

DIOCESE OF SALFORD

Social Action Network (DiSAN)



The Diocese of Salford Social Action Network (DiSAN) brings together charities and outreach groups in the Diocese of Salford to share information, strengthen and facilitate the network and develop the capacity for voluntary and community action within the diocese. The group is open to all organisations and individuals who support its aims.

NOTES FROM DiSAN ZOOM MEETING TUESDAY 22nd JUNE 2021

Present

Bishop John Arnold	Diocese of Salford
Kath Ansley	Caritas Diocese of Salford
Annie Sykes	Ministry Lead – Outreach, St James & All Souls
Mark Thompson	SVP
Marc Besford	Impact and YCW
David Jackman	L'Arche Manchester
Patrick O'Dowd	Caritas Diocese of Salford
Edward Whelan	Catholic Fellowship of Disabled People (National)
Jane Whelan	Catholic Fellowship of Disabled People (Diocese of Salford)
Kevin Flannigan	St. Antony's Centre for Church and Industry
Peter Fahy	Trustee Diocese of Salford & Hudson Society, Birmingham
Paul Ashton	Chair of Trustees, Loaves and Fishes, Salford
Tony Murray	Cornerstone volunteer
Mark Wiggin	Caritas Diocese of Salford

Apologies

Fr Andrew Pastore	SVP
Fr Jan Klaver	APF Mill Hill Mission
Anthony Brown	Caritas Modern Day Slavery volunteer
Tracey West	THOMAS
Pauline Conroy	UCM
Margaret Doyle	Rainbows North West

We apologise to any DiSAN members who did not receive the invitation to the meeting. We have been experiencing issues with our email lists which we hope have now been resolved.

Agenda

Welcome and opening prayer – Mark Wiggin & Kath Ansley.

Brief introductions – All.

Bishop John Arnold ~ The Importance of Charity.

DiSAN – Past Present and Future (Mark Wiggin)

Top priorities moving forward – All.

Caritas Salford – new strategic direction (Patrick O’Dowd)

Newsround – All.

Welcome and opening prayer

Mark Wiggin welcomed everyone to the meeting and Kath Ansley opened the meeting with a prayer.

Brief introductions

All introduced themselves and their organisations and it was noted that the turnout for the meeting was below average possibly due to some communications issues that would be looked into. Nevertheless, a rich discussion was anticipated on the role of DiSAN going forward.

Update on Caritas Salford - the pandemic and lockdown

Mark Wiggin shared how the year past has been dominated by the pandemic. All services have always remained open with reduced face to face contact and social distancing in place.

Very few staff have been furloughed as most are front line workers and due to the generosity of funders and flexibilities, the charity ended the financial year in April in a stronger position than predicted on which to build the new strategic plan.

Bishop John Arnold on the importance of charities working together

The meeting welcomed Bishop John who began by thanking Mark for his 11 years’ service as Director of Caritas and wished him a long and happy retirement. Bishop John then reminded everyone of the importance of collaborative working and that within the Diocese of Salford there is a rich diversity of charities and organisations working for the same ends. None is more important than another and each has their speciality. Currently, the key focus for the diocese is on promoting awareness and action on the environment which is the critical issue of our time. The diocese is not working in isolation on this matter but together with the Bishops Conference. This is the model to develop going forward – collaboration and sharing and DiSAN reflects this. Ultimately, we are all working for the same ends whether we are a large or a small organisation.

Asked for a tip on how to engage and encourage the faithful at parish level, Bishop John reinforced the importance of prayer, the development of liturgy in the parish and to pray specifically for what are about. He concluded by thanking everyone for their work and reminded us that we don’t act on our own but that God comes with

us as reflected in the simple prayer of our diocese, "Stay with us, Lord, on our journey."

