

2023-2024

Impact Report



A Day in the Park event, Shrewsbury 2023



CARITAS

DIOCESE OF SHREWSBURY

CHILDREN | FAMILIES | COMMUNITY

Welcome from the Chair of Trustees



Right Reverend Mark Davies
Bishop of Shrewsbury
Chair of Trustees

It is wonderful to see in these pages, testimony to the developing work of Caritas in response to the growing needs of people in so many communities across our Shrewsbury Diocese. In the different ways we seek to address these needs we are guided by the faith which works through love and awakens love of neighbour. May this work and witness continue to grow with the help of Caritas Diocese of Shrewsbury.

Welcome from the CEO



Ben Gilchrist
Chief Executive

For Caritas Shrewsbury 2023-2024 has been a year for development and new opportunities. From our new Stronger Together groups in Wirral and Shrewsbury (pg. 4), fully establishing St Mary's Caritas Centre in Crewe (pgs. 10 & 11), and the monthly SEN Den in Wythenshawe (pg. 15), we're proud to have supported amazing local community leadership and initiative.

Of course we couldn't do this without the dedication of our volunteers and generosity of so many supporters and partners. My thanks to all of them and our ever resourceful and innovative staff team. We are so grateful for all the fundraising, prayer and campaigning together that makes our work and all the impact this is having possible. Please don't hesitate to get in touch if you would like to find out more and to get involved.

OUR VISION

All children, families and communities are empowered to experience fullness of life.

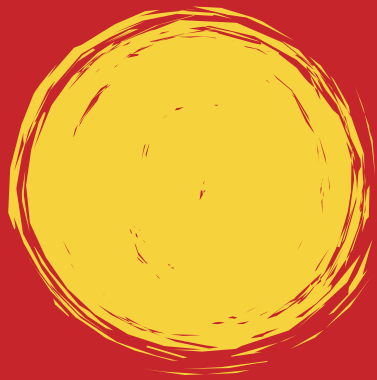


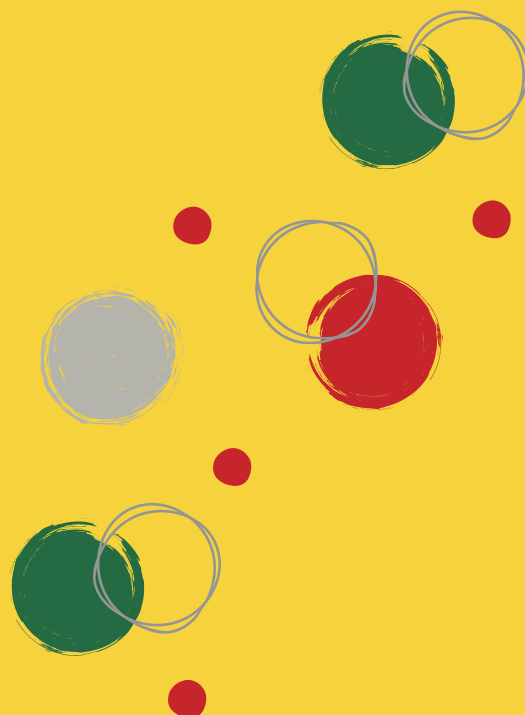
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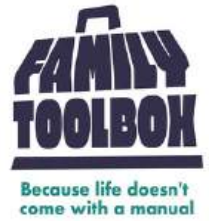
Why We're Here

Caritas is the social action and social justice agency of the Diocese of Shrewsbury which seeks to develop the Church's social mission.

Caritas means 'Christian love of humankind' and we express this through loving service. This is the motivation at the heart of all the work we do here at Caritas Shrewsbury.



Community Support



Stronger Together Groups

The Stronger Together groups really are just that – an opportunity for us to demonstrate that people don't have to feel isolated or struggle to sort problems on their own. We show that by talking about it and working together we can find solutions. Our aims are to help break down isolation, promote positive mental health, raise self-esteem, help people to cope with day-to-day life and build stronger, supportive communities.

