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Cover illustration: 'The Parting of the Red Sea' by William Swabey

# The In-between Church

A Study of the Church of England's Role in Society  
through the Prism of Welfare

Martha Middlemiss Lé Mon



UPPSALA  
UNIVERSITET

Dissertation presented at Uppsala University to be publicly examined in Geijersalen, Engelska parken, Thunbergsvägen 3P, Uppsala, Friday, October 2, 2009 at 10:15 for the degree of Doctor of Theology. The examination will be conducted in English.

### **Abstract**

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The aim of this thesis has been to explore the role of institutional religion in western Europe between individual and society. This is achieved through an empirical study of the role of the Church of England at local level, using the area of social welfare as the prism through which broader issues of the place of the Church in society can be brought to light.

At the heart of this thesis lies a case study of the town of Darlington in the North East of England. This is set against a background of a detailed description of the situation regarding religion and welfare in England and of the organisation and situation of the Church at national level. The case study uses a variety of qualitative methods to assess the Church's role in welfare at local level and the expectations and perceptions of its involvement in this sphere held by representatives of the churches, local authorities, voluntary organisations and town residents.

The role of the Church of England in its national and local context is therefore used as one example which can shed light on issues pertinent to a broader European one. To this end the results of the case study are compared with the situation in Sweden to tease out the extent to which conclusions pertaining to the established church in England can also be applied in a wider European context.

The study concludes that the Church has a continued role to play in welfare both in terms of practical provision and social activism. It reveals that the Church is, at one and the same time, both seen as one of many organisations in civil society and also perceived to have a particular part to play in society at local level. This continuing though changing role 'in-between' individual and society can be further specified as including three dimensions: mediator, neutral ground and critical voice.

This suggests that a distinct role in society is also possible for other religious institutions in Europe today within their national contexts, as representatives and upholders of overarching common values in the public sphere. It indicates that although the relationships between individuals and institutional religion and the role religions have to play in society today are ambiguous, they are by no means absent. Thereby the study engages with and contributes to the development of the theoretical debate concerning social change in late modern society, the continued role of institutional religions in the public sphere and the relevance of the secularisation paradigm.

*Keywords:* Church of England, contemporary society, Europe, individual, institutional religion, late modernity, religious change, social welfare, welfare systems

Martha Middlemiss Lé Mon, Department of Theology, Box 511, Uppsala University, SE-751 20 Uppsala, Sweden

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*To Fritha and Peter*



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*Martha Middlemiss Lé Mon*

Stockholm, Midsummer 2009

## Part I – Background Theoretical and Narrative



# 1. Introduction

## 1.1. Questions Raised

In the forward to a report he commissioned on behalf of the Church of England in his role as ‘Bishop for Urban Faith and Life’, Stephen Lowe, Bishop of Hulme writes:

The Church of England is still a major player in social and welfare provision in this country despite what its detractors might believe. It has earned the right as the largest voluntary organisation (and so much more) in the country to be listened to and worked with as a respected partner in the area of welfare provision as it is in education (Lowe 2008, 8).

But is it? As Lowe himself acknowledges, his position on the subject is not without its opponents and by no means all of these are hostile to the Church itself. The very report *Moral, But No Compass: Government, Church and the Future of Welfare* (2008), which Lowe introduces with these words makes the point that the Church includes bishops within its fold who are opposed to the active practical partnership of Church and public authorities in the field of welfare (Davis, Paulhus & Bradstock 2008, 21).

In the 1980s Giles Ecclestone, one time General Secretary of the Board of Social Responsibility of the Church of England, described the relationship of the Church of England to the state as one of ‘critical solidarity’ (Ecclestone 1981, 40), a phrase with which he intended to describe the role he felt the church played of a critical questioning of the state tempered by its established status. This presupposition involved an underlying assumption that the values of the Church were not fundamentally at odds with the dominant values in society. To what extent the authorities at the time agreed with Ecclestone’s assessment is the subject of another study, but as Lowe’s statement shows, the same questions that Ecclestone was battling with over two decades ago remain pertinent today. Are representatives of the Church and the state in agreement as to the role which the Church has to play in welfare issues? Is this role seen by both parties as one of a co-operative partner or an antagonist? And is this role seen as being important and specific in the context of the national welfare system today? Is the Church’s role both as a critical part of the welfare system and a critical observer of it?

These questions serve to illustrate more than the direct issue of the Church’s role in welfare. They actualise and concretise wider questions of

the relationship between religious institutions, welfare and wellbeing and of the role of religious institutions in contemporary society. Seen in this light a study, which addresses the role of the Church of England in the welfare arena can provide a contribution to the ongoing debate on the current state of and possible future for welfare societies. It can also add to the development of theory considering the role and perceptions of institutional religion in the modern world. It can do so by contributing new knowledge from studies in the intersection between religion and welfare, which has hitherto been a neglected area.

## 1.2. Aim

The aim of this study is to explore the role of institutional religion in contemporary western Europe between individual and society.

This is examined by:

- a) *empirically* studying the Church of England's role in society at local level through the prism of welfare
- b) *theoretically* elaborating on the results of the case study and relating this analysis to previous research

## 1.3. Thesis Design

The design of the study is based on the premise that the role of institutionalised religion cannot be studied without the use of an interface which makes the interaction between the public societal and private individual domains visible. Thus the area of welfare is used as an arena within which it is possible to examine the role of religion in contemporary society. Neither can the role of institutional religion in Europe as a whole, given the myriad of national variations, be the subject matter for a single empirical study. Thus the English national context and the role of the Church of England at local level within this serve as the focus for empirical studies.

First a theoretical framework is developed. This is followed by an exploration of the welfare system at national level in England, the place of institutionalised religion in society and the role of the Church of England. Against this background an in-depth empirical case study explores the issues at a local level. Finally, the thesis concludes with an analysis where, through the weaving together of threads from the earlier sections, the results of the case study are used to develop the theoretical framework.

This design has been chosen to allow analysis of detailed empirical material from one local level case study, not only to be placed in relation to the situation at national level, but also to enable its interpretation as an element

of wider European and global developments and thereby fulfil the aim of the study. In this way this study will contribute new knowledge, both of the Church of England's role as welfare provider and social voice, and to the ongoing debate on the role of institutional religion in contemporary European society.

In order to focus the empirical study in such a way as to produce material relevant to these broad issues, the case study approaches the Church as an organisation and focuses on its place as an institution in society in relation to individuals. The Church of England is regarded as an example of how the role of religious institutions in society is perceived at local level in contemporary England. For this reason the study will present the national welfare system and situation as well as explaining the role of the Church of England in society in general and welfare in particular, before proceeding to a detailed case study of one locality.

## 1.4. Background

### 1.4.1. Previous Research

The claim that the meeting point of religion and welfare has been a neglected area in academic terms requires a little clarification before proceeding. There is, namely, no shortage of historical accounts of the social and philanthropic work of the churches up to and including the twentieth-century. The involvement of the churches in social issues in twentieth century Britain has been, for example, documented by Ian Machin (1998), while Frank Prochaska has traced the handover of responsibility for the delivery of welfare services from the churches to the state during the evolution of the British welfare state (Prochaska 2006). What has been lacking, however, are integrated and contemporary studies of the roles that religion in general and the Christian churches in particular have played in the establishment and development of welfare systems in Europe. In fact empirical research in this intersection between religion and social policy in general is meagre in the European context, as most of the research that has been undertaken on the topic has been historical and the result of textual analysis. There is though, it must be noted, a growing body of literature on the role of faith-based organisations in welfare provision in the United States, which documents the interplay in that context, so different from Europe in terms of both welfare and religion (Wuthnow & Evans 2002; Cnaan 2002; Bartkowski & Regis 2003; Dionne & Hsu Chen 2001, Sider & Unruh 2004). In recent years the work undertaken on faith-based organisations in the United States has, however, inspired work in Europe. Against a background of government policy, which encourages the involvement of faith-based organisations in regeneration and community development, this has in the United Kingdom resulted in a num-

ber of empirical studies of faith-based organisations. These have primarily addressed issues of faith-based organisations as part of the voluntary and community sector, the policy implications of a role for faith communities in the public realm and the contribution of faith communities to social capital (Baker & Skinner 2005; Cameron 2003; Dinham, Furbey & Lowndes 2009; Furbey et al. 2006). There are also exceptions on the wider European research scene, most notably Anne Yeung (2004b) who herself has pointed to the unfulfilled potential of this research area (2004b, 404) and the work of Petra Böhnke (2008) who has demonstrated that religion has a particular role to play in influencing the interrelations between poverty and social disintegration in the different welfare regimes in Europe. ‘Social policy and interrelated general attitudes to religion, the family, and how to combat poverty’ are, she argues, all factors which ‘shape the support culture and influence the willingness of the population of a country to feel solidarity with the poor’ (Böhnke 2008, 147). The religiosity evident in a country and the influence of Catholicism in particular, are, she notes, particular influences on the social integration of the poor within a welfare system (Böhnke 2008, 147).

One researcher who has addressed the role of religion in the history of welfare state development, with particular reference to poverty policy, is Sigrun Kahl (2005; 2009). She has also highlighted the lack of work in this area and accused traditional welfare state literature of being ‘religion blind’ (Kahl 2005, 92). In seeking to remedy this blindness and bring studies of the influence of religion to the academic debate on the development of the welfare state Kahl is joined by Philip Manow.<sup>1</sup> Of particular interest here are the connections Manow has highlighted between the different typologies of the welfare state, familiar to the traditional literature in that field and the Christian denominational differences also visible across Europe (Manow 2004). Far from content, however, with highlighting the basic parallels between the different theological traditions of the majority churches in Europe and variations in the welfare systems which have developed in those same countries, Manow and his colleague Kees van Kersbergen have criticised the existing body of comparative research on religion and the welfare state of oversimplification. This has, they maintain, included an almost exclusive focus on the role of political Catholicism, a lack of attention to the different forms of Protestantism evident in Europe and overemphasis of the impact of religious ideas on the institutions of the welfare states. Instead, they propose a model which integrates comparisons of typologies of church–state relations and the presence or absence of conflict with differences in social class structures and their manifestation in party-political structures (Manow & van Kersbergen 2009).

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<sup>1</sup> See also Fix 2002.

## 1.4.2. Welfare State Typologies

The above debate on the 'religion blindness' of welfare state research coincided with an increased focus in such literature as well as in the public policy debate on the apparent demise of the welfare state and convergence of welfare policies in Europe. A brief explanation of this theoretical debate is therefore necessary for an understanding of the questions which this study seeks to address as well as for an understanding of the broader socio-political context within which changes which this study explores are taking place.

Welfare state establishment in post-war Europe was more than a consolidation and upgrading of existing social and poverty policy. As Esping-Andersen has explained:

In economic terms, the extension of income and employment security as a citizen's right meant a deliberate departure from the orthodoxies of the pure market. In moral terms, the welfare state promised a more universal, classless justice and solidarity of 'the people': it was presented as a ray of hope to those who were asked to sacrifice for the common good in the war effort. (Esping-Andersen 1996, 2)

The historian Asa Briggs has defined a welfare state as:

A state in which organised power is deliberately used (through politics and administration) in an effort to modify the play of market forces in at least three directions – first, by guaranteeing individuals and families a minimum income irrespective of the market value of their work or their property; second by narrowing the extent of insecurity by enabling families to meet certain social contingencies (for example sickness, old age and unemployment) which lead otherwise to individual and family crises; and third, by ensuring that all citizens without distinction of status or class are offered the best standards available in relation to a certain agreed range of social services. (Briggs 2004, 21)

The social service states which preceded the welfare states of the late twentieth century were, he argues, able to fulfil to a certain extent the first two of these criteria, but the third factor goes beyond their aims and is therefore intrinsic to the notion of a welfare state. While the various welfare states have basic economic and moral factors behind their construction in common however, there are significant differences. These have been hinted at above as the work of academics such as Manow tries to introduce into the discussion of the construction of various typologies of welfare states the notion of religious influence. Perhaps the most frequently cited, criticised and adapted welfare state typology is that developed by Gøsta Esping-Andersen (Esping-Andersen 1990; Wilhelmus & Gelissen 2002; Jeppsson Grassman 2004). His typology of regimes can be seen as a creation of a system of ideal types based on the differences in the ways and extent to which (responsibility for)

welfare provision is divided between the state, the market and households. In the original formulation of the typology he identifies three regimes: the liberal, the conservative and the social democratic (Esping-Andersen 1990; 1996). Esping-Andersen's model is not without its critics and he himself has also identified problems with the typology, not least the fact that it does not allow for shifts that have occurred within regimes after their conception (Esping-Andersen 1999; Jeppsson Grassman 2004, 14–15). Despite these flaws however it is a useful starting point from which to approach a study of welfare states in Europe and the processes of change which impact the states themselves and the organizations which have a role to play in the sphere of welfare.

This is not least the case precisely because these regime typologies are based on an analysis of the welfare states as they were formed at their conception after the Second World War. In this respect they provide templates against which the various aspects of change can be assessed. At the time of the formation of the welfare states in Europe there was no perceived trade-off between equality and efficiency, but with the demise of the era of mass industrial production, the underlying assumptions on which both welfare and nation states were built have also eroded. In the words of Manfred Steger, 'the ideologies dominating the world today are no longer exclusively articulations of the national imaginary' grounded in and grounding the notion of the nation state, 'but reconfigured ideational systems that constitute potent translations of the dawning global imaginary' (Steger 2008, 12). Thus, while proclamations of the death of the nation state proved to be both premature and exaggerated, the consensus which once underpinned the welfare systems of post-war European societies has disappeared, leading to a crisis of the European welfare state (Steger 2008, 171). The question for all welfare states is therefore: which way now? How should efficiency and equality be reconciled? It can be argued that the particular focus which has been placed on economic factors when welfare state reform has been undertaken has been at the expense of the notions of solidarity, which were fundamental in the foundation of the European welfare states and certainly the language of crisis is far from absent in the media coverage of the financial pressures threatening welfare states in Europe. Esping-Andersen has, however, reminded us that while the economic aspects of welfare state change cannot be ignored, the only real argument for economic efficiency in welfare provision is that it continues to produce welfare. So, he argues, despite the financial pressures on welfare systems, 'the idea of social citizenship may therefore extend into the twenty-first century' (Esping-Andersen 1996, 27). Issues of welfare state change intermingle, in other words, with issues of the future of western democracy and the role of civil society.

### 1.4.3. A European Project

Against the background of this process of change and challenge to the welfare states and the absence of research into the role which religion in general and the majority churches in particular play within this process, a comparative European research project was conceived. This project *Welfare and Religion in a European Perspective* (WREP), took Esping-Andersen's models and the different majority church traditions in Europe as two theoretical starting points. Looking at Europe from the perspective of these two starting points, eight national case studies were then planned which would produce new information at the intersection of denominational tradition and welfare state model, not in terms of influence on welfare state development, but during the current process of flux.<sup>2</sup> The project aimed to 'analyse the function of majority churches as providers of social welfare in a comparative European perspective' (WREP 2003, 52). Through qualitative case studies designed to produce snapshots of the situation in one town in each of these countries the project aimed to contribute new knowledge on the actions of majority churches at local level as welfare providers and opinion formers and on attitudes to this role. In addition, theological positions and tensions between national and local levels in these were explored, as was the importance of gender issues within all these areas (WREP 2003, 52–3).

The empirical material which makes up the core of the current study was collected as the English case study within this project and the fact that it forms part of a wider European project has left its mark in a number of ways. In particular the fact that the material has been collected within a wider framework enables comparison with other churches that would not otherwise be possible and can throw light on aspects of the English study which would otherwise not be visible. However, the practical aspects of the design of the study are not inconsequential either and such aspects as choice of case study town, mapping process and interview guide were heavily influenced by the direction which was taken by the project as a whole.

### 1.4.4. The State the Church is in.

This study is not historical, but an understanding of the historical involvement of the Church of England in welfare is as key to understanding its current role, as are more recent developments in religious belief and practice and in the organisation of welfare state regimes. The national established church in England has traditionally had a role to play in national life alongside a comprehensive welfare state regime, and the activity of voluntary

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<sup>2</sup> The countries studied were England, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Norway and Sweden. See Appendix 1 for a short introduction to the WREP project and Bäckström and Davie Forthcoming for a fuller description.

organisations, including faith-based groups, has been an integral part of the system since its inception in the wake of the Second World War.

Altered political discourse surrounding faith communities in Britain, decreasing attendance figures for the Church and the general European phenomenon of increasingly pressured welfare regimes, combined with increased European political co-operation, which many see as leading to a convergence of European welfare regimes, has led the Church to reconsider its role. It is against this background of change that the present study hopes to shed light on the current situation.

Integral to an understanding of the study is also the theological breadth of the Church of England and the organisational structure combining local autonomy and national authority. The tensions that these theological and organisational realities create and the opportunities that this is seen to give are of particular interest.

## 1.5. Paradigms and Perspectives forming the Project

This study follows a social constructivist enquiry paradigm. It seeks to contribute to that tradition, not seeking to discover new theory following the totally open approach of grounded theory (Burawoy 1991, 280), but rather by reconstructing existing theory. While it is the task of theory to make sense of a local situation, the study of the local in turn tests and contributes to the development of theory (Denzin & Lincoln 2003, 25). Following Burawoy therefore this case-based study is an attempt ‘to extract the general from the unique, to move from the “micro” to the “macro,” and to connect the present to the past in anticipation of the future, all by building on pre-existing theory’ (Burawoy 1998, 5). In this respect the basic underlying philosophy of science which underpins this study is one of reflexive rather than positive science (Burawoy 1998, 10).

### 1.5.1. Qualitative Research

In setting out to answer the questions addressed in this thesis it soon became apparent that quantitative methods would not provide material with sufficient complexity to highlight the ambiguities and tensions that are an integral part of human opinions and attitudes. Here I follow Bernice Martin’s application of the thought of Charles Taylor in arguing that qualitative work is required to access the ‘powerful, but semi-articulate dimensions of our moral and religious being’ (Martin, Bernice 2003, 3).

It was also clear that interviews would be necessary. Observation may provide an indication of attitudes linked to behaviours, but an individual’s own interpretations and expressions of opinions are of importance if a study is to be able to say anything over and above the opinions of one researcher.

The opinions and attitudes that I was hoping to gather do not, however, exist independent of the context in which those who profess them live and act. To study opinions and attitudes therefore necessitates an interview study, supported by various other materials which can illuminate and contextualise the interviews. It is important however to bear in mind Douglas Davies' reminder to the researcher that 'life lived is not as life documented' (Davies 2002, 20), by which he means to warn against imposing artificial order on human existence in the intellectual quest to systematise thoughts and actions so as to be able to study them. We must, he argues, pay 'proper attention to those human ways of thinking that produce ordinary forms of life and behaviour' (Davies 2002, 20). To this end I aspire in this study to create with the case study something which in Geertz's terminology could be described as 'thick descriptions' (Geertz 1973). In this approach the researcher's role in the case study is from the perspective of the anthropological tradition of research, which values not simply the observation of actions and the transcription of texts, but beyond this sees the researcher's role as an interpreter of signs which only have their full meaning within the cultural context in which they are played out. The study must then be seen as an interpretation of interpretations.

### 1.5.2. Researcher as Individual

The individual researcher does not exist in a vacuum and just as the researcher has an impact on what is being studied, so too does the research have an impact on the researcher. The research project is, in other words, a process of which the individual researcher is a part and so some knowledge of the researcher's background pertinent to an understanding of the results.

In this case it is important to note that I was both born and raised in England in a churchgoing family. Both my parents worked actively in and for the Church of England in both voluntary and paid capacities and I too was active in the Church at local and national level and continued to be so after leaving home and starting theological studies at university. Having grown up and been active within the church which one is studying can, in Geertz's terms, put the researcher in possession of 'informed opinion' which can be both of benefit and hindrance when studying one's society (Geertz 1988, 129–149). This familiarity with the subject provides both an opportunity in the form of a shared language with many informants, but also the risk of blindness to aspects of one's own culture which it is easy to take for granted. In this second respect the fact that I spent a year in Sweden at the age of 18, which proved to be the first move of many between the two countries is also a relevant biographical note. This first visit led eventually to my settling in Sweden and the fieldwork for this study has therefore all been conducted while I was based not in England, but rather in Sweden. This can be seen as a strength in providing some distance between researcher and object of

study. Furthermore this outside perspective has also provided a mirror to hold up to the situation of the Church of England, drawing attention to aspects that I may not have noticed without the constant presence of a contrasting example.

### 1.5.3. Case Study as Research Method

As Stake noted, the decision to carry out a case study is not a choice of method, but a choice defined by the area of interest, of what is to be studied (Stake 2003, 134). The epistemological question is what can be learned from a single case and whether this is appropriate with regard to the research question. Once this has been established, the method, or methods, to be used to adequately present that case can then be selected.

The case study approach is a suitable solution to the issues raised above. It allows for close focus on a single case, giving the researcher time to familiarise herself with the local in a manner which would not be possible in a study with a broader focus. To return to the epistemological question posed above however, it is necessary to weigh up whether a study of a single case is an appropriate and verifiable way of producing research which is of interest to those without an immediate interest in the case itself. Exponents of grounded theory such as Glaser and Strauss (1967) have met the challenge of verifiability posed to qualitative research with the development of rigorous qualitative analyses which follow the positivist tradition of quantitative research. Here, a single phenomenon can be studied in a variety of situations which are then collated and analysed separate from these contexts. This protects the researcher to some degree from criticism of the relevance of qualitative research to a wider audience, but does not answer the question of whether generalization ought to be central to all research. Burawoy argues, and here I agree with him and would place my case study within the broad tradition which he espouses, that while models of exploration such as grounded theory understand significance as statistical significance, the approach of extended case method looks rather to social significance (Burawoy 1991b, 281). The case study may not be able to claim to provide results which can be applied to the populations of similar cases, rather it can say something about society as a whole. Certain truths about social context or history can be revealed as the particular character of the case in question and the reasons for its development in this manner is scrutinised, an approach which can be successful if the necessary tension between lifting analysis above the local and anecdotal and recognising the importance of local and contextual factors for an understanding of the case is observed (Davies et al. 1991, 282).

The small number of case studies or locality studies which have been carried out in Britain and focus on the role of church in relation to local society show that this approach can be fruitful, while their limited numbers indicate

the potential for new knowledge to be gained by a new study taking this approach. Though neither is exactly in line with the study planned here, two relevant examples of such locality studies were undertaken in Scotland towards the end of the twentieth century. The first, carried out in the 1970s, focused on the social significance of church membership in one town (Sissons 1973). The second, two decades later, comprised an ethnography of a single congregation (Dowie 2002). Perhaps, however, the best example of past studies in line with the case study at the heart of this thesis is David Clark's now over 20-year old study of a fishing community in the North East of England (Clark 1982). The case study methodology enabled him to show a gap which existed between the religion preached in church and chapel and that the inhabitants of this close knit community supposedly followed and the reality of religious practice and spirituality.<sup>3</sup>

#### 1.5.4. Including a Gender Perspective

The gender issue has often been neglected in the past, both in studies of religious groups and of welfare systems, and while the literature is growing in both fields, as Ninna Edgardh has noted, the intersection of welfare, religion and gender remains a virtually unexplored domain (Edgardh forthcoming).

The growing body of work in the field of welfare research which has made use of a gender perspective has demonstrated not least the gender contract built into the post-Second World War welfare states of western Europe (Morgan 2006). This family-centred assumption of a male breadwinner and a female caregiver can still be seen to varying extents in the welfare regimes of Europe and women remain the primary caregivers, whether as health and social care professionals, in the home or in the voluntary sector (Daly & Rake 2003). In the early 1990s researchers began to make these connections and propose alternative or complementary gender sensitive welfare typologies to the mainstream theories. Jane Lewis was one of these first theorists, and in 1992 introduced a system of organisation of welfare systems according to the strength of the male breadwinner model displayed (Lewis 1992), while a few years later Diane Sainsbury presented her notion of gender regimes comprising the rules and norms surrounding gender relations as a parallel to the concept of welfare regimes (Sainsbury 1999, 5). As Ninna Edgardh has noted, historically the majority churches in Europe have been the primary sources for gender regimes and their justification (Edgardh forthcoming), but just as welfare theorists in the past expressed little interest in gender, both they and gender theorists in this sphere have displayed little interest in religion. As has been briefly demonstrated here, work in this field

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<sup>3</sup> Also of interest in this context are Tim Jenkins' (1999) study of a village and its church in Cambridgeshire and Michael Dalling & Raymond Francis' (1995) study of church and chapel in the village of Somercotes in Lincolnshire.

has shown the importance of a gender sensitive analysis to a full understanding of the dynamics involved in welfare regimes and in the field of religious studies researchers such as Linda Woodhead have demonstrated the same for religious organisations (Woodhead 2007). It therefore stands that any analysis of the role of the church in welfare in Europe would be incomplete if it did not take into account the gender dimension, even if this is not a central focus of the study.

## 1.6. Limitations

### 1.6.1. Setting the Boundaries

The empirical focus of this study is both on the Church of England at local level in terms of the contribution that the Church makes to welfare provision in the area and to the local welfare debate and on how this contribution is understood by those who represent the Church and representatives of other organisations. Particular focus is placed on tensions between the points of view expressed, both expected and unexpected. Where appropriate and in order to provide adequate background for an understanding of the situation for the local church, the situation for the national church will be referred to. No comprehensive analysis of the situation for the national church will be undertaken, however. While the Church of England in Darlington may not be said to be representative of all churches at local level in the Church of England, the case study, qualitative as it is, provides a picture of what the situation can look like at local level and indicates aspects of wider interest in the depth of its study.

While the intention is to draw conclusions against the background of wider global and European developments, this study has no ambition to draw general conclusions from its results. The study seeks rather to provide an in-depth study of a small section of a much larger picture. This window on the situation in England may therefore not be able to claim to be representative in the manner of quantitative research, but it does have significance beyond its spatial boundaries. Thanks to its depth it can provide vital insights to wider ongoing debate at national, international and theoretical levels. The processes and relations taking place in this one locality which are made visible by the in-depth approach are not limited to local boundaries. They are caught up in a broader national and global context and a study of the local therefore allows for an exploration of the impact of these global and national processes at local level.

The background against which this study takes place is as has been noted several times, important and forms part of the study itself. The study, however, makes no claims to tackle the wider debate as to the future of the welfare state in Europe. This discussion falls outside of its scope, which with its

foundations in the sociological theory of religion has as its focus the national church and more specifically church involvement in welfare. In this respect the study cannot either be seen as a comprehensive study of church–state relations, although here too the academic debate in this field can be informed by the results of this one locality study.

The practicalities of carrying out the study also involve one further limitation which has important consequences for the results of the study. At local level, however, it is interviews with local clergy which make up the interview material on which analysis of the Church’s perception of itself is mainly grounded. Exploration of the impact which this limitation in the empirical material will have on the study overall, as regards the understanding of the Church portrayed, forms an important part of a definition of concepts here.

### 1.6.2. England, Britain and the United Kingdom

The focus of this study is the Church of England and therefore the study as a whole will focus on the situation in England and will not deal with Britain as a whole or the situation of the Church in Wales and the Church of Scotland.<sup>4</sup> It is however paramount to draw attention from the very outset to the particular situation one finds oneself in when studying England. England is one of four national, or semi-national components, with distinct legal systems, which make up the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. Although the focus of this report is on the situation in England, given the particular constitutional arrangements of the United Kingdom as a whole and the fact that many political decisions and welfare systems cover the whole of Britain, this report will occasionally refer to Britain, or sometimes even the United Kingdom, rather than England, to allow for accurate presentation of statistics and the research of others. The issue is a practical one, but also serves to highlight the major conceptual issues at the heart of this study. In attempting to sketch the situation with regard to the role of institutional religion any study of England must necessarily pay attention to the different degrees to which these countries within a country share political leadership and public service systems.

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<sup>4</sup> Some studies of the role of religion in Britain in recent years, such as Callum Brown’s studies (2000 and 2006) have aimed to include the whole of Britain and therefore the situation for the Churches in Wales and Scotland as well as the Church of England. Paul Chamber’s study of Religion, Secularization and Social Change in Wales (2005) has a narrower focus.

## 1.7. Concepts Defined

### 1.7.1. Welfare and Wellbeing

A study in which the notion of welfare is central is a complex matter given the ambiguity of the term. As Allardt has noted, for example, the word used for welfare is, in all the Scandinavian languages also the word used for wellbeing. In these languages the same word can be used both for standard of living and quality of life (Allardt 1993, 88). This issue pertinent to the Scandinavian situation highlights the lack of clarity surrounding the terms in an English context too. While the English language has two separate words for these concepts there is nonetheless a grey area between them. The WREP study, in its attempts to find a common understanding of the object of study, whilst also grappling with diverse languages and social and historical contexts within Europe revealed the linguistic issues mentioned above. This in turn led to the realisation that any study of welfare which includes a subjective dimension must also be prepared to grapple with a varying and broad understanding of the term welfare (Middlemiss Lé Mon forthcoming). This problem inherent in the terminology is one which Allardt identified in considering the options available when designing studies intended to provide measures of human welfare. He argues that basing choice of welfare criteria entirely on the subjective views of individuals is ‘likely to lead to an unfruitful conservatism’ whereas a disregard of people’s opinions can lead to the ‘dogmatism of experts’ (Allardt 1993, 92). In light of this it therefore seems important to approach empirical studies of welfare with a basic broad definition of welfare as a starting point, but to design the study in such a way that individual informants’ understandings of the term are also given space.

In this study, given the focus on the Church as organisation and its role as an agent of welfare within the context of a particular welfare system, the starting point for a definition of welfare must necessarily relate to the notion of a welfare state. Following Allardt, however, the term is understood to refer not only to resources required for living, but to the satisfaction of the basic needs of individuals in terms of physical, mental and social health. Basic human needs can, in other words, be of both material and non-material character and can be understood as falling into three dimensions of welfare, which Allardt refers to as having, being and loving. *Having* refers to material conditions necessary for survival and the avoidance of misery, *loving* to the need to relate to other human beings and *being* the need to integrate with society and for personal growth and identity (Allardt 1975; 1993). In line with Allardt’s approach this study takes as its starting point an understanding of welfare encompassing both material and non-material needs.

Ronald Inglehart in his analysis of international value surveys has shown a growth in the numbers of what he terms ‘post-materialists’ in an international context. Post-materialists place particular emphasis on ‘maximizing

subjective wellbeing’ and on concerns with the quality of life as opposed to ‘materialists’ whose prime concern is the satisfaction of basic necessities and material security (Inglehart 1997, 36). Connecting such thoughts with a discussion of contemporary persisting consumer culture, David Lyon argues that:

The Protestant ethic does seem to have been supplanted in its entirety by a consumer culture, but the overproduction of signs and a loss of referents within contemporary culture are not without effects. Consuming is no longer about utilities that address fixed needs, but about constructing an expressive lifestyle. (Lyon 2000, 82)

In Tipton’s words from the perspective of a study of 1960s America:

The quest for self-fulfilment seen spreading across America in the “Me Decade” carries with it questions about the ultimate usefulness of utilitarian goods and so about the ultimate meaning of utilitarian happiness. This has reopened the question of what is good in itself for an audience well beyond ex-hippies. (Tipton 1982, 251)

This study does not address the nature, extent and importance ‘of the subjective wellbeing culture’ (Heelas & Woodhead 2005, 86), which is an element of this value development, nor does it explore issues of individuals’ understandings of their own subjective wellbeing. It does, however, take a broad view of the notion of welfare and includes within that the understanding that human welfare encompasses notions of wellbeing and the striving for a quality of life over and above material survival. This flexibility follows the line of the general explorative methodology of the empirical research, whereby rather than imposing a definition of welfare on the material, the decision was taken to provide the interviewees with the opportunity to define the implications of the term for themselves before proceeding with the rest of the interview. This produced interesting results in some cases with a split appearing between those who saw welfare as something provided by the state, i.e. the welfare system and those who interpreted the word as having a broader meaning, encompassing general health and wellbeing both physical and spiritual.

### 1.7.2. The Common Good

Given the potentially broad scope of the term welfare it is of particular interest to this study to highlight potential tensions between understandings of the term focusing on subjective wellbeing and those which emphasise collective welfare. To this end a discussion of the notion of the common good is called for here. The notion of the common good is, like the term welfare, one that is frequently uttered in discussions of the role of both government and

church in relation to society at large and also like the term welfare an ambiguous word. Noam Chomsky has traced the concept of the common good back to Aristotle's *Politics*, the main problem of which is, he argues, 'how to achieve what Aristotle calls, "the Common Good of All." Per Aristotle, "the state is a community of equals." It's aiming at the best life possible for all of them'. As Chomsky points out, The 'People' who were to make up this community of equals was a narrow category for Aristotle:

But among those he considered the people, they have to be equal, free, participatory. And the government must not only be democratic and participatory, but also a welfare state, which provides, as he put it, "lasting prosperity to the poor by distribution of public revenues" in a variety of ways that he discusses. (Chomsky 1997)

The notion of the common good also entered Christian social thought at an early stage in the writings of thinkers such as Aquinas and Ignatius, who echoed Aristotle's basic premise, but also went further in advocating a universal scope for the common good in the case of the latter and including the ties of affection that bind people together in communities in the former (Hollenbach 2002, 6 and 9). Interesting here is the clear connection made in the thinking of these early writers between the notion of the common good and welfare provision in the form of a welfare state and also between the common good and democracy. For, as David Hollenbach has argued, the notion of the common good, was for Aristotle and other early writers 'clearly different from the largely economic and utilitarian concept of the general welfare'. An aggregative notion of welfare which pays little attention to how such welfare is distributed within the society (Hollenbach 2002, 7).

Hollenbach's exploration of the concept of the common good in contemporary society highlights in particular the fundamental challenge to notions of the common good, which pluralism, individualism and an emphasis on diversity and freedom of the individual have thrown in its path (2002, 9). In particular he draws attention to Rawl's assertion that the classic formulations of the common good are no longer an option for 'those who accept the constraints of liberty and toleration of democratic institutions' (Hollenbach 2002, 9; Rawls 1993, 201). So in the modern world, 'the good that can be achieved in the shared domain of public life is hidden from view as protection of individual, private wellbeing becomes the centre of normative concern' (Hollenbach 2002, 10).

It is with awareness of this history therefore that both formulations of the common good by representatives of the Church of England and the social actions of the Church must be assessed.

In an open letter to Muslim Scholars and leaders in 2008 bearing the title *A Common Word for the Common Good* the Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams, places the Church firmly within the tradition which sees

the role of the Christian church as defender of the common good, but also addresses the fundamental criticism of the relevance of the notion to today's society. He argues that it is the duty of all faith communities to work for the common good together and, directly addressing British Muslim leaders, says:

We can together suggest a way in which religious plurality can be seen as serving the cause of social unity and acting as a force for the common good. As people of faith, we can never claim that social harmony can be established by uncontrolled coercive power. This means that we are not obliged to defend and argue for the legitimacy and righteousness of any social order. As the world now is, diverse religious traditions very frequently inhabit one territory, one nation, one social unit (and that may be a relatively small unit like a school, or a housing co-operative or even a business). In such a setting, we cannot avoid the pragmatic and secular question of 'common security': what is needed for our convictions to flourish is bound up with what is needed for the convictions of other groups to flourish. We learn that we can best defend ourselves by defending others. In a plural society, Christians secure their religious liberty by advocacy for the liberty of people of other faiths to have the same right to be heard in the continuing conversation about the direction and ethos of society. (Williams 2008, 14)

Working for the common good includes, he continues, speaking for those who have no voice in society – 'for the poorest, the most despised, the least powerful, for women and children, for migrants and minorities; and even to speak together for that great encompassing reality which has no 'voice' or power of its own – our injured and abused material environment' (Williams 2008, 14). Thus if William's letter is to be taken as an indication of the interpretation of the Church of England of the notion of the common good it encompasses a commitment not only to welfare and a moral duty to provide for those in need, but also freedom of speech, religion and the duty of the Church to speak out in society to defend the rights and freedoms of others. In a speech entitled *Christianity: Public Religion and the Common Good* in 2007 the Archbishop of Canterbury also clearly made these connections in a contemporary context emphasizing the role of churches and established religion in particular in relation to democracy. A healthy democracy is, he argues, 'one in which the state listens to the voices of moral vision that spring from communities that do not depend on the state itself for their integrity and meaning – above all the communities of faith' (Williams 2007). The essence of the Christian contribution to the public sphere is, he maintains that,

It is a voice that questions from a wholly different perspective, the kind of perspective that cannot be generated by corporate self-interest. It is a conversation partner, and what has sometimes been called a critical friend to the state and its laws; it asks about the foundations of what the state takes for granted and often challenges the shallowness of a prevailing social morality;

it pushes for change to make the state a little more like the community that it is itself representing, the Kingdom of God. (Williams 2007)

### 1.7.3. Institutional Religion and Church

James Beckford has argued that ‘talk of the ‘role of religion in society’ is unhelpful because such phraseology masks the complexity and variety both of things that count as religions and in the ways that individuals use what they define as religious (Beckford 2003, 16). Too often, he argues, studies of religion have not taken sufficient account of its socially constructed character and treated religion as a homogeneous phenomenon (Beckford 2003, 15). So, he continues:

from a social scientific point of view, it would be better to abandon the search for, and the assumption that there are, generic qualities of religion and instead, to analyse the various situations in which religious meaning or significance is constructed, attributed or challenged. (Beckford 2003, 16)

Rather, he posits, studies should ‘descend from the generic level in order to examine precisely what each religion means in terms of social interaction and social significance at particular times and places (Beckford 2003, 19).

The current study follows this line of approach in focusing on institutional religion rather than taking a broader substantive definition of religion and on one geographical area, western Europe. Furthermore, in this study a functional definition of religion is underlying. That is to say that it is the functional role of religious institutions and not the substantive content that is of interest. In other words focus is on the functions which religious institutions can and do perform within the framework of late modern society. The study is therefore intended not as a contribution to discussion of the role which can be played by religion in the construction of individuals’ identities, but rather the ways in which religious organisations can contribute to collective societal identity and how institutional religion can function as a tool for the individual in relating to wider society.

To examine what a religion means in terms of social interaction and significance in a particular time and place by means of an empirical study requires, however, a narrower focus than the broad aim of this thesis. To this end the empirical study at the heart of this volume focuses on one religious institution (the Church of England) within its national context. This case study is then used in the theoretical analysis as an example of how religious institutions can function in Europe. Given the specific focus on church in particular as well as institutional religion in general it is therefore also important to define what is meant by church in the context of this study.

The first issue to address with the use of the word church is the fact that it is a term which can be defined as both a sociological and an ecclesiological

concept. There are major differences between the two and this study seeks to understand church as a sociologically defined entity, while taking account of and being sensitive to language used by interviewees. In particular my sociological understanding of church is grounded in the thought of Ernst Troeltsch who distinguished between three types of Christianity – church, sect and mysticism. ‘The essence of the Church’, Troeltsch maintains ‘is its objective institutional character’ (Troeltsch 1931, 338). Where the sect is a voluntary form of organisation the active members of which are the only ones who will obtain salvation, the church is more inclusive in the sense that in this world it is content to dispense grace in the form of the sacraments to all who come within the range of its influence. Hence the church has a tendency to attempt to work within and even dominate public and political domains as well as the more distinctly religious (Troeltsch 1931, 338–9).

In studying the Church of England as an organisation, however, I have not taken the path of those such as Cameron (2003) who, in studying the local church as a membership organisation, employs a definition drawn from voluntary sector studies. Cameron’s studies have thus focused on congregations rather than parishes as the local expression of church and her definition includes an element of active membership and can be applied to and is used to compare the church with other local membership organisations. The focus in this study, however, is not in comparing the Church to other organisations in civil society, but understanding what is particular to the Church in its relations to individuals and to society at large and to this end the broader troeltschian understanding of church suffices as a starting point for this study.

In this study references to the ‘Church’ are to the Church of England where as the lower case ‘church’ or ‘churches’ is used for worldwide church, or churches of denominations other than the Church of England as well as for the buildings in which these worshipping communities gather.

## 1.8. A Comparative Possibility

As has been noted above, the English case study around which this thesis is built is intended to provide an example of the role which institutional religion can play between individual and society in contemporary Europe. In order to tease out which aspects of the picture of the Church of England’s role in society are particularly influenced by the national social and cultural situation and which are potentially applicable in a wider European context perspective, a comparative element to the study is needed. Given the implicit influence a researcher’s situation is likely to have on the analysis of the material such an opportunity for comparison presented itself naturally in the dual national perspective I have. In other words the Swedish context and my knowledge of it becomes a comparative possibility. It provides the opportu-

nity to tease out the specifically national characteristics of the English case, by comparison with the Swedish.

### **Comparative Studies**

In terms of comparative studies in the field immediately relevant to this study, very little has been done. Annette Leis' comparative study of two diaconal foundations in Sweden and Germany has, however, shown that simultaneous comparison of both welfare and ecclesiastical systems is possible, if complex (Leis 2004). As a number of researchers have concluded though, even if comparison is restricted to the welfare sector complex mixes of types of provisions as well as of levels of both political responsibility and provision between systems make comparison itself complex (see for example Anttonen, Baldock & Sipilä 2003; Rostgaard & Lehto 2001).

Comparative studies of England and Sweden do however exist in a variety of academic disciplines. Perhaps of greatest relevance to this study is Lars Karlsson's study of Swedish and British healthcare, which analyses welfare regimes in the two countries within the context of the differing concepts of citizenship dominant in the two nations (Karlsson 2003). Karlsson's study is particularly helpful in that it raises the issue of the possibility of comparing two systems as different as the Swedish and British. He argues that it is not only possible but highly valuable in that, while there are many differences there are also many similarities and, he argues, it would be hard to find a country with which Sweden shares so many characteristics as Britain, outside Scandinavia that is. A purely Scandinavian contrast could, he argues, however, be seen to be so similar as to make comparison trivial (Karlsson 2003, 31).

### **Sweden as a Mirror**

The works referred to above provide ample evidence of the value that can be gained by utilising a comparative method and also in the particular value of comparison of the Swedish and British situation. This study is not, however, a comparison of the situation in Sweden and England. It is centred around a detailed case study of the situation for the Church of England at local level in England, set within a theoretical framework of global and European developments. By utilising the Swedish situation and in particular making use of the results from a study of the role of the Church of Sweden at local level in Sweden carried out by other researchers, the Swedish case can become a tool by which to facilitate analysis of the English.

The mirroring approach I propose to take in of analysing of the English case study is not, in other words, an attempt to turn the study into a full-blown comparative study, but rather adds an element of comparison into my analytical toolbox. In taking the mirroring approach outlined above I have followed the thinking of Shmuel Eisenstadt, who in his definition of the comparative approach in social research, states that the term does not 'prop-

erly designate a specific method..., but rather a special focus on cross-societal, institutional, or macrosocietal aspects of societies and social analysis' (Eisenstadt 1968, 423). More specifically, my use of comparison can be seen to be based on the approach which Donatella della Portia has called 'paired comparisons' (della Portia 2002, 297). A paired comparison, she notes, 'allows us to test hypotheses that have arisen from single case studies, without losing the "thick description" of the units of analysis' (della Portia 2002, 297). While, however, a true fully comparative analysis following this method would involve the design and implementation of a new case study specifically designed to test the hypotheses developed in the first, the mirroring approach I espouse uses a pre-existing case study and wider knowledge of its context to illuminate the particular in the original case and to aid in the development of hypotheses. It can therefore be seen to some extent as both a tool with which to develop an individual case study and a method for testing the appropriateness of a full comparative study.

## 1.9. Structure of the Thesis

The first section of this thesis sets the scene further, with an introduction to theory. This Chapter 2 is intended not so much as a recantation of the state of the art in the sociology of religion, although to some extent it can also be seen in this light. Rather it is a more selective presentation of theory relevant to questions of this study. It is intended not merely as a presentation of the thought of others, but rather as the construction of a theoretical framework on which the empirical exploration and analysis can rest. Following this, Chapters 3 and 4 outline in detail the situation at national level for both the Church of England and the British welfare state including the historical background necessary to place the contemporary situation in context. Following a brief summary of the salient points of this theoretical and factual background and their relevance to the study, the study then proceeds in the second part of the thesis to an empirical exploration of the questions at local level. Chapter 5 introduces the methods used to compile the case study and the material which this comprises, including a discussion of the methodological decisions taken. In Chapter 6, the case study itself begins to take shape. Here, the case study town is introduced and the mapping process, which plotted in detail the situation as regards church life and welfare services in the town, is recounted. This sets the scene for the presentation in Chapter 7 of the interview material. The responses of Church representatives, representatives of local authorities and of other sectors of the population are presented separately and thematically. This comparative presentation then leads the way to the final section of the thesis, which provides an analysis of the material. Chapter 8 begins to do so against the background of the national situation and also by mirroring the results against a wider European

context and the situation of the Church of Sweden in particular. Chapter 9 picks up these strands and lifts the discussion to a theoretical plane. Here, the theoretical framework developed in Chapter 2 is utilised in a development of theory based on the empirical research already showcased. Finally, the thesis ends with a discursive section (Chapter 10) where the conclusions are explored in a tentative manner and questions for future research raised.

## 2. Theoretical Overview

### 2.1. Introduction – Theoretical Framework

Before embarking on the empirical case study it is important first to establish a theoretical framework on which the study can rest and which will form the dynamic toolbox through which to analyse the material, but which itself will also be developed in the process.

This research has its origins in a considerable and growing volume of literature assessing the situation for religious organisations and religious-orientated individuals in late modern English society and indeed in an equally comprehensive body of literature addressing the role and make up of the welfare state. It is also informed by and aware of the large body of theological research addressing the motivations and implications of social action on the part of the Church from this perspective.

There is however little literature which addresses the intersection of these fields and which studies the actions and motivations of the Church as an organisation at a local level from a societal perspective, taking into account its internal discourse and the role of individuals in relation to that organisation.

This study makes use of relevant discourse in the field of welfare studies insofar as it provides a background to the situation at national level, and a framework for the case study in this respect. A comprehensive presentation of the state of research in this field is, however, beyond the scope of the present study. The focus here is rather on the theoretical framework that theories developed within subject area of the sociology of religion can provide. What follows is therefore both an overview of relevant theoretical perspectives, which can function here both as background to the situation in England (and Europe) today and provide the basis for the development of a theoretical framework for the whole study. A framework which the analysis of the empirical material will then be used to develop. In particular this chapter seeks to place the study in the wider conceptual framework of the sociology of religion as well as in the context of broader sociological theory addressing late modern society.

