

Together

No 83 Summer 2013

in Sussex

APRIL SHOWERS

Housing Benefit saw the arrival of the Bedroom Tax.

Council Tax Benefit abolished and replaced by a Local Tax Reduction scheme.

Social Fund changes saw Community Care Grants and Crisis Loans for living expenses (including rent in advance) abolished and replaced by short-term benefit advances.

Budgeting Loans to be replaced by Budgeting Advances with the arrival of Universal Credit.

Severe Disablement Allowance and Incapacity Benefit to be phased out and current beneficiaries on the grounds of illness or disability to be re-assessed for Employment and Support Allowance.

Disability Living Allowance (DLA) to be replaced by a Personal Independence Payment (PIP) for new claimants only after June and current DLA beneficiaries to be invited to apply for PIP if there is a change in their condition or are approaching the age of 16. All other DLA beneficiaries to be re-assessed for PIP.

Benefit Cap proposals expected to be completed by Summer 2013.

Universal Credit to be introduced for people who don't claim Housing Benefit.

Further information from supportingpeople@eastsussex.gov.uk, www.eastsussex.gov.uk/benefits, www.westsussex.gov.uk/living/social_care, www.health/adults/looking_for_support/local_assistance_network.aspx and www.churchestogether.org (Home page) for a four-minute video.

DON'T BLAME THE POOR FOR THE CUTS

That is the blunt message of a recent Report produced by the Methodists, the United Reformed Church, the Baptist Union and the Church of Scotland, echoing sentiments already expressed by the Pope and the Archbishop of Canterbury, and with April traditionally a month of climatic uncertainty April 2013 added further stress for many people with an avalanche of cuts and the prospect of more to come. The East Sussex Welfare Reform Project carefully documented these April Showers 'lest we forget'.

The Report purported to challenge 'six dishonest "myths" perpetuated by politicians about the poor': namely, that they are lazy, addicted to drink or drugs, not really poor, cheat the system, have an easy life and caused the deficit. Peter Morrison, spokesman for the churches, said such systematic misrepresentation of the poorest of society, 'insulted day in and day out in the media', was a matter of injustice which all Christians had a responsibility to challenge, adding that 'when people believe those lies, poor people pay the highest price' and there is something wrong with 'a culture that blames the poor for their poverty'.

Many people in our local churches will welcome the Report and warm to its sentiments, including many clergy and ministers who are deeply concerned but feel helpless to do anything about it. Food Banks, Credit Unions, Debt Relief organisations, child care, luncheon clubs and the like are often seen as the only way of responding and though it is encouraging to see the growth of such charitable work on the part of the churches in recent years most of those engaged in it will be the first to admit that too often it is little more than a sticking plaster in a desperate situation.

Ian Duncan Smith, Work and Pension Secretary, admits as much when he says that the system is broken and his call for a more radical approach may be well founded though whether his proposals will really make a difference and at what cost is debatable and a topic for another time and place.

More worrying is the underlying feeling in many churches that too much rhetoric denigrates and demonises a whole section of society without justification. Independently adding weight to the Report, a new Pope has chosen the name of Francis, for whom the key issues are poverty, the plight of the poor, and the unjust distribution of wealth and resources in the world, to emphasise his commitment to fairness and social justice, and a new Archbishop of Canterbury, in the course of nailing his own colours to a similar mast, reminded us that in humility and simplicity Pope Francis called us to be protectors of each other: of the natural world, of the poor and vulnerable, with a courage released in a society that is under the authority of God.

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NO

SMOKING / EATING
TRAFFICKING PEOPLE
IN YOUR TAXI



Ian says . . .

According to best estimates some 100,000 Syrians have so far lost their lives in a two year conflict, most at the hands of their own Government, with news as I write (at the beginning of May) suggesting evidence that President Bashar al-Assad has used chemical weapons.

Already this has led to talk of 'red lines' being crossed and of International intervention, but since the deaths associated with the chemical weapons in this case are understood to be in single figures, some will want to ask to what extent this is a crossing of a 'red line'. Has anything really changed? Our National Leaders certainly see this as a worrying escalation but is it not the case that this appalling State is simply killing more of its citizens in a different way?

