investment organisations towards becoming **Big Society Capital** intermediaries.
7. **Big Society Capital** should encourage a social investment platform with good links with church-based social ventures to apply as an intermediary that could on-lend to such groups.

## Recommendations to the Church

### Preparing the Church

8. The **Mission and Public Affairs Department of the Church of England** should set up a **Social Action Unit** to offer guidance in co-ordinating the Church's role in public services and formal social action at a national level.
9. The **Social Action Unit**, through the dioceses and in partnership with Government, local community groups, charities, institutions and services, should encourage each diocese to set up designated **Social Action Teams** to review the social needs and assets of the locality, and draw up a co-ordinated local response to them and plan of action for their local community.
10. The **Social Action Unit**, in partnership with the **Cabinet Office** and the **Department for Communities and Local Government** should ensure that the designated teams promote the opportunities opened up by the new 'community rights' and work closely with other local groups such as neighbourhood forums and local councils.
11. **Local churches** should look further to develop two key assets – people and land:
  - **Local churches** should give congregations and communities the opportunity to develop skills and flourish, to prepare them for greater social action.
  - **Local churches** should conduct an asset management audit in order to maximise use of their assets, and scope out possibilities for regeneration, use or ownership. **The Church of England's Strategy and Development Unit** should commission pilot studies to test their effectiveness, including the social impact on the wider community.

- **Local churches** should become, where possible (and where space is available), 'social incubators' for start-up enterprises and social ventures.

### Capacity-Building the Church

12. The **Church Commissioners, Church of England Pensions Board** and **CCLA** should set aside a certain percentage of the returns on their investment to invest in church-based social ventures. Each body should explore how their respective responsibilities could invest in projects that can both generate returns and achieve greater social impact through churches, including establishing a 'first loss' capital pot to encourage Big Society Capital and other investors to accelerate their own church-based social investment.
13. **Local churches** and **church-based organisations** should utilise the 'community right to challenge' in instances when a church-based organisation is better placed to deliver a local public service and create greater social impact than its counterparts.
14. **Local churches** and **church-based organisations** should appeal to the Public Services (Social Value) Act when challenging services or local ownership of assets. The national co-ordinating Unit of the Church of England should work with Government to develop guidance on this matter for church-based ventures and public service providers.



# 1 Introduction

*“For us the Church is unique, irreplaceable and fundamental. This does not mean that it is yet fit for the purposes we envisage here, nor does it mean as a fundamentally human institution that is free of faults, error and failure. But what it does have is an unparalleled potential to become an institution that all of Britain desperately needs. What we argue in this report is that the Church is an utterly unique institution with enormous reservoirs of good will, education and capacity, as well as an asset base that – because it can be put to the use of all of our communities – can transform every community.”*

## 1.1. An institution for the twenty-first century

When times are bad for many, we often forget it can be even worse for some and when times are good we easily forget that it isn't so for all. One of the hallmarks of British society over the last thirty years is that those who fall behind do so progressively and aggressively whether the majority are doing well or ill. Part of the change in modern society is that the rewards accrue more and more to the winners and less and less to the losers. And as the winners get fewer, the losers grow and steadily proliferate. From loneliness to increasing financial insecurity to the scarcity of future work, all the old guarantees are out of date and are no longer underwritten. As such we are no longer in a minority crisis that can be safely ignored but increasingly in one that will affect the majority of us, the middle classes as well as the poor. We rely on organisations and programmes to protect us and promote our interests, yet many of our institutions are breaking and not just for financial reasons. On issues like trust and transparency the NHS is failing its mandate and the police are being questioned once again while some like the banks have entirely lost their way. As a country we need to rethink this once comfortable setting, and create a new institutional architecture to meet the needs and problems we now face as a nation. Endorsing the *status quo* is no longer a viable option in the midst of a crisis created by the very order that used to sustain us.

In Britain this divide seems brutal and permanent; when you fail in Britain there seems to be no second chance, no way back. When our postcode at birth is the most successful indicator of future success, it is no surprise that we are one of the most socially immobile countries in the developed world, fractured by ingrained inequality and deep social damage.

Worse, the poor condition of many areas and the sheer poverty of people in lowly occupations or out of work altogether require radical action. One reason for this state of affairs is the relative fanaticism of our politics, all too often divorced from the human person who should be its subject, not its object. Either the state is presented to us as replacement for the social good and its delivery, or we are

abandoned to the free market, robbed of our institutions all together and left to rely on our own resources, however depleted they may be. Trapped between individualism and collectivism we Britons have since the Second World War gradually eroded and ultimately eliminated most of our mediating and immediate institutions. Grammar schools have been denied to the poor, trade unions have abandoned the low paid and successful regional businesses have largely vanished. In modern Britain it is very hard now to envisage how one might exit a perilous situation or transform a disadvantaged area; there are no clear routes out for individuals or communities. Our institutions which were designed to save the poor from their fate are no longer fit for purpose; at best they maintain people in inequality rather than saving them from its deeply damaging consequences.



Coupled with our institutional failure is the miscarriage of our imagination. We no longer think anything else is really possible. We have lost the sense of hope, ambition and joy that of necessity must accompany any genuine social and economic transformation. All of our former institutions – be they welfare states, schools or national parks – came from the moral imagination, they derived from what people thought people ought to be or ought to become if not thwarted by circumstance and birth. These institutions were invented as a means to tackle inherited disadvantage and breakthrough to the wide fulfilment of all. Their current failure is all around us, currently many if not most believe the only way of advance is to join unaccountable elites, passage into which is believed to be both incredibly difficult and utterly necessary. But if the only life worth living is that at the top, then everything else is drained of wonder, meaning and worth. But as this station is fiercely and viciously defended by vested interest then the dream of joining it is for the overwhelming majority just that.

If we are to recover institutions that make a difference, a truly transformative difference to our communities, then we have also to recover our moral imagination, our sense of what ought to be the case and how people could and should live their lives free of want, despair and insecurity. These new, recovered or restored institutions have to think, operate and behave very differently from those that currently hold sway. We argue in this report that these new institutions have to be holistic, personal and local, and by these standards what we currently do and how do it falls woefully short.

### *The Limits of the State and the Failings of the Market*

Given the range of problems that people can and do face, what can be done? Clearly in our social architecture the first port of call is on the state and its vast complex architecture of welfare and subsidy. The trouble is that the state no longer seems very effective, all too often institutionalizing dysfunction rather than solving it. Even during the growth period under New Labour those on welfare did not benefit from the gains as they should and now they suffer twice over during austerity as even the little that they have is being taken away. The interesting question is - why? Why isn't the state more effective at solving these perennial problems be they drug addiction,

alcoholism, education or simple and outright poverty? After all billions are spent doing exactly that surely we should have better results than some of our citizens dying thirty years earlier than others simply because of where they live.

Part of the problem is how we think of universality. The common view in respect of public services is that this must mean the same thing delivered in the same way to everybody regardless of need. But people do not need the same thing; they need different things depending on who or where they are and the problems that confront them. The inability of public service to vary according to need, to give different things to different people in order that all may enjoy an equal flourishing is one of the reasons that inequality has soared. Moreover the state itself is often self-contradictory, with different arms delivering opposite things in mutually cancelling ways. Since the state delivers by departments or silos, it never has a holistic account of a person's needs, so it can often be that the different services which people require are delivered via conflicting views and therefore conflicting approaches to the social problems at issue. In addition these services are often disconnected from one another, with people not just falling through the cracks but being fundamentally unable to access the help and services they need when they transition from say, the police into psychiatric care and back out into the 'community.' A person who is in need often therefore receives fragmented and contradictory care. This is not because of malevolence or ill intent, it is simply that the system itself is not set up to deliver what is now needed. The state is all too often centralised and standardised and incapable therefore of understanding people's needs and how the system should be best positioned to help.

And in this regard the market is little better. The whole problem with privatising our public services is that if profit is the sole motivation for service delivery, then the profitable use of public services relies on not providing or delivering holistic care. Why? Because profits as currently conceived come from creating externalities, from not dealing with some problems as they are either perceived as too insoluble or too expensive. In addition, there is a clear motive to fragment the market as 'cherry picking' allows one to treat the most profitable patients or clients and ignore the more expensive. Finally

of course, people have multiple problems and as yet there are no holistic offers from the private sector not least because this sort of care requires both a personal and a local aspect that is thought too difficult to deliver. We have already seen this with the troubles in the work programme when large standardised providers try to attain local and personal traction through sub-prime contractors, a situation that has seen the sub-primes failing because the prime contractors retain all surplus. Moreover, the care that people really and genuinely need which is interpersonal cannot be reduced to a commodity; neither state provision nor private sector competition could ever solve complex problems such as loneliness.

If the state is to be equal to the problems of its citizens it must recognise the systemic gap between how it conceives and delivers public services and what the genuine needs of people are. From the point of view of people themselves what is needed is a holistic, personal and local approach. All of one's problems, be they mental, physical, emotional or relational, need to be met, recognised and treated in a bespoke fashion. This requires a fundamentally new type of institution, one whose holistic approach is a signature aspect of their delivery and one which is very close and very local to the problems at hand. Now there are a number of institutions that meet such a description. The many charities and local civic groups that are out there have done enormously important work but virtually all are partial in the problems they tackle or the areas they operate in. Few can go to the scale required to become the type of institutions we need. We know from the failures and successes of the Big Society programme that what was most needed was a hub or an institution which the myriad social and local projects doing great good could latch onto and link up with. Crucially, we lacked an institutional platform that could allow both diversity and universality, that could function as a hub bridging, linking and rendering capacity, imagination and expertise within and through the network it provides the foundation for. There is perhaps, only one non-state and non-market association which is universal in the sense of being literally almost everywhere, but local in that its focus is always that of the specific locality, its people and all their needs. That association is the Church of England.

### *The Church of England*

When thinking of the established Church too many of us remain blinded by a rhetoric of decline. The endless narrative of fewer and fewer people attending Church on a Sunday screens from us the work that the institution is already doing with a wide range of people beyond the flock of current believers. The Church's reach extends well beyond itself by several orders of magnitude with those it directly helps, those it works with and those it simply lets use its buildings. Many in the Church will be surprised by the range of things that the Church itself does, even more outside the Church will be a little astonished at its reach, range and depth.

For us the Church is unique, irreplaceable and fundamental. This does not mean that it is yet fit for the purposes we envisage here, nor does it mean as a fundamentally human institution that is free of faults, error and failure. But what it does have is an unparalleled potential to become an institution that all of Britain desperately needs. What we argue in this report is that the Church is an utterly unique institution with enormous reservoirs of good will, education and capacity, as well as an asset base that – because it can be put to the use of all of our communities – can transform every community.

But before we outline and argue for all of this let us make the major point first. The reason why we need the Church to expand and link up all of its social action and provision with that of the state and the market (in a manner yet to be fully explored), is that the Church's foundational vision is that of the holistic good. Potentially at least it is one of the few organisations that before the fact wishes to care for the whole person in a completely human way. As such all of a person's needs are relevant in respect of successfully caring for someone, whereas our dominant public service model hives off problems to different institutions that either deal successfully or more often than not unsuccessfully with the various issues that confront people. We will only be able to achieve a successful public service that actually saves people from their lot if we can remodel public service or social action on a holistic, personal and local foundation.

So our fundamental claim in this report is that the Church is of inestimable and unacknowledged value both in terms of what it currently does and in respect of its potential to do so much more. Part of the Church's value comes from its unique structure. It is able to be incredibly diverse in our cities with in London, for example, people from many different ethnicities and classes mixing in an almost unprecedented way for the purpose of achieving the common good. It is also wholly traditional, representing an enormous number of people who might be predominately educated older and white but who wish nonetheless to simply help everybody regardless of who they are. The Church is also hyper-local: its concern is with its diocese and its own area. Such an institution has a reach and a granular knowledge that exceeds the capacity of the state. It can go where few else can and it therefore can do more than almost any other national organisation. At its best, the Church is a unique gateway organisation not concerned with itself but with the whole life of the country and all the communities that constitute our nation. It allows people to come and go and opens up connections between all parties without regard to itself. In this sense, the established Church is a public realm and one which arguably extends beyond the state to all of the people of this country and the equal flourishing of us all.

If we tore the Church up and once more levelled the monasteries, the cost to this country would be catastrophic, we would lose an organic organisation that can while operating in many different ways in very different places, still chart a cohesive organic vision of the country. We have to be intellectually honest and creative. We need to create or restore new and revived institutions that can actually transform the outcomes and lives of our people and our country.

We believe the Church revived and capacitated around its social mission could be and should be just such an institution.

### *The Social and Spiritual Mission of the Church*

To some in the church this might all look radically wrong. The mission of the Church, they might argue, is not to save bodies but souls. All the Church's good works are still not equal to God, nor should they replace the individual's ascent to, and relationship with, the Creator. In this regard some might say this attempt to link the Church's mission with 'social work' is to get the Church radically wrong. This, so the argument goes, is not its prime mission or indeed its first focus.

To which we would argue that such an opposition is both un-Christian and un-Anglican. Anglican theology can be characterised by the radical degree to which it insists on the combination of the human and the divine in the event of the Incarnation: an emphasis that derives both from the Protestant reformer William Tyndale and the later more 'Catholicising' theologian Richard Hooker. This stress means, for Anglicanism, that when the human heart expands upwards towards God, it must also expand outwards towards nature, the neighbour and society at large. And it is the relationship with God that allows nature, neighbour and society to be ordered to their proper destined form as healed and salvific signs of God's presence in and love for the world. This 'double dilation' moving both vertically and horizontally at the same time, one finds throughout the English tradition in both secular and religious writers and indeed in the history of English social activism. And here we are thinking of Edmund Spenser, Hooker, Thomas Traherne, John Wesley, William Wilberforce and the Victorian reformers. Later in the 19<sup>th</sup> century the same impulse gave rise in the High and Broad Church tendencies to a social 'incarnationalism', which always located the mission of the church in its social works such that in saving creatures one also extolled the creator.

The heart of Anglicanism is its acute and visionary tendency to see the sacred in the ordinary, the way to the infinite through the finite. Thus Anglicans have characteristically looked for God in nature, in history, in art and in society as well as in scripture and liturgy. Anglicanism is 'pan-sacramental'. As such work and grace are already unified in a properly practised Christian social work.

All this is of crucial relevance to the social involvement of the Church of England today. For it means that Anglicans at their best tend to go out from themselves to embrace people, cultures and outlooks that are not their own without in anyway surrendering their integrity or their own prime service of God. For this 'going out' is seen at one with 'going inwards and upwards'. In this way, organised social and civic involvement is not for Anglicans a distraction from more spiritual concerns, but it belongs intimately to them. 'Mission' is or should be understood as building up the life of the Kingdom on earth. That involves beauty, fellowship and human flourishing as much as it involves a life of prayer, worship and sacrifice. Anglicans have never forgotten the ancient Christian and Medieval view that the Church is in itself a fully-fledged visionary society, whose ambitions towards reconciliation and harmony exceed those of a law-governed state or a market dominated by commercial exchange.

It is for this reason that one should not conceive of Anglican social involvement as either sporadic charity or as saving the Government care and expense in the field of welfare. Rather its social mission is indivisible from its spiritual mission. For Anglicans as for other Christians, social action is all about incarnation – bringing what is more in line with what ought to be. So raising the church to be equal to this task is indeed the mission of the Church. And our society has become so self-confidently secular because people see no specific need for the Church. They do not see the good work that is being done. Religion, if it is to command mass support, has to be relevant to the ordinary, and the ordinary has never been in so much need of what the Church has to offer. Frank Prochaska has famously written of Christianity wholly ceding its social mission to the state that 'the bishops blew out the candles to see better in the dark'.<sup>1</sup> It is time to unveil those already lit and light more and yet more again.

### *The Church and the State*

The aim of this report is not to reignite tired ideological battles over left and right or between collectivism and individualism. We are not arguing that the Church should replace the state or that the state should be like the Church. We are arguing for a new vision and a reformed and recreated

institution to fulfil that ideal and make it real. The Church as we will show via new research is uniquely positioned to be the type of institution that 21st century Britain desperately and urgently needs. We ask the Government to help make it so, and we ask the Church to do likewise.

