

Spring 2026

Caritas Shrewsbury Newsletter

Caritas at Heart: Walking with People, Then, Now and Always

I've been part of the Caritas family for 23 years - and in that time, one thing that I have noticed, and which has never changed, is the way people show up for one another.

I've seen it in parish halls and school offices, in community centres and quiet conversations, in moments of real joy and in moments when life feels heavy. Time and again, people choose kindness, generosity and compassion - often without fuss, and almost always without seeking recognition.

That is the heart of Caritas.

Over the years, I've had the privilege of walking alongside families, children, volunteers, colleagues and clergy, and of seeing first-hand how small acts of care can make a lasting difference. Whether it's practical help offered at just the right moment, or simply someone taking the time to listen, Caritas is about meeting people where they are - with dignity, respect and hope.

The stories in this newsletter reflect that beautifully. You'll read about miles walked in support of children, families finding strength together, communities choosing understanding over division, and individuals discovering that they are not alone. None of this happens by accident.

It happens because parishes open their doors, schools look out for the children in their care, volunteers give their time generously, and supporters trust Caritas to carry out this work with care and integrity.

I am incredibly proud to now serve as CEO of an organisation that I have grown with for so many years. And I am deeply grateful to each and every person who is part of the Caritas family.

Thank you for continuing to walk with us.

Trish



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Trish Spencer, CEO

In this newsletter you can expect:

Steps of Hope

**Bereavement
Therapeutic
Support**

**Family Support
Update**

**Building
Bridges Project
- Wythenshawe**

Crewe News

**Counselling
Update**



Steps of Hope



One idea. Many conversations. A shared journey across the Wirral.

Sometimes the simplest ideas are the most powerful.

Last year, newly appointed Wallasey Catenian Leader, Peter Graham, set out with a clear and generous plan: to walk between parishes across the Wirral, speak after Mass, and invite people to support Caritas Shrewsbury's Wirral Schools Programme. What followed was Steps of Hope, a journey shaped as much by conversation and connection as by miles walked.

Over several months, Peter (often accompanied by his wife, Paula) walked a total of 84 miles, visiting 23 parishes right across the Wirral.



By the end of the challenge, over £6,000 had been raised to help children and families through the Wirral Schools Programme - funding that will make a real, practical difference where it's needed most.

But Steps of Hope was about more than fundraising.

It was about turning up.

About walking the long way rather than taking shortcuts.

About putting a friendly face to the work Caritas does every day.

Along the way, Peter shared each walk on social media, widening the circle of support and sparking interest beyond the parish walls. Catenians across the country followed the journey, offered encouragement, and contributed generously, helping more people see what Caritas and Catenians can achieve together.

At each stop, priests warmly welcomed him, parishioners listened, questions were asked, and stories were shared. Slowly, parish by parish, support grew.

And people responded.

As Trish Spencer, CEO of Caritas Shrewsbury, reflected:

"Steps of Hope worked because it was simple. One person's idea and commitment sparked support for children and families across the Wirral. Parishes responded generously, and Peter's conversations helped more people understand what Caritas, Catenians and parishes can achieve together."

Steps of Hope reminds us that Caritas is at its best when it is close to people - walking alongside them, listening, and building relationships rooted in trust and generosity.

One step at a time."



Family Support

There has been a high increase in numbers seeking help from Caritas Family Support Services. We work with all age groups in the community, including; in community group settings, families, 1-to-1, and the schools service.

The Stronger Together groups are unique in their workings as we have an open door policy for those who need a safe space to share their thoughts and feelings; working with and benefiting from our inclusive, non-judgmental, and welcoming approach. The groups are situated in locations on the Wirral easily accessible to local transport so as not to exclude members of the community who do not have their own transport.

Running alongside our wider community groups and in response to our clients needs, Caritas now offers more focused support for families navigating SEND and the challenges that can come with it. Through a combination of 1:1 guidance and structured parenting courses, we provide practical tools, reassurance, and a deeper understanding of children's needs.

