



— Diocese of —  
Hereford

Proclaiming Christ ✦ Growing Disciples



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Space for Action:  
How the church building can  
provide a safe space for those in need.



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## WHAT IS SOCIAL ACTION

The Office for Civil Society defines social action as follows:

*‘Social action is about people coming together to help improve their lives and solve the problems that are important in their communities. It can broadly be defined as practical action in the **service of others**, which is (i) carried out by individuals or groups of people working together, (ii) not mandated and not for profit, (iii) **done for the good of others** – individuals, communities and/or society, and (iv) bringing about social change and or value.’*



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# Social Action

*Why should churches engage in Social Action?*

Jesus said ' Love your neighbour as yourself'  
Matthew Ch 23 VV 39.

Where Jesus is picking up on the reference In Leviticus 19.vv18

James 2:26 'Faith without works is dead'

Marks of Mission – we tend to those in need, we transform the unjust structures of society, and we treasure all of God's people.



- Church buildings can be used to support local social action.
- They can be used to address a community need, often by simply providing space to other groups.
- Many churches will have the volunteers and people connected able to volunteers.
- The response often doesn't require any change to the building.
- It can allow the building to be used in a simple light touch way.





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### Types of Social Action:

- Food banks
  - Food Share
  - Reducing loneliness and isolation
  - Offering a space that can be used by refugees or asylum seekers.
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- Anything done in the service of others and serves the common good.



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## Case Study: Asylum Seekers in Herefordshire.

### St Martins Hereford and Leominster Priory.

- 170 Asylum seekers arrived in the county over a period of 6 months.
- Living in two local hotels, one in the city and one in a market town.
- No negotiation with the local community about suitability of either location, although one hotel was certainly more suitable than the other.
- Local Civil Society organisations were reporting that they did not have the capacity to provide the support needed.



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## Case Study: Asylum Seekers in Herefordshire.

- Two local churches were contacted by the local authority asking if we could help. Other than their basic needs being met, very little support is provided by the contractor.
- The immediate need: clothing as many AS have nothing other than the clothes they arrive in.
- The church in Hereford was able to offer space for people to drop off donations, and they were also able to sort the clothes and weed out anything unsuitable.
- They were also able to go into the hotel and ask what the men needed.



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## Case Study: Asylum Seekers in Herefordshire.

- The local church was also able to offer a space for the men to use for drop-in, a space outside of the hotel that was welcoming and felt neutral.
- The church became an integral part of a civil society network who were able to offer other support, e.g English classes, boxing, football, some of the asylum seekers got involved in volunteering. Obviously not all of that happened in the church – but what can your church offer in terms of a safe space?
- Asylum Seekers reported that having a welcome from the local churches had enhanced their wellbeing and sense of safety.





## Case Study: Asylum Seekers in Herefordshire.

- Second location was a little more problematic as the hotel was in the middle of a small market town.
- 74 families who were moved very quickly into a hotel.
- The local church immediately offered to co-ordinate the welcome on behalf of the local community and very quickly other faith and civil society groups came on board.
- Mapping existing activities that AS families can join in, eg mother and toddler group, community lunches, coffee mornings, etc.





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- Already helping to run the food share and food bank, so already engaged in social action projects.
- Local church happy to arrange a drop in at the church, with toys for the children, and are looking at allowing the families access to the kitchen so that they can cook some of their own meals.
- Happy to offer space to other groups to use to deliver activities to the AS Families.
- Able to offer safer recruitment and DBS for volunteers.
- Able to offer other church owned buildings for activities, such as ESL, private meeting space for one to one meetings.



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# Social Action – a wide definition

- Worship of God and prayer space
- Village Halls/Meeting Space
- Community Shops
- Community Café
- Post offices
- Lunch clubs
- Libraries
- Shared Space (ecumenical or community)
- Clubs and Trainings
- Arts and Music Events
- Credit Unions
- Markets and fairs.
- Pop up restaurants
- Performance space
- Soft play areas
- Messy church
- Mother and Toddler Groups
- Parish Offices
- Shared space with other organisations
- Champing and holiday accommodation.
- Housing
- Heritage Centres
- Tourist Information Centres
- Children's Centres
- Food Assemblies
- Culture and Arts events
- Clubs and Societies
- Internet cafes and digital hubs
- Visitor attractions
- Quiet spaces

