

THE CROSSROADS INITIATIVE

Discerning the future direction for Christian Social Action

*‘Stand at the crossroads and look; ask for ancient paths, ask where the good way is,
and walk in it, and you will find rest for your souls.’ Jeremiah 6:16*

Report of Feasibility Study

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Contents

1. Executive summary	3
2. Introduction and background to the Crossroads Initiative	6
3. The focus and methodology for this feasibility study	9
4. Outline of responses to our consultation	10
5. Conclusion: what was found, what is feasible?	16
6. Recommendations for going forward	18
Appendices:	22
1. The original paper sent out to participants	23
2. Participants in the research	25
3. Analysis of the Christian social action 'sector'	27
4. Team Bios	29

About Together for the Common Good:

Together for the Common Good is a UK charity dedicated to spiritual and civic renewal. Working across the Christian traditions, it equips leaders, churches, schools and charities to read the signs of the times and work for the common good. Drawing on Catholic Social Teaching, it offers online resources, Staying Human public talks, the Leaving Egypt podcast, the Common Good Schools programme, and Crossroads.

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1. Executive Summary

Christian social action in the UK stands at an important moment. Across churches, charities and Christian organisations there remains a remarkable commitment to serving people and communities experiencing poverty, disadvantage and exclusion. Yet alongside this commitment, there is growing recognition that significant challenges have emerged within the sector itself. This feasibility study was commissioned to explore whether there is sufficient appetite for a long-term initiative that addresses these challenges by helping Christian social action recover a more integrated vision of justice, compassion and Christian discipleship.

Rather than beginning with a predetermined programme, this study sought to test a diagnosis or proposition of what is wrong. Through conversations with senior leaders from across Christian social action, theology, philanthropy, church leadership and practitioner networks, it explored whether there was recognition that the sector faces three interconnected challenges, and whether there is support for developing an initiative capable of addressing them over the long term.

The study suggests there is.

Although interviewees expressed different emphases, challenged particular language and identified important nuances, there was substantial engagement with the underlying diagnosis of three ‘disconnections’ that need addressing relating to justice, empowerment and faith. The appetite for change is genuine and broad.

But that appetite should not be mistaken for immediate readiness to change. Organisations still face significant operational and financial pressures, they are competitive within the "market" in which they operate, and a strategic conversation is a very different thing from embedding new practice within an organisation. The risk, named consistently across the study, is that Crossroads could become "another talking shop" rather than a driver of real change.

One of the strongest findings of the study, however, is that disagreement itself proved productive. Participants did not simply endorse a finished model; rather, they recognised that the framework provides a valuable structure for further theological reflection, practical learning and strategic collaboration. The conversations consistently demonstrated that these questions matter and warrant sustained investment, though recognising there is no “one size fits all” model and that intentional, patient engagement across traditions will be essential if it is to honour the complexity and nuance drawn out in the interviews.

An integrated vision

The proposed initiative begins with a simple but significant observation: Christian social action is most fruitful when justice, empowerment and Christian discipleship are integrated and held together. Where these become separated, important aspects of Christian witness are diminished. Disconnections are the problem; integration is the answer.

The research therefore tested three strategic priorities and the hypothesis that when these become separated, important aspects of Christian witness are diminished.

First, reconnect justice and compassion.

Too often, Christian social action has become characterised by an unnecessary separation between acts of compassion directed towards individuals and work addressing the structural causes of poverty and exclusion. Participants repeatedly recognised that these should not be treated as competing approaches. Christian tradition has consistently held together personal compassion and the pursuit of justice. The proposed initiative

seeks to recover this integrated vision and encourage organisations to resist false choices between personal care and structural change.

Second, cultivate genuinely empowering practice.

The conversations highlighted widespread concern that some forms of charitable activity, however well intentioned, can unintentionally reinforce dependency rather than enable flourishing. Participants pointed to the importance of approaches that recognise people's gifts, agency, relationships and capacity to contribute. Empowerment was understood not simply as a methodology but as an expression of core Christian convictions: seeing every person as created in the image of God with dignity, vocation and potential.

Third, renew Christian distinctiveness within social action.

Participants recognised that Christian organisations increasingly operate within professional environments shaped by funding requirements, measurement frameworks and secular assumptions. While these developments have brought many benefits, there was also concern that Christian motivation, theological reflection and discipleship can gradually become marginal to practice. The proposed initiative therefore seeks not to withdraw from professional excellence but to strengthen the theological foundations that distinguish Christian social action and deepen a commitment to distinctiveness.

A framework to take us forward

Taken together, these three priorities do not constitute separate programmes but an integrating framework to take Christian social action forward. They provide a common lens through which direction can be discerned, and future work developed.

Building a compelling vision for change underpinned by theological reflection, storytelling, research, learning communities and practitioner networks would all be designed to help churches and organisations integrate these three dimensions rather than treating them independently.

An important finding of the feasibility study is that this work occupies a distinctive space within the current Christian social action landscape. The study found many organisations making substantial contributions in particular areas, whether campaigning, delivering frontline services, supporting evangelism or equipping churches. There is also a huge number of small local initiatives, often unconnected and where the best practice often goes unrecognised.

However, few initiatives seek deliberately to hold the three dimensions together or to influence the wider ecology of Christian social action across denominational and organisational boundaries. The case for greater connection, co-ordination and a shared narrative of change is strong.

Serving not competing

The proposed initiative therefore should not be understood as another service provider competing within an already crowded landscape. Rather, its ambition is to strengthen the whole 'eco-system' of Christian social action by serving existing organisations, generating theological reflection, facilitating collaboration, developing shared language and disseminating practical learning that others can adapt within their own contexts. Its vocation is catalytic rather than competitive.

A further strength of the research is the deliberately ecumenical and non-tribal nature of the work, with the breadth of engagement spanning evangelical, Anglican, Catholic and other Christian traditions. Rather than seeking to reinforce existing theological or political constituencies, the conversations demonstrated the

possibility of building common ground around a richer understanding of poverty and Christian social action. This breadth is one of the initiative's distinctive assets.

The feasibility study also clarified the scope of the research itself. Its purpose was to test whether there is sufficient appetite among leaders for such an initiative and to identify the principal themes that should shape future development. It did not seek to explore the perspectives of people with lived experience of poverty in depth, nor to produce a fully developed programme design. These remain essential priorities for subsequent phases of work. Participants were clear that future development should include deeper engagement with lived experience alongside continued theological reflection and practical testing.

The conversations further reinforced the importance of articulating a richer understanding of poverty itself. While material deprivation remains critically important, participants consistently argued that poverty should also be understood in relational, moral and spiritual terms. This broader understanding aligns both with emerging practice across the sector and with long-standing Christian theological traditions, providing an important conceptual foundation for future work.

