

Centre Life

40TH ANNIVERSARY SPECIAL EDITION

Autumn 2026

The Cardinal Hume Centre magazine



'It was an embryo of what it is today'

Founder Sister Maria remembers the Centre's beginnings

Our staff reflect

Four long-time staff share what's kept them at the Centre and the impact they see of lasting support

500 Futures

A message from Cardinal Vincent Nichols

40 years of marriage and 40 years of support

A couple talk about their four-decade-long commitment



**CARDINAL
HUME CENTRE**
Each person matters

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Welcome to our special 40th anniversary edition of Centre Life



How often do you wish you had more time? Even with all our technology and labour-saving gadgets, time can still feel in painfully short supply.

For young people, children and families facing homelessness, a shortage of time comes at a real cost. Stretched services can struggle to get to the root of a problem. The deadline of an eviction notice sets its own relentless pace. A child's exams won't wait while a family searches for a safe home.

Too often, homelessness at a young age is repeated into adult life — sometimes across generations. Not because of a lack of love or determination, but because poverty, trauma and instability were not met with the right support at the right time.

That is why the Centre's mission matters: by standing alongside young people, children and families facing homelessness today, we can help break the cycle before it shapes their lives tomorrow.

People's lives cannot be divided into separate problems: housing, money, education, health and wellbeing are all connected. So the support we offer has to be connected too.

At the Centre, people find a warm welcome, safety and professional support. But they also find something just as important: time. Time to understand the whole picture, to respond to today's crisis, and to build the stability, confidence and opportunity that can last.

As we mark 40 years, I hope you'll see the power of that approach. We couldn't do it without your commitment and the generosity of our supporters, many of whom have been part of our story for decades.

Thank you for helping make lasting change possible.

George O'Neill
Chief Executive

'It was an embryo of what it is today'

Founder Sister Maria Parcher looks back at the Centre's beginnings

Forty years after helping establish the Cardinal Hume Centre, Sister Maria and Sister Lelia returned to the building where it all began – and remembered how an ambitious idea became reality.

In 1985, Sister Eileen O'Mahoney, a Daughter of Charity who had helped establish The Passage, noticed increasing numbers of young people experiencing homelessness. Concerned about what would happen without support for their needs, she began exploring the idea of a separate project for young people.

“Nothing major has changed. But everything has developed so much better.”

With Monsignor Pat O'Donoghue (POD), she identified the soon-to-be-vacated convent on Arneway Street as a potential home. POD approached Cardinal Basil Hume, who supported the idea and asked religious orders across the diocese to help. Some gave money, while others offered sisters to work there.

In 1986, Sister Eileen and Father Peter Corcoran moved into the empty convent and began turning the idea into reality. Sister Eileen drove the project forward, while Sister Maria, also a Daughter of Charity, researched gaps in support, visiting established homelessness organisations and bed and breakfasts across London.

What she discovered helped shape the Centre's future. Parents, often with babies and young children, had to leave their temporary accommodation in the morning and could not return until evening. One mother lived with two young children on the second floor, while the kitchen was in the basement.

'How could she safely carry a meal upstairs with two small children?' Sister Maria remembers thinking. 'We had to do something. And there was nothing around here at that time.'



The new Centre would support both young people and families, with the family day centre becoming the first service to open.

Sister Eileen also knew the Cardinal's name would give the fledgling project valuable support. She found him walking in Vincent Square and, Sister Maria recalls, took a typically no-nonsense approach: 'We need your name,' she told him. The Arneway Street Centre became the Cardinal Hume Centre.

Sister Lelia was among the sisters who came to work at the Centre. Living and working alongside sisters from other congregations was something new, and together they created a community of their own.

'I'd not heard of it before,' remembers Sister Lelia. 'I think it was a bit unusual.'

Some had spent their working lives in education or healthcare, but a growing movement within the church encouraged more direct work with people experiencing poverty.

'I was very happy as a teacher,' Sister Lelia says. 'But I wanted to do something more directly with the poor.'

The beginnings were modest. The Centre had little money and relied on religious congregations and its first supporters for much of what it needed.

'The furniture was all leftovers,' Sister Lelia remembers.

'People donated sofas that they had in their homes. 'At the time, many people had a limited understanding of family homelessness.

'People thought homeless people were those sleeping on the streets,' says Sister Maria. 'They didn't realise there were families living in hotels with nowhere permanent to call home.'

The sisters visited hotels, talked to parents and told them about the Centre. Families came five days a week. Children had somewhere to play, parents joined activities and the sisters prepared lunch. Later, they added a laundry room. Sister Maria also helped families advocate with councils and social services.

'It was very much an embryo of what it is now,' Sister Maria says.

Returning after so many years brought home both how much has changed – and how much of what they began remains.

'It's so much better than how we started. But then it would never be if we hadn't started it.'

She concluded:

'Nothing major has changed. But everything has developed so much better.'

From a little acorn...

When Lynne Pearson returned to the Cardinal Hume Centre this summer, she hadn't been back for 35 years.



Lynne joined the Centre as its first secretary in the late 1980s, when it was a small team and everyone did as much as they could. Alongside running the office, she volunteered with young people in the hostel, listening and helping with CVs.

'Nobody had ever asked them what they wanted before – and a lot of them weren't aware they had any skills,' she recalls. 'I was taken aback sometimes by how young they were. Some of them had been sleeping rough. They thought they were quite hardened, but you could see that was a defence mechanism.'

'They opened up when you didn't push them,' Lynn reflects. 'You just listened.

A lot of them just wanted to talk, really.'

Returning this summer, Lynne was amazed by 'how much that little acorn had grown' and how the services had expanded. 'We could only work with what we had, and reach out a little bit where we could.'

