

CHURCH ARMY CENTRES OF MISSION IN 2023/24

Recording the Journey Summary Report

Church Army's Research Unit, August 2024

Introduction

This report presents the key findings from the Recording the Journey research project on Church Army's Centres of Mission during the 2023/24 financial year (April 2023 to March 2024). It aims to highlight some of the ways that Centres of Mission (CoM) are impacting their communities and dioceses, with particular focus on:

- Social Impact
- Faith Development
- Resourcing and Enabling Others (Volunteers and Other Churches)

The report also looks at the challenges CoM feel they are facing and the key learning they have discovered and feel that Church Army as a whole could benefit from.

This report draws together data and findings from the two aspects of this project over the last year:

- Quantitative data (numbers) collected through a spreadsheet completed by CoM Evangelists at three time-points in the year (September 2023, January 2024, April 2024)
- Qualitative data (stories) collected through annual research interviews with CoM Evangelists

Across 2023/24, there were 32 active Centres of Mission (CoM). During the course of this year, 2 CoM closed and 1 CoM opened. 22 of these CoM provided usable quantitative data (13 of them at all three time-points) and 21 took part in the qualitative research interview.

Every CoM is different and tailored to the context in which they work, so it is impossible for this short report to do justice to the breadth and diversity of each of their works. But we hope that this gives at least an insight into the wide variety of contextual ways that CoM are making a difference in their communities.

We also wish to express our huge thanks to all of the Evangelists who have shared their numbers, stories and experiences with our team of researchers this year.

Church Army's Research Unit

August 2024

Summary

- Across 2023/24, there were 32 active Centres of Mission (CoM). During the course of this year, 2 CoM closed and 1 CoM opened.
- CoM have been involved in delivering over 28,000 hours of organised activity this year.
 - This is more than 2,300 hours every month
 - The 'average' CoM has been involved in approximately 75 hours of organised activity every month
- CoM have interacted with more than 32,000 people through organised activity during the year
 - The 'average' CoM has interacted with just under 1,000 people (although this ranges from 120 to 4,800)
 - 46% of those interacted with were children (under the age of 18)
- School assemblies are run by 29% of CoM and have been attended by nearly 3,000 children which means that 9% of people our CoM interact with are at school assemblies.
- There will almost certainly be other activities the CoM are involved in that are less organised and so not recorded here (e.g. pastoral and crisis support).
- The rest of this report explores these findings in more detail, as well as exploring some of the themes that arose in interviews in more depth.

Social Impact

CoM engage in a variety of activities that have a primarily social impact. These may include food banks, craft clubs, social events, support groups and educational/emotional support in schools.

- Every CoM (that responded) is involved with food provision in some form and in total have provided/distributed 33,600 meals or boxes of food in the last year.
- CoM also provide other essential items such as baby equipment, hygiene packs and furniture. In total they have distributed nearly 2,500 items.

The Centres of Mission (CoM) have been busy through the 2023-2024 year engaging in a wide range of work and activities that are creating social impact in their communities. . In this qualitative section we will take a thematic analysis of the Recording the Journey (RtJ) reports highlighting the most significant work being undertaken, and the impact being created across all the different work done by the CoM. We recognise 3 different findings that are worth highlighting:

1. Addressing Child Poverty
2. Improving Emotional Resilience
3. Creating Connections and Building Community

1. Addressing Child Poverty

One of the most significant impact stories is how the CoM affect children and young people through their work, even if the children are not directly the main stakeholders of their services. For example, during the Christmas season, Southampton CoM, when identifying families in need at women's refuges, "set up a shop where people can 'buy' free new quality toys." They gave vouchers to the parents for each of their children, which they exchange for toys. This brought some parents to tears.

A similar situation was found at Dundee CoM during Christmas,

"Christmas boxes (130 this year) were provided containing everything needed [for Christmas dinner], including the turkey. Presents for each family member were wrapped up with their name on the tag so their parents could give to their children."

It is not just during Christmas - Scunthorpe CoM provided "food and activities for children in receipt of free school meals during school holidays."

Addressing Youth Crime

As with the experience of addressing child poverty, the work of the CoM have impacted/addressed youth crime (which is a factor of child poverty) as a result of their normal work. The example of Greenwich CoM especially is worth noting:

"When two boys arrived at the club and started brandishing these knives, we didn't feel threatened... I don't think it was in any way possible that they would use them against us - and

that is because of the 1 Corinthians 13 type youth work that we've been doing with them and the confidence that it wasn't in their hearts to do any harm to us... You can always see the vulnerability in youths even if they're violent."