This research field addresses the issue of individual-church relations and therefore, makes use of the theoretical framework of the secularisation debate. However, it also raises questions relating to church-(national) society relations. In this area, use can be made of the theoretical debate surrounding

the development of contemporary society. Here theorists are divided in opinion as to whether contemporary society represents a continuation of or break with modernity. For critics of modernity such as Zygmunt Bauman (1992; 2000) it is clear that we have entered a postmodern era. Anthony Giddens, however, has argued that while changes have occurred that distinguish the current era from earlier 'simple' modernity this should be seen in terms of 'radicalised modernity' rather than postmodernity (Giddens 1990). Through use of this term Giddens wishes to emphasise the continually evolving nature of modernity, rather than defining our current era as a set societal form that has broken with an earlier modern era (Giddens 1991, 54). As Furseth and Repstad have noted 'most people in the Western hemisphere are still engaged in numerous sub-projects of modernity' (Furseth & Repstad 2006, 79). 'Therefore', they comment, 'if we must use definitive labels for our epoch, we would prefer late modern to postmodern' (Furseth & Repstad 2006, 79). Following this line of thought and the work of Giddens, the term 'late modern' will be used throughout this study, not least in order to highlight the fact that the development of society is an ongoing process where no clear lines can be drawn between a period of industrial society and the knowledge-based society of the present day.

### 2.1.1. Religion in Late Modern Society

#### **Secularisation**

The theoretical background to this study begins, with the debate which no sociologist of religion in the western hemisphere today can fail to ignore, namely the discussion of secularisation theory. The now classic theory that organised religious behaviour is undergoing a process of inevitable decline parallel and intrinsically related to the process of modernisation in the modern world, was articulated by Peter Berger in the 1960s (Berger 1969; Berger & Luckman 1966). The theory as it was proposed then and is still strongly defended by scholars such as Steve Bruce today, having observed the decline of organised religion in Western Europe during the last century predicts a comparable development in other parts of the world once certain criteria for modernisation have been fulfilled (Bruce 2001; 2002). Many scholars have however begun to doubt this reasoning that modernisation necessarily leads to a decline in religion and Berger himself has gone as far rejecting it (Berger 1998; 1999, 2). If, Berger notes,

modernization and secularization are intrinsically linked, one would have to argue that the United States is less modern than, say, the United Kingdom (which Bruce almost does, when he submits that modernization came later in the former – so it did – but it came even later in Sweden and look what happened *there*). (Berger 2001, 194)

Berger's volte-face comes not least in the light of evidence from researchers on other continents highlighting the resurgence and resilience of religion in a variety of forms (Berger 1999; 2001, 194). For examples of such work see Kepel 1994; Martin 1990). In seeking to lay the classic secularisation thesis to rest Peter Berger is joined by Rodney Stark. Having studied the historical evidence of church attendance in Europe he argues not from a basis in the relative 'modernity' to religion ratio of different countries, but rather from the premise that the religiosity of past societies has been overrepresented.

The evidence is clear that claims about a major decline in religious participation are based in part on very exaggerated perceptions of past religiousness. Participation may be very low today in several nations, but not because of modernization; therefore the secularization theory is irrelevant. (Stark 1999, 260)

David Martin argues for a nuancing of the secularisation debate, rather than its abandonment. His own *A General Theory of Secularization* published in 1978 is based on a study of Christianity, in which he argues that one does not need to assume secularisation is a long term trend, but suggests 'under what conditions religious institutions, like churches and sects, become less powerful and how it comes about that religious beliefs are less easily accepted' (Martin 1978, 12).

While the focus in both his original work and his later development of the thesis is on Europe, the European context is discussed in comparison with other parts of the globe. Neither is Europe seen as a single homogeneous entity, Martin draws in differences in historical, political and cultural developments within Europe. He does this to illustrate his basic premise that it is precisely such differences that mean that secularisation is not a direct result of modernisation and to explain patterns in the more nuanced line he himself proposes. He argues that broad tendencies in industrial society, such as geographical and social mobility, to name but two, combined with a number of other components relating to the role of religion as a part of social and cultural development (the success or not of the Reformation, relation of religion to the growth of nationalism, the specific national context etc.) serve to affect the form which the role of religious institutions has taken in different countries. These national processes, he argues, can be sorted into the following 5 categories; Total Monopoly (above all Catholic), Duopoly, Mixed (or 60:40 pattern including England), America (church-state separation / pluralism), Lutheran Scandinavia (close church-state relation) (Martin 1978, 59).

One particular focus in Martin's exploration is the motif of differentiation and the contrasting patterns this displays in relation to different societies and the development of the role of religion within them. Despite his focus on difference, however, Martin does note several factors which form the background to the process of secularisation in all the countries which he is ad-

dressings, namely the two phases of industrialisation. The first phase leaves the family structure standing in contexts organised within the framework of national boundaries, the second phase involves corrosion of these human scale structures and of a sense of national identity combined with a fragmentation of society in general and the cessation of relevance of a bounded horizon of meaning (Martin 1978, 91f). Having said this, he notes in his later works, that the process which in one society may lead to the decline of the national church may also lead simultaneously to the rise of more evangelical forms of religion (Martin 2005). The latter, however, by insisting on personal rather than vicarious religion as the measure of religiosity, may result not in a more religious society, as its adherents may have hoped, but rather the opposite. In short, Martin believes the story of secularisation in contemporary society to be a complex blend of several stories. The master narratives of past decades have not disappeared, and still retain some power of explanation, but they can no longer be assumed to follow one neat and uniform trajectory. They have lost some of their power, which to some extent must be seen as having been mythical and connected to the success of certain elites at particular periods of history.

For José Casanova the notion of the mythical power and domination of one world-view can be extended to the notion of secularisation itself. What is most interesting sociologically, he argues,

is not the fact of progressive religious decline among the European population since the 1950's, but the fact that this decline is interpreted through the lenses of the secularization paradigm and is therefore accompanied by a "secularist" self-understanding that interprets the decline as "normal" and "progressive", that is, as a quasi-normative consequence of being a "modern" and "enlightened" European. We need to entertain seriously the proposition that secularization became a self-fulfilling prophecy in Europe, once large sectors of the population of Western European societies, including the Christian churches, accepted the basic premises of the theory of secularization: that secularization is a teleological process of modern social change; that the more modern a society the more secular it becomes; that "secularity" is a "sign of the times". (Casanova 2007a, 63)

If Martin's thesis is to be accepted, however, even if Casanova's observations can be said to be true for western Europe in general, differences in the way that this has developed and played out must also be evident between the different countries in Europe, depending on the roles and dominance of different elites. Martin argues that in Britain religion 'as such' never had to face the levels of hostility found on the European continent in general and France in particular. This he attributes to the fact that where radical liberalism flourished in the French political climate, the liberal elite in Britain sought support not from the gathered 'masses', but rather from more fragmented pro-

vincial interests and a ‘provincial religiosity with which they shared commercial practicality, empiricism and pragmatism’ (Martin 2005, 67).

The question today is whether there is evidence of an ambivalent attitude to religion in Britain. Robin Gill argues that the very existence of an established church represents such evidence and that this personifies this ambivalent British attitude towards religion (Gill 2002, 338).

It offers the population at large rites of passage and Christian services at minimal cost and cares for thousands of historic buildings. In return it receives civic privileges [...] and general toleration rather than (Catholic European) anti-clericalism. Perhaps unsurprisingly, such an established Church is actively supported on a Sunday-by-Sunday basis by just a remnant of the population (2% in England). (Gill 2002, 338)

As Gill’s allusion to the small numbers of regular church attendees suggests that the majority churches in Europe are experiencing declining attendance rates (Brierley 2000; Brown 2001; Gill 2003).<sup>5</sup> For Callum Brown, the decline in the role of the established churches in Europe is not at issue. In his books *The Death of Christian Britain* (2001) and *Religion and Society in Twentieth Century Britain* (2006) Brown argues that there has been a clear secularisation of Britain during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. He challenges, however, the dominant hypothesis which argues that secularisation has been a gradual process created by scientific and Enlightenment rationale, a by-product, so to say, of the Industrial Revolution (Brown 2001). He argues rather that the Christian identity of Britain was alive and well in popular culture into the 1960s when a change in the role of the media, new gender identities and a moral revolution smashed this image precipitating a sudden change of perception as regards religious identity (Brown 2001, 169). Brown argues that this can be seen in the absence of a Christian grammar of discourse in a generation who are ‘inarticulate about religion’ (Brown 2001, 186). Brown’s argument rests heavily on his hypothesis that the sexual revolution and changes to women’s working patterns had a significant impact causing women, who had been the moral guardians of the nation, to revolt against church authority (Brown 2006, 16).

The gender aspects of Brown’s argument have not, however, gone unchallenged (McLeod 2007). Linda Woodhead (2008) who, while welcoming the gender nuancing of the secularisation thesis for which Brown’s thesis paves the way, argues that Brown over-exaggerates the changes of the 1960s and that in failing to take account of the fact that many women combine paid work with care work in the home he ‘fails to see that women’s assumption of

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<sup>5</sup> Majority in this case referring to the historical position of the Church giving it privileges and responsibilities towards society, but also to membership figures. In Sweden about 76% of the population are fee-paying members of the Church of Sweden, while in England the last census (2001) showed that 71.7% of the population regard themselves as Christian and surveys indicate that about 50% identify with the Church of England (ORB 2007).

a double burden of work hardly amounts to a straightforward revolution, let alone a liberation' (Woodhead 2008, 189).

Brown however is not alone in placing importance on societal developments in the 1960s as a turning point for religious influence. David Martin makes the same observation, but argues for an emphasis on the role of liberal left-leaning academics. The influence which they gained in key sectors of socialisation, such as education, the media and welfare services has, he claims, been important.

It means that as the state extended its role at the expense of voluntary organizations and churches, demanding secular certificates of competence divorced from any kind of confessional or religious background, the sphere of religion contracted. (Martin 2005, 67)

Moreover, this retraction of the religious sphere of influence was accomplished, he argues, not in the face of ecclesiastical opposition, but to some extent with its tacit compliance. After all, where educational and welfare organisations remained within the remit of religious bodies, the support offered by their representatives for universal and secular criteria served to undermine and therefore limit the influence of religions (2005, 67).

### **Individualisation and Subjectivisation**

Brown's thesis is of relevance to the current study insofar as he indicates that the formal religious institutions which have exercised power and influence in British society and have therefore had a distinct role to play in national and local life, appear to be on the wane. This argument is also espoused by Pollack who argues that a combination of the secularisation thesis and the individualisation thesis is still the most appropriate model for explaining religious change in Europe. He argues that the growth in syncretistic forms of individual religiosity and new religious movements cannot compensate for the decline experienced by churches (Pollack 2008).

Paul Heelas and Linda Woodhead in their latest joint contribution to the nuancing of the secularisation debate in the English context add to this picture. They build on the theoretical framework developed in their earlier works and develop this with empirical material gathered in a study of the town of Kendal in Cumbria in the rural North West. In their book *The Spiritual Revolution* (2004) Heelas and Woodhead seek to test the hypothesis that in the modern western world a spiritual revolution is taking place in which spirituality is taking over from religion (Heelas & Woodhead 2004). Rather than pursuing the path of the postmodern theoreticians who argue that a form of pick and mix approach to religion is becoming evident, the authors attempt to explain both the rise of spirituality and decline of institutional religion with the 'subjectivization thesis' (Heelas & Woodhead 2004, 2). They argue in other words that processes of both decline and growth can be ex-

plained by a cultural shift in modern western culture away from ‘life lived in terms of external or ‘objective’ roles, duties and obligations, and a turn towards life lived by reference to one’s own subjective experiences’ (Heelas & Woodhead 2004, 2). A shift which in religious terms means decline in affiliation with religions where authority is located in transcendent and external forms of devotion, ‘life-as religion’ and a correspondent rise in more personalised approach where authority is internal and subjectively defined, ‘subjective-life spirituality’ (Heelas & Woodhead 2004, 5). A spiritual revolution could, in these terms, therefore be said to take place when ‘subjective life’ forms of understanding of the sacred attract more people than do ‘life-as’ religions (Heelas & Woodhead 2004, 7). Given the subjective turn in evidence in modern society alongside the parallel emphasis on target related performance in many areas of life, not least working life, the authors argue that it is not surprising that individuals in their free time choose to engage with forms of the sacred which do not impose targets and regulations (Heelas & Woodhead 2004, 128). They are careful to state that it is not possible to say that a spiritual revolution has yet occurred despite the major changes in society, not least because growth in those practising ‘subjective-life’ spiritualities in the ‘holistic milieu’ has not made up for the decline in affiliation with ‘life-as’ religions in the ‘congregational domain’ (Heelas & Woodhead 2004, 149). But, they predict, although the holistic milieu is still comparatively small today it is likely to continue to grow and traditional churchgoing to continue to decline (Heelas & Woodhead 2004, 149).

Heelas and Woodhead’s argument builds to some extent on the now well worn concept ‘believing without belonging’ introduced to the debate by Grace Davie as the subtitle to her book *Religion in Britain since 1945* (Davie 1994). She argues that although the British at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century do not belong in the sense of attending places of worship, they continue to believe. In this basic assertion Davie’s argument is supported by a number of surveys showing a continued interest amongst significant sections of the population in existential questions.<sup>6</sup> Davie’s argument has, however, been criticised, not least by Steve Bruce who argues that ‘if the British are believing it is not orthodox Christianity, which has always put a high premium on belonging’ (Bruce 2002b, 324). Bruce’s criticism could, however, possibly be seen in this context as as much a rebuttal of the eagerness with which Davie’s concept was embraced by representatives of the established churches and interpreted as an argument for the continued relevance of the churches in contemporary society as of Davie’s argument itself. As she herself has responded:

Nowhere have I said that belief that detaches itself from institutional commitment remains unchanged. What I have said, and reaffirm here, is that be-

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<sup>6</sup> see European Values Study

belief that detaches itself from institutional commitment begins to drift away from the orthodoxies endorsed by the institution in question. (Davie 2002b, 333)

The gaps between the churches' official positions and the beliefs of the populations which they serve are, in other words, growing as the church's influence on society in general wanes. One person who has highlighted this change in the British context is Robin Gill, who has sought to demonstrate that the decline in churchgoing and resulting lack of Christian socialisation has led to a diminution not only of Christian belief, but also of specifically Christian values amongst the population at large (Gill 1999). Davie's notion of believing without belonging, has however been developed in more than one direction. The French sociologist Danièle Hervieu-Léger agrees with Davie, that this concept is a helpful characterisation of the state of secularisation in Europe, but points out that the phrase can be inverted and as 'belonging without believing' expresses an element of Europeans' attitude to religion (Hervieu-Léger 2006b, 48). This attitude, she writes 'entails a distant shared memory, which does not necessitate shared belief, but which – even from a distance – still governs collective reflexes in terms of identity' (Hervieu-Léger 2006b, 48). The notion of shared memory, on which Hervieu-Léger bases her argument is drawn from her work *Religion as a Chain of Memory* (2000). Davie too has taken this concept of shared and cultural memory and applied it directly to the context of the national churches of Europe, which people associate with their national and cultural identity and the preservation of a cultural heritage (Davie 2000, 59–60). She argues that it is possible to view the churches of Europe as examples of vicarious memory and to speak of institutional religion in Europe as 'vicarious religion' (Davie 2001, 106). In Davie's own words 'by vicarious, I mean the notion of religion performed by an active minority on behalf of a much larger number, who (implicitly at least) not only understand but quite clearly approve what the minority is doing' (Davie 2006b, 25).

Despite their contention of a continued vicarious role for the churches in Europe, however, Davie and Hervieu-Léger are in agreement that the symbolic cultural role of religion, must be interpreted against a background of a contemporary culture that is significantly individualistic. Davie argues that the sea change that has occurred in the way in which people understand the role of the church or religion in their lives can be understood in terms of obligation and consumption. As the influence of the church wanes in public life an increasing number of choices emerge for individuals, both between church and secular life (on a Sunday morning say) and between Christianity and other religions (Davie 2002). Where religion was once something 'embedded' in the local community and attending church something one was obliged to do or simply just did because everyone did is now a matter of choice (Chambers 2005, 201). It can therefore be concluded that people go

to church if and when they want to and, perhaps most importantly in the context of a study of the Church's role in welfare, at the same time expect the churches still to be there when they need or want them.

At this stage in the discussion a return to the ideas of David Martin is fruitful. He argues that the ethos of centralisation that is so key to the organisation of British society both supported the continued existence of an established church and has also contributed to its decline. For him:

the centralization which in England was once associated with the partial retention of an established church and a generalized Protestantism, along with a Protestant national identity, finds an analogous contemporary realization in the way the secular élite is able to exert influence over centralized institutions on the Scandinavian rather than the North American model (Martin 2005, 67).

In other words institutions which once supported a 'diffuse religiosity' in societal discourse have now moved to a 'diffuse secularity' and this shift itself has a particular European dimension (Martin 2005, 67).

### 2.1.3. The European Paradigm

The notion that the relative secularity of contemporary Europe might be exceptional in global terms already hinted at above has become a central feature of the secularisation debate (Berger 1999). Proponents of this notion of European exceptionalism argue that far from forming the template for the development of religious behaviour and organisations worldwide, Europe is a specific and unique case on the world scene as far as religious behaviour is concerned (Davie 1999; 2000a; 2002; 2006b). North American scholars have argued, for example, that while modernisation in Europe led to the decline of the mainstream churches, in the United States upsurges in conservative religious congregations point to development on a different trajectory from that evident in Europe (Tamney 2002; Warner 1993). The argument for European exceptionalism in this case is to a large extent influenced by the work of Shmuel Eisenstadt and his notion of 'multiple modernities' (Eisenstadt 2000). Eisenstadt is not addressing religion in particular and its connection to modernity, rather he challenges the classical theories of modernisation that assumed 'that the cultural program of modernity as it developed in modern Europe and the basic institutional constellations that emerged there would ultimately take over in all modernizing and modern societies' (Eisenstadt 2000, 1). It is by using Eisenstadt's theories as a springboard that scholars of religion have challenged traditional articulations of secularisation theory and begun to explore notions of multiple religious modernities (Hervieu-Léger 2003, 290). It is also by taking his work as a starting point that

they raise the question of whether Europe's secularity is the result of its modernity or its distinct European nature (Davie 2006, 290).

An example of the direction in which this debate is progressing can be instructive in the context of this thesis. Having argued that the established church is one institution in British society that argues particularly strongly for religious as opposed to ethnic toleration, Berger, Davie and Fokas in their recent *Religious America, Secular Europe?* (2008) attempt to highlight an important distinction, which they feel is often overlooked from an American perspective, namely that there is a difference between 'a historically strong state church and its modern somewhat weaker equivalent' (Berger, Davie & Fokas 2008, 129). They do not wish simply to draw this to the reader's attention however, rather the punch line of their argument is that while the former is almost automatically an exclusive organisation, the latter is not and can use its still considerable influence to include rather than exclude. It has, they argue, 'capacities to create and sustain a space within society in which faith is taken seriously – doing so by means of its connections with the state' (Berger, Davie & Fokas 2008, 129). This space-creating phenomenon attributed to the established church can serve as an argument for a continued role for an established church in a plural society and has been adopted both by representatives of other faith communities and the Church of England itself (Rothschild 1997; Sachs 2005). In terms of the Church's own recognition of this role it is interesting to note that Davies and Guest, in summing up their survey of retired Church of England bishops, conclude that a solid core of bishops perceived their role as including the representation of the religious and moral positions of people of other denominations and faiths (Davies & Guest 2007, 63). In fact, 90% of the bishops surveyed indicated that 'service to all of religious conscience' was of some level of concern to them (Davies & Guest 2007, 63). As Beckford has argued on the basis of a study of prison chaplaincy in the United Kingdom:

the persistence of an intimate connection between the church and the state helps to preserve a space for religion in areas of public life from which it is already excluded in many countries, but [...] the existence of an established church also aggravates friction with other faith communities. (Beckford 2001, 46)

Against this theoretical and to a certain extent empirically-based background, it is of interest to contribute to the debate with an in-depth study of an example of this European phenomenon and to include in this elements of comparison with other countries. In the continued scholarly debate of the role of religion in contemporary society the question of the continued relevance of an established church in an increasingly plural society is a highly relevant research field on which to focus. Here focusing on church-state relations in the area of welfare debate and provision is one way of highlight-

ing changes in relations between individuals and institutional religion. This is not least because the study in its focus on the relationship between church and welfare provision and activism allows one to concentrate on a particular area of church activity where the Church has both played a role historically and continues to play a role which touches on the lives of people who do not regularly attend the Church's worship services. It is also an arena where the continued role or alternatively absence of a role for institutional religion in public life and in relation to the political establishment, can be made visible and analysed. Furthermore a focus on issues connected to the composition of the welfare system and the impact of this on the lives of individuals itself highlights important issues concerning changes in the relationship between individual and society. This general picture in turn provides the wider context within which the question of role of institutional religion can be assessed. Ulrich Beck has argued that welfare state regulations 'presume the individual as actor, designer, juggler and stage director of his or her own biography, identity, social networks, commitments and convictions' (Beck 1994, 14). So, he continues:

'Individualization' means the disintegration of the certainties of industrial society as well as the compulsion to find and invent new certainties for oneself and others without them. But it also means new interdependencies, even global ones. Individualisation and globalization are in fact two sides of the same process of reflexive modernization. (Beck 1994, 14)

#### 2.1.4. Globalisation and Glocalisation

It thus becomes clear that one area of the current debate surrounding the development of late modern society which cannot be ignored in a study touching on issues of welfare policy in contemporary Europe and relations between individuals and institutions in society is the issue of globalisation. Not least in this context because discussions of the nature of globalisation touch both on the areas of welfare reform and development and the notion of a convergence of welfare policy, and also because of the framework such theories can give to an understanding of the role of the nation state and the relationship between church and nation state. The work of Ulrich Beck is illuminating in this context.

Beck (1992) discusses risk in much the same terms as Giddens, using the concepts of trust and confidence, though with one important difference. Beck chooses to focus on structures rather than individuals and therefore his discussion focuses on the understanding and impact of risk at a societal level, not least a national and international level. We face in the world today, he argues, risks that result from scientific and industrial development, that – unlike the risks faced by earlier generations – are both timeless and spaceless. These risks are defined according to measures of scientific probability

and technical experts have, to a large extent, been given the monopoly on risk discourse. This however, according to Beck needs to be questioned as he argues that one of the greatest risks in society today is the reliance of individuals on institutions and actors who speak in terms to which the people affected by the risks in question cannot relate.

The assumption that science holds the ultimate truth has meant that reflexivity has had no place in the interaction between experts and groups in society concerning these risks. Beck argues that if societies are to evolve they need to become reflexive and to operationalise this reflexivity in, amongst other things, a critique of scientific knowledge. Beck sees social change as being divisible into 3 distinct periods pre-modernity, simple modernity and finally reflexive modernity. Simple modernity is tied to industrial society, whereas reflexive modernity relates to risk society, and while industrial society is class based, risk society is individualised. Risk society has, however, not left industrial society behind altogether as the risks of risk society are created by industry and science.

Despite discussing the impact of notions of risk on individuals in late modern society, he proposes an understanding of global society where the nation state still has a significant role to play in providing a structure which balances the demands of the global and the local (Beck 2000). Beck's concept is helpful in assessing the role of national churches which continue to relate significantly to the nation state and which are historically related to and continue to contribute to a form of national identity. This said the churches in question reach both beyond the national context in their links to worldwide church bodies and are focused locally in their parochial ministry.

### **Glocalisation**

The tension between these different levels and the varying perceptions of the churches that exist at these three levels, both inside and outside of the organisations, are perfect examples of what Robertson terms 'glocalisation' (Robertson 1992), an attempt in a single term to describe the simultaneous focus in individual lives on the immediate local situation as well as the wider global situation. A term Beck has adopted as a useful concept encapsulating the ambiguity of the reflexive process of globalisation (Beck 2000). How far this impacts on the church and the practical forms that this tension takes is an issue to be explored in relation to the empirical study. Not least will it be interesting to assess the position of the church in society in its national context between the individual and the state.

### **Risk and Choices: Individual, Welfare State and Religion**

Bellah has argued that the essence of individualisation and the place which the individual and her right to choice has in late modern society can be articulated in terms of sacredness. We believe, Bellah contends, 'in the dignity, indeed the sacredness of the individual. Anything that would violate our

right to think for ourselves, judge for ourselves, make our own decisions, live our lives as we see fit, is not only morally wrong, it is sacrilegious' (Bellah 1985, 142).

In the risk society Beck sketches, individualisation has resulted in a society where 'Life, death, gender, corporeality, identity, religion, marriage, parenthood, social ties – all are becoming decidable down to the small print; once fragmented into options everything must be decided' (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim 1996, 29). For Beck and Beck-Gernsheim the result of this overload of choices can be both autonomy and anomie, but in both respects the absence of social barriers and routine in deciding both large and small questions results in the 'deification' of decisions about lifestyles (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim 1996, 31). Or, to put it in other words 'everyday life is being post-religiously "theologised"' (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim 1996, 31). Of course, this conclusion assumes the acceptance of the hypothesis that we live in a post-religious age, but whether or not one accepts the definition post-religious as a relevant description of the decline of influence of religious institutions in contemporary western European society, these conclusions are a helpful illustration of the impact on individuals. 'As modernity gains ground, God, nature and the social systems are being progressively replaced, in greater and lesser steps, by the individual – confused, astray, helpless and at a loss' (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim 1996, 32). In the face of this 'precarious freedom' Beck and Beck-Gernsheim pose the questions of whether there is a remaining social unit, how welfare policy, for example, should react to this diversification and the overarching question: is it possible to integrate highly individualised societies? (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim 1996, 42). In recent years, however, there are also those who have begun to answer yes to this question and to posit that individualism can in fact be a value which can have an integrating function. Pål Repstad has, for example, warned against over exaggerating the tendency towards privatisation, since collective cultural frameworks will always continue to exist, even if they do so in new ways (Repstad 2002a; 2002b). The debate needs, he argues, counterweights to 'superficial theories of society that assume that everyone in societies of our type [Norway] are living in increasingly similar ways and thinking increasingly individualistically – all together' (Repstad 2002a, 179).<sup>7</sup>

Such questions of the extent to which individualisation and differentiation are impacting the cohesion of society in contemporary Europe are of particular importance for this study for two reasons. Firstly it is imperative to place the interpretation of perceptions and expectations of the role of the national church within the framework of changes in society in general. Secondly, the particular impact which such changes have on support for the welfare state also frame discussions of the role of the church in that sphere.

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<sup>7</sup> My translation from the Norwegian: 'overflatisk samfunnsteori som forutsetter at alle i samfunn av vår type lever mer likt og tenker stadig mer individualistisk – alle sammen.'

Theories of functional differentiation, which originated in Emile Durkheim's *The Division of Labour* (1893) and were developed with regard to religion in his *Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* (1912) predicted the loss of a central role for religious institutions in society as the welfare state and professional organisations dedicated to health and welfare took over the tasks which were once the preserve of the church. Durkheim's prediction was that this loss of social role for the churches would also eventually result in a fading of their spiritual and moral roles. While there is evidence which appears to show that churchgoing falls most dramatically in those societies with the most comprehensive welfare states (Verweij, Ester & Nauta 1997), critics of this approach argue that 'An erosion of the social purpose of the church through functional differentiation does not necessarily mean that the core moral and spiritual roles of religious institutions are diminished or lost – indeed they could become more important' (Inglehart & Norris 2004, 10).

This observation is of particular interest when connected to discussions on the historical development of the welfare state and the impact of this on religion's role in society and vice versa. Philip Manow, who has written extensively on the role of the Christian churches in Europe in welfare state development, argues that welfare state growth can 'be seen to be (at least partially) responsible for the loss of the moral and cultural strength of religion in modern societies' (Manow 2004, 15). Manow's argument here is grounded in the work of Inglehart and Norris, who in their contribution to the secularisation debate have developed what they term a 'theory of existential security and secularisation' (Inglehart & Norris 2004, 217). This theory they base on two axioms, the security axiom and the cultural traditions axiom. Under the second heading they make the proposition that variations in religiosity between societies can partially be explained by 'each society's historical legacy of predominant religious traditions'. The predominant religious tradition can, in each society, be seen to stamp its mark on that society, they posit, 'affecting how societal modernization influences patterns of religious beliefs and practices' (Inglehart & Norris 2004, 28). It is their first proposition, however, which most concerns us here. Their argument is that 'levels of societal modernization, human development and economic equality shape the strength of [...] values, beliefs and practices of religion existing in any society' (Inglehart & Norris 2004, 27). While those poorer pre-industrial societies most vulnerable in the face of natural disaster and social risks are likely to afford religion a central role, in affluent post-industrial societies with high levels of social security religion is likely to have a lower priority (Inglehart & Norris 2004, 28). Manow's development of this hypothesis is that in helping to reduce survival-threatening risks, feelings of personal vulnerability and a sense of existential insecurity the welfare state has 'helped to dry out one of the strongest sources of religiosity and longing for religious guidance' (Manow 2004, 15).

If Manow is correct there can be said to be connections between welfare state development and changes in the social role of institutional religion and it is these connections and in particular their impact on the role of institutional religion which this study seeks to explore further on an empirical level. Before proceeding to such an analysis, however, one further factor must be added to the mix. In his studies, Manow primarily focused on the historical impact of different denominations on the development of different typologies of welfare state, whereas the current study seeks to provide a snapshot of the contemporary situation, albeit against the background of the historical trends which have influenced its formation. In this context it is crucial to look not only at the way welfare state development has influenced religion and vice versa, but also at nuances in the current state of affairs.

One such element is the curtailing of benefits and resources and marketisation of welfare provision and the corresponding decline in support for the welfare state. Zygmunt Bauman argues that declining support for the welfare state can be connected to the fact that it embodies a lack of choice which is out of tune with the ideals of consumer society (Bauman 2005, 59). Against this background as the provision of the welfare state becomes more focused on the poorest in society the majority of citizens see little reason to engage in the political life of the community. Thus Bauman feels the 'downsizing of the welfare state goes hand in hand with the wilting and shrinking of the politically active citizenship' (Bauman 2005, 50).

## 2.1.5. Civil Society and Social Capital

### **Civil Society**

There is a certain danger in using the concept of civil society as a theoretical framework to aid interpretation in that it is a relatively underdeveloped concept and has been used over recent years by both academics and representatives of a variety of movements to represent a huge range of concepts. This academic field is however developing fast and there is, to define the field crudely, a unity amongst researchers into civil society and the voluntary sector that an understanding needs to be developed around the area of society which stands between the individual, the state and the market. Of considerable help here is Filip Wijkström's model which divides the social sphere into four sectors, state, market, civil society and family (Wijkström & Lundström 2002, 7). For this study therefore the concept is of use in terms of providing a framework within which to analyse the relation of churches to both individuals and other organisations in society in the welfare sphere. In ascertaining where the churches in question fit into this model, if at all, and how they relate to different elements of it a clearer picture can be provided of the role which the Church plays.

Since the separation of church and state in Sweden in the year 2000 much attention has been paid to the new role of the Church of Sweden as a part of the voluntary sector in society and in England the political trend in recent years has clearly been to attempt to harness the various faith communities, including the national church and its affiliated organisations, as allies in local social development (See Farnell 2009; Taylor 2002). Although as Richard Farnell has indicated ‘many professionals at the local level, whether in local authorities, regeneration agencies or third sector bodies view faith organisations with a degree of suspicion’ (Farnell 2009, 183). Similarly some scepticism is evident as to the motivations behind political interest in co-operation with faith groups. This reticence is expressed both by representatives of the faith communities themselves and by those few academics who have concentrated on the role of faith groups in society (Davis, Paulhus & Bradstock 2008). One reason for this is the adoption of the notion of social capital in political circles so here it may be interesting to consider the notion of social capital and its frequent connection in discussions of the contribution of voluntary organisations to religious groups.

### **Social Capital**

Perhaps the most well known exposition of the notion of social capital, certainly within political circles, is the thought of Robert Putnam (1993; 2000; 2007). While, however it was Putnam’s work which popularised the concept in recent years, not only does it predate him, but his formulation and understanding of the term is by no means universally accepted.

Alejandro Portes (1998, 3) credits Pierre Bourdieu with conducting the first full contemporary analysis of social capital and certainly it is his definition of the concept and that of his contemporary James Coleman that have formed the starting point for much thought in the field. Bourdieu’s definition of social capital grew out of his work on cultural capital and for him social capital is one of a number of forms of capital which are resources at the disposal of the individual. For him, social capital is ‘the aggregate of the actual or potential resources, which are linked to a possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition’ (Bourdieu 1986, 248). For Coleman, too, social capital is a resource, but one which, unlike other forms of capital, ‘inheres in the structure of relations between persona and among persons’ (Coleman 1988, S98). It is, in other words, contextual, existing only between individuals in a certain context. In their understanding of social capital as a structural resource there are clear similarities between Bourdieu’s and Coleman’s approaches, but there is one important and interesting difference in that where for Bourdieu the creation of social capital is an intentional process, for Coleman there is little or no direct investment (Field, Schuller & Baron 2000a, 7).

Putnam’s work on social capital builds to a certain extent on Coleman, but differs in the important respect that where for Coleman social capital is

tied to particular relationships, for Putnam it is an individual phenomenon and therefore also able to be moved by an individual to other relationships (Furseth 2008, 151). In one of his most concise definitions of social capital Putnam declares that what he means by the term is ‘features of social life – networks, norms and trust – that enable participants to act together more effectively to pursue shared objectives’ (Putnam 1996, 66). Here, as well as emphasising the active nature of the role he perceives for the individual in generating social capital, he highlights the three terms networks, norms and trust, which have come to dominate both discussion of and analysis utilizing the concept of social capital (Field, Schuller & Baron 2000a, 9).

In his book which bore a title that caught the popular and political imagination *Bowling Alone* (2000), Putnam’s detailed analysis of the state of American society predicts a decline in societal cohesion and trust and therefore also a challenge to democracy. This will happen he argues, as individuals reject the associationalism which has been the foundation of social networks and begin not only to bowl, but also to pray alone.

Distinctions are made in the literature on social capital between bridging and bonding networks (Putnam 2000, 22). The former are portrayed in a positive light, defined as those which cross social boundaries and bring people into contact with a wider range of ‘others’ (Paxton 2002, 259). Bonding networks in contrast are groups where emphasis is placed on the strengthening internal group cohesion and in bringing together people from similar backgrounds or with similar interests. For Putnam bridging and bonding are not so much either/or categories as dimensions along which different forms of social capital can be compared (Putnam 2000, 23). However, as Putnam himself has been forced to admit (Field, Schuller & Baron 2000b, 247), there are examples of bonding networks which can potentially have a negative rather than positive impact on society as internal group bonding strengthens both social divisions and ‘us versus them’ thinking between groups (Putnam 2000, 22; Paxton 2002, 259).

Despite the wealth of material written on social capital, however, transforming the concept into a tool for the study of a contemporary local community is problematic. For example, one way of defining the bridging or bonding nature of a voluntary organisation that has been utilised is a study of overlapping memberships. This builds on the logic that if an individual is a member of a number of organisations he or she acts as a bridge between these and ties them into the broader structure of society (Paxton 2002). However, as Coffé & Geys have demonstrated simple counts of the number of members of associations who also have additional memberships lead to a bias towards the portrayal of large associations as more bonding and are therefore misleading (Coffé & Geys 2008, 365). Also, as Campbell has noted, there are further problems with using Putnam’s concept of social capital as conceptual tool in studying twenty-first century local English communities (Campbell 2000, 192). Campbell, in assessing the potential for use of

Putnam's notion of social capital in local community health promotion, argues that its characterisation of community life is both romanticised and inaccurate and that social capital cannot and should not be seen as a 'homogenous resource' available equally to all members of a community (Campbell 2000, 192–3). She also maintains that Putnam's emphasis on membership of organisations is unhelpful in the English context (Campbell 2000, 192). Rather, she claims, community networks tend to be more informal and small-scale and that these networks of family and friends are not taken account of by Putnam's model. Here it is interesting to note that much of the work undertaken in the sociology of religion on social capital has also paid little attention to informal networks in studying interaction between church attendance and civil engagement. In this respect therefore it is important not to forget alternative formulations of social capital to Putnam's model, as Furseth has pointed out. However, while there is possibly an over-emphasis in Putnam's work on voluntary organisations as the primary creators of social capital, he did early on acknowledge the family to be the most important form of social capital (Furseth 2008, 154; Putnam 1995, 667).

While it must be noted that Putnam's analysis that social capital in the United States is declining has not gone unchallenged (Ammerman 1997; 2002) it is not this debate which is of primary concern here. The differences between the United States and Europe as regards religious climate are significant and what is of particular interest to this study are the conceptual tools, which the theory provides for analysing the role of religious institutions in a European context. Having said this, however, the warnings sounded by the not insignificant number of critics of the concept should not be ignored when adopting social capital as an analytical tool. Despite the enchantment of policy makers with the term, as Portes reminded the research community a decade ago, in essentials the concept is not a new one to sociologists (Portes 1998, 2). Neither, Inger Furseth argues, should it be seen as a new notion to the sociology of religion since 'the idea that participation in groups can have positive effects for the individual and the community dates back to Durkheim' and, she continues, often lies at the heart of thought within the field (Furseth 2008, 149). Despite this, little systematic work has been dedicated to the relationship between religion and social capital until recent years and much of what has been undertaken has focused on the United States of America (cf. Smidt 2003; Foley & Hodge 2007). This study is intended as a contribution to this field from the European perspective.

Given the dominance of work in this field from the United States, however, any attempt to develop theories of social capital and religion from foundations in empirical studies in Europe, must also engage with theories developed in the United States. This raises the question once again as to the extent to which differences between the respective religious climates in the United States and Europe affect the transfer of conclusions relating to the interplay between welfare and institutional religion between the two con-

texts. Cnaan et al. in their contribution to Smidt's volume on religion and social capital in the United States, which they have entitled *Bowling Alone, but Serving Together*, list five factors which, they argue, contribute to high levels of human and social capital-building in religious congregations and their involvement in welfare service provision (Cnaan et al. 2003, 25). These are the group processes of life in congregations, the historical disestablishment of religion, homogeneity within congregations, the influence of religious moral teaching and changes in the 'ecology' of local voluntary organisations (Cnaan et al. 2003, 25). While the majority of these are applicable to the European situation their second factor, 'the historical disestablishment of religion which necessitates the entrepreneurial spirit of congregations', is one area in which Europe and the United States differ. A pertinent question though is whether in Europe the historical establishment of religion is not a factor contributing to social capital and the social involvement of churches in the European context. Another factor which Cnaan et al. bring up, namely changes in affiliation to local voluntary organisations, which has left many congregations as the primary local institution rings true, for example within the European situation. Local institutions, Cnaan et al. argue, can act as 'mediating organizations' between individuals at local level and powerful bodies such as the state or large companies (Cnaan et al. 2003, 30). This phenomenon can be seen in Europe where it is often parish churches of the established churches that fill a similar central role. It is, however, important to emphasise here the necessity of a contextual perspective when studying social capital. Maloney, Smith and Stoker are at pains to stress for example that the flow of influence from civil society to state is reciprocal and that, in the United Kingdom, the facilitation and encouragement of voluntary work by both local and national government is one factor that has proved to be important in the creation or enhancement of social capital (Maloney, Smith & Stoker 2000, 222–3).

These two issues are both areas that will be explored further in this study at a local as well as a theoretical level. Cnaan and his co-authors end their article with the conclusion that in the United States 'local religious congregations are at the forefront of meeting people's basic needs and serving as our national social safety net, a function that in other advanced democracies is reserved for governments' (Cnaan et al. 2003, 31). Here they hit on an important issue in studies of the intersection between religion and welfare where the concept of social capital is particularly useful in highlighting points of political as well as academic relevance. In a European context observations similar to those above on the positive implications of social capital in civil society for society in general, have also suggested a negative dimension. It has been noted that one danger of fostering social capital is that it gives the state the opportunity to divest itself of responsibility, not least in the welfare sphere (Field, Schuller & Baron 2000a, 34). The question in the context of this study therefore is not only whether religious organisations

and historical majority churches in particular contribute to social capital, but also whether they can be said to do so in a manner distinct from other organisations. In other words can institutional religion be said to contribute to social capital and can an exploration of this question shed light on the role of institutional religion in late modern society?

### **Voluntarism and Churchgoing**

When studying the role of the established church in England as an organisation in the welfare sphere, it is important not only to consider its impact on social capital as an organisation amongst other voluntary organisations, but also to introduce to the equation the specifics of the fact that it is a religious organisation. Greg Smith has raised the question of whether, in studies of religious institutions and policy making it is better to think of the faith sector as a subset of the voluntary sector or as a distinct entity and there seems to be no one universal answer to this question (Smith 2002). While it is possible to see religious organisations and congregations as part of civil society, or the voluntary and community sector, those who have conducted research in this area urge some caution. Margaret Harris, for example, has argued that ‘congregations are ‘special case voluntary associations’ in which the actions of participants are limited and proscribed in at least two important respects and in ways which would not normally apply in a secular voluntary association’ (Harris 1998b, 616). A position in which she is joined by Rachael Chapman who has argued that while there are many similarities between the contributions and experiences of faith-based organisations and more secular voluntary and community sector associations to urban governance there are also differences. The similarities, she maintains mean that secular and faith-based organisations have the potential to support and learn from one another. The differences, however, including in the ‘underlying basis of values, beliefs and motivations’ mean that faith-based organisations have a distinctive contribution to make (Chapman 2009, 218). So, Chapman concludes, although the similarities mean that there is a certain logic in locating faith-based organisations within civil society this can ‘mask diversity and distinctiveness, which is fundamentally important to some groups and within certain policy contexts’ (Chapman 2009, 219).

In the context of Birmingham’s inner city Karner and Parker have shown that religion plays a crucial role in promoting a culturally and religiously heterogeneous locality ‘as a resource facilitating social networks and initiatives – social capital both within and across boundaries; and as key motivation for many of its most committed social actors’ (Karner & Parker 2008, 520). The question is how applicable such findings are to more homogeneous localities and to the role of the established church.

In Scotland, a report carried out on behalf of the Church of Scotland in 2002 concluded on the basis of surveys, interviews and case study material that the ‘spiritual, communal and secular dimensions of congregational ac-

tivity are complementary components of the ability of churches to contribute to local stocks of social capital' (Flint, Atkinson & Kearns 2002, 2). The authors also note that on average Church of Scotland congregations are involved in about fifty percent of an identified range of activities that could generate social capital in the local community. In a similar vein Anne Yeung (2004a) has demonstrated in the Finnish context that belonging to a church can be linked to motivation to volunteer outside the church, while the 'British Citizenship Survey', collated on behalf of the Home Office, has shown that those who actively practise a religion are more likely to volunteer than those who do not (Kitchen 2006, 10). In her study of the impact of church attendance and involvement in religious voluntary organisations on social capital in another context with a historically strong majority church, Norway however, Kerstin Strømsnes has concluded that the relationship is more complex than is often recognised (Strømsnes 2008, 493). She concluded that while church attendance and membership of religious organisations has an important impact on individuals' political participation, it has little or no influence on levels of general trust in society of the tolerance of other groups once other factors have been controlled for (Strømsnes 2008, 493). In particular it is interesting to note the important role played by gender, which she identifies. As Strømsnes notes, the close association between gender and social trust and toleration which she identifies in her material can lead to the conclusion that 'the relationship initially observed between religious involvement and social trust and tolerance may partly be a consequence of there being more women amongst those who are religiously involved' (Strømsnes 2008, 492). In other words, in this context at least, there is evidence that active identification with a local church community is itself a factor which influences the extent to which individuals seek overlapping involvement in a variety of organisations and therefore churches can be seen as inherently bridging organisations, but some caution must be maintained in extending this to conclusions as to the contribution of churches to general social capital when defined in terms of trust.

In adding a gender dimension to her analysis Strømsnes brings to the discussion questions not only of the role played by gender, but also of the impact which the internal structures of congregations can have on their ability to generate social capital. In a similar vein John Coleman has concluded that it seems likely that denominational affiliation is a less significant factor in the generation of social capital than the structures of authority within congregations. Only horizontal authority structures, he notes, generally seem to generate social capital (Coleman 2003, 37). While Coleman's observations add welcome nuance to the debate, his conclusion may not be as comprehensively applicable as it seems at first glance. Furseth questions the argument that vertical religious authority necessarily hinders social capital with the example of the Nordic majority Lutheran churches where religiosity and

civic participation have been shown to correlate in a positive manner (Furseth 2008, 156).

Yeung's observations above must also be seen within the context of declining church attendance in the majority churches in Europe. In England in particular unpaid workers are crucial to both the day-to-day running of parish churches and congregations and to any outreach or welfare work that they perform (Harris 1998a). Helen Cameron is one scholar who has explored the consequences of declining church attendance and regular commitment to a particular parish or congregation and their potential. From a foundation in a detailed empirical study of five congregations in England she paints a stark picture of the challenges facing local churches. She demonstrates the significant voluntary human resources needed simply to keep churches running on a day-to-day basis and predicts that in the future only a small proportion of those who claim affiliation to the Church will continue to do so through membership of a local church (Cameron 2003, 118). Cameron's interest is in 'membership as a social phenomenon', and in analysing the congregations as 'membership organisations' she identifies the same problems facing them as are facing other traditional membership organisations in civil society (Cameron 2003, 110). The challenge to local churches, in her analysis, is in other words not simply the decline in member numbers, although this plays a part, but broader changes in the expectations of those affiliated to churches of both their own commitment and of the church as a provider of services.

Although Cameron is unusual as one of few scholars applying the disciplinary approach of voluntary sector studies to religious groups, she is not alone in making the connection between decline in church attendance and commitment and a decline in civic engagement and group association in general. What Steve Bruce terms the 'decline-of-associating thesis' is most well known in the form promulgated by Putnam in an American context (Bruce 2002, 318; Putnam 2000). Putnam's argument is that there has been a severe decline in social capital in the United States as people disengage socially, and he backs up his argument with considerable empirical material showing downturns in membership of political parties, trade unions and organisations such as Rotary and Scouts, as well as in church attendance and participation in group social activities. In this perspective the decline of church attendance in Britain, too, can be interpreted as one example of a general decline in voluntary activity, rather than a decline in interest in Christianity as such. Bruce argues that the decline in church attendance in Britain cannot be part of a general decline in civic engagement because 'there has not been any great decline in associating' (Bruce 2002, 326). In reaching this conclusion Bruce leans on the analysis of Peter Hall, which 'finds no equivalent erosion' of social capital in the British case to that which Putnam finds in the United States (Hall 1999, 417). It is the form and not the fact of association which has changed in Britain, is Bruce's argu-

ment, and he maintains that total participation in secular organisations has remained stable, while participation in church contexts has declined. It is beyond the scope of this study to attempt to prove or disprove this assertion, but it must be noted that neither Hall's original analysis nor Bruce's application of it has gone unchallenged (Davie 2002b; Gill 2002; Grenier & Wright 2004). The debate over the health of civil society in Britain and indeed in Europe remains a lively one, as does the question of the role of religious organisations within civil society and their contribution to social capital. This idea behind this study has been to connect with and contribute to that ongoing debate.