Yet for Lynne, something fundamental remains. She still sees the same belief in listening to people, valuing them and helping them recognise their own worth – only now on a much greater scale.

'The place always had a lovely feeling of caring,' Lynne recalls. 'And when I went there this time, that feeling was amplified. I didn't meet one person there who just thought it was a job. I came away uplifted.'



Simon's story:

From resident to trustee

Simon was 17 when he first came to the Cardinal Hume Centre. He had been sleeping rough in Westminster for months, moving between hostels, drop-ins and nights on the street, trying to stay safe.

'I was in survival mode all the time,' he says. 'The Centre was one of the first places that felt safe enough to come in, sit down, have a cup of tea and not worry about what was coming next.'

At the time, Simon was dealing with the effects of a violent and abusive home life, homelessness, addiction and the constant risk that comes with living on the street as a young person. Staff at the Centre recognised how vulnerable he was and worked quickly to help him get off the streets and into supported accommodation.

That first room in the hostel gave Simon something he had not had for a long time – an actual base.

'It was the first settled point I'd had in a long time,' he says. 'Having somewhere safe to be meant I did not have to stay in survival mode all the time.'

Over the next two years, Simon came in and out of the Centre as his circumstances changed. He received practical support with housing, benefits and longer-term accommodation, but what stayed with him most was how he was treated.

'People worked with compassion, without judgement, but with boundaries. That stayed with me. It is still how I work now.'

That sense of being seen and valued became a turning point.

'I think the Centre gave me a sense that I had value. When you are a homeless young person, that is not something you hear very often. At the Centre, there was always a sense that what you had to offer mattered.'

That belief helped Simon begin to see a future for himself. With support from the Centre, he found stable accommodation, avoided a prison sentence, and began taking up new opportunities. He worked in youth engagement before building a career in homelessness services. He later became a service manager at Thames Reach, leading homelessness services in south London, before moving into psychology.

// That sense of being seen and valued became a turning point."

Simon is now studying for a Doctorate in Clinical Psychology while continuing to work in homelessness and mental health.

Over the years, Simon stayed connected to the Centre – first by sharing his story, then by joining the Service Development Committee, and now as a trustee.

'I wanted to give something back to an organisation that had such a huge impact on my life. I would not be where I am now without the Cardinal Hume Centre.'

As a trustee, Simon brings lived experience, frontline leadership and clinical training. He is committed to making sure lived experience shapes services, and that staff are supported to do this work well.

'The Centre helped me survive, but more than that, it helped me believe I had something to offer. That changed everything.'

Investing

in our foundations



For 40 years, the former Corpus Domini Convent has been home to the Cardinal Hume Centre.

Its rooms have changed considerably, but the building remains central to our work – providing supported accommodation for more than 50 young people each year and bringing advice, employment, family and health services together under one roof.

After decades of use, parts of the building now need investment. Ageing plastic pipework has caused repeated leaks, flooding and disruption, including in our supported accommodation and Dr Hickey's Surgery, which provides healthcare for people affected by homelessness and addiction.

We are replacing the failing pipework with durable copper pipes, reducing the risk of future disruption. The work will also allow us to transform ageing shower rooms in our supported accommodation into modern facilities. The wider upgrade will help us make better use of the building and operate more sustainably.

We are grateful to the Rose Foundation, Strand Parishes Trust and The Story of Christmas, long-term supporters helping us make these improvements. Their investment recognises something important: sustaining our services also means sustaining the place from which we provide them, so it can continue supporting people for years to come.

Alison's story:

Helping people find their voice

Alison first heard of the Cardinal Hume Centre 14 years ago through a friend who volunteered with us.

Since then, she has volunteered here as a one-to-one English tutor, often working with the same student for around two years.

'It's about listening to what they're saying, understanding where they're getting stuck and helping them move forward.'

That time together matters. Lessons develop from grammar and vocabulary into conversations about work, children's education and everyday life.

Alison meticulously tailors lessons to each person's life, interests and ambitions, writing what she calls 'stories' that help them practise English through subjects and situations relevant to them. For one student from Georgia, she created stories about her home country. 'So if she met somebody at the bus stop and they were chatting and they said, "Where are you from?" she could tell them.'

One of Alison's first students arrived able to communicate very little. Together they worked through qualifications before the student secured a full-time job using her English, Cantonese and Mandarin.

As trust grows, students ask for help



understanding school choices and navigating everyday life.

After 14 years, seeing that confidence grow keeps Alison coming back.

'Watching someone smile, hearing them speak when they were once too nervous to try – that's incredibly rewarding,' she says. 'It's giving back, and it's a privilege to be part of it.'

Joanna and Paul:

A commitment that has lasted decades



Joanna and Paul have supported the Cardinal Hume Centre since the late 1980s. As the Centre marks its 40th anniversary in 2026, and they celebrate their 40th wedding anniversary, they reflect on why they first chose to give and why they still do today.

Joanna and Paul's connection with the Centre began when they heard Cardinal Basil Hume speak about his concern for people experiencing homelessness and poverty in Westminster – and a new project that could make a lasting difference.

'I'd always wondered whether giving money directly

to people on the street was the best way to help,' says Joanna. 'When I heard Cardinal Hume speaking about this project, I thought, "If we give money here, we know it will be well spent."'

What began as a single donation became a commitment that has lasted decades.

In their first years of support, Joanna and Paul were starting a family of their own, and the Centre's focus on children and families particularly resonated with them.

“When I heard Cardinal Hume speaking about this project, I thought, “If we give money here, we know it will be well spent.”



In celebrating their 40th wedding anniversary, Joanna and Paul asked friends celebrating with them to donate to us

'Children and families were very much uppermost in our minds,' says Joanna. 'We felt that supporting people at that stage of life had the opportunity to bear real fruit.'