(Greenwich CoM)

Sligo CoM has a similar example of how they have impacted the local area through their presence:

"Not sure what we are doing but since we moved in 'there is less hassle' according to a police officer and local councillor. Older people were being harassed in the street and that has stopped. It is a God thing, doing something we don't know how, but it may come from befriending and being present by praying into the street."

(Sligo CoM)

2. Improving Emotional Resilience

In last year's report we found that CoMs promoted positive emotional wellbeing; this has continued in 2023-2024, but with a little more purposefulness in improving the emotional resilience of the individuals, for example, *Medway* runs a Mum's Group for women with children involved in the care system, they write:

"The group have done activities such as writing down some of the negative things that have been said about them and then setting fire to the paper - symbolising that those words don't define them, and also talking about forgiveness and forgiving themselves... Helen has a heartfelt passion for these women. As she says, 'We're desperately trying to show them how God sees them.'"

(Medway CoM)

It is also encouraging to see that the CoM take these actions seriously, as seen from the example of Sligo CoM, where their volunteers were trained on mental health awareness:

"The CoM hosted a mental health training day for church and youth leaders using Mind Matters fund. Ireland had two years of lockdown, so it is hard to get people out."

(Sligo CoM)

3. Creating Connections and Building Community

The CoM tackle social isolation by creating valuable connections between people, especially between those that are most vulnerable in society. From here communities are being formed. The following are some examples of how they achieve this:

"The King's Table is a great example of social impact - two parts of the community that don't normally meet ... The community meals have a mix of demographics, some retirees coming here to retire, and the local community who are a mixture of people struggling with various issues, including mental health, low income, and substance misuse. At The Kings Table ... one of them said, 'Only time I see someone on the week is at The King's Table.'"

(North Coast of Wales CoM)

“The Menopause Café is a safe space for women to come together, and to share their journey. The women are able to be themselves, and whether we are sad, struggling, or sharing a positive experience, we are able to create a place where women can share openly without embarrassment or judgement.”

(North Coast of Wales CoM)

“In Sligo 30% of people [are] living alone. CoM tackles social isolation by bringing young adults together over a meal on a weekly basis.”

(Sligo CoM)

A particular subset of this community-building work is seen in those CoM that are supporting refugees and asylum seekers:

“After supporting a Ukrainian network facilitator for a year, the fruit of that partnership continues with our Centre of Mission's ongoing support for war refugees. This focuses primarily on a 40-strong Ukrainian choir and children's craft group ... We continue to pray for safety for those in Ukraine and for peace in their land.”

(Cork CoM)

We also partner with a charity who work with trafficked women; often they have had to flee their own countries due to persecution

(North Belfast CoM)

Faith Development

CoM engage in a variety of activities that allow individuals to explore, develop and express their faith including fresh expressions of Church, prayer gatherings, seasonal evangelistic events, enquirers courses (e.g. Alpha), school assemblies and discipleship or Bible study groups.

- Over 80 baptisms of children or adults have taken place through CoM, and an additional 40 infant baptisms or thanksgivings have taken place.
- Nearly 50 people have gone forward for confirmation from the CoM.
- 42% of CoM have been involved in assisting with or conducting a funeral - this is evidence of the huge level of trust and value of the CoM within their community. In total there have been 32 funerals.
- CoM report that 500 people are exploring faith with them and nearly 750 people are growing in their faith through the CoM.
- CoM have seen 120 people make a faith commitment for the first time this year and another 70 people rediscovered their faith or made a recommitment of faith.

There is a sense in the RtJ reports that the CoM *'nurture'* the faith of the people they encounter. This is in contrast to an explicit method of proselytising/evangelism, instead, their method of evangelism is nurturing from the early beginnings to full commitments. These start with the how their social work usually leads to individuals joining the community of the CoM thus *'belonging before believing.'* The different ways the CoM nurture faith are:

1. Through Their Social Impact
2. Breaking New Ground
3. Through Being Present
4. Through Faith Courses

1. Nurturing Faith Through Their Social Impact

A common theme found in the reports is how the CoM often do not distinguish between evangelism as words, and evangelism as deeds. Often, the deeds they do lead to nurturing the faith of the individuals. Below are a few examples of this:

"There are a lot of lonely people in the area. We met a man who was walking his dog, we chatted with him on the street. Afterwards, he sent a message: 'It was great to meet you and your friend the other day. I've been down in the dumps with the cross of loneliness.' He would love to come to the Tuesday gathering ... We find people, almost randomly, out on the street and start a conversation that leads to friendship and faith."

