



**CARITAS
DIOCESE OF
SHREWSBURY**



IMPACT REPORT

2024 - 2025

Children | Families | Communities



www.caritasshrewsbury.org.uk

Welcome Messages



Caritas Diocese
of Shrewsbury



**Right Reverend
Mark Davies**
Chair of Trustees

It has been good to see year after year, the growth and flourishing of Caritas Diocese of Shrewsbury. This is the story which is shared in these pages recounting how we are seeking to live caritas in so many acts of service and solidarity in our local communities. From counselling and bereavement support; to refugee outreach; food provision; and school programmes, the mission of Caritas reflects our desire to not merely respond with professional competence to immediate needs but to do so with loving personal concern¹.

I am deeply grateful to all the staff, volunteers, supporters, and partner organisations for making this mission possible. May this work continue to grow as a sign of the love of Christ and may it inspire us to serve those in need with more generous hearts.

It is with deep gratitude for so many people's support that we share our 2024-2025 Impact Report with you. Over the past year, we have continued to walk alongside families and individuals facing hardship, offering practical support, hope and dignity rooted in Catholic Social Teaching. Amid continued economic uncertainty and social challenges, our staff and volunteers have responded with compassion and unwavering dedication to those most in need across our Diocese.

This report offers just a glimpse into the transformative impact we are achieving together –from supporting struggling families to accompanying people seeking asylum. This work is a testament not only to the resilience of the people we serve, but also to the amazing generosity of our supporters and partners who make this possible. As we look to the future, we remain committed to building up the communities we serve and speaking up for change. Thank you for being part of this journey with us and do get in touch to find our more and get involved.



Ben Gilchrist
Chief Executive

[1] Cf. Deus Caritas Est No. 28

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Stronger Together Groups



Caritas 'Stronger Together' community groups offer a safe place to build confidence, increase self-esteem, improve mental health and prevent isolation.

Impact from client's feedback shows that they feel supported by peer group, staff, and volunteers, so reducing isolation. Attending has helped them to face their problems using strategies and information discussed in group to enable them in making better life choices.

"I feel much stronger than I did, but still have a long way to go."

"I didn't realise how much I needed this group until I started."

"I am starting to make friends and find my identity again, slowly but surely. I can't thank you enough."

"I have been made to feel welcome and everyone has been so lovely to me."

"I am so grateful that school recommended your service, I would still be stuck in a rut, without it."

Community Support

Friendship & Belonging

For many in our communities, Caritas groups are the first place they've truly felt seen and heard. Each week, people gather to share experiences, and make friends.

"...it's good to know you are not alone."

Simon shared that it's the only group where people genuinely ask after one another when someone misses a session.

"I didn't think anyone would care if I wasn't here. But they do. That means everything."

Support When It's Needed Most

Some arrive quietly, nervous, unsure. Like **Vicky**, who has autism and severe anxiety about meeting new people. After one session, she texted to say how much she enjoyed it and that she'd be back.

John, a retired paediatrician and Caritas volunteer, supports families under stress with advice and reassurance.

"It's the highlight of my week. It helps me cope with everything else."



Laughter & Lightness

From quizzes and Pictionary to shared meals and chocolate orange prizes, these sessions are filled with joy. The laughter, banter and connection become therapy in themselves..

"The quiz breaks the ice for newcomers and lifts everyone's spirits."



Community Support Overview

Stronger Together Community Groups (Wirral):



4 groups supporting
103 families

164 adults / **175** children

Family Support (Wirral):



623 people supported
327 adults / **296** children



Schools Support



Why Schools Support Matters

Every school year, Caritas works closely with families, teachers, and children to offer emotional, social, and practical support — helping children thrive both inside and outside the classroom.

Positive Communication in Practice

One mum was struggling with constant arguments and raised voices at home with her two young children. Through one-to-one sessions on Positive Communication, she began to replace everyday frustrations with affirming, gentle phrases:

- Instead of “Be quiet, you two!” → “Let’s speak in softer voices.”
- Instead of “Stop crying!” → “I know you’re upset. Let’s have a hug.”

