

Credit union branches in churches, a network of savings clubs in schools and a drive to promote greater financial resilience in communities are just a few of the achievements listed by the Archbishop of Canterbury's Task Group on responsible credit and savings in its final report published today.

More than 3,000 people are on course to have joined a credit union by the end of this year through the Church Credit Champions Network pilot scheme supported by the Task Group in London, Southwark and Liverpool dioceses with the scheme due to be extended to other parts of the country.

The LifeSavers financial education and savings clubs programme piloted in six primary schools in Bradford, Nottinghamshire and south east London, and launched by the Task Group in partnership with the charity Young Enterprise, is due to be extended to 150 schools over the next three years after attracting substantial funding from the Government and Virgin Money.

Other local initiatives inspired by the Task Group range from mass sign ups to credit unions to recruiting volunteers for credit union boards and promoting pay roll saving with credit unions.

A new charitable company is planned to oversee the continuing work of the Task Group.

Sir Hector Sants, chair of the Task Group, said: "The Archbishop of Canterbury's initiative has boosted support for credit unions from the Church and wider society and helped contribute to a sea change in public and political opinion about pay day lending.

"Over the past two years our major achievements have included the launch of an innovative financial education programme for schools and a drive to strengthen the financial resilience of local communities. In addition, there have been numerous initiatives across Church of England dioceses.

"Our work would not have been possible without the Church's unique network of parishes across the country - few institutions would be able to deliver this kind of response and the commitment demonstrated by the parish churches has been both moving and inspiring."

The Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, said: "I would like to thank Sir Hector and the members of the Task Group for their generous and unstinting work in promoting the vision of a stronger and more resilient community finance sector.

"The Task Group has delivered an impressive list of achievements that will have a real impact now and in the future. I would also like to pay tribute to the energy, enthusiasm and creativity of the Church of England parishes and schools in helping make this vision a reality."

ENDS

Notes to editors

Key achievements:

- The LifeSavers financial education programme and network of savings clubs in primary schools. A pilot scheme in Bradford,

Nottinghamshire and south east London is due to be extended to 150 schools in six areas over the next three years. More than 40,000 children are expected to be able to take part in the programme over this period.

- The [Church Credit Champions Network pilot scheme](#) has engaged more than 330 churches, trained over 260 credit champions and is on target to bring in more than 3,000 new credit union members across London, Southwark and Liverpool dioceses with plans to extend to other dioceses this year.
- [Debt awareness and signposting course](#) developed in partnership with Money Advice Trust and promoted through Church networks
- Local initiatives inspired by the work of the Task Group include credit union 'pop-ups' in church halls and vestries, set up alongside cafes, food banks and debt advice, with 31 dioceses involved in actively supporting credit unions in various ways. Examples of this activity include All Saints Church, Murston, in Canterbury Diocese which launched a credit union access point as part of a 'community hub' in January 2014 in partnership with KentSavers. Since the launch, and due to the publicity around Murston Community Bank, KentSavers has opened over 800 new accounts. The model is now being replicated across the diocese.
- Lichfield Diocese has provided support and promotion to the eight local credit unions in the area. They have distributed 5,000 leaflets on financial planning to couples planning a wedding, including a voucher entitling them to free credit union membership.
- Churches' Mutual Credit Union launched in February 2015 with the Church of England, Church of Scotland, Scottish Episcopal Church, Methodist Church and Church in Wales as members. Now has more than 600 members and more than £1.4 million in savings deposits with the United Reformed Church on course to join later this year.

To read the final report see <http://www.toyourcredit.org.uk/final-report>

For more information see: <http://www.toyourcredit.org.uk/#toyourcredit>

The Archbishop of Canterbury's Task Group on Responsible Credit and Savings was launched at the start of 2014 for a two-year term, under the leadership of Sir Hector Sants.

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