## **1.2. Overview**

This report examines the social action of the Church of England and the impact of its civic role on English communities today. We make six key arguments for why the Church plays a unique role in English society, and why this should be recognised and encouraged by government:

- First, we make a clear link between Christian faith and social action. 81% of respondents to our survey stated that they get involved in social action in their communities because of their faith; 79% of respondents have been involved in social action in the past 12 months (the national figure is 45%). According to the Sunday Telegraph, members of the Church of England give 22.3 million hours each month in voluntary service.<sup>2</sup> As the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government has recognised, 'faith communities provide a clear moral compass and a call to action that benefits society as a whole – and the Government is grateful for this'.<sup>3</sup>
- Second, we recognise that this link between faith and social action is central to the Christian tradition. The Church considers social action to be part of its mission and service, reflecting in particular the gospel and 'God's call to the poor'.<sup>4</sup> The Church is reconsidering how its own assets – both its investments and its buildings – can be better used for the benefit of society during a time of economic crisis. Too often, reports on faith groups dilute their religious belief when considering their social action. Churches are seen as mere 'NGOs with a social conscience'. We follow a different line, by acknowledging the Christian concept of asset management as part of a theology of stewardship of the wealth of God's Kingdom. The Church seeks not just to ameliorate a damaged society but to fundamentally reorder the systemic nature of contemporary injustice and so genuinely heal the world.

- Third, we suggest that the flourishing social action of the Church is the hidden counterpart to congregational decline, and as such requires a reconsideration of the so-called 'secularisation' of English society. We do not refute the wider patterns of decline in religious belief and practice as they have been identified by various sociologists of religion. We take note of the statistics provided by scholars such as Callum Brown and Steve Bruce, demonstrating that practices like Christian confirmation in England have collapsed since the 1960s.<sup>5</sup> Various interpretations of this pattern of decline exist, from the notion that people still believe in God but no longer belong to a church, or that they still belong culturally to a church but no longer believe in God, or that they neither believe in God nor belong to a church, and that this decline is generational.<sup>6</sup> Indeed, the Church of England itself acknowledges the collapse of certain formal expressions of Christian practice in recent decades.<sup>7</sup> However, we also recognise the inherent limits of depending on congregational attendance figures as an indicator of English religiosity. Such indicators risk reducing 'religiosity' to types of formal participation, to the extent that they ignore more informal and complex types of relationship between individuals, communities, and churches. Social action is a prime example of this kind of informal relationship, and we argue that it needs to be examined within the wider context of English religiosity. As the Diocese of Sheffield has stated, 'we must avoid applying the language of industrial production to the life of the Church... The local church is not an industrial unit of production but a living community'.<sup>8</sup>
- Fourth, we argue that the Church has a unique role in society because of the diversity of its members, the holism of its ethos, the extent of its reach, and the hyper-localism of its action. As such, it accesses people and places that other organisations cannot. As well as acting as social bridges across communities, churches also act as gateways into communities. While recognising the social action of other Christian denominations and faiths, we argue that the established Church is uniquely placed to achieve this almost universal access. Adam Dinham notes that 'while all

the Christian churches, and many faiths which are newer to Britain, are active in communities, it is suggested that the Church of England in particular has been effective in communities by deploying its national scope locally through its wide-reaching networks of staff, buildings and resources in every part of the country, even where other actors and agencies have withdrawn.<sup>9</sup> This echoes a recent speech made by Queen Elizabeth II, where she states that ‘the concept of our established Church is occasionally misunderstood and, I believe, commonly under-appreciated. Its role is not to defend Anglicanism to the exclusion of other religions. Instead, the Church has a duty to protect the free practice of all faiths in this country’. Queen Elizabeth highlights ‘the importance of faith in creating and sustaining communities all over the United Kingdom’ as a spur for social action... helping those in the greatest need, including the sick, the elderly, the lonely and the disadvantaged.<sup>10</sup>

- Fifth, we show how the unique role of the established Church and the emphasis on social action builds on historical foundations which can be traced from the late 18th century, particularly in terms of the Church’s work in education and poverty and the developing notion of the Church’s ‘social conscience’. Indeed, the historical role of Christian social action in education and poverty is intimately connected to the issue of English religiosity and congregational decline. As Frank Prochaska has shown, the Church’s lead on educational and welfare reform during the nineteenth century created a ‘civic’ culture of care. With the introduction of a more centralised ‘welfare state’, this culture disintegrated – as these bonds of civic involvement were loosened, congregational figures also began to decline.<sup>11</sup> As such, we encourage the Church to consider social action as a central part of both its mission and its strategy on church growth.
- Finally, we argue that, despite the challenges of funding and coordination discussed in this report, there are clear possibilities for formal partnership between the Church, government (both local and national) and other partners and institutions, which can build on the

vast network of existing informal social action in communities across England. We believe that such partnerships must continue to be encouraged by both government and the Church itself, enabling a new settlement to shape English civic life. In this report, we make a range of policy recommendations to outline how this settlement can be achieved and come to fruition.

### 1.3. Methodology

Our report draws on evidence gathered from two primary research sources. First, we have conducted a quantitative survey of Anglican congregations across England to discover the ways in which different types of social action occur. By comparing our findings to other measurements, including surveys conducted by government and the Church of England, we identify new ways in which the unique diversity, holism, and hyper-localism of the Church can be understood. For example: most indicators of diversity within congregations and faith communities are determined by surveys according to ethnicity and age.<sup>12</sup> This notion of diversity reflects the prevailing thinking of the previous government’s Faith, Race, and Cohesion Unit of the Department of Communities and Local Government. Our research goes beyond this, and examines how social action is carried out by a range of individuals from and across different socio-economic categories, with diverse types of religious practice, experiencing different levels of employment and unemployment, and living in different types of urban, suburban and rural community. As such, our research aims to capture the full diversity and localism of individuals and communities engaged in Christian social action today. In doing so, we demonstrate that churches are de facto the most diverse and the most local places in England, providing unique focal points for their communities.

For the survey, a sample of Church of England parishes was selected with the assistance of the Research and Statistics team at Church House, who randomly selected 43 churches from their database. The sampling frame was stratified to ensure that one selection per Church of England diocese was made. An urban-rural indicator was also attached to the sampling frame to ensure that a representative mix

of parishes was achieved. Having been contacted, almost half of the churches (a total of 19) agreed to facilitate the survey on 24 February 2013. In contrast to the ‘statistical returns’ that church leaders are often asked to complete on behalf of their congregations, we asked church wardens to give out a blank questionnaire to every adult member of the congregation who attended on the fieldwork day and then collate them at the end of service. This meant that our survey reached the agents of social action themselves, generating a total of 589 completed questionnaires. While this is considered to be a reasonable overall sample size, we recognise that it offers limited detailed analysis amongst sub groups (for example, differences across different parts of the country or amongst different socio-economic characteristics).

Second, we have conducted a series of qualitative case studies which give illustrative examples of the social action described in our survey. A consistent feature which emerges throughout our case studies is the desire expressed by the majority of Christians involved in social action to serve their communities in a ‘holistic’ fashion – that is, to find ‘whole answers’ to ‘whole problems’. Coupled with the diversity and the localism of churches captured in our survey, this aspiration for holism shows how the Church represents a unique ambition in English society and embodies a holistic demand by communities for systemic solutions in a way that the state and the market cannot. In our report, the unique space of the Church is no longer defined by a narrative of formal and congregational participation. Instead, our case studies illustrate the hidden forms of communal interaction achieved by churches: a range of social action from small-scale services to individual communities like youth groups, dinner clubs for older people, and mums and toddlers groups, to larger-scale national projects like food banks, credit unions, and homeless shelters.

Based on the evidence of both our qualitative and our quantitative research, therefore, we make recommendations to the Church, government and wider society on how co-ordinated partnerships can be better achieved between the social action of Christians and other providers of public service for the greater good. We ask how government can take advantage of the

Church's unique diversity and localism. We ask which barriers exist between agencies of the government and the Church to prevent the formation of such partnerships, and we ask how these barriers can be removed. We look at a range of innovative local models and partnerships which already exist and which could be encouraged to support good social action. We recognise a great deal of goodwill which exists between local authorities and church organisations,

and ask what more can be done in terms of guidance, co-ordination, and funding to transform this goodwill into long-lasting, meaningful and transformative social impact. Our recommendations are aimed at both government and the Church; only by working together, we conclude, can both achieve the new settlement necessary for the good of the communities they seek to serve.

*"79% of Church congregations engage in some formal voluntary action compared to just 40% of the general population, whereas 90% are involved in informal voluntary activity as opposed to 54% of the general population. Two thirds of those doing voluntary action state that it is through the Church, one fifth of those doing such work support those with disabilities."*

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1. Prochaska, F. (2006) *Christianity and Social Service in Modern Britain: The Disinherited Spirit*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, p. 152.
  2. Moreton, C. (2012) "What has the Church of England ever done for us?", *The Sunday Telegraph*.
  3. Pickles, E. (2012) "A Christian ethos strengthens our nation", *The Daily Telegraph*.
  4. Archbishops' Council (2004) *Mission-Shaped Church*, London: Church House Publishing, pp. 6-7, 13.
  5. See Brown, C. (2009) *The Death of Christian Britain: Understanding Secularisation 1800 – 2000*, London: Routledge. p. 189, and Bruce, S. (2001) "Christianity in Britain R.I.P.", *Sociology of Religion*, 62(2), pp. 191 – 203.
  6. For 'believing without belonging', see Davie, G. (1994) *Religion in Britain Since 1945: Believing Without Belonging*, Oxford: Blackwell; for 'belonging without believing', see Hervieu-Léger, D. "The role of religion in establishing social cohesion", in Michalski, K. (2006) (ed.) *Religion in the New Europe*, Budapest: Central European University Press; for 'neither believing nor belonging', see Voas, D. (2005) "Religion in Britain: Neither Believing nor Belonging", *Sociology* 39(1), pp. 11-28.
  7. Archbishops' Council (2004) *Mission-Shaped Church*, London. p. 9.
  8. See The Diocese of Sheffield (2011) *Growing the Body of Christ: A Strategy for Growth for the Diocese of Sheffield*, 2011-2021. Sheffield, p. 5.
  9. Dinham, A. (2008) "Commentary: From Faith in the City to Faithful Cities: The 'Third Way', the Church of England and Urban Regeneration", *Urban Studies* 40(10). p. 2163.
  10. Queen Elizabeth II (2012) Speech at Lambeth Palace, 15 February.
  11. Prochaska, F. (2006) *Christianity and Social Service in Modern Britain: The Disinherited Spirit*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
  12. See, for example, Archbishops' Council (2007) *Celebrating Diversity*, London: Church House Publishing, p. 4.



## 2 The Unique Role of the Church in English Society

*“Churches often have a level of access to individuals and communities that the state does not – an access which is increasingly recognised by agencies such as the police, local councils, and health authorities as they seek to approach social problems in a holistic way. In this report, for example, we show that almost half of the Parents and Toddlers groups in England are held in church premises, representing a significant level of access to the lives of both individuals and communities.”*

Christian social action is thriving across England today, shaping the civic life of a range of different types of urban, rural and suburban community. This range is at the heart of the diversity of the established Church and its contact with people of other faiths and none, and shows how the Church as an institution is both uniquely local *and* universal. Churches often have a level of access to individuals and communities that the state does not – an access which is increasingly recognised by agencies such as the police, local councils, and health authorities as they seek to approach social problems in a holistic way. In this report, for example, we show that almost half of the Parents and Toddlers groups in England are held in church premises, representing a significant level of access to the lives of both individuals and communities.

Increasingly too, the Church seeks to open up its ‘wide-ranging network’ in partnership with local authorities, as well as other faiths and Christian denominations. In other words, the geographical range of the Church’s network is now reflected in a range of denominational collaboration and a spectrum of social action in diverse types of intervention, enterprise, and partnership.

Much of the impact of church networks depends on their hyper-localism. According to our survey, 64% of respondents indicated that they travel less than one mile to go to church, and a further 24% travel only 1-2 miles (*see Fig. 1*). These figures echo other surveys carried out on the same question.<sup>13</sup> Furthermore, the social action of these churchgoers also takes place in the same

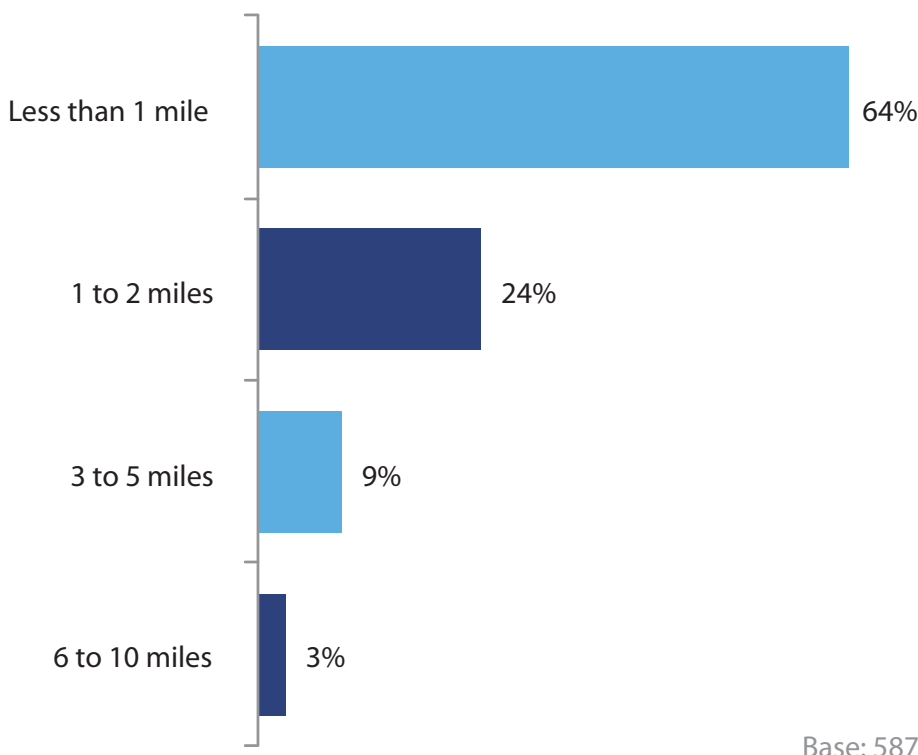
community: 61% of voluntary action takes place less than 1 mile from home, and 29% between 1 - 2 miles (*see Fig. 2*). In other words, 88% of Anglicans travel less than 2 miles to go to Church, and of these people who are involved in social action 90% do so less than 2 miles from home.

This is of critical importance if we are to talk about social action and localism. One danger with talking about localism in terms of the Church is that people might live in one area, but take the car to drive to church in another area because of their liturgical preference, and then commit themselves to social action in another area, thus creating three spheres of localism. Yet our survey indicates that Christians tend to live, worship, and engage in social action in the same area. This is what we mean by ‘hyper-localism’: these parts of their lives *overlap* and converge in the same community.

For Christians, social action is not a distraction from more spiritual concerns, but belongs to a notion of ‘Mission’ as building up the life of the Kingdom on earth. Mission involves beauty, good fellowship and human flourishing as much as it involves a life of prayer, worship and sacrifice. For Anglicans, this is part of an ancient view that the Church is in itself a fully-fledged ‘polity’, a social and political reality whose ambitions towards harmony exceed those of both state and market.

It is for this reason that Anglican social action should not be conceived merely as a cheaper alternative to the welfare

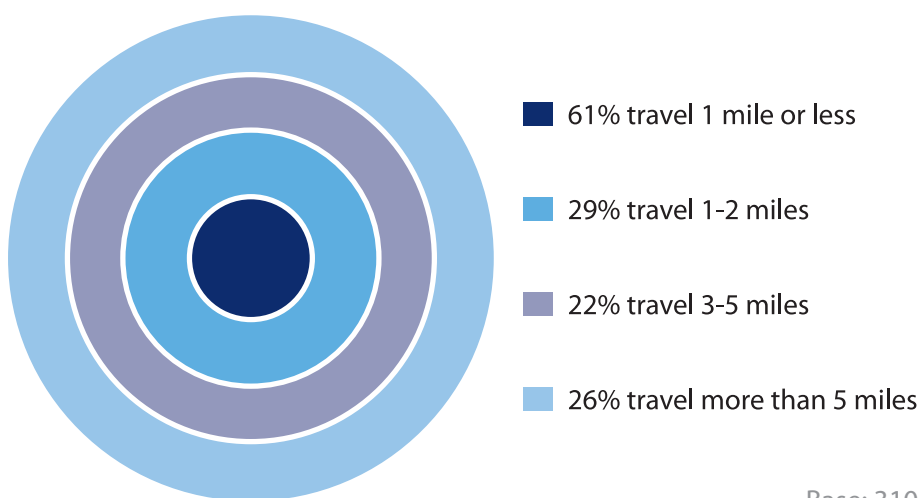
Fig. 1 How far do you travel to Church from your home



Source: Ruston, D. (2013) Social Action Survey 2013: Summary of survey analysis, Research by Design.