57



People supported in our Stronger Together Groups

222



Families helped through our work as part of the Family Toolbox

238



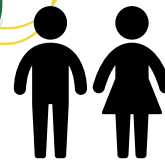
Adults

266



Children

100



Adults

93



Children

supported either directly or indirectly

Our third Stronger Together group opened in August 2023 and our fourth in January 2024. The Stronger Together group is unique as we have an open-door policy for those who need a safe space to share their thoughts and feelings. Participants benefit from our inclusive, non-judgmental, and welcoming approach. The groups are organised with a focus on being accessible so that barriers around the cost and time it takes to travel are overcome.

16



Guest Speakers at the Stronger Together Groups

What impact has attending group had on you?

THE GROUP HAS HELPED ME TO UNDERSTAND BETTER HOW WE CAN ALL HELP EACH OTHER MORE.

Gives me a break from the every day madness of a household & focusing on others, to focus on my self.

Attending this group motivates, gives me the effort to enjoy life.

makes you feel you are not alone. and coffee and toast is amazing 😊

I feel less anxious makes my day better

Being able to appreciate my own independence and time. Talk about my issues with bereavement, family and make valuable friends

Wouldn't of passed my driving test. If it wasn't for group Full support with confidence and support of group

Community Support

Parenting Groups

Over the years feedback from our courses has been extremely positive, with parents, carers, and grandparents feeling supported, appreciated, and valued in their roles. We ensure that clients feel listened to, heard, supported, and valued. This results in further referrals from professionals, and recommendations from attendees to their own family and friends to join us.



Parenting Groups, Wirral



Parents/Carers attended our
Parenting Groups, Wirral

'Time to Talk', Wirral



'Walk and Talk' Stronger Together Group, Wirral

Schools Support

An example of one-to-one work

Working one-to-one with a child gave her a safe environment to express her feelings and feel her voice was heard and listened to by a trusted adult. The child was able to engage and let her feelings be known by using emotion cards.

This became apparent when the cards were left on a table and she started to communicate using them. She is now able to express how she feels visually, allowing us to work together and explore how these emotions feel in her own body using visual aids and creativity.



Impact in School

"The support and work provided by Caritas is excellent. Parents, students and staff state that the support worker is always professional, highly organised and approachable. The support that she offers our families is invaluable. It has a positive impact on a range of aspects of our students and families lives ultimately improving their overall wellbeing in school, attendance and of course progress. She acts as the bridge that connects any breakdowns between parents and students and then feeds this information back to staff effectively to ensure the best support is put in place for the child at school. This service is a must."

Head Teacher, Wirral Secondary School

Creating a
Memory Bag,
Schools 2023



Schools Support

"Just to say Caritas is doing a great job. It is unanimous how impressed staff and pupils are with Caritas."

Head Teacher, Wirral Secondary School



Lego Therapy,
Schools 2023

Caritas delivered mindfulness workshops at a specialist school. This provided a space for students to talk about exam anxiety and stress. The workshops provided essential tools to help students prepare for their mock exams and help them manage exam stress and anxiety effectively, fostering resilience and confidence. Feedback was extremely positive and many students said they would like to attend similar workshops in the run up to their GCSEs. Caritas believe the success of these workshops highlights the importance of integrating support, like providing a listening ear and mindfulness, into an ongoing student support framework.



South Wirral
Social Gathering
& Information
Sharing Team

Counselling Service

The positive impact that our counselling has on the lives of the people we support can be significant and life-changing. Providing support which empowers people can enable them to make better choices which can help relieve financial pressures and reduce feelings they have of 'being trapped in a situation they have no control over'.

We show clients that with our support they can take back control of their lives. This feeling of empowerment improves their overall mental health and wellbeing. One client said:

"I suffered domestic abuse for years, and am living in poverty, but after my sessions with Caritas, I have begun to feel there is hope. The counselling has given me the confidence to enrol on a mentoring course and I also learned a lot on the children's mental health course which has shown me how to deal with the effect my abuse had on them".

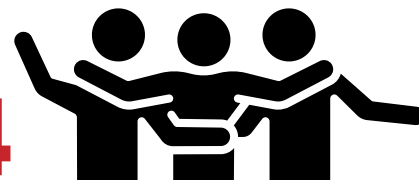
107



Adults benefitted from counselling

"My Counsellor was paired really well for me. She identified my issues straight away from the way I drove the conversation. She helped me process things I never could before, and gave me strategies in order to help myself in future."