(Ballina CoM)

“There is a guy ... at the Hub. He is ex-army, has Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and has mental health problems; at the Hub he started to come out of himself. He probably had a faith before, but he was not able to express it. We have given him the tools to express his faith. Since he volunteers at the Hub every day, he’s heard me talk about God. He couldn’t vocalise it before, but his confidence has grown as well as the tools to speak about his faith.”

(Southampton CoM)

“Drop-in at the Haven has a trickle impact in a faith sense as folk who attend regularly talk to me about faith matters ... As they have grown to trust what we provide we hear the stories of how in the past church has damaged them but how our approach has helped them get back on track again.”

(Scunthorpe CoM)

2. Nurturing Faith After Breaking New Ground

Another way the CoM are nurturing faith is in the breaking of new ground, meaning not shying away from those who reject the Christian message outright, but instead accepting them within their community:

“A member of the group said, ‘I feel a little fraudulent because I have no faith... I am not atheist or agnostic because there is nothing there to reject.’ However, within the three years of attending, she is slowly coming to faith. She has started speaking about her journey and using prayer apps.”

(Suffolk CoM)

3. Nurturing Faith Through Being Present

CoM also nurture faith by simply being present which is very reminiscent of a ‘Ministry of Presence.’ This approach is one of journeying alongside individuals, without anything expected in return:

“A Polish family had a problem with the husband being unfairly dismissed from his work over a false accusation. We encouraged them to appeal and supported them through it with prayer. They didn’t think the appeal would help, but out of five people being dismissed, he was the only one who appealed, and a few days after it he got the job back. They feel like it’s a miracle.”

(Rochdale CoM)

“One local lady asked for her baby to be baptised - her partner, who was previously against the concept of Christian faith, is now a regular attendee of Create [fresh expression of Church], often helping to set up.”

(Attercliffe and Darnall CoM)

“Recently, [the Lead Evangelist] was approached by a young mother on the estate who asked: ‘You’re the vicar, aren’t you?’; there is a clear reputation that he has garnered on the estate. This young mother was seeking an opportunity for her child to be christened. After several

meetings the mother was also baptised on Easter morning this year with the child. Simply being present on the estate is what God used to enable this opportunity.”

(Borders [A7] CoM)

4. Nurturing Faith Through Faith Courses

The CoM continue their effective use of faith courses. This could be seen as the final step of nurturing the faith of those in their communities transitioning from belonging to believing. There is a clear methodology that works here that might be worth investigating further:

“During a Youth Alpha Holy Spirit away day, a quiet young person was very impacted by the praying spaces; they said: ‘I was brought up to be an atheist, to be alone, but I discovered that in faith I’m no longer alone.’ In one of the young adults’ groups ran by our volunteer, a young man came to faith during Covid; his parents did not accept it and he had a horrendous time at home. He has his life together now and the volunteer helped him find a job. His faith was encouraged by the help the CoM gave him to improve his life.”

(Sligo CoM)

“There have been new people joining our Sunday congregation on a regular basis. This led to the starting of a new Alpha Course... Many of the new Christians go out into the estate and explain to people that church is not what you’d expect, come and see!”

(St Helier CoM)

Resourcing and Enabling Others - Volunteers

Volunteers are a key part of the CoM's community and work. As well as the practical help and support that they provide to the CoM, their volunteering is also often an opportunity for them to develop skills and explore and grow in their own faith.

- There were 560 volunteers across all CoM
- The 'average' CoM would have 17 volunteers, although in reality this ranges from 1 to 37
- The Christian/church background of volunteers is:

Background	% of volunteers
Regular church-goer	70%
Occasional church-goer	10%
Historical church-goer	2%
Never church-goer	19%

- This means that 30% of CoM volunteers are not regular church-goers

CoM invest in their volunteers in spiritual terms but also practical terms. CoM volunteers are being developed in the following ways:

1. Developing Faith - Belonging Before Believing
2. Improving Volunteers' Employability
3. Improving Volunteers' Self-Confidence

Below you can find examples of these:

1. Developing Faith - Belonging Before Believing

A common theme in developing volunteers is how they are part of the fuzzy area where they belong to the CoM before believing or declaring a faith. This resonates with the nurturing of faith process as seen in the section above. There are a couple of examples below:

"From the beginning of the football club, I managed to recruit coaches that are non-Christians, they keep the club going. One is a young man whose father is a Christian, but he is not, doesn't go to church. He has been consistent, committed and on board with our Christian values... Because we pray together, I feel he is getting Jesus this way."