This news and its presentation provoked me to consider two questions. First, to what extent are we as a Church able and ready to encourage or discourage our own political leaders to act? They are only able to respond and use national resources because we elected them. It is important that those of us who are informed and concerned enough do create opportunities to discuss this with our neighbours.

As one of the people who marched in London to ask Blair not to go to war in Iraq, the issues were a great deal easier to understand (even if the Government carried on regardless). At that time the leaders of the Sussex Churches formulated a statement prior to the invasion of Iraq. With the current levels of understanding throughout the Churches I don't think they would be able to do so over Syria.

Second, what 'red lines' are there in our more peaceful communities? Sometimes we can cross a line and a relationship becomes damaged or broken. Some of the issues are very clear, such as the ordination of women, along with the much less often debated issue of what ordination really means to us in our different church traditions. There is an increasing number of small lobby groups ready to articulate ideas that may influence us in our thinking on many issues, but which also can simply reinforce us in our small corners. They do nothing to assist members of local churches the better to understand one another and develop our views. Sadly what passes for debate on some issues is often a confrontational process, not at all educational.

Has the time come, I wonder, to find new spaces to debate matters that could facilitate our understanding of one another and help us to avoid creating so many red lines in the first place?

I would love to hear from any of you who are involved in discussions leading to real interchange of views and ideas — examples maybe where some of these red lines and people's views have changed over time as a result of their ecumenical endeavour.

Ian Chisnall
Mission and Unity Co-ordinator

One thing the church can do, and do well is pray . . . so how about focusing on one group a month in the local community for six months from Pentecost to Advent

HOW YOUR CHURCH CAN HELP THE UNEMPLOYED

An experiment in East Sussex carried out by
Ron Francis, District Office Manager, Job Centre Plus

If you were out of work and had to go to the Job Centre which would you prefer? Travelling some distance to an official office to meet people with whom you had no acquaintance in an atmosphere of officialdom, or popping into a local church hall, school or community centre not far from home to meet someone equally able to help you? If your answer is 'to the local' you might then wonder why there are not more Job Centres in a more human and less off-putting environment. One possible answer is that you can't have Job Centres everywhere. Or can you?

Ron and his colleagues in Lewes decided to find out. Rye and Battle were chosen for starters. The nearest Centre was Hastings, six miles from Battle and twelve from Rye. Neither is easy without a car, which few unemployed people have, and both have a totally a different ethos from Hastings. So why not open a mini Centre, where the need is great?

The very suggestion would cause eyebrows to be raised in any institution of size, especially a government body with an eye on costs, committed to ensuring quality control, adequate resources on tap and many other issues to boot. Fortunately, Ron and his colleagues managed to overcome such initial obstacles and made a start in Rye and Battle with three advisers working solely with customers most of whom can now get help in their home towns.

In Rye they work from the local Community Centre, in cooperation with Rye Partnership, two days a week, seeing customers who have been unemployed for six weeks or more. They deliver work-focused interviews, exploring opportunities and overcoming barriers in order to get people back into work. Within three months seventy of the 110 customers had got a job, which by any standard is significant progress.

They also support and work with the Rye Work Club who are especially helpful in dealing with customers and other vulnerable

people in Rye. In addition, since April a service previously delivered from the library in Rye (working with the library promoting their services and supporting their customers with Universal Job Match and internet based job search) is available from the new Centre, delivering the same level of service two mornings per week.

In Battle they currently work one day a week from one of the Council Help points, again delivering work-focussed interviews as well as helping a range of customers to get back into work whether on benefit or not.

Quite apart from the obvious benefit to costs and statistics, the benefit for customers has been enormous. A recent survey, for example, showed that with reduced travel costs and well away from the Job Centre Plus environment people respond much more readily to 'something local', resulting in a quicker return to work. A noticeable byproduct also is a positive change in other people's perception of a Job Centre and how it helps to promote work and reduce worklessness in a local community.

In Rye, for example, one customer had been on Job Seekers Allowance for over two years. He was a young fellow, aged 18-24, with real potential and as a result of support from the Job Centre began volunteering in the local Community Centre, delivering for the Work Club and helping other Job Centre customers to remove barriers to work and to find jobs. In due course he made such a good impression that the Director at the Community Centre offered him a part-time job to continue his good work.