4



Loss & Support Groups in 2 schools.

20



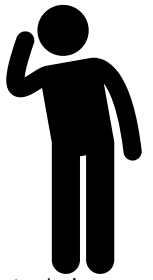
Children attended, in total

Bereavement & Loss



People attended our first Bereavement Group

28

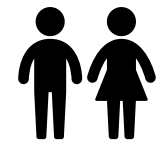


People supported via Listening Ear, 23 of which were for Bereavement & Loss

We started our first therapeutic Bereavement Group in November 2023, and it has been a great success with our second beginning in April 2024. The members decided at the end of the group that they would like to carry on meeting, and so got together with staff and decided to set up a new mindfulness group which also started in April 2024. This group is led by participants and will eventually be self-run. Below are some comments from the group members.

5

Adults



23

Children



A 58 year old lady who lost her husband, had become very isolated from her friends:

"It has transformed how I am able to talk to my friends using his name, I can now go out socially without getting too upset".

A 46 year old lady who lost her 18 year old daughter:

"I love the way I can speak openly about her and what her life would have been like, I am still angry at times with the hospital, but I am getting better".



A Memory Bottle

"I just wanted to say the biggest thank you for helping me during the worst time of my life. My worker was the kindest person with such a welcoming and warm nature that puts me at ease to be able to talk about my very tragic loss. She is very understanding and makes me feel that what I'm going through is normal for someone going through grief. She listens and understands and gives me ideas of ways to see things differently that I'm worrying about. Since losing my mum I feel completely alone so my weekly sessions have been really beneficial to talk about my grief".



St. Mary's Caritas Centre, Crewe

The Centre has continued to grow after the successful launch in January 2023, with more groups coming into the centre and the development of Caritas led projects such as the family activity sessions and Incredible Edible. A focus for the next 12 months is to develop a volunteer team to take new projects forward.

LATH have partnered with us since we opened and over the last twelve months, they have delivered 300 hours of drop-in provision for those experiencing homelessness and other vulnerable people. 137 individuals have accessed the service for food, drinks, and a warm space where volunteers offer support, advice, and encouragement to get involved in community activities. There are 20 LATH volunteers who gave more than 3,000 hours over the year.

103 hours of free room hire have been possible thanks to Cheshire East Council funding for grassroots community groups including:

- Activity sessions for young people run by the local police and Motherwell
- Engagement meetings with Afghan and East Timor communities
- English language support for the Polish community



Children receiving equipment at the end of the Family Food and Fun sessions.



Fun and games for families, and new equipment we can share with other groups

Community Fridge

Funding has been secured to launch a community fridge in June 2024 to reduce food waste and build community connections. Links have been established with other local community fridges, allotments, the food bank, community supermarket and food suppliers.



An Incredible Edible raised bed, ready for growing fruit, veg and herbs.

Incredible Edible and development of our outside green space

- Secured funding to construct 5 raised beds and plant fruit, vegetables, and herbs.
- Cheshire Wildlife Trust and the Coop approached us to install a bench on the site decorated in a design by a local school pupil.
- Set up a wormery to compost kitchen waste.
- Worked with Cheshire Wildlife Trust to plant a food hedge with volunteers from local businesses.

We have developed a partnership with St Paul's Futures Team, who work with supported adults and LATH to ensure that there are regular groups to maintain the raised beds. A couple of LATH clients have kindly volunteered to undertake some of the heavy digging and construction work. Helen, our local Incredible Edible coordinator, is coordinating the planting and harvesting plans and schedules. Harvested fruit, vegetables, and herbs will be used by LATH as well as being available freely to the local community.



The bench decorated by a local school pupil, following a competition run by the Co-op.