(Rochdale CoM)

"Three teenage girls that are fully on board with what we do. They are our volunteer leaders even though they haven't openly said they want to be Christians ... but they really like us and our activities. They are even in our planning meetings for the football and youth group... In a briefing meeting, we thought we could train the volunteers but only the three girls put their

hands up. They are flourishing that way. It is the non-Christians who have been pillars of the football club. Instead of Christians serving non-Christians, we have adapted so we serve WITH these people, we journey alongside these people, and we don't draw a strict line between you are Christian and you are not."

(Rochdale CoM)

2. Improving Volunteers' Employability

"One of the principles of Superkidz [children and youth ministry] is to provide employment and training opportunities for people in deprived communities rather than expecting them to volunteer for nothing."

(Greenwich CoM)

"One thing the team have learnt over the years is that, just because someone doesn't have qualifications doesn't mean they're not intelligent - it's recognising this fact and giving them opportunities to get training and develop their own education. One person who left school at 14 is now studying for her degree. One person has completed a diploma in youth work, and another is about to start."

(Greenwich CoM)

"Our volunteer doing 18 months was meant to be working with Operation Mobilisation (OM) in Roscommon, Ireland, but decided to stay with us. OM allowed the change from themselves to the CoM, which is not something that has happened before. It feels like all things colluded to make this position possible, and it is thriving. She is now exploring a vocation with Church Army."

(Sligo CoM)

3. Improving Volunteers' Self-Confidence

"[We have a] new Pioneer Evangelist starting in September, but he's been a long-term volunteer... He's done different things - played in the worship band, helped advertise [evangelistic events] by visiting all the hostels. [And] a previous [client] of the clothes bank is now running the clothes bank."

(Anonymous CoM)

"We have had someone who came to our community drop-in and is now actively exploring pioneer ministry. One other person who has evangelistic gifts and has been coming to the Bible study and drop-in and will now be on the next Discovery Day."

(Haverfordwest CoM)

Resourcing and Enabling Others - Church Impact

- During 2023/24, nearly 250 churches were actively supported in mission and evangelism by CoM
- CoM Evangelists undertook almost 120 speaking engagements promoting the work of Church Army

The CoM have continued their partnerships with different churches and parishes. However, in comparison to previous years, fewer examples were reported of successful partnerships, perhaps due to CoM teams' capacity. The main findings are:

1. Journeying With and Empowering Churches
2. Ministerial Connections
3. Minimal Impact

1. Journeying With and Empowering Churches

CoM walk alongside churches and are an important factor in empowering them to reach out:

"[We] work closely with the local churches. [We] meet and pray once a month. [We] take the lead on this. [We] have helped [one local church] in reaching out, and [the Lead Evangelist] has joined the mission team at [another local church] to help steer them into evangelism."

(Attercliffe & Darnall CoM)

"Locally the impact of what we do raises the profile of the local church, being seen as a viable and working community partner[ing] with other organisations who see the value of what it is that we offer."

(Scunthorpe CoM)

2. Ministerial Connections

CoM create connections between various services, linking them throughout their communities:

"Pioneer ministry has started in Ireland. [The Lead Evangelist] will be serving in the pioneer council, a lot of work in the coming year on that. Really positive. Pioneers to start in Spring 2024. [He] spoke to the bishop, and they are trying to get CA linked to YFC and Church of Ireland to install a youth work network. If it happens, youth work, schools work and Youth Alphas will be happening along a 100km stretch of the National Primary Road, the N4... [The Lead Evangelist] commented, 'We try to maximize all these things coming together, how to facilitate the connections is my role.'"

(Sligo CoM)

Challenges.

CoM faced several challenges during the year, these can be grouped as:

1. Spiritual Challenges
2. Strategic and Diocesan Challenges
3. Staffing Challenges
4. Practical Challenges

Examples of each are found below:

1. Spiritual Challenges

“The CoM is always wrestling with resistance to the Gospel. This is partly because of people’s negative life experience and finding faith in a God who loves them quite difficult.”

(Greenwich CoM)

“For me, personally, I’ve had a run of bad health - colds that I’ve not been able to shake for weeks on end. It’s the season we’re all in, but it’s been pretty energy-zapping trying to do ‘people-work’ but running at 75% instead of feeling good.”