### 2.1.6. National Church as Communicative Arena

Whether or not it is appropriate to class the Church of England as the largest voluntary organisation in the country, when studying the established church attention must be paid not only to the place of faith communities in general in civil society, but also to the particular attributes and effects of the relationship and history of the church-state connection. This applies as much for the theoretical framework as to the construction of the empirical study. In introducing their study of the Church of England and welfare Davis, Paulhus and Bradstock argue that the focus placed on 'congregations' by policy makers in recent years has been 'useful but inadequate' (Davis, Paulhus & Bradstock 2008, 18). 'The scale of Anglican presence and its structure both within and beyond localities, combined with its open theologies' place, they argue, the Church of England in a category of its own apart from other faith communities (Davis, Paulhus & Bradstock 2008, 21), a position in which they receive some measure of support from the Lord Justice of Appeal, who, writing on the implications of church establishment in England, argues that the peculiar position of the Church as an established body is also a benefit to English society. The established church, he argues, 'possesses two immeasurable virtues: first, that religion is no tyrant: belief is not compulsory; second, that the Church's ministrations are available to everyone. Their unified effect is a great force for good' (Laws 2004, 317). Similarly Bäckström, Edgardh Beckman and Pettersson choose to talk of the 'semi-official position' of the Church of Sweden in contemporary Sweden, which, they argue, means that the Church cannot be assessed as just one of a number of voluntary organisations, faith-based or otherwise (Bäckström, Edgardh Beckman and Pettersson 2004, 65).

In theoretical terms it is helpful here to turn to the work of Roberto Cipriani and the notion of 'diffused religion' which he has developed to explain value change in Italian society and the influence of the Roman Catholic Church (Cipriani 2002). Catholicism in Italy is, Cipriani argues 'diffused in every part of the country by means of a church structure well-equipped over time and particularly able to draw on its effective know-how' (Cipriani

2001, 295). The combination of tradition, habit and family and community involvement mean that affiliation to the predominant religion is almost unavoidable in Cipriani's understanding of the Italian situation. This is, however, not to say that Cipriani is arguing that the official doctrines of the majority church are coterminous with those of the majority of the population, but rather that the historical position of the church in society has led to a diffusion of values connected with the church into society at large, a situation which must be recognised if the studies of either church or society are to produce an adequate picture of reality. For Cipriani there is neither clear opposition nor clear connection between official church religion and diffused religion, but diffused religion is rather a 'passive' religion which becomes visible from time to time.

Rather than the dynamics of accelerated religious transformation, this provokes a certain stagnation. Even within the prevailing passivity, the underlying echo remains persistent and pervasive, it penetrates large groups of persons. At this stage "diffused religion" appears rather under false pretences: as a feeling, a sensation which "contaminates" both the religious and political fields. (Cipriani 1984, 32–3; 2001, 296)

This concept of diffused religion is an interesting phenomenon in the European context. This notion and other concepts which illustrate the underlying role which institutional religion can play in a society when historically in a majority position are of particular interest to this study. They can be helpful tools in understanding the potential for a long term influence of a historic majority church on society at large and on perceptions of the role of the church as welfare actor and moral voice in particular.

### 2.1.7. Models of Church

#### **Symbolic Roles for Clergy and Church Buildings**

David Martin's theory of secularisation includes a discussion of the role of the Christian clergy in Europe, which is of particular interest to a discussion of the Church's continued role as an agent of welfare. Martin is concerned to discuss the development of the role of the clergyman in response to the process of differentiation which, he argues, is written into Christianity itself and therefore into the role of the clergy (Martin 1978, 280). He describes this with the aid of a series of categories of phases (Martin 1978, 278–305). These phases are related to the degree of differentiation in society, but are not a set of evolutionary stages through which all Christian societies must pass, rather they can happen simultaneously or in any order). The first of these phases he describes is characterised by collusion, that is collusion of church and state, or collusion at national level over basic values. Secondly, he argues, follows the removal of Christianity and the clergy from the struc-

ture of legitimation and with this distancing comes the accentuation of the specifically religious element in the clerical role. The clergyman's role is no longer naturally at the heart of the community, but rather seen in terms of a co-ordinator of leisure activities. Martin's third phase he describes as a crisis amongst the guardians of the sacred, a crisis which can lead to one of a number of reactions. It can prompt a rejection of boundaries and of ecclesiastical language with clergy turning to secular terminology to articulate Christian concepts. Alternatively there can be a move to closer relations and the use of spiritual terms for secular concepts. Finally it can result in clergy 'developing the traditional pastoral role to converge with that of the secular social worker' and deliberately limiting social criticism (Martin 1978, 297). Martin discusses these phases specifically in relation to developments and changes in the role of the clergy, but they can however be helpful in studying the role of the Church as an organisation in society.

A further example of this symbolic role for the church and its embodiment in the clergy is that which Per Pettersson has demonstrated in his analysis of the life-long relationships of individuals to the Church of Sweden (Pettersson 2000). Pettersson's study which utilised a service theory perspective was unusual in approaching church members as users of services provided by the church. Interviews therefore elicited a perspective on the role of the clergy that has received but little attention in the past. In this context Pettersson has demonstrated that a positive or negative experience of a meeting with an individual clergyperson has a particular impact on an individual's perception of both the quality of services provided by the church as well as his or her relationship to the church in general (Pettersson 2000, 282).

The relevant question therefore is, what is the role or importance of the clergy specifically, as opposed to lay representatives or members of the church? Douglas Davies sees the clergy in an English Anglican context as embodying a symbolic social unity. Here he avails himself of the theories of Georg Simmel, whose definition of 'Priesthood' he recounts as 'an abstract unity ranged above all individuals and yet representing their interrelationships' (Davies 2004, 156. c.f. Simmel 1997, 114). In taking on this symbolic role, however, the clergy must relate to its varying interpretations and not least, for clergy in an established church, the differences between regular worshipers and occasional worshipers and society at large. Davies draws attention to the differences between what he calls regular and occasional congregations (Davies 2004). If the former are those who attend church services on a weekly basis, or similar the latter are those who attend those services in Anglican parlance termed the 'occasional offices' of the church Baptisms, Marriages and Funerals and annual celebrations such as Easter, Christmas or Remembrance day. Davies however goes one step further in including in his assessment of occasional congregations those who make use of or come into contact with the Church at times of national disaster or grief

(Davies 2004, 165). In earlier work Davies has explored the sense of public moral outrage and search for justice that can accompany high profile deaths of those perceived as innocent, such as small children, or to take a specific example from Britain, Princess Diana. He develops an ideal type of 'offending deaths' to categorise such events which 'comprises an unrehearsed mass public reaction to the death of an individual or individuals perceived not as unjust or untimely but also as an affront to current social values, and as an offence against key moral identity' (Davies, 2001, 411). By their very nature as unorganised mass reactions much of responses to such tragedies are not framed within the context of the established church, but they do 'reflect events in which the church has been much involved in past centuries and continues to be today' (Davies 2004, 165). So in the example of the Death of the Princess of Wales in 1997, while much of the public response was spontaneous a considerable focus became the memorial-funeral service held in Westminster Abbey and led by the Archbishop of Canterbury. Though not an official state funeral it took on a similar form, partly due to public pressure and therefore the location and the officiant as representatives of the established church played an important symbolic role. This Charles Taylor believes to be an expression of the continued existence of elements of the 'diffusive Christianity' of a previous age at the outer edges of community life. He takes the funeral of the Queen Mother as his example of the manifestation of a need people feel to be connected to the past, which can be met in the form of the established church. It is in such royal ceremonial, he argues, that we see 'the full force of the old neo-Durkheimian identity, linking Britishness to a certain form of Protestant Christianity, where oddly, the Anglican Church is allowed to perform ceremonies for everyone (even Catholics!), lives again for a day' (Taylor 2008, 222).

In a Swedish context Per Pettersson has shown that following disasters the Church of Sweden has been given a central role both locally and nationally and that, not least thanks to the focus taken by the mass media that it is here that priest and church building have come to be seen as the most powerful public symbols of the church in society (Pettersson 1995; 2000, 281). Following a similar line Bäckström, Edgardh and Pettersson have argued, using the example of the Estonia disaster amongst others, that it is following catastrophe that a sense of identification with the national church, present but usually hidden, becomes visible (Bäckström, Edgardh & Pettersson 2004, 132). Here therefore we can see agreement between those who have studied Britain and Sweden who argue that the national church can have a symbolic importance in national life and for individuals, although this is seldom articulated. Bäckström, Edgardh and Pettersson argue on the basis of studies of the church's role following disasters that 'what in *normal* everyday life is *religiously abnormal* in Sweden, is considered *religiously normal* in *abnormal situations*' (Bäckström, Edgardh & Pettersson 2004, 139).

However, apart from surfacing at times of crisis this symbolic role can be glimpsed in more mundane milieu at a local level and related to the church's ritual role in the rites of passage marked by the occasional offices. At local parish level too an example of the symbolic role of the church is the importance placed on the existence and even continued active use of church buildings by local communities who rarely enter them (Bäckström 1997; Davies 1994). To borrow Simon Jenkin's phraseology. The church building is more than a place of denominational worship. 'It is the stage on which the pageant of the community has been played out for a millennium' (Jenkins, S. 1999, 3). Here cathedrals in England appear to have a particular symbolic role to play. This is visible not least in relation to moments of national crisis or grief where a cathedral often becomes a focal point as the venue for funeral or memorial service as noted above. As a number of commentators have noted in recent years, however, attendance at worship services in cathedrals in England is growing in contrast to the general trend in worship attendance figures across the country (Brierley 2006, 198). While, as Grace Davie has commented the popularity of cathedrals and city centre churches appears to extend beyond both regular and irregular worshippers to encompass the overlapping categories of pilgrims and tourists (Davie 2000, 159). A popularity, which Davie theorises can be attributed at least in part to the fact that they present an opportunity to look-on or indeed take part without obligation (Davie 2006, 29).

### **Churchmanship**

As Douglas Davies has noted, the emergence of the Anglican Church 'through the English Reformation and subsequent centuries of theological reconsideration has produced a mixed sociological reality'. This is a reality which is particularly evident in the phenomenon of 'churchmanship' (Davies 1993; 2004, 159). There is no room here for a comprehensive study of the understanding of churchmanship in the Anglican Church and the ways in which it has been studied, but a brief introduction is necessary. Davies et al. in their empirical studies of the clergy in the Church of England operated with five categories Evangelicals, Open and Conservative; Central churchmanship and Catholic churchmanship, Modern and Traditional. In addition they made use of the notion of 'spiritual style', considering within these categories Charismatic, Liberal and Radical styles (Davies et al., 1990, 18–25). In a similar vein Kelvin Randall in his *Evangelicals Etcetera* argues that three elements have to be taken into account in a study of churchmanship, the two axes of Conservative/ Liberal and Catholic/ Evangelical and a measure of degree of influence from the charismatic movement (Randall 2005). Davies has argued that churchmanship has an impact, not only on the style of worship a priest adopts or the theology he or she preaches, but also in the ways that these individuals relate to and view those who fall into the category of 'occasional congregations' discussed above. Davies claims, on the

basis of data collected in the 1990s, to see ‘something of a difference between a more sacramental priesthood viewing itself as working out from the church into the community at large and an Evangelical ministry seeking the interior religious development of individuals and a congregation of spiritually developing selves’ (2004, 163–4).

### **Models of Church Organisation**

Despite developments both in styles of churchmanship and worship prevalent within the Church of England today, however the fact remains that, in formal legal terms at least the Church of England is not a congregational church as its forms of worship are prescribed by law, and not the property of the community worshipping in any particular church (Laws 2004). An interesting question which relates to the primary aim of this study is to what extent the model or typology of church which the Church of England can be said to represent is a determining factor in the role which the Church takes on and is perceived to have within the welfare sphere.

Paul Chambers, in his study of religion and social change in Wales posits a ‘provisional church typology’ where he classifies religious institutions into two basic types for the purposes of analysis. These are ‘Communal institutions’ and ‘Associational institutions’ (Chambers 2005, 204). In the former he locates the historic churches and denominations which have traditionally had close connections with community, but during processes of secularisation have become increasingly differentiated from society. The later category, in contrast, contains those churches which established gradually throughout the twentieth century, have sectarian tendencies and the membership base of which is a result primarily of voluntary affiliation rather than community or family ties. Chambers developed this typology as a tool in the analysis of church growth and decline, but while this is of interest to the current study I include Chamber’s typology here not specifically because issues of growth or decline will be addressed, but rather as it provides a helpful distinction between the ways in which different models of church interact with their local community. As such it is an aid to highlighting the particular role of the Church of England in welfare in contrast to churches operating as congregational, or in Chambers’ terms associational institutions. Chambers found in Wales that in contrast to churches fitting the associational model that ‘among the Anglican churches, an institutional principle of hierarchical authority structures and open inclusive pastoral ministry all serve to promote a wider sense of identity within which congregations can negotiate their relations with their catchment populations’ (Chambers 2005, 208). There is in other words a difference between the ways in which the communal institutions such as the Church in Wales or the Church of England relate to local community in activities which fall within the welfare sphere, when compared with the stance of associational churches. Differences which can be attributed to the model of church represented.

In Kenneth Medhurst and George Moyser's study of the membership of the Church of England's General Synod it is differences evident within the Church of England in attitudes to the Church's public role that are in focus. This study is now over two decades old, but as no subsequent study has addressed in a systematic manner the attitudes of the members of this governing body of the Church and how this relates to the opinions of 'ordinary' church attendees it remains a helpful analysis, not least in the typologies they posit against the background of their survey. Building on N. Richard Niehbuhr's ecclesiological model of the relations between Christianity and culture Medhurst and Moyser present a model of ideal types of Church of England representative's attitudes to the Church's role in politics (Medhurst & Moyser 1988, 355). Medhurst and Moyser take Niehbuhr's four dimensions of Christ 'in culture'; 'against culture'; 'above culture' and as 'transformer of culture' and argue that these labels represent ideal types of positions on the appropriate interaction of Church and society at large, which can be found within the Anglican Church in England (1988, 355–6). Those who fall within the 'Christ in culture' model can be said to see England as an essentially Christian country the religious tradition of which the Anglican Church is guardian. Exponents of this view combine religious and political conservatism. In this last respect they are joined by those who fit within the second type 'Christ above culture' the difference being that this second groups is characterised by a worldview where religion is seen as a private matter and which therefore expects the Church's public guardianship of moral values to be limited to issues of private or sexual morality and not wider social, political and economic issues. The underlying expectation in this second typology that the Church ought to avoid political engagement is also a feature of the third 'Christ against culture' ideal type. Those who fit this type however largely reject political action on the basis of a 'theologically grounded pessimism' and see the aims and purposes of the secular and political institutions to be at odds with those of the Church (Medhurst & Moyser 1988, 356). The final category, which uses the image of 'Christ as transformer of culture' is, in contrast to the previous type, grounded in an optimism based in an incarnational theology. Those who fall within this type tend to come from the 'high church' Catholic wing of the Church and also espouse more radical political values and social solutions (Medhurst & Moyser 1988, 357). Medhurst and Moyser do not develop the typology further here, but it is possible to place the four types in relation to the two axes of conservative–liberal and Interaction with–Isolation from secular society. Seen in this perspective what started out as theological classifications becomes a model of ideal types, which can be applied to the Church's role in welfare and in particular its role as a social voice in this sphere. This can then become a useful analytical tool in addressing the question of what the role of the Church of England specifically and institutional religion more generally can be said to be today.

## 2.2. Summary

The preceding chapter provided a theoretical framework for understanding the role of institutional religion in contemporary European society against which to place the empirical study of the role of the Church in welfare in England. It provides a framework within which both local and national contexts can be placed and therefore better understood, but also represents a starting point for the analysis of the empirical material, a process which in turn seeks to develop the framework in light of the results from one in-depth case study.

Developments in academic understanding of the role of religion in society have, during the twentieth century, moved from seeing secularisation as an almost inevitable feature of modernisation to a more complex and nuanced picture which presents the changing role of institutionalised religion in Europe as an exception to, rather than the model for global processes. At the same time, theoreticians of global society have urged attention to global processes which impact at both macro and micro levels and emphasised the particular nature of contemporary society as fluid, risk-filled and diverse. Here, the micro level of analysis is of particular importance, as notions of the individualisation of society are expounded and personal experience is emphasised, both in relation to life in general and religion in particular. Against this broad canvas, studies of the historic churches in Europe (and England in particular) have demonstrated a continued, but changed role for these bodies as institutions in society, something which can be seen especially clearly in comparison to the contrasting situation in the United States of America. Studies of churches in Europe have shown both alterations in individual understandings of the relationship to institutional religion and structural changes, which are part of wider alterations in the structures of society. Here, the concepts of civil society and social capital are helpful in theorising the relations between different parts of society and developing thinking relating to voluntary and community organisations, a sector of society in which the churches in Europe are increasingly finding their place. Nonetheless a symbolic role for churches can be seen, not least through their buildings and clergy and the interpretations of the meaning of this continued symbolic and particular role for the churches indicates tensions between the historic majority church role as part of the state and a new role as part of civil society.

Focusing on the Church's role in welfare within this theoretical framework will enable analysis of eventual tensions between Church and state at a national level, between Church and local authority at a local level and not least between national and local levels of the Church itself as regards the Church's contribution to society.

The Church's role as agent in welfare is perfect as a study object in this context, as the historical role of the Church both as a welfare provider and as a public voice in the welfare debate is well documented. What is less clear,

and to which this study intends to contribute is how this role is developing in relation to the particular challenges of contemporary society and how different groups interpret this role.

In order to provide the context and national framework against which the local level case study must be interpreted, the following chapter seeks to give a detailed presentation of the British welfare system, the Church of England and the role of the Church in national society both in general and more specifically within the welfare sphere.

## 3. The English Welfare System

### 3.1. The Liberal Welfare Regime in Britain

In Esping-Andersen's model of welfare regimes Britain is classified as a 'liberal' welfare regime (Esping-Andersen 1999). It has what John Clarke et al. have described as a 'mixed economy of welfare', where the State directs and organises welfare while not necessarily acting as provider (Clarke, Langan & Williams 2001a). The model is characterised by a balance between family, market, voluntary sector and public provision.

The basic framework of the welfare state was put in place by a series of acts introduced by the post Second World War Labour government which provided for health, social security and welfare benefits and came into force in 1948. These acts were based on the recommendations of the Beveridge Report 1942, which proposed a system of national insurance based on three basic principles: family allowances, a national health service and full (male) employment (Beveridge 1942). Interestingly in the context of this thesis, the first use of the term 'welfare state' in the English language is accredited to Archbishop William Temple (Grimley 2004, 1). Temple, who was both an influential churchman and personal friend of Beveridge, used the term to contrast with the wartime 'power-state' of Germany without developing it further (Temple 1928, 169–70). It was not, however, until the reforms implemented following Beveridge's report that the term was associated with a developed system of social provision (Briggs 2004, 41).

Despite considerable demographic, social and even some legislative changes over the past 50 years, the basic framework of the post-war Beveridge system remains in place and recent changes in society are now placing the system under significant strain. These issues will be returned to shortly, however, it is important first to mention the reforms which the system has undergone over recent decades. Even if the basic framework has not been altered, significant administrative reforms changing the administration of the system and backed by specific political programmes have meant that the roles played by different actors have altered considerably, which in turn has altered the system as a whole.

### 3.1.1. Historical Background

The post-war system of welfare in Britain arose out of the need to rebuild the nation after the war economically, physically and psychologically. Economically the need was felt to harness the free market, albeit kept in check by memories of the Great Depression of the 1930s. The subordination of Britain to the United States in the western alliance left its mark on the country that had been an imperial power, and great emphasis was placed on the development of the welfare state on values of citizenship and social solidarity, profiling Britain as a moral leader in the world. The system did not, however, emerge from nowhere, rather building on welfare policies that had been introduced over the first years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the most notable of these being the first non-contributory Old Age Pensions Act passed in 1908, which some have called the real beginning of the modern welfare state (Briggs 2004, 33).

These developments had, for the most part, come about as attempts to avoid reliance on the Poor Laws, which were generally despised. The Poor Laws, which had dominated British social policy from 1601, were built on the parish system and concentrated on poor relief. The 1834 Poor Law Amendment Act, responding to increased costs following the Industrial Revolution and in force until 1948, concentrated on two principles: reduced eligibility and relief in the workhouse. The new, social insurance based, system was seen by many as a more universal form of provision, although whether this proved to be so in practice is debatable (Lewis 2001, 11). In fact, the poor law tradition has continued to live on in the focus of the British system on the alleviation of poverty (Lewis 2001, 10). At the beginning of the century, voluntary organisations representing middle-class philanthropy (much of which was tied to the churches) as well as working-class friendly organisations worked in partnership with the state over and above the Poor Law legislation and were seen as part of the country's welfare system, working with the same values as the state. During the early years of the 1900s, however, the state gradually took over increasing control of the sector and by the 1930s, Lewis writes, the voluntary organisations were seen rather as a supplement to public services (Lewis 1999).

Part of the ideological background to these changes was the foreign policy of the country and the need to appease the working class to ensure industrial supremacy as well as a skilled and healthy army to defend the empire. As Asa Briggs has argued the fact that Beveridge's reforms had such popular and intellectual support to ensure that neither increase in government power nor spending financed from taxes was taken for granted shows that the 'world of ideas and the world of practical politics were not very far apart' (Briggs 2004, 41). A set of shared ideals which can no longer be assumed and the disintegration of which has contributed to the changes in and demise of the welfare state as it was originally envisaged.

In the creation of the welfare state the family was central in a policy that focused on race and national identity, and this in turn resulted in policies which kept women as wives and mothers in the home, out of the employment sector and excluded from some benefits, despite the important role that women had played as workers in factories and on the land during wartime. Some benefits were, moreover, restricted to British nationals, illustrating a close relationship between immigration and welfare policies and highlighting the ideals of British culture as white, English-speaking and Christian, which lay behind much welfare thinking of the period. While the notion of imperialism disappeared as a basis for welfare policy post Second World War it can be seen that many of the values of the pre-war welfare system continued. The reforms following the Beveridge Report met some of the needs of social construction and the demands of the labour movement strengthened by the ethos of solidarity and democracy which followed the experience of collective responsibility in wartime, while continuing to emphasise the role of the traditional family in British culture (Clarke, Langan & Williams 2001; Spicker 2004).

### 3.1.2. The Welfare State post 1948

The post-war system was based on the pivotal concept of full male employment with a corresponding family economy where women provided housework, childcare and other physical and emotional support in return for financial security. The state was therefore seen as an aid to the family economy and a woman's position in the welfare system was as a dependent. An active connection was made between participation in the labour market and benefit provision in an attempt to remove some of the judgmental nature of the poor law system and yet retain a notion of individual responsibility (Lewis 2001, 11). The state did, however, take on the role of primary provider in the fields of health and education and here state provision was expanded in those areas which were perceived to be most important. Primary healthcare, in particular, was prioritised, while areas such as personal social services for some of the most vulnerable in society received fewer resources and developed at a much slower rate. In those areas of welfare where responsibility for provision had been given to local authorities the voluntary sector continued to play a significant role. Voluntary bodies, part financed by the local authorities provided and developed services which the local authorities themselves did not have the capacity to offer. The role of the voluntary services thus remained central to the provision of healthcare and welfare, whereas the role of the private sector continued to be the provision of private education, occupational pension schemes and private health insurance alongside public provision.

It must also be remembered that a significant number of key English institutions are founded and continue to depend on the contributions of laymen

and laywomen who are not reimbursed for their work. The judicial system makes use of lay magistrates (Justices of the Peace) to serve local courts, while the national crown courts rely on the system of trial by jury whereby all citizens have the right to be tried by their peers, who are obliged to serve when called upon. The school system, too, has the voluntary involvement of local citizens built into it. Many state schools have boards of governors, often members of the local community, who along with the head teacher control the development of the school and are often responsible for the appointment of the teaching and managerial staff. These two examples serve to show the extent to which the notion of the involvement of non-professionals, who give their time for free, is embedded in English society and helps to explain the acceptance of the role of voluntary bodies as an integral part of the welfare system.

### 3.1.3. Reform in Two stages

The international economic boom in the decades following the war combined with a baby boom during the same period allowed for an expansion of welfare services within the existing framework. Growing prosperity along with demographic growth amongst the very young and the very old increased both expectations and demand and this, coupled with a perception of Britain as being in relative decline as growth rates lagged behind those of her international competitors led to a political programme of modernisation in which welfare services were to play a key role. This first phase of reforms of the welfare system in the 1960s and 1970s introduced a system where finances were allocated centrally from government to departments and then from departments to services.

The recession of the 1970s ensured support for the emerging ‘New Right’ theory that expansion of the public sector denies resources to the market sector. This became the cornerstone of the agenda of the Conservative party from the 1970s onwards who sought to curtail the role of the state, arguing that a strong state-welfare system was both a disincentive to work and a demoralising factor, taking away the feeling of personal responsibility for one’s own welfare. Here, as ever, an ideology of the family was an important factor. The family was seen as the guardian of the morals and culture of society and the locus of personal responsibility for welfare in terms of choices made in a free market. The focus was, in other words, on the market and the individual and family (Lewis 2001 13–14).

The reforms of the 1980s and 1990s broke up the administration of public welfare into agencies and brought in management systems and quasi-markets, where competition is introduced and the purchase and provision of services are disconnected from one another. Welfare was consumerised and the voluntary sector and private sectors both had a role to play through entering into partnership with the state. The family was given a significant role to

play, both in carrying out welfare work and in making choices. Women in particular took on much in terms of hidden welfare work during this period, as much care that had taken place in hospitals and institutions was moved 'into the community' (see Clarke, Langan & Williams 2001b; Oakland 1998; Spicker 2004). One area that is a good example of these policies and which is unique to the United Kingdom is housing policy. The provision of affordable basic housing had been a major feature of the post-war welfare state, but from the early 1980s the general shift in focus to the individual led to an explicit policy of encouraging home ownership which included the wholesale sale of council housing. In the same period and the following years cuts in national funding to local authorities for housing led to rises in rent to fund costs, which in turn led to large scale dependency on housing benefit. In recent years, housing benefit has become a major feature of social security support and crucial income for the unemployed in particular (Clasen 2003, 577).

These developments mean that it is now vital in Britain to make a distinction between the public sector and the state. The role of the public sector has changed dramatically, but the state, by which is meant the government and its subsidiary bodies, still retains overall control over welfare.

#### 3.1.4. Britain and America

It is important at this stage to note the historical and ideological connection which Britain has with the United States in the field of welfare politics and which sets it apart from its European neighbours with whom it otherwise has much in common. Historically, British and United States policies have a connection both in terms of philosophy and structure. As King has argued, they share a common structure in differentiating between core benefits (such as National Insurance benefits in the United Kingdom) and benefits such as income support, which tend to be stigmatised (King 1995). Underlying this structure is a philosophy of welfare where social assistance is considered to be a favour rather than an entitlement. The combination of these two, Daguerrre argues, sets the scene for the welfare politics of the 1990s in both countries and explains the convergence in the welfare systems, which were able to learn from each other (Daguerrre 2004, 52). The clearest example of this, which still underpins the welfare system in Britain today and has become a lynchpin of the Labour government's welfare policy portfolio is 'welfare to work' policy, a policy of enabling and encouraging as many people of working age as possible to participate in the labour market, with the aim of improving the economy in general and increasing the working population who fund welfare for the very young and the very old and of enabling individuals to support themselves as pensioners to a greater extent. This policy is one clear example of a policy which could be transferred from the United States to Britain because of similarities between the two societies. As

commentators have argued, the ‘welfare to work’ approach can be made to work in the American and British labour markets because both are relatively low-skill and low-wage, whereas it would not fare so well in the more highly selective environments of European labour markets (Daguerre 2004, 53). This said it must be emphasised that influences on the United Kingdom do not come solely from the other side of the Atlantic. Clare Annesley argues that while Americanisation and Europeanisation are distinct both in terms of content and process they currently have a simultaneous and not mutually exclusive influence on developments in the United Kingdom (Annesley 2003). The ‘welfare to work’ policy is a good example of Annesley’s point. The United Kingdom may have gone down the same path as the United States in its workfare programmes, but there are significant differences in the levels of compulsion, the degree of regulation of the labour market and the scope of state-sponsored childcare initiatives, which show the European influence on Britain (Annesley 2003, 161).

### 3.1.5. The Welfare State Today

The focus of national welfare policy at the beginning of the twenty-first century remains cost containment and the amelioration of poverty (Clasen 2003, 574). The current framework for the organisation of welfare services in the country has been in place since 1997. Reforms at this time redefined the areas of responsibility of government departments, which are in turn responsible for setting the agenda, both for the national institutions within their particular field and for developing national policy for those areas of welfare provision which fall under local government control. Local authorities may be responsible for providing a number of specified services, but have very little power to conduct work outside of the remit of parliament or to raise funds. A ‘council tax’ exists which is collected by local government to fund public services, but the rates at which this can be set are closely controlled by government and as the majority of local authority income (ca 80%) comes in the form of grants from central government, central power is significant. Conservative reforms (1979–97), which have already been briefly mentioned, had a wide-reaching impact on the provision of local services, not least because one of these reforms made councils ‘enabling authorities’ with the responsibility for ensuring services were provided, but without the obligation to provide them directly. Councils were instead encouraged to open up to a process of tendering for a wide variety of services, thereby introducing a market in service provision in which both the private sector and voluntary and community organisations (VCOs) could compete. This market approach to service provision applied largely to the private sector however and the role of the voluntary and community sector (VCS) remains largely in the provision of services which complement state provision, although the boundaries are debatable. Most voluntary agencies have charitable status,

which means that they have tax concessions on income. This, however, is not the only government provision designed to support the VCS; it is clear that the government is aware of the huge contribution made by such groups and of the fact that they are an essential element in welfare provision at the present time. One example of this is the cross cutting review undertaken by the Treasury in 2002: *The Role of the Voluntary and Community Sector in Service Delivery*. In his foreword to the report, the Chief Secretary to the Treasury and Lead Minister for the Review said:

This Government is passionately committed to the work of the voluntary sector. We believe that voluntary and community sector organisations have a crucial role to play in the reform of our public services and reinvigoration of civic life. We in government cannot do this on our own (HM Treasury 2002, 3).

The review reports NCVO estimates that nearly 30% of the income of ‘general charities’ in the United Kingdom in 2000–1 came from government at local or national level (HM Treasury 2002, 10 §2.7), although this is clearly focused on charities working within particular priority areas for government or areas where government cannot or will not provide the services needed. The majority of central government funding to VCOs was in the area of development and housing, and for local authorities the social services were by far the most significant service area with VCO involvement (HM Treasury 2002, 12 §2.11 and 13 §2.13). During 2000-1 the NHS also allocated 1.4% of its spending to VCOs (HM Treasury 2002, 13 §2.14). The funding of VCOs lay at the time of the report at around 3% of total local authority expenditure, which represents a doubling of the 1.5% allocation for most of the 1980s (HM Treasury 2002, 12 §2.12). The report attributes this rise to the impact of community care reforms during this period, which also had a significant impact on the role of families in the welfare sector. The Compact, a framework for partnership between the VCS and government envisaged as a guide to good practice and set up in 1998, is another example of the government’s reliance on and eagerness to both encourage and harness the potential of the VCS. The review highlights the potential for a ‘value-added’ element to services provided by the VCS (HM Treasury 2002, 17 §3.1). In the light of these observations and following the conclusion that government funding is an increasingly important source of finance for the sector (HM Treasury 2002, 13 §2.15), the government introduced a one-off investment in a fund entitled *futurebuilders* to ‘assist VCOs in their public service work’ (HM Treasury 2002, 32 §8.8). They also allocated annual funding for the implementation of the review based at the Active Community Unit at the Home Office (HM Treasury 2002, 31 §8.3).

As noted above families play an integral role in the welfare system in the form of individuals providing care for sick, disabled or elderly friends both

in their own households and in others. Statistics from the census in 2001 revealed over 5.2 million unpaid carers in England and Wales providing care for a family member or friend with a million of these providing over 50 hours of care per week (Census 2001, 2003). Figures from the General Household survey show that in 2000 16% of those aged 16 and over in Britain were caring for a sick, disabled or elderly person, figures which mean that one household in every five in Britain contains at least one carer. About one third of these were looking after someone in their own home. Of the carers as a whole, 21% were looking after a friend or neighbour, while the remaining majority cared for relatives. 4% of adults were spending 20 hours a week or more on their caring tasks (Mahler and Green 2002, 1). In this group with significant time-consuming responsibilities care for family members is even more dominant, with 93% caring for family members, nearly half care for a wife or husband (45%) and 33% for a parent (Mahler and Green 2002, 13 table 3.6). Forty-five percent of carers in the country were aged 45 to 65 and of those spending over 20 hours a week caring 40% were in this age group. This represents a significant number of people looking after a partner or elderly relative. The figures show therefore the crucial role that the family plays in the care of the elderly within the welfare system. Of those caring for someone outside of their own home (11% of the population), 83% were looking after someone aged 65 or over and the largest group of carers (38%) were caring for a parent (Mahler and Green 2002, 9–10).

This focus on family, voluntary sector and market combined with the increased domination of means-testing in social security support, indicates the move that has taken place in welfare policy away from the basic security of the post-war system that had its foundations in the Beveridge Report and was allocated according to need (non-means tested). As Taylor Gooby, Larsen and Kananen have argued the United Kingdom now has the most liberal market-oriented welfare system in the European Union largely as a result of this new departure in welfare policy implemented by the New Labour government from 1997 onwards which can be characterised as a policy of ‘welfare ends through market means’ (Taylor Gooby, Larsen & Kananen 2004, 573). Needs-based minimum support is now a secondary aspect of a system founded on principles of labour market (re)integration, where the majority of benefits are tied to paid employment or active job-seeking (Clasen 2003, 581).

### 3.1.6. Challenges to the Welfare System

The welfare system has been put under considerable strain in the decades following its conception due to a number of demographic and social factors. The General Household Survey has monitored such changes over the past 30 years and the figures reveal several important trends with implications for the welfare system. The first of these is an aging population. Since 1971 the

proportion of people in Britain aged 75 and over has risen from 4% to 7% while the proportion of those aged under 16 has declined (ONS 2001, 5). Households with one or more members over the age of 60 now represent 30% of the total. These figures represent an increasing number of pensioners drawing on a welfare system supported by a shrinking workforce, which means that as the population ages demographic support ratios fall. In 2006 there were 3.3 people of working age for every person of state pensionable age, a decline over time which is projected to continue to 2.9 in 2031 and which would have been more severe were not future changes to state pensionable age taken into account (Bray 2008, 15).

Family and household composition have also changed dramatically, thereby testing a system based on male employment, and these changes could have important consequences for a system which relies on large amounts of informal care provided by family members. Household size has shrunk, in particular influenced by the fact that the proportion of one-person households has almost doubled since 1971 (ONS 2001, 16 table 3.2). This change is also closely connected to changes in family make-up, with a decline in the number of families with dependent children which are headed by a couple. Lone parents represented only 8% of families with dependent children in 1971, but this figure had risen to 25% in 2001. This growth is mainly constituted of a rise in the numbers of lone mothers (7% to 22%), while lone fathers still only represent 3% of the total (ONS 2001, 19 table 3.6). These figures are of particular significance when compared with research which shows that lone parents are much less likely than their married or cohabiting counterparts not to be in paid employment and therefore to be dependent on state benefits (Bradshaw et al. 2003, 18f).

In addition to these large-scale changes, differences can also be seen today in working patterns. Inactivity rates amongst men have risen in recent decades, women now make up just over half of the workforce as opposed to 29% at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and there is an increased flexibility in the labour market with many more people working part time and in a self-employed capacity (Lindsay 2003, 138). These factors, along with upwards trends in the use of health services (ONS 2001, 7), have contributed to a situation where government spending on social services benefits alone increased as a proportion of GDP from 4.7% in 1949/50 to 11.2% in 1999/2000 (DSS 2000, 18). In real terms, this represents an eightfold increase in spending between 1949 and 1999. After general inflation has been taken into account and on the basis of 1998/99 prices, this means that spending was £97.2 billion that financial year compared with £12.2 billion in 1949/50 (DSS 2000, 14). These figures can be related to government expenditure on social services as a percentage of total government expenditure. In

1998/99 60% of general government expenditure related to social services (Hicks & Allen 1999, 22).<sup>8</sup>

Generally speaking these trends seem set to continue, however recent research does highlight complexities which point to alterations in certain trends. Two such indicators are worth mentioning here. The first of these which is beginning to be seen by researchers, is of the defeminisation of old age. The authors of the report *Ageing and gender: diversity and change* argue that the increase in the elderly population in the United Kingdom has been only modest over the past 30 years, in particular if compared to the rest of Europe (Arber & Ginn 2004). However, they write, this modest increase hides substantial changes in both age and gender composition of this group. Rapid growth can be seen in the section aged 85 and over which reflects advances in healthcare, but also puts a strain on the system, although costs for these individuals have as close a relationship to the existence, or not of informal care networks as to chronological age. Currently this cohort of the oldest in society is predominantly female, but the ratio of men to women is rising and a faster rise in male than female life expectancy means a projected fall from three times more women than men aged over 90 in 2001 to twice as many women in 2021 (Arber & Ginn 2004, 3). This defeminisation of later life, along with an increase in both cohabitation and divorce is changing the patterns of marital status later in life, which in turn has an impact on the dependence of elderly people on care from relatives and friends outside the home and from the state. Currently the majority of men who reach old age remain married until they die, while the norm for women is widowhood. The predicted changes in the report, and in particular increases in the number of elderly divorcees however have implications for welfare policy in general and pensions policy in particular (Arber & Ginn 2004, 13).

The second issue is less clear cut and is not so much the reversal of a long term trend, but rather ongoing changes in the understanding of the composition and role of the family in the contemporary European welfare state, which point in several directions at once. While household size has, as shown above, shrunk and extended family ties weakened, there has also been increasing interest from social and political actors towards the family as a basic unit of social life to play a key role in welfare (Bawin-Legros & Stassen 2002). With the financial pressures facing welfare systems and the consequent increase in the personal privatisation of welfare services with costs for education, health and welfare previously shouldered by the state being transferred to individuals, the role played by family financial solidarity within kinship networks raises interesting questions for the future of family composition and its role in welfare.

There is, however, little current research undertaken in the United Kingdom which can indicate quite what form the family's role is likely to take.

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<sup>8</sup> Including education, health, housing, personal social services and social security.

One recent study in Sweden indicated that intergenerational financial transfers play an important, but complementary role in individual's welfare. Researchers there who studied private financial support offered by families within the context of a welfare state where the state is assumed to take primary responsibility for its citizens concluded that 'the welfare state, which is portrayed as institutionally individualistic, has not entirely supported a development of individualism in terms of support patterns. However, it is also interesting to discover that support is very narrowly transferred within the nuclear family of two generations – biological parents and their children' (Björnberg & Latta 2007, 442). No similar study exists for the United Kingdom, but social trends reports compiled by the Office for National Statistics indicate changes in household composition (ONS 2009, 18). In particular numbers of young adults still living with their parents have increased significantly since 2001. In light of this a report produced by Skipton Building Society in March/ April 2004, despite not being an independent academic study, is of interest as it highlights the situation of flux in the role of the family within the welfare state as well as in understandings of family. The report predicted a rise over the next 20 years in the United Kingdom in the numbers of extended financial families from 75,000 in 2004 to 200,000 in 2024. The report defines extended families as three generations living in the same house and attributes this presumed increase, which goes against the movement of past decades, to smaller families to an increase in the personal privatisation of welfare services along with pension underfunding, increased childcare costs, higher levels of debt and rising property costs. Factors which the report predicts will make a combining of incomes and sharing of mortgage repayments the only alternatives for some while shared living combines, in the best instance, cuts in costs for childcare with savings in the expense of residential care for elderly relatives (Skipton Building Society 2004).

### 3.1.7. Current Debate

Without conducting a full study of media reports in England over a longer period it is difficult to single out with authority the major issues in current debate at the present time. However a more basic scan of the national press combined with a study of the prioritised aims of government departments give an indication of those issues which are high on the national agenda. One area which always receives considerable attention in the press is health and in particular issues concerning the efficiency and finance of the National Health Service (NHS). The NHS remains, as an overarching healthcare system, largely free at point of contact, but has been severely under funded in recent decades. This is clearly reflected in government policy which expressly prioritises improving efficiency in the NHS and cutting waiting lists. In addition the government aims to improve the general health of the nation

and to remove inequalities in health which can currently be seen to be aligned with the financial situation and place of residence of the individuals (Department of Health 2003). Such issues are also frequently addressed in media articles concerning the nationwide health issues and public fear of a 'postcode lottery' in healthcare. Issues of healthcare overlap in the public domain with issues of public sector staffing. Considerable attention has been paid in recent months to the pay and working conditions for public-sector staff in a range of service provision areas including, but not limited to healthcare professionals. Public solidarity with the staff concerned is however tempered by a fear of rising costs for welfare and education. At a policy level this situation involves active recruitment drives and incentives for entering a number of fields, not least teaching and nursing alongside hard-fought battles for pay rises.

Like the health service, the social services are often also a focus of public debate both in terms of cost and efficiency. The government's focus on a direct connection between welfare rights and paid employment is mirrored in the press by concern over levels of unemployment, access to benefits and the situation for the elderly when pensions and the cost of living do not match up. Once again in the history of the English welfare system the close connection between welfare and immigration policy can be seen as part of the debate surrounding benefits, not least following the Prime Minister's comments, only days before the integration of 10 new states into the EU, that citizens of new member states would have the right to work, but not to claim benefits in the United Kingdom.

Finally, while focus in the media on welfare is often combined with debates on immigration it is also frequently connected to questions of crime and the justice system. Crime and its effects on society as a whole fill many column inches, not least with reference to juvenile crime and preventative strategies, including regeneration as well as conditions in the country's prisons (Home Office 2003). The Home Office too has clearly articulated policy priorities of cutting crime and improving community relations. This involves an active policy of encouraging the voluntary and community sector particularly in areas of urban deprivation.

### 3.2. Characteristics and Policies of the English System regarding Gender

At the beginning of this study the importance of including a gender perspective in any study focusing on both welfare provision and religion was commented on and discussed. This in turn necessitates the inclusion of a presentation of the gender-equality policies of the English system if not an in-depth analysis of their impact. As Diane Sainsbury has commented, gender cuts

across welfare-state regimes and there are clear dynamic relations between the logics of gender regimes and of welfare-state regimes, which means that a comprehensive understanding of the latter would be impossible without some knowledge of the former (Sainsbury 1999, 245). This said, Mary Daly has made the point that although at European Union level there was considerable focus during the first few years of the twenty-first century on the need to connect policy thinking around social policy and gender equality, there was 'a virtual absence of action within European countries to utilize social policy to address gender inequalities' (Daly 2004, 143). Daly's point being that the fact that the two policy areas connect has not necessarily led to the connection of policy in this area and that gender inequalities are not being taken account of for the purposes of social policy. Rather she identifies an increasing representation of women and men in social policy as gender-neutral beings, where increasingly both are seen in terms of individual workers or potential workers, rather than in the context of a family setting (Daly 2004, 143). Despite the attempts towards a neutral approach by policy makers, however the statistics tell their own story of how such policies have failed to have an impact on gender equality and therefore also contribute to continuing inequalities in welfare provision. Women in Britain are, for example, on average paid less than their male colleagues and professional women are less likely to reach the top ranks of their chosen field. Women also spend more time than men doing household chores. An average of 2 hours and 30 minutes on a daily basis compared to the hour dedicated by the average man to such tasks daily (ONS 2004b).

The following section attempts depict the current situation as regards gender equality policy in Britain and government discourse on the issue as well as highlighting some issues connected to both which were evident in the media at the time at which fieldwork was being carried out. Neither political discourse or media reporting are neutral sources of information. The intention here is not to present a full analysis of the situation in Britain, but rather to outline policy relating to gender in Britain as well as the government discourse surrounding the development of that policy and to highlight a few issues which illustrate the impact or lack of impact of such political machinations on society in general and welfare issues in particular.

### 3.2.1. Legislation Promoting Equality

There are two pieces of legislation in Great Britain which aim to counteract discrimination on the grounds of sex. These are the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 and the Equal Pay Act 1970. Both acts apply to men and women of any age (including children). The Sex Discrimination Act outlaws sex-based discrimination (both direct and indirect) in employment, education and the provision and sale of goods, facilities, services and premises. It also prohibits discriminating against someone because they are married, victimising

someone for making allegations or bringing a case under the act and publishing discriminatory advertisements. There are a few exceptions to the act, most importantly positive action allowing positive discrimination in work or training where members of the relevant sex are under-represented in a particular field and discrimination by non-profit making bodies in restricting membership to one sex or providing benefits to one sex in line with their main objective.

One such example is the amendment to the act which came into force in February 2002 allowing political parties to apply positive discrimination when selecting candidates in order to reduce inequalities in the numbers of male and female candidates standing for election. This amendment came about following the General Election of 1997, as the Labour Party had been forced to withdraw a policy of women-only shortlists in some areas following an employment tribunal where it was found to be in breach of the Sex Discrimination Act (House of Commons Information Office 2003, 5). Nonetheless the General Election of 1997 resulted in the highest ever number of female Members of Parliament (MP). One hundred and eighteen were elected in June 2001, two less than in 1997. Twenty six of them have ministerial posts and together they represent 18% of the total number of MPs (House of Commons Information Office 2003, 2).

The Equal Pay Act gives an individual the right to the same pay and benefits as a person of the opposite sex in the same employment, where the individuals are doing comparable work or work of equal value. An employer does not however, have to provide the same pay and benefits if it can prove that the differences are due to a reason other than the sex of the person(s) involved. Both of these laws are monitored by the Equal Opportunities Commission which was set up under the SDA. The Equal Opportunities Commission is a statutory, independent body which works to promote equality and remove discrimination between the sexes (Equal Opportunities Commission 2008). Despite the fact that this legislation has been in place for over three decades, an article based on three different data sets collected by the Office for National Statistics concludes that although the gender pay gap for full-time employees has narrowed since the introduction of the Equal Pay Act, it has by no means disappeared and the extent of the gender pay gap varies considerably depending on an individual's circumstances (Leaker 2008). At its lowest point since records began in April 2007, the gap between women's median hourly pay and men's was 12.5% (ONS 2008).

### 3.2.2. Taxation and Social Entitlements

Parental leave is based on individual rights. Regulations which apply to all those whose child was due, or due to be adopted, on or after 6 April 2003 lengthen periods of parental leave and extend the rights of working parents to apply for flexible working hours. This policy is in line with the Labour

Government's general approach to welfare reform, which as Lewis and Campbell point out 'made a clear connection between employment-anchored welfare state reform and family welfare' documented in Labour's 2001 Election Manifesto (Lewis & Campbell 2007, 368). The Government's intention here, in line with other benefits policy, being to facilitate what is termed the combination of work and family responsibilities, allowing as many people of working age as possible to enter and remain in the labour market. Paid maternity leave is now 26 weeks with the option of an additional 26 weeks of unpaid leave if desired. (where the woman has worked for 26 weeks or more before 14<sup>th</sup> week of pregnancy) These rights are governed by laws relating to the woman's employment although unemployed women are entitled to basic maternity pay from the state. Two weeks' paid paternity leave are now available to fathers and rights akin to those of natural parents have been introduced for adoptive couples (or individuals), with one partner being entitled to the equivalent of maternity leave and the other to 2 weeks' paid leave. In addition all employees have the right to 13 weeks' unpaid parental leave to care for children, with this leave being available until the child's fifth birthday (extensions to these entitlements are available for the parents of disabled children).