The impact was immediate. Home became calmer, voices softer, and the children more responsive. She completed five sessions and even began creating her own helpful phrases. “It’s made such a difference. I feel more connected to my kids.”

“Let’s speak in softer voices.”

*“I know you’re upset.
Let’s have a hug.”*



Schools Work Summary

Number of Schools Engaged
(Wirral):



14 schools involved

Number of Children Supported:
156 children reached

Parenting Groups (‘Talking
Teens’ & ‘Nurturing Groups’):
44 parents/carers took part



Staff Reflections

“Parents, students and staff state that the support worker is always professional, highly organized and approachable, she acts as the bridge that connects any breakdowns between parents and students - this service is a must.”

Deputy Head Teacher, Wirral School



Building Trust

Through our family support initiative in schools, Caritas worked with a young person diagnosed with ADHD who was experiencing frequent conflicts at home and school. By offering creative engagement, games, and a safe space to build trust, he eventually disclosed a traumatic experience that was affecting his behaviour. This insight helped school and family better understand his hyper-vigilance and emotional responses.

Understanding Triggers

Support plans were then introduced, including smaller class sizes, emotional regulation strategies, and continued listening ear support. These changes helped him feel safer and more in control of his emotions.



A Collaborative Response

With school staff and family working together, a consistent approach was created to help manage his anxiety. This partnership fostered a more secure and nurturing environment, enabling him to focus on learning and feel supported in his day-to-day life.

“Your support, kind words and help have been utterly invaluable to me this year.”

Counselling & Therapies

Community Family Diversity



“Counselling was the one space where I didn’t have to pretend. I was just... allowed to be me.”

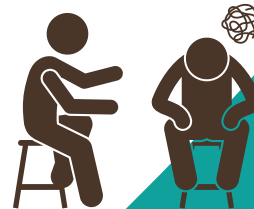
Counsellors have received feedback from clients about the positive impact the service has had on their lives. Clients report feeling more empowered, returning to work, addressing generational trauma, and breaking cycles of abuse, ultimately becoming more autonomous of their choices and lives.

In addition to our trained counsellors, we have **7** student counsellors in Shrewsbury, and 3 in Wirral. Supporting these student placements provides essential assistance to clients while also being a vital opportunity for the local student counsellors to grow both professionally and personally. In environments where placement opportunities are limited, each session is not only meaningful for our clients but also allows our students to gain experience and apply their theoretical knowledge.



Key Achievements

184 clients supported
Increasing NHS and self-referrals
Growing number of complex
mental health cases



“I feel I have got more control over my life and have been able to return to work following my sessions.”

Expansion of services that now include Clinical Hypnotherapy, Rewind Trauma Therapy, and Bereavement Therapeutic Group

Local Impact

Wirral: **101** adults supported
Shrewsbury: **61** adults



Bereavement & Loss

Community Family Diversity

"It's made such a difference knowing someone is here just for me."

Parent & Family Support

- Families supported through tailored 1-to-1 sessions
- Creating space for grief, storytelling, and healing
- Delivered with compassion by trained staff and volunteers



Bereavement Support

22 People in groups

36 people through 1-to-1 sessions

Support in Schools

20 children supported in **6** schools across the Diocese weekly sessions to explore emotions, memory, and healing



"Grief doesn't go away, but you've helped me carry it better."



Crewe

St. Mary's Caritas Centre



Dignity Partnership Welcoming



At a Glance – The Numbers

- **47** hours of bookings per week by **10+** organisations
- Over **3,137** visits across the year
- **40+** individuals supported regularly
- Hot Christmas Curry served on Christmas Day



Regular groups & services include:

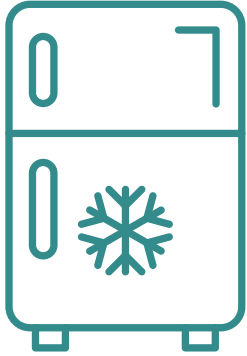
- Everybody Health and Leisure (healthy lifestyle)
- Falls Prevention / Move it or Lose it
- Bereavement & relationship counselling (Marriage Care, Dove)
- Dementia café
- LATH (support for homeless & vulnerable)
- Social activities: Irish dancing, chess, community choir & café

"I like coming here for the company."

