

## 1. What does CUF do?

For the last 35 years, Church Urban Fund has worked with communities across England.

CUF helps groups, especially churches, reach into communities to help reduce poverty at a grassroots level.

In that time, CUF has come to understand that poverty isn't just about lacking financial resources.

When people can't afford the basics, like heating and nutritious food, they can find it daunting to ask for help, especially if they have low self-esteem, and society doesn't seem to care about them. They can feel alone, and disconnected from the community, and question where they belong.

So poverty isn't just a lack of money – it's an insidious web of interconnected challenges that make it really hard for a person – or even a community – to thrive. It's poverty of three things: resources, relationships and identity.

- **Poverty of resources** is a lack of essential resources for a good standard of living – things like money, skills, qualifications, housing or health. But it's deeper than just not having these things – it's the lack of opportunity you get when you don't have them. It can be a downward spiral.
- **Poverty of identity** is when people don't have enough confidence or self-worth to believe they can overcome challenges. Just as with poverty of resources, poverty of identity gets worse if it isn't addressed – people lose hope, and their emotional well-being and mental health can start to suffer.
- **Poverty of community** comes when people feel socially isolated, that they don't belong, and that they can't join in with supportive networks, which robs them of the chance to connect and grow and thrive in their own back yard.

## 2. Why faith matters

In the face of widespread suffering, injustice and poverty, our hope comes from our faith in a loving God and our commitment to following Jesus' example of love, compassion, and justice.

Jesus said, **“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is: ‘Love your neighbour as yourself.’”** (Matthew 22:37-39).

## 3. Why local churches are powerful agents of change

CUF believes in the power of churches to change lives. Local people know their communities best, and need their voices to be heard and their actions to be amplified.

This is why CUF invests in grassroots initiatives run by local people, churches and community groups. At a neighbourhood level, everyone can come together, bringing their skills and gifts, to tackle inequality and injustice. And when churches get involved in social action, we act with and for God, working to heal His creation.

## 4. The Local Church in Action

Church Urban Fund has, for example, helped establish over 800 Places of Welcome in churches, community centres, libraries, and other faith venues, reaching 20,000 men, women and children in 2024 alone. They offer a place to go for a friendly face, a cup of tea, and a conversation.

It seems so simple, yet for some it is a lifeline. Mark from Nottingham was depressed, out of work, and feeling alone and afraid. He told volunteers at his local church's Place of Welcome that their community breakfast club was literally the only reason he had to leave the house. He was desperate for a friendly welcome, hot food, and conversation. There was even a game of bingo, which made it easier for newcomers to start talking to others at their table. For Mark, it was the only time of the day he made a human connection, and it was a Godsend.

## 5. The Power to Change Communities

Church Urban Fund is incredibly grateful to churches across the country for their practical and financial support.

As the Bible says in Galatians 6:2, **“Carry each other’s burdens, and in this way you will fulfil the law of Christ.”**

Together, CUF believes we can welcome refugees, tackle local homelessness, make isolated people feel welcome, and make our communities thrive.

Your support of Church Urban Fund makes a tangible, lasting difference in the lives of individuals and communities facing poverty and adversity as we all strive to build a more just and flourishing society, one step at a time.

For more information about our latest appeal and how you can help the Church Urban Fund this Autumn please go to our website <https://cuf.org.uk/everyone-invited-table>