Fig. 2 Distance typically travelled from home to help formal voluntary action groups

Percentages add to more than 100% because some respondents support more than one sort of voluntary group



Source: Ruston, D. (2013) Social Action Survey 2013: Summary of survey analysis, Research by Design.

state during a time of financial crisis. Social action lies at the centre of Church activity. The unique role of a church body is to coordinate, through its theology of mutualism and reciprocity, diverse voluntary activities done by people of many faiths and none. Its unique role is also to link these activities with aspects of the state. Thus the Church of the England is uniquely positioned to uphold both religious freedom and the secularity of politics. Establishment means that the Church qualifies the authority of the state as less than final and absolute. The role of the established Church is neither to sanctify the state nor to supplant the government but rather to transform public institutions in the direction of both individual virtue and public honour. In this manner, both Church and state can work together for the dignity of the person, human flourishing and the public common good.<sup>14</sup>

In this chapter, we give a brief overview of this unique role of the Church in English society, examining the hyper-localism and the diversity of Christian social action in different types of urban, rural, and suburban community. In doing so, we look at how churches approach social challenges according to the individual context of local communities. 'Hyper-localism' is not a mere buzzword to describe a geographical concentration of personal and professional overlaps. It is a principle of grassroots organisation which is at the heart of the Church's own hierarchy and structure. Nor is the Church's inherent hyper-localism and holism a new phenomenon. Grassroots and informal expressions of social action reflect the historical influence of the Church of England since the early nineteenth century. Before looking at cases of social action today, then, we first give a brief account of some of that history.



### 2.1. The Modern History of Church Social Action

It is important to acknowledge that the formal Church was not always a vocal supporter of social action and social reform. Historically, the Church often acted against perceived threats to its established role. In many cases, newly enfranchised industrial cities were associated with Nonconformism, particularly in the North of England, while the newly disenfranchised rural boroughs (including the famous 'rotten boroughs') were associated with the *status quo* of the Tory shires. The Chartist churches of the 1840s were prime examples of the opposition of some urban working men's associations to the established Church – an opposition between radicalism and Anglicanism which partly defined the evolution of the trade union movement and universal suffrage during the nineteenth century.

Likewise, nineteenth-century Anglicanism saw a change in the traditional role of the parish church. Frances Knight argues that the use of church buildings became more exclusive; some clergy denounced the holding of meetings for organisations like the Church Missionary Society within churches, as it led to people sitting (in the words of John Kaye, Bishop of Lincoln) 'upon the seats of a Church as upon the boxes of a Theatre'.<sup>15</sup> This refusal to sanction the use of a church building for anything other than worship 'had the effect of reducing its significance in the lives of many parishioners', according to Knight, until 'the church became a resort for the devout rather than a resource for the community'.<sup>16</sup> This historical detail is of particular interest to our own study of the use of church buildings today, as it indicates that the opening of a church to a full range of uses for its community marks a return to its traditional, pre-Victorian status rather than being a recent exceptional development.

While the formal structures of the Church of England often resisted social reform, the nineteenth century saw a flourishing of informal church social action, typically through the actions of individual bishops, priests, newly-founded associations, and new expressions of Protestantism building on the rise of Nonconformist churches like the Quakers, Methodists,

and Baptists.<sup>17</sup> Much of this action was committed to making a change in the conditions of poverty and education in a newly-industrialised society. Groups like the 'Bettering Society' and 'Small Debt Society' were promoted by individuals like Beilby Porteus, the then Bishop of London, and William Wilberforce and Henry Venn, both of whom were part of the so-called 'Clapham Sect'. Because such individuals and associations often operated outside the formal structures of the Church of England, the lines between Anglican and Nonconformist were frequently blurred. Wilberforce was an Evangelical, influenced by Nonconformism.<sup>18</sup> By one estimate, Evangelicals ran about three in four voluntary societies by the mid-nineteenth century.<sup>19</sup> Many Sunday schools, like that of Stockport, were inter-denominational. Nor was this ecumenism limited to a relationship between Anglicans and Nonconformists. Social and electoral reform in the early part of the nineteenth century aimed for the 'emancipation' of Catholics. In the latter part of the nineteenth century, much social action was associated with the so-called Anglo-Catholic 'slum priests' and the Christian Social Union, founded in Oxford in 1889 to alleviate social injustice. This relationship between 'High' Anglo-Catholicism and Christian Socialism connected concepts of Christian social action with a distinctly English notion of mission through involvement in education and culture. At the same time, Quakers like Joseph Rowntree and the Cadbury brothers, and Congregationalists like Viscount Leverhulme built model communities for their workers. These nineteenth-century overlaps are of importance to the debate today: too often, the historical foundations of Christian social action are claimed by one denomination over another. But the central role of individuals and informal associations in the nineteenth century tell us that social action was common to all expressions of Christian practice.

As the influence of individuals and associations grew, the Church of England became increasingly engaged in social action. From the late eighteenth century, Sunday schools had existed in slum areas of cities like Gloucester.<sup>20</sup> Mass education for the poor was promoted by the National Society in 1811, initially in industrial areas but aiming to establish schools in every parish. By 1840, according to Nick Spencer,

'around 70% of the British working class had achieved a basic level of literacy, thanks to the efforts of Sunday schools'.<sup>21</sup> By 1851, twenty years before the state took responsibility for education, there were 12,000 schools across England and Wales.<sup>22</sup>

Increasingly, Anglican bishops recognised that this kind of social action represented a bridge between struggling communities and government with which the established Church had a unique role to play. Mandell Creighton highlighted the social conditions of boot-makers in Leicester during his time as Bishop of Peterborough. Brooke Westcott mediated between pit owners and unions during his time as Bishop of Durham. Led by the example of such bishops, parish priests recognised the social role that the church had to play in their communities. In Radford, Nottinghamshire, the priest operated a gardens scheme which rented land to parishioners below the market rate. In other parts of the country, priests divided glebe land into plots for parishioners to lessen the financial burden of harvesting crops as essential (and vulnerable) as potatoes.<sup>23</sup>

The story of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, then, is one of an increasingly formal role of social action in the thinking of the Church of England, influenced by the work of charismatic clerics, associations, and other denominations. This legacy extended deep into the twentieth century, including in the industrial cities, indicating that the perceived connection between urbanisation and secularisation is both simplistic and problematic.<sup>24</sup> Congregations did not see a dramatic decline in their numbers until the 1950s, and by then the Church's social action was embedded in their communities: for example, the historical work of the Church in deprived urban areas grew as 'industrial missions' in the decades following World War Two. 'Secularisation' theorists typically talk about a decline in 'religiosity' in the 1960s; 'desecularisation' theorists talk of a 'resurgence' of religion since the 1980s. Historically, then, this is a small window – and even within that window, the social action of the Church complicates the story of congregational decline.

## 2.2. The Church in Today's Communities: Across Communities and Denominations

### Urban

Historically, much Christian social action has focussed on industrialised urban communities. Adam Dinham notes that the Anglican 'network' is particularly prevalent in areas of urban disadvantage.<sup>25</sup> In recent years, the Church has issued two reports outlining its thinking on urban communities: *Faith in the City* (1985) and *Faithful Cities* (2006). The debate over the former and its controversial reception by the Thatcher government is already well-documented, and does not need to be expanded here. Suffice to say, *Faith in the City* was a document of its time, responding to a particular combination of de-industrialisation and privatisation, and led to the launch of an organisation which continues to have a great impact on urban poverty today: the Church Urban Fund.

*Faithful Cities* reflected on changes in post-industrial urban areas and attempts at their regeneration during the New Labour years. It emphasised the importance of the Church and its members – what it labelled 'faithful capital' – to urban regeneration. The former Archbishop, Rowan Williams, argued that that 'the Church represents a resource which is bound to think in terms of sustained commitment'<sup>26</sup> – a notion of holism which is reflected throughout the case studies of our report. Nor is 'faithful capital' limited only to Christians in the eyes of the Church; Williams welcomed the role of other religions, particularly Muslims and Sikhs, in the regeneration of the post-industrial English city.

This holistic approach to Christian social action in urban communities can be seen across England. For example, Ipswich has teams of 'town pastors' committed to (in the words of their organiser) 'a demonstration of holistic care' which connects the surface problems of anti-social behaviour and alcohol abuse on Friday nights to deeper issues of debt, unemployment, and family breakdown in the city. *Faithful Cities* made this connection in theory, noting the increased average weekly consumption of alcohol among young adults since the

1990s and linking it to Britain's high levels of family breakdown and depression among children.<sup>27</sup> Schemes like the town pastors in Ipswich make the same connection in practice, finding that during their interventions on the streets, many people speak of their use of alcohol as a mask for deeper 'traumas', particularly involving their own families.

Through dialogue, and interpersonal engagement, the town pastors have access to individuals in a way that other agencies – for example, the police – do not. For this reason, the scheme is welcomed by the local police, and has been hailed as making a 'fantastic difference' to the city's streets by the Chief Constable. As one police sergeant notes, many owners of bars will now call on the town pastors to diffuse hostile situations. Referring to one particularly dramatic fight in the centre of Ipswich, he states that if police officers had intervened, 'it would have gone worse'. Thus the town pastors support the police by going beyond the limits of the police: as local MP Ben Gummer says, 'the police simply do not have the resources to be able to give pastoral support to people who are out in the middle of the night'.<sup>28</sup>

#### Ipswich Town Pastors

Like the national organisation of Street Pastors, 'an inter-denominational Church response to urban problems, engaging with people on the streets to care, listen and dialogue', the town pastors of Ipswich work as 'capable guardians' for a range of vulnerable people on the streets at night, particularly young women. Described as 'indispensable' by Suffolk Police, they have been increasingly recognised by local authorities to the extent that, based on their success and conduct, a range of other church projects are being invited into partnership with the local council, including food banks, night shelters, and working on dementia strategy with Age UK. With this range of social action and partnerships, a coordinating body has been set up to bring together all stakeholders: 'Network Ipswich'.

cities. In London, for example, 'Streetlytes' aims to tackle homelessness not only by providing food and shelter but also by focussing, in the words of its founder, on the 'broken spirits' of people. He makes a clear link between family trauma, substance abuse, and homelessness, stating that 'homelessness starts from the inside, from unresolved trauma and pain, from dysfunctional families. People try to resolve this pain through drugs, and it ends up being a vicious circle'. Streetlytes responds to this vicious circle by aiming to 'feed and clothe, both physically and spirituality', and is supported by a range of partners, including Tesco and Pret a Manger.

### Rural

Homelessness and substance abuse are not problems unique to cities. Many rural communities struggle with unemployment, drug use among young people, and precarious cultures of housing. The reason that church groups focus on these issues in urban areas is not because they are categorically urban phenomena, but because they are numerically concentrated in cities. Likewise, problems like isolation and a lack of mobility exist in cities; in terms of their numerical prevalence, however, they are associated with rural communities, particularly those which are far from urban centres of employment and which depend on a seasonal economy.

Many of these remote communities have experienced in recent decades a decline of local shops, affordable housing, and work for young people. Often, the Church of England uses its own assets to meet these shortfalls. In Dent in Cumbria, for example, the Diocese of Bradford has released glebe land for houses to be built and offered at an affordable rent to local young people, stating that 'we'd like to help young people stay in the village'. This echoes the Church's 1990 report *Faith in the Countryside*, which recommended building new rented housing. Twenty years after the publication of that report, the Bishop of St. Albans has argued that affordable housing in rural areas is essential to helping the local economy.<sup>29</sup> As well as housing, local churches are also involved in regenerating and maintaining rural shops and jobs. In Yarpole in Herefordshire, for example, the parish has combated the decline of local grocers by using the church building itself as a shop for the community.

### **Overcoming Rural Decline: Yarpole Community Shop**

In Yarpole, the local church has used its premises to create a 'community shop' run by volunteers. The parish had seven shops in the 1950s. By the 1990s, only one remained. A parish plan in 2004 outlined the survival of the shop and the pub as priorities for the village; at the same time, the Church authorities identified the need to modernise St Leonard's church so that it could become a useful community asset. A sum of £250,000 was raised for the project, of which £37,750 came from village fundraising. In 2009, the shop moved into the church.

Yarpole Community Shop became the first full-time shop to operate in a church, and is managed by a committee of eight elected volunteers. It has won awards from the Countryside Alliance for its work.

When these issues of rural isolation and unemployment are combined with high levels of migrant seasonal workers, they can become potentially toxic. The Lincolnshire Fens are a well-documented example of a place where small and isolated communities with 15% unemployment rates among local youths have at the same time experienced high levels of immigration from Poland, Russia, and the Baltic States. Initially, these immigrants came to the Fens for seasonal agricultural work – a situation which is comparable to the fruit-picking communities of the Vale of Evesham and Ledbury. In recent years, however, many have settled, creating relatively closed communities and attracting further immigration from their countries of origin (often through family ties) which is unconnected to the seasonal economy and which has, as a result, led to a range of social challenges.

Central to these challenges are episodes of conflict witnessed in recent years between newly-settled immigrants and locals, and the increasing presence of far-right groups in towns like Boston and Holbeach. Local churches have been at the forefront of

working towards community cohesion. In 2006, the 'Social Issues in the Fens' project was set up to tackle these challenges. It aimed to limit the influence of gang-masters by supporting the integration of migrant workers through English language classes and through giving advice on housing, transport, and types of employment which broke the cycle of seasonal work and connected to the wider community. In the early years of the project, the leading priest describes his work as being like a 'lone voice'. Since then, its success in helping community cohesion has been recognised and formally supported by the Diocese; it now works in partnership with Lincoln University, Lincolnshire Police, Lincolnshire Community and Voluntary Service, and South Holland District Council.

### **Facing the Challenges of Globalisation in Rural Communities: The Lincolnshire Fens**

In 2005, having witnessed an episode of violent community conflict in his market town, a local vicar organised a series of debates on the issue of rural communities and migrant workers. Following these debates, he established English language classes for East European workers, believing that community cohesion depends first and foremost on overcoming linguistic barriers – as he says, 'language isn't just about charity, it is empowerment, allowing for a transformative change'.

With help from church volunteers, these classes grew to include a range of citizens' advice sessions based in Boston College, before developing into the 'Market House' scheme in Long Sutton. In recognition of this pioneering work carried out by the Church, the government has given money to the project, which has expanded to include 'Social Issues in the Fens', the 'Alchemy Project', and 'Just Lincolnshire', and has the support of the Bishop of Grantham.

### **Suburban**

Social challenges such as isolation, substance abuse, immigration and unemployment are described to us by church workers as 'drawing attention to themselves' through their concentration in rural and urban communities. In suburban communities, however, these challenges tend to be (in the words of one parish priest in suburban Maidenhead) 'under the hood': he talks of the 'hidden needs' of suburbia.

These 'hidden needs' are particularly striking when we note how many people live in suburbia. It is estimated that between 80 – 86% of the population live in a suburban community.<sup>30</sup> Despite these figures, suburban communities are chronically under-represented in Church and government debates on deprivation. According to Max Nathan, 'there is no suburban dimension to current urban policy frameworks: this is a gap that needs filling' – although he notes that schemes like the Outer London Commission demonstrate that suburbia is being discussed in some quarters.<sup>31</sup> Since the Civic Trust's 1998 'Sustainable Suburbs Project', the issue of suburban regeneration has been increasingly on the policy agenda, but still lacks the scope of analysis appropriate to understanding the kind of community lived in by the vast majority of the English population. The same could be said for the Church: Unlike *Faithful Cities* and *Faith in the Countryside*, very little exists which looks at 'Faith in the Suburbs'.<sup>32</sup>

This lack of analysis is due in part to the difficulties in distinguishing suburban from urban and, according to Nathan, the 'inner' from the 'outer' suburban community. In many cases, the social challenges facing suburban communities represent an overspill from urban centres. This has often led, in terms of investment and infrastructure, to 'suburban free-loading',<sup>33</sup> where the suburban periphery depends on the urban centre and where suburban social challenges tend to be tackled not by truly local associations but by centralised agencies.