The key to success has been working in close partnership with others, one of which is Amicus Horizons supporting people with housing issues, and at the same time promoting joint working in the local community. Shortly they hope to be working alongside National Careers Service to the same end.

Two results stand out. One is that people engage far better in their own community, where it is relatively easy to travel to a Job Centre and meet more frequently with their named personal adviser from early on in their claim for unemployment. The other is that greater economies of scale enable a more tailored service. What it depends on, however, is a variety of close partnerships and premises.

In some areas neither the Job Centre nor their partners have any premises. Hence their desire to explore the potential of church halls. Problems of funding still remain, and can prove fatal, because that calls for a close partnership where the partners are prepared to bear some of the burden, but in a world, and at a time, when the need is so great, and when churches are anxious to help and not sure how to go about it, this might be a mission worth exploring.

IN PRAISE OF CARERS

Father God, when times are tough we remember those

who take personal risks or court unpopularity to care for victims of crime and injustice, often at the expense of their own programmes, family life and personal pleasure

who care for people to whom they have no personal responsibility, and continue faithfully and lovingly when responses are rare, rewards few and lapses frequent

who care for the bereaved, sometimes over long periods,

and all those professionals who know that success means they will no longer be wanted or needed.

Thank you God for all who care as Jesus cared. May they know they walk in the steps of One who surrendered a comfortable environment to live among us, cared for others before he cared for himself, adjusted plans and programmes when others called, gave preference to those overlooked or dismissed by others, sought nothing for himself and gave everything for those who needed him.

THE CUTS

Father God, when times are tough we remember the most vulnerable in our community struggling

to make ends meet
to feed their families
to maintain their self-respect

and those families, friends and professionals who seek to help them.

UNEMPLOYMENT

Father God, when times are tough we remember those in our community

who want to work but cannot get a job
the young, with training and enthusiasm knocking on unanswered doors
the early retired, whose life and purpose feels suddenly cut short
the family, desperate for a breadwinner

and those families, friends and professionals who seek to help them.

VICTIMS OF ABUSE

Father God, when times are tough we remember those in our community at the mercy of others

children tempted with false promises
women desperate to seek a living for those they love
victims of authority
all who live in fear of exposure

and those who have no conscience about what they do, those who seek to establish justice and those who want to help but don't know how.

CHILD CARE

Father God, when times are tough we remember those in our community who care for children

families who adopt or foster
foster children seeking adjustment to a new environment
the 'lost' with no sense of 'belonging'

and those professionals who have to match child with carer and often pick up the pieces when things begin to fall apart.

VICTIMS OF CIRCUMSTANCE

Father God, when times are tough we remember those in our community at the mercy of forces beyond their control

a disaster
a distressing and life-changing accident
a permanently handicapped child or relative
an anxious or distressed neighbour
with no one else to care for them

and those professionals whose primary role is to listen, to understand and to support.

A MORAL ISSUE

by Stuart Davison

If by organised crime we think only 'drugs and guns' it is easy to dismiss it as nothing to do with us but criminals today have a new way of making money. Human trafficking is a form of modern day slavery which has quickly risen to second place in criminal big business. The sale of guns and drugs can make big profits, but a human being can be sold over and over again.

It is global, immoral and illegal. The police see it as a major crime and it is happening in a town or street near to you. How familiar are you with the signs? Would you recognise them and know what to do if you saw them?

Who are these victims?

Victims of trafficking, some as young as three, can be trapped in a range of activities including prostitution, sexual exploitation, forced labour, servitude or the removal of human organs. Of an estimated 9.1 million trafficked victims, 1.2 million are children, over 5,000 in the UK forced to work in prostitution. Girls trafficked to the UK for prostitution may be forced to see up to 30 or 40 clients a day. Within the EU 300,000 people are trafficked every year. Nor is it only prostitution. For others it may be fruit picking, laying drives or working in restaurant kitchens — the list goes on.

An evil trade which affects what we buy

Many of the products we buy — from cotton to footballs, leather goods, tea, coffee, timber, gold, salt, clothes — are produced by slave labour. 40% of the world's cocoa passes through Cote d'Ivoire where child slave labour is common. As one boy put it, *'Please tell the people in your country that when they eat chocolate they are eating my blood'*. Fairtrade Easter Eggs and other chocolate products you may eat with a clear conscience, but if not . . . how can you be sure?

