

CHALLENGE POVERTY WEEK ENGLAND & WALES

11–17 October 2021
ACTIVITY TOOLKIT



Introduction

We all want to live in a compassionate society, where everyone can thrive and nobody is cut adrift.

We have seen that clearly as public compassion has come to the fore in the pandemic. Communities have pulled together over the past 18 months, and there has been strong action against injustices such as child hunger, inequality, and economic isolation. We have been reminded of the importance of community, the value of neighbours, and the extent to which we all rely on one another.

Encouragingly, there are compelling signs that people want to sustain this; that people want a more just society, with less inequality. Polling data shows that over six in ten people in the country think the Government should act to reduce differences in income levels.

So with that in mind, what should society look like in future? How do we make sure everyone is included in the UK's pandemic recovery? How do we ensure the injustices and inequalities exposed and exacerbated by Covid-19 are properly tackled as the country moves on from the pandemic?

We can't allow a recovery where some speed off down the fast lane while others are left behind, stalled at the side of the road. We have a real chance to do things differently. We can harness the compassion, community and connectedness that we have cherished, and get going again together.

Challenge Poverty Week England & Wales can be a catalyst for this. The week is an opportunity for us all to say what needs to change after Covid to enable our own communities to thrive. It's a chance for voices that are too often ignored to be heard loud and clear. It's a chance to show that it is possible to build a better, more compassionate society in which everyone can live life to the full. And it's a chance to start that journey, together, now.

We are working closely with partners organising Challenge Poverty Weeks in London and Scotland. If you are located in either London or Scotland you should visit their respective websites to download separate resource materials and to register your events with them:

London Challenge Poverty Week (also 11–17 October)
<https://londonchallengepovertyweek.org.uk>

Scotland Challenge Poverty Week
(4–11 October)
www.challengepoverty.net



Aims, themes and messages

Challenge Poverty Week is designed to highlight the growing problem of poverty in England and Wales and showcase the solutions we can all get behind to solve it.

Aims of the Week

- To build awareness and support for sustainable responses to the pandemic that focus on enhancing the dignity and agency of people in poverty.
- To raise voices in unison against poverty and shine a light on visions for a more just, compassionate and opportunity-filled country.
- To show what is already being done at community level to challenge and alleviate poverty.
- To change the conversation around poverty and help end the stigma.

Community after Covid

The overarching theme for 2021 is community after Covid. Participants are encouraged to consider what needs to change for everyone in their community to be able to thrive as we emerge from the pandemic. This will vary across areas. For instance, you may want to consider how the food system needs to change, how to increase digital inclusion; how to improve the economy where you are; or how to reduce economic, physical and social marginalisation.

Consider whose voices need to be heard during the Week. As we look beyond Covid, the voices of people living in poverty and people challenging poverty need to be more audible and prominent in public debate. We hope CPWEW will provide an opportunity for organisations responding to need in local neighbourhoods to become more vocal about the underlying causes of poverty and solutions.

We encourage participating organisations to work together with people and groups that have direct experience and insight of injustices, particularly around the way poverty links to race, gender, sexuality and regional inequalities.

A blue circular logo with white text. The text is arranged in five lines: 'CHALLENGE', 'POVERTY', 'WEEK', 'ENGLAND', and '& WALES'.

**CHALLENGE
POVERTY
WEEK
ENGLAND
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Aims, themes and messages

Key messages

- The Covid recovery needs to include everyone. We can't allow a system where some speed away but others are left behind. We need to tackle inequality at its root right now and ensure that the voices of those directly affected are heard and acted on.
- People across the country want the Government to tackle income inequality. We must work together to create a more just society, and to do that we must remove the hurdles that hold so many people back.
- We all want to live in a just and compassionate society, where everyone has opportunities and dignity. We have the ability and resources to end poverty. Now it's a matter of will. All of us need to come together now to make it happen.
- The pandemic has highlighted that we have not all been in this together. It is now clearer than ever that poverty and inequality hits some communities harder than others.
- Local communities have shown what is possible by working together, and the power of neighbourliness and mutual aid. Giving local people a greater say produces better results.

Together we can challenge poverty. Now more than ever, we need to come together to make it happen.

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How to get involved

Taking part in Challenge Poverty Week can be effective and rewarding. Last year's event was held entirely online due to Covid restrictions. This year, we expect a mixture of offline and online events.

Online activities can be just as effective as offline ones, and sometimes even more so. You can reach more people as there are no geographic or travel barriers, and you may find that some people are more comfortable sharing with an online meeting than addressing a busy room of people. Bear in mind however, that not everyone has good internet access, so judge for yourself whether to make your event physical or digital.