The proximity of an urban centre can result in a lack of civic structure to many suburban communities, made worse by their role as residential areas for commuters which are empty during the day, and where patterns

of work and leisure are highly fragmented. In many suburban communities, there is no discernible *local* centre: shops, cafes, and leisure facilities are typically in the city centre, leaving vast areas of residential housing without a central focus.<sup>34</sup> In such communities, the church and its hall is often the only landmark in an otherwise abstract place. By providing services like mums and toddlers groups or dinner clubs for older people, the church *creates* a centre for the suburban community. The use of church buildings in this respect is key. The church becomes the *de facto* community centre. As our Maidenhead priest put it, 'in suburbia the church does not just serve the community, but also creates the community'.

### Harrow and Wealdstone

The London suburb of Harrow and Wealdstone was recently designated for redevelopment as an 'Intensification Area', with a plan to build 2,800 new homes and create 3,000 new jobs by 2026. In the 'Metroland' part of Wealdstone, All Saints Church has initiated its own plan for the community – a 27-page report entitled 'All Saints Serving Harrow'. Like the priest in Maidenhead, the rector of this church speaks about 'the challenge of identifying the community' when establishing a vision for how to serve it.

All Saints began their action in 2009 by opening the church to host an exhibition featuring local artists, encouraging people to recognise the church as a community asset. In 2010, the church held a 'vision day' for people to come together to talk about 'social change'. One of the visions for Harrow has been the recent development of a 'forest school'.

The idea of the forest school is to make the most of suburbia's existing 'assets'. Suburbia is often maligned for being neither rural nor urban. As the rector of All Saints says, this can be seen differently: a unique feature of suburbia is the mix of residential housing and green areas like parks and woodland. The forest school takes advantage of this environment, by introducing children who risk exclusion from 'inner suburb' schools to green

spaces in the 'outer suburbs' and a new range of skills and experiences. While the forest school is not on church land, the church has been central to its development; this work has been recognised by the local authorities and the scheme is run in partnership with Harrow Council.

### Across Denominations

In each of these cases – urban, rural, and suburban – the social action of the Church of England has been achieved in partnership with other Christian denominations. Such partnerships reflect, as we have outlined, the historical foundations of informal Christian social action, where the established Church learned from the successes of non-Anglican individuals and communities. As the Church of England has benefited from the example of other denominations, so too these other churches have benefited from being brought together by the wide network of assets and access unique to the established Church.

Ecumenical partnership features in each of our case studies. For example, the Lincolnshire Chaplaincy Service which works with 'Social Issues in the Fens' aims 'to promote the physical, mental and spiritual wellbeing of the inhabitants of Lincolnshire by [providing] ecumenical Christian chaplaincy support and pastoral care to places of work, education and leisure for the benefit of the local community'. In Ipswich, the success of the town pastors has led to the scheme being franchised in other towns in Suffolk. However, this franchise is refused if the proposed scheme involves only one type of denomination. Thus the Christian model of holism defines not only the beneficiary of social action, but the giver too: the teams of town pastors include Anglicans, Roman Catholics, Baptists, Elim, and others working together – a representation, in the words of their organiser, of the 'whole Church' as well as the 'whole community'.

The crossing of denominations extends to other faiths. In the Diocese of Bradford, the Manningham Mills Community Centre is supported by the local church and hosts a community café, an 'Out of School' club, and a Madrassa. At St Wilfrid's & St. Columba's in Bradford, projects are launched in collaboration with Great Horton Methodist Church, Mennonite Youth Service, and Bradford Council Youth Service; one of these projects is an interfaith youth scheme for Asian and white young people.

On the practical level, much interfaith collaboration is achieved by the unique asset of the Church of England's land and buildings. According to the National Churches Trust Survey of 2011, 'church buildings represent vital community assets... The 47,000 churches in the UK represent one of the largest networks of actual and potential community buildings'. The survey shows that 60% of these buildings are used by non-Anglican organisations.<sup>35</sup> This echoes a recent Theos report on the 'bridging relationships' achieved by English cathedrals in their communities. Stating how such relationships 'are particularly important for a cohesive society', the report notes a 2012 parliamentary debate on the 'wide range of cathedral activity within their communities beyond their "ordinary" and special liturgy and worship services. These included cathedrals as instigators of, and major venues for, significant community meetings and initiatives, concerts, exhibitions, graduation ceremonies, educational activity, Street Pastors, support for asylum seekers and refugees, homeless charities, public debates and lectures'.<sup>36</sup>

The Church of England's role as a bridge, between communities and government and also between different denominations and faiths, can be obscured by fears that the only reason for religious participation in the public square is to compete for converts. There are understandable fears of "proselytisation" – aggressive approaches which do not respect difference. Church members would speak instead of evangelism or witness, and find it positive if people they encounter in their work show an interest in their religious motivation. The great majority



of Church members involved in social action are acutely aware that, whilst their commitment may attract interest in their faith, they should not use their position to press their beliefs on others. Many of the organisations who spoke to us have codes of practice whereby their volunteers will not talk about their faith unless asked to do so by the person whom they are serving. For example, the town pastors of Ipswich have a policy of not initiating conversations about their own faith, and the Christians who make up the majority of volunteers working for a homeless hostel in Worcester have a similar code of practice when working with residents.

### 2.3. How the Church is Different: Unique Forms of Localism, Universalism and Diversity

Our case studies demonstrate that the Church has a unique role in society because of the diversity of its members, the universalism of its ethos and reach (extending out into the diversity of the wider community), and the hyper-localism of its institutions. No other institution has this range of access to people and places. While we acknowledge that social action is carried out by many other Christian denominations and faiths, the established Church is uniquely placed to universalise this access through

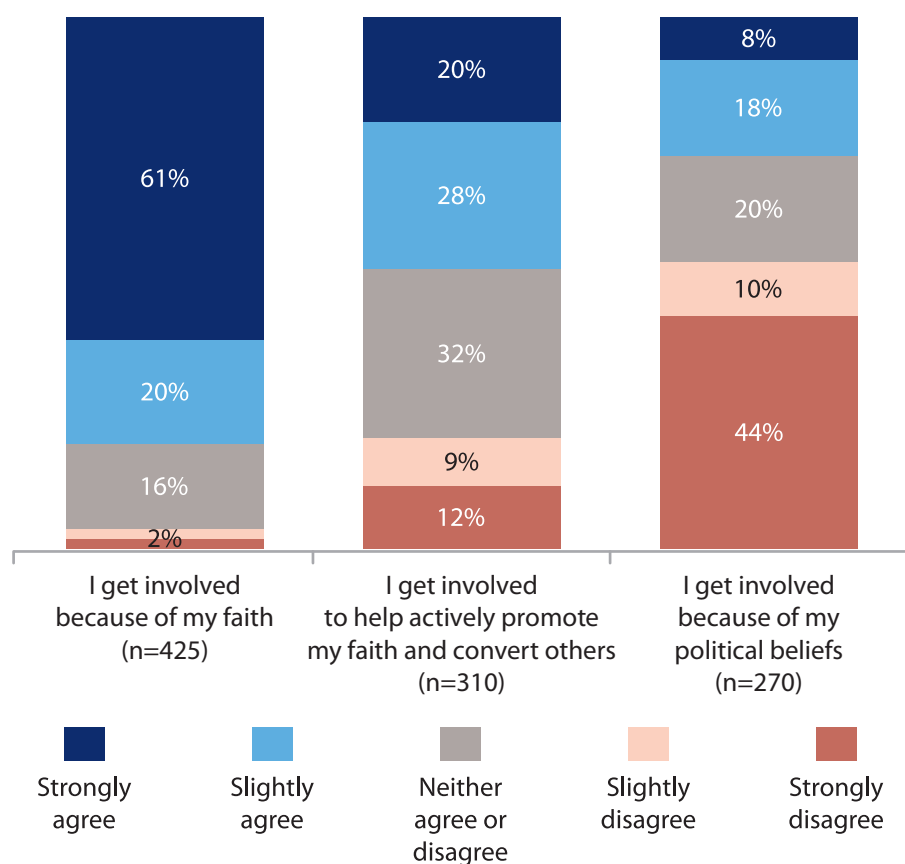
its wide network of members and assets. Queen Elizabeth's statement that 'the Church of England – unlike any other group of believers – has a historic duty to serve us all' is supported by our own survey of Anglican congregations. When asked whether they are comfortable helping people of other faiths in their social action, over 80% of respondents said that they were (see Fig. 4).

Our case studies have also shown the importance of church buildings to this unique access. Because churches and their congregations are hyper-local, their social action cannot be reduced to a concept of Christian mission which simply 'goes out into the community' as a kind of external influence. Hyper-localism means that these churches and their congregations already *are* the community. As such, social action tends to begin by inviting locals to make use of an asset which already exists at the centre of their community: the church premises. All Saints in Harrow is a good example of this process – they started by inviting the community into the church hall, and listening to the visions of people, before *then* reaching out in different and proactive forms of social action.

We have demonstrated that the church building is very often the only landmark in some communities and that people have need of such a landmark in their daily lives – not only as a place of worship but also as a place of functional service and civic 'bonding'. People come to churches for help looking after their children, elderly relatives, or vulnerable neighbours in an increasingly busy and fragmented life. In this way, the church building becomes a 'gateway' for individuals to connect with wider structures of support in their community – what sociologists have called 'bridging'.

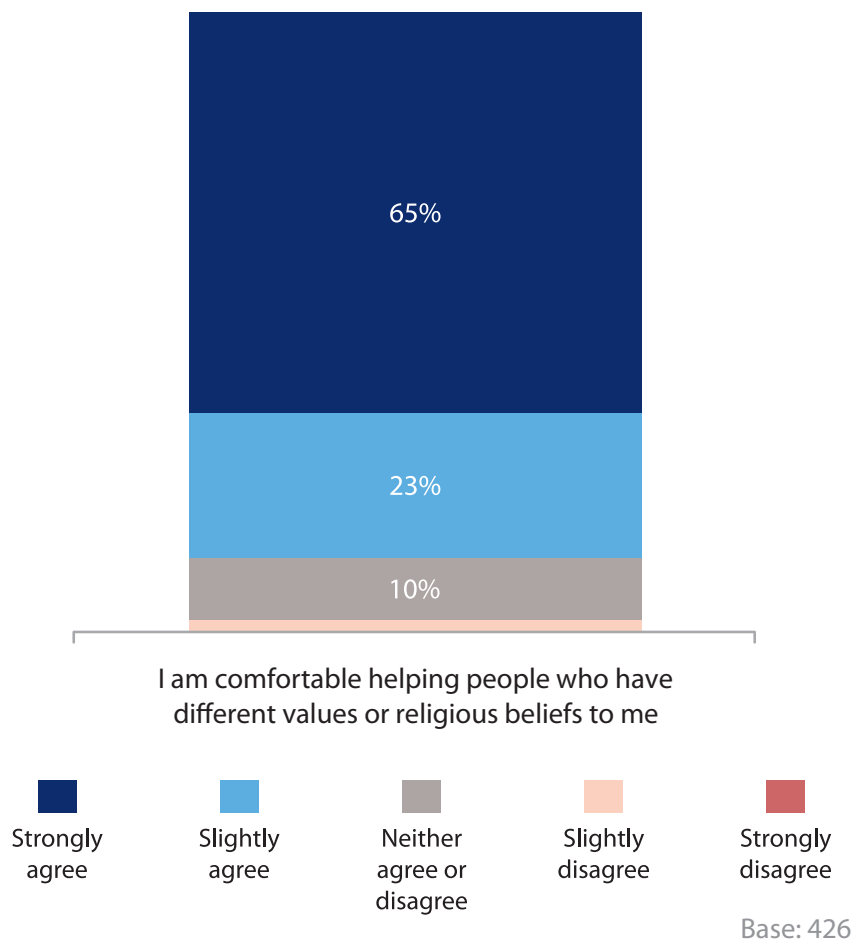
This gateway does not require converting non-churchgoers to the Christian faith. A key example of such a gateway in almost every community in England is the number of Parent and Toddler groups held in churches and Church halls. These groups tend to be advertised on websites like Mumsnet – a resource which has 1.4 million members and 4 million visitors a month. A close examination of Parents and Toddlers groups held in a variety of urban, rural, and suburban communities across England and advertised on Mumsnet shows that 42% are held in Church premises.

**Fig. 3** Motivations in relation to any voluntary or social action you take part in  
*Don't know responses are removed from base*



Source: Ruston, D. (2013) *Social Action Survey 2013: Summary of survey analysis*, Research by Design.

**Fig. 4** Attitudes towards beneficiaries of social action  
*Don't know responses are removed from base*



Source: Ruston, D. (2013) *Social Action Survey 2013: Summary of survey analysis, Research by Design*.

Our research shows that figures such as these are one of many examples of people using Church buildings as part of their daily lives. Church buildings represent both assets and access to communities. It is through this unique combination of asset and access that the *de facto* diversity of the Church of England is achieved.

This diversity can also be seen in the makeup of many congregations, particularly in urban areas. In terms of ethnicity, Church of England congregations broadly reflect the population as a whole. According to our survey, 96% of respondents called themselves White British/Irish/Other. This matches other surveys almost exactly, including the findings in 'Celebrating Diversity' that '4.7% of Church of England core adult parish congregations are from minority ethnic backgrounds: urban

parishes recorded an average of 9% while suburban and rural parishes recorded 4% and 3.6% respectively'.<sup>37</sup> 95% is slightly higher than the national average: according to the 2011 Census, 86% of people declared themselves to be White, of which 80.5% were White British – a difference which reflects the percentage of people practicing other faiths.

This link between the makeup of Anglican populations and the population as a whole extends to London, where according to the 2011 Census White British people are now a minority. Recent studies show that the percentage of BME core members of Anglican congregations is higher than the national average, and this has been a factor in high levels of Church growth over the past 20 years. 'Celebrating Diversity' notes that the three dioceses clustered around

the London conurbation (that is, London, Southwark and Chelmsford) contain two thirds of minority ethnic core congregation members. Not only are these congregations more ethnically diverse than the national average, they are also younger: among people under the age of 35, the percentage of Church members from ethnic minorities is 15%.<sup>38</sup> The Church is determined to build on the 'dynamism' of this youth as a bridge between the diversity of congregations and diverse communities.

This increased number of ethnic minority Anglicans in London has been analysed in terms of its effect on Church growth in the capital city. For example, the adult membership of the Anglican Diocese of London has risen by over 70 per cent since 1990. This partly reflects the increased number of minority ethnic core congregation members in the diocese, and partly reflects structural initiatives introduced by the two most recent bishops, David Hope and Richard Chartres.<sup>39</sup> While the Diocese of Southwark has not seen the same increase in church attendance, it has an active department focusing on Minority Ethnic Anglican Concerns (MEACC), and organises two annual events, the Southwark Diocese Black and Minority Ethnic Forum and the Youth Conference.

The Diocese of Southwark has also conducted surveys on 'Signs of Growth' which outline the diversity of their three episcopal areas: Croydon, Kingston and Woolwich. In Kingston, for example, Anglican churches have a strong representation from the Black community. While the Black community accounts for 12% of the local population, it accounts for 18% of those who attend Anglican acts of worship. In other words, in Kingston the Church is *more* diverse than the community itself. As many of these ethnic minorities have converted to Christianity from other faiths (notably within South Asian communities), the evidence shows that large percentage of Southwark Anglican churchgoers bring previous experience of association with other religious groups: 4% have had experience of other faith traditions, and 33% have had experience of other Christian denominations.

These statistics provide a useful counterbalance to the prevailing notion that ethnic minority churches in London tend to

be monochrome in their identity (for example, in the Black Pentacostalist tradition) and part of deprived neighbourhoods. The story is not simply one of ghetto churches. The increased number of BME congregations in London corresponds to mainstream churches like Anglicanism as much as it does to other forms of 'imported' worship. Furthermore, these congregations exhibit a range of types of employment. In Kingston, 55% of Anglican congregations are employed and 4% are unemployed (32% are retired); in one of the most ethnically diverse places in the Diocese of London, the Parish of St John at Hackney, 59% of people are employed and 8% are

unemployed; of these people, the majority of the employed are in 'professional' occupations. In this Hackney parish, White British people make up 36% of the population, but the number of people declaring themselves as Christians in the 2011 census was 42%. The Church of St. John has dedicated its social action to connecting the diverse elements of the community in its social action – notably in a project supported by the Bishop of London. This work has also been recognised by the mayor of Hackney, John Pipe, who says that 'the St John at Hackney Project offers an exciting development in the wider regeneration of Hackney Central. This unique

building has the potential to offer a whole host of new initiatives which will benefit the diverse population, all set within a context that speaks of Hackney identity through many centuries'.