Enter William Wilberforce

Christians like Wilberforce, influenced so much by the young Baptist missionary William Knibb, stood out against the slave trade. The Anglican John Newton broke his long silence about the trade for which he had repented. Early Quakers like George Fox and Benjamin Lay encouraged others to stop owning slaves in the Americas. Sadly some clergy openly opposed the abolitionists, but the Dissenters (Methodists, Quakers and Baptists) remained strong in their defence and despite the financial interests of a few Wilberforce brought the slave trade to an end in these Isles and finally throughout the Empire.

A new call

Today comes a new call for Christians once again to take up the cause of the poor and downtrodden, including the victims of a different form of exploitation. No longer something 'out there'. This is something 'right here' in the towns and villages of Sussex. Raising Awareness calls us to raise awareness in our families, churches, schools and places of work.

Support for the police, Stop the Traffik and other campaigning organisations such as the Salvation Army, Hope for Justice, and Anti-Slavery International is crucial in the fight as they address the issues, bring the perpetrators to justice and seek to set the captives free — one important way *'to preach good news to the poor . . . to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners'*. (Isaiah 61:1)

Stuart Davison is Regional Minister Team Leader, South Eastern Baptist Association.

Four Young Women with a Mission to Raise Awareness of Human Suffering in Sussex

Hannah Chisnall (City Gate, Brighton), seen here (left) with Catherine Bearder, MEP and Rachel Tyas, was first motivated to do something about human trafficking as a result of listening to passionate speakers on the subject and felt it was time to do something.

Lizzy Dalby (Church of Christ the King, Shoreham) was an ardent Stop the Traffik supporter from her late teens. On a visit to Latvia she met others tackling the issues where they lived, and on her return used her final university year art project to raise awareness.

Laura Parsons (St Peter's, Brighton) had Stop the Traffik on her radar in Devon back in 2007. She teamed up with them when she came to Brighton in 2010, and Rachel Tyas (Holland Road, Hove) who had worked in India as a volunteer with women who had been trafficked was introduced to them through Stop the Traffik.



Last year they formed ACT Brighton (Active Communities against Trafficking) and in eighteen months have partnered with the Council, the police and various charities, working alongside front-line professionals raising awareness in local meetings and school classrooms.

Their first major undertaking was the **Taxi Campaign**. Taxi drivers are the eyes and ears of cities, but do they know and can they recognise the signs of trafficking? So ACT Brighton offered snacks to drivers in return for completing a questionnaire to find out. One result was a surprising insight into what taxi drivers see and recognise. Some knew. Some didn't. A few shared their concerns. So they gave them stickers for their cabs with a phone number (see page 1) to call if they ever had suspicions and, in conjunction with Brighton and Hove City Council, arranged an Awareness Raising presentation at the local Taxi Forum in May.

TIME TO STOP THIS MODERN SLAVERY

An International View by Justin Blake

Stuart Davison's reminder of Wilberforce is timely. So too his emphasis on slavery in a fresh garb. There are more slaves today than in the time of Wilberforce. The latest UN Global Report on Human Trafficking found victims of slavery from 136 nationalities in 118 destination countries and at least 460 distinct flows of trafficking crossing all continents. Organised criminal networks trade people as well as drugs and guns. It is an illicit trade with huge profit, relatively low-risk and resulting in big business.

Slavery, in different forms, afflicts adults and children, and is destroying many lives, UK nationals as well as people from overseas. Many, tragically, are deceived by the promise of work and a better life. A large proportion are young. Exploitation in all forms manifests itself in the sex industry, forced labour, domestic servitude, the sale of human organs and forced criminal activity. Evidence from agriculture, factories, construction sites, brothels and houses can be found in a recent report from the Centre for Social Justice. One tragic case highlighted a school girl raped by 90 different men in a flat over one weekend.

