

## News from Caritas Westminster, for priests and parishioners

As we approach the great celebration of Christmas, we are always excited to see how many people in our churches use the opportunity of the Advent and Christmas “festive season” to reach out to others who are struggling, suffering, or have been forced to the edges of society.

At Caritas Westminster it is our privilege to be able to support the work of so many volunteers in our churches and schools, and to work in partnership with such dedicated people.

As ever, we need you to tell us what you are doing and what the needs are in your area, so that we can target our support more effectively.

This year there has been a great uptake of our Advent Giving Calendar and people are showing such generosity of spirit. If your parish has made use of this Calendar as a community, please do share photographs of what you have done, and let us know what difference this has made. Send all feedback to [nikipsarias@rcdow.org.uk](mailto:nikipsarias@rcdow.org.uk)



*Advent Giving Calendar collection at Our Lady of Victories School, Kensington*

## Latest Government announcement on migrants

You may have heard the Prime Minister announce further measures to attempt to reduce the number of people making perilous journeys across the channel to seek sanctuary or a safer, better life on our shores. It has already been described as a plan “to destroy the right to seek safety in the UK” (Asylum Matters, on Twitter) and the Jesuit Refugee Service has said “Finding more ways to criminalise, punish, and exclude refugees is a distraction from real issues – and it is a dangerous distraction for which human beings, our sisters and brothers, will pay the price.”

We are also concerned about the proposed measures to “significantly raise the threshold someone has to meet” to be considered a victim of modern slavery, that Rishi Sunak announced. We will be following this story and keeping our supporters informed as these new proposals progress through parliament.

## Cost of Living Crisis

We have updated our list of helpful organisations, to include those who were part of our Cost of Living Conference. They are all listed in the handy PDF document attached to this email, and to this page <https://www.caritaswestminster.org.uk/colc2022.php>, where you can also find other information.

Please continue to keep Caritas Westminster informed of any outreach activities you are doing to support people who are struggling financially. We have been pleased to see fifteen parishes already setting up Warm Spaces (with two more being planned), and were able to contribute to this Tablet Article [Church steps up to help homeless with outreach during cold weather \(thetablet.co.uk\)](https://www.tablet.co.uk), to help highlight the work of the Church in this way.

[See our web page for ideas](#), on how to support people who are struggling to pay heating bills.

## Volunteer recruitment

**In 2023, Volunteer recruitment could help your parish:**

- To give parishioners the opportunity to give back and to cultivate a sense of purpose.
- To build on diversity, inclusion and belonging in parishes
- To help more people access the Eucharist
- To welcome visitors and new arrivals
- To reach out to those who feel disengaged or left out

Sign up to our event, on **Thursday 26th January 2023, 11:30 - 12:30 (online)** organised by Caritas Volunteer Service as a guide to help parishes with their volunteer recruitment and engagement.

Find out more here: <https://www.caritaswestminster.org.uk/recruiting-parish-volunteers-in-2023-1445.php>

### **Do you need volunteers now?**

If any parish projects or activities need extra volunteers over the Christmas period, get in touch with Elke Springett, our Volunteer Service manager, who might be able to help you recruit.

Email [elkespringett@rcdow.org.uk](mailto:elkespringett@rcdow.org.uk)

## **We are relaunching Caritas Parish Representatives!**

Caritas Representatives are our key contacts in parishes to share **news of local opportunities for mission and outreach, networking, training and formation in Catholic Social Teaching**. They help put up posters, raise awareness in the parish and with local schools, they let us know about local need, provide information on the amazing community outreach and share data and stories so that we can work together towards social justice. **If you don't already have a Caritas Representative for your parish, please consider who you might appoint.** The attached information sheet and poster can help.

This should be someone who is passionate about **local** social action. We appreciate that many others are asking you for the same, so the same person could be your synodal rep, a youth rep, an SVP, J&P or CAFOD rep; or it might be someone entirely new who can help bring others together to help shape the social mission of your parish. Please ask them to complete a form and send to your Caritas Development Worker.

Find more information and the form here: <https://www.caritaswestminster.org.uk/parish-social-action.php>

## Events

### **Homeless Network meeting - Trauma Informed Care**

Please pass this information on to anyone working frontline in a social outreach project in your parish.

**This was postponed from November and will now be held on Tuesday 17th January 2023, 17:00 - 18:30 (Online)**

This meeting hosted by the Diocese of Westminster Homeless Network, but open to all in the Diocese of Westminster who accompany people who have experienced trauma.

This is a chance to learn about Trauma Informed Care (TIC) - what it means to support people who have suffered trauma in their past. We will learn about dealing with challenging behaviour and about the importance of our own selfcare and resilience in the work that we do. This training is invaluable to all that work or volunteer in the homeless sector and other similar areas.

[Click here for more information](#)

Also for people working with those experiencing homelessness or other hardships:

In collaboration with The Upper Room, Caritas Westminster would like to invite you to join a short series of three meetings:

### **Routes out of Homelessness - Stepping Stones - Dignified Work Series**

**Mondays 23 January, 20<sup>th</sup> February and 27th March 2023, 10:00 - 12:00**

You can learn about the work of three organisations: Only a Pavement Away, Social Bite, and Beam. Please feel free to sign up for one or all of the meetings.

Find out more here: <https://www.caritaswestminster.org.uk/routes-out-of-homelessness-stepping-stones-dignified-work-series-1451.php>

## **Date for your Diary:**

### **Animating Parish Seniors Groups - Conference**

**Thursday 20th April 2023, 10:00 - 16:00**

**Westminster Cathedral Hall – Lunch will be provided.**

This Conference, jointly organised by Caritas Westminster and the Irish Chaplaincy, the Agency for Evangelisation, SVP and Anna Chaplaincy, is for all parishes, agencies or groups who accompany or work with older people in the Diocese of Westminster.

Click here for more information: <https://www.caritaswestminster.org.uk/animating-parish-seniors-groups-conference-1448.php>