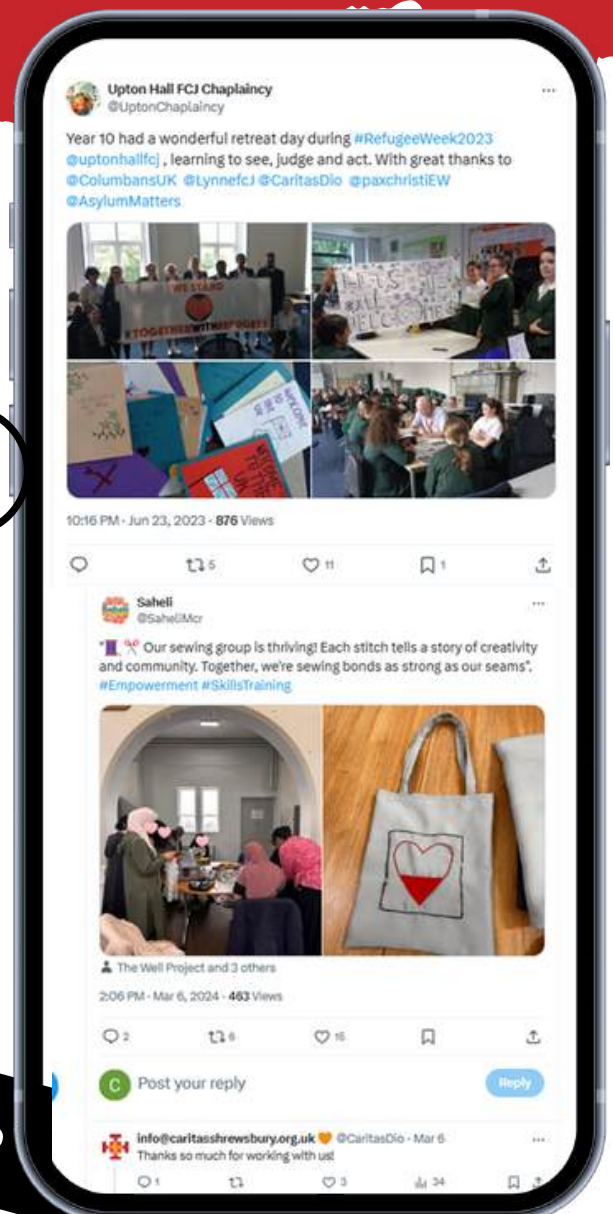
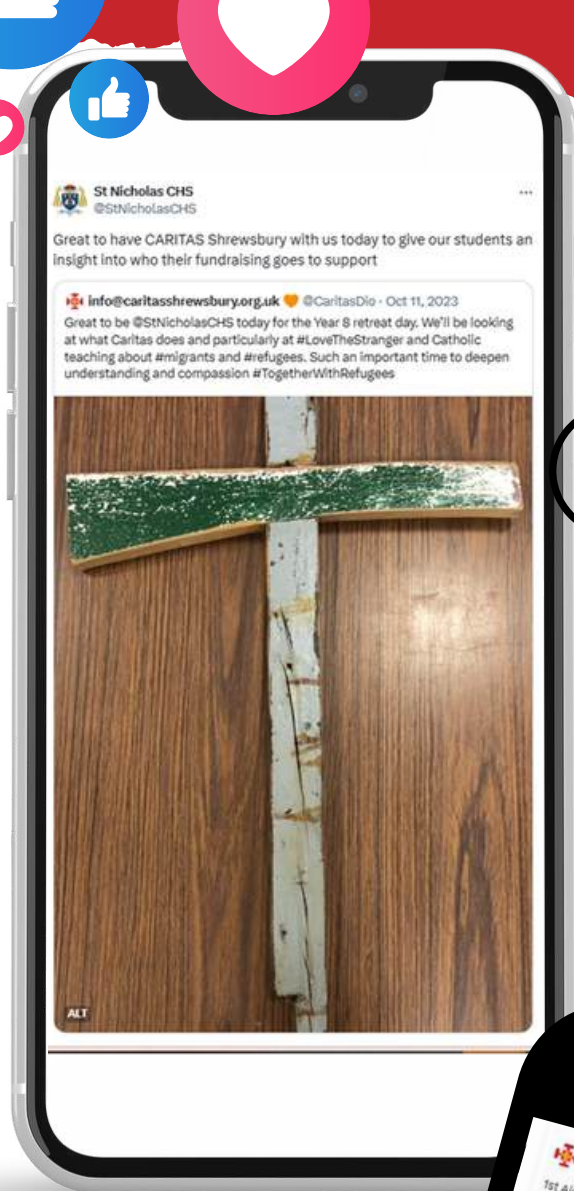
Regular sessions