In the next chapter, we present a series of case studies which illustrate how these hyper-local, diverse assets are used as gateways to achieve a holistic model of social action – a model which we believe can be encouraged in partnership with the public and private sector.

13. See, for example, Coventry University: Applied Research Centre for Sustainable Regeneration (2010) *Building Better Neighbourhoods: The Contribution of Faith Communities to Oxfordshire Life*, Coventry University p.10, which shows that 85% of respondents are hyper-local and 30% are involved in organisations working with social and community action.
14. For the relationship between the established Church and the state, see Phillip Blond, Radio 4, 'Blond on Britain' (22<sup>nd</sup> December 2013): 'this very idea that society stands beyond the political is the child of the notion of exceeding the state, in the way I have already described. So just as we need the Church to protect the political, so we need the Church to protect the idea of civil society. Today, churches and other religious groups have a crucial role to play in co-ordinating the revival of spontaneous citizens' activity'.
15. Knight, F. (1995) *The nineteenth-century church and English society*, Cambridge University Press, p. 71.
16. Knight, F. (1995) *The nineteenth-century church and English society*, p. 71.
17. Prochaska, F. (2006) *Christianity and Social Service*, p. 6.
18. Tomkins, S. (2010) *The Clapham Sect: How Wilberforce's Circle transformed Britain*, Oxford, p. 175.
19. Heasman, K. (1962) *Evangelicals in action: an appraisal of their social work in the Victorian Era*, London.
20. Laqueur, T. (1967) *Religion and respectability: Sunday schools and working class culture, 1780-1850*, New Haven.
21. Spencer, N. (2009) "Corrupt it? We invented it", *The Guardian* 9 March 2009. This growth of Sunday schools offering education for all represents an example of the Church leading the state in the provision of 'welfare'. Unlike the centralised welfare state, however, this original provision operated through self-governing institutions. Prochaska, who writes extensively about nineteenth-century education, notes that this model of welfare was encouraged by 'the Victorians, who admired the democratic nature of self-governing institutions, but it faded in the twentieth century with the growth of government and the decline of religion, trends that were not unrelated to each other'. Indeed, he follows de Tocqueville by arguing that 'the effect of state provision on Christianity and its associated institutions' diminished 'the historic relationship between religious institutions and freedom in Anglo-American democracy'. Prochaska, F. (2006) *Christianity and Social Service*, pp. vii – viii.
22. Spencer, N. (2009) "Corrupt it? We invented it", *The Guardian* 9 March 2009.
23. Knight, F. (1995) *The nineteenth-century church and English society*, Cambridge, p. 74.
24. Brown, C. (2009) *The Death of Christian Britain*, London, p. 163.
25. Dinham, A. (2008) "Commentary: From Faith in the City to Faithful Cities: The 'Third Way', the Church of England and Urban Regeneration", *Urban Studies* 40(10), p. 2164.
26. Church of England Commission on Urban Life and Faith (2006) *Faithful Cities*, p. v.
27. See Church of England Commission on Urban Life and Faith (2006) *Faithful Cities*, p. 40. See also the Department of Health (2006) *General Household Survey* and the Office for National Statistics (2010) *Opinions Survey Report No. 42 - Drinking: Adult's behaviour and knowledge in 2009*, Norwich, pp. 29 – 30.
28. For more interviews with Suffolk Police on the role of town pastors in Ipswich, see: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=929IH0eObOo>
29. See The Church of England (2010) *Lack of Affordable Housing could undermine the Future of the Countryside* [Online]. Available at: <http://www.churchofengland.org/media-centre/news/2010/10/lack-of-affordable-housing-could-undermine-the-future-of-the-countryside-bishop-warns.aspx> [Accessed 14 June 2013].
30. See both the Smith Institute's *Housing and Growth in Suburbia* (2009) and the "Suburbia Report" (2002).
31. Nathan, M. (2009) "Fixing broken suburbs – regenerating deprived suburban neighborhoods", in Hackett, P. (ed), *Housing and Growth in Suburbia*, London: The Smith Institute, p. 56.
32. The only monograph being: Brown, M. (2005) *Faith in Suburbia: Completing the Contextual Trilogy*, Contact Pastoral Monograph No.15. Edinburgh: Contact Pastoral Trust.
33. Graauw, E., Gleeson, S. and Bloemraad, I. (2012) "Funding Immigrant Organisations: Suburban Free-riding and Local Civic Presence", *American Political Science Association 2012 Annual Meeting Paper*.
34. Nathan, M. (2009) "Fixing broken suburbs – regenerating deprived suburban neighborhoods", in Hackett, P. (ed), *Housing and Growth in Suburbia*, London: The Smith Institute, p. 58.
35. The National Churches Trust Survey (2011) *How the United Kingdom's church buildings are maintained, funded, managed and contribute to their wider communities*, p. 37.
36. Theos (2012) *Spiritual Capital: The Present and Future of English Cathedrals*, London, p. 36
37. Archbishops' Council (2004) *Celebrating Diversity*, p. 11.
38. Archbishops' Council (2004) *Celebrating Diversity*, p. 4.
39. Wolffe, J. and Jackson, B. (2010) "Anglican resurgence: the Church of England in London" in Goodhew, D. (ed.), *Church Growth in Britain from 1980 to the Present*, Ashgate.



# 3 The Holistic Model of Church Social Action

*“Government is increasingly recognising the ‘gateway’ of Church social action as a unique access into communities, and understands that in many of the cases we describe, the Church is already the de facto provider of local public services, most notably health, social and investment services.”*

In the previous chapter, we outlined the historical foundations and present-day practice of Church social action in different types of urban, rural, and suburban community. In this chapter, we examine how this action is replicated across England, and provide a range of case-based evidence to support our claim that the Church as an institution has access to people and places that other institutions of the market and state do not. In many of the cases we describe, Christian volunteers are the key agents of social action within their community. However, much of their work remains informal and, as such, unrecognised. We look at the challenges in formally *co-ordinating* this social action without imposing a top-down structure of governance which would be alien to the Church’s vision. In doing so, we make recommendations to the Church on how it can better connect its work.

Government is increasingly recognising the ‘gateway’ of Church social action as a unique access into communities, and understands that in many of the cases we describe, the Church is already the *de facto* provider of local public services, most notably health, social and investment services. For this to be translated into a formal provider of public services, as we shall argue in the next chapter, government needs to see evidence of increased levels of coordination between the Church and other partners. The case studies in this chapter give examples of such partnership in action. While our survey shows that the majority of Christian social action benefits mainstream channels, we have focussed on three areas of this action: health, family, and vulnerable adults. (See FIG. 5 - p.22)

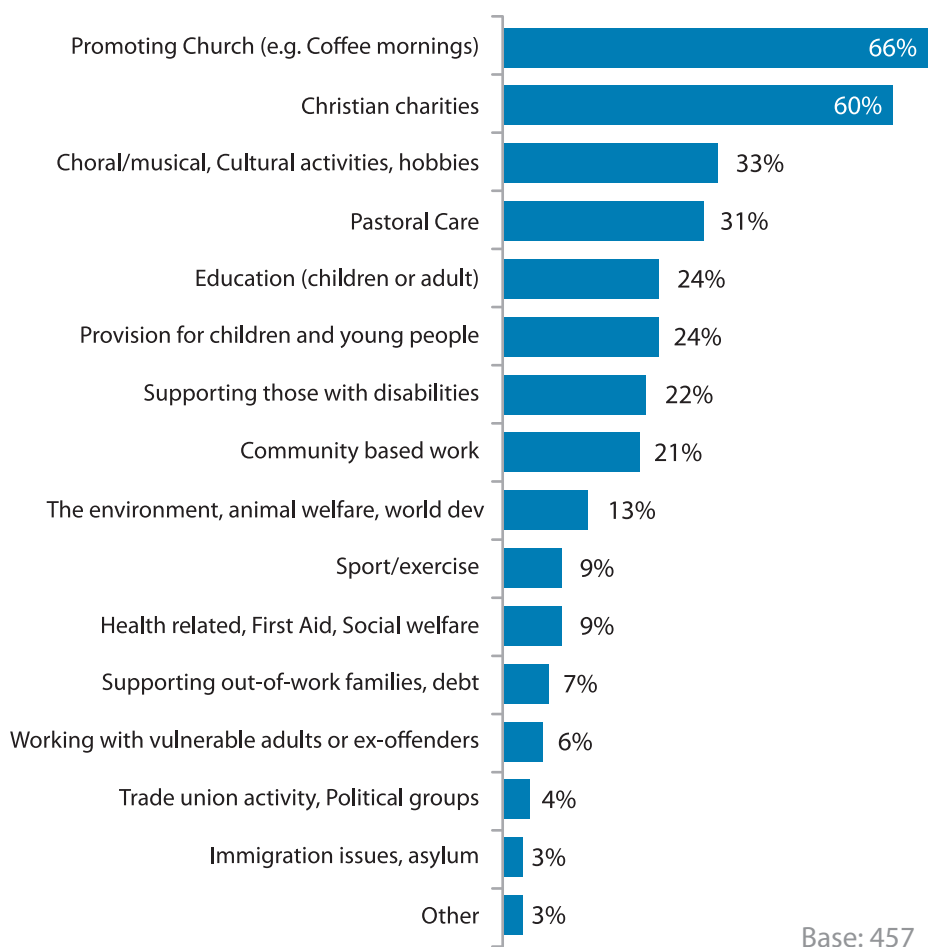
## 3.1. The Holistic Model of Church Social Action: Some Case Studies

### Health

The South Oxhey estate, near Watford, has been described as ‘an island of deprivation in a sea of prosperity’. Built after World War Two to house Londoners who had lost their homes during the Blitz, the estate was designed to be invisible, hidden on each side by thick woods. According to *Faithful Cities*, this seclusion has had ‘an impact on the lives and self-image of those who live on the estate. There is much material poverty but there is a much greater poverty of spirit. There is a common perception in South Oxhey that nearby communities deride the residents of the estate, that “they think we are scum”’.<sup>40</sup>

All Saints’ Church has worked to overcome these conditions: on the material level, the Church Centre provides hot meals and household goods to those who are struggling financially; on the social level, the Centre seeks to identify the root causes of the community’s deprivation. In recent years, it has identified mental health problems as both an effect of decades of isolation and a contributing factor to poverty on the estate. The ‘Step Up’ scheme, part of the ‘ASCEND Project’ run by the Centre, promotes positive mental health in the area by assisting people to gain employment – a holistic approach to the problems of this ‘island of deprivation’ which has been recognised by both the district council and Mind UK.

Fig. 5 Types of formal voluntary work undertaken in the past 12 months amongst those who volunteer



Source: Ruston, D. (2013) *Social Action Survey 2013: Summary of survey analysis, Research by Design*.

This model of holistic action which makes a connection between mental health and social deprivation is not unique to isolated estates like South Oxhey. Across the country, similar schemes are working towards the same aim. The Diocese of Chester runs a mental health forum which produced the '1 in 4' document; the Diocese of Southwell and Nottingham has set up a group called 'Opening Minds', made up of a mixture of ordained and lay people, health professionals and service users working on mental health issues; and the Diocese of Sheffield's Mental Health Working Team brings together Catholics, Methodists, Pentecostals, and non-believers. Many of these groups are part of the national 'Time to Change' programme to end mental health discrimination, funded by the Department of Health.

By connecting the question of mental health to social deprivation, the holistic model of healthcare promoted by these Church groups aims to care for the 'whole person' – just as other groups aim to include the 'whole Church' in serving the 'whole community'. As such, this connection extends to every aspect of wellbeing: in Chester, for example, the Diocese has set up a group to understand better the difference of life expectancy on either side of the Wirral. On average, people who border Mersey die 12 years younger than people who live by the Dee. For example, the Church's 'Life Expectancy Wirral' scheme responds to this differentiation in life expectancy by working in collaboration with other denominations and the public sector.

### *Holism in Healthcare: The Case of Chapel St.*

The CEO of Chapel St., Dr. Russ Rook, tells us that 60% of wellbeing needs are not met by GPs, because surgeries operate like 'sickness centres' which operate along formulaic lines instead of being 'health hubs' which approach the context of health from a holistic angle. Chapel St., a registered charity, aims to establish such 'health hubs' as 'connection points' which go beyond the usual ten-minute allocated surgery time to find wider causes of the health problem of the patient, and provides support through channelling funding to these projects.

For example, in Blackburn, Chapel St. have identified **chains** to sickness: for example, sickness is triggered by factors like depression which in turn is triggered by factors like debt and family breakdown. Rook maintains that the state cannot adequately provide for this chain, because it cannot 'access' individuals in the way that health hubs can through their network of church volunteers. And just as the state has limits, so too does the market. No private agency of healthcare exists to approach sickness in such a holistic way, because holism tends to prevent 'cherry picking' and therefore resists commercialisation.

### *Family*

In the previous chapter, we showed how a key way in which churches act as gateways to their communities is through the number of Mums and Toddlers groups held in church buildings across England. The majority of these groups act as gateways in a *passive* sense; that is, assets like church buildings serve people in the community through invitation, without necessarily making any connection between those who benefit from the church asset and the Church itself.

Schemes of *active* intervention in family care also exist. On a national level, the Mothers' Union runs the 'Away from it All' scheme,

where families without the means to have a holiday are helped with the costs to take a break. This scheme is provided to both Christians and non-Christians, and helps on average 550 families a year.<sup>41</sup> On a local level, 'Family Care' is a volunteer-led Christian organisation based in Nottingham and offers services in adoption, family support, and emotional support to children and young people. It works in partnership with other agencies, is supported by Boots, and is inspected by OFSTED. Another example of an Anglican agency which provides an adoption service is the Diocese of Oxford's 'Parents and Children Together' (PACT) scheme. PACT employs professionally qualified social workers and administrative staff to 'supplement and complement the statutory authorities, which have limitations on their areas of involvement'. As well as adoption, they provide support in both housing and counselling for families.

### Vulnerable Adults

Without the appropriate structures of support, vulnerable children can become vulnerable adults. This can be exacerbated by geographical circumstance – that is, when disadvantaged families live in areas of sustained isolation and poverty. For example in communities like South Oxhey, social problems of deprivation overlap in such a way that they include both the individual and the community. In other words, they become 'whole problems'.

The holistic model of care espoused by church organisations aims to tackle these whole problems by disentangling the knot of individual and communal breakdown. The vulnerable adult is seen not only according to his or her present circumstances, but also as someone who was once a vulnerable child. In this sense, undoing the knot of breakdown acts as a kind of 'rehabilitation' in the truest sense of the word: through holistic action with the vulnerable adult, their upbringing and circumstances is acknowledged and a picture of health is *restored*. The original meaning of the verb 'to rehabilitate' was 'to restore'. Christian theology understands the word as restoring humankind in the image of God, through love. In the words of the Diocese of Derby: 'the holistic nature of the Christian faith means that there is a close link between faith and action, "Love your neighbour" being one of the two most important commandments'.<sup>42</sup> As such,

holistic action for the health of the 'whole person' extends from the physical and mental to encompass the spiritual well-being of the individual – a reflection of the 'whole ministry' of the Church.

Practically speaking, rehabilitation of the vulnerable adult often means disentangling sustained and overlapping episodes of abuse throughout their lives. An example of this restoration of the individual can be seen in Ipswich and the work of churches with sex workers. As a port, Ipswich has a long-standing culture of prostitution, brought to public attention in 2006 when five sex workers were murdered by the same man over a period of three months. Indeed, it was during this time that the town pastors 'earned their stripes' in the eyes of the police: with their attentions focussed on apprehending the killer, the police were unable to concentrate on the problem of drunk and disorderly behaviour at the weekend. The town pastors were invited to support the police in this task. Impressed both by their holistic approach to social action and their levels of access to vulnerable adults (including many sex workers), church organisations were invited to collaborate on helping respond to Ipswich's problem with prostitution.