Rochdale and Leighton Buzzard are by no means isolated incidents. It is happening on a huge scale, hidden inside rural communities as well as cities, and even here in Sussex, uncovered on our doorstep as Olivia Pinkney demonstrates on this page. With Gatwick and a coast with many entry points Sussex attracts traffickers. One victim

who called into a church drop-in café in Brighton poured out the heartbreaking story of her living hell. Victims have found support from Life Centre in Chichester, a counselling service centred on Christian values providing confidential help for victims of sexual abuse. The testimonies of healing and transformed lives are moving and inspiring. Some of the most voiceless and helpless in our communities are finding freedom. When people act things change.

In ancient Rome, gladiatorial games were popular and involved victims of trafficking. Slaves were forced to fight to the death. Then in January 403 AD all that changed. Telemachus, a young monk, could not understand how the Emperor, who claimed to be Christian, supported the games. He chose to take a stand, travelled to the Coliseum and made his protest before 80,000 people. Rising from his seat, he shouted, 'Stop, in the name of Jesus, stop!' He repeated his cry and made his way to the floor of the stadium where the fighting gladiators beat him to death. The crowd fell silent and one by one people rose and left. After such a courageous stand the masses acted, the Emperor outlawed all fighting and no more lives were lost like this across the empire.

TIME FOR A UNITED STAND ACROSS SUSSEX

Justin Blake is Head of Community Links at Windlesham House School in West Sussex and works with Sussex Police to promote life-changing community initiatives. For further information email jblake@windlesham.com.

'It ought to concern every person, because it is a debasement of our common humanity. It ought to concern every community, because it tears at our social fabric. It ought to concern every nation because it endangers public health and fuels violence and organized crime. I'm talking about the injustice of human trafficking which must be called by its name – modern slavery.' President Obama, September 2012.

A LEGAL ISSUE

by Olivia Pinkney

Human Trafficking, with Organised Immigration Crime is an issue across Europe and its victims are some of the most vulnerable of our society. With victims, often conditioned or threatened, afraid to speak out or possibly even unable to escape to inform the authorities, Intelligence is difficult to gather. Where their current life is better than what they had before they were recruited they may not even consider themselves 'victims', but once they do come forward the police will always start an appropriate investigation.

Local Police Forces work closely on all human trafficking operations with the UK Human Trafficking Centre which provides tactical advice, coordinates intelligence, engages with overseas law enforcement and (in common with all European countries) shares all intelligence relating to trafficking with Europol. Success, however, depends heavily on victims coming forward, after which it is up to the police, partner agencies, support organisations and the community to work together to ensure their safety and gain their confidence and trust. This may take time.

Hidden crime and public awareness

Since we are dealing with 'hidden crime' we rely heavily on the public providing information which calls for increasing public awareness but Neighbourhood Policing Teams also build relationships within hard to reach communities (including the homeless), work with local charities to increase reporting and encourage a multi-agency approach so that early reporting can ensure immediate care.

Equally important are initiatives and improvements recently put in place, covering tougher law enforcement to tackle the criminal gangs and improved identification and care for victims, with further powers to charge criminals who exploit others.

Exploitation in Sussex

Evidence of Organised Immigration Crime and exploitation in Sussex over the last few years includes 21 Vietnamese smuggled into the country in a yacht via Brighton Marina, Mauritian nationals recruited by an employment agency to work in Worthing care homes, a chain of brothels throughout the south of England run by a Chinese and British crime group, and a 24 year old Chinese woman found dead in the back yard of a Chinese take away who had to pay £20k (debt bondage), had worked 16 hours a day with no pay, slept on a concrete slab in the back yard, and washed using a hose pipe in the yard.

Operation Thames, launched last year, aims at getting a clearer picture of the extent of the problem in Sussex with a project team looking at awareness, training, operational response, policies and procedures, Intelligence, and partnership working.

Working alongside NGOs enables training and briefings so that officers can spot signs of trafficking when going about their daily duties and also come to appreciate the role they can play in identifying and helping victims. Single Points of Contact have been nominated in all force divisions and as officers gain confidence in recording and responding to such incidents they will also provide knowledge and support to other officers and monitor operational activity in their areas.

Modern slavery and trafficking in any form is intolerable and the police and their partner agencies are committed to tackling exploitation in whatever form it takes.