Long-term change

Overall, the feasibility study provides strong evidence that there is both need and appetite for a long-term initiative capable of renewing Christian social action in these ways. The research has not produced unanimous agreement on every question, nor was that its purpose. Instead, it has established a robust framework for ongoing collaboration, theological development and practical experimentation.

The recommendation arising from this study is therefore to proceed: a ten-year vision for transformation has been developed, recognising the long work of culture change, beginning with a realistic two-year foundation as the next phase of development. This phase should refine the project design, engage more extensively with lived experience, strengthen strategic partnerships and begin shaping the practical outputs from the workstreams outlined in the ten-year vision. All of this should be underpinned by the three “disconnections” validated through this research. Ultimately, the ambition is not simply to produce new resources but to contribute to a renewed culture of integrated Christian social witness – one in which justice is inseparable from compassion, practice consistently empowers rather than diminishes, and Christian faith remains the animating source of both conviction and action.

Thanks

We are grateful to the 73 people, mainly leaders, who contributed to this unique study.

And we are deeply grateful for the support of the Trust who funded the study. We hope it will be a step towards developing a longer-term initiative to create genuine change: for both the church's social mission and to positively impact the UK.

2. Introduction and background to the Crossroads Initiative

The Crossroads Initiative was so named because of a conviction that as a nation, a church and within Christian social action, we are at a “crossroads” and social action needs a reset; that given the context, a strategic change in approach is required. As the prophet Jeremiah wisely taught, we are called to:

‘Stand at the crossroads and look; ask for ancient paths, ask where the good way is, and walk in it, and you will find rest for your souls.’ Jeremiah 6:16

This initiative has its roots in conversations initiated in March 2023, when Jon Kuhrt (CEO of Hope into Action) and Jenny Sinclair (Founder and Director of Together for the Common Good) began corresponding following Jon's response to a talk Jenny had given on the church's response to poverty.

This exchange led Jon Kuhrt to publish an article in December 2023, *Justice, Empowerment & Faith: the Future Direction for Christian Social Action*, which in turn prompted Jenny to invite Jon to deliver a public lecture in July 2024, *Grace, Truth and the Common Good: The Future of Christian Social Action*. Seventy invited Christian leaders from major charities across denominations attended, 30 of whom also participated in a Chatham House Rule roundtable. This led to a one-day retreat in November 2024, in which again, a cross-section of church and charity leaders participated, and from which Jenny Sinclair and Jon Kuhrt produced a report, *Challenging Power, Changing Practice and Deepening Spirituality: The Future of UK Christian Social Action*.

Responses to each of these interventions have demonstrated a growing appetite for a deeper engagement in this work and for a space to continue engaging with peers. In summer 2025, Rachel Arnold joined the initiative, and a framework was developed to test and research the diagnosis. Up to this point all had devoted their time to this project on a pro bono basis. To test the feasibility of further development, we approached a Trust who generously agreed to fund this study.

A holistic perspective on poverty

As the diagnosis notes, the last 20–30 years have seen a remarkable expansion of Christian social action in the UK. Foodbanks, warm hubs, debt centres, night shelters and community meals have all grown at significant rates.

Trussell alone distributed 60,000 emergency food parcels in 2010/11; by 2025 that figure had risen to 2.6 million.¹ Yet over the same period, poverty has not improved, and for those in the most acute need, things are continuing to get worse. The Joseph Rowntree Foundation reports that over 21% of the UK population live in poverty. This figure has remained stubbornly flat over the last 20 years or so, but beneath that headline the number of people living in very deep poverty has grown by around two-thirds over the past 25 years.²

More provision has not meant less poverty. To what extent there may have been more poverty, had it not been for the action of churches, Christian charities and secular organisations working in this space is hard to accurately estimate and it's important to acknowledge that this work has offered compassion and support to millions.

But poverty is not simply a material condition. There is also a deepening poverty of relationships between people and a poverty of identity, in terms of how people see themselves. Around a quarter of UK adults report feeling lonely always, often or some of the time, and the number experiencing chronic loneliness has risen by

¹ Trussell End of Year Stats 2025 <https://www.trussell.org.uk/news-and-research/latest-stats/end-of-year-stats>

² Joseph Rowntree Foundation, UK Poverty 2025, January 2025. Available at: <https://www.jrf.org.uk/uk-poverty-2025-the-essential-guide-to-understanding-poverty-in-the-uk>

over half a million since the first year of the pandemic alone.³ Relationship breakdown now costs the UK economy an estimated £47 billion a year, with profound and long-lasting effects on individuals, children and communities.⁴

Meanwhile, around 9.1 million people aged 16 to 64 are economically inactive in the UK, with historically high numbers reporting long-term sickness as the reason. These figures point to a deeper crisis of purpose, meaning and dignity for those who find themselves without the structure, identity and community that meaningful work provides.⁵ Worklessness is not just a financial loss – it is often a loss of purpose and connection too. With the rapid progression of artificial intelligence into all walks of life, this is likely to accelerate further in the coming years.

It is this fuller, more complex picture of poverty (material, relational, moral and spiritual) that Crossroads challenges the church to reckon with. Emergency responses and service provision can respond to the surface; they cannot address the systemic root causes or relational imperative. And it is this gap between what is being offered and what is actually needed that makes the question of what kind of social action the church pursues more urgent than ever.

‘An unravelling’

The Crossroads paper circulated to participants (Appendix 1) named the context we are living through as an “unravelling” as we see community cohesion giving way to polarisation, the liberal consensus that has shaped our nation for decades failing, and tensions around immigration, cost of living, housing and unemployment revealing how ordinary people feel let down by both the market and the state.

Over the past thirty years Christian social action in the UK has expanded dramatically, yet over the same period, levels of poverty have not declined. Indeed, for those in deep poverty, things have got worse.

Crossroads argues that Christian social action is not working, as crisis responses repeatedly substitute for the approaches that chronic issues require. The question Crossroads asks is if the prevailing social action culture is not working, then what kind of action, what kind of prophetic witness, and what kind of transformation the church is being called to.