- 50 Irish Dance School sessions – average attendance 60/week
- 37 Funky Choir sessions – average attendance 80/week
- 37 Crewe Chess Club meetings – average attendance 50/week
- 28 dementia cafe sessions – average attendance 20/week
- 24 Adventure Gamers meetings – average attendance 20/week
- 18 three-hour Family, Food and Fun Sessions
- 50 hours of relationship counselling provided by Marriage Care
- 36 hours of bereavement support provided by Dove
- 13 hours of employment support for refugees provided by Maximus
- Weekly church groups – average attendance 150/week

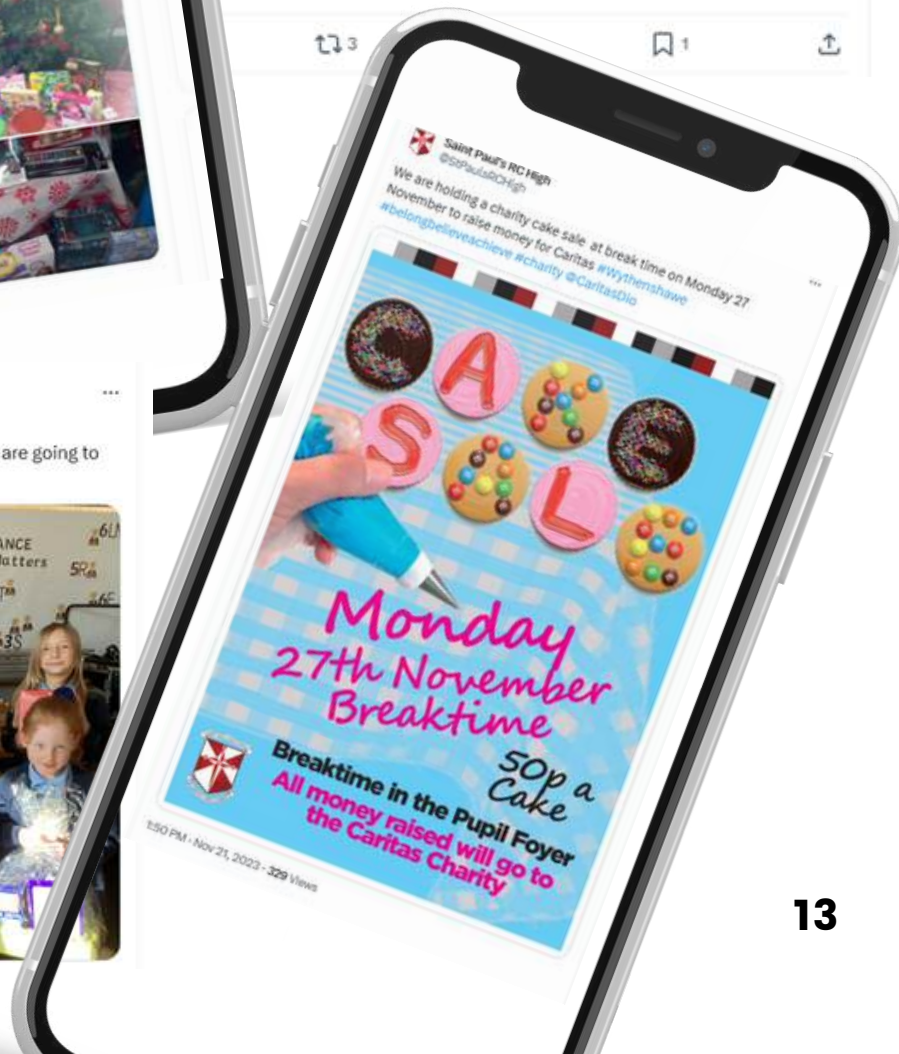


Aerial view of the St. Mary's Caritas Centre, Crewe.

SOCIAL MEDIA



SOCIAL MEDIA



Shrewsbury



Fun in the the
park event,
Shrewsbury,
2023



"I contacted the social Prescribing team to get Caritas on board as a Social Prescriber Provider, we had a meeting and signed up Caritas (August 2023). Through this many clients have accessed free counselling and support, and we have had clients signposted to the Stronger Together Group."

