

Friday 23 September 2011

Archbishop meets Christian groups tackling poverty in Derby

The Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr Rowan Williams, today visited the Restore Project and Derby City Mission as part of a three-day visit to the Diocese of Derby.

Both projects have received financial support from Church Urban Fund. The grants from the Church of England charity, which supports those tackling poverty in the most deprived communities in England, have been vital to both projects, enabling them to develop their work and have a bigger impact on local people and communities.

In a private audience at St Augustine's church, the Archbishop met staff and volunteers from the Restore Project, a Christian initiative helping vulnerable women, including women involved in the sex industry in Derby. Trained volunteer support workers befriend at-risk women through street outreach and drop-in sessions, and work with them to make positive changes towards better health, wellbeing and relationships. The project has helped more than three hundred women in the last ten years. A specialist worker, funded by Church Urban Fund, is now helping women involved in off-street sex work, which is a growing issue in the city.

Dr Rowan Williams said:

"This project shows yet again how the Church Urban Fund can respond promptly, imaginatively and co-operatively to the needs of people at risk. I felt very privileged to visit and to learn about the work."

After a walk through the Normanton area of the city with local bishops, Dr Williams visited Derby City Mission where he was welcomed by the Director, Alasdair Kay, and other staff members. Derby City Mission runs a number of initiatives, including a successful Street Pastors team, street outreach to homeless and alcoholics, and the Jubilee project, a debt and benefits advice service. The Jubilee project has grown out of the City Mission's long-established food parcel service, called Basics Bank, which Church Urban Fund supported for six years.

Church Urban Fund was also one of the first organisations to finance the Street Pastors project, which is now in its third year. The Street Pastors, all volunteers, are drawn from more than twenty Derby churches as part of a wider partnership involving local churches and agencies including the police. The project is having a significant impact on street safety in the city centre.

Church Urban Fund Chief Executive, Tim Bissett said:

"Restore and Derby City Mission are two great examples of Christian projects working together with local churches and agencies to bring real and lasting support to people who need it the most. It has been exciting to see how both projects are growing and evolving to meet the needs of their community. The support of local people and churches, either directly, by volunteering, or by giving time, money or prayer has made a huge difference. At Church Urban Fund, we want to see every church, in every community across England tackling poverty together."

The Church Urban Fund is a Church of England charity working to tackle poverty in England. It was established in 1987. For further information go to www.cuf.org.uk.

For information regarding the Restore Project, contact Rebecca Manzie (e-mail admin@restorederby.org.uk or call 07507 557856.

For information about Derby City Mission, call Alasdair Kay on 01332 460346.