Olivia Pinkney is Assistant Chief Constable, Sussex Police

THE PROS AND CONS OF FOSTERING

One Couple Share their Experience to Encourage Others

Jude and David, who live in a comfortably sized house and pleasant garden in Worthing, were assessed for Fostering by West Sussex County Council in 2006. Since then they have fostered a number of young people. Their own children have now grown up and flown the nest but in 2006 were old enough to be aware of what was happening and mature enough to contribute to it. As Jude puts it, 'they too bought into it'.

Faithful Anglicans at Hosanna, Broadwater, after years of experience working with young people in church groups, and with their own children growing up but still on hand and ready to help, the family decided to open their home and offer support and stability to young people in care. Jude clearly holds the reins but not without the practical, moral and emotional support of her family, WSCC Family Placement Social Workers and Social Workers responsible for the welfare of the child.

For Jude this is clearly a mission, but she is by no means starry-eyed as to what it means not only for her and Dave but also for their children. It is not always easy for growing children to welcome a child or young person from an entirely different background into the family unit. Their very presence presents challenges of all kinds for everyone involved — not least the children and foster children. Jude does not disguise the fact that 'some days our children hated it', but — she explains proudly — they also embraced their new family members. Now, looking back, they have no doubt that overall the experience was good and they too have benefitted from it.



She is well aware that it is not enough to see fostering as 'a good idea' or 'a nice thing to do'. The key is a capacity to enjoy being with young people — sharing their interests, trying to understand and respond positively to their moods, spotting their strengths and weaknesses — and that sense of enjoyment which must be conveyed to all the family is the one thing you must never lose.

Being churchgoers, the diet for Sunday morning was routine. While there was no pressure on their foster children to attend, they did join the family at church where they were welcomed and their foster children in turn enjoyed the social environment and related activities. Some had never been in groups like that before and found it in general rewarding, though when one of them indicated that they did not want to attend they were able to express that, were listened to and able to opt out.

Some of the foster children in Jude's care went through stages when their behaviour was 'tricky' and handling them could be difficult. Living with a different family, whose attitudes and aspirations were different from their own, could lead to disagreements. On occasions when it got too much for them they could react negatively, going through mood swings, not to mention the typical teenage tantrums.

Inevitably there were times when it was tough but Jude always put it down to their low self-esteem which needed building up and that was what she was there to do. To be able to help these young people overcome their problems and provide support as they grew older was a very fulfilling exercise and to see them flourishing socially and developing as adults proved to be an incredibly rewarding and enjoyable experience.

Success in fostering is not something that can be easily measured but there are rewards. One child who had settled in fine and was doing well educationally but whose behaviour became more tricky towards the end later returned for a visit simply to apologise. Relationships with many of their foster children have continued even after they left which says something for Jude and Dave's commitment and what it meant to the young people in their care.

Fostering is of many kinds. Jude and Dave went for teenagers because of their family and their previous experience, but carers can opt for younger children or provide 'respite' for other foster carers. Their experience is entirely with WSCC and they have high praise for the support received and the capacity of the staff to match parents and children. The assessment process — which is lengthy — is tough, but necessary to protect vulnerable children and young people. Once approved, ongoing training is available to foster carers which Jude says can be extremely helpful. Summing up the experience Jude describes it as 'Really hard, but worth while. If you believe in it, you must do it — push open the door', she said.

Any church wishing to extend its mission into the local community might well make contact with their local authority to see how they could co-operate. Churches, more than many organisations, have a natural line to and an ear for the very varied communities in which they work. This could be another door that needs pushing.

Further information from WSCC Fostering Recruitment Team. (Tel 01403 229333. Email fostering.recruitment.team@westsussex.gov.uk. www.westsussex.gov.uk/fostering.)

Different ways of Fostering

Emergency. Somewhere safe for a child to stay overnight, for a weekend or up to two weeks.

Long-term or permanent. When a child cannot return to their own family. Often an alternative to adoption.

Short-term. Caring for a child to help them return to their own family or move to a long-term foster care.

Short break. Enabling children with disabilities to spend short periods away from home to support the parents.

Respite. Temporary care to provide a break for a parent or another foster carer.

Informal drop-in sessions about fostering take place at locations across West Sussex throughout the year.

ARE OUR CHILD PROTECTION POLICIES FIT FOR PURPOSE?

