



St Vincent
de Paul Society

England and Wales

Turning Concern into Action

WELCOME





Welcome and Introduction: Getting your Youth SVP started

Overview:

The St Vincent de Paul Society (SVP) is an international volunteer organisation whose members work with anyone in need in their local community – the homeless, the elderly, prisoners, struggling families, people who are sick and lonely. Young people are an important part of the Vincentian family. We are all called to be like Jesus by helping people, becoming their friend and working with others to make a difference.

The St. Vincent de Paul Society (SVP) in England and Wales runs programmes for young people in primary schools, secondary schools, colleges, universities and parishes.

These conferences (groups) meet weekly or fortnightly to pray together, talk about the needs they see in their communities and to put positive action in place. All groups under 18 years of age need at least one adult mentor. This person is the main point of contact between the young people in the group and the wider society. Young people flourish in their Vincentian groups by benefitting from the example and support of the Vincentian Coordinator (VC). They are an essential and highly valued part of the SVP family, who encourage and inspire the nurturing of faith among the young people and magnify the possibilities of the young people implementing charitable works in a Vincentian spirit. There can be more than one VC per group, though for our records we ask for one named VC per group. When an SVP group is formed the SVP call it a conference; this goes back to our foundation in France where members were considered confreres – being like brothers and sisters!

Why start a Youth SVP:

There are many benefits of starting a Youth SVP Conference.

For young people, it's a brilliant opportunity to:

- make a real difference to the lives of people in their community
- meet like-minded people wanting to make a difference
- put faith into action
- gain a better understanding of Catholic Social Teaching
- participate in fun activities
- be a role model for others
- develop leadership skills which will prepare them for life after school and college
- step out of their comfort zone.
- become part of the worldwide network of Vincentians



Network of support centres and grassroots action, that young people can engage with and support

Worldwide network of community

Over 700,000 members across the world



A Mission and Vision rooted in growing and supporting young leaders





Our Story & Key People:



Blessed Frédéric Ozanam

The St Vincent de Paul Society was started in 1833 by Frédéric Ozanam, a 19 year old law student at the Sorbonne University. Responding to the great poverty in the Paris of his day, he and a group of friends began visiting the homes of the poor, bringing practical assistance of food and firewood, as well as something less tangible - empathy and love. Frederic and his friends began meeting regularly and formed the first conference. They decided to adopt the name of the St Vincent de Paul Society after the patron saint of charities.



Saint Vincent de Paul

Born into a poor family, Saint Vincent de Paul became a priest at the age of 19. He led an interesting life. At a young age, he was captured by pirates and sold into slavery. During this time, it was claimed he witnessed the terrible conditions in which slaves were forced to live. Upon becoming free, he had the opportunity to preach to the wealthy, but instead, he focused on spreading the Good News to people who were sick, orphaned, elderly, starving or abandoned. He was canonised (declared a saint) in 1737 and named the universal patron of Catholic charities in 1885.



Saint Louise de Marillac

With St Vincent de Paul, Louise started the Daughters of Charity (an order of nuns) in 1642. The Daughters of Charity were a revolutionary order of the poor. They helped abandoned children, people who were poor and sick, wounded soldiers, slaves, people who were mentally ill and the elderly. Today, there are over 20,000 Daughters of Charity, and they continue to help people in need. Louise is the patron saint of sick people, widows and orphans, and in 1960, Pope John XXIII proclaimed her the Patroness of Social Workers.



Blessed Rosalie Rendu

Jeanne Marie Rendu grew up during the French Revolution in 1789. She faced some tough times at an early age when her father and baby sister died and was forced to help her mother care for her two younger sisters. Jeanne's mother sent her to boarding school soon after. It was here she discovered the Daughters of Charity and was given the name Rosalie. As a Daughter of Charity, she opened a pharmacy, a school, an orphanage, a home for the elderly and a youth club. She became the "Good Mother of All" and worked closely with Blessed Fredric Ozanam to perform good works for the St Vincent de Paul Society.



Where we are working:

Befriending

Home visiting is the core work of the St Vincent de Paul Society in England & Wales. Home visits are mainly carried out in pairs, with conference members providing support to people experiencing hardships by offering them practical help. More importantly, our members offer emotional guidance to allow people to take control of their lives and continue the tradition established by Blessed Frederic Ozanam.