Here are seven ideas for how you could join in Challenge Poverty Week and help make it a success in your community.

1. [Meet your MP](#)
2. [Host a discussion event](#)
3. [Host a storytelling event](#)
4. [Take to the streets](#)
5. [Get creative](#)
6. [Speak up on social media](#)
7. [Speak to your local media](#)

How to get involved

1. Meet your MP

MPs say meeting face to face is one of the best ways for constituents to raise issues with them. They are keen to hear how issues affect constituents, and how they can help.

You can check who your MP is by entering your postcode at www.parliament.uk/mps-lords-and-offices/mps and contact them to ask for a meeting during Challenge Poverty Week.

If you arrange a meeting, decide who is going to go, what you are going to talk about, and what you are going to ask your MP to do. Prepare some evidence (facts and first-person insights) relating to your issue and come up with one very clear thing you want to ask them to do. This might be to raise the issue via a question in Parliament, or to write to the relevant Government minister, or to start or sign an Early Day Motion raising the issue you are discussing.

Think about what they might say in response and how you might counter any challenges to your arguments. If your MP asks any questions you can't answer, offer to go away and find out, and follow up in writing.

Discuss anything you want to do to publicise the meeting (e.g. writing to your local paper, tweeting), and take a photograph if you can. Share the photo on social media, with the tag #ChallengePoverty.

2. Host a discussion event

An open discussion event can be an effective way to prompt people to reconsider their views, and show that change is possible.

Invite people from different local groups with experience of poverty or injustice to talk about what causes poverty and inequality locally, and what needs to change. Better yet, organise this event together.

You could discuss generally what needs to change after Covid or focus on a specific issue, such as links between poverty and gender / ethnicity / disability; fair work; poverty and health; stigma; hunger; or any other local issue. Try to discuss underlying causes and solutions.

It's likely you'll want to ask people to discuss what policies and systems need to be redesigned and how. Ask who is most at risk of being cut adrift where you live, and how your community can ensure that doesn't happen.

Arrange a few speakers to lead the discussion and ensure they all know who's taking part. Who do you most want to hear what is said? Invite the public and also politicians, business leaders, journalists and others. Events like this work well in person, at accessible venues, or on Zoom and we can help with Zoom practicalities if required.

How to get involved

3. Host a storytelling event

Maybe you'd prefer to tell a few selected stories, to convey what the issues are in your community and what could be done differently. You may still want to invite questions at the end, but most of the event would be more one-way than the discussion events described above.

Think about who in your group or community has a powerful story to tell, and the confidence to tell it. Again, think about other groups locally who might be interested in co-hosting this event.

Like the discussion events, this would work well in-person or online through Zoom. If you do it in person, make sure your storytellers are happy to tell their story, and encourage them to practice in advance. They might want to read from a prepared document, or speak unscripted, or use some props or images to say what they want to say. If you do an online event, you have some extra options, as it's a bit easier to prepare a video or audio recording in advance and play it in the event. Again, if you need support with Zoom practicalities, we can help.

It's up to your speakers what they want to say but most effective stories will include some identification of the causes of the issue being talked about, and will highlight what can be done different, by who, in order for things to change.

4. Take to the streets

Sometimes the best way to be seen and heard is to take to the streets. Do you have premises with a visible outside space where you can speak to people? If not, contact your local council and ask for a one-day street licence for a stall in your town or city-centre.

Speak to local people who pass. Perhaps ask them to use post-its or a suggestion box to say what they think needs to change after Covid. Ask thought-provoking questions, such as:

Who do we need to listen to more after the pandemic? and

Who do you feel is most at risk of being left behind?

Make your stall bright and engaging and again, and make sure you take some photos or videos, especially if local people are happy to share their thoughts as they take part. Invite your local media and politicians, but if they can't make it then contact them afterwards to let them know what you did and what responses you got. If you have permission from people in the pictures, share some photos with your MPs and media.

How to get involved

5. Get creative

If you have creative people in your group or community, ask for their ideas for creative ways to highlight the need to challenge poverty. It could involve poetry, music, art, photography, knitting, or literally anything!

Last year, the most creative parts of Challenge Poverty Week were among the most powerful moments. We had a poetry reading and the launch of a short film, both of which encouraged people to think about the issues in a different way.