"We have a good chat, putting the world to rights."

"I love it, it gets me out of the house."

Projects in Action



Incredible Edible

Supported by St Paul's Futures Team

- New compost bin and planters installed
- Local family now actively growing their own produce



"I look forward to it every week — I definitely feel better after coming."

Community Fridge

- Launched in November
- Partnered with Cheshire East Food Network
- Plans to expand with Churches Together in Crewe



Community Laundry

Washer & dryer installed with new funding

- Offers on-site clothing support for LATH clients
- Reduces pressure on volunteers and improves dignity and hygiene access
- Open to the wider community

"The ability to wash and dry clients' clothes on-site has been very beneficial for our rough sleeping clients."

"Being able to wash her clothes has been vital for L's warmth and dignity during the winter."

#CaritasMoments



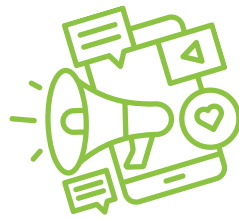
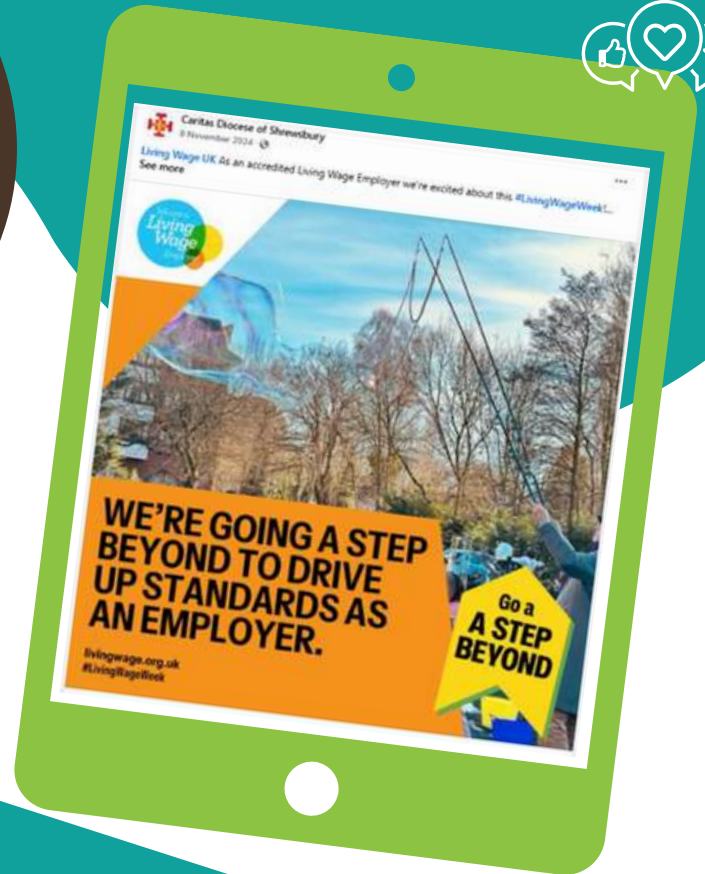
@CaritasDio



@CaritasDioceseShrewsbury

@CaritasWirral

#SmallActsBigImpact



@CaritasDio



@CaritasShrewsburyRFc

@CreweCaritas

Wythenshawe St. Aidan's Community Centre



"I didn't think this was possible, but I am so looking forward to the year ahead!"



SEND Together

Weekly group, monthly SEN Den, and workshops supporting families with additional needs.



38 Families supported

29 Carers attended weekly group

44 Children with additional needs involved in group activities

11 Parents supported with forms

9 Parents involved in campaigning – Women of Wythenshawe & GM Citizens

SEN Den & Family Activities

Empowering Parents | Enriching Families



Learning & Engagement Highlights

34 Families attended monthly SEN Den

9 Parents completed training (on SEND law, Paediatric First Aid & Mental Health)

3 Parents co-produced **6** videos myth-busting SEND challenges for other families



"It's so good to come today! I want to cry — I've felt so alone."