A diagnosis

In Jon Kuhrt’s original article, he used the term ‘the sins of social action’ to describe three disconnections within Christian social action that need challenging. These three disconnections form our diagnosis of what is wrong:

- a) The disconnect between charity and justice** Much social action operates downstream from the forces that create poverty. While relief is vital, we need to look deeper at the drivers of the increase in poverty. The church should not accept being the ‘handmaid of the state’, busily helping without asking harder questions.
- b) Dependency – the disconnect with empowerment** While well-meaning, some service-provision models can unintentionally generate dependency among those they seek to help. This form of social provision

³ ONS, Public opinions and social trends, GB, Dec 2023; Campaign to End Loneliness, The State of Loneliness 2023. Available at: <https://www.ons.gov.uk>

⁴ Relate, press statement, 11 January 2016. Available at: <https://www.relate.org.uk>

⁵ ONS, Labour market overview; House of Commons Library, UK labour market statistics. Available at: <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-9366/>

often creates passive recipients rather than empowering people to positive change. Some forms of help can dig a deeper hole for those they seek to help.

- c) **Secularisation – the disconnect with faith** A whole host of Christian agencies have drifted in a secular direction – through fear of losing funding, fossilised through neglect, or the fading of faith – and have lost their distinctiveness. The fruit they produce has become disconnected from the roots from which it has grown.

As the Crossroads initiative developed further, the following **problem statement** was defined:

Christian social action has increasingly adopted a service provider approach which can alienate those it seeks to help, turning neighbours into recipients. This mission drift has sidelined economic justice, fostered dependency, and weakened the distinctively relational witness Christ intended.

3. The focus and methodology for this feasibility study

This feasibility study tested two things:

- 1. The three-fold diagnosis of what we think is problematic in Christian social action**
- 2. The feasibility of a longer-term initiative to prompt change and positive development.**

Conversations were held with key leaders from a broad range of churches and Christian charities to explore three questions:

- *Do leaders recognise the diagnosis and feel the need for change? (Resonance)*
- *Would organisations engage and adapt accordingly? (Appetite)*
- *What format of initiative would be most effective? (Vehicles)*

We met with a total of 73 participants (see Appendix 2) across 25 interviews, 4 focus groups, and a 32-person seminar at the Hope into Action conference. These conversations span Catholic, Anglican, Methodist, Baptist, Salvation Army, and various Evangelical traditions, and include practitioners, charity leaders, funders, theologians, thought leaders and senior church leaders.

We believe that this form of consultative exercise is quite unique in asking questions to such a diverse group of both church and charity leaders, thinkers and front-line activists.

While engaging people specifically with lived experience of poverty was beyond the scope of this first stage, their perspectives will be essential to shaping any future development.

4. Outline of responses

As can be imagined, the process of meeting with so many people with strong and divergent opinions produced a huge range of feedback and data. While there was robust discussion around the diagnosis and challenge around how we phrased our analysis, the feedback affirms that these are the right questions to be asking.

Below, we share the main ways in which the diagnosis was *affirmed*, how it was *challenged* and an overall summary of the responses based around the three key themes.

Affirmation of the diagnosis

The diagnosis resonated broadly across all the participants engaged in the feasibility study. No participant rejected the three disconnections framing outright. The sense that things are not working as they should or that we need new approaches for the moment we are in, was widely shared across Catholic, Anglican and evangelical traditions as well as across the thinker and practitioner contexts. The appetite for something to change is genuine and broad.

Across the focus groups, participants were first asked, in a word-cloud poll, for their perception of Christian social action in the UK today in a single word or phrase. The picture that emerged was strikingly ambivalent. The words offered most often paired genuine affirmation with unease: alongside 'important' and 'well-meaning' sat 'disjointed', 'overwhelmed', 'patchy', 'reactive' and 'mixed' as the most used words.

In one word or phrase — what is your perception of Christian social action in the UK at the moment?



A handful of responses were warmer – 'growing', 'vibrant', 'impactful', 'essential' but the critical notes were just as insistent: 'inadequate', 'ineffective', 'remedial', 'needs-based', 'sometimes paternalistic' and 'middle class'. Even before the structured discussion began, participants were signalling the central tension of the study: a sector full of goodwill and effort that is nonetheless experienced as fragmented, reactive and stretched – strong on compassion, less certain of its coherence and direction.

Ranking the disconnections

Participants were also invited to rank the three disconnections of Christian social action in order of priority. We forced a ranking deliberately, not because the three can really be separated, but because asking people to choose drew out far richer insight than simply asking them to comment. Almost everyone who ranked also pushed back on the idea of the exercise, insisting the three are interconnected and that addressing one pulls on the others. That tension is itself one of the clearest findings of the study.

The theme of dependency and empowerment scored highest by a clear margin, with charity and justice and secularisation following close behind.

Rank	Disconnection	Weighted score
1st	Dependency: the disconnect with empowerment	129 pts (27 ranked first)
2nd	The disconnect between charity and justice	105 pts (14 ranked first)
3rd	Secularisation: the disconnection with faith	100 pts (16 ranked first)

1. Connecting charity and justice: dealing with symptoms or causes

“Prophetic voice is needed – and largely absent.”

“Justice is hard to talk about openly – there is a fear of upsetting others or being seen as political.”

Justice drew the most varied responses. Most participants accepted that Christian social action tends to address symptoms more than causes, with only the practitioners questioning the political economy (housing, wages, zero-hours contracts, wealth, inequality) as territory the church has not seriously engaged.

The fact that very few named the political economy demonstrates the point around symptoms and causes. Because social action and campaigning are so readily mistaken for justice, the church and social action charities rarely press on to the structural change that justice actually requires. This is a failure of the church to challenge the dysfunctional political economy and stand in solidarity with post-industrial communities.

One participant judged the barrier to be confusion rather than indifference: most people agree something is broken, but he feels that no one has set out clearly what the church should actually do.

Another put the gap most sharply, describing Christians who hand out food at soup runs while feeling powerless against the system that fills them: ‘It’s not that people don’t ask why. It’s the complete passiveness of being able to do anything about it.’ This is a helplessness that the church has not found a way to address.

The opportunities presented by the three-year government Crisis and Resilience Fund as a sign that the ground is shifting towards pantry, advice and employment models were referred to by one of the participants. However, this is not in itself evidence that the culture of social action is changing – if anything it is a harsh fiscal reality that may force change from the outside, rather than a sign the social action sector has acknowledged the issue itself.

Several traditions offered ways through with one participant describing the Salvation Army’s confidence in being political without being party-political – campaigning and speaking truth to whoever is in power. Someone else set the Catholic works of mercy alongside Catholic Social Teaching’s insistence that the state has a

proper role in the common good, so that working alongside the state can be a mature form of justice rather than a compromise of it.

A minority, notably one participant, held a different theological position: the state's job is housing, transport and education, and the church's is to grow the kingdom and speak prophetically through the institutions it already has, having no business engaging with matters of economy.

2. Connecting empowerment to compassion: from provision to mutuality and avoiding dependency

“The empowerment model already works where it exists – the priority is to spread and resource what is proven, not to invent a new programme.”