The introduction of paternity leave marks a major change in United Kingdom policy. Katherine Rake, writing before the introduction of these new measures commented on the consistent lack of policies in the United Kingdom designed to increase men's participation in caring (Rake 2001, 224). While this has now been addressed to a certain extent, much of what Rake was saying following the Labour Government's first term in office remains true. The statements which it made in 1998 concerning families remain true of its policies at the present time, singling out marriages as the 'most reliable framework for raising children' (Home Office 1998 cited in Rake 2001, 224). There is, Rake argues an implicit gender bias built into the current policy framework as the focus on paid employment as the basis for citizenship 'increases the opportunity costs and income risks attached to caring work and sustains the long-standing under-valuation of unpaid caring work' (Rake 2001, 226).

Pensions are also based on individual rights. Currently the pensions system is based on the payment of national insurance contributions throughout working life, the amount of basic state pension received on retirement will depend on the number of years the individual has contributed to National Insurance. In addition to this basic rate, contributions can be made to the additional state pension, an occupational pension scheme or a personal pension scheme. The terms of these vary, but often there is no automatic right of inheritance for a spouse and the additional state pension, for example, limits inheritance to a maximum of 50%.

By contrast to both maternity and paternity leave and pension rights, child tax credit, an income supplement which is available to adults with the main

caring responsibility for a child or children, while means-tested is allocated to families rather than individuals. Furthermore the status of this benefit as a family rather than individual right is anchored in the fact that the amount received is allocated according to total household income and number of dependent children in the household (HM Revenue and Customs).

### 3.2.3. Gender Equality Policy

The changes to parental leave rights are part of the Government's wider 'welfare to work' policy mentioned above which follows the gender-neutral logic highlighted earlier. Within this policy is an explicit emphasis on encouraging women of working age into the labour market. It is therefore perhaps unsurprising that at the time of the empirical research the Minister for women in the Cabinet, Patricia Hewitt, was also the Trade and Industry Secretary. She and the Deputy Minister for women were supported by the 'Women and Equality Unit' (WEU), which is a part of the Department for Trade and Industry. The unit had a remit to promote and realise the benefits of diversity in the economy and more widely and to develop policies relating to gender equality and ensure that work on equality across Government as a whole was co-ordinated.<sup>9</sup> According to the website of the WEU: 'The Government believes in a modern Britain: That fosters and uses the talents of all; That promotes opportunity for everyone, and; That views diversity as a source of competitive advantage and higher productivity' (WEU 2004).

Equality for women then, in the vision of the Government, assumes what Lewis has characterised as the generalisation to women of the masculinist model of work and welfare (Lewis 2002, 331). Equality is characterised mainly in terms of being a catalyst to economic growth and many of the issues with which the WEU works on behalf of government relate to the position of the women in the workplace, although not exclusively so. The Unit works with a variety of issues which give not only a good indication of policy but also the areas prominent in public debate. In the workplace the government has a commitment to reduce the pay gap which still exists between men and women and to work with business to address the fact that women are still in a minority in the boardroom. In families, the government has a commitment to provide accessible, affordable childcare and to help working families to improve the work-life balance. This includes policies for flexible working and parental leave as well as tax credit and investment in childcare facilities, although the ongoing lack of formal childcare available in the country must be noted (Clasen 2003, 576). In terms of society in

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<sup>9</sup> Following re-organisation in 2008 the Women and Equality Unit has been amalgamated into the newly formed Government Equalities Office. This is a self-standing department with responsibility for government policy on equality and women's issues and reports to the Ministers for Women and Equality. <http://www.equalities.gov.uk/>

general the government's equality policy includes working to tackle discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation. This includes introducing regulations which came into force as part of the Equality Act 2006 (see GEO 2008).

The Unit is also led a cross-governmental gender equality steering group to co-ordinate equality and to embrace best practice in promoting diversity in policies and services as part of a process of 'mainstreaming' equality policy and strengthening the separate institutions which have worked with these issues, by bringing them into the mainstream of public policy.

Finally a practical issue, on which the unit is actively working and which has also been prominent in public debate, is the question of domestic violence. New legislation covering this area was introduced in 2004, the most significant alteration of the domestic violence legislation for 30 years (Civil Partnership Act 2004). In addition, the WEU published the first ever national study into the social and economic costs of domestic violence in 2004 (Walby 2004). The study has shown that two women are killed by a partner or former partner in Britain every week (Walby 2004). Publicity of this issue along with new legislation has brought the general issue of violence against women into public debate. Recent high-profile cases of forced marriage and subsequent policy reactions with renewed guidelines for police and officials in foreign embassies also contributed to the overall debate during the period of study (FCO 2004). This subsequently led in 2007 to the passing of legislation in the United Kingdom to protect individuals forced into marriage (Forced Marriage (Civil Protection) Act 2007). This issue is a recent example of the close connections in England between welfare and immigration policy, which have traditionally had and continue to have an impact on one another. In terms of government policy, this can be seen in the close connection between gender equality and policy to reduce racial, sexual and religious discrimination. The WEU had a wide remit including the promotion of equality between all in society. In more specific terms this connection can be seen in the special attention paid by the unit to minority ethnic women. These women are less likely to be in paid employment than their white peers and more likely to be surviving on benefits (GEO 2007).

#### 3.2.4. Gender Issues in Public Debate on Welfare

The discussion above highlighted issues prioritised by the government in terms of gender equality. These are all issues high on the public agenda, but also compatible with the government's prioritising of gender issues which can be connected to policy promoting economic growth. The following are also issues which have taken up a significant number of column inches in recent months or are a focus for academic research.

Women live longer than men but are also more likely to have more years of ill health (Summerfield & Babb 2004, 106). Outliving their partners they

are therefore also more likely to spend time living in a residential care or nursing home than their male counterparts (Arber & Ginn 2004). This has an impact on the way the care of the elderly is profiled in public debate, as issues that particularly affect women are therefore prominent. One such issue connected both to issues of the elderly and changes in families is the debate over pensions: if women live longer in a system where the philosophy is still based on a male breadwinner supporting the family, both in work and later through a pension, women suffer years of poverty following the death of a husband or as the outcome of a divorce which leaves them with little claim to their husband's pension. (Although the latter has been recently affected by changes to the divorce law allowing the courts greater powers to split pensions as they see fit in such cases, this has had little effect to date.)

Also, as more and more women now choose to work, government policy reflects this, expecting them to work in order to earn a pension. Public debate correspondingly takes up issues of the responsibility of the individual to save towards their pension. The issue of pensions is also closely connected to another prominent issue in public debate, namely the close relationship between gender and poverty in Britain. The report *Gender and Poverty in Britain* demonstrates that women are more likely than men to be living in poverty (Bradshaw et al. 2003). This is underpinned by the assumption that still prevails in the system that women have access to a male partner's income. Lone parents, divorcees and retired women are therefore all at greater risk of poverty than their male counterparts. Women are frequently granted care of their children following a divorce or never have the support of the child's father. Many fathers do not pay maintenance to their children, even where this has been demanded by the courts, and lone mothers are as a result of this and other connecting factors statistically the group most likely to end up living in poverty. Politically this sparks debate as to the workings of the benefits system in such cases, while both academics and politicians debate the relative merits of benefits as opposed to incentives to work.

In low-income households, women's traditional role as managers of the household income means that many women with male partners are more likely to go without to provide for their children and to bear the brunt of the stress of budgeting and there is therefore also an issue of hidden female poverty (Bradshaw et al. 2003).

### 3.2.5. Women and Men in the Welfare Sector

The roles of women and men in the welfare sector differ both in terms of employees in the public sector and welfare work that is carried out in the home. Data from the General Household Survey, which collected data on the extent and nature of care-giving in Britain in 2000 shows that 16% of those aged 16 and over in Britain were caring for a sick, disabled or elderly person (Mahler & Green 2002, x). Twenty eight percent of these spent over 20

hours per week on such responsibilities (Mahler & Green 2002, xi). While both men and women of all ages provide care to individuals both within and outside their own household, women are more likely than men to be carers (18% compared with 14%) and while there are no differences in the numbers who care for someone in their own household, women predominate as carers for individuals who do not share their household (12% compared with 9%) (Mahler & Green 2002, x). Women are also numerically dominant in the sub groups with the largest commitments. Five percent of women spend 20 hours or more on caring tasks compared with 3% of men and 11% are the main carer for an individual compared with 7% of men (Mahler & Green 2002, 2).

Gender differences can also be detected in the types of care-work carried out by women and men. Women are more likely than men to provide care in the form of personal care, keeping an eye on the person cared for and keeping them company while figures for men and women providing physical and other forms of practical help are virtually equal (Summerfield & Babb 2004, 122). These figures charting the work of unpaid carers are particularly important as indicators of gender roles in the welfare sector when one notes that 59% of those being cared for in this way do not receive visits from health social and voluntary services (Mahler & Green 2002, xi).

In addition to these figures statistics from the Labour Force (2003) and United Kingdom Time Use (2000) Surveys show that women spend more time caring for their children than men, a figure that holds even when comparing full-time workers (women who work spend on average 4½ hours with their children on a weekday compared with 3½ for men in the same situation). The age of the youngest child clearly affects the mother's role in the labour market 68% of working age women with dependent children are active in the labour market (this figure sinks to 55% for those with children under the age of 5), while 96% of their male counterparts are active in the labour market regardless of the age of the youngest child. Men in this situation are, in fact, more likely than those without children to be working, while the opposite is true for women, although numbers of women who are economically inactive because they are at home with children is lower than it once was (ONS 2004c).

Women are also in the majority as regards workers in the public sector (welfare and education) both in relation to men and in relation to numbers of women in work, and black and ethnic-minority women are even more likely than their white peers to work in this sector.

Labour market statistics also show a marked difference between men and women as regards paid employment in the welfare sector. Of a total of 29,721,000 workforce jobs in 2003 7,165,000 were in public administration, health and education and women held 4,924,000 of these (compared with 2,241,000 men). Over and above this, not only do women dominate numerically in this sector, as the figures show, but because there are fewer women in the workforce than men these figures represent 35% of all women in

workforce jobs in 2003 while the equivalent figure for men is only 14% (ONS 2005).<sup>10</sup> In addition, detailed statistics from the Health Service corroborate this general trend which highlights some significant differences between men and women as regards the type of work carried out. Of whole time equivalent (wte) staff working in council social services departments, for example, 81% are female. Women also represent 73% of all central and strategic staff, but interestingly within that figure a breakdown by activity shows that 81% of those providing wte clerical and administrative support were female compared to only 45% of all senior directing staff. Women are also statistically much more likely to be working with young children or the elderly and mentally infirm than their male counterparts. Despite the numerical dominance of women in employed by social services, however, 59% of them work part-time compared to 25% of men (Department of Health 2004c). Statistics from the Department of Health detailing medical and non-medical staff paint a similar picture. Women make up 81.8% of all non-medical staff in NHS hospitals and community health services but only 58.2% of all administrative managers within this field (Department of Health 2004a). While women dominate numerically in non-medical posts, however, of 74,965 hospital medical staff in England only 26,466 are female and only 6,667 have risen to the position of consultant compared to 20,620 of their male counterparts. Within the ranks of medical professionals too differences exist as regards nature of contract 22.1% of female medics held part-time posts in 2003 compared with 10% of their male peers (Department of Health 2004b).

### 3.3. Summary

As the preceding chapter has shown, the British welfare state in its post-Second World War form as an example of the liberal welfare state, did not appear from nowhere, but evolved from the poverty alleviating policies of previous generations. Its history, including in particular a retention of a role for civil society throughout, has continued to influence development as it has evolved throughout the twentieth century to its current formation. Now, despite continued basic responsibility for welfare being held by the state and its subsidiary public authorities, welfare provision at the point of access is supplied by a complex interaction between public authorities, voluntary and community organisations and market forces.

This adapted welfare state, which can perhaps more appropriately be called a welfare system, faces a number of challenges both because of demographic changes and global social developments which impact at both

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<sup>10</sup> Note: workforce jobs = sum of employee jobs (from employer surveys), self employment (from LFS), HM Forces and government funded trainees.

local and national level. Ageing populations and increased mobility, along with shifts in ideology and attitudes to the nation state and public welfare, are straining a system not designed with these developments in mind. Added to this, changes in perceptions of gender relations and notions of gender equality have a particular impact on welfare provision in a welfare system built on the male breadwinner model.

This presentation of the welfare system in place in Britain today, the challenges it faces and the gender regime with which it interacts serves two purposes in this study. Firstly, it acts as a background presenting some basic information about welfare and British society, which is essential in order to understand the role of the Church of England in relation to the state in general and its role in welfare in particular. It presents the social system which is also the framework for the functions of the Church and therefore gives an understanding of the context in which the Church is acting and speaking. Secondly, it sets the scene for the case study in part II by providing the framework of the national welfare system within which the local system of welfare provision sits. Both are essential requirements for fulfilling the aims of this study. This detailed picture of the welfare system at national level provides, alongside the local case study, the prism of welfare through which the Church's role in society can be refracted, thus enabling the local study of one religious institution to contribute to a wider debate on the role of institutional religion in contemporary western Europe between the individual and society.

To this end, Chapter 4 which follows provides the equivalent picture of the place of religion in English society and the role of the Church in relation to the state and population, both generally and in terms of social policy.

## 4. Religion and Society in England

### 4.1. The National Religious Situation

#### Religious Affiliation

The 2001 census in England and Wales included for the first time a voluntary question about religious affiliation (and similar questions were posed in Scotland). The results from this provide the most comprehensive information available about the presence and distribution of religions in the country. In addition figures are available from annual Labour Force Surveys and the Home Office Citizenship Survey (2001) which produced similar results. The following table shows the population of Great Britain by religion.

Table 1. Population of Great Britain by Religion in April 2001<sup>11</sup>

	<b>Total Population</b>	<b>Non-Christian religious population</b>
Muslim	2.8%	51.9%
Hindu	1.0%	18.3%
Sikh	0.6%	11.0%
Jewish	0.5%	8.7%
Buddhist	0.3%	4.9%
Any other religion	0.3%	5.2%
All non-Christian religious population	5.4%	100%
Christian	71.8%	-
No religion	15.1%	-
Religion not stated	7.8%	-
All population	100%	-

The category Christian covers almost two-thirds of the population (41 million) and includes the Church of England, Church of Wales and Church of Scotland as well as the Roman Catholic Church and all other Christian denominations in the country. Following this the next largest group in society

<sup>11</sup> Figures from Census April 2001, Office for National Statistics and Census April 2001, General Registrar for Scotland. Figures compiled by Office for National Statistics and published October 2004. <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/cci/nugget.asp?id=954>

is those who declare that they have no religion.<sup>12</sup> Muslims comprise about half of the Non Christian religious population in Britain and, with 1.6 million living in Britain, made up 3% of the total population in 2001. Hindus make up about 1% of the population and people who affiliate with Sikhism, Judaism and Buddhism comprise groups which represent less than 1%, but at least 0.3% of the population. The remaining 0.3% of the population affiliates to non-Christian religious groups which do not fall within the religions noted above. In England and Wales 151,000 people selected the category 'other religion' when filling in their census form. The largest of these groups were Spiritualists (32,000) and Pagans (31,000), followed by Jain (15,000), Wicca (7,000), Rastafarian (5,000) and Zoroastrian (4,000).<sup>13</sup>

Neither the census nor the Home Office Citizenship Survey provide information on the spread of the Christian population amongst the various denominations present in Britain. Polls by the national polling institution MORI however have produced a figure of about 50% of the population of Great Britain saying that they belong to the Church of England, as table 2 indicates. As the table below also shows, however, a significantly smaller percentage of the population attends Sunday worship regularly either in the Church of England or in another Christian church.

### **Support for Religious Values in Public Life**

Despite increased religious pluralism and decreasing church attendance it is interesting to note evidence of public support for values connected to religion in public life. A survey conducted on behalf of the BBC in 2009 found 62% of the 1045 people surveyed, from a representative sample of the population of the United Kingdom, agreed with the statement 'Religion has an important role to play in public life'. Furthermore, 63% of those questioned agreed that 'our laws should respect and be influenced by UK religious values' (ComRes 2009). While the formulation 'UK religious values' is ambiguous it is not controversial to suggest that for many this would imply an association with traditional Christian values, given the country's Christian heritage. In light of this it is therefore of particular interest that, while there is little variance in the responses on the basis of age or gender, religious affiliation does have an impact. A significantly larger proportion of the (admittedly small numbers of) Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs polled supported a strong role in national life for UK religious values than those claiming Christian affiliation (ComRes 2009).

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<sup>12</sup> This figure includes all who ticked 'None' in the Census survey as well as those who answered Jedi Knight, Heathen, Agnostic and Atheist and all those who ticked 'Other', but did not specify a religion. Census April 2001.

<sup>13</sup> Census April 2001, Office for National Statistics

Table 2. Denominational affiliation and Sunday church attendance in Great Britain/ England

An '\*' indicates a finding of less than 0.5%, but greater than zero

	Denominational affiliation GB (MORI Poll 2001) <sup>14</sup>	Denominational affiliation England and Wales (ORB survey 2007) <sup>15</sup>	Denominational affiliation GB (BSA Survey 2005) <sup>16</sup>	Church attendance on average Sunday as % of population 1998 - England <sup>17</sup>
Church of England	49%	45%	26.39%	2.0%
Roman Catholic	11%	13%	9.11%	2.5%
Church of Scotland	6%	4%		
Methodist	6%	3%	2.37%	0.8%
URC/ Congregationalist		2%	0.37%	0.2%
Baptist and other free and independent churches			0.93%	0.9%
New churches		1%		0.5%
Church in Wales		1%		
Other Christian - including Orthodox and smaller denominations	1%	1%		*
Muslim	2%	2%		
Hindu	1%	1%		
Buddhist	*	1%		
Jewish	*	1%		
Sikh	2%	1%		
Other		1%		
None	18%	22%		
Don't know/ refused	1%	2%		

<sup>14</sup> Responses to the question 'What is your religion, if any? (If Christian) What denomination are you?' Figures Ipsos Mori 2001,

<sup>15</sup> Responses to question: 'Which religion, if any, do you regard yourself as belonging to?' ORB Survey, 2007

<sup>16</sup> Responses to question: 'Do you regard yourself as belonging to any particular religion? If YES: Which?' If 'Christian' Probe for denomination. BSA Survey 2005.

<sup>17</sup> Figures from The English Church Attendance Survey. Brierley 2000, 56.

## 4.2. Characteristics of the Church of England and its Role in National Life

### 4.2.1. The Official Theological Self-understanding of the Church

The influence of the English Reformation in the doctrine of the Church of England is very clear. The catalyst for the creation of the Church of England may have been the marriage of Henry VIII, but it would not have been possible had there not existed an interest in theological reform amongst some prominent churchmen of the day. The doctrine of the Church therefore has grown, not by virtue of written confessions, as with the Protestant churches, or conciliar decrees as the Roman Catholic Church, but as a result of compromise between two factions of the Church, with tensions inherent in the Church's understanding of itself from the beginning as being both Catholic and reformed. The liturgy of the Church in the Prayer Book expresses the understanding that the Church of England is one part of a single church of Christ and, based on this, Anglican apologetic has often asserted that Anglicanism has no specific doctrines of its own and that Anglicans believe what is common to all Christendom. This may be true in-so-far as Anglican doctrine exists nowhere as a central set of documents that are universally recognised, but rather rests on interpretation of Scripture and the Creeds. The problem however comes when the question is raised as to where the limits for acceptable interpretations should be set and where the authority to determine such limits rests.

In the context of a debate over the limits of biblical authority Richard Hooker, the acknowledged father of the Anglican intellectual tradition, laid out three elements of a theological method in his *Of the laws of Ecclesiastical Polity* which have served as a yardstick for Anglican theologians ever since, namely scripture, reason and tradition (Hooker 1907). Implicit in this method is the understanding that the individual will use his or her God-given faculties to interpret scripture in the light of the wisdom and learning available to him in the traditions of the Church. The Thirty-nine Articles, Prayer Book and Ecclesiastical Canons are therefore but a single part of this tradition. Far from being a dogmatic approach, therefore, the Anglican theological tradition allows an enquiring approach to theology. Perhaps for this reason an emphasis on the 'via media', or middle way, has long been a defining feature of the Anglican tradition and an emphasis on this and on the value of critical reasoning has led to a theological tradition tolerant of diversity, sustaining communal decision-making processes which rely on consensus politics to clarify doctrinal positions. Thus to this day official reports of the commissions of the Church and of the House of Bishops are compiled in this manner and on first publication represent a consensus of opinion of the

members of the group, which may then at a later date be ratified by the General Synod of the Church. To what extent this theological tradition has grown out of the necessity of holding together a diverse church, both nationally and in terms of the worldwide Anglican communion, and to what extent the diversity of the Church has increased because of the theological tradition is impossible to quantify.

One area where the mixture of Protestant and Catholic tradition is clear in Anglican theology is in the area of pastoral theology. In many ways the Anglican Church has developed in directions similar to those of its Protestant neighbours, the opening up of the funeral liturgy in 2000, for example, shows a move on the part of the Church of England away from a Catholic understanding of the role of the funeral service, with its focus on the life after that on earth, to a more pastoral response focused on the individual who has died and the grieving family. Nonetheless, the Church of England has never fully embraced the Protestant understanding of the diaconate or gone down the road of developing a pastoral theology based on a concept of 'Dia-konia' as in Germany and Scandinavia. The role of the deacon in the Church of England is, it is emphasised, part of the threefold ordained ministry, yet elements remain of the Roman Catholic understanding of the role as a transitory phase (all priests in the Church of England serve as deacons for a year before their ordination to the priesthood) although many become deacons with the intention of entering a permanent diaconate.<sup>18</sup> Unlike the majority of their Scandinavian counterparts deacons in the Church of England are not expected to have training in nursing, social work or similar and emphasis is placed on the liturgical role and on the deacon as a link between Eucharist and World (Hall, C., 1999).

A second aspect of the Church's self understanding, which has both sociological and theological implications and therefore must be mentioned briefly here is the Church's view of its role in the nation. The Church's role as the established church has led to a development of a theological understanding of the Church as the church of the nation, with the resulting practical implications of a geographically organised responsibility to all citizens of the nation and a duty to both support and criticise the representatives and systems of political power. Opinions on this amongst representatives of the Church are however closely aligned with attitudes to the relationship between Church and state. Opponents of establishment often also oppose theologies upholding the link between church and state as elitist and irrelevant in the modern world, where a Christian moral is no longer the common element in society.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> A situation reinforced in the years before the decision to allow the ordination of women to the priesthood, when women were ordained deacon, but did not progress to the priesthood along with their male colleagues.

<sup>19</sup> For a more in-depth discussion of the Church of England's theological self-understanding and the doctrine of Anglicanism see Sykes & Booth (eds.) 1988; Avis 2000; Wolf, (ed.) 1979

#### 4.2.2. Relationship between Church and State

The Church of England is the established church of England, although England has no written constitution and neither is there one document or Act of Parliament which secures the status of the Church in the nation. The nature of establishment is, rather, defined through the series of relationships which the Church and the state have to one another which are manifested as privileges and advantages, but also as restrictions and limitations for the Church. The Queen is the Supreme Governor of the Church, and in the Coronation Oath promises to uphold the 'Protestant reformed religion established by law' and to 'maintain and preserve inviolably the settlement of the Church of England, and the doctrine, worship, discipline and government thereof, as by law established in England' (Welsby 1985, 45). The monarch is thereby obliged to be in communion with the Church of England and is crowned by the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Church has responsibility for religious services associated with important events in national life. In addition, certain positions in national life can only be filled by Anglican clergy and 26 senior bishops of the Church sit as members of the House of Lords.<sup>20</sup> The monarch has no spiritual role although the Queen is, via her prime minister, responsible for the appointment of bishops (Cumper & Edge 2006). The power that this arrangement gives to politicians to influence the running of the Church has long been used by those in favour of disestablishment as a significant argument in favour of their position.

Agitators for disestablishment can be found both amongst representatives of the Church of England and of other faiths and none, however the same can also be said of the opposite position. It is particularly interesting in the context of a study of the Church and welfare to note that one argument of those in favour of establishment is, in the words of one senior bishop, that the 'reason that bishops are in the House of Lords is so that they may comment on every aspect of the nation's life not simply the religious or spiritual' (Nazir-Ali 1997, 33). But, he continues, the Church must see its role as one of advocacy, of enabling the voices of others that might not otherwise be heard. In particular, he notes 'the Archbishop of Canterbury, for instance, is already involved in representing to a very great extent the interests of other faith communities in the corridors of power' (Nazir-Ali 1997, 33). In other words the established nature of the Church can be portrayed as a representation and guardian of the interests of faith and faiths in society at large and not simply of the Church of England. While members of other faith communities in the country are divided as to their opinions on this aspect of the

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<sup>20</sup> The upper chamber of Parliament in Britain. The continued role of the bishop's in the House of Lords has been the subject of particular debate in recent years connected to wider discussions surrounding revision of the composition of that chamber and after the report of the Royal Commission on the reform of the House of Lords (2000). For a discussion of some aspects of the debate see Davie 2000b; Hurd 2006.

Church's role it is noteworthy that several prominent representatives of other faith communities, the most well known of these being the Chief Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, have publically declared their support for continued establishment in similar terms. They do so arguing that an established church can better defend the interests of faith in the public sphere than a neutral secular state (Sacks 2005).

The Church has held four investigations into the possibility of church-state disestablishment over the past hundred years, resulting in the Selborne (1917), Cecil (1935), Moberley (1952) and Chadwick (1970) reports (Field 2007, 90). None of these, however, has resulted in significant change and although there are those who campaign actively for this cause, the Church and state remain closely connected albeit with some modifications (Dyson 1985). William Temple was never a campaigner for disestablishment, but the Life and Liberty campaign, which he set up in 1917 achieved perhaps the greatest modification in church-state relations in the history of the modern Church. The campaign for greater control for the Church over its internal affairs and matters spiritual resulted in the Enabling Act (1919) which created the Church Assembly and was intended to free up Parliament, who no longer had time for ecclesiastical business. The decisions of the Church Assembly were, however, still subject to parliamentary approval and the minor nature of the change was seen in 1927 when the proposed new Prayer Book which had been approved by the Church Assembly was rejected by Parliament. A measure in 1969 gave the General Synod (the body which replaced the General Assembly following a number of reforms to make the system more effective, tie national structures closer to dioceses and parishes and give the laity a more influence) most of its legislative authority in ecclesiastical affairs. Nonetheless final authority continues to rest with Parliament which, when a measure has passed through all of its stages, must either accept or reject it. In 1974 further powers were given by parliament to the Church to enable it to make its own provisions for forms of service, within certain boundaries.

In practice the connection between church and state also has implications for the work of the Church at a local, parish level. The network of parish churches in England is ancient and many rural parishes correspond to village boundaries. The situation in towns is somewhat different given the huge rise in urban populations following the Industrial Revolution, but here too boundaries often coincide with local administrative areas. The clergy of a parish have a pastoral responsibility for those resident in the geographical area regardless of whether or not they are baptised members of the Church. Residents of a parish have a legal right to the performance of a certain minimum of authorised services in their parish church, parishioners also have the right to have their child baptised by the incumbent, to be married in the church of the parish and to be buried in the churchyard of their parish or of the parish where they happen to die. Residents of the parish over 16 years

of age who are baptised and members of the Church, or of a church in communion with the Church of England are also entitled to enter their name on the Electoral Roll and thereby to participate in Church elections. Even those who have regularly attended public worship over a period of 6 months in a parish where they are not resident have this right and the corresponding rights to pastoral services (Welsby 1985).

#### 4.2.3. Church Membership/-Affiliation

In 2005 26.39% of respondents to the British Social Attitudes Survey consider themselves to belong to the Church of England/-Anglican Church and 42.35% responded Church of England/Anglican when asked in what religion, if any, they were brought up (British Social Attitudes Survey 2004a and 2004b). This can be compared to the responses to the Ipsos Mori Poll in 2006, where 49% of the population claimed affiliation with the Church of England and the ORB survey commissioned by the Church of England in England and Wales in 2007, where 45% of respondents said they belong to the Church of England (Ipsos Mori 2006; ORB 2007a). Parish Electoral Rolls provide an indication of the number of more active members of the Church. Figures from the six-yearly revision in 2002 show a 7% decrease from 1996, with 1.2 million adults aged 16 or over registered. In 2004 the figure was 1,254,000 (Archbishops' Council 2006). It must be noted however that the size of the electoral roll is a significant factor taken into account when the size of the parish share is calculated by the diocese (the annual financial contribution paid by the parish to the diocese). Churches with larger electoral rolls are expected to pay greater contributions to the diocese and this fact can therefore act as a disincentive to actively encourage individuals to sign up.<sup>21</sup> The Church of England's own statistics show that average weekly figures for attendance at church services each week dropped by 1% and weekly attendance specifically on Sundays by 2% between 2004 and 2005. On average weekly attendance at Church of England services remained at 1.1 million people with just below 1 million of these attending on a Sunday (Archbishops' Council 2008).<sup>22</sup> Figures from the English church census are somewhat lower, showing an 11% decrease between 1998 and 2005 to a usual Sunday attendance of 867,400 (Brierley 2006, 28). Figures from an ORB poll on behalf of the Church of England in 2003 also show that 39% of the population attend a church/ place of worship at Christmas (ORB 2003, Table 10). A total of 2,629,300 people attended a Church of England church or cathedral on Christmas Eve or Christmas Day 2004 and 1,512,700 attended on Easter Day (Archbishops' Council 2006).

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<sup>21</sup> No study has however been undertaken to provide empirical evidence of the impact of this.

<sup>22</sup> Church of England average weekly attendance 2004 1,186,000; 2005 1,174,000; 2006 1,163,000. Average Sunday attendance 2004 1,010,000; 2005 993,000; 2006 983,000.

#### 4.2.4. Pastoral Services

Figures for 2004 show that about 143,600 infants, children and adults were baptised in the Church of England that year. The numbers of children, young people and adults being baptised has remained fairly stable at around 46,000 per year since the beginning of the 1990s, while figures clearly show a steady decline in infant baptisms. In 2001 70% of those baptised were infants while in 1990 80% were infants. Current figures represent a rate of 198 baptisms per 1,000 live births (Archbishops' Council 2003a, 9). Since 2000 parishes have also collected statistics relating to the other occasional offices of the Church, by which are meant funerals, marriages, blessings of civil marriage and thanksgiving services. In 2001 51% of occasional offices were funerals, 35% baptisms and thanksgiving services and 14% marriages and blessings of civil marriage. There was a 4% drop in the numbers of occasional offices taken between 2000 and 2001, but on average every stipendiary parish clergyperson performs one such service a week.<sup>23</sup> Church of England parish funerals are held for 44% of all people who die in England (Archbishops' Council 2006). Of the 212,500 funerals performed by a minister from the Church of England in 2004 101,000 were held in a church and 111,600 in crematoria/cemeteries (Archbishops' Council 2006). In 2001 Church of England/ Church in Wales marriages made up 24% of all marriages performed in England and Wales. Attendance levels at these services are not recorded, but the ORB survey from 2003 indicates that 59% of the population attended a funeral in a church/place of worship in the past year, 49% a wedding and 37% a baptism (ORB 2003, Table 10).

#### 4.2.5. Church Buildings

In addition to the pastoral services which the Church carries out and through which many people come into contact with the Church and make use of its buildings the buildings themselves often play a significant role in the local community. The church building is often a local landmark and important for many as the venue for memorable family events, sometimes over several generations. The church hall too, which exists in many parishes, is frequently a social centre as the venue for everything from children's birthday parties to yoga classes. In rural communities in particular the church hall may be the only suitable venue available for hire for such activities and so while the events themselves may have nothing to do with the church the building is known to local people and plays a central symbolic role in village life, a fact which has been demonstrated by Timothy Jenkins in his ethnographic study of a country church (Jenkins 1999). The results of the ORB survey show that church buildings also have a place in people's everyday

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<sup>23</sup> For an explanation of clergy remuneration terms in the Church of England and definition of the term stipend see Archbishops' Council 2001b, 7-9.

lives. Of those questioned, 73% said that they thought of their local church or chapel as a quiet place or sanctuary and 56% saw it as a social or community venue. Eighty six percent of respondents had attended a place of worship over the last year. Many had attended funerals, weddings and baptisms, but 17% said they had been for a concert or theatrical performance, 19% because they were seeking a quiet place and 13% responded that they were walking past and felt the need to go in.<sup>24</sup> In addition, 16% answered that they had attended a church/ place of worship through their children's school. Perhaps an unsurprising figure when related to the fact that Church of England schools make up 21.9% of all state-maintained schools in England and 25% of primary schools (Archbishops' Council 2003a, 21).

#### 4.2.6. Church Schools

While a full analysis of the role of the Church in the education sector in England would require a study of its own, the significant role of the Church in this field, which clearly adjoins the welfare sector, and the impact that this has on the place of the Church in society in general necessitates a brief explanation of the current situation. The Church works in partnership with Local Education Authorities (LEAs) in running three different kinds of school. The main differences being the extent of influence and control which the Church has a right to extend over the school in question.

*Voluntary-aided* is the term for schools where the Church has maximum authority. Here the school is owned by the Church, which appoints a majority of the governors. Teachers are both appointed and employed by the governing body and the same body has responsibility for securing funding to cover the costs of repairs and capital projects, albeit with 90% grants from the Department for Education and Skills. The governing body also controls admissions and both religious education and worship in such schools are distinctly Anglican. *Voluntary-controlled* schools are also owned by the Church, which appoints governors, but here they do not make up the majority of the governing body. Teachers are employed by the LEA and the same authority has financial responsibility for the fabric of the building. Religious education in these schools follows the local agreed syllabus, but worship is Anglican. In the third category, *foundation schools*, the school is owned by an independent charitable foundation, the governing body controls both the employment of staff and admissions and the Church appoints a minority of governors. Worship and religious education follow the same pattern as voluntary-controlled schools. In addition, the Church runs two different types of independent schools: academies, which are owned by their trustees, non-fee paying and have a Church of England character and other independent schools which are fee-paying and have a Church of England character. Of

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<sup>24</sup> Figures from Church of England 2003

the 1,300 independent schools in the country, 1,000 have a Church of England ethos. This is an interesting figure as regards the place of the Church in society given the fact that individuals educated at independent schools represent a significant number of those at prestigious universities and in both politics and the civil service. It is common in both Church and non-church schools, although by no means the case for all schools, for the local priest to act as chair of governors and also to attend the school regularly to lead simple acts of worship at the beginning of the school day. All church schools welcome all pupils from their local area including those of other faiths, but have admission policies where places are limited. These policies are set by the governors in all schools except for voluntary-controlled schools (where they are set by the LEA), and vary from school to school, but may take into account such factors as involvement in the local church.

Many church schools perform well and have a good reputation in their local community and a survey from 2007 shows that of the 45% who are of the opinion that church schools are different from state schools run by local authorities, 78% feel that they provide a broad and balanced education, have a caring approach to their pupils and have a close relationship to their church, but 43% are of the opinion that they create divisions in society and 35% that they impose their opinions on pupils (ORB 2007b). Following a report by the Dearing Commission into church schools in 2001 the General Synod of the Church set in motion a plan to open an additional 100 church secondary schools. 40 had either opened or were due to open during 2004 with a further 30 at various stages of planning.<sup>25</sup>

#### 4.2.7. Ecumenical Relations

Despite the fact that the figures detailing affiliation to denominations other than the Church of England are low they do represent a significant number of actively worshipping Christians in the country and it must be noted how significant an understanding of the ecumenical movement and inter-church relations are as part of an overall understanding of the role of the Church in English society. As Adrian Hastings has commented: 'It may be seen as an accident of history but it is also intrinsic to the character of modern Britain that our Christianity has developed so pluralistically – far more so than that of any other European country' (Hastings 1997, 45–6). One element of this historical influence, which has already been touched upon is the fact that the reformation in England was far less clear cut than in other northern European countries. For decades the denominational affiliation of the nation fluctuated in line with the allegiance of the monarch. This meant that although there was significant persecution of both Roman Catholics and Dissenters

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<sup>25</sup> For further information on Church of England Schools see <http://www.england.anglican.org/about/education/schools> (Accessed on 17 April 2005)

through various periods of ecclesiastical history, diversity has never been absent from the national scene, even though the Test and Corporation acts put in place in 1673 and 1661 respectively required affiliation to the Church of England of all holders of crown and municipal office, which effectively excluded free church dissenters and Roman Catholics from holding posts of any influence in the country. The repeal of the Acts in 1828 followed the next year by the Catholic Emancipation Act removed these distinctions and acted as an important marker on the way to a religiously pluralistic society (Hylson-Smith 1998, 46-7). As John Gay makes clear in his *The Geography of Religion in England* in many areas of England the Church of England has rarely or never been the majority church. In much of Yorkshire, for example, the Methodist chapel and not the Anglican church was historically the social centre of small communities and Liverpool, with its history of Irish immigration, has long been an area associated with Roman Catholic sympathies (Gay 1971). This combination of geography and history has, in the words of the ecumenical body in England, Churches Together in England (CTE), 'conspired to give the churches in England a privileged role in the ecumenical movement' (Churches Together in England 2002, 9). This can be seen at both national and local level and today has a considerable impact on the ways in which the churches operate.

The British Council of Churches was first established in 1942 and since then continuing ecumenical discussions have led to close co-operation between the churches. In particular closer unity between the Methodist Church and the Church of England has been a significant issue in recent decades. Following discussions between the two churches in the 1960s a motion for unity was drawn up that was accepted by the Methodist Church, but failed to achieve the necessary two-thirds majority in the General Synod of the Church of England in 1972. Direct discussions were then halted for a time and the focus shifted to wider issues of inter-church co-operation. Anglican-Methodist discussions however resumed as formal conversations during 1997/8 and the two churches are now on a clear path to unity sanctioned by both the Methodist Conference and the General Synod and set out in the Anglican-Methodist Covenant signed on 1 November 2003. The focus of this covenant, as of the Swanwick declaration signed by representatives of Churches in Britain and Ireland in 1987, is on shared life and mission building on and building up local and regional expressions of unity, rather than focusing on national structural unity (Anglican-Methodist Covenant 2003). In England today there are over 2,000 local 'churches together' groups, where churches locally co-operate in a variety of worship, study and service-related activities and Local Ecumenical Partnerships (LEPs), where churches of different denominations in a particular geographical parish enter into a more formal co-operation, sharing buildings, ministers and other resources as well as eucharistic communion and have one church council (Churches Together in England 2002, 13). These bodies are in turn overseen by about

50 intermediate ecumenical bodies bringing churches together over larger geographical areas.<sup>26</sup>

Local co-operation is mirrored on a national scale by co-operation over a number of political and moral issues on which the churches wish to speak out. Often this takes place through the work of the Churches Together in England or the larger body Churches Together in Britain and Ireland (CTBI). One good recent example of this is the booklet compiled by members of the churches represented by CTBI, which was produced to help Christians explore issues raised by the European elections in June 2004 prior to casting their vote (Lampard 2004). In addition it is not uncommon for church leaders to unite in making statements on public policy, one example of this being the joint statement made by the Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr Rowan Williams, and his Roman Catholic counterpart the Archbishop of Westminster, Cardinal Cormac Murphy O'Connor, in February 2003 relating to the crisis in Iraq (Church of England 2003a). Such initiatives act as evidence of the close co-operation and agreement between the mainstream church bodies.

In order to reach a full understanding of the current situation however mention must be made of the cross-church bodies that exist uniting members of different denominations who have both their churchmanship and aspects of theological interpretation in common. This is particularly true of representatives of the evangelical tradition, who are united through such bodies as the Evangelical Alliance<sup>27</sup>. A greater split in terms both of theology and practice can increasingly be seen in England between the mainstream church bodies and representatives of the evangelical tradition than between the various denominations that exist in England.

#### 4.2.8. Faith Communities: National Policy

A further issue which has impacted the role played by the Church vis-à-vis government and in the nation as a whole in terms of social policy at the beginning of the twenty-first century has been the development in interfaith relations in general and the government's policy with regard to faith communities in particular. The government makes use of the term 'faith communities' to refer to religious groups with which it can consult, through which it hopes to work to develop civil society and which it sees as important partners in reaching out to local communities. Evidence of the direction of government policy in this regard can be seen in the Home Office document *Working Together: Co-operation between Government and Faith Communities* (Home Office Faith and Communities Unit 2004). Here the report refers to the role of the churches in relation to other faith communities in the country:

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<sup>26</sup>See Nunn 1995 for further information on this process and its practical implications.

<sup>27</sup> Evangelical Alliance website: <http://www.eauk.org> (22 March 2004)

The Christian Churches have had an immense historic influence in shaping society, and make significant contributions in a wide range of areas such as community development, education, social inclusion and heritage. For these reasons the Churches have made and continue to make a particular and distinctive contribution to the development and implementation of Government policy in certain areas (Home Office Faith and Communities Unit 2004, 7).

The report further notes the role that faith communities whose members are ‘more recently settled in these islands’ can make (2004, 7). It is interesting to observe that later, in the report in laying down guidelines for consultation by government department with faith communities, the authors feel the need to emphasise that consultation should not only include minority communities, but should also extend to the Christian churches who are a ‘crucial constituency’ (2004, 24 §2.2.38). The report however goes on to say, in an interesting indication of the official declining influence of the Church of England as counterpart to Government, that:

While the Church of England is the Established Church in England, it should not be accorded privileged status in such consultations... However, if a decision is taken to canvas the views of the Church of England, for instance on matters with a doctrinal dimension, (e.g. civil partnerships), it would normally be appropriate to approach other prominent Christian traditions. (Home Office Faith and Communities Unit 2004, 24)

#### 4.2.9. Organisational and Decision-making Structures of the Church

The parishes of the Church of England are the key units in both its structure and ministry. Because of the Church’s established nature the parishes have pastoral responsibility for all those living within their geographical boundaries, whether or not they are members of the Church. Parishes are run by elected parochial church councils (PCC) who, in collaboration with the priest serving the parish, take responsibility for the day-to-day running of the parish and for the upkeep of the fabric of the Church as well as more long term planning. Particularly important are the two churchwardens who have a personal legal responsibility for some aspects of the running of the Church. In addition to this elected body of the PCC some parishes have further worship, youth, visiting and similar committees who take responsibility for particular areas of church life. PCCs also send representatives to both deanery and diocesan synods and in this way the laity play a role in the governance of the regional and national church.

The deanery is an organisational unit consisting of a number of parishes in a geographical area, often focused on a small town in rural areas, for example. The clergy of the area and two representatives of each PCC sit on the deanery synod and this body aims to co-ordinate activity in the local area as well

as functioning as the electoral body to General Synod. Any baptised and confirmed member of the Church of England who is on the electoral roll and over the age of 16 is eligible to stand for election as one of the diocesan representatives on General Synod, although it is only deanery synod members who are eligible to vote. These lay representatives then join clergy representatives similarly elected by their peers and the bishops of the Church in making up the General Synod.<sup>28</sup>

A perusal of this structure does not however tell the whole story. In 1999 as part of a wider revision of the synodical structures the Archbishops' Council was set up. This body has a brief to 'co-ordinate, promote, aid and further the work and mission of the Church of England' (Archbishops' Council 2000c). The body is made up of 19 members, the two archbishops and 17 other elected and appointed members.<sup>29</sup> The task of the Council is to give a sense of direction to the Church nationally and support the Church locally and it does this by working with the General Synod (to which it reports), the House of Bishops, the national boards and councils of the Church, the dioceses and a number of other bodies. In very simple terms it can therefore be said that the Archbishops' Council draws up a strategy (and budget) for the Church which is ratified by the General Synod and interpreted and put into practice by the elected members and staff who serve on the boards and councils under the Archbishops' Council. Or, as Colin Podmore has phrased it, the Archbishops' Council is 'the Synod's financial executive and the managing employer of its staff, most of whose work is overseen by boards and councils – committees of the Council whose representatives can, again, be questioned by members of the Synod' (Podmore 2009, 8). Such boards are chaired by a member of the House of Bishops with their other members being taken from among the members of General Synod who are nominated and elected to serve on the various boards and councils with specific responsibility for different areas of the work of the Church.

The Church is therefore, we can see, governed by its Synod and managed through the Archbishop's Council, but it is led by its bishops and therefore ultimately by its two archbishops who have metropolitan authority (that is supervisory authority in defined issues) in the provinces of Canterbury and York respectively.<sup>30</sup> The relationships between these governing and managerial bodies and their sub-bodies can be seen in figure 1 below.

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<sup>28</sup> All diocesan Bishops sit on General Synod along with a selection of suffragan bishops, making a total of 54 out of 108 Bishops in total who have a voice on this body.

<sup>29</sup> The 17 other members are selected as follows: Prolocutors of the Convocations of Canterbury and York (ex officio), Chair and Vice Chair of the House of Laity (ex officio), 2 elected representatives each of the Houses of Bishops, Clergy and Laity, 6 individuals appointed by the Archbishops and approved by General Synod, A first Estates Commissioner.

<sup>30</sup> Although as Colin Podmore has pointed out, the distinction commonly made in the Church of England of the Church as episcopally led and synodically governed can be misleading given both the governing role that bishops have at diocesan level and the positions of leadership held by some lay people (Podmore 2009, 10–11).

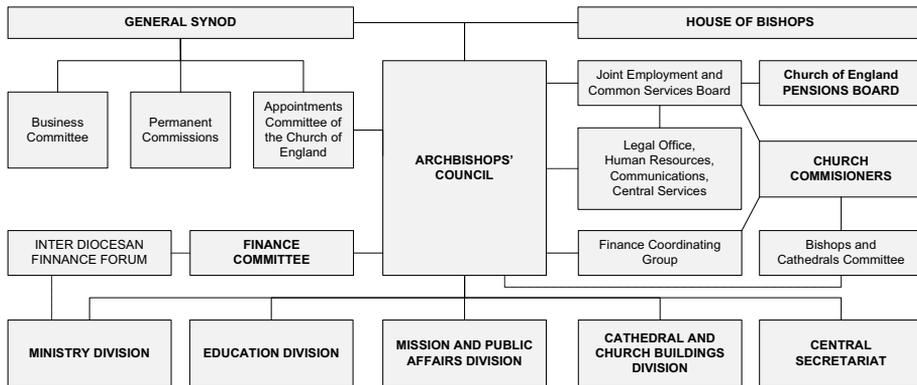


Figure 1. Governance and Management of the Church of England: Key Structures and Working Relationships<sup>31</sup>

The Archbishop of Canterbury is also Primate of All England and therefore the figurehead of the Church and the nation's senior Christian voice. The two provinces cover the 30 dioceses in the south of the country (Canterbury) and the 14 in the north (York). The 43 dioceses in the Church of England are in turn each led by a bishop who, with the help of assistant bishops, other clergy and lay people, is responsible for all those living within his diocesan boundaries.<sup>32</sup> Clergy and lay officers of the Church are licensed by their bishop for service in a particular parish and it is to their bishop that they pledge canonical obedience on taking up a post. We can therefore see here the practical outworking of the Anglican ecclesiology of episcopal succession. Regardless of the details of whether this is interpreted more or less strictly in the Church at present, the central role that this has played in the ideology of Anglicanism means that the episcopate retains a central role in the leadership of the Church both legally and ideologically. Something which is demonstrated in the Church's commitment to the Porvoo/Borgå ecumenical agreement of 1996, based on the *Porvoo Common Statement* (1993).<sup>33</sup> The diocesan bishop has the power in his diocese to license and

<sup>31</sup> For a more detailed model see Archbishops' Council 2004c, 16.