DiSAN – Past Present and Future

Mark Wiggin reflected on his time with Caritas as Director as he steps down at the end of June. He said, "I have always recognized and valued how a forum such as DiSAN enables all in the Catholic network involved in social action across the Diocese of Salford, to come together to share experiences, support one another and identify opportunities for collaborative partnerships to meet the challenges all our organisations are facing".

Top Priorities

The group reflected upon the value of the network and its place within the diocese. From discussions emerged 4 themes:

1. The role and place of the laity to be in a position to contribute to the shaping of strategy and policy in the diocese, especially on matters of social action, outreach and social justice.
2. The need for DiSAN and other mechanisms that can be an interface between social justice organisations, charities and religious orders and hear the voice of the poor.
3. Greater investment needed in young people.
4. Support to parishes to develop outreach in their communities.

From the discussions, the desire emerged from some participants for a Diocesan Pastoral Council with a synodical approach to listening and the direct involvement of the poor to hear the 'cry of the earth and the cry of the poor' as Pope Francis has said. Ed Whelan has already raised this with Bishop John and his proposal received a warm welcome. DiSAN will be able to support this development as an enhancing and enriching platform to engage directly with the Bishop and all those of faith but it was noted that it should not replace the DiSAN forum that has its own purpose to assist the charitable family of the Diocese of Salford to work together better for the common good.

Young people was a special cause for action and it was agreed that support for the YCW Impact and the Diocesan Youth Service was essential to compliment and connect the informal youth work with more formal work in schools.

Parishes are also a cause for action in that the supporter base for social action was in essence the parishioner. Where an animator existed in a parish, an active representative or a pro-active secretary there was an opportunity for fruitful engagement.

Caritas Strategic plans

Patrick O'Dowd, the new Director of Caritas Salford, introduced the new strategic plan for the charity that has at its heart the following 4 pillars of action over the next 3 years:

- Pillar 1: Reduce poverty, isolation and vulnerability in our Diocese to enable people to 'live life to the full' by providing practical responses to those in need.
- Pillar 2: Increase awareness of Catholic Social Teaching and animate the Diocesan Community to take practical action.
- Pillar 3: Become a voice for those who cannot speak for themselves and advocate for justice and social change.
- Pillar 4: Become a sustainable and more visible and effective catalyst for change.

In addition to existing services, Caritas will develop 2 new aspects of our work – parish outreach and advocacy. The plan will be made available more publically soon.

Newsround

Paul Ashton - Loaves and Fishes – announced the working partnership with St Antony's in training opportunities for homeless people.

Mark Thompson – SVP shared the news of a national membership coordinator role to grow conferences nationally.

Marc Besford - Impact and YCW stressed the need to ensure that young people are the heart of our work and planning.

Annie Sykes – St. James Salford outreach parish volunteer shared the outreach role she has in her parish that has adopted the theme 'from maintenance to mission'.

David Jackman – shared the good news that L'Arche Manchester has opened a second house in Manchester.

Kevin Flanagan – shared the work that has continued with St Antony's Centre for Church and Industry in terms of the return to face to face training, increased work for vulnerable low paid workers as well as pastoral ministries in partnership with other charities.

Patrick O'Dowd reflected on the successful Refugee week webinar that included a presentation about how the Social Teaching of the Catholic Church can lead us to advocate for a future of justice and peace, accelerating the process of working Towards An Ever Wider "We", envisioned by Pope Francis. Speakers included the Caritas Team, Dr Anna Rowlands – St Hilda Associate Professor of Catholic Social Thought and Practice at Durham University and Helen Pridd, North of England editor of the Guardian, based in Manchester.

End piece

The meeting ended with a reflection from Kevin Flannigan on the contribution of Mark Wiggan as the Director of Caritas Salford to the diocese and also to the wider Caritas Social Action Network where he has worked to support and promote social action at both diocesan and national levels.

Next meetings

Venues to be confirmed for the next two meetings.

- Tuesday 21st September 2021 10am – 12 noon.
- Tuesday 14th December 2021 10am – 12 noon.