Tim Loughton Asks the Question

Following my experience as Minister for Children in the Coalition and the the Jimmy Saville revelations, coupled with similar events in the worldwide Roman Catholic Church and recently as close as the Diocese of Chichester, **Child Protection** is a matter of top priority on my agenda. It is an urgent question not only for the churches but for all major institutions and businesses, and indeed for society in general.

The issues are not exactly new. They go back as far as the human race, but whereas twenty or thirty years ago things seemed to be improving we have suddenly discovered a whole can of worms under our nose which either we never knew existed, didn't want to talk about or were more than a little reluctant to handle when confronted with them.

It is a fine line between understanding and forgiveness, sympathetic treatment and discretion on the one side and tacit toleration, indifference, self-serving face-saving or plain cover-up on the other. Did we draw the line in the wrong place or did we not even appreciate its existence?

Either way it is high time for a top level review to find out what went wrong, where and why. In this the churches have a particular role to play and current cases in the courts and the press must not blind us to the wider issues.

Churches have a strong record of caring for young people in Sunday Schools, uniformed organisations, choirs and youth clubs. No doubt most fulfil all the legal requirements, just as most people are honest and straightforward, but should all those responsible perhaps be more diligent and better trained to handle a situation where they suspect something is 'not quite right'?

People of course expect the churches to be whiter than white and if the churches can give a lead that would be fine but it is not something the churches can solve in isolation, any more than it is something that can be left to social workers and the police. Every section of society has to be involved — education, entertainment, press, employers and employees. Every one of us has a duty to be vigilant.

Another area where churches could be more proactive is in seeking out and encouraging suitable people in their neighbourhood (not necessarily in their congregations) to consider **fostering children**. At present there are some 57,000 children in care and the State is 'a lousy parent'. On the one hand the very fact that someone need fostering means that they are vulnerable. On the other, not every family can offer tender love and care on a long-term basis to a child 'not their own' to the point where that child can grow into a realistic sense of 'belonging'. Fostering and adoption agencies for the most part do a splendid job but more help in recruiting, training and giving moral support could pay dividends.

A current debating point on which a local church could do some useful thinking and education is that of **mixed races and faiths**, particularly in relation to fostering or adoption. There are two camps here. One camp says that a child of a different colour, faith or culture reared by a white Anglo-Saxon family may be denied its family heritage. The other camp says every child has to acclimatise to the family and community in which it grows up and every parent has to adjust to the child they have. Change has to be mutual and can be beneficial. The question is not which is right but how the two views can learn to work together in the interests of the child.

White for white, black for black, Muslim for Muslim may be best but it is not a deal breaker. The issues are rarely simple and clear cut, but if someone is deemed good enough to foster or adopt then they must have an appreciation of what that child needs, at the point of adoption and beyond. That being the case they will want to make every effort to understand and care for that child, and I have known foster parents who have gone out of their way to understand a child of another faith to the point where their own life has been enriched as child and parent have 'educated' each other. On the other hand, to confine a child to parents of their own background might in some cases lead to the imposition of a particularly narrow interpretation of life with problems emerging later. Political Correctness has its place, but can sometimes be taken too far.

Overall I think the key to many of these issues lies in **local initiatives** and involvement and in this respect I have a warm appreciation of the role of the churches and their potential. They are very good at picking up people (especially immigrants) who seem to have gone 'off the radar' and caring for them, or responding to problems which seem to have been missed by others, and one aspect of working with the churches which I greatly value is sharing regularly in a Prayer Service with the clergy in Lancing followed by a time for questions and discussion on current problems and how to handle them.

It is also good that more churches and local authorities are jointly engaging with young people in schemes such as a solid Youth Policy, similar to Worthing (the first to have a Youth Mayor), or Shoreham and Chichester's work training young people as fire fighters and developing outreach services such as Electric Storm Youth in Lancing.

In days of high youth unemployment especially, this could bring rich rewards all round, as young people are not only *listened to* but actually *feel* listened to and through it all we must never let the problems of today nor the failures of our structures and institutions in the past blind us to what they have achieved. So much has been done. So much remains to do.

Tim Loughton is MP for East Worthing and Shoreham.