Over the years they have watched the Centre adapt to changing needs while staying true to its purpose.

'I find it encouraging that the Centre has evolved,' says Paul, 'but there has always been a strong commitment to young people. Whether it's young people who have been forced to leave home, care leavers, refugees or families facing homelessness, the Centre has continued to focus on people who need a chance to build a better future.'

What has impressed them most is the Centre's long-term approach.

'There's no sticking-plaster solution,' says Joanna.

'This work requires consistent effort over years. It's not a quick fix.'

// This work requires consistent effort over years. It's not a quick fix."

They point to the Centre's work with refugees and people learning English as an example of the patience and persistence needed to create lasting change.

'There is so much to learn when you arrive in a new country,' says Joanna. 'Language, systems, culture, everything. We've seen how transformative that support can be. It opens the door to so many other opportunities.'

As parents, they recognise how much support and encouragement young people need to thrive.

'We know how much time, energy, love and money has been poured into our own children,' says Joanna. 'Many people simply don't have those advantages. It feels right to give something to others who have had fewer opportunities.'

Their confidence in the Centre has been strengthened by seeing the impact of its work over many years.

As supporters, they also value hearing directly from people whose lives have been changed through the Centre's services.

'The stories matter,' says Paul. 'They show what can happen when people are given the right support. Not every success story is dramatic. Sometimes the achievement is simply that someone attends a meeting, takes a first step, or feels valued and cared for. Those things matter too.'

As the Cardinal Hume Centre approaches its 40th anniversary, Joanna and Paul's support remains as strong as ever.

'Real change comes from consistent effort over a long period of time,' says Paul.

For nearly four decades, they have helped make that consistency possible. And after all these years, they still believe in the same idea that first inspired them to give: that each person matters, and that lasting change begins when people are welcomed, valued and given the opportunity to build a more stable future.

If you would like to share your special connection with the Centre we'd love to hear from you!

supporters@cardinalhumecentre.org.uk

Centre news

An invitation to a special Mass

You are invited to join us in thanksgiving and prayer for the work of the Cardinal Hume Centre at a very special Mass to mark our 40th anniversary. Join our team and other supporters at Westminster Cathedral on Tuesday 13 October at 5.30pm. Cardinal Vincent Nichols has very kindly agreed to preside with Bishop James Curry concelebrating with others. We would be delighted to see you there.

We're award winning!



Excellence Award for Anja and Gaia

We were delighted to have won one of five coveted awards at Homeless Link's national Excellence Awards 2026. We won the Excellent Support Award for our temporary accommodation outreach project, selected from 121 entries from around the country.

Homeless Link is the national membership charity for frontline homelessness organisations, and its annual awards recognise the innovative and impactful work happening across the sector to support people experiencing homelessness and rough sleeping in England.

Our outreach project created psychologically informed and welcoming spaces that encouraged families to spend more time outside their rooms and help children to thrive. At the same time it enabled our team to build trust with parents, identifying longer-term challenges, and connecting families with assessment, advocacy and casework services.

Supporter publishes book



Brendan at the finish line

Brendan Hemming first heard about our work when someone from the Centre spoke at his church around eight years ago. A couple of weeks later, he came to visit for himself – the beginning of a connection that has lasted ever since.

Brendan was inspired by the Centre's Big 4,000 Challenge – representing the distance many refugees travel in search of safety – he decided to take on those miles himself.

Already in his seventies, Brendan set out to walk 4,000 miles around the coastlines of England and Wales, raising money for the Centre as he went.

It became a huge physical and personal challenge. Brendan encountered poor weather, injuries and difficult terrain but also the kindness of wonderful people along the journey.

Search for *Old Enough to Know Better* by Brendan Hemming on Amazon to read his story – proceeds will go to the Cardinal Hume Centre.

Archbishop Richard Moth: our new patron



*Archbishop Richard Moth
Photo © Mazur/cbcew.org.uk*

We were pleased to welcome Archbishop Richard Moth to the Centre on 11 May and introduce him to clients and frontline staff.

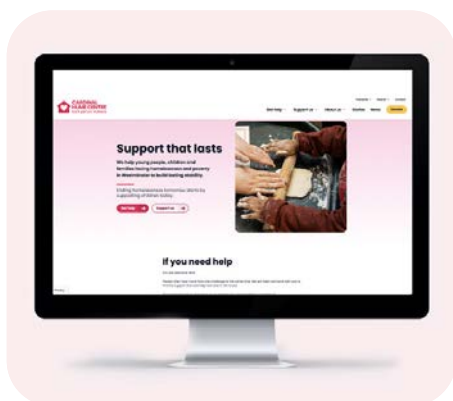
He was appointed Archbishop of Westminster in February, replacing Cardinal Vincent Nichols who retired last year. The Archbishop of Westminster has always been closely involved in the Centre's governance so we are very happy that Archbishop Moth has agreed to become a patron, alongside Abbot Robert Igo, Abbot of Ampleforth.

Share your story

We'd love to hear about your connection with the Centre, and why you support our work.

Please let us know by emailing us at supporters@cardinalhumecentre.org.uk

Our new look



Our new look

As we mark 40 years in Westminster, we've updated our look. Our refreshed identity reflects the Centre we are today – and our ambitions for the future – while keeping much that will be familiar to long-standing supporters.

Our logo has been updated to make it clearer and stronger, with 'Each person matters' given greater prominence. We have permanently added a heart inside the house in our logo, making clear our founding values remain at the core of our work. And you might spot one small change: the chimney has gone,

recognising that homes come in many shapes and sizes.

Alongside our new look, we launched a new website, making it easier for people to find help, understand our work and support us.

Our look may have changed, but what matters most has not. Forty years on, each person still matters – and our new identity will help us carry that commitment into the years ahead.

