



DIOCESE
OF HEXHAM & NEWCASTLE

**CARITAS HEXHAM & NEWCASTLE
GRANT REPORT**

NAME OF GROUP Joe's Place

NAME OF CONTACT Bernadette Hirst

ADDRESS & POSTCODE

St Joseph's Parish Hall
High West Street
Gateshead NE8 1LX

DATE/AMOUNT OF GRANT

£500 grant. Awarded in March 2021

WHAT YOU WANTED THE GRANT FOR

We had given all our food stocks to the Bensham Food co-op, which is run from Corpus Christi Church and to Vinnies at Blackfriars. All our sleeping bags, rucksacks and clothing had been given to the SVP at Blackfriars. Our cupboards were cleared out so that everything could be used by others.

We wanted to be able to quickly restock our store cupboard with tinned & dried food and be able to offer sleeping bags etc if they were needed once we were able to reopen. In a time of great uncertainty, it was good to know that we had this grant to help us to re-establish our project.

We used the time when we were closed, to press ahead with the plans to refurbish the kitchen and tearooms. Fr Adrian and Caritas have been very supportive in ensuring that this work was completed and in helping to secure funding which came from the generosity of local parishes, the partnership, and St Joseph's itself.

WHAT YOU DID WITH THE GRANT

Initially we were compelled to offer a Take-Away Service only - so needed to equip ourselves for this. We were very conscious of the need to be environmentally responsible too and reduce our use of single use plastics.

We bought a Soup Kettle to keep soup hot when we opened as a 'Take-away' service – and for use when 'normal' service is resumed.

Purchased insulated paper cups with lids for take-away soup or hot drinks.
Purchased bamboo disposable cutlery & paper 'carrier bags' for take -away meals.
We have had to buy 'take-away' containers with lids for dinners and puddings.
There has also been the need to buy extra cleaning materials, sanitiser hand gels, disposable masks for our visitors and a range of plastic gloves for our volunteers.

We have been fortunate in the generosity of local parishes and our store cupboard is filling up quickly with tinned and dried food, so we have used some of the grant for



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the purchase of fresh foods: vegetables, fruit, bread, cheese etc. At Christmas we purchased cooked sliced chicken and all the trimmings. As it happened this had to be served as a take-away meal; but it was greatly appreciated.

The kitchen and tearoom had been extensively refurbished during Lockdown. Some of our cooking equipment needed replacing. New pans had to be bought, as the old ones did not work on the new ceramic hob, and we also purchased new microwaveable containers.

WHAT IMPACT HAS YOUR PROJECT MADE (*WHAT DIFFERENCE HAS IT MADE TO THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH IN YOUR COMMUNITY?*)

Joe's Place was really missed when we were unable to open during the Lockdown. When our volunteers met our regular visitors during the time we were closed, it was clear that they were looking forward to our reopening. It was also good to realise that we were all one community & the caring & concern was mutual.

The Pandemic has opened the eyes, as well as the hearts and minds of many to the needs of those around them. We have all shared the anxiety, loneliness, and lack of human contact – and many have looked for practical ways to help others. Some felt able to come to volunteer in person. Others have given their support in supplying food and other donations. Joe's Place has been a great 'unifier' and has inspired people who wanted to take action in a variety of ways to help others.

A good example of this was when we appealed for help to reupholster the seating we use, and many groups and individuals from our local parishes contributed to pay for individual chairs to be covered. One young parishioner donated the sponsorship money he had raised by completing the Junior Great North Run.

Another example was the provision of a very generous food parcel for all our visitors thanks to the Christmas project organised by the Outreach Group of St. Peter's & Corpus Christi parishes. Our visitors also received a Gift bag of toiletries which had been donated by parishioners and local schools. There were also warm knitted hats for all who wanted one. These were made by people who'd heard about our project.

At Joe's Place we all work together as a community where we recognise each other's vulnerabilities and where we treat each other with mutual kindness & respect. Actions such as wearing our masks to protect each other, preparing and serving food with care and sharing conversations, a joke or a smile are valued and treasured. Kind words and expressions of concern as well as words of thanks bring people closer: as does knowing each other by name as well as by face.

Joe's Place is a very visible, and well-known part of Gateshead life. By quietly working together and helping others it is evidence of Christ's love in action.