“We are in a key cultural moment – the state, society and church are all under pressure simultaneously.”

This was the most universally resonant of the three. The foodbank recurred as the example – largely because this is a widely used model that is easy to replicate, and many participants felt that the dependency questions often go unasked at the grassroots.

This was countered by those who see the foodbank network, especially Trussell, actively questioning the underlying drivers of emergency food provision and offering a range of services. Trussell has also worked with the DWP to influence the new Crisis and Resilience Fund.

It would be simplistic to say that ‘foodbanks foster dependency’ and that other models of food support are inherently more empowering. But the focus for the Christian social action discussion should be how all models of food provision can foster dignity, participation and mutuality and create pathways towards longer-term change and addressing root causes of poverty.

Participants were quick to qualify the critique: the goal is interdependency, not independence, and dependence is sometimes a necessary stage on the way to something better. One participant reframed the question itself – not ‘is someone dependent?’ but ‘what kind of dependency, and is it mutual?’

An example of this was given in one of the interviews that grounded the idea in the Leviticus gleaning law, where the farmer leaves the edges of the field so the vulnerable are both provided for and dignified, because they still gather it themselves; another participant gave the example in Acts, where need is met within community and everyone contributes in some way, giving Christians Against Poverty's home visit model as an example of community in action and helping to change money management habits rather than simply clear a debt.

The Catholic Social Thought tradition offers a theological framing for the themes of justice, empowerment and contribution explored in this study. Subsidiarity, often interpreted as a simple preference for localism, was reframed by one of the participants as a matter of the level at which responsibility is taken: *“Subsidiarity is not a rush to localism. It's about appropriateness. If something can be done better at a local level, why not do it at a local level? But if it can't be done better at a local level, you do it at a higher level. It balances with solidarity”*. This “bottom-up” insight applies not only to communities but to individuals too. It speaks directly to the empowerment question and the importance of the contributory principle. Enabling people to experience the dignity that comes from taking responsibility – at the most appropriate level – builds agency and is a more just approach than leaving them dependent.

Participants also widened the lens of dependency. For example, has the state grown dependent on the church to fill the gaps it has vacated? And the church can become dependent on being needed? One of those in a

focus group named the dependency no one else raised – that of volunteers in the act of volunteering, many of them are mitigating their own loneliness through service.

Crucially though, empowerment is a practical challenge not just a theoretical debate. And we found plenty of practical examples where this is influencing practice: the food pantry movement, Spear's employment work, Hope into Action's national church-partnered housing for homeless people, Grace Enterprises' employment work in Nottingham, Acts Trust in Lincoln and NewWay in East London all demonstrate it working in practice. As one of the participants observed, dependency is better understood as a consequence than a cause: *'if you change the empowerment piece but not the structure, you change the presenting issue, not the real one.'*

3. Christian distinctiveness: presence, proclamation and theological confidence

"Theological underpinning required, especially on poverty, justice and what it means to be human"

"Formation and discipleship needed at every level. Without it the diagnosis remains theoretical."

The concern over Christian distinctiveness resonated strongly among senior leaders and funders and far less among frontline practitioners – one of the sharpest divides in the study.

One of the strongest points around this came from one participant, who saw the three disconnections and present failures as an expression of a single underlying problem – the loss of a coherent Christian vision for what human flourishing looks like.

Funders also particularly focussed on this. One put the test simply: if an organisation cannot articulate what makes it Christian, it is becoming secular by stealth; another noted that applications to Christian funders are often sanitised to look secular. And another of the funders said that faith identity thins when organisations recruit well beyond the local church. All three of these grant-making trusts firmly reject the common excuse that funders force secularisation.

A couple of participants specifically located the issue structurally rather than spiritually: churches have devolved their work to charities and agencies without staying connected to them, and charities often treating the local church as a mere distribution channel for their own purposes. Frontline practitioners pushed back hardest; they did not so much disagree as not recognise the critique in their own work, where distinctiveness is carried incarnationally – in the quality of presence and relationship, rather than through explicit proclamation.

Much of their resistance was to a narrow, 'saving souls' reading of the term. Beneath all of this sat one participant's deeper challenge: 'What is the good news for the poor? I have yet to find anybody who can give me a satisfactory answer.' His challenge highlights the absence of a worked-out theological narrative of why the church and Christians should be involved in social action.

Challenge to the diagnosis

The following challenges emerged with sufficient consistency and weight to require direct engagement, including how the three sins are framed.

1. The importance of defining poverty

“How are you defining poverty?”

Absolute, relative, and relational poverty are different things with different implications. The claim that poverty is getting worse is contested. Relational poverty and the collapse of belonging, meaning, and community may be a more honest account of what Christian social action can address than material poverty, and a more theologically interesting one.

2. Not fair to claim Christian social action ‘not working’

“It’s not as simple as saying Christian social action isn’t working. It’s that the church has lost the vision for human flourishing and the rejection of faith at the centre of culture.”

“Don’t dismiss charity as love in action. There are hugely kind and compassionate people out there.”

Several participants, particularly in the focus groups, challenged the idea that Christian social action is ‘not working’. Without Christian social action, they argued, things would be considerably worse. The honest framing perhaps needs to be more that the current model is insufficient for the moment we are in and needs to change.

3. The problem of dependency is nuanced

“Multiple dependencies exist simultaneously – individuals, volunteers, churches, and the state itself.”

“The state has become dependent on the church. The dependency runs in multiple directions. Dependency isn’t always bad – it is needed at times and can be a precursor to something better.”

“There is a widespread understanding of dependency culture, but it is hard to change – projects are easy, behaviour change is not.”

Multiple participants made this point. The goal is *interdependency* not independence. Sometimes people need to depend on someone. The dependency critique, if presented too bluntly, risks dismissing the genuine compassion of people who are doing something real. The initiative needs to honour what is good in the current model while naming what needs to change.

5. The importance of straightforward language and practical examples

“We don’t need another talking shop or thinking from an ivory tower – must be on the ground not theoretical.”

“More theory not needed – practical examples and data are.”

“Absent voices – people with lived experience.”

In response to the phrase ‘relational and reciprocal’, one participant’s honest reaction was ‘what the heck does that mean?’ The foodbank feels relational to the people running it; the lunch club feels like community even if the models themselves are not actually transformational. The initiative must use language that lands with the people doing the work, a language precise enough and accessible enough to communicate the change required to people not already inside the conversation.

6. Fear of being political around justice

This was named consistently. Several participants said justice is hard to talk about because it sounds political, and churches are nervous about being associated with a political position.