Community Projects, Food Support & MENd Minds



Wythenshawe SEND Network

4 Workshops Held
37 Carers Attended
Focus on Sensory Needs
(Parents & Children)



"I can't thank you enough for the support you have given. When I first came here, I thought it was the end of the world, I was so down."

"It's better than staying in bed feeling sorry for myself."



MENd Minds – Men's Mental Health Support

13 Men Supported
4 Took Part in Gym Sessions
2 Continued with Independent Exercise
1 Attended Rehab & Reunited with Children



Hope Foodbank



491 Adults & **414** Children Supported
383 Parcels/Vouchers
£1,755 in Extra Financial Support
1,050 Volunteer Hours by **14** Volunteers



The Well Project



Community Family Diversity

Dignity Partnership Welcoming

Based at St. Aidan's Centre in Wythenshawe, the Well Project supports people seeking asylum and refugees through English classes, community groups, and wellbeing activities.

ESOL - English Support



13 Volunteer tutors

30 Learners supported annually

Lessons build confidence in everyday English and includes one-to-one and group support



"My English has improved, and I've made lovely friends her."

The Well Women's Group provides a welcoming space for refugees and people seeking asylum to come together for English conversation and a range of activities, such as craft, sewing, knitting, cooking and exercise, as well as providing information and orientation for life in the UK.



Well Women's Group

5 regular group volunteers - supporting weekly sessions

15+ women attend annually

Christmas party welcomed **30** families

Weekly activities include craft, conversation, cooking, while volunteers support children so mums can attend.



"The ladies feel like family. I'm so happy with my gift."



Hotel Outreach Programme

Caritas Shrewsbury supports weekly wellbeing and creative activities for families living in asylum hotels.

Family Activities



Art Therapy: **20** women weekly

Children's & Toddlers' Groups: **10+** families

Creative School Holiday Sessions:



185+ children involved

Sessions include: crafts, games, drama, storytelling



Christmas Joy

200 children at Christmas party

240+ toys distributed

Shared sweets, games, and celebration

"It was so good to play, craft and laugh with others."

Practical Support



"My children were so happy to see Santa for the first time!"

"Thank you for remembering us – we love Christmas."

35 bus passes issued weekly

90 SIM cards

14 phones distributed

Donations: nappies, waterproof coats



Shrewsbury

In Shrewsbury, Caritas supports children and families through school sessions, drop-ins, and community events — offering a friendly presence whenever someone needs a little extra support.



From coffee and craft to summer park picnics, our community groups offer spaces to connect, chat, and feel supported.



“He no longer thinks about being sick... Mum says he’s sleeping in his own bed and seems so much more settled.”

Helping Children Manage Anxiety

- Adam (not his real name), age 10, was struggling with anxiety and repetitive behaviours. Adam was anxious about being sick, pacing and sleeping in mum’s bed.
- Support given: Weekly sessions using games, cards, and strategies like grounding and breathing techniques, and thought-challenging, he began to build confidence and feel in control of his thoughts.
- Outcome: Sleeping independently, anxiety significantly reduced, and he’s using his strategies without help.