We'd love to see similar imagination and creativity again this year. Think about other groups you might work with, and discuss creative ways of getting your message across. Perhaps you might put on an exhibition, a poetry evening, a music gig, or anything else. These events are most effective and engaging in person but can be done on Zoom as well, and if you need advice, let us know.

6. Speak up on social media

Social media is a brilliant way to make yourself heard, and to collaborate with others to turn up the volume.

We will be driving key messages on social media throughout Challenge Poverty Week and will help share your messages and pictures. We have images, posters and logos to fit twitter, facebook and Instagram. Download them at www.challengepoverty.co.uk and add your own message if you want to.

Why not make a short video talking about poverty in your community and the solutions? Or, using Facebook Live or YouTube, you could host a digital event easily and gather an audience who can readily share your message. Large numbers of people will be using and sharing the #ChallengePoverty hashtag throughout the week, so you have lots of people ready to share and boost your message – and you can do the same for them in return.

7. Speak to your local media

Local journalists will be interested in your work, and in what you are doing to mark Challenge Poverty Week. You could invite a reporter to your event, or speak to them separately about poverty in your community and why you're taking part in the week.

We can help with press releases or, if you prefer, you could write to the letters page of your local newspaper, setting out what needs to change in your community. Alternatively, if your local radio station has a regular call-in or discussion show, why not approach them well in advance, and see if they might feature your issues during the week.

Media work is most effective when you know who you're working with. If you already know a local journalist, then let them know as early as possible about the week and your plans. If you don't, then take a look at who already reports on social issues well in your area, and arrange a call or a quick coffee meeting, to get to know them and let them know about the week.

How can we help?

To support your involvement in Challenge Poverty Week, we can:

- Provide social media graphics, draft press releases, and useful letter templates for writing to your MP.
- Provide advice and support with organising an online discussion on Zoom.
- Provide advice on media, social media and how to build support for solutions to poverty and push for change. For advice, email gavin@church-poverty.org.uk
- Promote your activity through social media, local media, and our events calendar.

We will also be running further workshops ahead of Challenge Poverty Week to provide help you may find useful. To make sure you hear about those first, sign up for Challenge Poverty Week emails at <https://challengepoverty.co.uk/get-involved>

Watch this space

If you'd like help or advice on how to make your message as powerful as possible, we plan to hold workshops on effective framing and language. Dates to be confirmed, so sign up for emails to be among the first to hear.

Small steps

If you are not able to organise an event this year, you can still help to make Challenge Poverty Week a success. You could:

- Check out what is happening, and attend events.
- Use social media to share pictures and stories from others taking part in events. Sharing, and spreading the word, helps ensure more people hear the vital messages.
- Look out on 17 October for a full day of action by members of the APLE Collective ('Addressing Poverty Through Lived Experience'), who are marking the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty with a range of events, led by people who have direct experience of the issues and aiming to "light up the map".
- Get involved with existing community initiatives or charities. If you want things to change in your community, you won't be the only one. Perhaps there are others you can contact so you're prepared when the 2022 week comes around.
- Write to the letters page of your local newspaper or phone your local radio call-in show to support those who are taking part.
- Write to your MP as an individual, saying what you feel needs to change after Covid, and asking them to act. The [advice about meeting your MP](#) may be useful here as well.

Beyond Challenge Poverty Week

What happens next? Challenge Poverty Week is a fantastic opportunity to come together, but we want it to be a springboard for sustained action.

Here's what you can do to continue once the week has finished.

- If you are an individual or a member of a group with personal experience of poverty, join the APLE collective, which aims to create a sustainable, grassroots network across the UK to raise awareness of poverty, reduce stigma and work together with others to eradicate it. If you would like to know more about the work of APLE or become a member, please visit the website www.aplecollective.com
- Use Challenge Poverty Week to plan a local or national campaign that can run for longer.
- If you wrote to or met your MP, follow up with them. Did they do what they said they would? What happened?
- Continue to support local and national organisations in the fight against poverty.
- Identify groups doing work similar to you, and be good allies. Maybe you can work together on projects, or simply share each other's stories and messages online. We all need to pull together to create the more just and compassionate society we want.

Get in touch

Planning on getting involved? Let us know by submitting information about your action to our online calendar at www.challengepoverty.co.uk

Email: jessica@church-poverty.org.uk

Website: www.challengepoverty.co.uk

Phone: 0161 872 9294

Facebook: www.facebook.com/challengepovertyweek

Twitter: @CPW_E_W

Instagram: @challengepovertyweek

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CHALLENGE POVERTY WEEK ENGLAND AND WALES

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**Church Action
on Poverty**