In this case, holism represented not only a tenet of Christian theology but also a practical solution for the local authorities. On average, enabling a woman to leave prostitution and to regain her independence takes seven years: many sex workers were abused by their own family members and therefore need time to rebuild support networks. However, councils turn over every four years, meaning that funding and priorities can change. The Church is able to provide the long-term commitment which is necessary to help sex workers – an example of the 'sustained commitment' to which Rowan Williams referred in *Faithful Cities*. Increasingly, councils and the police are becoming aware of the benefits of this long-term commitment. The result is seen in new partnerships: near Ipswich, the 'Talitha Koum' project is building a 'therapeutic centre' for ex-sex workers, helping them with the shelter and training they need to be restored in independent lives.

Of course, 'rehabilitation' also has a legal meaning, and many dioceses are involved in restorative justice. For example, the Norfolk

Ecumenical Criminal Justice Forum, supported by the Chief Constable, is designed to bring together people from diverse backgrounds to discuss the issue of justice in the county. These people include chaplains, imams, magistrates, the police, the probation service, judges, mental health officers, and ex-offenders. The forum is hosted by the Bishop of Norwich and organised by the diocesan network of community concerns – in this way, the Diocese (in the words of its organiser) 'provides a unique space for people to come together and talk about criminal justice'. Similar schemes exist in other areas. For example, the Diocese of St. Albans promotes education about criminal justice and works on 'community payback' with the probation service, and the Bishop of Liverpool is planning a national conference for 2014 on penal affairs. On a national level, the Restorative Justice Council's Sycamore Tree Project runs in over thirty prisons and young offender institutes in England and Wales, involving around 2,000 offenders every year.

The ecumenical approach to holistic social action shows how churches work beyond denominations when trying to disentangle the knot and break the cycle of breakdown which connects vulnerable children and vulnerable adults. Ecumenical models become wider partnerships; while these partnerships often grow into professionalised, national charities which go beyond an explicitly Church profile, their holistic approach to social action remains rooted in the origins of their Christian theology.

An example of this wider work, focussing on the age when children become adults, is the London-based Resurgo Charity's 'Spear' scheme. 'Spear' supports disadvantaged young people into work, education or further training through a six-week programme addressing issues of attitude, motivation, and life skills. 75% of those who graduate from Spear remain in work or education a year after completing the course. Shortly to open its sixth centre in London, the scheme works with a range of public and private partners to "ignite a vision of the possible" in unemployed young people, build their confidence and ability, and develop their leadership within the local community.

### 3.2. To Respond or to Intervene? How Churches Identify Need and Build on Social Infrastructure

Our study of church social action has shown a thriving culture of grassroots organisations which are involved in a range of holistic care in their communities, and which are connected through an informal network operating through the assets and institutions of the Church of England. We have provided case studies from across the country to demonstrate how this network is already an established *de facto* provider of public service and in some cases matches or goes beyond the **efficacy** of the State and the market. Unlike the state and market, the Church has an access to the 'whole lives' of individuals and their 'whole communities' which is unique in achieving long-term and transformative change.

We have argued that the informal workings of such organisations reflect the historical foundations of Church social action, and are best equipped to respond to the particular circumstances of their communities. One of the reasons that the present government welcomes these groups is exactly because they illustrate the kind of decentralised organic socialisation favoured by a political philosophy of the decentralised, plural state. This 'bottom-up' approach to social action also reflects the Church's own structure, where the authority of the bishop is maintained along with the autonomy of the parish priest.

However, during the course of our research, we have been told by Church organisations across the country that more needs to be done to coordinate these informal programmes of social action. Clearly, the organic nature of Christian social action is at the heart of its value-added role in society. But organic structures are fragile, and without the necessary structures of support they risk fizzling out. When this happens, potential partnerships are lost. Goodwill alone is not enough to sustain partnerships. Many local councils express goodwill towards Church organisations, but they are also obliged by law to work within certain structures. Structures of coordination

are essential if government is to realise the potential for formal partnerships to flourish between the Church and other providers of public service.

At the centre of the debate over formal and informal coordination is the question: how do these churches and organisations identify social need in their communities? Should they respond to problems as they 'draw attention to themselves', or should they intervene in advance? The majority of people with whom we have spoken argue for intervention. Theologically, there is a case to be made for Christians to intervene when they witness injustice.<sup>43</sup> Practically, our research has shown that as hyper-local institutions, churches are often best placed to identify the needs of their community at an early stage and act accordingly.

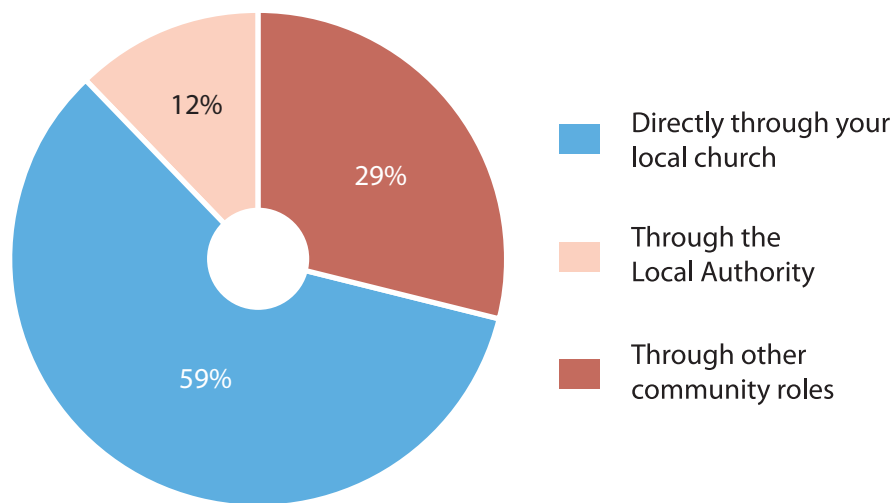
In Burbage, Leicestershire, the priest warns against becoming a 'ghetto church' and encourages 'identifying need which in turn enables the church to respond to the community'. He links the issue of *identification* to wider questions about how churches connect with (or, as he puts it, 'return to') their communities. Sometimes this involves the kind of 'passive' gateway described in the previous section; for example, a six-year old girl from a family of non-churchgoers in the village who had their house flooded asked to hold her birthday party in the church premises. But a gateway is something which opens **out** as well as **in**: keen to reach out to the community, the priest in Burbage has removed the pews from the church, obtained a liquor licence, and now organises gatherings of locals around food and drink.

Increasingly, there is a debate over whether there should be less of an emphasis on social need and more of an emphasis on *building on* what already exists within a community – that is, making the most of a community's assets. This is put forward by a canon in the Diocese of Portsmouth, who believes that a 'needs industry' can have the effect of stigmatising whole areas; he points out that clergy can be too focussed on looking for gaps to plug instead of looking for the advantages which already exist in all communities, including in some of England's most deprived areas. This approach identifies assets, not needs; an

example would be the case of Harrow's 'Forest School', which aims to make the most of the local area's particular blend of semi-urban housing and green spaces. Indeed, the emphasis on assets rather than need echoes the rector of Burbage, who argues for a concept of ministry which moves away from a 'Church-focused' towards a 'people (parishioner)-focused' agenda.<sup>44</sup>

Whether it is focused on assets or on need, the Church depends on the willingness of individual parish priests to identify social challenges in their communities, to intervene where necessary, and to call on their diocese for the necessary support. This highlights a feature of Church governance which is relevant to our concept of churches as 'gateways': dioceses themselves are reluctant to intervene in parishes if it means undermining the autonomy and authority of the parish priest. Such a delicate balance between top-down and bottom-up coordination, and between intervening in and responding to communities, becomes problematic when the Church does not always work with efficient systems of coordination. The culture of Church governance, where 'bottom-up' organisations are encouraged to flourish, can become a capacity challenge in itself when it comes to supporting that culture with resources, guidance, and funding. As Frances Ward, the Dean of St. Edmundsbury and Ipswich, asks us: 'how can light association be fostered between individuals and communities while also providing the formal support they need'?<sup>45</sup> The next section will examine the practical aspects of that crucial question.

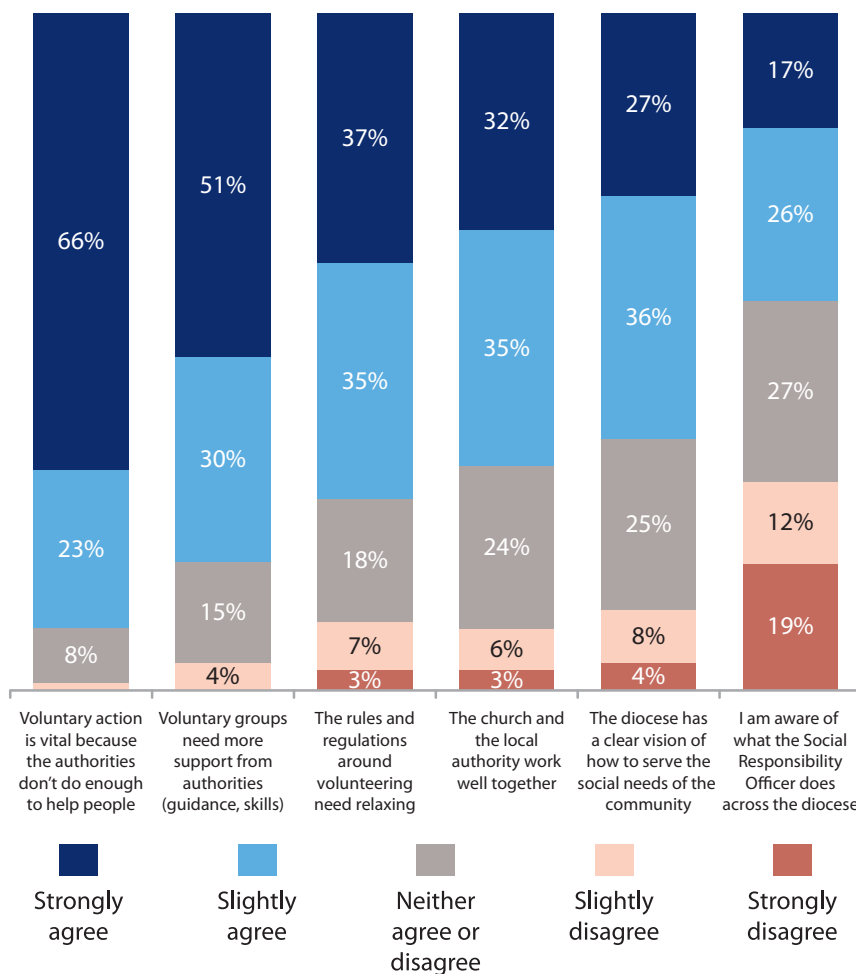
Fig. 6 Channels for undertaking formal voluntary work



Source: Ruston, D. (2013) Social Action Survey 2013: Summary of survey analysis, Research by Design.

Fig. 7 Attitudes towards local social action organisation and regulation

Don't know responses are removed from base



Base: 217 - 473

Source: Ruston, D. (2013) Social Action Survey 2013: Summary of survey analysis, Research by Design.

### 3.3. Challenges to Governance and Co-ordination

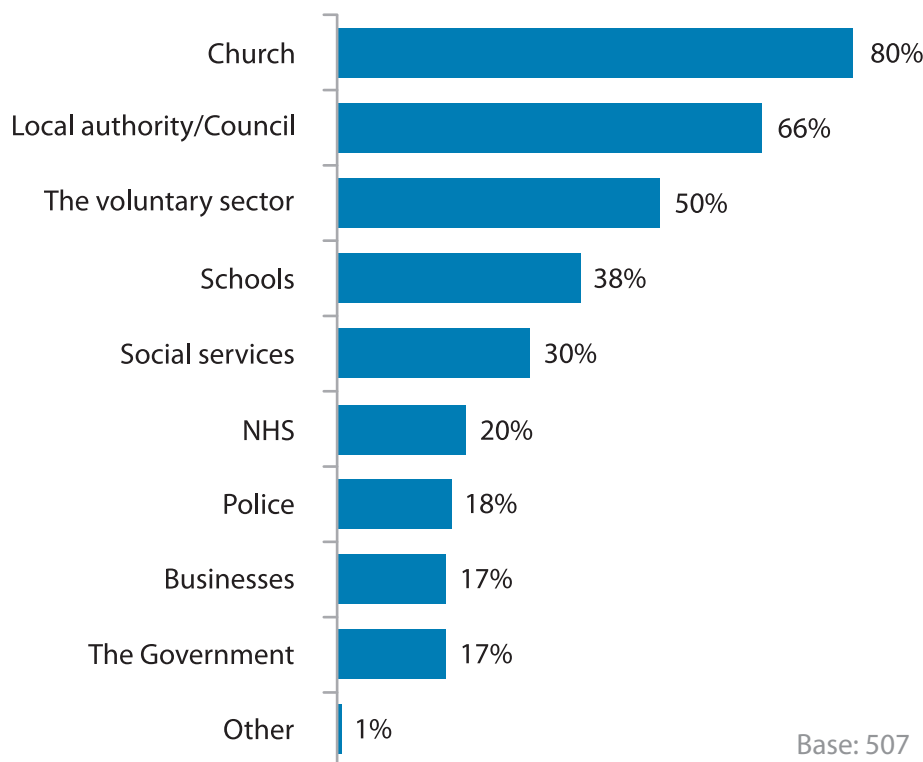
Out of a list of organisations, including the Church, local authority, the voluntary sector, schools, businesses and the Government, an overwhelming majority of respondents to our survey state that the Church is the preferred organisation to co-ordinate voluntary activity, followed by the local authority and the voluntary sector. This reflects the fact that most social action captured in this survey is not taking part through Local Authority channels. Nearly three quarters agree that the regulatory restraints surrounding volunteering need to be relaxed. Crucially, over 80% of respondents said that organisations involved in social action need more support and guidance.

This call from congregations for more guidance and coordination from the Church poses a problem: how can the balance between diocesan authority and local parish autonomy be maintained when providing support for small organisations involved in social action? The Church has been described to us as being like 43 fiefdoms (the dioceses) with rulers (the bishops), within which exist many little fiefdoms with their own rulers – the parishes and their priests. In some cases, the bishop has a vision for social action in his diocese which matches that of his parish priests. However, it is inevitable that not all bishops and all priests have such a vision. Sometimes gaps emerge between the fiefdoms, leading to missed opportunities for collaboration between agencies working on social action at both parish and diocesan level.

This issue of coordination between diocese and parish and between church groups and other stakeholders is one that has proved problematic for the Church of England in recent years. In the past, the co-ordinating role was filled by appointed diocesan 'Social Responsibility Officers'. However, in many dioceses this role has become part-time or the position has been completely eliminated. The reasons for this are several and complex: ostensibly, Social Responsibility Officers have been cut due to funding constraints, but there is also the suggestion that the demands of identifying



Fig. 8 Preferred organisations to co-ordinate local social action



Source: Ruston, D. (2013) *Social Action Survey 2013: Summary of survey analysis, Research by Design*.

and co-ordinating social action across a whole diocese was too much for one person. Job descriptions have often been diverse and varied, and the aims and outcomes of the role for each diocese can differ greatly. The term 'Social Responsibility' has also proved controversial, as it exposes liturgical differences of opinion between social action and the Church's 'social conscience'.

For this reason, some dioceses continue to employ someone in the role of coordinating social action, but do not call the post 'Social Responsibility', preferring instead a title like 'Church and Society'. As a result, there is little consistency today between dioceses in terms of who or what co-ordinates the social visions of parish priests, diocesan bishops, local authorities, and other stakeholders. Because this co-ordinating role is different across dioceses, it makes a national vision difficult to achieve.

Efforts are being made to bring together the different levels of Church social action. Each year, an SRO annual conference is held. In 2012, a project was launched by the Archbishop of York on 'Resourcing Christian

Community Action' together with a report written by Hilary Russell and a website ([www.how2help.net](http://www.how2help.net)) detailing more than 45 projects and initiatives. 'how2help' aims to be a 'catalyst' to bring together 'current best practice in providing Christian care in local communities with the resources and knowledge needed to multiply those good works across the country over the coming years'. In this respect, it helps co-ordinate church groups at the local level. On the informal level, some SROs find it useful to meet up with their counterparts in neighbouring dioceses: for example, those working within dioceses in the East of England meet regularly in Ely to share ideas and strategies.