One participant sharpened the reasons around this fear. When people reach for the word ‘justice’, he noted, they tend to assume it means the state – but the state has its own, often inadequate, account of human flourishing and is frequently part of the problem rather than its solution. The task is therefore not to align the church with a political programme but to recover a biblical vision of justice (mishpat) that is theological before it is party-political. Holding that distinction is precisely what frees churches to speak about justice without feeling they are on one “side” or another.

The idea that justice is not a political position but a theological one needs naming and explaining.

Key differences between groups

The focus groups broadly confirmed the 1:1 interview findings but added important challenge and nuance. Where someone sits – funder, senior leader, thinker or frontline practitioner – visibly shapes which of the three disconnects feels most urgent.

- **Empowerment model resonated most strongly:** this was the clearest single finding across all groups and the seminar; concrete examples and case studies highlighting the empowerment model ranked first in every poll, in every group, in every tradition.
- **Justice felt more urgent than empowerment by frontline practitioners:** those working directly in homelessness and community poverty ranked justice first, reversing the pattern from the 1:1 interviews. Where poverty is most visible, the structural question is most live.
- **Secularisation consistently ranked last by practitioners:** even in the Hope into Action seminar with people largely from an Evangelical background, 17 of 32 ranked it third. Practitioners do not experience the faith disconnect as their most pressing challenge – they are living their faith but often cannot articulate its theological foundations.
- **Producing ‘another talking shop’ was named as the single most consistent risk:** named in polling, in open discussion, and in 1:1 interview. The initiative must answer clearly what will be concretely different as a result of this.
- **Justice and the role of the political economy need engaging:** a further challenge emerged strongly from the Practitioners group – the initiative needs to engage more directly with housing, wages, and inequality, or risk operating at too shallow a level.

5. Conclusion: what was found, what is feasible?

Overall conclusions

This feasibility study has held a unique range of conversations which were based around a provocative three-fold critique of the state of Christian social action. Whilst we could not claim that a consensus emerged from the conversations in all areas, we can state that we believe these are the right questions to be asking and the right challenges to be grappling with. Whilst no ‘silver bullet’ emerged as ‘the answer’, we believe that the framework we have proposed holds together the key questions facing Christian social witness in the UK.

We can state the following overall conclusions with confidence:

- **We are living in a moment of cultural unravelling.** The social contract feels increasingly broken, the post-war consensus is fraying, and a rampant individualism has left many people without a shared sense of what it is to be human or what a good life consists of. As the norms we have absorbed fail to satisfy, there is a growing openness to church, faith and spirituality and with it a real opportunity for a Christian account of human flourishing to be heard.
- **The limitations of current approaches to social action are becoming visible.** Organisations that began with confidence are increasingly confronted with evidence that outputs do not necessarily deliver transformation. The charity–justice disconnect is harder to ignore. Poverty has deepened; the years ahead may be more challenging still.
- **The funder landscape is open to change.** Some significant Christian funders are genuinely open to funding more relational work than against narrow output targets and as one funder noted, the pressure to chase numbers often comes less from funders and more from applicants assuming that is what is wanted. However, it is important to note this is not universal amongst the funders we spoke to. The appetite for a different conversation also extends beyond traditional funders. At a recent UBS Faith and Philanthropy dinner, 12 high net worth individuals demonstrated a significant interest in exploring the themes of this study more deeply. There are also some government programmes moving in this direction.
- **The empowerment model is not theoretical.** Organisations like Hope into Action, Bramley Baths, Spear, Bonny Downs, NewWay, Acts Trust, Grace Enterprises and the Eden Network are already working differently. The task is to make their practice visible, reproducible and measurable.
- **The growing concern about the secularisation of social action.** In the wider voluntary sector and within government there is far more openness to faith than in previous decades. It provides an opportunity for social action which maintains its Christian distinctiveness.
- **A broad appetite to engage.** The responses to all our interventions show a genuine appetite among relevant leaders to engage and an interest in changing practice. Every participant expressed willingness to remain involved in this conversation. Of course, appetite for conversation does not automatically mean readiness to change but it shows the need for a good process to carry this discussion forward.

A framework to take social action forward

The imperative of the exercise was based on a critique of social action based on these three disconnections:

- *Charity – the disconnect with justice*
- *Dependency – the disconnect with empowerment*
- *Secularisation – the disconnect with faith*

Taken together, these three priorities do not constitute separate programmes but an integrated framework to guide the future direction of Christian social action. They provide a common lens through which direction can be discerned, and future work developed.

This common lens proved a generative framework within which different views can be weighed. The study revealed plenty of push-back, caveats and points of disagreement. It is a healthy sign that these themes create lively and robust debate. Each of them involves a dialectical tension that needs to be tackled:

- The relationship between charity and justice involves grappling with the competing demands of addressing immediate needs on an inter-personal basis and acting against the wider issues and structures of society. This is an age-old discussion that needs to be refreshed in every generation.
- The problem of dependency involves grappling with the demands of both offering practical compassion which ameliorates immediate needs, with a concern for what really helps people change over the longer term.
- The problem of secularisation involves grappling with the tension inherent in Christian social action of both loving God and loving neighbour. How do we blend the demands of being both distinctive and tolerant?

Our research does not reveal a ‘magic answer’ to these questions. Rather, it does clearly reveal the need for an initiative which can provide the space where these tensions are discussed and where imagination can be fostered, stronger theological foundations can be built and where practice can be shaped and learned.

The gap that exists

An important finding of the feasibility study is that the critique that the Crossroads initiative has shared occupies a distinctive space within the current Christian social action landscape. The study found many organisations making outstanding contributions in particular areas, whether campaigning, delivering frontline services, supporting evangelism or equipping churches.

However, there are no initiatives seeking deliberately to hold these dimensions together in a coherent framework or to influence the wider ecology of Christian social action across denominational and organisational boundaries.

It is into this space that we want to share our recommendations for going forward.

6. Recommendations for going forward

We believe that there is a strong basis for a **long-term piece of work** to emerge from this research which has the ambition to influence UK Christian social action in the three directions of our three-fold critique: to see a Christian social witness which connects its compassion to an understanding of justice, which focusses its practice on empowering ways of working, and which confidently retains its Christian distinctiveness.

None of these changes will be quick or easy and they will not come about by themselves. We need a long-term initiative which can build on the widespread interest and enthusiasm to engage in such questions.

We think any future initiative should be hallmarked by these characteristics:

Relational – to be rooted in strong relationships across theological traditions and the social action institutions that exist. We need sensitivity to the differences and an ability to bring large and small networks together.

Generous – to draw people together in a spirit of generosity rather than narrow or judgemental. We believe that Christian generosity can hold together the need to be both distinctive and tolerant.

