

Our mission, approach and strategic aims

CAP's Mission:

To work with people living in poverty, the churches and others to overcome UK poverty.

Our beliefs

- in a country rich in resources poverty is an injustice that can and must be overcome.
- all people have the right to share in 'life in all its fullness' (1 John 10 v10), but poverty actively prevents this
- in the unique value of each person made in the image and likeness of God regardless of gender, race, ethnicity, sexuality, ability or wealth. CAP believes that poverty is a reflection of a society that places a greater value on some rather than others.
- people living in poverty are the real poverty experts and have a right to shape the decisions that affect their lives.

Our approach

All CAP's work is founded on an approach based on participation. We challenge ourselves and others to work with people living in poverty to develop lasting solutions to the problems they experience. We believe that lasting solutions will only be found with the active participation of people living in poverty.

Solutions are of no use unless they are taken up and implemented by those with power. This is why we empower people living with poverty to be their own advocates and to effectively influence the policies and practices that cause poverty. Change on the scale we want to see requires persistent pressure. This is why we equip people of good will to campaign and act in solidarity.

CAP has its roots in the Christian churches. We therefore have a particular role to play in resourcing church and other groups to better understand the nature of poverty in the UK and to engage in spiritual reflection.

We ally ourselves with all people of good will who seek to overcome poverty. We recognise that some groups in society are disproportionately affected by poverty and exclusion and actively work to address these inequalities.

Our strategic Aims

A sustainable livelihood for all: People living in poverty will achieve income security and paid employment which promotes dignity and justice.

A voice for people living with poverty: All poor and marginalised people will have an effective voice in shaping decisions which affect their lives.

A church that is mobilised to work with others to overcome poverty: The churches will actively promote a 'bias to the poor', working with those of good will from all faiths and none.

An organization that is effective and sustainable: CAP will seek to be a model of good practice in how we work, and sustain a long-term commitment to bringing about change.

What is unique about CAP?

Church Action on Poverty (CAP) is a national membership-based an independent, non-denominational educational charity founded in 1982 as an ecumenical response to poverty in Britain.

CAP is one of a handful of national organisations committed to working in an empowering and participatory way with people in poverty in the UK.

CAP creates opportunities for people in poverty to bring their unique insights, knowledge and expertise gained from living with poverty to bear in reforming policy, challenging bad practices that sustain poverty and to be their own advocates for change.

CAP works to change the attitudes and understanding of Government. CAP has contributed directly to increased levels of participation by people in poverty in policy making. In this way, policy making is informed by the unique insights, knowledge and expertise gained from living with poverty on a day to day basis. To find solutions to poverty, it is vital that Government policies and other initiatives are rooted in and tested against this experience.

“Poverty wears people down and can make them feel devalued and worthless. CAP’s Lent Minimum Wage challenge has given me a new respect for people I meet, and I meet quite a lot of them in my work, who against the odds bring up families on little money but with great dignity. This period has given me a new vigour to campaign for a decent living wage for people.”
Barry Morgan, Archbishop of Wales.

CAP puts great emphasis on working in partnership with and giving added value to the work of others. A key role for CAP is raising the profile of poverty issues and influencing the understanding, priorities and agendas of the mainstream Christian denominations and church agencies, at national and local level.

Church Action on Poverty seeks to improve the lives of people in poverty by learning from and introducing international development practice and perspectives to the UK. In recent years we have sought to pilot the use of a range of approaches which are largely new in a UK context, including participatory budgeting, the sustainable livelihoods analysis, Frierean approaches to conscientization, organising and participation.

“Christ calls us to stand alongside individuals, families and pensioners in Britain for whom poverty is a daily stressful experience. He redefined the meaning of neighbourliness to include all who suffer injustice and oppression, and led the way Himself by seeking the company of the poor, the sick and the marginalized. As Christians we are called to follow His example. Your "poverty roadshows" are designed to help all of us recognise the sometimes hidden reality of poverty in all our parishes, both rural and urban, and to point to the practical things that can be done at local level to relieve the stress of unavoidable debt.”
Most Rev Rowan Williams, Archbishop of Canterbury and
Cardinal Cormac Murphy O’Connor, Archbishop of Westminster

For more information on our work see:

www.church-poverty.org.uk

www.participatorybudgeting.org.uk

<http://www.changemakersmanchester.org.uk/>