<sup>32</sup> 44 if the Diocese of Europe is included, which has a Bishop based in Gibraltar and clergy placed in chaplaincies throughout Europe.

<sup>33</sup> The Porvoo Common Statement including the Porvoo Declaration was the result of ecumenical conversations between the Churches of England and Ireland, the Church in Wales and the Episcopal Church of Scotland, together with the Churches of Denmark, Norway and Sweden, and the Evangelical-Lutheran Churches of Estonia, Finland, Iceland, Latvia and Lithuania. Acceptance by the signatory churches means that for the first time the Anglican Churches in Britain and Ireland are now in communion with other national Churches in Europe. All the churches involved are episcopal churches and most the national church of their respective countries. A significant issue during discussions was that of the historic episcopate and interpretations of apostolic succession. §52 of the common statement declares 'Faithfulness to the apostolic calling of the whole Church is carried by more than one means of continuity. Therefore a church which has preserved the sign of historic episcopal succession is free to acknowledge an authentic episcopal ministry in a church which has preserved

ordain and while this frequently occurs in consultation with others it is ultimately his personal decision and responsibility. At national level a number of bishops make up one of three sections of the General Synod, and this body is referred to as the House of Bishops. (A body which, even separate of the General Synod, holds considerable power as the college of the bishops of the Church). In addition to leading the Church, in terms of its individual members chairing committees and boards, the House of Bishops also takes responsibility for developing the position of the Church on pertinent issues of the day. Like the boards and councils of General Synod who produce reports for ratification by Synod, which until such a time bear only the authority of the board that authored them, the House of Bishops produces reports and occasionally statements which are statements of their common mind on the issue in question and intended as guidelines for the Church.<sup>34</sup>

#### 4.2.10. The Church's General Financial Situation

Funding to support the work of the Church of England comes from two main sources: the Church Commissioners and independent giving. The Church Commissioners manage the assets of the national church, both in terms of land and financial portfolios, and have particular responsibility for clergy stipends and pensions. Financial losses in the early 1990s however forced cut-backs in payments to dioceses and this in turn prompted a major review of the entire system. As a result parishes now fund two-thirds of the Church of England's total expenditure, which amounts to around £850 million per year and the majority of this parish level income comes from charitable giving and fundraising (Archbishops' Council 2003b, 10).

In light of this it is therefore particularly pertinent to note the impact that changes to Charities legislation in 2006 could have on the Church in the future. Since the implementation of the Charities Act (2006) an organisation set up for the purpose of 'the advancement of religion' no longer qualifies for charitable status on this proviso alone. Churches, as other organisations in civil society must be able to demonstrate in a manner that will stand up to tests from external experts 'public benefit' if they are to continue to be counted as charities with the fundraising and tax benefits this ensures. This is, as Davis, Paulhus and Bradstock pointed out in their report to the Church in 2008, a significant alteration from the previous legal position where the 'advancement of religion' was 'assumed' to be for the public benefit (Davis,

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continuity in the episcopal office by an occasional priestly/presbyterial ordination at the time of the Reformation. Similarly a church which has preserved continuity through such a succession is free to enter a relationship of mutual participation in episcopal ordinations with a church which has retained the historical episcopal succession, and to embrace this sign, without denying its past apostolic continuity'.

<sup>34</sup> One such example is the report 'Issues in Human Sexuality' (House of Bishops 1991) which laid down guidelines for the Church concerning homosexuality.

Paulhus & Bradstock 2008, 23–24). This will mean, not least, that the extent to which churches report and publicise activities within the welfare sector can have a direct impact on financial status and income.

An in-depth survey of the finances of the Church in October 2000 predicted annual deficits for 36 dioceses during the period 2001–3 with only two dioceses predicting surpluses and the remaining ten breaking even and these figures were taken before the review of the pensions scheme was finalised (Archbishops' Council 2001a, 28 §138).

### **Costs of Ministry**

Formally most clergy in the Church of England are not employed and in receipt of a salary. Instead they receive a stipend intended to meet living costs (on average £16,910 p.a. in 2001), housing and a non-contributory pension on retirement. Clergy pensions in particular have become a significant issue for the Church in recent years as clergy, following general societal trends, are living longer. These costs have a direct impact on parish finances as dioceses (using funding mainly raised by the parishes) have taken on responsibility for clergy pensions earned from 1998, while the Church Commissioners are funding past service pensions. The changes have meant a transfer of ministry costs of over £80 million p.a. from the central church to the dioceses. In response to this churchgoers have increased their giving by 52% on average and now give on average about 2.8% of gross income (Archbishops' Council 2001a, 3). This however still needs to increase and General Synod has set a target of 5% (Archbishops' Council 2001a, 3 §6). Naturally some dioceses remain richer than others however and the principle of mutual support is increasingly implemented to provide assistance for those dioceses that cannot cover their costs. This does, however, mean that richer parishes are able to put pressure on their dioceses by withholding funds, a fact which exposes the weaknesses inherent in the Anglican system.<sup>35</sup> Centrally costs were held at 2001 levels for the period 2002–4 meaning the loss of about 50 posts in national church institutions (Archbishops' Council 2003b, 10).

About 44% of total church expenditure is spent on meeting the costs of stipendiary ministry and although stipendiary clergy numbers are expected to decline these costs are expected to remain a significant element of church expenditure (Archbishops' Council 2006).<sup>36</sup> In 2001 in England as a whole there were 0.17 full-time stipendiary clergymen and women per 1000 inhabi-

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<sup>35</sup> This happened during the controversy surrounding the appointment and installment of the openly gay, but celibate, Dr. Jeffrey John as Dean of St Albans in 2004. In May 2003 he had been appointed as Bishop of Reading in the Diocese of Oxford, but eventually withdrew from the appointment following controversy and at the request of the Archbishop of Canterbury. In St Albans several traditional evangelical parishes decided to withhold the money they would normally contribute to diocesan funds in protest at the appointment.

<sup>36</sup> From 8,900 in 2004 to 8,150 in 2010

tants (Archbishops' Council 2003a, 3), a figure that reveals that although the funding for such posts is a significant cost for the Church, at almost half its annual expenditure, given the pastoral responsibility of clergy noted above the Church could not function as it does without the work of other categories of church worker, many of whom are not paid for their services at all. The corresponding figure for total clergy, readers and Church Army ministers per 1000 inhabitants was 0.40 in 2005 (Archbishops' Council 2006).

All dioceses also employ some level of administrative staff and a number of posts at national level are filled by lay workers. Even without taking these into account however parochial stipendiary clergy made up only 32% of licensed ministries in 2005 (Archbishops' Council 2006). Of over 25,000 licensed ministers in the Church of England in 2005, 9,138 were stipendiary clergy (including 114 bishops and other dignitaries), around 1,628 chaplains to the Armed Forces, in prisons, hospitals, universities and other ministries. These ministers, unlike their colleagues who are stipendiary ministers, are employed by the respective institutions that they serve and therefore do not have the same impact on church finances. Furthermore 354 were Church Army Evangelists and licensed layworkers. Of those who do not receive a stipend for their services 2,888 were non-stipendiary ministers or ordained local ministers and 10,178 lay readers, licensed or with permission to officiate<sup>37</sup> while over 4,400 retired clergy still play an active role in parish ministry (Archbishops' Council 2006). Non-stipendiary ministers and ordained local ministers are both categories of ordained ministers in the Church who do not receive financial remuneration for their work, the difference being that ordained local ministers are selected locally and licensed to a particular parish. Many such ministers, as well as lay readers, have paid secular employment.

### **Other Expenditure and Income**

As has already been demonstrated above, the Church of England is not one neat financial unit. Despite this however it is possible to give an indication of the distribution of expenditure for the Church seen nationally. In 2004 43% of Church expenditure was spent on clergy including pensions costs, 10% was allocated to administration at various levels, 19% spent on buildings, 6% on grants to other charities, organisations and individuals and 24% to the 'Mission and Ministry' of the Church (Archbishops' Council Finance Committee 2006, 8). As has already been mentioned income comes from two main sources: investments and donations. For 2001 this can be broken down as follows: Church Commissioners' capital 5% and Investments 14%,

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<sup>37</sup> Lay readers are men and women selected locally and licensed to a particular parish. They are unpaid and following training, assist the priest of the parish with worship and pastoral care. They are licensed to preach, teach and conduct services of worship, including funerals.

investments (other bodies) 10%, tax-efficient giving 27%,<sup>38</sup> other donations and fundraising 37%, legacies 4% and fees 3% (Archbishops' Council 2003b, 10).

#### 4.2.11. Volunteers

As noted previously a significant percentage of the licensed ministers of the Church do not receive a stipend for their work. In addition to these individuals there are also significant numbers of churchgoers who voluntarily give time to the Church and without whom the Church could not run as it does. At local level the majority of parishes have youth clubs, Sunday schools, choirs and fundraising events that are dependent on such people. There are however no official figures available that confirm the extent of this, variation is huge across the country and an indication can only be provided by reference to individual surveys. A survey carried out for the Rural Church Project between 1988 and 1990 showed for example that in the 5 rural dioceses studied just under one-third of attendees at Anglican Sunday services held some position of responsibility in the parish (Davies et al. 1991, 164). A decade later the English Church Life Profile survey of attendees at Protestant churches in England found that 58% of regular churchgoers have a role in their local church (Barley 2007, 39).

Between 2002 and 2004 the Church measured the numbers of children and young people taking part in non-worship activities connected to the Church and also the numbers of adults working with this age group on a national basis for the first time. Table 3 shows that over half a million children and young people attend non-worship activities in a church and that this involved around 135,00 adult volunteers.

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<sup>38</sup> Tax efficient giving refers to gifts made to the Church by UK taxpayers through Gift Aid. Any individual UK taxpayer can apply Gift Aid to any payment to a UK charity regardless of the amount involved. The payments are treated as made after the deduction of basic rate tax which the charity is then able to recover from the tax authority.

Table 3. Children and young people attending non-worship activities in the Church.<sup>39</sup>

	<b>Numbers attending non-worship activities</b>	<b>Adult volunteers working with children and young people</b>
Under 5 years	120,100	27,200
5-10 years	249,000	67,000
11-25 years	164,000	41,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>533,100</b>	<b>135,200</b>

One group which has already been mentioned and for which figures do exist are churchwardens. There are approximately 32,000 churchwardens in the Church of England as a whole and these individuals are of crucial importance to the continued life of the Church shouldering as they do responsibility for the fabric of their parish church and, in times of interregnum, for the coordination of the ministry of the parish. The churchwardens in a parish are supported by a parochial church council, and all members of this group serve without financial reimbursement. The introduction of lay ministry teams in a number of parishes in recent years has also meant a rise in the number of churchgoers who, alongside the ordained minister(s) take an active role in the ministry of the parish.

At national level lay members of General Synod are reimbursed for travel and living expenses when attending its residential meetings two or three times a year, but give their time for free, often including holiday leave. Members are also expected to attend diocesan and deanery synods in their free time and in addition many members sit on committees and boards of Synod. The report of the 2001 survey mentioned above estimated that 4 of 10 churchgoers undertake voluntary work outside of their church and a similar proportion undertake voluntary work within the local church (Barley 2007, 39). Interestingly, commitment to voluntary work within the sphere of the church seems to be connected to the propensity of individuals to volunteer outside of the church and to undertake voluntary work focused outside of the congregation. Twenty one percent of churchgoers who responded to the 2001 survey are involved in social action through their church community and 24% outside of their congregation, while a similar number hold a position of responsibility in their local community (Barley 2007, 39). In her analysis of the survey's results Helen Cameron has commented:

Finally, there is a high correlation between church membership and giving time. The church can be regarded as evoking exceptional levels of activism from its members. Two of the fastest growing membership organisations in the UK are the National Trust, with 1.5% of members volunteering for the

<sup>39</sup> Figures from Church statistics 2004/5. Tables 9, 10 and 11. Available at <http://www.cofe.anglican.org/info/statistics/churchstats2004/statisticsfront.html> (19 November 2008)

organisation and the RSPB, with 8% of members volunteering. (Cameron with Escott 2002, 11)

#### 4.2.12. Women in the Church

The problems associated with attracting men into the Church at local level and associated concern to develop theologies of masculinity has become an increasing priority for the Church in recent years. This is no doubt due to the significant under-representation of men as regular worshippers although the predominance of women at the ground roots of church activity is not a new phenomenon. Callum Brown's theory of secularisation, which places the de-Christianisation of British society as a process which dramatically accelerated in the late 1960s in direct relation to several factors in the modernisation of society including the changing roles of women, is by no means uncontested. Irrespective, however, of whether or not the hypothesis holds, his study reveals important evidence of the place of the wife and mother in British society in past generations as preservers of Christian discourse (Brown 2000). Brown's study is important in this respect because so little research exists which addresses the role women have played in the life of the church, and much that has been written on the subject in recent years has related specifically to the issue of the ordination of women. Since the mid-1800s, however, the role of lay women in the Church has gradually expanded and women have frequently filled functions distinctive and explicitly connected in theological terms by the Church to their gender.

The Victorian era was, as previously mentioned, an age of middle-class philanthropy, where women found a role as pastoral assistants to the male clergy of the parish and where female religious orders began to flourish again after many years of absence following their dispersal at the time of the reformation. This was a period where the doctrine of subordination was preached from many a pulpit and was accepted as the norm even by many of those women who nonetheless sought a role for themselves, and as a result women's work in the church was overseen by the parish priest or, in the case of religious orders, by the bishop of the diocese. The pastoral work performed by these women was frequently care-related and the bounds of subordination proved to be flexible in that it seemed natural to many for women to extend their domestic talents and responsibility to a wider sphere in the service of the church as carers of the sick, teachers of children and similar tasks. Women put to the service of the wider community that motherly talent which it was believed came naturally to women, as well as natural female piety which religious instinct, strangely enough in the male-dominated church, was seen to be a particular female asset (Heeney 1988, 13–14). Interestingly Davies' and Guest's study of bishops and their families also provided evidence of this in contemporary times in the close connections between traditional gender roles and perceptions of the role of a clergy wife.

While beginning to change as some women reject this traditional role it has by no means disappeared (Davies & Guest, 2007, 100). And there appears to be foundation for the notion that the clerical home has been a vehicle for the perpetuation of this attitude to women up to the present day. This trend of philanthropic work developed by the end of the nineteenth century in some areas into a more professional role with district visitors, (Heeney 1988, 46) and in some areas deaconess orders following the Lutheran model (Heeney 1988, 70). As Heeney notes, however, preaching and leading worship were not seen as a suitable roles for women and this approach towards the clerical professional role from the pastoral side was the only one possible for women in the Victorian era (Heeney 1988, 79).

Despite one or two brave examples and the changes to the perceived role of women that came about as a result of the tasks they took on during the First World War which they were then reluctant to relinquish in peacetime, the perception of women's work as primarily domestic and in a different sphere from that of men persisted well into the twentieth century. As regards lay participation, however, the Church, as was the case in society at large, was affected by the campaigns for female suffrage. As early as 1897, bishops in the Canterbury Convocation (with responsibility for the south of the country) when voting on measures to encourage the formation of elected parochial church councils only narrowly voted against excluding the stipulation *male* in the regulations for those eligible to be nominated. The debate surrounding this reveals that many churchwardens, who would receive ex-officio posts on such councils, were women at the time, thus raising the question why it would be necessary to exclude women from achieving the same post by election, a fact which provides evidence of a movement in the understanding of women's roles and also of the active role which women were playing in church life at a parish level.

It was not, however, until 1914 that women won the franchise to vote in national elections for lay representatives and the right to stand for election to PCCs. Two of the objections voiced at the time clearly illustrate the two aspects of opposition to a role for women in the structures of the Church: the concept of the different nature of women and issues of the power wielded by the Church in secular society. Truly feminine women, it was argued, would not wish to stand and speak in public while the Church would lose influence if too many women held the positions of power in the Church. These arguments are similar to many used later in opposition to the ordination of women and show the fear that existed of women in positions of power, a situation exacerbated in the case of the ordination of women given the symbolic nature of that role.

Much of this sentiment lingers today. It is true in many areas that where lay women aspire to roles in the structures of the Church they are free to access them, to the extent that such roles exist for lay people in general. It is the priesthood that has had formal bars to entry for women and these practi-

cal obstacles have served to bring this one aspect of the place of women in the Church to the fore. Jacqueline Field Bibb has written a history of the movement towards this decision which traces the role of women as ministers in the Church, as members of sisterhoods and as deaconesses from the mid-1800s through to the vote in General Synod supporting the ordination of women to the priesthood (Field Bibb 1991). Before the 1860s, she notes, there was no officially recognised place for women in the structures of the Church and even after this date women were not given a clear place by the Church, a thesis in which she is supported by Sean Gill, who sums up the position with the words of Florence Nightingale: 'The Church of England has for men bishoprics, archbishoprics, and a little work... For women she has what?' (Gill 1994, 135).

Florence's lament is still shared by many women in the Church today. Following protracted debate the General Synod of the Church of England finally voted to allow the ordination of women in 1992, a decision ratified by Parliament the following year, which means that the Church has, at the time of writing experienced over a decade of the ministry of ordained women, and women are now beginning, if only slowly, to permeate the structures of the Church. A breakdown of figures based on gender is not available for the entire group of licensed ministers, but in the case of full-time stipendiary ministers it is possible to see that of a total of 9,352 diocesan clergy in 2001, only 1,194 were women, and by breaking this down further it can be seen that of those who are incumbents or who have incumbent status, 6,474 are men and 678 women, while as regards assistant curacies women occupy under half the number of posts held by men (1,053 men and 445 women). While projections, based on retirement figures and numbers at theological training college, predicted a rise in the number of women in full-time stipendiary ministry from 1,260 in 2001 to 1,530 in 2005 and a drop in the number of men over the same period from 8,150 to 7,610 there is still a very small number of women in leadership positions in the Church. It must be noted, however, that this is partly due to concessions made at the time of the vote to allow the ordination of women which prevent women entering the episcopate. Although while of 370 dignitaries only 14 are women only 114 of the posts in this category are bishoprics. Further details of the settlement put a ban on the discussion of women bishops until 10 years after the vote,<sup>40</sup> introduced new posts of 'episcopal visitors', popularly referred to as 'flying bishops', who have episcopal oversight over those clergy who feel they cannot accept the ordination of women or the episcopal leadership of those who

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<sup>40</sup> A specialist working group set up to advise the House Of Bishops published a report on their discussions in November 2004. The report *Women Bishops in the Church of England?* was discussed by General Synod in February 2005. In July 2008 the General Synod voted in favour of a proposal to bring forward legislation to consecrate women bishops, at the same time rejecting proposals for a compromise settlement to appease objectors similar to that of 1992.

ordain women and gave parishes the option of adopting certain resolutions through which mechanism they can refuse to consider women priests for appointment. The impact of these measures limiting the progression of women into the hierarchy of the Church and their opportunity to, like their male colleagues, apply for placement in any parish of the country, has been wider than the immediate issue. The measures, once in place, require a not insignificant amount of coordination at local level and even if the issue has, for many, receded over the past decade as a major issue for the Church, a significant number of respondents to a recent study regarded coping with the practicalities and theological issues raised by the divided church created by the 1992–4 settlement to be a more pressing and time-consuming issue than the debate over the ordination of women (Jones 2004, xi).

As noted briefly above the opportunities for women to assert influence as lay people in the Church are marginally greater than in the priesthood, although it must be admitted that there is little research on the matter. One study in this field, although it is now somewhat outdated, was carried out by Medhurst and Moyser during the Synod elections of 1975. At this time 31.6% of those contesting the election for the house of laity were women, showing a predominance of male candidates inconsistent, they conclude, with the predominance of women as churchgoers (Medhurst & Moyser 1988, 143–6). While there are no more recent statistics available for the numbers of women contesting General Synod elections, it is possible to assess the gender balance of successful candidates. In October 2005 following the quinquennial elections to General Synod, of 457 elected and appointed posts filled, 28% had been taken by women. As the following table shows the clear majority of clergy seats were taken by men, while the laity are more evenly balanced even if men are in the majority.

Table 4. Gender Balance of the General Synod of the Church of England by Houses.<sup>41</sup>

	Women		Men		Total
Laity	84	41%	120	59%	204
Clergy	46	23%	154	77%	200
Bishops	0	0%	53	100%	53
<b>Total</b>	<b>130</b>	<b>28%</b>	<b>327</b>	<b>72%</b>	<b>457</b>

<sup>41</sup> Figures as at October 2005 following September elections. These figures exclude places available, but not filled at this time.

## 4.3. The Church in the Welfare System

### 4.3.1. A Historical Perspective

We have seen that the Poor Laws were the dominating factor in English social policy from 1601 until the formation of the welfare state, and within this system the Church played a crucial role. The basic unit of administration was the parish and the churchwardens were charged with the role of Poor Law guardians, which involved keeping track of the poor of the parish and administering the aid to which they were entitled. Following the Industrial Revolution, the situation in the country changed and the system which had been effective in rural parishes was shown to be less effective in the towns. The Victorian reforms of 1834 were pushed through Parliament by a number of committed reformers, the majority of whom, such as Lord Shaftesbury, were also known for their Christian faith. These reforms improved sanitation and general conditions in the towns and centred poor relief around the workhouse. Public welfare provision remained, in other words, minimal and the majority of aid for the poor as well as education continued to be provided by private benefactors and charitable organisations, many of whom had connections to the Church, and by missions often set up by clergymen. Much of this charitable support was provided in the Victorian spirit of paternalism and involved education and the encouragement of self-help so as not to encourage the *evil* of dependency. Not all such philanthropy was provided by men however and a number of wealthier women of this era found a role for themselves in campaigning and social work. One of the best known social campaigners of the day was Josephine Butler (married to an Anglican clergyman and a devout churchgoer herself) who fought for the rights of women and for better social conditions for all. She was more outspoken than many women of that time, but otherwise typical of the Anglican lady of her day, throwing herself into charitable works spurred on by a mixture of boredom and religious and social conviction (Loades 2001). In the majority of cases activities were conducted under the supervision of the parish priest who, through his rounds of visiting and baptisms, weddings and funerals, remained at the centre of local society.<sup>42</sup> Such philanthropy is however only one element of the Church's involvement and influence in the formation of the welfare system in the country.

The Church has, throughout the whole of modern English history, had a role to play in the political life of the nation, and in this way the Church both directly and indirectly influenced the formation of the welfare state in the form it took in 1948. Much of this was due to the particular influence of

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<sup>42</sup> See Gill 1994 for a detailed discussion of the role of Anglican women in Victorian philanthropy

William Temple, leading churchman and then Archbishop of Canterbury until his death in 1944. Munby has said of Temple that his thought formed the basis of the welfare state (Munby 1960).<sup>43</sup> This is a fact which suggests influence, but which ceases to be so surprising when it is realised that Temple and Beveridge, architect of the post-war British welfare system, had studied together at Oxford. There they had become close friends and also both during this period as students, encouraged by their tutor, spent time in London working as volunteers so as to experience the realities of slum life. The influence of the Church worked informally in this manner through personal contacts, but also formally through the bishops in the House of Lords who spoke on a wide range of social issues and through the regular contact which the Archbishop still customarily had with the Prime Minister at this time. Temple firmly believed in a church in the nation, which had a duty to debate social issues and formulate principles which could underpin political policy in a Christian country. Speaking at the Malvern Conference in 1941 Temple said: 'It is the duty of Lambeth to remind Westminster that Westminster is responsible to God; but this does not mean that Westminster is responsible to Lambeth' (Malvern Conference 1941, 15).

Temple saw the role of the Church in society as one of mediator and moral guide, while the politicians clearly saw this as their role. However, as representatives of the established church, Temple and other church leaders had the opportunity to act and comment on a variety of issues which other religious and community leaders were never given the space to do. By making use of these opportunities the Church was able to influence the formation of the welfare state, albeit minimally, and retain for itself within the framework of this comprehensive welfare system a role as a voice on moral and social issues, legitimate critic of political policy and mouthpiece for the disadvantaged.

Here we can return to Giles Ecclestone's characterisation of the Church's perception of its role in relation to government as one of 'critical solidarity' (Ecclestone 1981, 40). This is a policy which the Church continued throughout the second half of the twentieth century, albeit with varying degrees of criticism and solidarity. Temple and his generation believed that the Church had a right to be heard and shared moral principles with the nation at large, which could underpin policy formed by politicians.

His successors have lived and acted in a changed society where that consensus no longer exists, but the continued voice of the Church in national debate shows that the Church still sees it as her duty to speak out on welfare issues. The Church Report *Faith in the City* produced by the Archbishop of Canterbury's Commission on Urban Priority Areas (ACCUPA) in 1985 in the midst of changes being made to the welfare system by the Conservative

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<sup>43</sup> For a detailed discussion of Temple and the development of Anglican Christian Social Theory see Middlemiss, 2002.

government highlights both the continuation of the Church's role as it perceived itself and the changes (ACCUPA 1985). The report is explicitly subtitled *A call for Action by Church and Nation* and this clearly shows the Church's own belief that its place is to make recommendations not just for the Church, but also for the nation as a whole. Where the report differs however from the approach taken by Temple is in its detailed recommendations for political action. Temple had confined himself and the Church to forming principles and left the detail to the *experts*, the Church of *Faith in the City* however was well aware that it represented only one voice of many in an increasingly secular society. The Church may have a duty to speak out, but in the late twentieth century there was an increasing need, that was recognised within the Church, for its comment to be grounded in a good grasp of the empirical facts. This was an understanding which came about not least because in this period the lack of a credible political opposition to the strong government meant that the Church increasingly took on the role of government critic and was not uncommonly referred to as the 'unofficial opposition' (Gladwin 1990, 67).<sup>44</sup>

#### 4.3.2. The Church, Gender and Welfare

What is interesting here is not what the Church has said on the issue of gender, but the fact that it has said very little on gender at all. A recent report by the Doctrine Commission, *Being Human*, makes only passing reference to the gender issue despite the fact that it explicitly addresses the themes of power, sex, money and time (Doctrine Commission 2003). In considering the issue of power, the Commission notes the historical distortion of this concept by patriarchal society and following a short reflection on the possible biological or social constructions of separate male and female identities makes the comment: 'It hardly seems plausible to rank the male viewpoint above the female, or visa versa. If the way men and women conceive their identities is genuinely different, then those differences require equal emphasis and valuation' (Doctrine Commission 2003, 34). But the Commission's reference to the feminist theological tradition is cautious. Following a commentary on a couple of biblical passages the Commission comments: 'There is undeniably an important point in alertness to male bias in religious traditions written and largely (though not exclusively) interpreted by men, but strands of the tradition do not match so generalised a criticism' (Doctrine Commission 2003, 34). This said, the Commission is prepared to criticise aspects of the Christian tradition with regard to teaching on sexuality.

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<sup>44</sup> For a fuller discussion of the development of the role of the Church in the political system and a voice on welfare issues see Clark 1993; Middlemiss 2002, and on the 1980s in particular Alison & Edwards eds., 1990.

For some time now, the majority of Christians have taken a much more positive view than some of the early Church Fathers of the embodied nature of human existence and would repudiate negative views about women. Indeed, the historical inheritance of the Church on sexuality is very ambivalent and there are strands in it that now seem profoundly mistaken. Some contemporary changes are very much to be welcomed, especially the growing liberation of female sexuality (Doctrine Commission 2003, 81).

In their discussion of marriage and sexual union, the Commission rejects a hierarchical or proprietorial construction of marriage, which they note has sometimes been read into the Genesis tradition. Rather, it emphasises mutuality. In general in this document the Commission places great emphasis on the value of human relationships. We are, it writes, made in the image of a God of love, whose being is a 'communion of love' and so our identity as human beings is never as isolated individuals. Referring to the nineteenth century Anglican theologian F.D.Maurice, the report continues:

The fundamental relationships of human life, parents and children, brothers and sisters, husbands and wives, are the place where we learn the meaning of love and the disciplines of relatedness that enable us to grow in the wider context of our belonging together in human society in a world-wide community of nations (Doctrine Commission 2003, 131).

In light of this it can be seen that the Commission's condemnation of the commercial exploitation of sex and sexual abuse comes from the same theological foundation as its criticism of adultery and casual sexual relationships and advice in the face of failed relationships (Doctrine Commission 2003, 92f).

Where the Church has not been outspoken on gender issues it has however addressed the role of the family in Church and society and has considered both gender issues and government policy relating to the family within the report *Something to Celebrate: Valuing Families in Church and Society* (Board for Social Responsibility 1995). Before making a number of specific policy recommendations to government on issues of housing, social security, health, children and crime the report looks at the role of the Church in advising on family life recognising: 'A constant tension in the Church between the desire for a firm moral line, and the wish to care for people and offer them fresh starts in the messy, complex situations of actual life' (Board for Social Responsibility 1995, 27). Accordingly the report's recommendations to the Church focus on pastoral care and support for the family. In the body of the report the working party assesses the history of the Anglican theology of the family as well as number of issues central to family life. In its discussion of authority and roles the report notes:

The Church in particular, and society in general can no longer tolerate a sexual division of labour which marginalises women and disenfranchises them

from public life... The Church must also attend better to the needs of men, helping them to find new ways of expressing a masculinity that is strong without being domineering... What is needed is a re-evaluation of the contributions of men and women to our common life, not on the basis of gender differences reinforced by assumptions about the separation of the public domain from the private, but on the basis of considerations of justice and the building of the common good. (Board for Social Responsibility 1995, 93)

#### 4.3.3. The Church in the Welfare System: Today

Today the Church continues to act in this vein at a national level. The national church employs a policy advisor on Home Office affairs, whose specific brief is to monitor developments and government policy on a wide range of social issues and act as informed advisor on such matters to the Church leadership. The Church therefore continues to campaign and speak out on a variety of social issues both directly to government in response to consultations and in the national media. Some of the ways that the Church does this and issues it has commented on in the recent past are detailed below. A specific theological stance with regard to the welfare state is, however, a different matter. In 1986 the Social Policy Committee of the Board for Social Responsibility published a report entitled *Not Just for the Poor: Christian Perspectives on the Welfare State* (Board for Social Responsibility 1986). This report is now nearly 20 years old and was written in the same period as *Faith in the City*, when many of the values underpinning the Welfare State seemed under threat, but it is still valid as the stance of the Church in relation to the welfare state. The report concludes that any system of welfare must be:

Concerned with the wellbeing of all members of society: the notion of interdependence and concern for the poor and oppressed demands no less... Generous provision of services by society through the state is essential. But it is not enough on its own to produce the kind of society we wish to see. A mixed economy of welfare, built on co-operation between the public, voluntary and private sectors is to be welcomed. (Board for Social Responsibility 1986, 133)

The authors go on to say that they affirm the vision, if not the detail of the post-war settlement, but are, however, not arguing for the status quo as weaknesses exist in the system and society is changing. Christians therefore, the report ends, should oppose the introduction of any individualist philosophy into welfare provision and policy, should be concerned about divisions of wealth and opportunity in society, be wary of trends which divide the nation into those who receive benefits and those who do not. The committee that produced the report clearly see a particular role for Christians and the Church in the welfare system

If the Church were to encourage the building of links and bridges across the barriers that divide our society, Christians would be in a better position to play that role effectively and ensure that ours was a society in which justice and compassion were valued and the interdependence on one another was acknowledged and accepted. (Board for Social Responsibility 1986, 137)

Speaking more recently when delivering the 2002 Richard Dimbleby Lecture the Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr. Rowan Williams, also argued for a role for the Church as creator of space for humanity in the midst of deprivation. Religious communities have a role to play in the modern state, according to Williams, if they can offer their vision not in an attempt to gain social control, but rather as a way of opening up some of the ‘depths of human choices.’ He thus argues the role for the Church of England is one of making space available.

Its history, its constitutional position – however controversial that may have become for some – means that it is obliged just to be there speaking a certain language, telling a certain story, witnessing to certain non-negotiable things about humanity and about the context in which humanity lives. (Williams 2002)

The involvement of religious groups as partners for government in regeneration is then, for him, not a way for politicians to shirk their responsibilities by outsourcing essential work to private agencies, but rather the provision of a neutral voice which can draw groups together and help identify common priorities. The survival of the public sphere as a realm where political argument about vision and education can take place depends, according to the Archbishop, on religion being taken more seriously (Williams 2002).

In recent years the Church has also sought to follow up the *Faith in the City* with reports in its image, the best example in recent years in the welfare sphere is the setting up of the Commission on Urban Life and Faith (CULF) and the report of this commission *Faithful Cities* (CULF 2006). This report was the result of the work of an ecumenical and inter-faith commission, but one formed on the initiative of the Church of England and on which it had majority representation. The report is therefore not only a good example of Church policy on welfare matters, but also of the extent of ecumenical cooperation in this field. Following interviews and visits to churches and faith-based projects all over the country the commission concluded that the religious communities at local level in Britain represent a form of ‘faithful capital’ in urban areas. A capital, which like the concept of social capital from which the term is developed, is envisaged as a resource for development and regeneration at the local level (CULF 2006, 3 and 76–7). This, the commission concludes means that ‘The Church of England with its ecumenical partners must maintain a planned, continued and substantial presence across our urban areas’, but also that this cannot be done by the faith communities on

their own (CULF 2006, 89). The authors argue also that: ‘There needs to be greater clarity over expectations in partnership relationships between faith communities and public authorities at national, regional and local level’ (2006, 91).

The focus in this thesis on the national role of the Church has, by necessity concentrated on the contributions which the Church makes at a national level, which are primarily political and social pronouncements and decisions. It must however not be forgotten that many of these pronouncements come from and are fed back to a church which remains firmly rooted in the geographical parish system. Much of the work that the Church of England does in terms of welfare takes place at this local level and is therefore difficult if not impossible to mirror in a comprehensive document such as this given the contextual nature of such work and not infrequently the lack of evidence of the existence of local initiatives. The fact that much work carried out by parishes in the Church of England is done by volunteers means that in many areas small initiatives may not even be known to the parish priest as the individuals who have made the contribution do not consider it appropriate, necessary or relevant to inform others of their efforts. The case study of Darlington in the North East of England highlights such initiatives as well as the types of larger, but still local, welfare initiatives which take place under the auspices of the Church.

#### 4.3.4. The Church on Social/Ethical Issues

The Church of England frequently responds to consultation documents and reports/legislation from Government. This is done via official responses issued by the Archbishop’s Council or boards of the General Synod or in comments in the press by board members or individual bishops. In addition the General Synod, through its boards and councils, publishes reports on issues of particular concern to the Church, as does the House of Bishops, and individual bishops, in particular those senior bishops with seats in the House of Lords, make statements relating to public policy in speeches and sermons. The broad nature of this approach and the impact which personal interest has means that it is impossible to discern a *church line* from such pronouncements. The fact that the Church is asked to respond to government policy consultations, and actively does so, is interesting in this respect, however, and the issues on which the Church has submitted official comments or commented publicly over the past couple of years include civil partnership (Archbishop’s Council 2003c), charities and charitable status (Archbishop’s Council 2002b), drugs policy (Board for Social Responsibility 2002a and 2002b), employment regulations (Church of England 2003a), and asylum, immigration and citizenship (Church of England 2002b).

The Church’s response to the consultation document on civil marriage are of particular interest as regards the Church’s official position on ethical is-

sues. In this document the Archbishop's Council reiterated the Church's position that marriage between a man and a woman is central to 'the stability and health of human society' and is the best context within which to raise children. Here the Church shows its position as the established church of the land citing the above reasons for according marriage a 'special position within the social and legislative framework of our society'(Archbishop's Council 2003c). The Church however also highlights the importance it places on social justice and human rights stating that:

As a result the Church has on occasions, taken a positive view of particular legislative changes where there has been a need to remedy injustices in our diverse society, even where the result may have been to facilitate developments about which the Church has had particular concerns given its doctrine and teaching. An example would be the law relating to divorce. (Archbishops' Council 2003c)

This document also makes reference to the Church's internal debate, both national and international, on the issue of sexually active relationships between gay and lesbian people in committed partnerships which has had an impact outside of the Church too. The General Synod debated, in February 2004, a study guide to the statement 'Issues in Human Sexuality' made in 1991 by the House of Bishops (House of Bishops 1991, House of Bishops 2003). This statement is at present the most authoritative Church of England position on the issue and the decision by the General Synod to commend the recent book for study in the Church was widely seen as an affirmation of that position. The issue is too complex to handle here, but in short the practical implications of the Church's stance are a policy against blessing gay relationships or ordaining people in same sex relationships (Church of England 2004a).

At the same sitting in February 2004 the Synod also unanimously passed a motion relating to the recent successes of the far right-wing British National Party in local elections in Lancashire. The motion shows the combination of theological criticism of racism combined with an understanding of the Church's duty as a national church to speak for the whole nation.

That this Synod, noting the recent successes of the British National Party in local elections in parts of Lancashire:

Believe that any political movement which seeks to divide our communities on the basis of ethnicity is an affront to the nature of God revealed in creation and in scripture and is a grave danger to harmonious community relationships; consequently voting for and/or supporting a political party that offers racist policies is incompatible with Christian discipleship;

Call on all Christians in England to nurture a loathing of the sin of racism and to model the teaching of Christ in loving all our neighbours; and

Commit the Church of England to work in partnership with our ecumenical partners, other faith groups, voluntary and statutory organisations, mainstream political parties and all people of goodwill in building cohesive communities and in affirming our multi ethnic, culturally and religiously diverse society. (General Synod 2004)

A further example of the Church contributing to public debate on social issues is the report *Development matters: Christian perspectives on globalisation* published by the Board for Social Responsibility (BSR) and presented to General Synod in 2001 (Reed 2001). This report, unlike the report of a traditional working party, was the result of co-operation with Christian Aid, CAFOD and other mission agencies active in development. The contributions are therefore the views of individual contributors, not the common mind of a committee and as such it is authorised by the BSR as a ‘contribution to debate’. The debate that followed in General Synod was however not untypical in both the concern for social justice that was expressed and the calls from members for the need both to debate the issue within the Church and encourage both further reflection and practical action and to put pressure on government. This focus on these two ways forward is typical of the commentary offered by General Synod on social and ethical issues in current debate. The motion that was passed by Synod following the presentation of the above-mentioned report and subsequent debate was:

That this Synod: Commend *Development Matters* to diocesan synods and to the wider Church for further study;

Call for Global political and economic action as set out in *Global View 2001*, with a view to strengthening the position of the world’s poor;

Encourage the Church to practise justice in the distribution of its investments and resources;

Recognise that current trading relations and lending practices have exacerbated the acute economic and social problems facing developing countries and therefore (i) urge Her Majesty’s Government to give priority in trade negotiations to the needs of the poorest communities and (ii) encourage discussion with business about the wider social contract and corporate responsibility of companies in pursuit of the common good;

Urge that Export Credit Guarantees are only provided for sustainable projects which do not add further unpayable debt to already indebted countries; and

Ask that education and health for the poorest should be priorities in any development agenda. (General Synod 2001)<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> *Global View 2001: An Emerging Agenda* (GS1413) Report by the International and Development Affairs Committee of the Board of Social Responsibility and *Development matters: Christian perspectives on globalization* (GS Misc 634)

A further example of the ways in which the Church speaks out on social and ethical issues is through its bishops and archbishops. In the summer of 2004, for example, the archbishops wrote to the Prime Minister on behalf of the bishops of the Church of England setting out their views on issues relating to the situation in Iraq and the Middle East (Church of England 2004b). This received particular media attention given the fact that it is rare for the bishops to speak so publicly as a united voice. However, the Archbishop of Canterbury in particular is a figure whose comments are not irregularly the subject of newspaper and news reports. A sermon given by the Archbishop on Tuesday 20<sup>th</sup> April 2004 was for example the subject of a news article on the BBC News website the following day. The Archbishop had preached a sermon on Christian obedience, but, referring to the need for credible truth in public life, the circumstances of the war in Iraq and the failure to find weapons of mass destruction, noted that ‘we face a general weakening of trust in the political system’ (Williams 2004). This sermon was a subtle, if open critique of government, yet delivered as a sermon with a distinct theological message. The Archbishop’s criticism of the war was not unexpected since he had offered clear and direct opposition from the outset, along with many other representatives of the Church. The details of the entire debate cannot be included here as the contributions were many and complex, but such a clear line from the Archbishop on the question in opposition to the government was powerful in that it attracted media and government attention in a way no other religious figure could. For this reason as well as the fact that the Archbishop of Canterbury is the spiritual figurehead of the Church his views and statements on moral and ethical issues demand attention as statements by the Church.

#### 4.3.5. The Relationship between Liturgy and Contributions in the Welfare Sector

As with almost all areas of the theology and ministry of the Church of England there is no one official position on the relationship of its liturgy to its contributions within the welfare sector and as always the differences in churchmanship that exist within the church lead to differences in liturgical approaches. However the issue has been touched on by theologians and practitioners writing in an official capacity and in particular an officially sanctioned approach can be discerned in discussions of urban theology which followed the *Faith in the City* report. One such initiative was the Archbishop of Canterbury’s Urban Theology Group, a group of academic theologians and practitioners ministering in the inner cities, which worked with such questions from 1990. One of the fruits of their work was a volume of essays and reflections entitled *God in the City*. In his introduction the editor, Peter Sedgwick points to the need for honesty in urban theology, in accepting that

things are getting worse, but he stresses, this is a need for realism not pessimism. This urban theology, he argues:

points to the necessity of praise and transformation. In the 'sense of place' which is so dominant in urban life there can also be a sense of belonging, of community and of dignity... The central reality of prayer turns realism away from pessimism. (Sedgwick 1995, xi)

This brief comment is supported by an article in the same volume entitled *Praise*. The Church has, the authors argue, a vocation to be a 'sanctuary of transformation' where there is a different time scale structured by the church week or year and where participation in the stories, rituals and songs of the Church can change people's ways of perceiving and living their reality (Ford & McFadyen 1995, 98–9). It is, they argue, also vital that the Church relate its worship to the situations in Urban Priority Areas (UPAs) and other similarly deprived situations. They argue that it is not enough for the rest of society and churches in more comfortable situations to be concerned and send aid, rather 'Genuine worship in the UPA church is of fundamental importance both for those who live there and for the Church and society as a whole' (Ford & McFadyen 1995, 103). Worship then is a central part of the social work of the Church. They conclude:

It seems a strangely weak gesture 'just' to worship. What are we doing every Sunday, every day as we 'waste' time on this? We are resisting the most dangerous of temptations – to turn stones into bread, manipulate the world to suit ourselves, dazzle with successful gestures – in favour of a message that says to love God with all we have and are, and to worship God alone. And when we do that in the extreme situations of the UPA there is a sign of faith, hope and love that is desperately needed elsewhere too. (Ford & McFadyen 1995, 104)

Here therefore we can discern two distinct threads which are present in other contemporary official statements of the Church's position on the role of liturgy, namely that it should be contextual and relate to the everyday lives and language of individuals, but also that it should be the liturgy of the whole church not merely of the immediate worshipping community.

The preface to Common Worship, the officially authorised liturgy of the Church of England since 2000, affirms the need to recognise the multiplicity of contexts in which worship is offered whilst placing this diversity within an 'ordered structure which affirms our essential unity and common life' (Archbishops' Council 2000a, ix).<sup>46</sup> This is further emphasised in the introduction to the volume of Pastoral Services. Here the image is used of the

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<sup>46</sup> Similarly the officially authorised Patterns for Worship (*New Patterns for Worship*, Church House Publishing for the Archbishops' Council, London, 2002) is an attempt to assist and advise worship leaders on ways to present and adapt liturgy to suit the local context.

church as a body of people on the move, individuals are all at different stages of the journey, but the services of the Church are an opportunity for people to put that journey in the context of the Church. For this reason the liturgy of the Church needs in-built flexibility to adapt to varied pastoral situations while also reflecting the 'dependability, consistency and stability which is implied by the long history of the Church's worship, tradition and buildings' (Archbishops' Council 2000b, 3).

Here an understanding of the Church of England as the church of the nation and not just for the regularly worshipping community is implicit and it is therefore seen as a part of the pastoral responsibility of the Church to provide company on life's journey (Archbishops' Council 2000b, 6). So worship that 'not only strengthens Christians for witness and service, but which is itself a forum in which Christ is made known' is seen as the task of the Church (Archbishops' Council 2000a, x). The structure and not just content of the worship is therefore argued to be important for both the witness and service of the Church moving from 'the gathering of the community through the Liturgy of the Word to an opportunity of transformation, sacramental or non-sacramental, after which those present are sent out to put their faith into practice' (Archbishops' Council 2000a, x).