A second home

When Evin first came to the Cardinal Hume Centre in 2010, she had only been in the UK for a year, spoke little English and, as her eldest daughter remembers, 'had absolutely nobody, no friends, no one'.

Someone at the school gates told her about the Centre. She began bringing her baby daughter to the family centre and joined English classes herself.

'I found so many friends and wonderful people,' she says. Her daughter saw the difference, 'I'm honestly grateful that my mum was able to change her life around. She's able to speak the language because of the Centre.'

Over the years, her children have joined clubs, activities and trips. This summer, her two teenagers spent their first nights away from home on the Centre's four-day residential. Evin would not normally have let them stay away overnight, but years of knowing the team made the difference: 'I feel safe with them,' she says.

The family have been facing eviction from their home of 16 years and was offered temporary accommodation almost two hours away. Three children are still at school in Westminster – one studying for GCSEs and another for A levels – while their eldest daughter has recently completed a master's degree. 'We're a family that's very passionate about our education,' her



daughter says. 'My siblings cried when they heard they might have to move.'

The Centre's housing team is advising the family and advocating with the council. After one particularly frightening development, mother and daughter were in tears. 'I didn't know what to do. I just said to my mum, "Let's go to the Cardinal Hume Centre."'

Sixteen years of support have built trust across the family.

'The Centre feels like our second home,' her daughter says. 'To call somewhere home, you must have a very strong connection to it. We're grateful we always have somewhere to turn when we need help.'

Work that lasts

We're thankful to have many staff who have been with us, building relationships, for years. Four of them reflect on their time at the Centre.

Natalie – Immigration Manager At the Centre since 2003



What have you learnt from your years at the Centre?

How difficult systems can be to navigate. There's an assumption that if you're homeless, you can just go to the council and get help. It isn't like that.

Working across housing, benefits and now

immigration, I've seen how complicated the rules can be and how easily people can find themselves without the help they need. Even after all this time, I'm still learning.

What has kept you at the Centre?

The ethos. The Centre has changed, but that sense of welcome is still at its core. And we have the freedom to give people the time and help they need.

What difference does long-term support make?

People rarely need help with just one thing. Someone may come for immigration advice, then need help with housing, benefits or their children.

Immigration can also mean years of uncertainty, with people renewing their leave every few years before they can eventually settle. Some need our help throughout that process.

I supported a mother and her two children when a fee waiver needed to renew and their leave was wrongly refused. Without it, they risked losing their right to work and becoming homeless. We challenged the decision and it was corrected.

That continuity builds trust – and means people know where to turn when they need help again.

Phil – Assessment Manager At the Centre since 2004



What have you learnt from your years at the Centre?

How a seemingly small problem can become overwhelming.

People often arrive with several problems at once. When everything piles up, it can be hard to see a way through. We can't always solve the problem

someone came in with, but we can listen, help untangle what's happening and work out the next step.

Sometimes you can see the difference between the person who walked through the door and the person who leaves.

What has kept you at the Centre?

Mostly, it's the people. The assessment team is often at the start of someone's journey, when things are at their most difficult and we don't always see the ending. Another team may take over, so you learn to value the small wins. People don't often feel they've really been listened to until they come to the Centre. Giving someone that time can be where things start to change. They walk out of their appointment feeling slightly more in control than when they came in.

What difference does long-term support make?

Years ago, I helped a young man get a hostel place. Much later, I happened to pass him in the street.

'You probably can't remember me,' he said. He told me he was married, with children, a home and a job.

We don't often get to find out what happened next. Every so often, you do – and realise that small win wasn't so small after all.

"The Centre has changed, but that sense of welcome is still at its core."

Gareth – Assessment worker
At the Centre since 2004



What have you learnt from your years at the Centre?

When people ask what I do, they're often surprised that homelessness is not just rough sleeping. The person you're sitting next to on the bus or tube could be experiencing homelessness.

What has kept you at the Centre?

My first seven years at the Centre was on reception. We were adding the third floor to the hostel – it was a building site. Even then, there was a sense that everyone was in it together.

In assessment, as the ones who triage our clients' first contact with the Centre, there's huge variety in the people and the work. After 21 years, I'm still proud to work here.

What difference does long-term support make?

We're a local community charity with a range of services, and we see people who live in Westminster come back as their lives and needs change.

A tenancy agreement might run to 16 pages, with important choices buried in the small print. Social housing can routinely come without flooring – which is expensive. We often have to apply for grants for families moving into a home with bare boards or concrete floors. If English isn't your first language, or you're neurodivergent or struggling with your mental health, doing this alone can be difficult.

We give people the time they need, be that 20 minutes or half a day.

Gemma – Housing and welfare Manager
At the Centre since 2016



What have you learnt from your years at the Centre?

Before I came here, I'd mainly worked with people sleeping rough. If someone got off the street, that felt like the goal.

Working with families showed me how much more complicated it

can be. A family may be offered somewhere to live, but it could be an hour and 45 minutes from the children's school. They might arrive and find the beds haven't been delivered or the carpet is filthy and they have a baby who needs somewhere safe to crawl.

Getting a roof over someone's head matters enormously, but it's only part of what makes a home safe and stable.

What has kept you at the Centre?

Working somewhere that really has the clients' backs.. You don't always get the outcome they hoped for, but they know you listened and fought for what they needed.

What difference does long-term support make?

Trust. We've worked with one woman for around ten years. When I first knew her, she was a refugee living in a hostel and often very distressed.

As her needs changed, different teams helped with housing, benefits, immigration and learning. Only recently, she felt able to tell a colleague about trauma she had experienced in her home country.

That trust has taken years to build. She knows that when circumstances change, she can come back and we'll be here.