Focused on integrating thinking, theology and practice – we heard clearly from the research that nobody wants another ‘talking shop’: the thinking and theology around justice, empowerment and distinctiveness must be integrated with practice. This means drawing out the great examples of current practice through stories and case studies and articulating the theoretical and theological basis that underpins their effectiveness. What actually changes practice on the ground is stories, relationships, and real examples that help leaders to say: *‘I’ve seen this work, I’ve met the people, I understand what it takes.’* The visits, roundtables and funder conversations proposed in this document start with real organisations doing things differently, not simply documents describing what they should do.

A mandate to proceed

We hope that Crossroads can become a convening initiative that exists to shift the culture, theology, language, and practice of the Christian social action sector.

This is not a new programme or organisation. It works by surfacing what is already working and producing resources which make it visible and reproducible.

The feasibility study confirms there is a genuine mandate to proceed. The next phase begins the long work of **cultural change**, starting with a realistic two-year foundation before wider action.

A ten-year framework for transformation

The feasibility study did not reveal a single vehicle as the response to the diagnosis but rather points toward **six interconnected streams** of work which embody the three-fold change we want to see and which together form a **ten-year framework** for cultural change in the Christian social action sector. This is not a linear process but an ongoing cycle as each phase builds on and feeds back into the others, changing and embedding into culture.

Stream	What it involves
IMAGINATION	Developing IMAGINATION about how social action could change: telling stories which speak into the cultural moment Surfacing and sharing the stories of organisations already working differently, and building a compelling account of the moment we are in as a church and a nation that creates urgency and opens space for a different conversation.
THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS	Building stronger THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS: a theological commission for social action Involving theologians from across the Christian traditions and grounding the work in serious theological reflection that can underpin the work of Crossroads with a Biblical framework and a theological language reflecting an authentic conception of Christian justice, empowerment and distinctiveness.
CODIFYING GOOD PRACTICE	CODIFYING GOOD PRACTICE with regard to Christian justice, empowerment and distinctiveness – ‘how this is done’ Visiting organisations already working differently, identifying what they have in common, and making that practice visible and reproducible. Turning stories into a framework others can learn from, with measurement approaches that go beyond counting numbers.
LANGUAGE	LANGUAGE: Shared definitions and glossary Developing the shared language, definitions and frameworks that allow the approach to travel across Catholic, evangelical and other traditions. Emerges from the programme streams over time rather than being designed separately.
INFLUENCING FUNDERS	INFLUENCING on Christian justice, empowerment and distinctiveness Examining current funding models and what might need to change, and co-producing guidance around funding that develops relationships and transformation in a distinctly Christian way rather than outputs.
FORMATION	FORMATION: learning communities Drawing on the deep work of the earlier streams to support trustees, managers and frontline teams. Learning communities coming together regionally and online to learn from and support one another on the journey.
RESOURCES – an output of all six streams	An output of each of the six streams will be the production of resources that share, inspire and equip people in Christian approaches to justice, empowerment and distinctiveness. These may include video stories of local action, practical frameworks for implementing new ways of working that embody the three themes of this study, and theologically rooted resources that give practical language to complex issues.

Good practice empowerment models already exist – practical examples

The study surfaced compelling evidence that there are great examples of Christian approaches to empowerment, distinctiveness and justice which could be drawn on and learning shared:

Bramley Baths, Leeds (Sir John Battle). A failing council swimming pool transformed into a community enterprise, twinned with Leeds Rhinos and linked to local schools and the NHS, generating £2.6m and employing 60 people. When the council said no, the community said yes.

The Spear Programme, HTB / Resurgo (Tom Jackson). A 25-year employment programme for young people aged 16–24 written off by the statutory system; social services staff have wept at transformations they had stopped believing were possible.

Eden Communities / The Message Trust (Sarah Small/Tom Grant). Incarnational presence, with urban missionaries moving to live on the estates they serve. Two seasons: the first approach unintentionally created dependency while the second was genuinely participatory. The honest realisation that the first was insufficient and unsustainable may be one of the most important stories.

The Food Pantry Model, Feeding Britain (Andrew Forsey). Over 1,000 pantries and food clubs seeking to increase choice, participation and agency in the experience of receiving food support, while also acting as a gateway to credit unions, employment support and advice.

NewWay, East London (Angie Allgood). A day centre and community enterprise serving 700+ people a year, built around purpose and belonging rather than service provision – ‘we share our assets’ rather than simply serving.

Acts Trust, Lincoln (Simon Hawking). A network of food, mental-health cafés and community groceries connected to local churches and built around empowerment as choice – including the choice to make what others consider a bad decision.

Bonny Downs Baptist Church, East London (Sally Mann). Converting its building into a co-living project, The Abbey, where eight people leaving homelessness will live alongside two families as missional companions in supported tenancies. Her challenge is direct: with unused buildings, manses and land, using church assets for housing is a greater act of justice than ‘writing papers about it’.

Hope into Action (Jon Kuhrt). A 15-year tried and tested model of supported housing which attracts private investment by encouraging people to share their wealth by investing in housing that they turn into homes for people who have been homeless. Each home is partnered with a local church who provide friendship and community, with Hope into Action’s Empowerment Workers providing the professional support.

Summary

This feasibility study set out to test a diagnosis, not to sell a programme. We deliberately put a provocative critique in front of 73 leaders from across the breadth of the UK church (Catholic, Anglican, Free Church and Evangelical; funders, theologians, senior leaders and frontline practitioners) and invited them to challenge it. They did. And that is precisely why we can now write with confidence.

The three disconnections – between charity and justice, between provision and empowerment, and between social action and its Christian roots – resonated across every tradition and context we engaged. Not everyone agreed with every framing, and this report has been honest about the push-back we received. But no participant rejected the diagnosis outright, every participant expressed a willingness to stay involved, and the disagreements themselves proved productive – evidence that these are the right questions, being asked at the right moment. The next stage would be to engage a coalition of the most willing with a shared commitment and vision to continue this journey together, whilst accommodating the differences of tradition.

Just as significantly, the study confirmed a genuine gap: many excellent organisations are working on one of these challenges, but none exists to hold all three together or to shift the wider culture of Christian social action across denominational boundaries. That is the distinctive, catalytic space Crossroads is called to occupy.

We are also clear-eyed about what this study has not yet done. Its scope did not extend to in-depth engagement with people with lived experience of poverty. While it did explore potential concrete actions, it was premature to produce a fully developed programme design. And we heard, repeatedly and rightly, that people want to move beyond the “talking shop” model. These are not weaknesses to be glossed over; they define the work of the next phase: deeper theological foundations, the integration of lived experience, and practice-rooted development built around the organisations already demonstrating that a different way is possible.