In an essay which has the authority of the Liturgical Commission of the Church John Gladwin places the liturgy of the Church in its social context (Gladwin 1993). Taking as his starting point the Book of Common Prayer (from 1662), still the only permanently authorised provision for public worship in the Church of England (Archbishops' Council 2000a, ix). He argues that it is committed to the concept of a national church and the idea that the nation accepts itself as a Christian nation so that the Church of England is the church of all the people of the nation and not a gathered congregation set apart from the community. It is also committed to the supremacy of the Crown and its unifying role, and therefore recognises its role as trustee of the gospel in the nation and body responsible for its spiritual welfare. With this in mind therefore he argues for a liturgy which expresses the duty of the Church to provide worship, education, pastoral care and compassionate action for all. It should include prayers for government and citizenship, war and peace, leisure and work, poverty and plenty. It should affirm the concept of political power and support the institutions of the land, although not unconditionally and emphasise an understanding of the establishment of the Church not as a role which gives privilege, but rather as an emphasis of the Christian inheritance of the nation. Liturgy of the Church of England should therefore be able to:

embrace a wide range of people... People of other faiths and of none ought not to be embarrassed by the worship of the Church. There are important occasions when people from many backgrounds will be present: occasional offices, civic occasions and community based events. The presentation and ex-

perience of Christian worship can serve to draw into its heart the spiritual longings of many... [It] can impart the challenge and the welcome of the Gospel without undermining the integrity of those who do not call themselves Christians. (Gladwin 1993, 42)

In a similar vein Michael Perham, a member of the Liturgical Commission, argues in a commentary on popular festivals that people respond to the Church when what it is doing relates to their lives and community. This may involve using existing festivals to affirm existing communities or the creation of new one to help create a sense of identity and community. For

unless the Church of England wishes to follow the way of a sect, it must be constantly on the look out for occasions for ministering to the whole parish, and that must include the institutions in it and the places where its people work. Some will protest that their parish is not like that, for a commuter parish has no institutions except schools, and everybody works elsewhere. But it is precisely in those parishes that a sense of corporate identity and community most needs to be developed by the Church, for there are few other bodies to do it. If that is the ministry the Church is to exercise liturgy will surely be an important part of it. (Perham 1984, 217)

#### 4.4. Summary

As has been stated above, the aim of this chapter was to present a picture of the place of religion in English society and the role of the Church of England in relation to the state in particular. Despite Britain being an increasingly plural society in religious terms and declining church attendance and finances for the established church it is clear that the Church of England retains certain privileges and responsibilities in relation to society. At both national and individual levels, this translates into an expectation that the Church will fulfil certain symbolic functions and that it will involve itself in national debates concerning social and welfare policy. This, too, appears to be something that the Church itself is concerned to preserve, and official expressions of social policy indicate an understanding on the part of the Church that the Church has a particular duty to engage in both the welfare debate and the provision of welfare. This includes linking justifications of such a position to theological reasoning and to the worship life of the Church. Thus this overview indicates, at national level a role for the Church as an institution which retains a distinct, though changing role in English society.

## Part II – Case Study



# 5. Method and Material

## 5.1. Research Methods and Material

### 5.1.1. Introduction

The detailed account given above of the welfare system in place in contemporary England and the role played by religion in modern English society is not a static image, but a portrait of a society in change. The established church retains a particular role in national life, distinct from that of other churches and faith groups, but the shape which this takes continues to mutate as does that of the current welfare system. This picture has been placed for the purposes of this study in a theoretical frame, which in setting the national situation in a wider European and global context allows the one national case to provide insights into transnational processes of change surrounding issues of institutional religion and its place between the public and private spheres today. As well as providing a detailed picture of the role of the Church within the welfare system in contemporary England, the preceding chapters highlight the lack of empirical studies of these issues both at local and national level. Building on the foundations set in part one, part two of this thesis will redress the lack of empirical material focusing the impact of social changes on the role of institutional religion in society to some extent with a detailed case study of a single town. This will contribute new knowledge to the wider debate concerning the role of institutionalised religion in the provision of welfare and policy debate as well as addressing the specific aim of this study, namely to explore the role of institutional religion in contemporary western Europe between individual and society.

It is clear that the Church's role in England has changed over recent decades and that the challenges faced by the welfare system have both altered and deepened and that the resulting changes are interconnected and both representative of and affected by wider social change. Against this background, it is pertinent for a study seeking to address whether the Church has a continued role to play in society to ask of a local level study: What is the role of the Church in welfare today as both actor and social voice? Is the understanding of what this role is – and what it ought to be – shared by those who represent the Church and those who represent the official welfare system?

### 5.1.2. Questions for the Case Study

The aim of this thesis as stated in Chapter 1 is to explore the role of institutional religion in contemporary western Europe between individual and society. Furthermore, this aim was to be achieved in two ways: first through an empirical study focusing on one example of institutional religion in Europe, the Church of England, and using welfare as a prism through which to study that role and secondly, with a theoretical discussion of the findings of the empirical study.

In part I the foundations have been laid for an in-depth study of the Church of England's role in society at local level with a detailed presentation of the national situation as regards both Church and welfare system. As the study moves from this more descriptive section which set the scene for a detailed empirical exploration at local level, to part II where this will be carried out it is necessary to operationalise the basic aim of the thesis.

To this end the more specific research question which the case study focuses in on is to investigate and analyse the actions, perceptions and expectations of the Church of England as agent of welfare and social voice at the local level within and in relation to the national context today.

Furthermore this can be broken down into a number of questions which will be addressed in the case study. Firstly in the case study the answers will be sought to a number of questions concerning the role of the Church at local level as agent of welfare and social voice namely:

- I What does the Church of England say and do at local level around issues of welfare?
- II What do representatives of the Church of England perceive to be its role as an agent of welfare at local level and what do they expect of the Church in this regard?
- III What do representatives of the Church of England perceive to be its role as a social voice at local level and what do they expect of the Church in this regard?
- IV How is the Church of England's role as an agent of welfare perceived at local level by representatives of the local authority, other organisations and the local community and what is expected of the Church in this regard?
- V How is the Church of England's role as a social voice perceived at local level by representatives of the local authority, other organisations and the local community and what is expected of the Church in this regard?

Secondly the following questions will be addressed as the case study material is analysed, namely:

- VI What are the tensions in these perceptions/ expectations within the Church of England?
- VII What are the tensions in these perceptions/ expectations between representatives of the Church and others in the local community?
- VIII How can these tensions be understood in the context of contemporary English society?

In answering these questions the study will provide new information in the form of a detailed mapping of the situation as regards the role of the Church as an agent of welfare and a social voice at local level. The study will also, through analysis of this material, provide insights into the current situation and contribute to the ongoing theoretical debate from a foundation in one particular case. Here it is important to note that both the narrative and the analytic aspects of this research have scientific value in themselves and that while they frequently go hand in hand the narrative section is more than a platform for the analytic portion of the study. This represents a basic, but nonetheless important principle behind the organisation of this study (Föllesdal, Wallé & Elster 2001). In part II below, the questions above will be addressed at local level as the case study is presented in detail, before the gaze shifts once again to a theoretical plane, drawing out the implications of the case study in a national and international context in part III.

### 5.1.3. The Case Study Approach

As has been indicated above, my application of the case study approach has not been a strictly ethnographic one, using participant observation as its main method of obtaining data, although there are similarities between my understanding of the value and limitations of case studies and those of proponents of the extended case study method in that field (Burawoy 1991; 1998). Rather, while centring my enquires on interviews, I have taken a multi-method approach following the line of reasoning which argues that qualitative research is inherently multi-method in focus (Denzin & Lincoln 2003, 8; see also Flick 2006). This approach has the double advantage of providing background and context within which to place the *core* interviews and also enables some measure of comparison with quantitative data collected by others to confirm and clarify results (Stake 2003, 148).

### 5.1.4. Material Collection and Timeframe

The collection of material within the framework of the case study was undertaken in two waves and it is also fair to say that the empirical material collected can be divided into two parts of different character, which together comprise the case study as a whole.

First, a mapping exercise was undertaken. This was designed to collate as much information as possible on Darlington as a town and in particular on Church and welfare, in the town. The aim was to provide both a background against which to set in-depth interviews and a picture of the welfare involvement of the churches in the town. This in itself is new information and an interesting result for the research, as no such comprehensive mapping of church welfare involvement in a single locality has previously been documented and analysed in England.

The mapping exercise did not involve the generation of new statistical material. The focus was rather on the collation of an array of existing material including documentation, statistical material, local media and promotional material, both printed and online. This was complemented with fact-finding interviews and visits to buildings and welfare institutions at the disposal of both churches and other organisations. Collection of the material for the mapping exercise, which is presented in more detail below, was begun in January 2004 and continued throughout the year. A visit to the town, including the performance of three fact-finding interviews was undertaken in March 2004.

The second part of the study comprised in-depth interviews and focus groups. The majority of the interviews were carried out during July 2004 and the remainder in further visits to the town in September 2004 and January 2005 at the same time as the two focus group interviews. An additional two interviews were carried out in April 2007 as detailed below.

### 5.1.5. Choice of Case Study Town

Darlington was selected as the case study locality for a number of reasons. In order to fit into the framework of the WREP project, it was necessary to choose a medium-sized town (within its national context) with an industrial background, but where the service sector is now dominant in employment terms. Darlington was a logical choice for practical reasons too. It is a unitary authority, which means that political control of the town, with its related service-providing departments, is concentrated in one body. This in turn simplified the processes both of gaining access to and forming an understanding of structures. On a different practical note, Darlington is also close to Durham, which was to serve as the administrative base for the organisation of fieldwork. This coincided well, however, with the fact that the North East region, of which Darlington is a part, is a relatively deprived region, which indicated that welfare issues could be of particular interest. The fact that the population of Darlington is more mixed in terms of social status than that of the region as a whole represented another bonus as in this it reflects the mix in the country as a whole. Finally the population of Darlington is fairly homogeneous in ethnic and religious terms. So while the town does not represent the country as a whole in terms of percentages of minority

groups resident, it is a good example of medium-sized towns throughout the country, which, unlike the urban conurbations, often have only very small minority communities.<sup>47</sup>

### 5.1.6. The Mapping Process

As indicated above, the material collected during the mapping process was derived from a wide variety of sources, which have not previously been brought together in this manner and which together give a unique and detailed picture of the role of the Church of England in welfare at local level in England.

#### **Documents and Statistics on Local Government, Welfare Provision and Policy**

Both formal publications and internal documents relating to welfare provision were collected from the borough council, Local Strategic Partnership, health authorities and voluntary organisations. This included anything potentially relevant, such as briefing documents for new staff, annual reviews and accounts, policy documents, vision statements, equality plans, minutes of meetings, target and planning documents and promotional/information literature. Material available online as well as in printed format was collected including from the websites of the above mentioned bodies as well as voluntary organisations in the town. Other material included statistics from the national census, regional bodies and from the local authority. This documentation was complemented by factual information given in interviews on welfare provision in the town as well as visits to the buildings where welfare services are provided both by statutory bodies and voluntary organisations.

#### **Documents and Statistics Relating to the Church of England**

Material collected in this category includes statistics from the national church and diocese, and a comprehensive survey of all church websites both for individual parishes, ecumenical bodies and the diocese and region. It also includes informal publications by the churches both for internal and promotional use, reports from meetings, parish magazines, information leaflets and posters. This documentation was complemented by information given in interviews on the churches' activities as well as visits to church buildings themselves.

#### **Local Media**

The local newspapers were also followed for a twelve month period which included the period when I was in Darlington carrying out fieldwork. It was

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<sup>47</sup> Detail as to the situation in Darlington in relation to the national situation can be found in Chapter 6.

not feasible to subscribe to a newspaper in printed format so this was mainly confined to those sections of the newspapers available online. The newspapers followed in this manner were the online editions of the Darlington and Stockton Times, the Advertiser (Darlington, Aycliffe and Sedgely Edition) and the Darlington Northern Echo.<sup>48</sup> This was not therefore a systematic study of the printed text, but provided an overview of the situation in Darlington. Particular attention was paid to articles concerning welfare services, voluntary organisations and the local churches. In the latter case references to the churches in the local newspapers proved mainly to consist of notes of events and services, rather than commentary on the role of the churches. The Darlington Northern Echo does have one weekly column covering matters relating to the Christian churches, this too though concentrates largely on reporting from liturgical events and the reporter covers the whole of the North East.

### **Fact-finding Interviews**

Three interviews were conducted during the mapping process which focused solely on obtaining information about the town and the churches' activities that was not available in other formats. Two of these interviews were with parish priests, who were later interviewed again as part of the in-depth interview study and one with a representative of the Church of England diocese with particular responsibility for social and welfare issues. In addition to these, a number of shorter phone conversations were conducted with representatives of churches, local authorities and voluntary organisations with the aim of confirming or clarifying details.

#### **5.1.7. Semi-structured Interviews**

The interviews have been carried out using a semi-structured interview technique and differ therefore somewhat from an ethnographic approach (Merriam 1994, 88). There are, however, important similarities, not least that both approaches recognise the importance of personal intuition and observation as instruments in qualitative research (Merriam 1994, 30f). The semi-structured approach allows for comparison between interviews in ensuring some common questions and themes are addressed in all conversations, but also allows for the expression and development of ideas and issues which are particularly important for individual interviewees. Building on this at the stage of transcription and analysis, I have striven to preserve the narrative element of each of the interviews. Unlike those who espouse the implementation of

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<sup>48</sup> The Advertiser (Darlington, Aycliffe and Sedgely Edition)  
[www.theadvertiserseries.co.uk/darlington](http://theadvertiserseries.co.uk/darlington) ; Darlington Northern Echo  
<http://thenorthernecho.co.uk/news/local/darlington/> ; Darlington and Stockton Times  
<http://www.darlingtonandstocktontimes.co.uk/>

qualitative methods in a positivist vein, producing from interviews or participant observation *quasi* statistical data, I have preferred to treat the interviews as individual stories within the larger story of the case.

A snowball method was adopted, with a small number of preliminary contacts in the town leading to further interviews, as key individuals acted as gatekeepers. This method based on trust-building and individual contacts, was essential in a small town where it was not always possible to tell from the outset who the most useful contacts would be and where personal introductions were sometimes key to being granted an interview. In line with this method, while a basic target was set in advance for the number of interviews to be conducted, the fact that the interview process would likely have to be continued until it was felt that a form of saturation had been accomplished was acknowledged from the outset. In other words, interviews should be conducted until it was felt that further interviews would add no additional insights to the material.

As noted above, the interviews were carried out using a semi-structured method, and interviewees were told as little as possible about the specific questions that would be addressed in the interview beforehand. Interviews took place in the interviewee's home or office, according to their own preference and lasted about an hour on average. In a number of cases the interviews were preceded or followed by a tour of the church building/ hall/ premises and a chance to ask additional factual questions. Interviews were taped and transcribed.

An interview guide was followed in all interviews which was similar to that used by other members of the WREP project, but also adapted to fit the local and national context. The guide included seven core questions, which were posed to all interviewees and a number of other questions, which served more as guidelines for the conversation. In some cases the seven questions acted almost as thematic prompts for the respondents, who proceeded to speak freely for much of the interview, in others the interview took much more of a question and answer format, although in all cases the interviews were conducted in a conversational manner.<sup>49</sup>

Using an interview guide intended as the basis of a comparative research project facilitated the process in some ways, but also brought particular challenges, which could, however, easily be overlooked. Some questions, for example, relevant in an international comparative context, seemed strange in an English context and produced puzzled reactions from some respondents. The very task of posing such questions, however proved fruitful in encouraging interviewees to state what, to them, was obvious. The flexible and interactive nature of the interview format was of particular importance in this context. It facilitated a more nuanced discussion of the issues and allowed

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<sup>49</sup> The full interview guide can be found in Appendix 3.

me to weave questions into the conversation, rather than interrupt the flow of discussion in an abrupt manner.

The clearest example of an area where questions intended to elicit information important for the comparative study appeared superfluous to interviewees in an English context was a section of questions on the value and extent of voluntary participation. To many of those working within a system in which reliance on voluntary work is inherent, questions as to whether use is made of volunteers and whether this is a good thing seemed odd, and it was therefore necessary to point out to interviewees that a description of the role it played in their work was vital for the comparative study. Asking such questions and observing such reactions also proved fruitful for the case study itself in highlighting issues taken for granted in the local context. Here, as at other times throughout the research process, my own background in the Church of England and English welfare system combined with my current situation, one step removed, was a valuable resource.

One further example of the impact of local context on the interviewees' interpretation of interview questions can be seen in responses to a question focusing on issues of co-operation between church and state. A common automatic response was to refer to the formal partnership which exists in the town between local authority, businesses and voluntary organisations, described in detail below. Perceptions of this partnership colour responses relating to issues of co-operation across sectors.

Similarly, following a short explanation of the focus of the study on the majority church, in many interviews it proved more productive to include all churches in questions of the role of religion, rather than concentrating solely on the role of the Church of England, and interviewees varied considerably in the ways in which they interpreted and used the term church (or churches). This is discussed in more detail in the analysis of the interviews, but is important to note here as an example of one area where interpretation of the use of a particular word or phrase is not clear cut and requires knowledge of the context and judgement on the part of the interviewer.

### 5.1.8. Ethical Considerations

As for all researchers conducting research involving interaction with individuals whose opinions and lives both contribute to and can be affected by the research process, I was faced with a number of complex tensions between the demands of the research on the one hand and my moral obligations towards the participants on the other. In designing and conducting the study I was therefore careful to follow guidelines laid down by the Swedish Research Council (Vetenskapsrådet 2002) and to make use of a number of other international ethical guidelines and codes of practice (ESOMAR 1996, UNESCO 1994, Gustafsson, Hermerén & Petersson, 2006). While not legally binding in themselves, these documents provided a useful aid in ensur-

ing that I was complying with the law, but over and above this act as a reminder of areas which could easily have been overlooked as I began to get to know the town to and immerse myself in meetings with people. Finally these guidelines provided help, advice and pointers at times where the correct balance between academic rigidity and interviewee anonymity was hard to strike.

In accordance with the principle of informed consent, all potential interviewees were first approached by letter, followed by electronic or telephone contact. In some cases where contact was first made via a previous interviewee no formal letter was sent by post (due to time constraints), but the same text was sent by e-mail instead. In addition to being asked whether they consented to participation in advance, the interviewees were also asked explicitly whether they would consent to an audio recording of the interview being made. I also made sure that it was easy to contact both me and the professor supervising the fieldwork both before and after the interviews. Here I was particularly careful to make sure that respondents did not feel that they would have to make expensive phone calls abroad should they wish to get in touch.

Interviewees were also informed that all information would be treated with confidentiality and that their anonymity would be maintained as far as possible, but also that there were potential limitations to that anonymity. In light of this latter point, interviewees were also informed of their right to refuse to take part and to withdraw from the project at any time. The question of anonymity proved, in ethical terms, to be perhaps the most complex and important balancing act in the project. Its potential limitations meant that it was particularly important that each interviewee understood the potential consequences for themselves of participation.

It was decided early on in the WREP project to publicise the names of the case study towns, rather than creating aliases. This had a number of advantages, not least in allowing the use of much more contextual information and local factual documentation which enriched the study but would not have been possible had we attempted to hide the real identity of the location in the text. However, as Pål Repstad has commented, when research is conducted in small communities people are recognisable even if they are not named (Repstad 1999, 139). Darlington is a small town in a number of ways, and this makes it difficult to fully preserve the identity of the interviewees. If the relevance of their comments is to be made use of to the fullest possible extent in analysing and presenting the interview material and if sufficient attention is to be paid to academic standards, which require transparency on the part of the researcher in the presentation of material full anonymity cannot be promised to the interviewees. To this end I was careful to inform the interviewees that, while steps would be taken to preserve their anonymity interviewees may, where relevant in the final text, be identified by gender and

profession and that this may in some cases mean that others could identify the individual behind the words.

### 5.1.9. Selection of Interviewees

The adoption of a snowball method in identifying candidates for interview proved vital, both in terms of using local knowledge to ascertain the key people in the field in question and in terms of gaining an introduction leading to interviews with people who might otherwise have refused, especially where scepticism existed regarding the focus on religion in the project. The weakness of this method is, however, that it strengthens the tendency, already naturally present, for certain well-known individuals to come to the fore, risking the marginalisation of less prominent voices.

The mapping exercise proved a vital starting point for the interview study as it gave a basic picture both of the situation in Darlington and of key individuals and institutions who it would be of interest to include in the interview sample. A list of potential interview candidates was compiled and a formal letter sent to all those on the list outlining the basic aim of the project and requesting an interview. A number of potential interviewees responded positively to this first request and an additional few to a follow up e-mail or phone call. A few declined involvement and no response was received from the remainder. This led to a preliminary list of interviewees for the first wave of interviews. During these interviews informants often mentioned key individuals in the town, who they thought might be of interest to the study and at the end of each interview participants were asked specifically if there was anyone they would recommend. This led both to confirmation of my understanding as to who were key players in the welfare sector and church life of the town and to some new names appearing. In both cases, some informants whom I had already interviewed were kind enough to assist me in making contact with a new potential interviewee, assistance, which in a few cases was instrumental in securing the participation of the individual concerned.

Selection of interviewees is split fairly evenly between representatives of the churches and religious organisations and those of the local authority or other non-church institutions. Further, for purposes of analysis, the material can be split into five categories: representatives of the Church of England, elected representatives of the local authority and other public bodies, employees of the local authority and other public bodies, employees and volunteers in organisations within the voluntary and community sector, and representatives of other denominations or welfare organisations with connection to a particular religious institution.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Representatives of the local authority and of the health service are included here. The health service is technically not part of the local authority, but here the heading is used to include all providers of public services.

Table 5. Interviewees by category and gender

<b>Interview category</b>	<b>Men</b>	<b>Women</b>	<b>Total</b>
Church of England	10	2+2	14
Local authority/ public body – elected	1	4	5
Local authority/ public body – employee	0	4	4
Voluntary/ community sector	2	1	3
Other denominations	3	1	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>30</b>

On the Church side, parish priests working in the town were interviewed. Of the twelve interviewed, only two are women. This mirrors the situation in the Church at large, although the focus on the clergy does mean that the large numbers of (predominantly female) volunteers in the churches were not initially represented in the interviews. At the outset, in designing a qualitative study aiming not to provide a representative base for generalisation, but rather a deeper understanding of factors that can and do exist I was faced with a dilemma: the necessity of keeping the sample small and my intention in connection with this to apply the principle of saturation required the application of a principle for selection which would narrow the field of potential interview candidates, but nonetheless provide a variety of voices, which could illuminate different aspects of the case. Here I decided to contact all parish priests working in the town itself at the time, rather than focusing on a mix of clergy and volunteers from a smaller number of parishes. However during the later analysis phase I also decided to return to the town and conduct two further interviews with active lay members of two parishes in the town.<sup>51</sup> Although conducted much later than the original interviews and therefore following changes and developments in the town these interviews allowed for a check that the views of church volunteers did not represent significantly different attitudes to those of the Church representatives selected to make up the core of the material. It must however also be noted that the views of lay church members/volunteers appeared in the focus group discussions and one or two other interviews with representatives for the local authority or voluntary and community sector, where people with a public role also had a private church commitment. In addition to the Church of England parish clergy, ordained representatives of some of the other main denominations of the town were interviewed and are included, for purposes of analysis, with the interviews of representatives of the voluntary and community sector. On the non-church side elected and appointed representatives responsible for social and health questions were selected and here women

<sup>51</sup> Two women who were active members of their respective parish congregations were interviewed in January 2006. These interviews were not included in the original analysis, but were checked against it at a later date.

were in the majority. Women are in a majority as employees of the public bodies in the town in the areas of health and welfare and this is reflected in the fact that this group of interviewees is entirely made up of women.<sup>52</sup> In this group an attempt was made to find voices from within several areas of welfare provision and attention was therefore focused on those with managerial responsibility, although at different levels. In addition to those in the local authority, representatives of the Darlington Partnership and of important local voluntary bodies have been interviewed.

While the Church representatives all live in the town this cannot be said of a number of the public sector representatives interviewed. The elected representatives live in their respective wards and have all been both resident in Darlington and active as councillors for long periods.<sup>53</sup> Employees in the public sector are more likely to live elsewhere and commute to Darlington to work. Their connection with Darlington is also likely to have spanned only the past two or three years. Interviewees, both church and non-church-related have longer education (the majority have university degrees) than the average in the town. They also hold professional jobs (unsurprising, however, given that this was often a criteria for selection). Both groups include an age spread between mid 30s and pre-retirement. Reference to individual interviews throughout the entire study, are given in the following format (6fc) indicating the interview number, male or female and category of interviewee (see Appendix 2 for detail).

### 5.1.10. Focus Groups

Four focus groups were planned to gather the opinions of residents of Darlington. Practical problems meant however that only two were carried out and, even these could not be used as originally planned. The focus groups were intended to provide material for the case study which gave an insight into attitudes and opinions of a broader cross-section of the population of the town, i.e. people who make use of welfare services, but who do not necessarily have detailed knowledge either of the Church or of the organisation of welfare provision. Practically, the only way to proceed in convening such groups was to make use of contacts in the town who were kind enough to offer their assistance in suggesting and recruiting members and organising meetings. It proved difficult to communicate exactly what was needed to people, who while eager to help were naturally not fully aware of the needs of the project and of focus group methodology. The result of this recruitment

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<sup>52</sup> Local area statistics from the 2001 census show that while men and women are fairly equally represented in the working population as a whole (20, 127 women aged 16–74 in work as compared to 22, 165 men). 38.1% of the female working population are employed in education, public administration and health compared to only 14.6% of the male working population.

<sup>53</sup> Wards are geographical units of division of the town for electoral/ bureaucratic purposes

process, one stage distanced from myself, was not two randomly selected groups in line with my original intentions. Rather the final result was two separate discussion or focus groups comprised of people who worked for the local authority at some level, were actively involved in voluntary welfare work and/or had a significant commitment to one of the churches in the town.<sup>54</sup>

While not providing the material originally intended therefore, these two discussions provided useful material as a complement to individual interviews, adding more voices to the emerging picture and providing another layer to add to the documents and observations that together make up the case study.

### 5.1.11. Validity and Reliability

#### **Validity**

The case study approach as applied here utilises different groups of informants and a variety of methods to gain knowledge of the role of the local church as welfare actor and as critical voice. In this respect this case study measures qualitatively the Church's role in the welfare sphere and therefore also provides an indicator of the Church's role in society. While it may be said to be impossible to fulfil the broader aims of this thesis completely through the execution of one such case study there is validity to the study, in the sense that the methods employed give increased knowledge of the Church's role in welfare, and, in turn, through the use of the prism of welfare it is further possible to demonstrate wider issues of the Church's role in society.

#### **Reliability**

While it would be possible for another researcher to conduct a similar study in Darlington today the context of this study was affected by events that took place both nationally and locally at the time of the fieldwork as well as by the presence or absence of particular individuals, which naturally changes over time. The study is also, as has already been mentioned, significantly coloured by the interaction between researcher and context and the researcher's impressions in recording these encounters. Given these restrictions, it is nevertheless possible for other researchers to assess the reliability of the study. This account strives to present all sources as clearly as possible, while adhering to ethical guidelines (see above), but the possibility also exists for checks to be made of tapes and transcripts of interviews, researcher's notes of impressions from interviews and other meetings as well as newspa-

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<sup>54</sup> Group 1 comprised 6 people (2 men and 4 women). Group 2 comprised 9 people (8 men and 1 woman). In both of the groups people who had already been interviewed took part in discussions.

per articles and of other published and unpublished material collected during fieldwork.

## 5.2. Methods of Analysis

### 5.2.1. Transcription and Textual Analysis

All interviewees were asked for, and gave, their consent before interviews were taped. I then transcribed the interviews verbatim with the exception of one, where the sound quality was so poor that this was not possible. In this case those passages of the interview that were audible have been transcribed, and this is complemented by notes taken during the interview (7fc). The two additional interviews with church volunteers conducted at a later date were also taped, but rather than being transcribed in full notes were taken from the audio to allow for comparison with the core material. Where quotations from interviews are included in the text, these are the exact words of the individual who uttered them and the only alterations that I have made is occasionally to remove repetitions or asides which interrupt the flow of a comment. Where words have been omitted this is clearly marked as follows: [...]. Before undertaking the interviews I was unsure whether everyone would be happy to agree to my use of a tape recorder and was therefore gratified by the trust shown in me not only in that everyone agreed to its use, but also on a couple of occasions where I was asked to switch off the tape to allow the individual to say something to me that they felt they did not want recorded officially.

In accordance with the relevant ethical guidelines and to preserve confidentiality as far as possible all interview transcripts were anonymised. They were all coded with a number, the interviewee's gender and area of work/voluntary activity, which made them a relevant contact for this study. Where quotations from or references to the interviews are made in the text they are identified by their interview number and a code indicating whether the interviewee is male or female and to which interview category the individual belongs. Appendix 1 provides a comprehensive list. Notes were also taken during the interviews, both as security in case of problems with the recording, but also to allow for the recording of other relevant observations, such as use of body language.

In compliance with practice within the whole of the WREP project, interviewees were not offered the opportunity to read over the completed transcript of their interview and make changes. This approach was adopted in an attempt to preserve the entire interview material as a record of immediate reactions to the questions and as unpremeditated conversations on the topic concerned. The interviews represent thus not the considered and ordered opinion of the individuals concerned, but rather spontaneous reflections on

the issues discussed. Both approaches have their merits and can produce interesting material for research, but in the interests of comparison in the context of the WREP project, this path was taken. Had the participants been actively encouraged to comment on and amend interview transcripts, the result could well have been a considerable variation in degrees of take-up by the participants, exacerbating already existing differences in levels of prior reflection on the issues. Interviewees were, however, given the opportunity to contact me after the event should they think of anything they wanted to add or discuss or should they wish, on reflection, to withdraw from the project. None of the interviewees made use of this opportunity, or asked for their interview recording to be destroyed.

### 5.2.2. Analysis of Interview Material

It is important to recognise the significance of interaction between interviewer and interviewee and the baggage that both bring with them to the interview itself and have on the analysis of the interview. Here I agree with Scheuring that an interview cannot be taken as a 'reality' which in text transcript form provides data which can then be subjected to textual analysis distanced from the context of the interview (Scheuring 1997, 67). At this stage, as well as during the interview, impressions of the conversation as a whole play a significant role in influencing a researcher's analysis. I have therefore taken a reflexive approach in analysing the interviews. They are interpreted within the context of the case study as a whole and a reading of the analysis therefore necessitates on the part of the reader some understanding of my background as well as of the case study as a whole (see Chapter 1).

This approach also means that the line between data collection and data analysis traditionally drawn in research reporting becomes much less clear cut (Stake 2003, 150). The process of interviewing, recording and transcribing data may be separated chronologically from the period of writing the final text, but these actions during the fieldwork become part of the process of analysis which continues into and throughout the writing of a final report. Writing itself therefore forms part of the method of enquiry involving both self-reflection and reflection on the material (Denzin & Lincoln 2003, 27). Similarly, nuances of language use, body language and interaction between researcher and interviewee mean that the transcribed text alone cannot be said to be a full record of the interview. As Linde has argued, the interview situation can not be seen independent of the social nature of language and most types of interview involve both interaction between interviewer and interviewee and acknowledgement that the interviewer too is a participant (Linde 1993, 59). Interviewees react to particular phraseology in different ways, leave things unsaid, yet implied on sensing understanding on the part of the interviewer, or alternatively take on a defensive stand and take refuge

in clichés, or standard political discourse. This ambiguity inherent in the data turns the interviewer who has herself carried out the interviews into a resource in their analysis, provided both she and her readers are aware of this dual role. In line with this it is important to note that in presenting results of both the interviews and the case study as a whole I have sought to regard them as narrative, with the proviso that while the results are the case's story, the way in which they are portrayed is determined by choices made by the researcher as well as the interviewees (Stake 2003, 144).

This poses problems for the automated analysis of expressions used and even the manual extraction of particular words or phrases from their context in the interview as a unit. The use of methods which count the frequency of particular words or phrases in a number of interviews are therefore of little relevance in a study of this nature. For this reason and in line with the broader perspective underlying the design and analysis of the empirical material, I have adopted an explorative approach to the analysis of the interviews within the context of the case study as a whole.

### 5.2.3. Explorative Analysis of Narrative

In line with the approach outlined above to treat the interview material in a reflexive and explorative manner it is also pertinent to explore how such interview data can be handled. As has already been noted above this study does not claim that the interview data represents some form of objective raw facts which can be presented and analysed as such, and it must therefore be accepted that the interviews allow for a number of interpretations. In their transcribed form they represent, however, a body of text to be interpreted, and as a result perspectives from linguistics and literature studies can also be helpful tools in developing an approach to the material. One such concept is that of narrative. Peter Collins has noted that there is a 'growing understanding that narrative is centrally important not only to fictional accounts but to social accounts more generally' (2004, 100). In this he builds on Polkinghorne's definition of narrative as 'the cognitive process that gives meaning to temporal events by identifying them as parts of a plot' (Collins 2004, 100; Polkinghorne 1991, 136). Following Collins therefore we can argue that individuals construct themselves by use of narratives and, as a result, any study which involves an analysis of social agency can benefit from 'adopting narrative as a perspectival tool' both in terms of understanding the individual's story, but also the wider context (2004, 101). The use of narrative is nothing new to the science of anthropology, whose proponents have long acknowledged that anthropological texts can often be better understood if portrayed as narratives told by the anthropologist (Geertz 1988). In an interview study such as this one, however, the recognition that the subjects themselves form their responses as narrative is equally important, as Collins points out:

In relating the stories of individuals and groups we can identify the twists applied to structural rules which were once taken to be rigid, external and overarching. In fact, through their stories we can see how ordinary people actually construct and reconstruct these structures only to unravel or embroider them in order to see their world better. And we begin to see that the structures themselves are stories we tell ourselves. (Collins 2004, 102–103)

Within any particular narrative, Collins argues, there are several levels which can be identified ‘canonic’, providing the widest contextualisation; ‘vernacular’, the local, macro, or community level; and ‘individual’ narrative where the individual agent takes centre stage (2004, 104–5). An interpretation should allow for the difference in meaning which these levels inherent in the text can imply, and not only this but also the unspoken acknowledgement on the part of the interviewee that the interviewer is familiar with a particular discourse or terminology relevant to an understanding of the actual level of narrative.

The attempt to understand the text within its context in this manner can also be framed as a search for coherence in the text. Linde has described coherence as a ‘property of texts’ which ‘derives from the relations that the parts of a text bear to one another and to the whole text, as well as from the relation that the text bears to other texts of its type’ (1993, 12). The text must in other words make sense both in and of itself and in relation to a broader tradition or context. More than this, however, coherence is also a result of a co-operation between speaker and listener. ‘The speaker works to construct a text whose coherence can be appreciated, and at the same time the addressee works to reach some understanding of it as a coherent text and to communicate that understanding’ (1993, 12). The coherent text constructed by the interviewer in this case will therefore not necessarily be the same as that intended by the speaker. In this respect, a helpful term in understanding the process is the ‘hermeneutic circle’, a widely discussed term in the literature of hermeneutics (Linde 1993, 95). This notion encompasses an understanding that a researcher can never approach a text without some inherent pre-understanding and that this cannot be removed, but only acknowledged.

With this in mind it becomes clear that not only is a knowledge of the researcher’s background important to an understanding of the analysis, but also that the interview data presented and analysed below can only be interpreted against the background of both the national context and the particular locality in which it was collected. In addition to forming a result of this study in itself therefore the detailed mapping of the locality which formed this case study can also be seen as an essential ingredient in analysing the interview material.

## 6. Church and Society in Darlington

### 6.1. An Account of Welfare and Church in the Town of Darlington

The mapping process, which formed the first part of the case study contributed to a picture of the town of Darlington and of the Church of England in the town which slowly emerged. This is a picture which ought to be easily recognisable to residents of the town, but which did not exist in any empirically verifiable form before this study was undertaken. One result of this study has been to produce a detailed account of the role of the Church in the welfare sphere in a medium-sized town in England, and more specifically of the situation in Darlington. The chapter that follows is therefore a presentation of the results of the first stage of the case study. The image that appears provides new knowledge of the welfare provision and agency of the churches in an English town within the context of the activities and service provided by public authorities and civil society.

#### 6.1.1. Setting the Scene

The case study was carried out in Darlington, a medieval market town in the North East of England. On the trade route north from London to Newcastle and Edinburgh, as the map below shows, the town was well placed during the Industrial Revolution. The railways, with associated heavy industry, played a large role in the growth of Darlington to an industrial town in the 1800s. During this period the prominent families in the town were all members of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) (see Cookson 2004; Orde 2000). They used family and business connections with other Friends around the country to build up iron and engineering industries and as Gillian Cookson notes with reference to sources from the period: ‘The Quakers, it was said, ran everything in town apart from the Anglican Church, the Licensed Victuallers Association (founded 1859) and the trades unions’ (Cookson 2004, 134). This combination of religious and economic history is important to the current study, firstly because the Quaker past of the town could give the impression that it is a particularly pious area (indeed the town’s football team is still called the Quakers), and secondly, given that the Quaker families had such a prominent position, because they also acted to a large extent as the benefactors of the town as far as welfare provision for workers was

concerned. An awareness of the pivotal role of a free church, as opposed to the Church of England, in the historical development the town therefore represents important background to the study.



Map 1. Map showing the location of Darlington in relation to other major cities in Britain and including key transport arteries. Map reproduced with the kind permission of Darlington Borough Council. Reproduced from Ordnance Survey material with the permission of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office, © Crown Copyright NC/january/2009.

The town, however, underwent significant changes during the late twentieth century.<sup>55</sup> Although once a manufacturing town, 80% of those in paid employment now have jobs within the service sector and the average wage in the town is relatively low, as table 9 below shows (DBC 2004b, 5).

<sup>55</sup> For a detailed description of the history of Darlington's townscape see Cookson 2003.

The local council is the single largest employer (5100 employees), followed by the telecom company Orange (4500) and Darlington Memorial Hospital (2000) (DBC 2004a, 7).

Of the 5100 people employed by the council the majority are women (70.8%), but 83.5% of these work part-time. Only 16.5% of male council employees (29.1% of the total) work part-time (DBC 2004a, 1). Unemployment is at 3.1% in the town, although the figure is much higher for men (4.8%) than for women (1.4%) (Tees Valley JSU 2007, 7).<sup>56</sup> It must however be noted that traditional perceptions of gender roles may play a part in this difference in that many women not active in the labour force have chosen to look after family and home on a full-time basis and are therefore not registered as unemployed. In the United Kingdom as a whole, for example, in a survey in 2001, 33% of women of working age but not active in the labour force stated that they did not want a job because they were looking after family and home, while only 3% of their male counterparts gave the same reply (ONS 2002).

Today the town has a population of 98,561 (DBC 2005, 4).<sup>57</sup> Nearly 20% of the population is of retirement age and over (DBC 2004a, 4), a figure that is slightly higher than the national average of 18.5% (Tees Valley JSU 2002).<sup>58</sup> Correspondingly, the number of young people in the town is slightly below the national average. There has been a small population increase in the town since the 1990s mainly as a result of a rise in the ratio of births to deaths in the region; migration into the area is a marginal factor in this growth. Population density is above average at 5.0 in the town, compared to 3.4 in England and Wales as a whole (DBC 2004a 4).<sup>59</sup> The proportion of ethnic minorities in the population is below average at 2.1% compared with a national average of 9.1% (DBC 2004a, 4).<sup>60</sup> In terms of the administrative regions into which the country is divided, Darlington is located in the North East region and its administrative sub-region the Tees Valley, as can be seen on the maps below.

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<sup>56</sup> The unemployment figure is also higher than for Great Britain in general (2.5%), in Figures from March 2004.

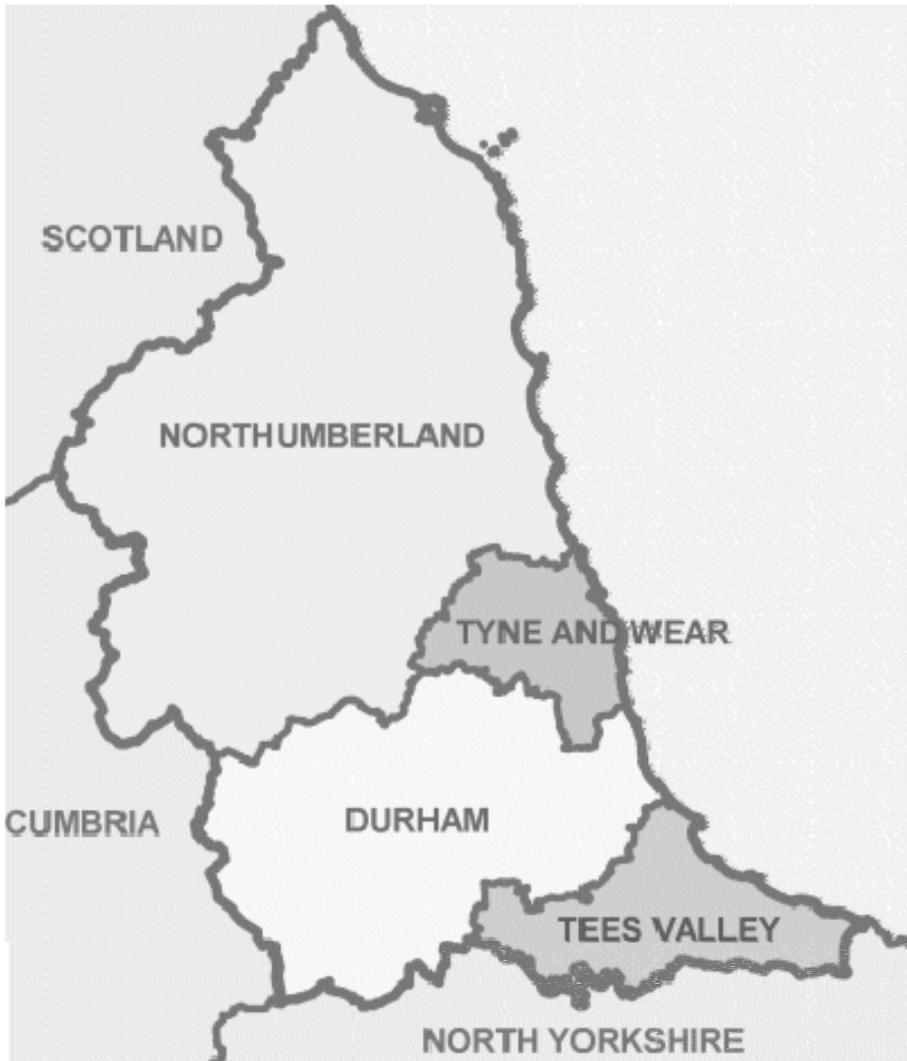
<sup>57</sup> Mid 2004 estimates ONS.

<sup>58</sup> Retirement age Females 60 years, Males 65 years. Total retirement age and over in Darlington 19,284. Mid 2003 estimates ONS. National Average ONS/JSU 2002.

<sup>59</sup> Population density measured in people per hectare, 2002. Darlington Borough Council, September 2004

<sup>59</sup> Figures from Census 2001.

<sup>60</sup> Figures from Census 2001.



Map 2. Map showing the North East region and its sub-regions. Map originally produced by Darlington Borough Council and reproduced with permission. Reproduced from Ordnance Survey material with the permission of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office, © Crown Copyright NC/january/2009



Map 3. Map showing the Borough Councils in the Tees Valley sub-region. Map originally produced by Darlington Borough Council and reproduced with permission. Re-produced from Ordnance Survey material with the permission of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office, © Crown Copyright NC/january/2009

While Darlington has much in common with the rest of the surrounding Tees Valley region, it also contains some noteworthy differences.<sup>61</sup> It has a more elderly and more stable population than the surrounding area (Tees Valley JSU 2002, 3). Unemployment in the area is above the national average, mirroring the situation in the wider region (Tees Valley JSU 2007, 2), but in Darlington itself, unemployment levels are above the regional average (Tees Valley JSU 2007).<sup>62</sup> These figures must however be seen in the light of a more detailed analysis of the local situation.

Statistics which break down the town into its 25 administrative and electoral districts, called wards, show that, far from being a homogeneous unit, the town mirrors the national situation in terms of the huge inequalities in health and wealth (Tees Valley JSU 2001, 2). As a result of this imbalance, the full extent of deprivation in some areas of the town can easily be overlooked if only the mean figures for the town are taken. This can be illustrated with figures from the national Index of Multiple Deprivation. This index combines data on a number of factors, chosen to cover a range of economic, social and housing issues, into a single deprivation score for each small area in England. This allows these areas to be ranked relative to one another according to their level of deprivation. In the national index of multiple deprivation from 2004, for example, the average of the ward scores for the whole of Darlington places Darlington as 90<sup>th</sup> most deprived of 354 authorities

<sup>61</sup> The Tees Valley region is the administrative sub-region of the larger North East region in which Darlington is located.

<sup>62</sup> 4.0% in the Tees Valley and 3.2% in the North East. March 2004.

nationally. However of the 25 wards in Darlington the lowest ranked, (where 1 is the most deprived nationally), has a national ranking of 261 while the highest has placing 7370 of 7932 wards in total (DBC 2004a, 5–6).

Government rankings which divide the town into even smaller units for statistical purposes show this even more starkly. The least affluent area in Darlington, the south side of Park East ward is amongst the worst 1.4% nationally, while the most affluent on the west side of Hummersknott, is in the best 7.8% nationally (DBC 2004c, 8). In practical terms these scores represent significant differences in life expectancy, financial stability and quality of life for the inhabitants. So while some of Darlington's inhabitants live in comfortable circumstances, 44% of the residents of the town live in wards that are among the 25% most deprived in the country (DBC 2004b).

### 6.1.2. Local Government and Service Provision

Providing a clear and concise account of the way that the town is run and how different bodies interact in local government and the provision of services is no easy task, as the system is not a streamlined structure ultimately accountable to one elected body. Figure 2 below attempts to give some indication of the bodies involved and the ways in which they are connected.

Some further explanation of the key bodies is however needed in addition to the table below as the complex nature of interaction and co-operation between the bodies indicated is not made evident by such a model.

Local elections held every four years appoint representatives to Darlington Borough Council. Darlington has been a unitary authority since 1997, which means that it has responsibility for all services in Darlington that were previously provided by both County and Borough councils.<sup>63</sup> The full council in Darlington, sitting in a parliamentary style chamber, decides on the budget and policy framework for the local authority. An executive of nine members is responsible for detailed decision making and individual councillors take on responsibility for particular areas of work, following the portfolio model of national government ministers. The services of the council are then provided through a department structure staffed by professionals, with five departments under the supervision of a chief executive.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> This two-tier system with two separate decision-making bodies at local level still operates in some parts of the country

<sup>64</sup> At the time the research was carried out the council structure comprised five departments: Corporate Services, Community Services, Development and Environment, Education and Social Services. ([www.darlington.gov.uk](http://www.darlington.gov.uk), 30<sup>th</sup> September 2003). Following a restructuring programme, the Council, however now provides services through four departments: Community Services, Corporate Services, Development and Environment and Children's Services. ([www.darlington.gov.uk](http://www.darlington.gov.uk), 9<sup>th</sup> October 2005).