Canopy:

Extending our reach under one roof

For 40 years, the Cardinal Hume Centre has been a place people can come to when they need help. Canopy is testing what it means for that support to reach beyond our doors.

Families experiencing homelessness do not always remain in Westminster. They may be placed in temporary accommodation elsewhere in London, sometimes far from the schools, services and the networks they know. But moving borough does not mean that the challenges they face have been resolved – or that relationships built with trusted staff suddenly stop mattering.

Since February 2026, Canopy has been exploring how the Centre can continue working with families when they move beyond Westminster. Part-funded by Justlife, the project is testing an approach that responds to families'

We were one of only three organisations chosen from 58 applications nationally by Justlife to trial community-led approaches to supporting people living in temporary accommodation.

needs rather than borough boundaries.

Already, the team has worked with 15 families across 10 London boroughs. More than half have faced communication or literacy barriers, while families have also been managing the practical difficulties

of settling into new accommodation, medical needs, and domestic abuse.

The team has recorded 283 individual actions, from advocating with statutory agencies to practical help with managing a new home.

Canopy is still a developing project. But as we look beyond our 40th year, it represents an important question for the Centre: how can the relationships, knowledge and trust built here continue to help families when their circumstances change?

After 40 years of welcoming people through our doors, Canopy is helping us explore how our support can travel further.



Summer with Canopy

By team leader Anja Blazewicz

"Summer can be a challenging time for many of the families we support. When families are moved to temporary accommodation outside Westminster, they can find themselves isolated and unable to attend government-funded free activities for children, either in Westminster or the borough where they have been housed. The result can be a long, lonely summer in unfamiliar surroundings, often in cramped accommodation. This year, Canopy and the Cardinal Hume Centre family services team have been working together to give some of those families opportunities to get out, try new things and spend time with others.

Several Canopy families joined the family services trip to Bocketts Farm in Surrey, where the children enjoyed feeding the animals. One boy told me his family had kept goats and a cow before they came to the UK – and we were all very excited to see the baby piglets!

We also encouraged children to develop new skills. Some learned to ride a bike on a trip to Herne Hill Velodrome, while others challenged themselves by staying away from their parents for the first time on the Sayers Croft residential, as well as learning to swim and climb.

A Canopy family day at the Centre in Pimlico also brought families together. Parents were able to relax and quickly connected through their shared experiences of being moved out of borough. The children enjoyed craft activities and playing in our garden. We hope to make these days a regular part of the Canopy calendar.

The Canopy team is also working to find activities and resources in the areas where families are now living, helping them find new opportunities to play, meet others and become part of their local communities."

Zara's story

Growing up with the Centre



“Even now, when I’m overwhelmed, I know I can ask – and I’ll get the right kind of help.”

Zara first came to the Cardinal Hume Centre aged 11, after moving back to London without a school place. What began as help with school enrolment became a much longer-term relationship.

Her mum was unwell. There were legal issues, housing challenges, and systems that were hard to navigate – especially without good English. Zara became her mum’s translator and carer while she was still a child.

At one point, a social worker told her mum she could lose her home – and her daughter. It wasn’t true, but the attitude left its mark.

‘I remember even as a child, I wasn’t comfortable around that person,’ Zara says. ‘But the Centre was different.’

Against that backdrop, one relationship stood out.

‘I’ve known Jenny in the Centre’s welfare rights team since I was a child. She was always someone my family trusted.’

Over the years, Zara kept coming back – not just in moments of crisis, but whenever things felt uncertain.

‘When things start going around in circles, I feel comfortable asking Jenny’s advice because I know she’ll direct me to the right place.’

It wasn’t just what support was given, but how it felt.

‘It never felt like we were under threat. It never felt like we were a problem. It just felt like we were in the right place to get the right help.’

With that steady support, Zara stayed in education, took some time out, and then found the confidence to start again on a new course. When others told her, ‘Maybe education isn’t for you’, the Centre helped her rebuild – supporting her application, portfolio and reference to art college.

She went on to study fine art and graduated with first-class honours.

‘So going from feeling that maybe education wasn’t for me to actually getting a first!’ she says.

Today, she is planning her next steps, including further study and a career that keeps art at its centre.

‘I don’t know how my life would have turned out without that support,’ she says. ‘I think we would be in a very different place.’

The support was there as Zara’s life changed – from childhood, through caring for her mum, through university, to building her own future.

‘Even now, when I’m overwhelmed, I know I can ask – and I’ll get the right kind of help.’

Andrew and Giuseppe:

Showing up for young people



For Andrew and Giuseppe, supporting young people at the Cardinal Hume Centre starts with one simple principle: no two people need the same thing.

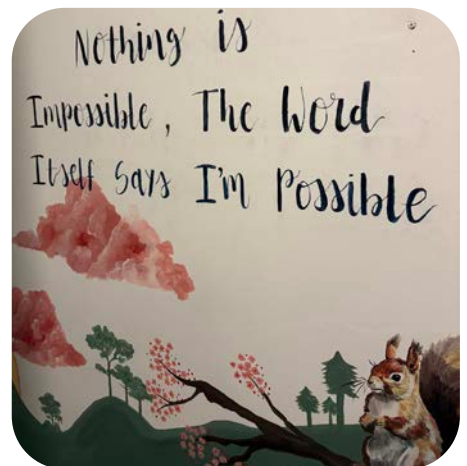


In our supported accommodation, every young person arrives with their own story. Some have experienced trauma, loss, or displacement. Some have been let down by the adults around them. Many arrive unsure whether they can trust anyone at all. Andrew and Giuseppe are part of the hostel team who meet each young person as they are, listen carefully, and build support around what they need – not what a system assumes they need.

