

S E C T I O N G : PUTTING THE IDEAS INTO PRACTICE

A summary of the suggestions made at the three briefing meetings held in the Archdiocese of Liverpool during November 1987

1 Welcoming schemes for newcomers

- registration cards/books in the church
- welcomers in church, looking for new faces and helping to create a warm, friendly atmosphere
- welcome leaflets/parish directory delivered initially to all houses and then to newcomers, with reply slip (best arranged ecumenically)
- systematic house-visiting by ecumenical team
- contact through the schools
- card sent to new parish when people move (esp. newly-weds)
- welcome group needed to follow-up first contact with house visit and personal invitation to special events or to join in parish activities
- neighbourhood schemes (e.g. neighbourhood watch, neighbourhood Masses)
- names and addresses of newcomers (if willing) published in newsletter
- regular "Family Masses"
- regular social gatherings (e.g. Coffee/Tea after Mass)
- remember that converts are newcomers too.

2 Babysitting provisions

- a reciprocal arrangement such as a Babysitting Circle, with a co-ordinator and a token system
- "rent-a-granny" (or a grandad) system, perhaps organised through the Welfare Officer of the Union of Catholic Mothers
- young baby-sitters (though some foresaw problems with selection, payment and the possible need to escort them home)
- and system would need co-ordination, good publicity (through bulletins, noticeboards, pulpit announcements and posters in clinics, chemists etc.), and clear conditions (e.g. emergency procedure)
- could be extended to care of elderly sick and housebound people.

3 Mother and Toddler Clubs

- can be small and house-based, but if larger would need:

Organisation: - 2-3 people, preferably with children over 5, to run the group, open up, handle discipline etc.,
- age limits (e.g. birth - school age, or more restricted)
- start small, with waiting list if necessary

Requirements: - secure meeting place (compliant with fire regulations)
- toys, crockery, secure storage space
- register kept at each session
- insurance
- publicity (schools, clinics etc., parish newsletter)

- grants are available (e.g. Social Services or Pre-Play Group Association)
- referrals (e.g. from Social Services) can be a problem
- mothers' activities can be a great benefit

4 Unemployment

- any response must respect, not patronise, unemployed people, regarding them as a resource for the local community
- use available experience and expertise, e.g. Trade Union officials, local councillors, unemployed people, diocesan, ecumenical and secular agencies

Specific suggestions:

- make use of Government schemes to provide work and training opportunities
- make parish premises available to the unemployed, (especially day-time)
- remove financial obstacles to involvement in parish activities and social events (e.g. special prices for social events, avoidance of volunteers being "out of pocket" for phone-calls, postage, refreshments etc.)
- provide information service about benefits, debt-counselling etc.)
- consider setting up a Credit Union
- provide a job register, matching skills to opportunities and targetting particular groups (e.g. school leavers)
- arrange inexpensive holidays which can include unemployed families
- use liturgical opportunities, e.g. Unemployment Sunday (14 February 1988)

5 Housing Advisory Service

- work ecumenically, involving whole community
- establish needs of the area (e.g. parish census)
- avoid duplication by co-operation with existing services and groups
- find people with expertise (advisory and practical)
- find suitable premises if necessary
- make sure people know about the service (notices, bulletins, and pulpit announcements by laypeople)

For further information about any of these ideas, contact the relevant organisation listed in the June 23 1987 issue of Briefing, or contact:

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