INTEGRITY IS ALL

Olivia Pinkney, Assistant Chief Constable

Olivia Pinkney, whose approach to Trafficking can be found on pages 4-5, joined the Constabulary on leaving Cambridge with a degree in Mathematics. She saw it as a bolt-hole until she sorted herself out and got a 'proper job', but it was not long before what started as a job became a vocation. She saw policing as a public service with a unique opportunity to help people and contribute to society, and after twenty years in the Force still sees it that way. Moving swiftly through the ranks she arrived in Sussex from Bristol four years ago, with her husband and their (then) six-year-old son, to become Assistant Chief Constable.

I tracked her down on one of the few sunny mornings in March, tucked away on the other side of the Downs in a pleasant house at the end of a country lane. The first thing that struck me on entering her home was an unusual piece of art work over the fireplace. Lines, shapes and bright colours, clearly a one-off, inviting reflection and imagination.

She began by telling me that she grew up with her sister in a fairly traditional middle class family in Devon. Her father was a House Master in a Boys' boarding school and she went to a Girls' school in Exeter. Religion was not a strong factor, perhaps best described as traditional Public School Anglicanism. 'Church', she said, 'meant weddings, christenings and Christmas', but she always felt there was something she was missing. She envied Christian school friends but could never quite get it. Cambridge was great, but not in that department. Then in 1999 she married and came across a leaflet inviting people to an Alpha course in the local Anglican church. She went and it clicked. Why? Possibly because of Alpha openness. The ability to mix with people of very different views on life but with the ability to discuss delicate, personal and contentious issues openly, without any pressure either to change or to be changed.

Today, she thrives on openness, respect for differences, and a love of people and this is one of the attractions of the Force.

It is not their job to enforce morality or even to make moral judgements. Nor is it their job to represent (much less) defend the government of the day. Their job is to represent the people, to protect them, and when groups protest to ensure that they can protest peacefully. She firmly believes this conviction is shared by the vast majority of members of the Force despite the occasional slipping in standards (so much popularised by the press) and the odd member who just doesn't fit that pattern and has to be moved on as soon as possible. In a tight situation an error of judgement or a less than ideal response can never

be ruled out but there is nearly always another officer around to check and whistle-blowing facilities within the Force are second to none.

With no theological background or training her faith is clearly rooted in and worked out in her job, but as time and circumstance allow she and her family worship regularly in the local church, though she regrets that life makes it difficult for her to take a regular role in a house group and is not uncritical of church life as she finds it. She worries that local churches tend to be 'white anglo-saxon' and sadly seem to lack the fire she longs for. She is sensitive to the danger of the church as a 'clubby atmosphere' and is well aware that close friendships can be exclusive, but what she really longs for is 'more variety, sparkle and challenge'.

The neutrality which she has to exercise in her work, however, does not prevent her from supporting and espousing causes dear to her heart in her private life. She is a Trustee of Life

Centre in Worthing and CAADA (a domestic abuse charity) and through her local connections goes out of her way to engage with people and raise awareness on a variety of issues. She is unhappy with the split between 'the haves and the have nots' and the way it is getting worse. Also the way in which the two sides of society live almost in separate compartments. They rarely meet and increasingly no longer have to. She is very sensitive to the vulnerability of people. Reactions to trafficking, for example, reflect where we were on child abuse twenty years ago. People don't like to talk about it and too often the whole subject is ignored, swept under the carpet or even denied altogether, yet underneath a lot of people live in fear and don't know where to turn for help.

She is well aware that in the eyes of some people the Police Force is not the flavour of the month. Of late they have had some bumpy rides but 98% of her colleagues see it as a vocation to serve and the 2% who don't have to be dealt with and are, but she

cannot help but fear lest recent attitudes of press and public to the police might spill over into the NHS. 'In both institutions,' she said, 'integrity is all', and on that note we parted.

On my way home I found myself going back to that piece of art work. Surely I saw a cross somewhere there, its presence powerful but not immediately obvious, its colour radiating hope and joy but not without the darker patches. Perhaps it symbolised the person I had met, though there was no suggestion from her that that was why it was there or indeed how she saw it.



Together is the Newsletter of Churches Together in Sussex though views expressed are not necessarily those of Churches Together in Sussex, its leaders or its officers

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Printed by CM Print, Portslade Tel 01273-420983