‘There isn’t really a one-size-fits-all,’ Giuseppe says. ‘It’s always about asking: what do you need right now? What would help? What is it that you want?’

That approach shapes everything. The support is both practical and emotional, immediate and long term. It might mean helping a young person

register with a GP, get to a hospital appointment, apply for college, or search for work. It might mean sitting



with them through a crisis, helping them navigate benefits, or simply offering a coffee and providing a quiet space to talk.

What matters most, Andrew says, is consistency.

'A lot of young people have been let down by adults. So it's about showing up when you say you will. Doing what you say you'll do. Not making promises you can't keep. After a while, that builds trust.'

That trust can take time. Sometimes a long time. But it is often the turning point.

Giuseppe remembers one young man who arrived after fleeing Eritrea alone.

"It's about showing up when you say you will. Doing what you say you'll do."

He joined a local theatre group, built his confidence, and steadily improved his English. From there, he kept moving forward – eventually securing a place at university. Giuseppe is quick to say the young man did much of the work himself. But the team helped bridge

the gaps, advocating when outside systems were slow to respond and making sure he had the support he needed to keep going.

Andrew remembers a young woman who others in her life had begun to give up on. He believed she needed a chance – and someone to believe she could succeed. With support, she found work, stayed in it, and began building a more stable future for herself. Watching that change unfold has stayed with him ever since.

For both of them, some of the most important moments happen outside formal support plans. A walk to an appointment. A journey to hospital. A conversation on neutral ground, away from the office. Often, that is when young people begin to say what is really on their mind.

'Sometimes that's when the real conversation happens,' Giuseppe says.

The Centre's model makes those conversations easier to act on. With housing, therapy, employment support

and welfare advice all under one roof, young people don't have to keep starting again with different services. They can access joined-up support in one place, from people who know them.



For Andrew and Giuseppe, that is what makes the difference. Not just offering a bed, but offering safety, stability and the chance to be heard.

And then staying long enough for change to happen.



The lasting impact of corporate partnership



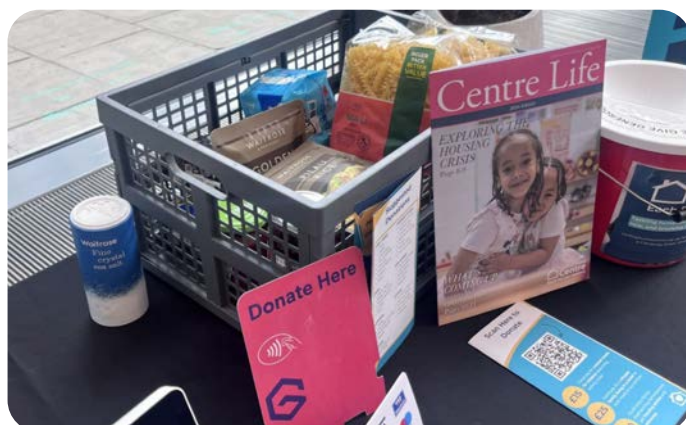
We know that many of the challenges our clients face cannot be overcome overnight. Whether someone is looking for stable employment, a safe place to live or support to rebuild their confidence, progress often takes time. That is why long-term partnerships are so important.

For more than 10 years, Landsec has been a core supporter of our employment and learning services. Their annual donation helps us provide personalised support to people looking for work, training or education. Beyond this, Landsec supports the Centre through volunteering, fundraising and advocacy, helping us continue providing vital services and opportunities for our clients.

Our employment and learning team works alongside clients to build confidence, develop skills and identify practical steps towards their goals. The team has recently worked with Elizabeth – a mum with a degree in psychology and a career in mental health in Cameroon looking to transfer her skills and experience into a role in London. Elizabeth first came to the Cardinal Hume Centre when her daughter was born and joined family services sessions where both she and her daughter quickly found a sense of community. She was referred to our employment and learning team this year who helped her find a volunteer role with Central

and North West London NHS Foundation Trust. Since then, Elizabeth has flourished and has now been accepted onto a psychological wellbeing practitioner training programme and paid work placement.

‘What makes this partnership so special is Landsec’s long term commitment,’ says Aimee Kinniburgh, corporate partnerships fundraiser at the Cardinal Hume Centre. ‘We are passionate about building relationships with organisations that want to make a genuine difference, and Landsec is a great example of that. They haven’t just supported us financially, they have continually found new ways to get involved, whether that’s through volunteering, fundraising, sharing their skills or helping us raise awareness of our work.’



Throughout the year Landsec staff have volunteered their time, shared their skills and helped create opportunities for clients. They have hosted a world of work day, supported activities for our family services and volunteered in our food and essentials store. Last year, they also raised £1,000 through a Christmas jumper day fundraiser and donated more than 180 items through a collection drive for World Homeless Day.

Marcus Geddes, managing director at Landsec, also joined our 40th Anniversary Development Board and is helping to support our 500 Futures campaign. Find out more about this ambitious campaign on page 22 and in 'about us' on our website on the 'four decades in Westminster' page.

'As we mark 40 years in Westminster, Landsec's commitment helps us meet today's challenges and creates opportunities that can make a real and lasting difference to someone's future,' says Aimee. Find out more about corporate partnerships by emailing aimee.kinniburgh@cardinalhumecentre.org.uk or scan the QR code.



Why I support:

By Ollie Leggett

"Landsec has been supporting Cardinal Hume Centre for over 10 years, and has become one of our key partners. We have held many fundraising events over the years, including food store collections in our building receptions, Christmas jumper days, as well as quiz nights, raising thousands of pounds. Over the past few years, I have been lucky enough to look after this partnership, and see first hand the positive impact made to local people in and around Westminster. I chose to support Cardinal Hume Centre personally by doing the London Summer Walk Challenge in August. I walked 42km around the streets of London, covering a full marathon distance in a day. It was a real challenge, but the motivation of knowing every step taken, and penny raised, will go directly to helped get me over the line."