(Cork CoM)

“Church of Ireland in rural communities is really struggling, there is no capacity inside so let’s match it with other capacities or churches and create synergy. In the Irish context success is relational, so we must ask ourselves how do we best serve a growing international community? How do we best serve those areas that are 80% homogeneous, Catholic and Protestant, with their intricacies at the same time? ... The institutional church needs to advocate for those who are not familiar with the system. We constantly have to ask, ‘How to make the Irish system work for the people well.’”

(Sligo CoM)

2. Strategic and Diocesan Challenges

“There are ongoing issues around the diocese and the use of the building.”

(North Coast of Wales CoM)

“As Lead Evangelist works cross-diocese alongside several organisations and people within the diocese. Everyone has an opinion of what the CoM should be doing.”

[NB: since this quote was given, the CoM note that they now feel in a more settled position within the diocese]

(Suffolk CoM)

3. Staffing Challenges

“Capacity - There’s so much that the CoM could be doing but they just don’t have the capacity to do it all. They say that it often feels like ‘we’re just dealing with the symptoms and not the root problem’, although they comment that for those they are able to build relationships with on an individual basis, they are able to go deeper.”

(Medway CoM)

“Finding capable volunteers. CoM does have volunteers who can help in the kitchen, etc. But for the work with vulnerable women or with [the fresh expression of Church], need to have a living Christian faith because we’re trying to make disciples. The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. It seems like, if you’re a keen Christian, you want to go somewhere with good provision for your kids, a perfect worship band, etc., and we can’t offer that, we’re much rougher.”

(Anonymous CoM)

4. Practical Challenges

“For me the other thing is, doing the two jobs means: because I’m [member of the Church Army Operations team] I don’t give 100% to my lead role in Selby both time-wise and headspace wise, and that’s always a challenge.”

(Selby CoM)

“It is challenging having to report to the different bodies - such as the diocese and CA - there is lots of report writing. There is also a need to mobilise the local Churches Together committee so that they are more committed to the work and have a greater vision for what we can do.”

(Ballina CoM)

“Time or lack of it, one person doing two people’s jobs. It brings both freedom but also limitations.”

(Scunthorpe CoM)

“Keeping on top of admin things. [The church building] doesn’t even have an internet connection. At start of the year, I hoped to find a volunteer admin person but no luck - difficulty is finding someone who has the time and is able/trusted to deal with highly sensitive info.”

(Anonymous CoM)

“There’s always the structural challenge of wanting to do new things but finding limitations on diary and headspace and room-space and meeting resources and people resources. Just allowing some blank spaces in the diary to enable new things to happen. It’s easy to fill your diary twice over.”

(Cork CoM)

‘We are having many Ukrainian refugees come to our meetings, we used Ukrainian Bibles, but discovered that they spoke mostly Russian, and that in the Eastern Orthodox tradition the Psalms are numbered differently, so the reading in English did not match the Russian reading. So now we just translate the actual words.’”

(Sligo CoM)

Key Learning

When analysing this section, it became evident that there is real wisdom being shared in the RtJ reports, but what is happening with it? We would recommend publishing these somehow, and with that in mind, we have anonymised the responses to give a sense of how they would look being shared widely. The key learning can be divided into three sections:

1. Spiritual Advice
2. Theological Advice
3. Practical Advice

1. Spiritual Advice

“God works despite the uncertainty, the change, and the chaos. Mission and ministry still happens even if we are not sure what the expectations are around things.”

“When there is change, just having clarity on expectations for everybody. Recognising that it takes time to re-establish and not to expect results shortly after there is change.”

“Expect to find goodness, too often we go into an area with preconceptions about what we will find - you have to be able to hear what people are doing, thinking and saying - and expect to find goodness there.”

“Having contentment is important, being happy being small, being happy about what God has put in front of you. Manage outside expectations and sit with where God is leading or doing. Allowing the Holy Spirit’s leading and not being worried about what people say.”

“Keep your eyes fixed on Jesus - otherwise you will sink. I can’t do these things in my own strength. Listen to God and stay focused. God is good and faithful. Be rooted in him so the rest will follow.”

“To be true to yourself, your expression of faith and what you believe God has said to you for vision is both costly and extremely rewarding. It is by being faithful and honest with what God has said to you that you receive the blessing of the Lord.”

“The importance of understanding different spiritualities and how someone’s heart is expressed differently depending on their spiritual background and different expressions of spirituality. The Anglican church is very broad, and those who are at the ‘lower end of the candle’ can often find it much harder to express their spirituality, without coming up against criticism and opposition from their own wider church team.”