The prophet Jeremiah calls us to stand at the crossroads, to look, and to ask where the good way is. This study has done the standing and the looking. We believe the good way is now discernible – and that the moment to walk in it is now.

We are deeply grateful to the Trust who made this study possible, and for the wisdom and encouragement that has accompanied the grant.

We do not come with a finished blueprint, but with a tested diagnosis, a broad coalition of goodwill, and a clear sense of direction. We would be delighted to continue this conversation with those interested and welcome comments. Please send to: annette@togetherforthecommongood.co.uk

Rachel Arnold, Jenny Sinclair and Jon Kuhrt

October 2026

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Paper Circulated to Participants

THE CROSSROADS INITIATIVE

Discerning the Future of Christian Social Action



‘Stand at the crossroads and look; ask for ancient paths, ask where the good way is, and walk in it, and you will find rest for your souls.’ Jeremiah 6:16

Our current context

We are living through a time of unravelling. We see community cohesion giving way to polarisation. The liberal consensus that shaped our political, social and economic life for decades has failed. The tensions around mismanaged immigration, the cost of living, unaffordable housing, job insecurity, and growing destitution reveal how ordinary people have been let down by both market and state.

The state of UK social action

Over the past 20–30 years, Christian social action has evolved, with a significant increase in debt centres, night shelters and foodbanks addressing many *symptoms* of poverty. Yet the growth of these crisis responses is not something to celebrate. Despite the heroic efforts, poverty has deepened and the coming years may prove even more difficult.

Therefore, the social witness of the churches stands at a crossroads. What direction will we take? This is no time for complacency. We must grapple with serious questions: about the underlying causes of poverty, the purpose of charitable work and mission drift.

We have identified **three “sins” of social action** which need to be addressed:

The disconnect between charity and justice Much social action operates downstream from the forces that create poverty. While relief is vital, being “useful” while propping up a broken system is no longer credible. Rather than just calling for increases in welfare benefits, we must demand a form of social justice which addresses the drivers of inequality.

Dependency – the disconnect with empowerment While well-meaning, service-provision models can unintentionally generate dependency, rendering recipients passive rather than empowered with agency.

Secularisation – the disconnect with faith Christian distinctiveness has suffered mission drift – through fear of losing funding, fossilised through neglect, or the fading of faith – becoming no different from an NGO.

And we have summarised this into a problem statement like this:

Christian social action has increasingly adopted a service provider approach which can alienate those it seeks to help, turning neighbours into recipients. This mission drift has sidelined economic justice, fostered dependency, and weakened the distinctively relational witness Christ intended.

The change we want to see

Christian social action should be relational and reciprocal: empowering people to stand on their own two feet, building communities of solidarity thriving on the dignity of work rather than surviving on welfare. Our social action must be distinctive and be rooted in the Biblical call to ‘act justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with God’ (Micah 6:8).

Background

In 2024, Together for the Common Good commissioned Jon Kuhrt's lecture *Grace, Truth and the Common Good: The Future of Christian Social Action*. The response of key leaders to this lecture and subsequent events has prompted T4CG to explore these themes further. This included a discernment retreat of 36 key leaders in November 2024, which produced this [report](#).

We now have funding for a feasibility project to discern ways to take this forward. This initiative is led by Jenny Sinclair (Founder/Director, T4CG), Rachel Arnold (formerly Head of Church Engagement, Christians Against Poverty) and Jon Kuhrt (CEO, Hope into Action).

What we will do

We have explored **possible vehicles** that could shape the form of the project, such as booklets, roundtable discussions and retreats, videos and other calls to action.

However, these ideas **and themes need testing** with key stakeholders, and we are keen to consult as widely as possible with key leaders and practitioners across the churches.

Rachel Arnold – Co-Founder, the Crossroads Initiative

rachel@togetherforthecommongood.co.uk

Appendix 2 – Participants

Interviews – 29 individuals (25 interviews)

Name	Role	Organisation
Richard Harries	CEO	Caritas Westminster
Tom Jackson	CEO/ Founder	Love Your Neighbour/ Resurgo (Spear)
Sarah Small Tom Grant	Head of Eden Network Head of Proximity	The Message Trust
Sir John Battle	Trustee	CSAN (Caritas Social Action Network)
Raymond Friel	CEO	CSAN (Caritas Social Action Network)
Andrew Forsey	National Director	Feeding Britain
Kate Nightingale	CEO	SVP (St Vincent de Paul Society)
Major Kerry Coke	Secretary for Mission	Salvation Army
Andy Frost	CEO	Gather Movement/ Sharing Jesus
Patrick O'Dowd Mark Choonara	CEO CEO	Caritas Salford Caritas Southwark
Bishop Lynne Cullens	Chair of EETG	Bishop of Barking; Estates Evangelism Task Group (EETG)
Dr Aimi King Jonathan Macy	Lead (EETG) Chair (NECN)	Estates Evangelism Task Group (EETG) National Estates Churches Network (NECN)
Bishop Rob Wickham (speaking personally)	Group CEO	Church Urban Fund
Professor Paul Williams Paul Woolley	CEO CEO	Bible Society London Institute of Contemporary Christianity (LICC)
Vikki McLachlan	Trust Executive	Jerusalem Trust (funder)
Helen Grey	Trust Director	Benefact Trust (funder)
Grant Farrant	Chief Executive	Lauderdale Trust (funder)
Bishop Mike Royal	General Secretary	Churches Together in England
Bejoy Pal	Director of Development	Ascension Trust
Martin Dickson	Chair of Trustees	Good Faith Foundation
Alicia Edmund	Head of Public Policy	Evangelical Alliance
Jack Palmer-White	Project Director	ChurchWorks Commission
Matthew Van Duyvenbode	Co-CEO	Trussell

Focus groups – 12 individuals

Group conversations were convened across several cohorts. Where convening on shared dates proved difficult, some planned focus groups became one-to-one interviews which are listed above.

Group	Participants and organisations
Charity Leaders	Mick Clark CEO, The Passage
Thinkers group	Nick Spencer Senior Fellow, Theos Al Roxburgh Theologian and Missional Leader Dr Joe Forde Urban Theology Unit
Frontline practitioners	Angie Allgood Founder and Director NewWay Project Nick Graves Pastor, Old Lodge Lane Baptist Church, Croydon Simon Hawking CEO, Acts Trust
Frontline practitioners	Sally Mann Lead Pastor, Bonny Downs Baptist Church Kirstie Cook CEO, HopeWorks Mark McGreevey

Participation does not indicate an endorsement of the final report.

Some names and organisations are redacted at their request.