Madani's next step

If you've been reading Centre Life for a few years, you may remember Madani. He fled political unrest in Chad on his own at 14 and later found safety in our supported accommodation.

When we shared his story in 2024, Madani had taken English classes, worked with our employment and learning team and secured his first part-time job at the M&M Store in Leicester Square.

Since then, he has moved into his own home and is living independently. But his connection with the Centre has continued.

In February, Madani came back to us. This time, he wanted help finding a job with more hours. Through a world of work day with Genuine Dining, he developed his skills, prepared for an interview – and was offered a new job in hospitality.

Madani's story shows how support can change as life changes.

Having moved on from the hostel, he knows the Centre is still here when he needs it.

'If I need something, they welcome me,' he says. 'They're always opening the door to help you.'





Generations of support



School communities have long been part of the Cardinal Hume Centre's story. From support sustained over decades to a new generation of students choosing to get involved, their fundraising turns compassion into practical action.

Mayfield: more than 20 years of compassion

For more than 20 years, Mayfield Girls School has supported the Centre, putting its Catholic faith into practice through generosity and service.

Its annual Sleep Out has become a particular tradition. In January 2026, 20 students and two members of staff slept outside in a cold 5 degrees, raising more than £2,500 while reflecting on the experiences of people facing homelessness.

As Year 13 charity prefect Anna said, it offered 'a small insight into the realities faced by people for whom this is everyday life'.

The Sleep Out sits alongside the school's Live Crib, a tradition dating back to 1959, whose retiring collection supports the Centre. Together, the latest Live Crib and Sleep Out raised £5,108.

Year after year, new groups of students have taken up that commitment – passing support from one generation to the next.

St Paul's: £12,000 for the Centre

Students at St Paul's Catholic College in Sunbury-on-Thames chose the Cardinal Hume Centre as their Lenten charity for 2026 – and raised an extraordinary £12,000.

Fundraising ranged from tuck shops, cake sales and sixth form darts to the school's annual sponsored walk around the local area and Kempton Park.

Along the way, students learnt more about the challenges facing young people, children and families experiencing homelessness and poverty, and how the Centre supports them.

Together, the two schools show how young people can turn compassion into action – creating support that makes a difference today and helps sustain our work for the future.

Liz's story: *Passing kindness on*

Liz first heard about the Cardinal Hume Centre through someone she affectionately called 'Auntie Jean'.

Jean was a great admirer of Cardinal Hume and lent Liz his books. 'He was just so kind and gentle and generous,' Liz says. 'He really was a great man.' Because of Jean, Liz became a regular supporter of the Centre.

Faith has inspired Liz to support others throughout her life, including corresponding for 20 years with a man serving a life sentence in an American prison. She says of building relationships over time, 'You get to know them and you get to trust them'.

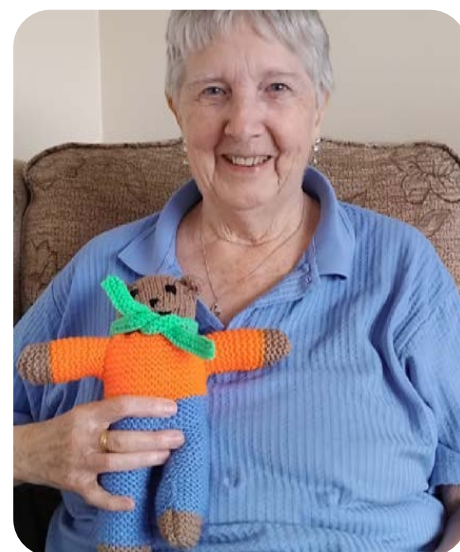
That sense of being there for someone is what Liz values about the Centre. She thinks of its support for young people as, 'just what a parent would do for them'.

'If my son was down in London,' she says, 'I would hope there would be somebody like the Centre to help him.'

Two years ago, Liz's close friend Eve died, leaving Liz part of her estate with the request that she give the money to charity. Eve had always cared about young people, so Liz immediately thought of the Cardinal Hume Centre.

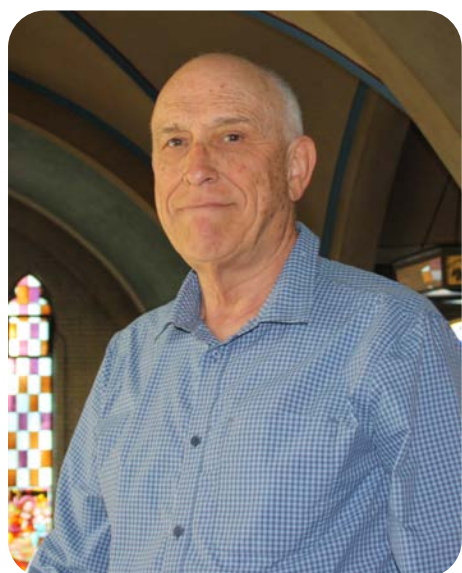
Her decision reflects something Liz's mother taught her: 'If somebody does you a kindness, don't return it, pass it on.'

'I'm trying to pass on, in what little way I can, the blessings I have received from God.'



*Liz with a bear she's knitted for the charity
Teddies for Tragedies*

Paul's story: *A lifetime of commitment*



"If he were here today, I think he'd be horrified that the Centre in his name is busier than ever."

For nearly 30 years, Paul has supported the Cardinal Hume Centre – donating, volunteering as an English tutor with our advice and assessment team, and raising money, most recently by walking the final stage of the Via Francigena pilgrimage to Rome. 'I knew of the Centre for years,' he says. 'Then I joined the mailing list, and the rest is history.'