Advocacy

When the voice of the poor calls, we listen. Our grassroots approach to advocacy engages individuals, communities, organisations, faith groups and government. Our extensive network of SVP groups creates a safe and supportive environment for those who feel powerless, left behind or not listened to, where they are empowered to find a better and more fulfilling life. We apply the messages of Catholic Social Teaching (CST) to our work by placing human dignity, fairness and the collective good of society at the centre of our work. We seek to enable people, through on-the-ground support as well as our social justice work, to become their own spokespeople and hold those in power accountable.

Young Vincentians

All over England and Wales children, young people and young adults are taking up the invitation to join the Vincentian family and turn their concern into real action! These groups are based in schools, youth hubs and parishes. The energy they bring is hugely important to the greater work of the St Vincent de Paul Society. For over 100 years summer camps have been run at various locations around England and Wales

Community Support Projects

Community Support Projects (CSP) is the collective term we use to describe all the project work we do in the community. Community Support Projects includes our furniture stores, support centres, supported accommodation and our contract with the Home Office to manage and run local Approved Premises. SVP members are also involved with holiday camps and the running of local soup runs and food banks.

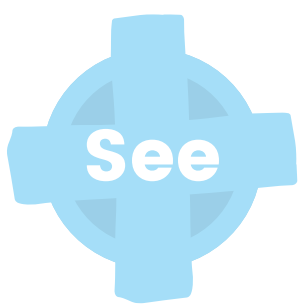
Retail

We have a number of St Vincent's community shops all around England and Wales. The primary role of our shops is to help raise vital funds to support our work and mission. Every purchase made in our shops helps someone in need. Our shops are full of sustainable, ethically sourced and recycled products. By giving opportunities to shop sustainably, we are also doing our bit to reduce our impact on the environment and increase the life-span of a product that may otherwise go to a landfill.



Starting a Conference

The 3 point process of the Youth conference is based around a method developed by Joseph Cardijn who was the founder of the Young Christian Workers (YCW). His method of 'See, Judge, Act' is where we take our inspiration from for the process outlined below.



Where is the need in our own communities?

Young people are given the space and time to express their own concerns and reflections on the world they live in and experience.



What would Christ do, and how would he do it in modern society?

This time to reflect on the Gospel and example of Jesus is a key for the Vincentian family. We believe deeply that our responsibility is to preach the Gospel by our words and work.



Act in support of those in need!

The SVP is a family built on action. After action there is time to reflect upon how we have been Christlike, where we have seen Christ, and how to go about spreading the word and getting others involved.





The role of Vincentian Coordinator:

The SVP refers to its members groups as conferences – this is the same language we use for our Youth SVP. In all our Young Vincentians conferences, young people can really have a say and make decisions about how they can help people in their community.

The Vincentian Coordinator (VC) should help make this happen and should support the young people in their individual and collective growth and formation in the process. Someone from the local adult SVP Conference may be able to advise on charitable actions that could be done in the community and may offer help to a VC in the early stages of setting up a conference.

Where possible, our VCs positively encourage projects their young people plan. All that is needed is for the coordinator to spend some time looking into the safety and safeguarding requirements and ensuring that safe processes are followed. This may involve organising permission slips, getting the head teacher/parish priest's approval or recruiting parents or teachers to assist with supervision.

The number of hours a week vary on many different factors, such as the Youth conferences' ages, to how often they meet, to the intensity and frequency of the activities they engage in, to the level of support any given group may need.

In all our conferences, it should be the young people who identify the needs in their local community and come up with ideas of how to help and make decisions about service activities and fundraising. The role of the coordinator, then, is to guide these discussions and assist the young people in putting their passion and ideas into action by:

- Setting up the group with the support of the local Young Vincentians Development Officer (YVDO) or [National Team](#).
- Archiving meeting minutes in conjunction with the group secretary & helping the president with preparations for the spiritual reflections and other spiritual input / events.
- Helping the President organise an election so that leadership roles in the group are filled and maintained year-on-year.
- Ensuring the leadership of the group is fulfilling their roles of: president, vice-president, secretary, treasurer and communications officer, and motivating members without office.
- Keeping discussions within the realm of possibilities.
- Supporting the group by looking into the feasibility of projects in accordance with Health and Safety policies and duty of care requirements held by the institution.
- Helping the President organise an election so that leadership roles in the group are filled and maintained year-on-year.
- Ensuring the leadership of the group is fulfilling their roles of: president, vice-president, secretary, treasurer and communications officer, and motivating members without office.
- Sharing good news with the Young Vincentians Development Officer or the national team at the end of the academic year and ensuring the annual online form is filled out.

This will be covered in more detail in later documentation