Two qualified nurses from India approached Caritas desperate for help in June 2023. They had paid £18,000 each to come to the UK but had not been given work for three months even though it was promised on arrival. We secured two new work sponsorships, helped secure their new housing, shopped and helped them to furnish their flats. we also found a place at a school in Shrewsbury for one of their daughters arriving from India.

We have partnered with the council to run a parenting group - this is benefitting 5 families and their wider support network.

Caritas help:

- Support letters given towards Educational Health Care Plans
- Successfully supported parents to apply for accommodation for their child after prison release.
- Supermarket vouchers given to those in need.

18



Referrals to our Service

24



People helped during the
Drop-In events

21



People attended the
Stronger Together Group

29



Adults benefitted
from counselling

"I want to express my deepest gratitude for being an unwavering source of support during one of the most challenging periods of my life. Your assistance in navigating the difficulties of moving to the UK, finding a new job, and securing a new home has been nothing short of miraculous. Moreover, your constant presence and support during tough times for my family have been invaluable. Your generosity in helping us purchase essential items for our new home has made the transition so much smoother. Your kindness and selflessness have touched us deeply, and we are forever grateful for your friendship and support."

SEND Together



The SEND Together Group reached the finals of the Spirit of Manchester Awards 2024

"I love going to the SEN Den. There are others just like me. I can just be myself."

8 year old girl with additional needs

The weekly support group, monthly SEN Den, and regular peer support at St. Aidan's Centre, Wythenshawe, have had a big impact.

12 mothers and 1 carer from the group have been engaged in campaigning on SEND issues as part of the Women of Wythenshawe project and with Greater Manchester Citizens.

The new monthly SEN Den has been hugely popular. Numbers have had to be limited since a peak of 23 parents/carers and 31 children last October. 41 families accessed the SEN Den at least once during the year. The group has worked hard to create a sensory room which has helped provide a quiet space for children and is a much needed addition to the support on offer. During the school holidays the group also organise family events or trips – last summer 25 children enjoyed visiting Knowsley Safari Park. Winter is a difficult time for SEND families with the challenge of keeping homes warm and the reduced opportunities to play outside. Funding via the Women of Wythenshawe project supplied 30 Winter Warmer Packs to families including a teddy which could be warmed, a blanket, gloves, socks, earmuffs, and fidget toys for children.

"It's the only place I can go where my child doesn't have to mask her special needs. She can just be her authentic self!"

A mother who is part of the groups

"My daughter was absolutely ecstatic when she opened the bag and couldn't wait to show me – once she had put on the earmuffs, gloves and wrapped herself in the blanket."

A mother who's family received a Winter Warmer Pack from Women of Wythenshawe

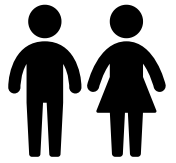


43



Families supported

34



Different parents or carers access the weekly group

44



Children with additional needs took part in activities

13



Adults from the group engaged in campaigning on SEND issues

15

The Hope Foodbank

348



Food parcels distributed

- 348 food parcels or vouchers distributed = 2,634 days of meals.
- 14 families gained specialised support regarding debt, benefits or housing issues.
- 15 volunteers across the year = 600 hours of support.
- 5 adults with additional needs or disabilities supported to build confidence and learn new skills through volunteering.

"I can't thank you enough for this support. You really don't know how much this means to my family. It has been so difficult for my children just to see me in hospital. To be at home with them means everything to me. Thank you, words just don't seem enough."

A mother who was able to return home to her children, having been provided with a downstairs sofa bed, after spending many months in hospital.

MENd Minds

Quotes from the men involved speak for themselves:

13



Men engaged

"I wouldn't have known what I would have done had I not found the support of the group. The group helped me through the darkest of days."

"I love going to the centre and have met so many amazing people. I can't believe some of the things I am now doing after so many years of being turned down. I feel so much part of it!"



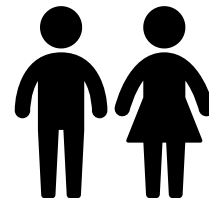
Indian Community Foodbank donation

21



Families helped every month

438



Adults Supported

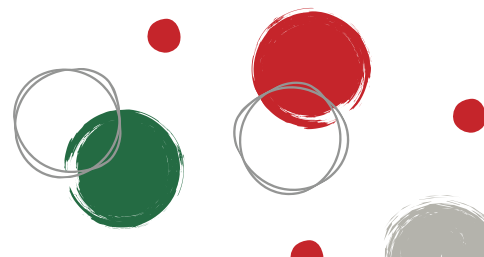
440



Children Supported

MENd Minds is a support group to help promote wellbeing for men.