“We’ve learnt to be ‘church in the mess and church in the random’. We need to ask ourselves how to work collectively; how do we as a church speak well into situations and be available for the community?”

“Appreciating God’s plan and what is going on. Being prepared to lay down things, be adaptable. Availability: in those communities what can we bring to the universal Church and then the denominational piece? Reflectivity is key; we had a day of reflection which was asking the questions: ‘What has been and what will be?’”

2. Theological Advice

“The long-term things remain; the parable of the sower is so often true. This thing of ‘How many people at any one time are ever really seeking?’ - historically a lot of church belonging has been cultural, and in the old days if you weren’t in church on Sunday you wouldn’t have a job at the mill on Monday. So realistically the church has been declining in the west, but actually is that any different to the underlying reality of whether people are moving towards God? It is massively important to get the church involved, and to keep working at that; it is vital.”

“It’s okay to stop some activities (even though they might seem successful) if God is leading and prompting to do so. Communication as a team is vital. They’ve been on a journey of working out ‘what is mission?’ - they’ve been grappling with their theology but have now been able to express, in words, the aim of each activity they do:

- 1. Presence - God is already present and highlighting where they can engage others. Also recognising that they’re present as individuals that carry Christ with them.*
- 2. Enabling - They utilise an asset-based community development method. Asking: ‘Where are the treasures and how can they be released?’ - it’s about ‘being the change’.*
- 3. Proclamation - how are they telling others about Jesus? e.g. through Alpha, relationships, etc.”*

3. Practical Advice

“Be flexible - many things planned ... can sometimes ‘crash and burn’; they have found that when one operates in an organic matter it thrived. Ultimately, be actively slow, vulnerable and small and allow God to do his work. Hold on to your monastic rhythm of prayer and worship. Listen to your community.”

“In the last eight months we have seen a rise of alt-right individuals and attitudes in the community, we need to address these.”

“It’s not a radical new insight for the church, but the bit of insight I’ve got is that time with people is almost never wasted time.”

“Patience - it is very easy to run away with busy-ness; Jesus never went running around - he always took things at his own pace.”

“The importance of good volunteers who can pick up the slack at times when you ain’t really feeling it. Because life happens to us all. And raising their confidence and helping them develop as volunteers and leaders so that they’re okay with stuff.”

“Communication as much as possible - making sure we work as team members.”

“Pacesetting is important; the spreading of oneself too thinly can lead to burnout.”

“The concept of coming together with food to talk about faith - in a relaxed atmosphere so that we can explore together. It is so important to include the creative element as well, including music, art, poetry and the space and time to reflect.”

“We can only do what we can do, and we shouldn’t reproach ourselves if we are unable to do it. Resources are finite and not infinite.”

“Look beyond the Christian. We couldn’t do half of what we do without our non-Christian volunteers; 95% of my volunteers are non-Christian, some are even more Christians than the Christians we work with. We call them people of peace... They have started in their own faith journey, without them knowing. We constantly hear comments like ‘I’m here because I’ve been led here’, or they call themselves spiritual. God is calling them to work in their community and they don’t know it.”

“The most significant lesson has been the nature of [the city] as a ‘big village’ - everything is linked via communication and community. This includes non-Christian institutions such as the local council, charities, or NGOs, as well as a variety of Christian initiatives and local churches. There is a strong network that [the Evangelist] has been tapping into ... and learning to navigate that has been advantageous.”

“The context of each CoM is unique... become adept at ‘doing things on the cheap’ to circumvent the issues that often arise out of trying to find funding for Christian activity - certainly when operating within the confines of city policy.”

“Context is key - keep listening to God and to each other while also listening to the community.”

“Something we’ve learned from recovery journeys: not to be disappointed when it doesn’t happen. Just because it doesn’t happen doesn’t mean there’s been no benefit. We’re in it for the long-haul, there are no quick fixes to addiction. Don’t give up. Don’t give up. Don’t give up.”

“To be there for the long-haul, you need to look after yourself. Church Army needs to take seriously giving people sabbaticals. And CA might even need to provide cover so that people can do that.”

Conclusion

This short report has explored some of the ways that Church Army's Centres of Mission have been impacting their communities in the year 2023/24.

It has explored the impact in terms of,

- Social Impact
- Faith Development
- Resourcing and Enabling Others

The report has also explored and highlighted some of the challenges that CoM have been facing, as well the learning that is coming from their experiences. As was said at the start of this report, there is no 'typical' CoM but we hope that this has been a chance to draw together and share some of the work and impact that CoM are having across the UK and Ireland.