'People think this part of London is very affluent, but we know there are families and individuals here who need support. I want to help in any way I can.'

Seeing young people move into work, education and secure housing has reinforced Paul's belief in long-term support. He also knows local families whose lives have been transformed with the Centre alongside them.

'It shows what can be done. That's proof of the Centre's work.'

'I've never met anyone there who felt they were just doing a job,' he says. 'Everyone is completely committed. They do what they say they'll do, and that's so important for people who've lost trust in services.'

After nearly three decades of support, Paul has taken his commitment one step further by leaving a gift in his Will. His inspiration has always been Cardinal Basil Hume. 'He used to say that the most important people in the cathedral were those outside,' Paul says. 'If he were here today, I think he'd be horrified that the Centre in his name is busier than ever.'

'I think many people, like me, want to give to a charity that's local and focused, where they know their donations will reach the people who need them most.'

Turn to the back page to find out more about leaving a gift in your Will.

500 Futures:

Tackling homelessness today and into the future

For 40 years, the Cardinal Hume Centre has supported young people, children and families experiencing homelessness and poverty. As we mark that anniversary this year, we are looking ahead to what the next chapter of that work needs to achieve.

Homelessness in Westminster is at its highest level on record. Nearly 4000 children are living in temporary accommodation in the borough, often in conditions that affect their health, education, wellbeing and opportunities. At the same time, demand for the Centre's services continues to grow.

Our response is 500 Futures – an ambitious campaign to raise £1.2 million and enable the Centre to support 500 more people every year. The funding will expand our frontline advice, employment and therapeutic support, helping us reach more people with the right help at the right time.

But this is about more than meeting growing demand.

We know that homelessness rarely has a single cause. Housing problems can be bound up with poverty, insecure immigration status, unemployment, trauma or isolation. That is why our services work together, under one roof, to understand the whole situation and help people build greater stability and security.

That support can tackle homelessness today – preventing an eviction, securing a home or helping a family through a crisis. But it also looks further ahead. Experiences of poverty, trauma and housing instability in childhood

can increase the risk of homelessness in adulthood.

By supporting children and families earlier, and addressing the underlying causes as well as the immediate crisis, we can help reduce the risk of homelessness recurring in the future.

500 Futures is our commitment to do both: help people facing homelessness

now and build the stability, skills and opportunities that can help prevent it tomorrow.



Our reach and the growing need

Forty years on, the number of people we support has increased significantly, both at the Centre and into the wider community. While data retention rules mean we can't know exactly how many people we have supported since 1986, our latest figures show both how our work has grown – and why it is still needed

4187

the number of people we supported in the last six years
2020/21–2025/26

28% increase

in the number of people we support each year

1189 → **1516**
in 2020/21 in 2025/26

3973 children

currently living in temporary accommodation in Westminster
up from 3693 in 2020

166 people

the number of people we supported through **99 outreach sessions** since September 2024

500 Futures

Ending homelessness tomorrow
begins with what we do for children today.

Dear Friends,

For forty years, the Cardinal Hume Centre, has stood as a place of welcome for so many in need.

Founded by Cardinal Basil Hume, it strives to be faithful to a central teaching of our faith that every person has God-given dignity and worth, and in moments of greatest need should be met with help and encouragement. This conviction filled the heart of the Cardinal; it remains as compelling today as it was in 1986.

A great privilege in my life has been the opportunity to work closely with Cardinal Hume. I was, therefore, delighted to be able to serve the Centre as Patron during my years as Archbishop of Westminster. I have seen the quiet but transformative impact of its work. The Centre does not simply respond to immediate need; it walks alongside each individual, helping them to rediscover confidence, build resilience, and move towards a more secure future.

This is work of lasting importance, carried out with compassion, professionalism, and deep respect for each person. I recall on one visit to the Centre a young man who had arrived feeling overwhelmed and uncertain of his future. What struck him most was not the help he had received, but the way he had been listened to, respected and given renewed confidence. It was clear that this was more than support; it was a restoration of hope.

I am pleased to be Patron of the 500 Futures campaign. This is both ambitious and deeply necessary. By seeking to support 500 more people each year the Centre is responding to the increasing pressures faced by many. I warmly encourage you to support this campaign. In doing so, you will be helping to sustain and extend a work of lasting significance – one that offers not only practical assistance but also renewed hope for many for whom the future seems bleak indeed.

Cardinal Hume would be so proud of this work and grateful for your assistance.

With every good wish and my blessing,



✠ Vincent Cardinal Nichols

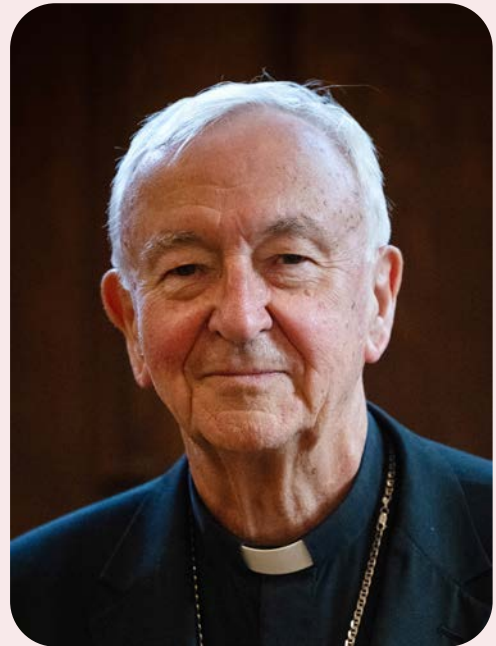


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**CARDINAL
HUME CENTRE**
Each person matters

Be always there



Contact us for
your free guide
to making a gift
in your Will

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