

Christians in Calderdale Schools

Chair's Report - September 2023 - August 2024

As always it is a privilege to serve CICS as the Chair of Trustees and support the workers, volunteers and trustee team as we seek to share the hope, life and love of Jesus in a wide variety of ways in Calderdale's schools.

This year has been about putting some flesh on the bones of The Partnership plans and discussions of the previous year.

In September CICS, Urban Saints and the church community in Sowerby Bridge started training around setting up a weekly safe space that would support the young people in Sowerby Bridge. This launched in early 2024.

Working with The King's Church, Halifax we launched Chilli Tuesday, a free lunch, chill out area and games for students and staff of nearby Calderdale College. Over the year between 30 and 70 students attended this each Tuesday lunchtime. To hear from one student that this was his first hot meal in three days shows the level of food poverty in our Borough and Chilli Tuesday is a response to that. Building on the partnership with Calderdale College we attended the Freshers Fair and Mental Health Awareness day.

Faith Panels have continued in several schools giving students an opportunity to meet and question people of faith. The depth of research from the students around the people on the panel and questions that are asked shows how vital and welcomed this is within the schools we have visited.

CICS and The Partnership have received invitations to contribute within lessons tackling weighty topics such as poverty, euthanasia, food banks, Street Angels and around asylum seekers and refugees.

In May I had the honour of presenting 34 NIV Bibles to Ryburn Valley High School in response to a request from them to replace the very well used and falling apart stock they had. Just before Christmas I was the keynote speaker at an awards evening at Ryburn where I was able to encourage and challenge the young people and parents.

It's Your Move was distributed to around 2000 young people as they made the move from primary to secondary school. Thanks to Robert for increasing the number of schools who were part of the It's Your Move distribution this year.

The mentoring service in Brighouse continues to happen with three of our workers, Chris, Sophie and Sarah, in school each week supporting and listening to pupils in need of that listening ear. A student from Huddersfield University, Marina, joined the team as her University placement and we are thankful to Chris for starting the conversation as he was served by Marina in Currys Huddersfield!

Joan and Steve continue to work in Todmorden and Sowerby Bridge and always have an inspirational story to tell of God at work in these schools. Joan and Steve have taken the lead on the Sowerby Bridge initiative.

Robert has continued in his role networking with schools and seeking new and exciting opportunities. We are so grateful to him for opening doors and ensuring CICS is at work in schools across the Borough.

As you will see from the financial report we do need to increase our giving - if you can invest in CICS as we invest in the life of schools, the students and staff please do consider signing up to give.

One of our workers, Sarah Stone, moved on from CICS at the end of August. Sarah has been an incredible asset and has worked incredibly supporting students and staff at Brighouse High over many years. Thank you to Sarah and we wish her well for the future.

Post Balance Sheet Events

At the commencement of this academic year we received notification from two workers, Joan Wright and Sophie Tinker of their pending resignations.

Joan left at the end of September, however, she and her husband Steve will continue to support CICS as volunteers. They are continuing the work they were doing at Todmorden High School, running a Question Point and Steve mentoring a male student.

Sophie left during November, in order to pursue a role alongside her daughter supporting students with learning difficulties.

In summary, this leaves CICS with two paid workers: Chris Mason leading on mentoring at Brighouse High School (BHS), supported by one volunteer Martina, and Robert Fox (Project Manager) developing links and new opportunities across Calderdale secondary schools.

CICS is also building up a network of volunteers and partner agencies who are helping deliver into schools and colleges across the Borough.

All new opportunities will be delivered through existing staff resources, volunteers or Partners.

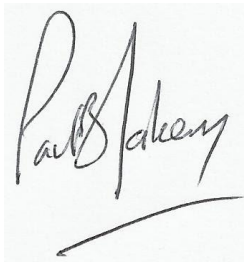
In addition to these changes, Roberts contracted hours and hourly rate were reduced for the

forthcoming year.

Consequently, the salary and worker expenses costs have been significantly reduced for the remainder of the year. This reduction, to less than half of previous salary costs alongside other expenditure managed within the 2024/25 budget indicates that the projected carry forward balance into 2025/26 will be in the order of £24k. This alongside existing donations allowing CICS to continue working beyond the current academic year.

During the remainder year, Trustees will continue to explore additional funding through grant applications. One to the CofE Family and Social Welfare Committee (FSWC), which is ongoing at present, and to another local organisation. It is anticipated that if successful the FSWC grant will off-set the reduction in income generated from mentoring at BHS, since BHS will be invoiced for only one worker as against three in previous years.

Finally my thanks to all who make CICS happen - the workers, volunteers, trustees, supporters and partners. Your action, prayers, financial gifts and general support means we can do what we do.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Paul Blakey', with a horizontal line underneath.

Paul Blakey MBE
Chair of Trustees