One member has become motivated to give up alcohol through the group. This father of three is now in a rehabilitation unit and has begun the journey of attempting to live a life free from alcohol. He recently reaching the milestone of 100 days of sobriety. The group also celebrated a member who has been free from addictions for 25 years. It is men like this who provide motivation for other men who have similar challenges.



The Well Project

96

Hours of ESOL
Training

20



ESOL students every week

66%



of attendees attended more than
half of the sessions

Well Women's Group at Caritas
St. Aidan's Centre, Wythenshawe

12



Qualified and dedicated
ESOL volunteers

Attendees enjoying cooking
together at the Well Women's
Group



The Well Project provides a safe space for advice, support and friendship for people who are seeking asylum and refugees. English learners gain confidence using the language helping them socialise and integrate in the community. The Well Women group gives women the chance to lead and flourish.

Some highlights from our partnerships and activities this year:

- Working with other groups in the area as part of the Women of Wythenshawe project Work with Saheli to deliver sewing sessions
- Holiday activities for children
- Trips such as the women's group trip to a Whitworth Gallery exhibition
- Solving problems preventing people attending sessions resulting in increased participation Conversational English classes (ESOL)

"I'm so impressed with how organised the Well Project is, both ESOL and women's group. We have benefited a lot our language is way better and we made good relations with other service users and friendships."

Hotel Work

26



Different charities providing support

Our work coordinating support for people seeking asylum living in hotels in Manchester continued to grow and develop this year. It was a very challenging time for everyone involved, not least the residents, but the success was a result of working together with such a wide range of organisations including the council, schools, the NHS and so many charities.

Collaboration was essential and included generous donations of:

- Weekly bus tickets helping families get children to school
- 600 SIM cards and 145 phones
- 150 Tesco vouchers
- Clothing and shoes supplied weekly
- 480 New Balance backpacks for children to start the school year



1750

Donation requests



6000

Meals distributed during Ramadan

Highlights from the wide range of events organised to give residents something to do and support their wellbeing included school activity days, a Refugee Week party for children and Christmas and Eid celebrations.

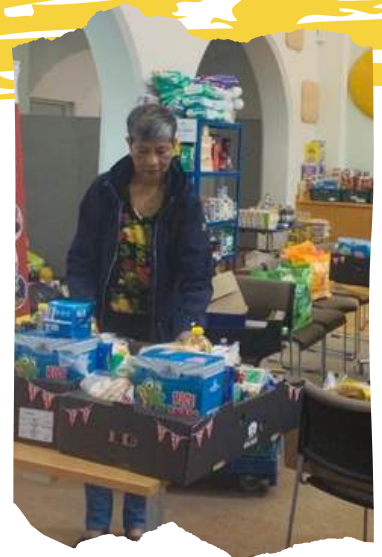


474

Gifts distributed during Christmas and Eid



Caritas at Christmas, hotel party 2023



Donations received for refugees



Football at a local pitch, Wellbeing Programme

Appeals & Crisis Grants

The Caritas at Christmas Appeal

£23,226

raised from

60



Cheadle Catholic Junior School, Caritas at Christmas collection



Parishes

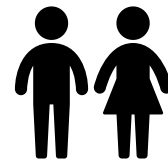
4



Schools

166

235



Adults



Children

117

Families helped



All Hallows Catholic High School, Caritas at Christmas collection



The Good Shepherd Appeal

£11,833

raised from

24



18 Primary and 6 Secondary Schools

Wirral Council Crisis Grants

£46,000

helped

198



Families

222



Adults

375



Children



Caritas Good Shepherd Campaign landing early 2025



19

Campaigns

This year we have continued to speak out about child poverty, for a compassionate, fair and efficient asylum system, and for better special education needs and disabilities (SEND) support, as we try to address the root causes of the injustices we see as a charity.

We were privileged to help develop and launch the new Let's End Poverty movement (www.letsendpoverty.co.uk) while continuing to campaign as part of the End Child Poverty coalition (www.endchildpoverty.org.uk) for the scrapping of the two-child limit.