While acknowledging these efforts, we believe that a far more structured initiative needs to be put in place across dioceses which prevents 'gaps' both within dioceses and between the Church and other stakeholders. The infrastructure needs to be put in place to recognise and reflect the far more holistic way in which the churches and Christian charities and services could work – beyond isolated instances of social and

civic action, and toward a more integrated model that sees such groups as central to the workings of society.

To achieve this, we suggest the following:

**First:** we suggest that if the nomenclature of 'Social Responsibility Officer' does not wholly capture the mainstream role that social and civic action plays within the Church and Christian communities, then an *alternative title* should be agreed upon if they are to be maintained.

**Second:** if the financial cost of employing a full-time person in this role proves to be prohibitive, we suggest that the Church makes more use of its *non-stipendiary ministers and laypeople* to take over such a role.

**Third:** as the job of covering a whole diocese is too much for one individual, we suggest that these NSMs and laypeople should work in *teams*, with the primary purpose of assessing local needs and issues, and finding solutions and formal responses within and outside of the Church to respond to them. It might be, for example, that a given area has suffered from high youth unemployment. The local churches and connected groups should proactively explore which existing programmes, expertise, assets or support they could provide in order to most effectively respond. Such teams should be encouraged at a national level, by the Mission and Public Affairs department of the Church of England, but should be initiated and led by the dioceses themselves.

**Fourth:** these teams should include a wider range of representatives from the area. Reflecting the Church's desire to work with other denominations and faiths, they should also include representatives from *key faith groups* in the community. As each diocese has different types of population profile, these representatives will differ accordingly: in the Diocese of Bradford, for example, a Muslim leader should be part of the team; in the Diocese of Liverpool, the team should include a Catholic priest. The teams should include an *elected representative* from the local authority. They should also work according to *present-day statutory* rather than archaic diocesan *boundaries*. This

is to avoid potential gaps in towns like Lowestoft (in the county of Suffolk, but Diocese of Norwich) and Bournemouth (in the county of Dorset, but Diocese of Winchester). They should also invite local businesses, public service representatives and establish links with neighbourhood forums and town teams to engage with them, either as members or informal partners, to ensure that local churches and their connected charities and public services, can really target the greatest needs where they are best positioned to do so.

With such teams working in each diocese, the gap between diocese and parish is diminished and the potential for partnership with other stakeholders is increased. In the next chapter, we make the case that government should encourage Church groups as formal providers of public service. Government needs to be reassured, however, that the Church has the capacity put in place to fulfil this role. We believe that these recommendations for co-ordinating teams in each diocese provide that reassurance.

### Recommendations

- The Mission and Public Affairs department of the Church of England should set up a **Social Action Unit** to offer guidance in co-ordinating the Church's role in public services and formal social action at a national level (thereby connecting mismatches over certain boundaries and providing guidance on the role of social enterprises and potential partnerships that churches might want to pursue). This Unit will be responsible for liaising with government and will encourage dioceses across England to set up and lead on teams, as well as offering resources to support them. As well as ensuring an organic structure for each diocese, this Unit will also enable the Church to move beyond the old minefield of 'Social Responsibility'.

This Unit should offer guidance on national policy, such as public service

commissioning, the rights to challenge and buy and the Public Services (Social Value) Act.

- The Church, through the dioceses and in partnership with government, local community groups, charities, institutions and services, should set up designated social action teams (the name of which are to be confirmed after discussion) to review the social needs and assets of the locality, and draw up a co-ordinated response to them. In this way, the Church should act in its established and historical role as a facilitator to a more holistic approach to social action.
- Government and the Church should ensure that the designated teams promote the opportunities opened up by the new community rights and work closely with other local groups such as neighbourhood forums and local councils.

40. Church of England Commission on Urban Life and Faith (2006) *Faithful Cities*, London: Church House Publishing, p. 33.

41. See Mothers Union, *Community Work* [Online] <http://www.themothersunion.org/communitywork.aspxm> [Accessed 14 June 2013].

42. Derby Diocesan Council for Social Responsibility (2006) *Faith in Derbyshire*, Derbyshire. Available at: <http://www.faithinderbyshire.org/faith-in-derbyshire#sg> [Accessed 14 June 2013], p. 8.

43. Brandon, G. (2011) *The Big Society in Context: a Means to what End?*, Cambridge: Jubilee Centre. Available at: [http://www.jubilee-centre.org/uploaded/files/resource\\_413.pdf](http://www.jubilee-centre.org/uploaded/files/resource_413.pdf) [accessed 27 June 2013].

44. Jennings, D. (2012) *The Kingdom of God: God's Big Society* [Online]. Available at: <http://www.burbage.leicester.anglican.org/sermons/GODSBIGSOCIETY.pdf> [Accessed 14 June 2013].

45. Frances Ward, in interview, December 2012.



# 4 The New Settlement

*"...for both government and the Church, the new settlement does not require creating a culture from scratch. Our research has shown that this culture already exists, and is flourishing. It already reaches into different types of urban, rural, and suburban community, it is already local, it is already led by individuals who possess leadership experience in their professional lives, and it already works in partnership with a range of local and national stakeholders. This culture does not need to be created; however, it does need both government and the Church to address certain policy issues in order for it to flourish."*

In the previous chapters, we gave an overview of how Christian social action is flourishing throughout England today, with a particular emphasis on the unique role that the established Church has to play in social bridging across and within communities. We concluded our overview with some questions over the kind of co-ordination required to achieve this bridging and bonding and the practical implications of bringing together a diverse range of stakeholders in social action. We argued that finding *structural* solutions for this question of co-ordination is key to achieving the necessary framework for government to work more closely in partnership with the Church – a partnership which we have described as the foundation stone of a 'new settlement' for English civic society. In this chapter, we investigate the policy implications of achieving that new settlement, and make a range of recommendations to both the Church and government.

## 4.1. Building a New Settlement

What does the new settlement look like? It is important to state from the outset what such a settlement is *not*. Throughout our report, we have observed how the Church has a level of access to individuals and communities which goes beyond that of other agencies like the health services and the police. It has a breadth, depth and reach that is both unique and universal. On the political level, we have argued that this indicates the *limits* of the state in providing holistic social action. A top-down, statist form of welfare dependency

reduces the chance for communities to 'restore' themselves; furthermore, it does not reflect the bottom-up, organic identity of the Church's own structure. In this way, the emphasis on holism and long-term transformative change inherent in Christian social action has helped shape the political debate of the past three years – from the government's recent emphasis on the 'Big Society' to the Opposition's current platform on One-Nationism. As Guy Brandon notes, 'one of the ways that Christians might shape the Big Society agenda ... is to help identify some of the appropriate limits to government'.<sup>46</sup> Contained within Christian social action, therefore, is a political debate over new ways of thinking about welfare and the state.

However, while the new settlement does not accommodate a statist version of welfare, neither does it entail Christians being left alone to 'get on with it' in the task of transforming their communities. Many leaders of organisations involved in Church social action have expressed to us their dissatisfaction at being used as a 'sticking plaster' for an 'ailing' Big Society if that is understood as the state retreating from communities, they feel conscience-bound through their religious beliefs to fill the gap. Bäckström and Davie have described this as the 'taken-for-grantedness' that the Church will always be there to fill the welfare gap during hard times. As the Church of England's social action involves mostly unpaid volunteers (and of that number, mostly women), such taken-for-grantedness can be profoundly damaging: like the findings of our own survey, Bäckström and Davie emphasise the importance of proper

support and coordination being provided for these volunteers, adding that 'given appropriate tasks and training, volunteers excel; overburdened and taken-for-granted, they and the system they sustain collapse together'.<sup>47</sup> In other words, retreat from welfare statism and taking for granted Christian gap-filling is not enough: the new settlement, if it is to achieve meaningful and lasting change, must be built on strong partnerships which reflect the thriving networks of social action across England today.

The new settlement rejects the false opposition as currently conceived between free market and welfare state. Instead, it responds to the complex realities of communities in England today, where holism – or the lack of it – defines social cohesion and identity. In such communities, we have shown how it is the Church which is often best placed to act as a bridge between individuals and their society. Indeed, the new settlement reflects a shift in the Church's own thinking about its social action and civic role: where Christians once gave charity to the 'needy', now they increasingly seek to harness the assets of a community. The Church no longer talks of dependency but of social enterprise. Through social enterprise, the uniquely holistic and hyper-local identity of the Church is expressed, and replaces past models of 'ghetto charity' and welfare with future models for transformative change.

According to Luke Bretherton, speaking to the Church Urban Fund, this represents a shift from a model of social action which focuses on service 'to' and 'for' the community to a model of service 'with' a range of partners. He says that 'to' models involve top-down, paternalistic provision, based on a duty of care to the needy, while 'for' models seek to avoid paternalism through adopting technocratic, value-free procedures that match provision to need but tend to generate dependency. 'With' models, however, 'involve all parties with an interest in the common life of the community or institution'. He adds that 'there are particular challenges if the Church is going to take this "with" model seriously and move to more cooperative action or mutual aid ... If we want to see powerful, resilient and faithful communities with the capacity to address their own problems, then people need the power to act for themselves rather than being dependent on services'.<sup>48</sup>

In this respect, government recognises that there are significant overlaps between the Church's thinking on civic society and its own. The question is how to translate these overlaps into meaningful partnerships. Our previous chapters have shown how Christian social action is already the *de facto* network through which a range of partners come together informally. In this chapter, we show how the new settlement represents the *formal* coming-together of these partners in the provision of public service.

### Transforming Networks into Partnerships

Examples of formal partnerships which have built on informal networks of Christian social action already exist throughout England, and both government and the Church can learn from these examples in the quest to achieve a new settlement. In Clubmoor, a suburb of Liverpool, the social action of St. Andrew's Church has grown into the 'St. Andrew's Community Network'. This network has identified debt as the second-most important issue facing the community – it works with 13,000 people in debt, equating to £6m – and, like other groups described in our report, makes the holistic link between debt, individual wellbeing, and social deprivation. The immediate response of the church is to provide material care through schemes like food banks; however, the network also aims to go beyond a culture of dependency by encouraging people to take control of their own finances. It runs an advice clinic designed to 'walk alongside' people in debt by conveying information about repayment structures from banks, thus 'providing an *intermediary* between the person who owes money and the person who is owed'.

From this basis of structure, intermediary support, and accountability, the network has also set up a credit union and microfinance scheme, serving a part of Liverpool where many people are excluded from mainstream banking. In the words of the organiser, 'without microfinance, we can't see how communities like this could access investment,' referring to the example of a carpenter recently recovering from alcoholism who needed a small loan to buy tools in order to set up a business.

In this way, the network connects microfinance to social rehabilitation – a practical model which reflects both 'the

holistic approach that the Church offers' and the political principle of community restoration through partnerships rather than the state. This model has been recognised by the local authorities: 'Clubmoor Community Support' and 'St Andrews Community Network' have two pastors funded by the Archbishops' Council which work with the police and the council, as well as the wider national support of the organisation 'Community Money Advice'. In the words of the network leader, such partnerships between religious and non-religious stakeholders working through local and national organisations represent a 'journey in public services'. We believe that it is precisely this 'journey in public services' which leads to a new settlement.

Credit unions which have been built by church groups must extend, if they are to succeed on a meaningful level, beyond the Church itself. By definition, microfinance, franchising, and social enterprise bridges communities and flourishes through partnerships. A local group working towards the alleviation of debt connects, through schemes like credit unions and microfinance, to other groups working towards the same end: for example, the West Leeds Debt Forum combats illegal money-lenders through partnerships not only with local churches of all denominations but also with locally-elected representatives in the public sector and with housing associations. In some cases, such groups become larger operations: in London, for example, a group of Christian volunteers concerned with debt grew to become the Zacchaeus 2000 charity providing training courses across all of London.

When linked to Church assets – notably, through land or through a building like a church hall or even a cathedral – these schemes can extend to the national level. A key example presently taking shape is the 'Cathedral Innovation Centre', a scheme which backs and incubates start-up businesses through a network which is franchised in partnership with other stakeholders, and looks 'to enhance innovation to create employment, build enterprises and address pressing social needs' – including 'developing a socially responsible generation of managers'.

Luke Bretherton has pointed to the practical challenges of building a 'With' model of social action. The Cathedral Innovation Centre responds to this challenge, by focussing on developing a generation of socially responsible managers as the agents of enabling a culture of 'With' instead of 'To' or 'For'. One could also envisage in the near future the potential for spare Church assets to be used to facilitate, encourage and guarantee social innovation and enterprise.

Frances Ward spoke to us of the need to identify the 'agents of change' within communities; such identification is key to partnership capacity-building within the Church. On this level, our research shows that in addition to a strong correlation between social action and religious belief, two-thirds of those Christians who responded to our survey and who are engaged in social action (65%) are drawn from *managerial*, administrative, and professional occupations. In other words, the Church's capacity-building is being

achieved, on the informal level, by people who in many cases are already leaders in their own professional lives. Thus the task of identifying agents of change and developing a socially responsible generation of managers does not need to start from scratch: those agents and managers are already engaged in social action in their communities. The task for the Church is not perhaps so much to create them but to co-ordinate them.

**Table. 1** Propensity to undertake formal and informal volunteering in the past 12 months according to sub groups

		Formal social action	Base:	Informal social action	Base:
<b>Gender</b>	Male	73%	199	73%	127
	Female	83%	374	81%	284
<b>Church attendee</b>	Regular churchgoer	81%	532	78%	492
	More engaged member of church <sup>1</sup>	91%	113	77%	105
<b>Frequency of attendance</b>	Attends church at least weekly	84%	453	77%	419
	Attends less than weekly	66%	130	81%	116
<b>Social Class</b>	Managerial, administrative & professional occupations	81%	227	81%	216
	Intermediate occupations	84%	55	90%	50
	Lower social classes	63%	67	78%	54
<b>Age</b>	Under 45	60%	68	79%	62
	45 to 54	75%	75	82%	67
	55 to 64	82%	104	81%	96
	65 to 74	83%	171	80%	159
	75 years and over	84%	152	73%	139

Source: Ruston, D. (2013) *Social Action Survey 2013: Summary of survey analysis, Research by Design*.

<sup>1</sup> More engaged includes church wardens/member of deanery synod, licensed readers/lay worker, office holder, stipendiary minister/priest, non-stipendiary minister priest.

Table 2 NS-SEC classifications of church attendees<sup>2</sup>

	Church attendees	General population
Managerial, administrative and professional occupations	65%	43%
Intermediate occupations	16%	14%
Small employers and own account worker	6%	11%
Lower supervisory and technical occupations	7%	8%
Semi-routine and routine occupations	7%	24%
Base	349	28,412

Source: Ruston, D. (2013) *Social Action Survey 2013: Summary of survey analysis, Research by Design*.

<sup>2</sup> Socio-economic classifications (five classes) have been calculated using the Office for National Statistics methodology, using employment status and occupation type of respondents. In the case of retired persons, previous occupation is taken into account. See Appendix C for more information

In recent years, government has shown a willingness to work in partnership with national organisations which engage in social action from a position of religious faith. Notable examples are the Church Urban Fund's collaboration with the 'Near Neighbours' scheme and the use of the Cinnamon Network to channel funds for facilitating micro-startup projects. While these flagship collaborations show how a holistic model of social action based on a Christian theology can become part of social policy, we believe that much more can be done to harness the wider networks of the Church. Partnership with Christian organisations must not be restricted to flagship national schemes. In this report, we have shown that the Church already offers an 'added extra' and greater social impact through church-based social action and the provision of local public services in communities across England.

One major way in which the Church and its related partners can help build 'bottom up' capacity, and ensure the long-term sustainability and growth of social action is through encouraging social investment. Big Society Capital has started to encourage the fluidity and investment of capital in such projects more broadly, but little exists by way of intermediaries to target the potential

capacity for growth amongst successful church-based social ventures. Such church-based initiatives are an untapped social investment opportunity, and should be attractive to investors looking to create great social impact through a sector with ambitions and capacity for growth and scale. These intermediaries are few and far between, but have very recently emerged on the social investment scene. One such example is Resurgo Investors.

#### Resurgo Investors

Established in 2013, Resurgo Investors is a club of socially motivated investors who aim to accelerate the reach and impact of outstanding church-based social ventures. They achieve this by investing in initiatives with a sustainable income stream, so that local churches can harness emerging opportunities such as increased social sector commissioning and outcomes based payments. Building on its own social enterprise experience and also the commercial venture capital and investment know-how of its management team, Resurgo supports investors to source, negotiate, complete

and then manage their investments through to successful exit. Members have currently completed deals including debt and equity investments in church-based social ventures addressing, for example, housing and youth education interventions. Such investment provides a new and powerful means to help multiply the impact and sustainability of social enterprise through churches as part of the new settlement.