Support

Stronger Together Community Group

26 people engaged



Drop-In Support Sessions
17 individuals supported through regular drop-ins

2 Parenting Groups attended by **14** people

31 additional people supported



Campaigns

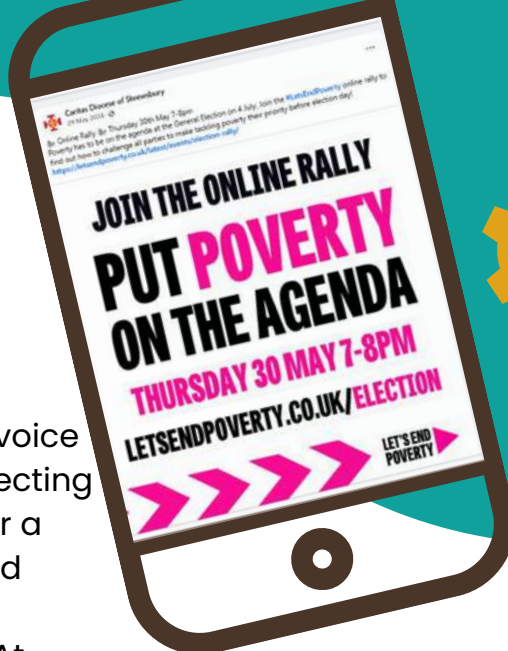
In 2024–25 we have continued to raise our voice on some of the most pressing injustices affecting our communities: child poverty, the need for a compassionate and fair asylum system, and stronger support for children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). At Caritas Shrewsbury, we remain committed to addressing the root causes of inequality through both grassroots action and campaigning.

We were proud to help grow the Let's End Poverty movement (www.letsendpoverty.co.uk) with a big focus on speaking up at the General Election. We have also remained an active member of the End Child Poverty Coalition (www.endchildpoverty.org.uk), continuing to call for the abolition of the two-child limit as the single biggest change that could lift the most children out of poverty (please email you MP today to call for change – <https://tinyurl.com/caritas-ecp>).

Campaigning as part of Together with Refugees (www.togetherwithrefugees.org.uk), which calls for fair new deal for people seeking sanctuary, we achieved a huge success in seeing the Government scrap the Rwanda plan. This shows how important it is to speak out together and being part of a coalition that now includes over 600 organisations has been deeply inspiring.

Our SEND advocacy has remained centred in Wythenshawe, through our work at St Aidan's Centre and our involvement with Greater Manchester Citizens. This year, local parents and leaders have continued to speak out with courage and clarity, demanding real improvements in support and inclusion—see page 14 for more information.

We warmly invite you to stand with us in these vital campaigns. If you're interested in becoming a campaign volunteer, please get in touch—together we can make a difference!



Appeals & Crisis Grants



Dignity Partnership Welcoming

Every gift matters. Whether through our Christmas Appeal or emergency crisis support, generosity across our parishes and partnerships helped families weather challenging times.



Caritas at Christmas £17,140 raised

From **44** parishes, **6** schools,
and **33** individuals
Supported **79** families
That's **126** adults and **146**
children

*"I didn't think
this was
possible... It
meant so much to
us."*



Good Shepherd Appeal

£10,206 raised

From **16** primary
and **3** secondary
schools



Crisis Grants – Emergency Help

Thanks to Wirral Council
£26,756 distributed in crisis grants
Supported **142** families –
166 adults and **277** children

*"It kept the lights
on and food on
the table—thank
you."*

*"The children felt
so proud to be
helping others
through Lent."*



Generosity & Partnership



Community Family Diversity

From parish giving to council funding and trust partnerships, our work is only possible through the continued generosity and belief in our mission. This year, individuals, communities, councils, schools, and businesses came together to help transform lives.

Individual Giving



Monthly Support

142 monthly donors

£19,626 raised



Parish Collectors

26 parishes,
141 individuals

£4,063 raised



Online Giving

43 online donors

£3,970 raised



Legacy Gifts

2 legacy donations

£1,624 received

Parish Appeals

11 parish events

£2,666 raised

Other Donations

9 one-off donors

£3,625 raised

Grants & Partnerships



3 councils (Wirral, Manchester, Cheshire East)



Funded **6** projects

£194,908



School Support

11 schools

£75,340



Business Support

2 local businesses

£18,474 raised

Trusts & Foundations



16 grant-making Trusts

£204,437 awarded

“ We give what we can because we’ve seen what a difference it makes. ”

Caritas at Christmas 2024



Caritas at Christmas Appeal landing early Autumn 2025

£17,140
raised



helping **126** adults
and **146** children

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 info@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.

Contact Us



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CARITAS

DIOCESE OF SHREWSBURY

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