It has been moving to be an active part of Together with Refugees (www.togetherwithrefugees.org.uk) which now has an incredible over 600 members. We loved helping organise the launch of their new Fair Begins Here campaign in Manchester calling for a fair new plan for refugees.

Our SEND campaigning has been a Wythenshawe focus at St Aidan's Centre and as part of Greater Manchester Citizens – see page 15 for more details about the brilliant local leaders speaking up.

Do join us in supporting these vital campaigns and if you would like to become a campaign volunteer please get in touch so that we can make an even bigger difference together.



Generosity & Partnership



£17,585 raised from monthly giving by standing order from 180 supporters

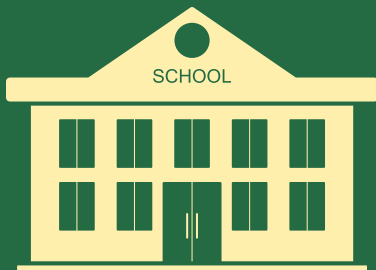


£4,437 received in donations by 14 supporters



£2,578 raised from 5 parish appeals

£189,760 received from 3 Councils (Wirral, Manchester and Cheshire East) supporting 6 projects



£64,000 received from 11 schools for our family support work



£5,471 raised by parish collectors in 29 parishes from 185 individuals

£12,500 received from 3 businesses



£16,950 received in legacy donations



£2,075 raised from 35 online donations



£131,365 received from 8 grant making trusts



Caritas at Christmas 2023



Caritas at Christmas Appeal landing
early Autumn 2024

STANDING ORDER FORM

Please complete this form in **FULL** using a ball point pen. Please return the completed form to the Caritas Diocese of Shrewsbury, Wheatland Lane, Wallasey, Wirral CH44 7ED. We will send it to your banks and make a copy for our records. If you set this Standing Order up directly with your bank (either on-line or at your branch) please contact Anne Smith on 0151 652 1281 or send an e-mail to anne.smith@caritasshrewsbury.org.uk

..... Bank Plc
.....
.....
..... Postcode

Please insert the full name and address of the Branch of your Bank or Building Society - including the Post Code

PLEASE PAY THE SUM OF

£ : p

To:	Lloyds Bank plc
	Prenton Branch, PO Box 1000, BX1 1LT
Sort Code:	30 – 15 – 52
Account Number:	55224260
For the credit of:	Caritas Diocese of Shrewsbury

If you would like to Gift Aid your donation, please indicate below and the paperwork will be sent out to you.

YES / NO

AND DEBIT MY / OUR ACCOUNT NUMBER:-

.....

SORT CODE:-

..... - -

IN THE NAME(S) OF:-

.....

BEGINNING ON THE:-

..... DAY OF 20.....

AND THEREAFTER MAKE THE SAME PAYMENT UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE EACH MONTH / QUARTER / YEAR
(delete as appropriate)

THIS ORDER SUPERSEDES ANY EXISTING STANDING ORDER IN FAVOUR OF THE ABOVE ACCOUNT

Signed: (Your Signature)

Address:

..... Postcode:

Date:

Protecting your Privacy

Caritas is registered as a charity with the Charity Commission (charity number 1169317) a record of your personal information and donations will be held by the Caritas and stored securely on the charity's database.

We comply with data protection and marketing legislation and the Fundraising Regulator's Code of Practice. We do not transfer your data to third parties to use for their own marketing or fundraising purposes. We will use your details to administer your gifts. This may include sharing your information with external organisations working on our behalf such as IT support companies, or when required by law (e.g. to claim Gift Aid).

We would also occasionally like to send you news by post on the work of Caritas in pursuance of our legitimate aim, which is to support other who see our assistance and give you the opportunity to support future appeals. If you do wish to receive these communications, please tick this box ☐

Many thanks for your continued support. You can read our full Privacy Notice at <http://www.caritasshrewsbury.org.uk> The Statement also contains details on how to opt-out of further communications from Caritas if you change your mind at a later date and how to update your preferences.



It's so easy to support us!
Scan the QR code to donate.

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DIOCESE OF SHREWSBURY

CHILDREN | FAMILIES | COMMUNITY