

# Bishop of Leeds opens the 'Door of Mercy' at Yorkshire SVP centres

Bishop Marcus Stock was on hand to open the doors at St Vincent's Support Centre in Leeds – as well as the CHAS@St Vincent's Centre in Bradford – both works of the St Vincent de Paul Society.

Recognising the work of the charity, which each year helps thousands of people living in poverty, the bishop's sermon included the opening of the symbolic 'Door of Mercy' to those in need across West Yorkshire.

In Leeds, the day marked the official opening of the support centre following a recent move to new premises back in April. "The inclusion of St Vincent's as part of the Holy Year of Mercy is an honour and a real tribute to the achievements and hard work of staff and volunteers," commented Sheena Eastwood, centre manager.

"St Vincent's is a place of help, hope and opportunity and everyone is welcome here.

"The new centre has given St Vincent's the opportunity to develop its services to meet the growing need in the city. We wanted to create a warm and friendly space which is accessible to all and hope it will be a vibrant hub for the local community to enjoy".

St Vincent's helps people who are deprived of income, employment, education, social networks and community support, without judgement, to help them build a brighter future. The services are aimed at educating and empowering people, giving each person the confidence and skills to escape poverty.

Whether it is through debt advice, counselling, education or by practical means in the form of the charity's food parcel service or community shops, the services are there for people in their time of need.

In Bradford, the event celebrated the work of CHAS@St Vincent's Community Learning and Development programme. Established just over two years ago, the programme already boasts over 15 classes per week for English, IT and Employment Support and works with partners from the Carers Resource, National Careers Service and Job Centre Plus.

They have also developed an



immigration drop-in service run in partnership with the Manuel Bravo Project. Matt Henderson, education manager, says: "We are happy as long as students feel welcome and they leave having learned some new skills."

In a letter to the education team, an employment support beneficiary wrote, "Thank you again for all your support, for the fantastic courses you put me through, and for boosting my confidence when it was as low as it could get.

"With all your help and guidance I have finally found a job!"

The bishop views the work of St Vincent's as a vital part of the community. In regard to the charity's work supporting migrants, refugees and asylum seekers, Bishop Marcus Stock comments: "I know from my last visit that there are people who arrive in the country and they have absolutely nothing, not even a chair to sit on. Here they can source furniture and white goods for their kitchen.

"Everything they need to have the basic needs in life that most families require, so it provides an essential service."

The St Vincent's Support Centres pride themselves on helping everyone, and developing its services to meet the



needs of the community. In a letter to St Vincent's, Debt Advice client Lisa wrote: "You didn't judge me. You listened to me and allowed me to talk, shout and cry. You have helped me get my debts under

control which I would never have been able to do alone. I cannot tell you how grateful I am that you were there for me when I really didn't know where to turn."

If you'd like to get involved with St Vincent's, be it volunteering, donating items to their charity shops or giving money, get in touch via the details published in the panel below.

**Get involved with the SVP in Yorkshire**

St Vincent's Support Centre  
0113 248 4126  
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Curtis Building, 4 Berking Avenue, Leeds, LS9 9LF  
Twitter: @StVincentsLeeds

CHAS@StVincents  
01274 726790  
chasbradford.btkc.co.uk/  
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Allenby House, Rees Way, Bradford, BD3 0DZ



The Mayor of Leeds helps open the SVP centre (right), while above, Bishop Stock blesses the new centre and chats to SVP volunteers who attended the launch event