Seminar – 32 individuals

Separately, a 32-person seminar was held at the Hope into Action conference led by Jon Kuhrt and Rachel Arnold attended by a cross section of Hope into Action frontline workers, church leaders, trustees and investors. The Christian tradition represented was predominantly evangelical.

UBS Philanthropist Dinner

Jenny Sinclair and Rachel Arnold were guest speakers at a UBS “Faith and Philanthropy” dinner. While this didn’t form part of the official research, it was a valuable opportunity to test the themes raised by Crossroads in an environment of high net worth individuals who are all actively engaged in funding charitable and social action ventures.

Invited but unable to join an interview or working group

The following organisations were invited to contribute but were unable to join within the study period:

The Cardinal Hume Centre, FaithAction, Prison Advice and Care Trust (PACT), Safe Families/ Home for Good, Porticus, Sir Halley Stewart Trust, CARE, Catholic Bishops’ Conference, Jubilee+, Centre for Theology and Community, Lemos and Crane, Charles Plater Trust, Together Liverpool, Compassionate Communities (Diocese of London).

Appendix 3 – Analysis of the Christian social action ‘sector’

Across Christian social action, there is a significant number of organisations working on poverty and community need and this number has grown considerably in recent years. Each has a genuine stake in the culture and direction of Christian engagement with poverty, community and public life, and all have much to contribute.

While many address one or maybe two of the “sins”, no one organisation emerges as tackling all three in a joined-up, interlinked manner nor has culture change within Christian social action as their core purpose. That seems to be the distinct, and unoccupied space Crossroads seeks to fill, and this piece of research is the widest of its kind across the traditions.

This study has examined a wide range of Christian charities and church-based social action models, and some are outlined below.

Think Tanks, Advocacy and Public Policy

A first group shapes the wider public conversation about faith and national life: Theos Think Tank is one of the leading voices on religion and public life in the UK. The Good Faith Partnership and ChurchWorks convene church leaders and policymakers with a view to influencing government.

A second group focuses on Christian public policy advocacy: the Evangelical Alliance, the Joint Public Issues Team (JPIT), CARE (Christian Action Research and Education), the Church of England's Faith and Public Life Department and the Catholic Bishops' Conference Department for Policy and Public Affairs all carry significant institutional weight in this space.

In addition, a third group engages in advocacy and research, including the Poverty Truth Network, the William Temple Foundation, and the Urban Theology Unit, with the Bible Society and LICC adding biblical engagement and whole-life discipleship, all offer important resources and models.

Para-church organisations

This grouping includes charities addressing a specific issue through local church partnership.

Hope into Action is a growing network of supported housing for people who have been homeless. Their mission is to empower the church to end homelessness and they attract investment to buy property. Their model seeks to empower the individuals through the support of “empowerment workers” and each of their 135 homes is partnered with a local church. Ascension Trust, whose work this study engaged with directly through interview, operates Street Pastors with a distinctive model that maintains a foot in both camps – the local church and the local authority – using patrol data to advocate with police and policymakers on behalf of communities. Spear, delivered by Resurgo, is an empowerment model: a church-based employment programme for young people aged 16 to 24 that offers a coaching programme and year-long accompaniment into employment. Christians Against Poverty operates debt centres through a church franchise model; Safe Families and Home for Good work on fostering and family support alongside local churches; TLG (Transforming Lives for Good) supports struggling children and Kintsugi Hope resources churches to run mental health wellbeing groups. Trussell, though no longer explicitly Christian, operates the majority of its foodbanks from church premises, meaning the local church provides its primary infrastructure. Feeding Britain is notable in actively moving toward pantry and mutuality models that widen choice and participation; though led by Anglicans it isn't a Christian organisation.

Church-based, asset-led training projects

Church Urban Fund's Growing Good programme seeks to help churches move from reactive project delivery toward deeper, asset led community engagement, and Christians Against Poverty's Church and Community Transformation programme are two of the few attempts to resource churches at local level to take the first steps towards the kind of theological and practical reorientation Crossroads is calling for.

National, multiplier bodies

Among the convening and multiplier bodies nationally, Gather convenes senior church leaders around city renewal, seeking to build social action partnerships between churches and local government. Cinnamon Network maps and fosters church social action franchise models; Jubilee+ provides resources for churches engaging with poor communities. Caritas Social Action Network convenes and resources more than fifty national Catholic charities; the St Vincent de Paul Society's large lay-led network provides practical support; Churches Together in England's Urban Mission Alliance, the Message Trust, the Proximity Network, the Church of England's Estates Evangelism Task Group, and the National Estates Churches Network resource churches engaged in missional activity in estate-based and other poor communities. At diocesan level, the Together Network (the Anglican diocesan charities that emerged from Church Urban Fund) and the Caritas agencies in Catholic dioceses deliver social action programmes and provide accompaniment and social care at scale.

Community Organising

In the community organising space, Citizens UK (with churches as its primary institutional base) has built the most developed practical infrastructure for moving communities to justice-focused campaigns but its mobilisation model does not address social action practice or structural causes. The Centre for Theology and Community, which grew out of Citizens UK's East London work, combines theological reflection with community organising practice.

Not least: smaller, local initiatives

Alongside the national organisations, there are thousands of local initiatives that often come closest to the relational approach Crossroads is seeking to promote. Projects such as Acts Trust in Lincoln, Bonny Downs Community Association in east London, the work of practitioners like HopeWorks in Bedford and Nick Graves' Old Lodge Lane Baptist Church in Croydon, and countless church-rooted initiatives up and down the country, represent a generation of practitioners already working in deeply relational, justice-oriented and community-oriented ways.

The sheer number of these small, local initiatives is itself significant within the picture this study describes: a densely populated, often unconnected landscape where the very best practice frequently goes unrecognised and unsupported, and where the case for greater connection, coordination, and a shared narrative of change has never been stronger.

The list above is illustrative rather than exhaustive. There are many more issue-specific Christian charities operating nationally – addressing addiction, modern slavery, prisoners and their families, asylum seekers, care leavers and more.

Others

The faith-based social action sector is influenced by the secular Joseph Rowntree Foundation, which frames the poverty research agenda that policymakers and funders follow; the National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) and Association of Chief Executives of Voluntary Organisations (ACEVO) are the gatekeepers of the broader voluntary sector.

Appendix 4 – Team Bios

Jon Kuhrt is CEO of the Christian homeless charity Hope into Action and for the last 15 years has written the blog Grace+Truth.

Jenny Sinclair is Founder and Director of Together for the Common Good and co-host of the Leaving Egypt podcast.

Rachel Arnold is a Freelance Consultant, formerly Head of Church Engagement at Christians Against Poverty.