

this was action week 2012

Breaking Barriers

The theme for Poverty & Homelessness Action Week this year (28 January to 5 February 2012) was 'Breaking Barriers'. We mobilised churches and campaigners around the country to raise funds for the vital work done by the Action Week partners – and to raise awareness of the barriers which trap people in poverty and homelessness.

Barriers are created by unfair benefits rules and inadequate wages; by the stigma attached to being poor or homeless; and by the growing gap between the richest and poorest people in our society. As Christians, we are called to break these barriers. Throughout the nation, Action Week supporters showed their readiness to do so – taking heed of James 2:20 “that faith, without works, is barren...”

more events than ever before!



We know that well over 200 events took place across the country – and it's likely that many more events slipped under our radar. There were events from Jersey to the Scottish Highlands, with supporters showing great imagination: activities included special services, sleep-outs, flashmobs, coffee mornings, poetry events, information days and ladies' nights. You can read about a few of the most successful events opposite.

Events raised anything from £20 to £200, welcoming from 10 people to several hundred, yet whatever the size, each tackled the injustices at the heart of life in Britain today, challenging stereotypes, raising money for vital campaigning work and standing in solidarity.

Whatever the event, wherever it was held, and whoever attended, the Action Week partners Church Action on Poverty, Housing Justice and Scottish Churches Housing Action would like to thank you for your hard work, commitment and thirst for a better world. Without you the Action Week message would be mere rhetoric. We wish you all the best for the rest of the year, and hope that you continue to work with us and others as we strive to break barriers.

resourcing your work



As always, we provided a range of FREE resources to help people take part in Action Week. This year, the materials contained worship ideas, children's activities, event suggestions, prayer cards, videos about the barriers, and promotional materials. The return to simple prayer cards proved to be very popular. We combined them with a series of videos on the Action Week website and DVD, each aiding people's understanding of a specific barrier.

Reporting back, Sister Sheila from the Community of All Hallows remarked on this year's “splendid” resources, which enabled her and the small weekly congregation to pray both publicly and privately in an informed way. Sister Mary Clare from Peterborough was “very impressed with the mini videos” which featured the former head of Christian Aid Michael Taylor (pictured) and disabilities campaigner Sue Marsh, along with other inspirational figures.

www.actionweek.org.uk

poverty & homelessness
action week



Scottish Churches
Housing Action

it doesn't take a lot

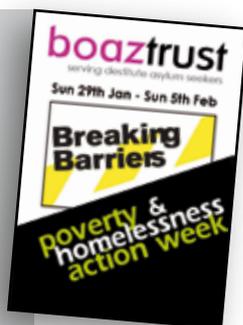


The Doorway project held a sponsored sleep-out and church service in St Andrew's Church, Chippenham where "guests, volunteers, Doorway staff, sponsored sleepers, local dignitaries, 'ordinary people', the currently homeless, the previously homeless, those who had narrowly avoided being homeless, and those for whom that shadow has not (yet) crossed their lives, mingled without barriers". Specially written poems were read out, including this one by Mark Urmston:

Redundancy and lack of jobs
Economy gone to pot
The welfare state on life support
It doesn't take a lot.

breaking barriers and asylum

The Boaz Trust, a Christian organisation in Greater Manchester serving destitute asylum-seekers, tailored the Action Week resources to their own needs. They prepared a special prayer booklet for churches, focusing on the barriers that lead to destitution for people seeking sanctuary in the UK.



cuts – from rhetoric to reality

Merseyside and Region Church Action on Poverty, together with Liverpool Justice and Peace and Nugent Care, staged this conference in Liverpool. The main focus was a panel discussion, chaired by Roger Phillips from BBC Radio Merseyside and the Lord Mayor of Liverpool, Frank Prendergast, featuring Church Action on Poverty's Niall Cooper, Housing Justice's Alison Gelder and the Liverpool MPs Luciana Berger and Louise Ellman. The event drew a full house and provoked a great amount of debate on what ordinary people can do in the current climate to ensure a just world. Alison Gelder remarked, "It was great to see so many people turning out to hold their Liverpool MPs to account about poverty and homelessness."



a mustard seed?

Staff and pupils at Holy Cross College in Bury were once again great supporters of Action Week. The school collected over 10 boxes and numerous carrier bags of toiletries to aid the Mustard Tree charity's work with the homeless in Manchester. They also sent over £100 to Church Action on Poverty.



what are the things that need to change?

In Glasgow, 50 people joined together in the newly-built Church of Scotland Community Church in Gorbals, and were challenged to think about the questions "What are the things that need to change if everyone is to know that they matter?" and "What are the promises we need to remember as we look for justice to reign?" John Harvey writes that everyone left "encouraged and determined".