Thus for both government and the Church, the new settlement does not require creating a culture from scratch. Our research has shown that this culture already exists, and is flourishing. It already reaches into different types of urban, rural, and suburban community, it is already local, it is already led by individuals who possess leadership experience in their professional lives, and it already works in partnership with a range of local and national stakeholders. This culture does not need to be created; however, it does need both government and the Church to address certain policy issues in order for it to flourish. It is therefore to the question of policy that we shall now turn – first, in terms of the government; and second, in terms of the Church.

46. Brandon, G. (2011) *The Big Society in Context: a Means to what End?*, Cambridge, p. 13. See also Bretherton, L. (2010) 'Big Society and the Church', *The Guardian*.

47. Bäckström, A. and Davie G. (2011) "Welfare and Religion in Europe: Themes, Theories, and Tensions", in Bäckström, A. and Davie G. (eds.), *Welfare and Religion in 21st Century Europe*, Farnham, p. 153.

48. See Church Urban Fund (2011) *Power, Poverty and the Church: Galvanising the Church to tackle Poverty in this Country*, p. 2.

# 5 Recommendations to Government and the Church

*“Future governmental policy must therefore ensure that the Church is brokered into wider ambitions for the ‘common good’ of the country. The state must recognise that it alone cannot or should not stand proxy for all public good; it needs to identify and work with those others who also constitute the public realm.”*

## *The Church should be a partner in all projects*

As we have argued, public services need to be holistic, personalised and local, the state needs partners in order to achieve this, and those partners also need partners. But the state needs those who can deliver across all areas while working differently in each and every instance. Again the church is uniquely placed in this regard. As a relational institution, it can broker networks and multiple activities; it can liaise beyond itself about a good that is not reducible to itself; it is paradoxically a modern platform for the innovations that our institutions need today.

But too often, faith is addressed in government policy in the manner of a silo. If Government thinks of the Church in terms of social policy or social action, it tends to do so only in the most fractured situations where community cohesion is the most pressing situation. In the light of risks from religious fundamentalism, Government tries to induce interfaith dialogue without rooting this dialogue in its proper context. This is depressing, but not surprising. Faith cannot be put in a silo because faith is always about everything that we do and should do. As such, the Church should be a national partner (which also partners with others) in health, education, work and training programmes – as well as all the other countless goods that the state quite rightly tries to achieve.

Future governmental policy must therefore ensure that the Church is brokered into wider ambitions for the ‘common good’ of

the country. The state must recognise that it alone cannot or should not stand proxy for all public good; it needs to identify and work with those others who also constitute the public realm.

The Church must embrace and build on its legacy to become once more a provider and deliverer of public service. While it is far from being able to do this at a national level, this report has shown how it has already achieved this at a local level. We know it can be done. The Church needs to build on its past an institution fit for the future, and learn how better to co-ordinate local social action with a wide range of partners, stakeholders and people.

Central innovation cannot be achieved without local response. We therefore recommend that parishes develop their holistic approach by working with people, congregations and communities to identify where each could be best used in support of a given local need. All of the above must be linked in with the opportunities made available through the new ‘community rights’ and the newly devolved powers to local authorities, such as responsibilities for public health.



### *Government should augment its approach*

Beyond the Open Public Services reform programme, many aspects of which we support – the indifference to process and the reliance on outcome, for example – the Government should set out a new vision for the delivery of public services that takes into account the need for a more holistic and personalised approach. The Government has recently published a ‘Choice Charter’ – choice being one of the core principles of the programme. But we recommend that the Government recognises that choice by itself is not sufficient to deliver the outcomes our people and our communities need. Too often, rudderless choice fragments the holistic agenda, because it can lead to multiple contactors, conflicting vision and failed delivery. Recognising the need for a holistic and interpersonal approach is crucial if we want to create public services that make a difference to the public. In this regard, Government should seek to establish relationships between local authorities and other partners, including the Church, to ensure that the whole diversity of a community’s needs in each locality are met, and that the right institutions and groups are able to help meet these needs in full, not in part.

We recommend that the Cabinet Office should explore the possibility for a new White Paper on public service reform to investigate the principles and potential impact of holism and personalism in public services. In effect, the Government is trying this already with its laudable approach to troubled families, but these are lessons that could and should be applied more widely. Once the benefits of an interpersonal and holistic approach are recognised, the current Open Public Services Programme and White Paper, with its equally laudable principles of an indifference to process and a focus on outcome, can be augmented by an approach that no longer breaks down the public sector in order to contract it out.

Government should look to the Church and ask it to become an enabling institution providing both the national co-ordination and local responsiveness and innovation needed for success ‘on the ground’. We have unfolded in detail in Chapter Three how the Church, through a new Social Action Unit and diocesan

teams, can facilitate such co-ordination. But we also recommend that this should be taken on as a formal Unit or ‘taskforce’ by the Cabinet Office, just as it has successfully done with its approach to including small and medium-sized enterprises in public procurement, and public service mutuals. This Unit or taskforce should be set up with the specific aim to explore how government can better work with the Church and church-based social ventures.

Enabling the Church to re-enter the public square and public service provision is crucial to creating the environment within which a revived institution might flourish. There is an opportunity for the Church to harness, broker and form better relationships with public services and local authorities, by building on what it already does. Currently, 20% of councils are granting to, or contracting with local churches to deliver community-based services; there is much that the Church can learn from its own projects to ensure that it is ready for these new challenges now, and in the future as its public role develops.<sup>49</sup>

As part of building such relationships, we endorse the All Party Parliamentary Group for Faith and Society’s recent recommendation to introduce a ‘Faith and Localism Charter’ to ensure trust and transparency between commissioners and faith-based organisations. The Church needs to accept and dispel the fear of proselytising if it delivers public services when it competes for public procurement contracts.

We also recommend that the Cabinet Office ensure that representatives from the Church’s Social Action Unit and church-based organisations which currently, or are looking to, deliver a public service should be invited to participate in the Government’s Commissioning Academy, and benefit directly from any further training or guidance regarding related policies, such as the recent Public Services (Social Value) Act.

If the Government wants competition to flourish, we recommend that it should encourage competition between different types of business model, and on the basis of social value and social impact. Government should play a role in capacity-building small and medium-scale projects in organisations which offer alternative models of delivering public services. The faith-based sector

should be seen as being as serious a competitor as the private sector when it comes to public service provision.

### *Preparing and capacity-building the Church*

Finally, both Government and the Church have a responsibility for preparing and capacity-building the Church. The Church, its local churches, and church-based ventures, hold great potential to start-up, scale-up and flourish. To harness this potential, we recommend that churches should ready themselves for social action, and be supported in doing so, by working more effectively with people – the congregations and their communities and assets – as well as their spaces and resources. The present Government has opened up opportunities to communities to buy, own and run their local assets, through the Localism Act, and has further supported the growth of social innovation through regional Social Incubators and the Cabinet Office’s Social Incubator Fund. Local churches should respond to local needs, and offer themselves, where appropriate, as facilitators of wider community activism and community ownership, and as hubs for start-up social enterprises and local entrepreneurs. Beyond the regionalism of such projects, local churches are crucially able to respond to the needs and ambitions of their communities by virtue of their social and physical proximity.

As with other social action projects, emerging church-based social ventures require financial investment in order to become sustainable as a sector. Current support of Christian social action is mostly limited to one-off funds (for example, the Cabinet Office’s Social Action Fund), and programmes that are co-ordinated at a national level. A more sustainable model is needed in order to encourage such projects to become more ‘investment ready’, and to ‘capacity build’ the Church and Christian social action from the bottom up.

As such, we recommend that both the Church and the Government take a lead role in instigating this. As part of the new government taskforce mentioned above, the Cabinet Office and their major stakeholders (including the Big Lottery Fund) should support the growth of social venture platforms, which focus

## Recommendations to Government and the Church

particularly on working with church-based social investors and investments, in order to build their capacity toward becoming Big Society Capital intermediaries that are able to on-lend to such groups. There is currently no such intermediary that is able to invest in this emerging market. Resurgo Investors represents just one that has recently been set up for this purpose. Such an intermediary should be encouraged formally by both the Cabinet Office and Big Society Capital.

The Church itself can also play a much greater role in facilitating investment in such projects. We recommend that the Church Commissioners, Church of England Pensions Board and the CCLA, all of which manage a certain proportion of the Church's assets and investments, should each set aside, as appropriate to their function and role, a certain percentage of the returns on their investment for the purpose of investing in church-based social ventures. This action could be performed both directly and through intermediaries. Each body should explore how their respective responsibilities could invest in projects that can both generate returns and achieve greater social impact through churches, including establishing a 'first loss' capital pot to encourage Big Society capital and other investors to accelerate their own church-based social investment.

In short, we need leadership and vision from both the Government and the Church to broker a new settlement for the country and its people.

## Summary of Recommendations

### *To the Minister for Civil Society*

1. **The Cabinet Office** should introduce a new Unit or taskforce, specifically to explore how Government can better work with the Church and church-based social ventures. It needs to help open doors for the Church to enter public service delivery and to do so in a manner wholly consistent with the Church's vision, beliefs and holistic approach. In short, the Government should facilitate competition *between* as well as within public service models.

### *To the Archbishop of Canterbury*

We recommend to the Archbishop of Canterbury that a growing universalisation of Christian social action be one of the key projects of his primacy. It will only succeed if it is governed and led by him. Internally, this would mean a rigorous assessment of what is needed to get the Church better ready and able to deliver, and how it might not only broker in itself, but other faith groups, in meeting national and local needs. It will require national, regional and local Church administration to adopt the structures needed to make it possible to deliver services in every locality. Externally, this would require the Archbishop meeting with the Government and the Cabinet Office to discern what is needed to allow the Church to enter the market for procuring, delivering and grouping public services in holistic provision.

2. **The (Resource) Strategy and Development Unit of the Archbishops' Council and Church Commissioners** should set up a national 'Social Commission' which is tasked with setting-out a vision for the future of the Church's social action and role in delivering public services – both statutory and voluntary. Specifically, the Social Commission should include a strategy for how the Church can prepare, resource and implement this vision.

### *Recommendations to Government*

3. **The Cabinet Office** should explore the possibility for a new White Paper on Public Service reform to investigate the principles and potential impact of holism and personalism in public services. In effect, the government is already trying this with its approach to troubled families, but these are lessons that could and should be applied more widely. Once the benefits of an interpersonal and holistic approach is recognised, the current Open Public Services Programme and White Paper can be augmented by an approach that no longer breaks down the public sector in order to contract it out.
4. As recommended by the APPG for Faith and Society, a '**Faith and Localism Charter**' should be introduced to ensure trust and transparency between commissioners and faith-based organisations when preparing to commission services from them.
5. The **Cabinet Office** should ensure that representatives from church-based organisations which are currently, or are looking to, deliver a public service should be invited to participate in the Government's Commissioning Academy.
6. The **Cabinet Office** and their major stakeholders (including Big Lottery Fund) should support the growth of a social venture platform which focusses on capacity-building church-based social investment organisations towards becoming **Big Society Capital** intermediaries.
7. **Big Society Capital** should encourage a social investment platform with good links with church-based social ventures to apply as an intermediary that could on-lend to such groups.



## Recommendations to the Church

### Preparing the Church

8. The **Mission and Public Affairs Department of the Church of England** should set up a **Social Action Unit** to offer guidance in co-ordinating the Church's role in public services and formal social action at a national level.
9. The **Social Action Unit**, through the dioceses and in partnership with Government, local community groups, charities, institutions and services, should encourage each diocese to set up designated **Social Action Teams** to review the social needs and assets of the locality, and draw up a co-ordinated local response to them and plan of action for their local community.
10. The **Social Action Unit**, in partnership with the **Cabinet Office** and the **Department for Communities and Local Government** should ensure that the designated teams promote the opportunities opened up by the new 'community rights' and work closely with other local groups such as neighbourhood forums and local councils.
11. **Local churches** should look further to develop two key assets – people and land:
  - **Local churches** should give congregations and communities the opportunity to develop skills and flourish, to prepare them for greater social action.
  - **Local churches** should conduct an asset management audit in order to maximise use of their assets, and scope out possibilities for regeneration, use or ownership. **The Church of England's Strategy and Development Unit** should commission pilot studies to test their effectiveness, including the social impact on the wider community.

- **Local churches** should become, where possible (and where space is available), 'social incubators' for start-up enterprises and social ventures.

### Capacity-Building the Church

12. The **Church Commissioners, Church of England Pensions Board** and **CCLA** should set aside a certain percentage of the returns on their investment to invest in church-based social ventures. Each body should explore how their respective responsibilities could invest in projects that can both generate returns and achieve greater social impact through churches, including establishing a 'first loss' capital pot to encourage Big Society Capital and other investors to accelerate their own church-based social investment.
13. **Local churches** and **church-based organisations** should utilise the 'community right to challenge' in instances when a Church-based organisation is better placed to deliver a local public service and create greater social impact than its counterparts.
14. **Local churches** and **church-based organisations** should appeal to the Public Services (Social Value) Act when challenging services or local ownership of assets. The national co-ordinating Unit of the Church of England should work with Government to develop guidance on this matter for church-based ventures and public service providers.

*"Enabling the Church to re-enter the public square and public service provision is crucial to creating the environment within which a revived institution might flourish. There is an opportunity for the Church to harness, broker and form better relationships with public services and local authorities, by building on what it already does."*

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## British Civic Life

*This publication is an output of ResPublica's British Civic Life workstream, one of the three core workstreams of the ResPublica Trust.*

*This workstream addresses the nature of civic association, community assets and cultural hubs, from a constitutional scale to our smallest institutions. This includes the importance of the family and other social intermediaries in cultivating values and citizenship, the social action and ethically instructive role of faith bodies and civic groups, and the role of the media in channelling civic participation at a local and national level.*

*Current and forthcoming work will build upon the ideas outlined in our past output which have had a continuing impact on the British policy landscape. Examples of our successes in 2012 include ResPublica's work on how the House of Lords can best reflect the diversity of British civil society, featuring contributions from Frank Field MP, Lord Nat Wei, and Bishop Tim Stevens, Convenor of the Lords Spiritual, amongst others. In partnership with the National Council for Voluntary Youth Services we launched a Commission on Youth to address young people's engagement with social institutions and civic identity. As part of our work on community interaction, we published a report which recommended that public policy should draw on existing social groups and membership networks to tackle social ills and achieve public good. In 2013 this workstream will encompass our research into the role of the Church of England and other faith groups, media outlets and heritage both within communities and as part of our national infrastructure.*

## About Resurgo Social Ventures

*Resurgo means "to raise up again." It describes Resurgo's mission to help churches overcome local social challenges through effective and scalable innovation. Working in partnership with local churches, Resurgo brings skills and resources together from across the wider neighbourhood to help tackle complex issues in a truly transformative way.*

*Resurgo's award-winning initiatives Spear and SpearHead provide coaching services to create sustainable employment for disadvantaged young people, while Resurgo Investors accelerates the reach and impact of outstanding church-based ventures through social investment.*

*Resurgo was founded through St. Paul's church in Hammersmith in 2003 and it currently partners with a number of churches across London and beyond.*

Institutions are crucial to brokering the future of a country. Without both enabling and mediating institutions that leverage people into education, skills and shared prosperity, a nation cannot progress. This report argues the Church has the potential, the experience and the capacity to become one of the foundational enabling and mediating institutions that the country so desperately needs. The Church is a unique institution with enormous reservoirs of good will, education and capacity, as well as an asset base that – because it can be put to the use of all of our communities – can transform every community. The Church as ‘hyper-local’ can go places where the state cannot reach and where the market sees no profit. Because it cares for the whole person, it can offer a bespoke personal service focused on the genuine and varied needs of every individual.

*Holistic Mission* draws upon new survey data, specifically commissioned for this report, to explore the current social action of the Church of England and the impact and potential of its civic role in English communities today. It shows that the Church both encourages and caters for the diversity of people whom its members wish to help, regardless of faith or creed, and argues that the excellence achieved by the Church in some places should be repeated within communities where such provision is absent. The report concludes by recommending that the Church must prepare itself for such a role, and that the Government should welcome and encourage such a development by opening the doors of public procurement and the provision of public services to the Church and its social mission.