Over the past six months, we have supported 92 parents and carers through our parenting programme, alongside 26 individual support sessions. Feedback continues to reflect the real difference this support makes, with one parent sharing:

"This course has been life-changing for us as a family. We have learnt so much and are starting to understand the struggles our son faces on a daily basis. We have noticed a big change at home by changing how we react and respond to him."



Bereavement Therapeutic Support

When grief feels heavy, no one should face it alone

Through conversations within our Stronger Together groups, a clear need emerged for more focused support around grief and loss. In response, we developed our Therapeutic Bereavement Group, offering a safe and supportive space for individuals to begin processing their grief.

As the groups developed, clients shared a desire for continued support beyond the initial programme. In listening to this, we have recently introduced a Mindfulness Group, providing a gentle next step for those who wish to continue their journey.

We also continue to stay connected with those who have taken part, offering opportunities to check in and ensuring that no one feels alone as they navigate their grief.

Building Bridges Project – Wythenshawe

Building Bridges Across Communities

In January, Caritas partnered with Wythenshawe Community Housing Trust to deliver a Community Connector event promoting the Building Bridges Project.

The project aims to build trust across communities of difference and address hate crime through dialogue, training and shared learning. The event brought together 70 local residents, many of whom signed up for further community exchanges and training.

Over the past 14 months:

- 170 people have engaged directly in exchanges, dialogue and training
- Awareness-raising has reached over 1,000 people through assemblies and faith networks

Gerry Flanagan, Caritas lead on the project, said:

"It is always good when communities work in solidarity to address challenging issues in a positive and respectful way."



From Garden to Gathering: Community in Crewe



At St Mary's Caritas Centre in Crewe, small moments are creating meaningful change. Our **Incredible Edible** initiative brings people together to grow and share fresh produce, offering opportunities to learn new skills, build confidence, and connect with others in a relaxed and supportive environment. It's not just about what is grown, but the friendships and sense of purpose that grow alongside it.

Just a few steps away, our **Community Café** provides a warm, welcoming space where people can pause, enjoy a drink, and share conversation. Alongside this, our **Community Fridge** offers practical support, helping to reduce food waste while ensuring that individuals and families can access fresh food in a dignified and accessible way.

For many, these spaces offer more than just food or a place to sit; they are a chance to feel part of something again, to be known, included, and supported. Together, these simple, accessible activities are helping to reduce isolation, strengthen community spirit, and create a place where everyone feels they truly belong.

Counselling: A Path to Healing

Across the Wirral and in Shrewsbury, demand for our counselling services remains high, with referrals continuing to be received from individuals facing trauma, bereavement, anxiety, and complex life challenges. At Caritas, we are responding to this need with urgency and compassion because no one should have to face these experiences alone.

On the Wirral, we have expanded our offer to include a wider range of therapeutic modalities, including integrative counselling, cognitive behavioural

approaches, hypnotherapy, and complementary therapies such as Rewind Therapy, which can be particularly effective in supporting those experiencing trauma and PTSD. This enables us to tailor support to each individual, recognising that no two journeys are the same.

Support is available both in-person and online, helping to remove barriers and ensure access to timely, person-centred care. Through this responsive and evolving approach, we continue to walk alongside individuals as they process, heal, and begin to rebuild their lives.

Thank you for reading!

Walking with Caritas - How you can be part of the journey

Caritas exists because people choose to care, often in small ways that make a lasting difference. Whether it's giving time, offering support, or helping us respond when someone needs help most, every act of generosity plays a part.

Support our work

Regular giving helps us plan ahead and respond quickly when families and individuals need support. Even a small monthly gift can help provide stability, dignity and care at the right moment.

If you'd like to find out more about regular giving, we'd love to hear from you.

Volunteer with us

Volunteers are at the heart of Caritas. From helping at events to supporting groups and activities, there's a place for everyone - whether you have a little time or a lot.

Get your parish or school involved

Parishes and schools play a vital role in helping us reach people quietly and respectfully.

This might include:

- inviting a Caritas speaker
- sharing our work in newsletters
- taking part in appeals or fundraising
- helping us identify families who may need support

Stay Connected

Follow our work, share our stories, and help spread the word about Caritas across the Diocese.