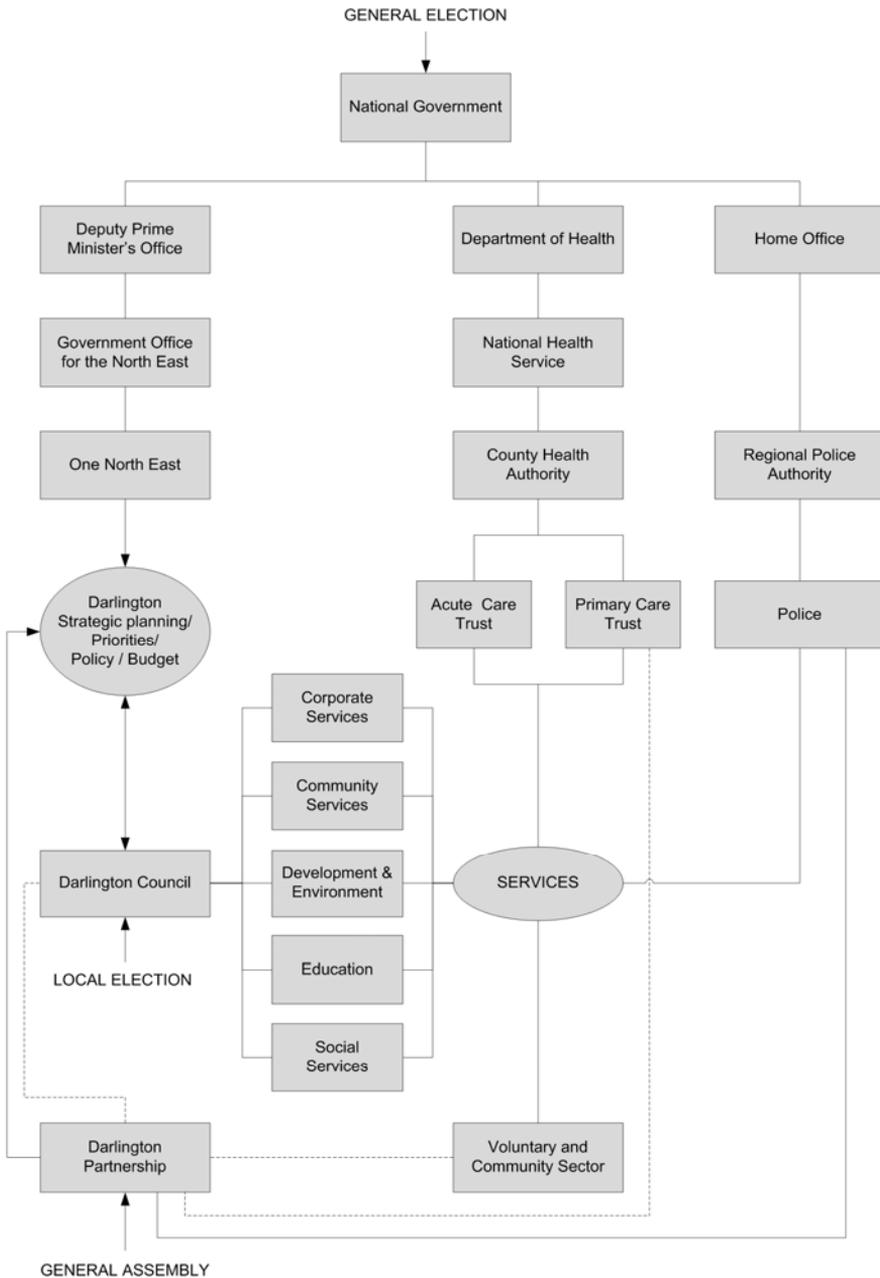


Figure 2. Service provision in Darlington: A model showing in basic terms the bodies involved in the provision of social services and the relations between them.

As a relatively deprived area the North East is, in political terms, traditionally a Labour stronghold. Of 30 parliamentary seats in the region, 28 are held by Labour members of parliament (MPs) (BBC News 2007). The local MP

for the Darlington constituency, Alan Milburn is one of these and was returned to Westminster at the last general election with just over 52% of the vote (BBC News 2006).<sup>65</sup> While Darlington to a certain extent mirrors the wider region politically in this respect however, the presence of both Conservative and Liberal Democrat representatives on the borough council, alongside the Labour majority, reflects the mixed social composition of the town. Following council elections in 2003 the 53 seats are held by 35 Labour, 16 Conservative and 2 Liberal Democrat elected representatives. These councillors, as with all elected local government representatives in England, serve as unpaid representatives. This means that the council also contains representatives of a variety of professions and business and social interests in the town.

Decision-making at local level is, however, not completely separate from national government in Westminster. In 1999, the national government made a decision to support the development of regional strategies for the nine regions in the country. In practice this means supporting the development of economic strategies across several local authorities. These nine regional offices form part of the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister and provide a regional presence for national government carrying out functions for several government departments. The relevant body for Darlington is the Government Office for the North East and under its direction the regional development agency *One North East*.

One North East is responsible for implementing a regional economic strategy and for business development, regeneration and improvement in the North East region (One North East). This body develops key priorities for the region in consultation with councils and businesses and is responsible for co-ordinating strategies for development of the region as a whole. As a result, it has a direct impact on the activities of local government in Darlington on priorities that are set for the town and the investment of funding from central government in the infrastructure and services of the town (GONE).

Finally, the running of the town is significantly influenced by the existence of a Local Strategic Partnership (LSP), called the Darlington Partnership. This is a formalised instrument for coordinating the different interests prevalent in Darlington to work towards a common goal to improve the quality of life in the town. Darlington Partnership has its origins in an employers' forum, formed in 1992 by Darlington's MP and the leader of the council. The aim of this forum was to engage and work with the main private sector companies in Darlington. It was renamed and launched as Darlington Partnership in 1997, the intention being to provide a formal interface between the new unitary borough council and the private sector, with a primary focus

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<sup>65</sup> Alan Milburn has served as Darlington's MP since 1992 and for much of that time has been a member of the shadow Cabinet or Cabinet. More information can be found on his website [www.alanmilburn.co.uk](http://www.alanmilburn.co.uk).

on stimulating economic development. Darlington Partnership was taken as an example of good practice by the national government when it began to work towards setting up Local Strategic Partnerships in all parts of the country, and the Partnership became the LSP for Darlington (Darlington Partnership 2008, 6). During the process of expansion that accompanied its transformation into an LSP, the Partnership's broader representation from public, community and voluntary sectors was integrated. At this stage, wide reaching consultations were launched which resulted in the development of a community strategy accepted in 2003 (Darlington Partnership 2003). This document formed the basis of all strategic goals in the development of the town from 2003 to 2008, when a new strategy document was launched (Darlington Partnership 2008, 6). This includes everything from budget priorities set by the council to grassroots action by voluntary bodies. One aim of the Partnership is to encourage collective responsibility for the development of and wellbeing in the town. The Partnership's website states:

Darlington Partnership brings together public, private, voluntary and community sector organisations - such as those in local government, health, education, crime reduction, businesses, and local community groups - to collectively achieve our ambitious vision for the Darlington area, contained in our Community Strategy. Our aim is to offer everyone the chance to be involved in moving Darlington forward - we believe it essential to our success (Darlington Partnership 2004).

The Partnership is controlled by an assembly that meets twice a year to discuss basic strategy and develop the community strategy. This assembly is made up of representatives of community groups, public, private and voluntary sector bodies. The Partnership is governed by a board elected by this body, which has responsibility for implementing the strategy; councillors, local community groups, businesses and the churches are represented (Darlington Partnership 2004). The Partnership is not a service provider in its own right, but works through the activities of individuals and organisations in Darlington to reach goals prioritised in the community strategy. Themed groups are an important part of the structure, taking responsibility for the delivery of specific areas of the strategy. Figure 3 below, showing this structure and chairpersons of the themed groups is itself a good indication of how the interaction between public, private and voluntary sectors works.

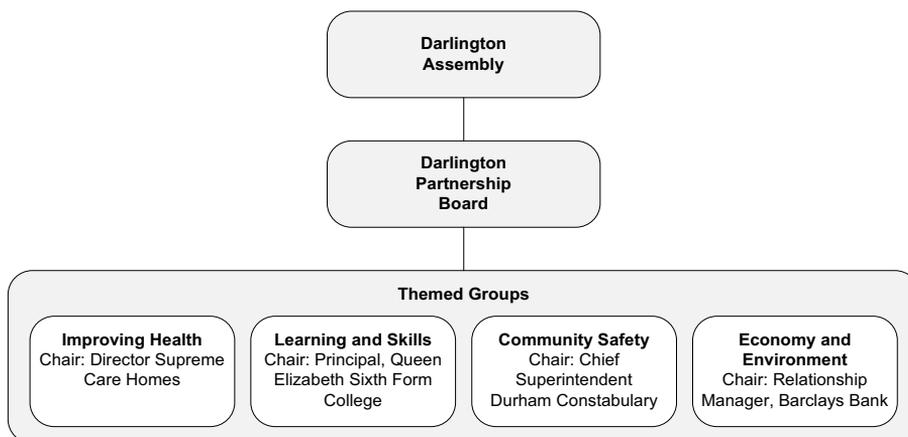


Figure 3. Darlington Partnership Structure

Partnership between different kinds of organisations is a key factor in understanding the provision of services in Darlington. Table 6 shows the areas of responsibility of the different themed groups in the Partnership.

Table 6. Themed groups within Darlington Partnership, their areas of responsibility and chairpersons

Themed group	Coverage	Chairperson
Health Improvement and Social Exclusion	Health improvement, promotion and preventative initiatives, acute and community healthcare, social services and housing	Director, Supreme Care Homes
Learning and Skills	Education, training and development, lifelong learning and skills, early years provision	Principal, Queen Elizabeth Sixth Form College
Community Safety	Tackling crime and disorder, anti-social behaviour, youth offending, drugs, public protection, licensing and enforcement issues	Chief Superintendent Durham Constabulary
Economy and Environment	Economic development, town centre, jobs, environmental protection and enhancement, culture, regeneration	Relationship Manager, Barclays Bank

What is not shown in this table is the variety of agencies and independent groups (public, private and voluntary) represented across the range of themes. The community safety group is, for example, chaired by the Chief Superintendent of Police, but the themes that this group works on involve co-operation with voluntary bodies that work with issues of drug misuse, local neighbourhood watch schemes and groups representing the interests of pensioners, for example. The very existence of the Partnership is dependent on the strong voluntary sector in Darlington. There are over 500 voluntary

organisations and community groups in the town with over 10,000 volunteers in total (Darlington Partnership 2003, 10).

In light of the importance of the Partnership, it is interesting to look more closely at the priorities outlined in the community strategy. The vision for a better Darlington outlined in the strategy adopted in March 2003 is structured into four visionary goals and eight connecting themes, and these areas set the agenda for the priorities determined by the council and the budgets allocated to different areas of work. This strategy was adopted as the basis for the council's priorities, 'in recognition of the reality that public services are delivered by a range of agencies and following government guidance' in the words of its corporate plan (DBC 2004c, 12).

That there are a range of agencies involved in the provision of welfare is clear, and they are all affected by the council's budget, which is in turn influenced by the community strategy. The goals and themes can be seen in the tables below:

Table 7. Four Visionary Goals

An area creating and sharing prosperity	A location for learning achievement and leisure	A place for living safely and well	A high quality environment with excellent communication links
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Table 8. Eight connecting themes

Improving the local economy	Raising educational achievement	Promoting community safety	Enhancing the environment
Promoting inclusive communities	Stimulating leisure activities	Improving health and wellbeing	Developing an effective transport system

Tables 7 and 8 show the goals and themes which form the basis for strategic planning in Darlington Community Strategy (Darlington Partnership 2003, 18)

Three areas have been highlighted by the Partnership as priorities:

- **Improving the local economy** – in recognition of its importance to all other aspects of improving quality of life
- **Raising educational achievement** – to bring about the desired long-term investment and improvements for the area and life chances for individuals.
- **Promoting inclusive communities.** – ensuring everyone has the opportunity to live active lives, participating in and contributing positively to all aspects of the community (Darlington Partnership 2003, 18).

In addition, while working with these aims, both the Partnership and the council intend to target efforts on three groups of residents: the elderly, children and young people, and those living in the most deprived wards (for further information see DBC 2004c). All of these priorities are directly related to issues of welfare in the eyes of the council. The motivation, for example, for a focus on improving the local economy is the impact that it has on quality of life. The council's spending also reflects the focus on priority targets. Of a total expenditure of £160,469,000 in the revenue budget for 2004/5, £22,673,000 is allocated to social services and £53,469,000 to education. In addition, council capital spending plans for the same year allocate £24 million to be spent in total, £7.0 million of which is allocated to education, £5.5 million to housing and £1 million to the Sure Start programme targeting families with young children in areas of deprivation (DBC 2004c, 105–7).

In addition to the co-operation in place between the council and a number of bodies, including the police, within the Partnership, welfare provision is influenced by co-operation with the Primary Care Trust and the Acute Hospitals NHS Trust. These organisations have responsibility for general local healthcare and hospital care respectively and do not come under the jurisdiction of the council. Rather they are independent statutory bodies accountable to the county statutory health authority and the public through a board consisting of both professional and local lay people. The PCT had an expenditure of £111,693,000 for the financial year 2003/4 of which 6,479,000 was used to commission services from non-NHS bodies (Darlington Primary Care Trust 2004, 32).

Finally, it is important to mention the local community partnerships in the town, which are both one result of the goal to promote inclusive communities and one way in which the council and the Partnership seek to improve welfare services and quality of life in the most deprived areas of Darlington. There are currently eleven such partnerships, each covering one ward. They represent people who live in the ward and get involved in projects that will improve the lives of residents. They are run as *stakeholder* partnerships and partners include both local residents and organisations. Partners in North Road Community Partnership, for example, include local residents, ward councillors, Sure Start, local churches, residents associations, housing associations, local schools, police, youth service, uniformed wardens, Friends of the Park group, local community groups and voluntary groups (North Road Community Partnership 2005).

### 6.1.3. Welfare Issues in Darlington

The priorities outlined by the Council and Partnership give an indication of the most pressing welfare issues in Darlington. In addition to this social issues mapping, which charts the existence of a range of social issues used to

calculate indexes of multiple deprivation, indicates welfare issues that are particularly pertinent and also shows starkly the significant differences in standards of living between the different areas of Darlington.

The social issues map compiled in 2004 shows, for example, that in addition to being a low-wage economy in general the situation is particularly bad for women. The average weekly wage for women in Darlington is very low in comparison to the national and also the regional average, as the following table shows (DBC 2004b).

Table 9. Average gross weekly wages for those in full-time employment in Darlington, the North East and Britain (figures from DBC 2004b, 5).

	Darlington as place of work	Darlington as place of residence	N.E Region as place of work	N.E Region as place of residence	Britain
Men	£438.50	£423.80	£437.80	£436.20	£525.00
Women	£298.50	£340.30	£347.30	£349.90	£396.00
All	£382.80	£390.80	£402.10	£402.90	£475.80

The fact that Darlington has a low-wage economy and that this is an important issue as regards the welfare of the individuals who live there can also be seen in the reporting by the local media of investment in the town. For example, reports that the national retailer Argos was planning to locate a new distribution centre in Darlington, a development which would create around 700 jobs (albeit on a large scale in this instance) generate much comment on the development prospects for Darlington (One North East 2004).

One further issue which is important for welfare in the town and which also receives considerable attention in the local press is that of crime and vandalism, and youth crime and delinquency in particular. This includes debate surrounding both the quality of life and feelings of security for residents in the areas where it occurs and also into the causes of crime and prospects for young people. One article in a local newspaper following an incident which angered the local parish priest and triggered her contact with the media resulted in greater public debate of the issue in the area, renewed interest in community development and prompted the local councillor to contact the priest in question. This first contact has since led to increased cooperation between the councillor and the parish church and to the church being seen as a valid partner in conversation and action.<sup>66</sup> This said, it must be noted that rates of crime in the police region of which Darlington is a part are below national averages. Figures from 2004/5 show a household crime rate of 2,555 per 10,000 households compared to an average for England of 3,000 (Nicholas et al. 2005, 56, Table 6.01).

<sup>66</sup> Fact-finding interview B, March 2004 and article in *The Advertiser*, 22 April 2004

One other relevant issue which also highlights gender divisions in welfare is the issue of lone parent households. Figures from 2002 show that lone parents with dependent children make up 7.1% of households in the region (compared to 6.5% in England as a whole) (Office for National Statistics 2002, Table 3.20). Nationally, women are significantly more likely to become lone parents than their male counterparts and this is also the case in Darlington. The census in 2001 revealed 249 lone-parent households in Darlington headed by a man and 2742 headed by a woman. Furthermore, employment statistics for these households show significant differences between men and women. 4.2% of male lone-parents were in part-time employment in 2001 and 52.21% in full-time employment compared to 31.29% of the female lone-parents who were in part-time employment and 18.53% working full-time (Office for National Statistics 2004, Table KS22).<sup>67</sup>

Over and above these issues it is relevant to note a couple which appeared prominently in the interview material or recur frequently in the local press. One such is the role played by voluntary and community groups in the town. In fact the reporting of the activities of local voluntary and community groups takes up much of the local newspaper and often such articles can be linked to other issues such as quality of life for the elderly, health and the provision and quality of healthcare and community development. This provides an insight into the importance of such groups to welfare services in the town. It is not, for example, uncommon to read reports of fund raising events organised by individuals or groups, including activities to raise money for the rehabilitation of individuals, local hospitals and hospices or air ambulance and for local schools to fund extras, such as conservation projects, which, on account of their tight budgets, they could otherwise not afford (for examples see Northern Echo 2006a; 2006b; 2006c; 2008; BBC News 2005).

A second issue, not a factor included in data used to measure levels of deprivation in an area, is homelessness. It was both frequently mentioned by interviewees and is a focus of several projects with origins in the churches or with connections to the churches. The official measure of homelessness in the United Kingdom is the number of households accepted by local authorities as being unintentionally homeless and in priority need. Figures collated by the charity Shelter show that, on the basis of this measure, homelessness increased by just over one third nationally between 1997/8 and 2003/4. When broken down by region however the implications for Darlington are significant. In the North East, the percentage change in homeless people in the same period was nearly three times the national average, at 91% (Shelter 2004, 3). This represents a considerable number of homeless individuals in Darlington, many of whom have multiple problems of alcohol or substance

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<sup>67</sup> Figures are for parents with a dependent child living in a household with no other parents (whether related to that child or not).

misuse and/or mental ill-health, for instance, over and above their housing situation.

#### 6.1.4. The Religious Situation in Darlington

Statistics relating to religion from the 2001 census show that the proportion of the population of the town who define themselves as Christian is above the national average at 79.8%. Figures for affiliation with other religions, on the other hand are below the national average: 0.6% identified themselves as Muslim, 0.1% Hindu, 0.3% Sikh, 0.3% replied that they had some other religion and 11.4% that they had no religion.<sup>68</sup> The category ‘other’ in this case includes both Buddhism and Judaism as well as those others mentioned with the national statistics (Tees Valley JSU 2004).

The above statistics could lead one to conclude that the churches in the town have large congregations. However, this picture is somewhat misleading both in terms of membership and influence in the town. As with the situation at national level, the census results only show where individuals say that their sense of affiliation lies and are not membership statistics. The nearest that the Church of England comes to membership records is the electoral role, which individuals actively sign up to if they are regular attendees wishing to be able to vote in church elections. Many more people however make use of the services of the church in the parish in which they live for weddings, funerals and baptisms. The following table for the diocese of which Darlington is a part shows clearly that these figures are well below the numbers who identify themselves as Christian, but are closely reminiscent of the situation at national level.

Table 10. Membership and attendance figures for the Church of England in Durham Diocese<sup>69</sup>

	<b>Durham Diocese</b>	<b>England (total for 44 dioceses)</b>
Population	1,435,000	49,800,000
Electoral role	24,000	1,206,000
Electoral role as % population	1.67%	2.42%
Weekly attendance	22,600	1,166,000
Weekly attendance as % population	1.57%	2.34%
Marriages	1,320	60,700
Funerals	7,440	224,200
Baptisms and thanksgivings	4,970	158,000
Baptisms per 1000 live births	250	181

<sup>68</sup> Census 2001, Office for National Statistics. Question asked: ‘What is your Religion?’

<sup>69</sup> Table shows numbers who make use of the Church of England nationally and in Darlington. All figures from the Church of England Statistics for 2002.

This discrepancy between a feeling of affiliation with and actual attendance at or use of the services of the Church may go some way to explaining why the Church is frequently ascribed no particular role in the social sphere, but is rather seen as one actor amongst many, while representatives of the Church see their role in a different light.

## 6.2. The Church of England in Darlington

Darlington is in the Anglican diocese of Durham, one of two dioceses in the North East region. At a local administrative and pastoral level the parishes in Darlington are part of the deanery of Darlington, one of 16 deaneries in the diocese. The bishop has primary pastoral responsibility over the diocese and is aided by a suffragan bishop and 3 archdeacons. Darlington is in the Archdeaconry of Auckland and the deanery is centred round the town whose southern border is the river Tees, which also marks the diocesan boundary. Of the 22 parishes which make up the deanery, 10 are in the town of Darlington, while the remainder are rural parishes. At a deanery level the area dean, himself a parish priest, has pastoral and administrative responsibility for the parishes and clergy in the deanery.

Since 2000 the diocese has also been working with the concept of ‘localities,’ and Darlington is divided up into four such areas, where parishes work together and share resources for mission and ministry.<sup>70</sup> Some of these localities contain a mixture of town and rural parishes. The parishes themselves in the town of Darlington are geographical entities closely related to ward boundaries. They therefore vary considerably both in size and social make-up and consequently in their particular problems and priorities.

### 6.2.1. Financial and Human Resources

Given the complex nature of transactions between local and national church it is difficult to give a clear picture of the financial situation at local level without presenting detailed financial records parish by parish. It is, however, possible to give some indication of the situation at a diocesan level. Seen at national level funding to support the work of the Church comes from two main sources, income from the assets of the national church, which are managed by the Church Commissioners, and independent giving. Other small amounts come from fees taken for services such as weddings and funerals.

This means that the Parochial Church Council (PCC) has a huge responsibility to meet the annual costs of running the church and the targets for the sum which they are required to pay to the diocese. This ‘parish share’ funds

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<sup>70</sup> Information on the localities system in Durham Diocese can be found on the diocesan website <http://www.durham.anglican.org/> (Information retrieved 23 March 2005)

the stipends and housing of the parish clergy and support costs of diocesan staff. How much each parish pays depends on a number of factors such as size of parish and number of members on the electoral role, as well as the relative wealth of the population, rather than being directly related to the number of clergy employed.

Rising pension costs, in particular, have been a major issue for the Church in recent years and cuts have been made and restructuring has taken place to ensure that the Church can cover these costs as well as continuing with other ministry without eating into capital. One element of this restructuring entailed the transfer of responsibility for pensions from the Church Commissioners to the dioceses, which resulted in increased parish shares. Campaigns followed to encourage church-goers to increase the percentage of their income which they give to the Church and to give this in planned forms, which enable the Church to recover the income tax paid. Nationally, planned giving in 2002 increased by 5.9% on the previous year and raised over £235 million, which almost covered the combined costs of the parish shares (Archbishops' Council 2004a, vii).

At parish level this means that any other costs which the parish incurs must be covered from other sources, generally fundraising, collections at services and other giving, such as bequests. In 2002, the total recurring income for PCCs in Durham diocese was £8,295,000. Eighty two percent of this was income from voluntary donations, which equates to a weekly average of £4.75 per electoral role member per week. This is below average for the country as a whole, where the weekly average is £6.20. This, however, tells us little about the relative wealth of the Church in Durham diocese, as average giving figures are affected by population density as well as average income, to name but two factors (Archbishops' Council 2004a, 36).

Of more interest is how the income figures for the churches relate to expenditure. Total recurring expenditure for the PCCs in Durham diocese in the same year was £8,463,000, 6% of which represented charitable donations with the remainder funding running costs. This means that the Church was running at a deficit despite increases in giving. Nationally the costs of funding full-time ministers account for about 44% of the Church's expenditure (Archbishops' Council 2001a, 3 §6), which translates as only 0.65 of a clergy-person per parish, or 0.17 per 1000 residents. Durham diocese is slightly worse off, with 0.14 stipendiary clergy per 1000 inhabitants, although this does equate to 0.80 of a minister per parish (Archbishops' Council 2004a, 3).

Parish priests in Darlington are paid stipends in line with national guidelines. Given that parish priests are provided with housing, it is not easy to compare clergy remuneration with the pay of others with similar levels of education. A national Church report in 2001, however, attempted the comparison after first adding a notional cost for housing to the clergy stipend. The report concluded that clergy receive slightly more than the national average non-manual wage, but considerably less than those in other professions

with similar levels of responsibility. The starting level salary for a primary school head teacher in 2001, for example, was £36,470 while the notional value of the clergy remuneration package was calculated to be £26,338 (Archbishops' Council 2001a, 19–20).

No empirical study was undertaken of the numbers of individuals giving their time as volunteers to the churches in Darlington, and as the churches themselves collect no statistics for this the extent of voluntary activity in the work of the churches is hard to measure. All parishes in Darlington, as elsewhere are run by PCC comprising the clergy of the parish and elected lay members. These lay representatives and the two lay churchwardens, who have particular responsibilities for the running and fabric of the church, give their time without reimbursement. In addition, interviews with clergy in the town reveal huge levels of voluntary activity essential to the running of the Church at local-level and to its outreach work. Volunteers hand out hymn books, serve coffee after services, clean the church and grounds, arrange flowers, organise fundraising, run Sunday schools and other activities for children and young people and form visiting committees who visit the sick and bereaved in the parish, to name but a few activities. In short, the many activities of the churches are completely reliant on the existence of volunteers. The figures that do exist at diocesan level confirm this impression. A national survey in 2002 showed that 800 adults across the parishes in Durham diocese were working with young people aged 11 to 25. Even given the fact that one or two parishes may have employed lay youth workers, with 249 parishes in the diocese this leaves an average of just over three people per parish giving their time to work with young people (Archbishops' Council 2002a, 5).

None of the parishes in Darlington employs staff over and above the ordained ministers, apart from a nominal number of hours' work provided by caretakers in a couple of parishes where the church has a community hall. Nor is there a large number of stipendiary clergy, with an average of only just over one per parish in the town, including curates in training posts. Even here, in terms of the pastoral and liturgical tasks performed in the parish which require a licensed minister, volunteers play a not inconsiderable role. Lay readers, non-stipendiary clergy and retired clergy are an important part both of the regular life of the church and of cover for clergy holidays and interregnums.

### 6.2.2. Parishes in the Town

This study is not one of parish ministry and therefore in the following report of the social actions of the churches in Darlington a general picture will be given as opposed to a parish-by-parish account. It is, however, central to an understanding of the situation both in Darlington and England to recognise

the centrality of the parish system to the way in which the churches work and interact with both individuals and authorities.

While the churches co-operate with one another, each is responsible for the citizens living within its parish boundaries, so initiatives undertaken by the parishes are clearly focused on their own area. The lack of paid employees also means that the focus of the parish is often steered by the interests, enthusiasm and churchmanship of the parish priest and, to a greater or lesser extent, the churchmanship and tradition of the parish and influential members of the congregation. In order to illuminate this aspect and provide the necessary background to the interview material the ten parishes in the town are shown in table 11 and map 4 below and a brief sketch of each of the parishes follows.

Table 11. Church of England parishes in the town of Darlington<sup>71</sup>

<b>Position on map</b>	<b>Parish</b>	<b>Church(es)</b>	<b>Group Ministry affiliation</b>	<b>Location in the town</b>
1	Blackwell All Saints and Salutation	All Saints, Blackwell	Darlington Group Ministry	South West
2	Darlington St Cuthbert	St Cuthbert	Darlington Group Ministry	Town centre
3	Darlington Holy Trinity	Holy Trinity	Darlington Group Ministry	West
4	Cockerton	St Mary		West
5	Darlington St Matthew and St Luke	St Matthew		West
6	Darlington St Mark with St Paul	St Mark		North
7	Haughton-Le-Skerne	St Andrew Whinfield (church plant)		North East
8	Darlington St James	St James		North East
9	East Darlington	St John	East Darlington Team Ministry	East
10		St Herbert		
11	Darlington St Hilda and St Columba	St Columba		South

<sup>71</sup> Church of England parishes, their church buildings and geographical location in the town.



Map 4. Map of Darlington showing ward boundaries and location of Church of England parish churches

These parishes represent amongst themselves the breadth of churchmanship in the Church of England as a whole. St James' is perhaps the most easy to define, being a church aligned to the Forward in Faith movement, which rejects the ministry and authority of ordained women and is set further apart from the other churches in the town in that it is under the episcopal authority of one of the episcopal visitors, the Bishop of Beverley, rather than the diocesan bishop.<sup>72</sup> In line with most churches on this wing of the Church its liturgical practice is high church and traditional (9mc).<sup>73</sup>

St Cuthbert's is the ancient church in the town centre, although the creation of the parishes of Blackwell and Holy Trinity in the 1990s has meant that the church now basically serves the town centre, and the population

<sup>72</sup> This arrangement was one of a number of concessions made, towards those who oppose the ministry of women, at the time of the vote in the General Synod of the Church of England in 1992 to allow women to be ordained as priests. This has in practice led to a system of church organisation running parallel to the mainstream system, with clergy in such parishes opting to form their own deanery and diocesan groupings rather than participating in the forums which exist locally. For further detail see of the concessions see section 4.2.12 and Jones 2004.

<sup>73</sup> See also Parish website <http://www.stjamesthegreat.co.uk/> (23 March 2004)

resident in the parish is minute. For this reason, many worshippers are those who have chosen the church for its strong musical tradition. It is moderate Catholic/Liberal in churchmanship, but with a mixed congregation (Bm). Holy Trinity is Anglo-Catholic/Liberal with a small congregation struggling to maintain a historic church building. The size of the congregation has to some extent been influenced by the fact that the present incumbent is open and outspoken on the issue of the acceptance of homosexuals by the church and some worshippers, feeling that this issue has taken over church life, have gone elsewhere for regular worship. The third parish in the group which co-ordinates resources and services is All Saints Blackwell. Situated on the more affluent west side of the town, this mainly middle-class parish has a thriving congregation, the largest in Darlington. The vicar, who was curate at St Cuthbert's before moving to his present position, is also the area dean. In terms of churchmanship it is fairly Liberal/Evangelistic, with a slight low-church leaning worship that is 'middle of the road' in the community's own words on its website. The church has a lively and strong social network with lots of youth work much of which takes place in the new Millennium Centre which was built by the church, but is used by many groups. There is, for example, a parents and toddlers group held there every day.<sup>74</sup>

St Mark's is a modern church building with a high Anglican theological and worship style influenced by the past (female) incumbent who has converted to Roman Catholicism following recent retirement (Bm). The congregation is not numerically large, although there is a devoted core of regular worshippers. St Andrews Haughton is a small old church in an area that used to be a separate village and retains its village atmosphere although it is now officially part of the town of Darlington. The parish also contains a church plant on the Whinfield housing estate served by a priest in charge. St Andrew's has a charismatic low-church congregation, although the current rector, a biblical scholar, is taking it in a more liberal direction. The parish's statement of intent describes it as 'an Anglican church that values our open evangelical tradition, but our church seeks to include other traditions or expression of Christian faith and witness' (St Andrew's Haughton 2007). The parish is large and has the highest parish share of the parishes in Darlington (followed by St Cuthbert's) (13mc).

On the east side of Darlington the churches of St Herbert's and St John's form a team ministry mainly made up of deprived areas of the town, although the two vicars each retain responsibility for a particular church (Af). St Herbert's is the most easterly church in the town. The congregation is not large and has a middle to moderate Catholic worship style and theology. The parish is large and includes the town's industrial estate. St John's, like its partner has a moderate Catholic style. This church is the older of the two and receives the majority of requests for pastoral services from parish residents

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<sup>74</sup> <http://www.allsaintschurch-blackwell.org.uk/> (Accessed on 24 March 2004)

(AF). The locality of which this team ministry is a part also includes the churches of St Columba and All Saints' Hurworth (which is outside the town). St Columba's is moderately Anglo-Catholic. The church began as a new plant in a residential area and has maintained the approach of an outward-looking community church. A new hall has been built, a joint venture in partnership with the community association. Meetings of the joint committee are chaired by the vicar and the committee includes members of the community association committee and the PCC, a model also in use in a number of the other parishes in the town (6fc).

St Matthew's is perhaps the parish in the town with the poorest residents although, its parish priest maintains, this is not always evident statistically as ward boundaries for this area were altered in recent years, combining deprived areas with more wealthy districts and thus hiding deprivation (4mc). This church too has worked actively with the local community in recent years in setting up a community centre in the parish.

The parish of St Mary's Cockerton, which also has a moderately Catholic stance, covers the entire north west of the town. This is the largest parish in Darlington in terms of geographical area and has ca. 18,000 inhabitants. This means that a large element of the work of the vicar is the performance of weddings, funerals and baptisms. The parish contains a large housing estate which continues to be developed and there are hopes for a church plant (18mc). To this end, discussions are underway with the King's Church, a charismatic free church in Darlington, who are considering starting activity there.<sup>75</sup> The primary school in Cockerton is Church of England-controlled and the local vicar thus occupies the position of chair of governors to the school (Directgov 2008).

### 6.2.3. Ecumenical Links

Although none of the parishes in the town is part of a formal local ecumenical partnership (LEP), considerable co-operation across denominational boundaries exists both in individual parishes and in the town as a whole. The churches of the Darlington Group Ministry, alongside those churches and chapels of other denominations with premises in the town centre form the Town Centre Churches Group (Af).<sup>76</sup> This group jointly organises a number of events and services throughout the year. It also, along with other churches and chapels in Darlington is part of the larger umbrella body, Churches Together in Darlington. This includes the Roman Catholic Church, the Methodists, the United Reformed Church, the Religious Society of Friends, the Sal-

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<sup>75</sup> <http://www.kingschurchdarlington.org/> (Accessed on 30 April 2005)

<sup>76</sup> This Group includes the Anglican Churches in the Darlington Group Ministry; Northgate United Reformed Church; the Religious Society of Friends, Skinnergate; St Augustine's Roman Catholic Church; Grange Road Baptist Church; the Salvation Army, Northgate; and Bondgate Methodist Church.

vation Army, the Eastern Orthodox Church, the Traditional Anglican Communion,<sup>77</sup> the Baptists and a number of non-denominational free churches (Church in Darlington 2008). In addition to the Christian churches in the town there is also a Carmelite convent.

## 6.3. Church Actions in the Welfare Sphere

### 6.3.1. What the Parishes Do

In a recent questionnaire based study of social action by faith communities in the North East region, the Churches Regional Commission lists social action by the faith communities under a number of headings for each of the towns in the region. Their figures reveal the extent of the work, both in terms of quantity and areas covered, that the different religious groups provide. Their headings are not the same as those used in this study and their remit in terms of geographical area and coverage of faith communities is wider, but it gives a useful indication. In the Darlington area it identified 23 activities or projects focused on children, 18 on the elderly, 36 on families including parenting, 6 related to employment and 74 to community support. These figures relate only to more formalised and larger project-based activity, and the response rate was just over 50% (Smith 2004). Against this background of basic knowledge that faith communities are involved in the welfare sphere in Darlington, one aim of the mapping process in my study was to discover in more detail what the churches in Darlington do in the welfare sphere and what different forms such involvement takes. In particular the intention was to discover what the Church of England parishes organise or are involved in, but also where church activity involves co-operation with other churches, voluntary bodies, businesses or the public sector. The activities of the Church of England and other churches are collated in table 12 below and this overview is further expanded with illustrative examples of the various types of activity in the following sections.

### 6.3.2. Church-based Activities

The case study has clearly demonstrated that while the Church of England can be said to be a welfare provider the activities of the Church in this sector

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<sup>77</sup> The Traditional Anglican Communion (TAC) is an international communion of churches of traditional Anglo-Catholic theology and liturgy. The churches of the TAC chose to split from the Anglican Communion under the leadership of the Archbishop of Canterbury over issues relating to the preservation of tradition as they understand it. These include disputes over the ordination of women and liturgical revisions. The TAC is seeking unity with the Roman Catholic Church in the form of an Anglican prelature within the Roman Catholic Church. The parish in Darlington is one of 18 in England. See <http://www.thetraditionalanglicanchurch.org.uk>. (Accessed 9 February 2009).

are, as in others, predominantly parish-based and the actions of the Church as welfare provider vary considerably from parish-to-parish. It is, however, fair to say that all parishes organise activities for children and for the elderly which could be described as welfare services. For children, this is often parent-and-toddler groups, in the case of one parish a shoppers' crèche, and for the elderly both activities in the church building, such as luncheon clubs and home visits are common. In addition some churches run jumble sales, the primary purpose of which being to provide low-cost clothing to those who need it rather than to raise money for the church, and similarly in a couple of places a weekly coffee morning provides a meeting place for those who need it. The clergy also carry out what they define as welfare work, visiting parishioners in their homes, either in person or organising rotas of volunteers in the parish.

### 6.3.3. Church Interaction with the Public Sector

#### **Church Presence in the Public Sector**

The Church is present in the welfare sphere in Darlington in a number of ways and at a variety of levels. At the level of individual contact, clergy regularly visit residential homes for the elderly in their respective parishes, both to hold services and in a pastoral and counselling capacity. They also visit members of their congregations in hospital and many parishes also draw up visiting rotas to arrange visits by lay volunteers to both hospitals and residential homes for the elderly. The clergy also co-ordinate a visiting rota between themselves for the local hospice, which does not have a dedicated chaplain.

Chaplaincy is, however, one way in which the Church in Darlington is present and visible in the public sector. Parish priests in the town act, within their remit as parish priests, as chaplains to a number of institutions within their respective parishes such as the Arts Centre and local college, and the parish priest of St Cuthbert's is chaplain to the Darlington Police, whose main police station is situated in the parish.

#### **Publicly Financed Activities run by the Church**

Unlike the chaplaincy posts named above hospital chaplaincy in Darlington is, as in all other parts of the country, funded by the local Acute Care Trust and the chaplaincy staff are employed as members of staff of the hospital. The Church of England clergyman who is based at Darlington Memorial Hospital and is also the Trust senior chaplain for the area therefore represents both a church presence in the healthcare sector, but also part of the welfare services that the health system offers to those in hospital (Hospital Chaplaincy in Darlington). The chaplain's duties within this remit include providing religious services and pastoral support and listening, as well as

facilitating contact between patients and representatives of other denominations and faiths where desired, and organising teams of volunteer ward visitors.

In all parishes, the clergy are actively involved in the local primary school and often chair the boards of governors, whether they occupy this position by right (in a church school) or are elected. In total, there are five Church of England schools in the Darlington deanery; four controlled and one aided, although not all are in the town itself (Durham Diocese 2005). In fact, in most parishes in the town itself, the schools in question are not Church schools. In their capacity as governors, clergy have an important role to play, alongside other governors, in appointing both head teachers and other teaching staff and supporting the head teacher in setting both budgets and teaching plans for the school. Clergy in all parishes also regularly visit the schools to take morning assembly or assist with the teaching of religious education.

#### 6.3.4. Other Forms of Co-operation or Activity

##### **Joint Ventures between the Church, the Public Sector and other Organisations**

As well as direct interaction with the public sector as outlined above, the case study revealed that much Church involvement in the welfare sphere is not the result of unilateral church activity, but is based on collaboration with both public authorities and other organisations in civil society. Co-operation between the majority church and the social authorities can be said to occur on three levels. Firstly the Church is represented on a number of committees and boards which have an impact on welfare in the town. As noted above, the Church is one of a number of organisations represented in the Darlington Partnership and is thereby involved in strategic planning for the development of the town. The rural dean is, for example a member of the 24-person-strong Partnership Board. The majority of clergy also chair the boards of governors of their local schools and in this way play a significant role in the development and implementation of local educational policy.

Secondly the churches also make their buildings available to a wide variety of community activities for which they are not responsible, but which could not take place without the availability of the building. In a number of cases what was the church hall has been converted into a community centre with a joint board comprising members of the congregation and of the local community. These ventures were often launched on the initiative of the local church and have meant the churches handing over some of the ownership of the building in return for the opportunity to apply for community funding to improve the buildings and to enhance contact and relationships with the local community. This has in turn led to additional resources being available to the local community. In one parish, the community hall now houses a computer

suite, and co-operation with the local college means that local residents can undertake basic computer courses there. Some church buildings and community halls, run in partnership between church and local community are also used by the social authorities, not least because these buildings are often the only space available to gather groups together within the residential areas of the town. Sure Start is one such activity held regularly in one community hall, and where the location was chosen precisely because its representatives believe it to be important for the success of the project that it takes place in the community where the families live (6fc). These examples, but also visits to the various community and church halls, where the notice boards bear witness to the wide variety of community activities taking place, show that the various church premises are a valuable asset to the town.

Connected to this is the issue of co-operation at the local level, that is to say between individual church and local parish residents, rather than directly with the social authorities. The council has clearly prioritised working with local community partnerships in recent years and there are now 11 such partnerships in the most deprived wards of the town. These partnerships are a direct attempt to increase the engagement of residents in their local community and the churches play a role within these. In all cases the local parish priest sits on the committee, although the nature of the role he or she plays varies from individual to individual.

This leads on to the third level of co-operation, namely individual contacts, arguably the most important of the three levels. Interviewees from both the Church and local authority stressed the importance of personal relationships and individual contacts both within and between institutions in a town the size of Darlington. Representatives of both Church and local authorities knew people working for the corresponding body who they could contact in particular situations. However, a couple of interviewees from the local authority also noted the absence now of such contacts which they felt had been more evident a few years ago. One example of the results of individual activism on the part of clergy is First Stop. Established up in 1999 on the initiative of local clergy, it is now an independent charitable organisation, as detailed below and one of the parish priests in the town sits on its management board alongside a local councillor and others. The day-to-day running of the organisation is, however, independent of both borough council and Church and is dependent largely on external grants.

At an individual level it is also clear that the churches co-operate with the social authorities to a considerable extent. Many clergy have also been involved in contacting the social or healthcare services on behalf of parishioners and filling in forms, or accompanying vulnerable people to appointments with social or healthcare workers. Both the clergy and some representatives of the local authority identified a role for the Church, and the clergy in particular as something of an in-between point, informed so that they can help individuals reach someone who can help them within the local authorities'

systems and in the other direction as a resource among others in the voluntary sector as an organisation to which, for example, a district nurse can recommend that a lonely pensioner turn for support and companionship.

### **Co-operation between the Church and other Organisations**

In addition to these various examples of co-operation in the welfare sphere at a number of different levels, the study also revealed examples of church involvement in the welfare sphere which are characterised by co-operation between the Church and other organisations, as well as church-based welfare activity organised by other Christian churches in the town, but supported to varying degrees by the Church of England parishes. Perhaps the clearest example of the Church interacting with local business in this sphere is the initiative of one priest who runs what he calls a 'surgery' at a local supermarket once a month, where he is available for anyone who wants to drop by and talk to him. Many priests when interviewed also noted the fact that much of the social work of the Church is done by individuals in their capacity as individual Christians who are part of the church community. Many churches organise volunteers to visit patients in the local hospital, for example, and many clergy said that they often hear of informal networks for social help and support within their own parish that they have not been aware of before.

Of the churches in Darlington by far the most active in the social field is the Baptist church in the town centre, which runs extensive programmes for the homeless and those with drug addiction in the local area, including a volunteer-run cafe and soup kitchen as well as blanket/clothes handouts. In addition, the church was involved alongside the Darlington Housing Action Group in setting up the 700 Club, which runs projects in co-operation with the local authority to help homeless people back into accommodation and operates short-term shelters for both men and women (700 Club). The minister acts as chair of the committees that oversee work done by professionals and has done so since its inception in 1994, and the offices of the 700 Club and some of their work continue to be situated in church premises. Here too the offices of Darlington Nightstop are based, a project which co-ordinates the placement of homeless minors (those under 16) at the homes of volunteers for a night. The Baptist church was also involved in the launch of this project in 1993 and remains involved in its organisation.

Larger projects include First Stop, a one-stop shop set up to provide on-the-spot advice and assistance to the homeless and unemployed was set up a few years ago on the initiative of the then town centre vicar, and his successor continues to sit on the committee, while the Mothers Union (a church-affiliated women's group) collects and sorts clothing and bedding for the shelter.<sup>78</sup> There are two credit unions, cooperative financial unions owned and controlled by the members and mainly used as a way of facilitating

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<sup>78</sup> <http://www.darlingtonfirststop.org.uk/> (Accessed 24 March 2007)

small loans to the members, in the town which various churches were involved in getting off the ground in the early 1990s and which make use of churches in the town as collection points. A scheme collecting and redistributing second-hand furniture is run by and from another of the free churches in Darlington (King's furniture).<sup>79</sup> The following table gives an overview of the social action of the Christian churches in the town and where this involves interaction with other bodies.

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<sup>79</sup> <http://kingschurchdarlington.org/Furniture.html> (Accessed on 20 April 2009)

Table 12. Church social work in Darlington. Table showing the activities organised by the churches and co-operation with other bodies in the social sphere in Darlington

<p>Church activities</p>	<p><b>Church-based activities</b>          Social gatherings related to worship          Healing services          Choirs          Women's/ men's groups          Groups for children and young people          Parent-and-toddler groups          Shoppers crèche          Drop-in centre/ cafés          Lunches,          House calls/ support for bereaved/ hospital visits          Jumble sales/ thrift shops          Soup kitchen for homeless          Furniture re-use scheme</p>	
<p>Church interaction with the public sector</p>	<p><b>Church presence in the public sector</b>          Arts Centre chaplain          College chaplain          Police chaplain          Worship and visits to residents and guidance for the staff at geriatric institutions          Assemblies/ visits to schools/ priest as chair of school governors.</p>	<p><b>Publicly financed activities run by the Church</b>          Primary schools          Hospital chaplaincy</p>
<p>Other forms of co-operation/ activity</p>	<p><b>Co-operation between the Church and other organisations</b>          Priest available for consultation/ chat at local supermarket          Use of church buildings by community groups/ unformed organisations          Financial contributions from the churches to welfare projects/ organisations          Relationships between personnel in the parish and other actors          Free use of local authority equipment for, e.g. carols in town square</p>	<p><b>Joint ventures between the churches, the public sector and other organisations</b>          Emergency-counselling          Town partnership/ local community partnerships          Drop-in centre for homeless          Housing schemes for homeless          Joint church/ community halls</p>

### 6.3.5. Welfare Projects and Organisations in the Town with a Christian Ethos, Organisation or Background

In addition to the work done by the churches, there are several organisations in the town that have a Christian ethos, organisation or background, and which influences the work to a greater or lesser extent. First Stop for example, mentioned above, is an independent registered charity which is run completely independently of the churches, although it was set up on the initiative of a churchman. Neither is this the only organisation working with the homeless in Darlington with such connections. The Salvation Army runs a hostel in Darlington providing accommodation and support for up to 36 men at any one time. This organisation is staffed by professionals and funded by the Salvation Army centrally and project funding, so it is in no way directly dependent on the local corps for either funding or human resources, but the Christian ethos in general and of the Salvation Army in particular is clearly built into the way the centre is run, from ethical guidelines for staff to daily services in the chapel and the opportunity for residents to have contact with the chaplain (the local Salvation Army Officer) on a regular basis. The manager co-operates both with local churches and other public and voluntary sector-organisations.

In addition to the healthcare services in the town provided by local authorities, there is also a hospice providing palliative care for the terminally ill. The hospice was originally able to get off the ground through a donation from the Carmelite convent in Darlington, which funded the first building and for this reason it is named after the convent's patron saint, St Teresa. The hospice is run and staffed by professionals and is not a church organisation, although local ministers from all denominations are welcome and organise a regular visiting rota. Although medical and nursing staff at the hospice are professionals, many tasks are undertaken by volunteers from administration, fundraising and cleaning, to sitting with patients.

Finally it is important to mention one organisation with both a Christian ethos and connections with the churches in Darlington, the town mission. It was formed in 1838 as an ecumenical body, funded by donations from members of a number of denominations within the town. Its aim was and is to help the poor, the sick and the lonely. At one point it employed as many as five salaried town missionaries though at present there is only one, who is assisted by a small number of volunteers. The Mission does not seek or receive grants and no office is run, so that the salary of the Missioner, expenses of the volunteers and charitable giving to others are financed from the original bequests, along with some gifts. The mission aims to visit all who contact them regardless of age, gender, race or religious convictions and outline what they can offer. There are about 100 people receiving the services of the mission, but needs vary greatly so while some receive regular visits others are more infrequent. Emphasis is put on providing a listening

ear, though they will pray with people if requested. The mission also organises worship services in some residential homes, assists with worship in the local hospital, arranges group outings and will accompany individuals to the hospital or doctor. The mission co-operates with the Social Services, other churches and chapels in town and with other caring organisations.

## 6.4. Church Voice in the Welfare Sphere

### 6.4.1. Engaging in the Political Debate

During the period in which fieldwork was undertaken in Darlington, no examples could be found of the local clergy speaking out on social or welfare issues in the local media. When interviewed, clergy of the town also confirmed this impression, with only a couple being able to recall an incident over the past five years where they had spoken out in a public forum on such issues or taken part in an event such as a protest march. The Church representatives interviewed chose rather to stress examples of committee work and criticism from within the structures as part of partnership with secular authorities as well as informal contacts (discussion of which is expanded below) as the most appropriate way of engaging in the political debate and being the social voice of the Church at the local level.

There was however one exception to this lack of active political engagement on the part of local church representatives. Prior to the last local election the churches in the town centre jointly organised a local hustings meeting and prepared questions for the candidates on a series of important issues. The discussion was then chaired by one of the local clergy. This process, co-ordinated by the Churches Together in Darlington was then repeated in advance of the General Election May 5<sup>th</sup> 2005 (Churches Together in Darlington 2005; Northern Echo 2005).

The general election in Britain is a particularly interesting forum as regards the church and politics, as it combines both local and national concern and involvement. The candidates are elected to parliament as representatives of particular political parties, but they are also elected to serve a particular geographical area. The Labour party have held the Darlington constituency seat since 1992, but prior to that there is a history of both Conservative and Labour winning in the area and therefore initiatives which awaken interest in and reflection over the issues in the election are not unimportant to the national political scene. Of particular interest to this study is that the Labour MP, Alan Milburn, sat in the Government as Secretary of State for Health (1999- 2003) (Alan Milburn 2009).

The group set up a website with the aim 'not to promote any particular party or national political agenda but instead to allow us all to reflect upon how we may best work together towards the common good in our town'

(Churches Together in Darlington 2005). A document entitled *Grounding the Common Good: A challenge to the prospective parliamentary candidates of Darlington on the eve of the 2005 General Election* was then prepared setting out fundamental principles, areas where Christian concerns lie and a number of questions to the candidates (Churches Together in Darlington 2005). This document, the theological reflection behind both it and the whole process and the answers of the candidates were subsequently published on the website. While the aim was to stimulate debate rather than take any one political line, it nonetheless takes a clear and strong line on a number of issues. The project was publicly launched in the Marketplace in the town with the candidates present and a public meeting was held at one of the local colleges, formed as a *Question Time* for the candidates.

#### 6.4.2. Individual Action and Informal Influence

Members of local churches, both clergy and laity, have been active in the anti-war campaign since before the outbreak of the 2003 Iraq war and have taken part in manifestations in the town.

In addition interviews revealed that many clergy felt, and this was backed up by council members and others with influence in the local community, that they were able to influence decisions and question policy by taking up issues with individuals both formally and informally. One clergyman represents the churches in Darlington on the board of the Darlington Partnership and clergy interviewed gave examples of when they felt that they had been able to make the voice of the church heard by contacting individuals on the council who they knew were sympathetic, by keeping up relations with local councillors (e.g. meeting for a drink occasionally) and in one case by persisting in forging relations with a hostile member of a community hall committee.

### 6.5. Gender Issues in the Church

The local churches have no common gender equality strategy and neither is there a common course of action/line in this area. The points of view available are therefore often those of the individual clergymen and women working in the parishes and here a variety of theological positions are represented, which in turn influence the situation in the parish concerned. Given that the clergy are often the only paid employees in the church (One or two parishes have curates as well as the parish priest and one parish recently employed a paid lay worker whose salary was covered by external project funding. This has now come to a close.) they therefore influence considerably the work that is done by the parish, the roles taken on by volunteers (through delegation and encouragement) and also the leadership they enact in both preach-

ing, chairing PCCs and by personal example. One parish in the town does not recognise the ministry of ordained women and here in particular a theology which distinguishes between male and female roles both in church and in life in general is evident.

As there is no statistical documentation of volunteers and therefore no gender statistics, equally there is no quantitative evidence of the participation of men and women in decision-making processes or their use of the services of the churches. Commentary in this section relies therefore almost exclusively on information from interviews.

There are more women than men involved in the social work of the churches, but in addition the men who do get involved concentrate on very specific tasks. As with national figures for unpaid carers there is a clear gender divide in the types of work that male and female volunteers do within the context of church welfare activity. Generally speaking there are more women than men involved in the social work of the parishes, though many of the clergy feel that this is representative of the gender demography of their congregations. Those men that do get involved however tend to take on practical tasks connected to care of buildings or churchyards, providing a taxi service to and from lunch clubs and other events and/or fundraising. Significantly more women are involved in work with children and visiting of the elderly or bereaved. An example of this can be taken from an interview with a parish priest in the town:

I think women have always been greater in numbers, not only numerically in the congregation, but also in the participation in the life of the church. We have a good stalwart group of men, but they are in the minority still and many of the men act as taxi drivers for the women [...] the men are often in the background actually. We have though a very good group of men who look after the church building. It does tend to be the men who do the jobs around. Putting new locks on doors and making sure windows are mended and graffiti removed and all the rest. So in fact we have got a good group of men involved in that way, but women tend to be still [...] probably are involved more actively in the organisations of the church and in quite a lot of the workings, yes. (19 mc)

In addition to this division of labour at a practical level there is the issue of the leadership of the parish. In Darlington only two of the parish priests are women and as the priests are, with few exceptions, the only employees of the parishes they naturally have a leadership role.

The question of who uses the services of the churches also has a gender dimension. As one priest comments, the Church has a history of being better at domestic ministry and therefore of ministering to women:

Because the church is in the domestic environment, this is almost entirely a residential area, people go out of [the area] to work, so because this is where we live and minister the people who are here most of the time is mums and

children and the elderly and that I suppose has been the problem of the Church since the Industrial Revolution, [...] I mean it is changing now, we have always been better at domestic ministry than workplace ministry and the opportunities to meet with people who are working are limited and the opportunities for them to worship are limited because of working patterns now, so for a whole variety of reasons there is more for women than men, I think. (8 mc)

So women use many of the services that the churches provide because they are those who are responsible for the care of children and are at home during the day. Interestingly most of those interviewed refer to their parent-and-toddler groups as ‘mums and toddlers’, in the words of one ‘We did have one man come once’!

Lunch clubs and other groups targeting the elderly are, it seems, attended by significantly more women than men. This is no doubt, as many interviewees point out, partly because there are more elderly women than elderly men. However this is not the whole picture and it seems that church services of this sort appeal more to women than men, or at least that women choose to go along to a far greater extent. Several interviewees from both Church and local authority argue that, as is the case in healthcare, men are less likely to go looking for help and support. And/or if they do take the initiative they are less likely than their female contemporaries to turn to the church. This raises interesting questions as to what extent the absence of men in these groups is connected to the fact that these are church-run groups. Is it the format or the connection to the church that is attractive to elderly women and if it is the case, as the statistical projections suggest, that there will be more single elderly men around in the future, how will the churches respond to this different need?

In terms of the churches’ services for the poor, the pattern is less clear, though this may be because of the hidden nature of much female poverty, for example, provision for the homeless in the town is used more by men than by women, not least because men are more likely to be on the streets than women. As a public authority representative from Darlington put it: ‘Arguably females are underrepresented in the homeless figures because females tend to be roofless rather than homeless, males tend to be homeless rather than roofless’ (16 m l/el).

Women, in other words, are more likely to be spending nights at relatives, friends, or in bed and breakfasts than sleeping rough. This means that they are not seen in the same way, but they are nevertheless as vulnerable. Similarly it also appears that in households with limited income, in line with the national picture, it is the women who take responsibility for children and the family. An indication of this gendered relation to poverty and the ways in which welfare services provided by the churches connect with this can be seen in the thrift shop that is run by one of the churches mentioned briefly above. This monthly event where clothes and toys are sold is run not as a

fundraising event, but in order to provide cheap second-hand goods for residents of a local estate. From the church's point of view the event is a welfare service to the local community which provides both a point of contact with the local church and much needed assistance that is not seen as 'handouts' by those who make use of it. It is open to anyone, but it is the women from the families on the estate who queue down the road on a regular basis (9fc).

## 6.7. A Full Picture of Welfare in Darlington?

### 6.7.1. Where the Map Stops Short

The picture presented here gives an insight into the welfare situation in a medium-sized town in the North East of England at the beginning of the twenty-first century and the role of the churches within this general picture. In this respect it provides a detailed image that has not been collated before either for Darlington or any other town in England. This said, however, the picture is by no means exhaustive. In particular it must be noted that the focus on the role of the Church has meant that the mapping process centred around this. To undertake a complete and exhaustive study of all welfare services available in Darlington and their efficacy lay outside the scope of this study. The account given, which sketches the situation in Darlington in broad strokes and gives an indication of the main actors involved in welfare, serves the purpose of indicating the context in which the actions of the churches are to be understood and interpreted. This is sufficient for the current purpose, but given increased time and resources it would be interesting to map in detail the welfare provision available to citizens in Darlington through the public authorities as well as through other actors in civil society. It would also be interesting to conduct a full study of the situation in Darlington as portrayed in the media. Here only a cursory glance in this direction has been possible as a few indications of issues that have surfaced in the local news media have been given. But a fuller study, which would necessarily include a fuller discussion of the problems and possibilities of media accounts as source material would add another dimension to the case study as a whole.

In addition it is relevant to note one further limitation of this section of the study. While based on the collation of a broad range of different material from a wide range of sources there was no opportunity to carry out a more ethnographic study of welfare provision in the town. Given additional time and resources, a fuller picture of the situation could perhaps have been achieved through visits to a more comprehensive range of welfare services and participant observation at activities run both by churches, local authority and other voluntary bodies.

Finally it must be observed that the picture both of welfare services in general and the role of the Church in particular given above is the result of the fact that methods used to gather information focused on projects and activities. The material from the interviews conducted, which are described in more detail in the following chapters gives some indication of the role played by personal relationships in individuals' welfare and the role of the Church, but this is a relatively unexplored aspect of the presentation as the material addressing this is limited. Furthermore, as several interviews with the clergy indicate, a not inconsiderable amount of welfare activity is carried out by members of the local churches on an informal basis. Visits to fellow church members in hospital or shopping for elderly neighbours are examples of such activities carried out at the individual level, which comprise a form of welfare activity, but the extent of which cannot be assessed without a detailed supplementary interview study or survey. Had it been possible to spend more time in the field a survey of the regular churchgoers and residents in one of the parishes in Darlington would have been an excellent complement to the more general mapping process to add the element of informal welfare provision to the general picture.

## 6.8. Summary

### **Darlington and the National Picture**

The presentation above has shown that while no town can be a microcosm of the national situation, the welfare issues and systems of service provision visible in Darlington are akin to those at national level and the same can be said for the general situation for the Church of England in the town. This means that while this study does not intend to use the case study of Darlington to draw generalisations that can be said to be applicable to the whole country in a way that a quantitative study might aim to do, it is credible to claim that the case study of Darlington can provide a picture of the role of the Church in welfare in a medium-sized town in England and furthermore that this can provide the basis for theoretical explorations of the place of institutional religion in late modern society. Seen in this light the case study is of interest not only to those who live and work in Darlington, or indeed to anyone with an interest in the role of churches, faith communities and the Church of England in particular in welfare at local level in England, but also to a wider debate on the continued role of religious institutions within contemporary society.

This study indicates that, as in the rest of England, the Church of England in Darlington has a comprehensive geographical presence and a parish system where individual parishes assume responsibility for all who live within the boundaries. A minority of these individuals choose to attend the worship

services offered by the churches and although larger numbers attend occasional offices on an irregular basis it cannot be argued that large numbers of the population of Darlington regularly seek contact with institutionalised religion in that form. The churches however continue to take on a broader role in society than worship attendance figures would imply and evidence for this can be found not least in the provision of welfare services through the parishes and the adoption of a social critical role by the parish priests.

The results of the mapping process detailed above have been able to show that although it is not an integral part of the systems of basic welfare provision, the Church does provide welfare services and act as a voice in the public sphere around such issues at a local level. It does so in co-operation with both local authorities and other welfare organisations within the framework of the Darlington Partnership, as well as in other more informal networks. In this respect it has also been demonstrated that this welfare role played by the Church is, to a large extent, as part of the voluntary and community sector where the churches work alongside and in co-operation with other organisations, including the public sector. In this way the mapping process has demonstrated a continued role for the Church in the public sphere in Darlington as part of civil society, but still distinct from other organisations within civil society.

### **Institutional Religion in Darlington between Individual and Society**

The mapping process has also shown that there are elements of the welfare role of the Church that are not immediately obvious. Two examples of this are of particular interest. Firstly, the importance of the influence of individual relationships between representatives of the churches and other key figures in the town in the context of welfare decisions at both town and individual level. Secondly, the Church's physical presence in all parts of the town and the knowledge of the immediate local community that this gives to its representatives as well as the symbolic and practical role of its buildings.

These indications of the importance both of individual relationships and churches as symbolic structures which have appeared in the case study so far mean that the churches' involvement in welfare issues has to be evaluated, not simply in terms of the projects and activities that the Church organises or funds, but also at a more individual level. A significant component of the Church's welfare provision at local level has been shown to be informal support offered to those who turn to the churches for assistance and the relationships which are built up in contacts between the churches and individuals, which can in themselves in terms of a broad definition of welfare be seen as enhancing the welfare of the people concerned. Here the survey of the role of the Church in Darlington against the background of the local context of welfare provision has shown that the churches' involvement in the welfare sphere provides a variety of opportunities for individuals in Darlington, who

are not active worshippers, to come into contact with the churches and for the Church to sustain a distinct role in the public sphere.

In relation to the overarching aim of this study to explore the role of institutional religion in contemporary western Europe between individual and society though the use of an in-depth empirical study these findings are important. They are important because they provide a examples of the Church as an institution balancing between the broader societal structures and individuals' needs and expectations.

What this mapping process has not been able to show, however, is how the role which the Church has taken in the welfare sphere in Darlington is perceived, both by those who represent it and by others in the town. The following chapter, which explores the perceptions and expectations of the Church and its role in welfare, is therefore an attempt, with a starting point in this picture now available of the actions of the church in the welfare sphere, to further explore the role of the Church of England in contemporary society. Together these two sections of the case study provide new knowledge of the situation for the Church at local level in England. It is however a picture which points beyond the confines of national and confessional boundaries. The findings of the case study in Darlington can be seen as one example of the role that can played by institutional religion between individual and society today and thus point towards broader trends in social and religious developments in western Europe as a whole.

# 7. Perceptions and Expectations of the Church of England in the Welfare Sphere

## 7.1. Introduction

Against the background of the previous chapters, which detail the situation in Darlington in general and the role of the churches in particular, the following chapter turns its attention to the expectations and perceptions of the Church within the welfare sphere at local level. As Chapter 5 detailed, the interviews conducted for this study encompassed individuals who represent the Church, local authorities, other churches and voluntary bodies as well as focus groups comprising members of the general public. Here material from the interviews will be presented in three distinct sections. First, material from the interviews with representatives of the Church, second, material from the interviews with representatives of the local authorities and third, material from the interviews with representatives of voluntary sector organisations and focus groups representing the local population. In each section a number of themes are explored and under each heading an outline is given of the views of the interviewees in that group. This presentation strives to provide a picture representing both the breadth and consensus of the responses, where they exist, the aim being to indicate perceptions and expectations evident in the responses of the members of each of the groups without claiming a universal or proportional representation that would provide a basis for broad generalisation.

## 7.2. Perceptions and Expectations from the Church: Views held by Representatives of the Church of England

### 7.2.1. Welfare

Generally speaking, the clergy interviewed in Darlington choose to define welfare in very broad terms. Several use the term *spiritual welfare*, which they regard as a fundamental component of the umbrella term together with physical and material concerns. Others use the phrases *wholeness* and *holisticness* in much the same way. This focus on wholeness and wellbeing is

connected for many to an understanding of welfare as related to the wellbeing not just of individuals, but also of whole communities of people. 'It is an underlying feeling of working for the common good, of finding what is it that makes the heart of a community – not just those who are ill, disabled whatever, but the nature of a wholeness and holisticness' (17mc). It is in other words seen as implying the overall wellbeing of both individuals and communities, encompassing physical, mental and spiritual wellbeing. For some, it is a word which evokes the idea of the 'care of people' (28mc), 'caring at different levels for social needs' (6fc), while others refer to the 'social, political, governmental' system of a safety net (8mc). It is not insignificant that mention was also made of the fact that the word can have negative connotations, not least for some older people. In the words of one interviewee:

If you had asked my grandparents what welfare was, they would probably have said the dole and means-testing and stuff, very, very bad word to use in those days, very bad word. To be on the welfare meant poverty, so it has changed very much. (4mc)

For some older people welfare can, in other words be a word associated not only with poverty, but also with the stigma attached to being forced to seek help.

### 7.2.2. Functioning of the Local Welfare System

There was a general consensus amongst those interviewed that the welfare system functions fairly well in Darlington, although there was disagreement as to whether it is currently better or worse than it was a few years ago. Most indicated that their comments are not the result of comprehensive knowledge of the system but based on personal experience of healthcare services, or experiences of parishioners' families. In relation to this, several noted that 'isolated incidences I think [...] can prove it both ways. There are certain instances that I think show that there are gaps in the system. But I have seen other people that have been very well supported by welfare' (28mc). This mixed picture of welfare is connected by many to an interpretation of the system as unnecessarily complex and bureaucratic: 'The feeling of a bureaucratic system that has become more complicated than it should,' (13mc) and 'designed by those who probably won't use most of it and therefore is not user-friendly for most of the groups in society' (18mc). As the system has got more complicated, therefore, 'people have in one sense more freedom and greater choice and in another sense just a sense of bafflement and a lack of direction' (19mc), coupled with a lack of understanding as to how to 'work the system' (25mc). One further common thread in the statements is an observation that the underlying philosophy and structure of the system is adequate, but that the system is stretched and that resources do not always

exist on the ground. 'There is provision for most people in most situations. I think the concern is with the resources that are made available to fulfil the philosophy [...] and actually make the provision on the ground' (15mc). Or, put another way, the system is now 'much more to do with crisis than it is to do with ongoing care' (17mc). This also ties in with the expectations that the interviewees have of the public sector; they expect those providing services in the welfare sector to do 'as much as they can for people in need' with the resources available (15mc). But being aware that these resources are limited, acknowledge that this will never meet need in full and that pragmatism is required. 'I think that the best that we can do is find a mid-point where people's needs are met, but the constraints of the system are also recognised' (4mc).

### 7.2.3. Role of the Church

All the clergy interviewed responded in the affirmative to the question: Does the Church have a role to play in the welfare and the wellbeing of people? Their answers in terms of what this role is are, however, diverse and complex, and while there are a number of common factors, to produce a summary of the answers requires a level of analysis which is most appropriate in the later sections of this thesis. I will therefore introduce a discussion here, which will be developed later on.

Opinions amongst the clergy as to what the role of the Church is in the welfare and wellbeing of people can be divided into three ideal types, although some individuals cross the boundaries of two of these types. The most easily defined is what I have chosen to call the *spiritual*. Those who fit within this category stress the primary role of the Church to be a provider of spiritual support and nurture. The role of the church, they say, 'is primarily on the spiritual side' (6fc). The local church's task is to lead the Christian community in worship and to assist individuals in building up their relationship to God, as from this relationship flows social concern. 'In the public sector, the charitable sector, the primary role of the church is to share with people the good news about Jesus and that in a sense is a primary contribution we have to make to welfare' (8mc). Individual Christians can, in other words, be inspired and encouraged to work in the community, and the local church can both encourage, and in some ways act as co-ordinator in, for example, organising volunteers to visit in local hospitals. A typical response from a clergyperson in this category is the comment that a vicar is not a social worker without training and that the expertise of the church lie in other areas. One respondent illustrates this type well:

I think actually if you put the Good News first, you get the social involvement as well ... In a sense yes we could devote a lot of time and energy to social things, but actually if we concentrate on growing and gathering more

people into the one community with the one sense of purpose, then actually we can do more for the community, as the church becomes bigger and has a bigger influence on the society around it. [...] So in a sense the bums on pews thing is actually part of the church's social involvement, because the more bums you have got, the more things you can actually do and the more things you can organise. (8mc)

The respondents of the second type, *community voice*, emphasise the presence of the church in the local community, and to some extent nationally as well. 'The main role of the church is to lead the people of God in the worship of God, but the social dimension is very important. Whenever we see an idyllic English village, it is all there, the church is providing for social needs' (9mc). The fact that the Church has a parish system and that consequently 'every square inch of the country is in a parish somewhere' (15mc), is seen as important as the Church then becomes a body with responsibility for representing the vulnerable in society which is present in local communities in a way that other organisations are not. It is, one clergyman notes, 'in every part of the country and we are still living in these communities' (9mc). As a priest in the Church of England, he continues: 'We have always had to live in the place where we work and that, I think, has been one of the great strengths of the Church of England, being like salt in a community, leavening it giving another perspective and always being there for people' (9mc).

At a local level this can come to expression in the form of campaigning activities, either at collective or individual level, with the Church and its representatives raising their voices and being active in ensuring that no one is neglected. 'One of my roles as a parish priest', one clergyman commented, 'is to make the town hall know that I know that it is still there' (4mc). Here, the focus is on speaking out and the church as 'prophetic conscience, that it can say there are communities being left out' (17mc). There is, however, also a feeling that the church cannot leave the provision of practical care to others. The church, it is argued here, has a responsibility to show society how it should behave, to act as an example in the creation of a caring society. As one priest commented:

We can't go back to the nineteenth century, where the Church provided much of this, but if the Church dropped out I think that the motivation, I think there will be something lost. If we just sit back and say we will leave a lot of these things to other people who are paid to do it and all the rest of it, I think we will encourage a culture of leaving it to others. (13mc)

The third type can be referred to as *pragmatic provision*. Those respondents who fit in here speak of outreach into the community to improve the quality of life of people as a central part of the role of the church. 'We have got the pastoral welfare of people at heart, but I think beyond that the churches are waking up to the fact that there is a great deal that can be done with our re-

sources to reach into community' (4mc). There is, however, a clearly voiced caution setting the boundaries for practical provision by the churches. While the 'Church should be involved everywhere and trying to affirm what is good in everything and challenge what is not good,' it also needs to be 'honest about our limits and how much help we can really offer and not pretend to be God Almighty to everybody. We aren't. We are just part of his means of helping others' (13mc).

Some speak of the need to 'work with other partners in the community' (15mc), while others emphasise the need for provision to be tailored to the needs of the people in the area as well as the resources of that particular church. In terms of the Church speaking out on social issues, there is similar concern that the Church and its representatives need to know their limits and refrain from commenting on areas on which they have little knowledge.

#### 7.2.4. Church and Social Work

The general opinion is that the Church can and should carry out practical social work, but that how this is done depends on a number of factors. The time when the Church was responsible for overarching welfare provision has long gone, but this does not mean that the Church does not have a role to play in this field. Respondents were quick to stress that practical social work done by churches or church-based organisations is best done at a local level, where consideration can be paid to local context and needs, but also the abilities and resources of the church concerned. This caution is not least because of an awareness of increasing legislation. Some feel that there could in theory be a role for the church in specialised care, employing trained professionals, but that whether this is appropriate would depend on the situation, and no one feels such work to be appropriate for their church today. In the words of one parish priest: 'I am not saying we couldn't and I am not saying we shouldn't. All I am saying is that at this point in time in my parish it would be a bridge too far' (4mc).

There is some agreement that the churches are suited to making the kinds of contributions that are often connected with it providing care and support at an individual level (home visits, lunch clubs etc.). There is also a feeling that this is appropriate, as the workforce that the local church has at its disposal is largely made up of community-spirited volunteers who do not have the training or time for more specialised work. This does not mean that people do not offer their particular talents and skills to the church, but rather that programmes such as drug-addiction programmes require commitment and professional training above and beyond that which most church volunteers can provide. As one respondent phrased it, what is important is 'a careful conversation between the energies of the people that have got something to offer and the skills they have got to offer and actually what they can realistically achieve' (13mc).

There is also a feeling for some that the Church can continue doing what it has historically done, namely setting up projects which respond to direct needs. In this perspective the ‘church in some ways is a voluntary organisation, so people see a need and you know are motivated to meet that [...] there will always be a role for that and obviously we shouldn’t have, it seems to me, such a prescriptive state organisation that would prevent the Church or any other organisation responding to need’ (15mc). Here the ‘historic role of the Church’, which one cleric argues, ‘in some ways has been to draw out weaknesses and to try and find, to lead society into caring ways’ (18mc), is claimed as a precedent, and the Church’s work with the urban poor in the nineteenth century is held up in particular as a useful model. Where the Church ‘went in and founded those things that weren’t necessarily Church of England things, but became associated with because the Church of England had somehow promoted them and set them off and let them run by themselves [...] there is a lot that we could do again’(17mc). The Church, in other words, is seen as having a role where there are gaps in current provision. As one clergywoman asserted, ‘as long as people are doing it better than we could do it I would always say it is no good starting something [...] But that is not to say that we shouldn’t perhaps do other things that aren’t being covered in our area’ (6fc). Church actions in such circumstances are seen therefore not as permanent solutions, but as projects started with the hope and aim that they will later be taken on by others. This attitude is often connected to a strong sense that in responding to perceived needs at local level ‘no longer would we [the Church] be working I would have thought, in isolation, we will have to work with other partners in the community’ (19mc). Similarly what the Church has to offer is seen as being complementary to that which other organisations provide at a number of levels. One clergyman makes the connection here between Church and health service, arguing that while there is no longer a role for the Church in dispensing medicines as in medieval times, he sees ‘the church’s ministry of healing as complementary to the professional doctors and clinical practitioners’ (19mc). So by extension, those individuals who both work in the medical or caring professions and are churchgoers, ‘work as Christians and the two go hand-in-hand in that sense’ (19mc).

### 7.2.5. Church and the Public Debate

That the Church should contribute to the public debate on welfare issues was common to all of the respondents; interviewees said more or less explicitly that the Church must always be involved in politics, in so far as this means speaking out on the issues of the day, although this does not mean taking a party political line. The Church’s role is to speak out on behalf of the poor and vulnerable, to bring Christian values to the debate, to act as a social conscience for the nation and to challenge discrepancies in public policy. This

role is one that is seen to be one for all churches and faith communities, but its representatives see a particular role for the established church in this respect. 'The Church of England as the established church I think has an overarching responsibility to look for the care of everybody and it is largely a prophetic role that it has lost and I think that with Rowan Williams we have got to discover it again' (17mc). This role is also seen as being largely, but not solely, relevant to the Church at national level, in contrast to social action, which is seen primarily as a role for the Church at local level. 'Nationally you could have a voice on major issues of concern that impinge on the welfare of people and I think locally we can deal with the issues that impinge on our areas' (4mc).

Many choose to emphasise what they interpret as a clear theological justification for such action. The notion of challenging government at both local and national level is a common motif in responses, although there are different ways of doing this at different levels. The Church is seen as being an independent voice, but still with a connection to and influence on power structures which it should use on behalf of others, whether this be in public confrontation or in working more quietly in, as one respondent put it, the 'kind of traditional Church of England way of doing it, behind the scenes' (13mc).

This notion of acting as a critical voice, but in a quiet way, on committees or as chair of the board of governors at the local school, for example, was an element present in the comments of a number of the interviewees. Here, clergy feel that they are often in a position to speak out on welfare or justice issues at a local level, as they can speak 'without fear or favour' (9mc). In addition, when asked directly none of the Church of England clergy reported having spoken to the local media or in open public forums on welfare matters over the five-year period preceding the study, and there is no evidence of such activity in the local newspapers during the period in which the study was conducted. So a common theme is that while both clergy and laity, not least informed professionals who can bring a Christian viewpoint to their working environment, have a role to play at local level, few seemed to have put this into practice in terms of making public statements. In this regard more emphasis is placed on the importance of the national level and the role of the bishops and in particular those who sit in the House of Lords. One priest goes as far as to say that 'I do feel that perhaps at national level [...] that that is what we have bishops for I regret that they don't speak out more' (4mc). Nor is he alone in articulating a feeling that the bishops have a natural platform which parish priests do not have and should perhaps speak out more than they currently do. Such comments were often connected with a feeling that they as individual priests cannot make much difference through speaking out, as little attention is paid to the Church in today's society. This feeling was, however, not universal.

Interestingly, against the background conviction that the Church should speak out, many of the clergy also expressed concern over the Church's ability to speak out and be heard. The Church, it was felt, has credibility problems, both as a result of scandals and the fact that 'the Church in general seems to have got much more interested in the fluff in its own navel and its endless arguments about women priests and gay priests and sex and all the rest of it' (17mc). This, it is felt, has led to the Church being seen as inward-looking and out of touch with society, and also shows that the Church has 'lost the sight of what it really was established for, so that everyone could feel that they had a home and someone who could act as advocate on their behalf' (17mc). The Church needs to address this if it is to be heard, it was felt, and it also needs to speak with a united voice to a greater extent than it manages to do today. Many feel that internal disagreement damages the Church's ability to speak out in a credible manner, as do examples of representatives of the Church speaking on issues without being properly informed. The call for a united voice for the Church is therefore connected with a call for better internal communication. As one clergyman put it, 'I think the fact that there are still clergy in the House of Lords is an important thing [...] and if information from grassroots can get to some of those who represent some of those views in places like that I think that would be great' (13mc).

#### 7.2.6. Change over the Past Ten Years

For many, ten years is too short a period in which to be able to identify a change in the Church's role in society. They refer instead to a more gradual change over a longer period. The Church is perceived as being more 'congregational', that is to say following more of an associational model, than in the past and those congregations in turn are seen to be both smaller and older. The Church has diminished financial, and therefore also human, resources, and this is seen to have an impact on the parish church's ability to play a welfare role in the local community. 'It seems to me', one clergyman comments, 'that with fewer clergy there is more emphasis on the church as a gathered congregation, so putting on a good show on Sunday becomes more and more important' (25mc). Likewise, 'looking after individual church members becomes more important because they pay the bills, so there is less opportunity to kind of exercise that sort of wider pastoral concern' (25mc). So, 'there is a real tension now between servicing the needs of the worshipping community and seeing to the wellbeing of the wider parish' (25mc).

These changes are also connected to a sense that the Church has lost the influence and credibility that it once had and is now seen as somewhat of an irrelevance. It is still used by many for baptisms, marriages and funerals, but while some see this as positive, others note a decline even in the use of the

parish church for these events and argue that the Church is seen ‘as a last resort’ in the eyes of many (6fc).

There is a perception that the Church is seen by society at large as a preserver of historic monuments and buildings in particular, whereas the Church itself sees itself as having a larger role. As one priest puts it:

Aspects of society would like the Church to become guardians of heritage and, you know “look after your buildings and keep your nose out” and we have to just keep reminding people that churches are about people not buildings and God is not going to keep his nose out and neither are we. (8mc)

The more optimistic prefer to say that although the Church may no longer be central to people’s decision-making, it retains a role here too, while others see in the same patterns a situation where ‘one of the Church’s roles has been usurped by the media. The media is the social conscience of the country’ (4mc). This attitude is connected to a sense that the media in general has a negative attitude to the Church and deliberately portrays it in a bad light and a feeling that ‘whenever a bishop or a significant church leader is interviewed on television or radio the attitude of the interviewer is hostile’ (13mc). This hostility to the Church, it is felt, makes it hard for the Church to be taken seriously and to have a voice for people who are disenfranchised (13mc). Politicians may still wish to see the Church as a social conscience, but mainly as one which provides the moral justification for the economic policies it has decided upon. There is, however, acknowledgement amongst the respondents that expectations from the wider society that the Church should function as a moral voice for the nation can be a double-edged sword:

A lot of people want us to be the conscience of the nation and to be promoting certain values, but there are double standards on that because obviously if we promote everything we would just be clay pigeons to shoot out of the sky for people who we would actually be wanting to help. (13mc)

In relation to this, several emphasise the positive aspects of the fact that the Church itself has moved on in a number of questions, such as the remarriage of divorcees and is more in tune with society here than it was a few years ago. The fact that the evangelical wing of the Church ‘in the last twenty or thirty years has realised that there is a social aspect to the Gospel as well as the aspect of bringing people into a relationship with God’ (8mc), and has therefore turned its focus more towards social engagement is mentioned, as is a sense that in some respects the Church has become more confident in speaking out, at least in areas where individual bishops have particular expertise.

Several wish to stress that there can be a difference between how the Church is portrayed at national and local level. The Church may have lost influence at national level, they claim, but locally it has been possible to

build up a good reputation built on personal contacts and commitment to the local community and that 'our willingness to really engage with people's lives at points where they need us I think enhances our reputation' (13mc).

Finally, two comments are of particular interest from a theological perspective. Two respondents use the term 'managing decline', but with radically different opinions grounded in different theologies. The first argues that the Church focuses too much on a model of 'managing decline rather than of excitement at the possibility of this Gospel meaning change for the good of all' (9mc). The second argues rather that the Church spends too much time trying to talk things up and pretending that the Church has not shrunk when it should be engaged in managing decline as he says: 'There is perfectly good theology that you can go to in terms of decline and maybe you can think about death in one part and new life in another' (25mc).

### 7.2.7. Desire for Change in the Role of the Church

The wish list for changes to the Church's current role in society is long, but contains several common elements. A number of respondents were quick to point out that one change that they do not want to see is disestablishment. In the words of one respondent:

I think there is a strength in us being the Church of England and that we should make use of that in a sense and not lose what is perhaps one of our greatest strengths: the fact that every blade of grass is in somebody's parish, the fact that every person belongs somewhere if they want to take advantage of that. (6fc)

Respondents feel that the parochial system 'is gently being undermined by the shortage in clergy and money and of course the amalgamation of parishes' (9mc). Moves away from the parochial system to one of working in localities are seen as negative and there is a clear wish to be able to continue working with the parish model and a hope that this can be strengthened. At the same time, an awareness that society has changed and the resources of the Church have declined, means that many clergy, in saying what they would like to change or not change, note that if this is not what society wants then it may not be possible for the Church to retain this role much longer. As one respondent phrased the issue: 'If society said we don't want the established church any more then we would have to accept that'. However, he continues, 'that doesn't stop us trying to be church or offer the Church, what the Church has got to offer to all the people of the area or of the nation' (13mc). There is also a wish that the Church move away from focusing on matters such as its own financial security and find a common voice instead of constantly becoming tied up in internal debates. In this, representatives of the Church note that one of the Church's greatest strengths is also a weak-

ness in terms of its ability to speak out on social issues. ‘If I could do anything at all with a magic wand,’ one parish priest commented,

It would be to get a common voice, but the Church of England is a very, very broad canvas with very many shades of opinion in it and that is one of its strengths, what makes it attractive to many people, but to get a common voice on a common polity I fear is almost an impossibility. (4mc)

The Church may not have the resources to do all it wants to do, but there is a clear wish that it should focus on engagement with society. Here, respondents say the Church can offer something particular in terms of welfare. ‘In this area of welfare and caring for people the state can’t provide everything and it is not just about money either is it, it is about, I call it a culture of care’ (9mc). Respondents would, in other words, like to see the Church at the forefront of the development of ‘a culture of care’ in society, providing an example of putting others first and building on the Christian tradition to construct a caring society. The Church’s role can, in other words, be seen not just in terms of acting or speaking as an organisation, but it can:

Motivate people and enable people to get on and do something and to give them again that purpose of whether you are working for the public authorities or whether you are working in the voluntary or indeed the private sector in terms of care for the elderly, how in fact you are working together for the benefit of the common good. (17mc)

One respondent expresses this sentiment in theological language, arguing that it would be good to see the Church developing ‘a ministry-based model of mission rather than an evangelistic model of mission’ (18mc). This would, he continues, serve:

Both as a more effective way of reaching people in society and as being faithful to the example that was given to us, that is what church is all about. I believe it will be more effective but actually that doesn’t matter. What matters is that we faithfully follow the way that Jesus gave us. (18mc)

On a practical note, a couple of interviewees say that they would like to see resources from the state to finance the upkeep of historic church buildings, so that the Church could concentrate its own resources on outreach and care.

Finally, one comment deserves particular attention. Struggling to express what it is that he would like to see change, one clergyman comments on the role of the Church:

I think that where as perhaps 10 years ago [...] one would have wanted to argue with people about how the institutional church was still really important, that it was worth fighting for, that even though they had been hurt by it and felt that it wasn’t meeting their needs they needed to stick by it instead of

looking for anything else. I don't think we would bother arguing now [...] There is a kind of a more real, more [...] that there is an invisible church. [...] maybe there is a church there that is people meeting together, where they happen to encounter one another as Christians that is the church and I think what one perhaps wants to say to people, well if you are meeting with your fellow Christians and if you love God and Jesus then that is fine, do that, that is the church and don't worry about the Church of England and all its trimmings. (25mc)

### 7.2.8. Significance of Gender

Questions posed in interviews as to the role of gender in the life of the local church proved to be difficult, prompting either automatic or defensive responses, not necessarily in terms of the question being interpreted as an attack, but rather because of an awareness of what was expected. This means that it is not easy to identify the real attitudes. In response to questions of men's and women's involvement in the parish, for example, many give an automatic response that both men and women are involved in decision-making in the parish on equal terms, which is only of limited use to this study. However some answers awaken interest, while requiring further analysis. In several cases interviewees talk about lay involvement and common decision making but clearly see themselves in the driving seat. The vicar is, for example, chair of the PCC, and in the following excerpt from an interview we hear the assumed implication that one purpose of such meetings is for the priest to hear what people have to say:

Take the PCC for example, I think that everyone has an equal voice on there, but like any group of people sometimes the most vocal could be female or could be a man. I have two particular people in mind one is male and one is female, both are very vocal and both need a little control from the chair and there are two or three quiet ones and I want to hear what they have to say so I encourage them to come forward. It is a question of even-handed chairmanship, which I hope I provide, yes I would say so. There are probably people who would argue with me, but the way I see it yes. I would hope so. (4mc)

In addition to commenting on services provided either for or by women or men, interviewees also commented on whether they felt the Church should get involved in issues of gender equality in society. With one notable exception those who commented here feel that it is important for the Church to address issues of equality in society in general and that gender equality is one such issue. This, however, is qualified with the caveat that equality should not mean sameness, but rather equal but different. The Church is seen as having a responsibility to speak out on this issue, but not in militant terms, rather in terms of assisting individuals and families to find their identities and roles. As one put it with reference to the gospel:

I think that there is an ugliness there that cannot be upheld by the gospel in both directions. The repression of women is not spiritual, neither is unreasoned hatred of men either, but I don't think we can avoid the issue. (4mc)

And a second, with reference to the Church's understanding of individuals made in the image of God:

What are men and women supposed to be in the image of God, [...] I think equality is a very slippery concept, what is equality between men and women if one works and ends up in a higher-paid job than the other does that mean that they are not equal? If one has got different gifts than the other does that mean that they are not equal? How do you give being a mum equal status to being a corporate executive? The whole thing of trying to put value on things. In a sense structural equality is all well and good, what we need is for all people to understand that they are unique and made in the image of God and precious to him and to treat each other that way. (8mc)

### 7.2.9. Theological Motivation

Theological motivation for both social action and speaking out which surfaced in the interviews has been mentioned above, but the interviewees were also asked to comment on their understanding of links between liturgy and the worship life of the Church and the Church's diaconal role.

For many, the role of the Church in social action is connected with an understanding that it is the social duty of individual Christians to involve themselves in welfare work in society, with the liturgical gatherings of the churches seen as support, strength and inspiration in this. The organised worship of the Church is therefore important in itself as the Church's central task, but also to bring the local church community together so that in this gathered form the church can be inspired, enthused and energised to go out and minister in its scattered form. Here, interviewees emphasise both the need for the church community to gather and for the Church to provide an opportunity for those who are not regular attendees to worship. For some, this means providing themed services or services for different organisations, while for others the emphasis is on bringing different communities together, but the common tone is one of the worship services of the Church of England as a resource for all:

I try in that sense to involve everyone together, so that we all come bringing our own thing, muddle it all together give it to God, get it blessed and get it sent out again. So I think the worship services can become this huge resource because in that sense you can provide neutral territory which everyone can come together and I think that again is the great advantage of the Church of England. That at its best is seen as the best possibility of neutral holy ground. It belongs in that sense to everybody [...] come to the Church of England then everybody sees it as some kind of neutral ground, including the Church of England people. (17mc)

The worship that the Church provides is also seen as helping bring shape and meaning to people's lives, both for individuals and the community as a whole, including those who do not regularly attend church:

I think worship operates at all sorts of different levels. Worship first of all is a community and a communal activity. It brings together a body, a corporate body of people [...]. It operates to provide, I think, a sense of meaning and purpose in people's lives. If they feel they are worshipping a God who cares about them and who loves them then I think that is going to give a deeper meaning to their lives [...], we come together as a community believing that life has a focus, a goal, [...] and we also, I think give some shape and meaning to the course of the year because we have the great festivals and feasts like Christmas [...]. And so I think that through prayer and drama and music and hopefully through sermons and so on we do try and give some variety and meaning to the different stages of the year, the Christian year, and also relate it to social issues that are going on. (19mc)

This role for the Church as bringing structure and meaning through liturgy is also envisaged as being for and of relevance to the wider community, including those who do not regularly attend church, at times of local or national disaster. The parish priest quoted above goes on to say:

Obviously one example is when a major catastrophe happens, like the death of Princess Diana or the Twin Towers on September 11<sup>th</sup>. That kind of terrible catastrophe, you get a reaction and [...] A larger number of people in the community turn to the Church. I think that we tend to be able to provide some kind of depth, of just listening, of just providing the space for people to ask those very basic questions [...] What on earth are we here on earth for? What is life about? And I think that we should be ready to tune into those questions. (19mc)

In addition there are some examples of liturgical innovations which the clergy themselves see as an aspect of service to the community in welfare terms. One parish priest, for example was considering organising a service at St Luke's-tide with a particular focus on healing and issuing invitations to this to the doctors and other healthcare workers in the parish. Similarly in several parishes regular healing services are held which are seen as part of the social and diaconal work of the church and more than one parish priest mentioned an annual All Souls' service to which all the families in the parish who have had a funeral during the year are specifically invited back. The priest reflected: 'That is an important thing, to give people time to remember, to give thanks, to grieve, part of the grieving process, of letting go' (6fc).

## 7.3. Perceptions and Expectations: Views held by Representatives of the Local Authority

### 7.3.1. Welfare

Both employees and representatives of the public authorities define welfare in one of two ways, or in some cases both. Many refer to notions of care or looking after, both from the point of view of society in general and the individual. The second aspect that is common throughout are references to essential needs or a basic bottom line, here connections are made to the notion of welfare as a social construct and system. The negative connotations that the word can have for many, particularly older people in Britain are mentioned and some indicate a broader understanding of the term: 'It is all embracing,' (14f l/el) and 'It is how we look after people. Not just their mental health and physical health but spiritual health as well. You have to look after the whole person [...]' (3f l/em).

### 7.3.2. Functioning of the Local Welfare System

Many feel that the system functions pretty well in Darlington. Often, particular mention is made of the circumstances that make Darlington different from other areas; its size and the fact that it is a unitary authority impact the delivery of welfare in several ways, it is felt. Several mention the fact that this combination of size and system make for ease of communication and, although resources can be stretched, the town is not swamped with the social problems typical of larger cities. Size, several feel, also means that the role that individuals, networks and personal relationships play has a considerable impact.

Failures in the system are however not absent from comments, inequalities both in the standard of living in general and in welfare provision in particular are highlighted as is the existence of groups who are hidden or who fall outside the system. Finally, there is a sense that expectations have advanced more quickly than the services that are on offer, meaning that services have to perform better than before in order to be judged as acceptable. One role of the public sector from this perspective is therefore to manage expectations.

The essence of the comments of this group can be summed up in the following quotation: 'I think it functions as well as it does anywhere, if not better than some places although it is never perfect and it serves some people very well, but not all' (21 f l/el).

### 7.3.3. Role of the Church

The vast majority of the interviewees feel that the Church has, or should have, a role to play in welfare. Some, however, choose to qualify this with the comment that it has no greater role than other groups in society. For some, the Church is one of a number of voluntary organisations in this respect, although one councillor defines the Church as a public servant alongside the public authorities, because of its established nature. ‘I think,’ she says:

If we are going to serve, whoever we are, every aspect of the community, the society out there, there is a role for the Church as there is for the public sector as there is for the voluntary sector and all of these organisations have to find their position and do the supporting. (21f l/el)

A cautious note is also struck by a few respondents who are firmly of the opinion that, although the church has a role to play, provision should never be connected to a demand to believe or participate in religious activities and similarly that the actions of the churches should never be allowed to compromise people’s ability to choose how to live their lives. In the words of one:

I think where it starts to impact on people’s freedom of choice then I have a big problem with that. [...] I know they have these beliefs and everyone can have, it is just that how you put that on to somebody else [...] and I have a problem with the church doing that frankly. They are entitled to their views it is, as I say, when it adversely affects people’s ability to choose. (5f l/em)

There is also a feeling that the Church has in the past played a greater role, but that it is declining. ‘It ought to have [a role], but I don’t think it does much now,’ one councillor comments (10f l/el). The generally positive comments that the Church has a role to play are therefore echoed in follow-up comments that it needs to become more engaged both with the authorities and the local community. It needs to show people what relevance and knowledge it has if it is to be taken seriously. One public-sector employee drew parallels here to the programme that she works with which has a particular focus on engaging so-called hard-to-reach groups and has therefore had to develop a range of strategies in order to approach them. ‘I think’ she comments, ‘that the churches would benefit from similarly reflecting on how they engage with their wider population and how they show people that they have a relevance in their lives and that they have a role to play’ (26f l/em).

Many feel that there is a role for the church in partnership with the authorities, but that if this is to work the Church has to become more engaged. This attitude is clearly connected to issues of the size of the town and the considerable role that individual personalities play. Some feel that the role that the Church can play depends on the situation in the local area, and to a not insignificant extent on the clergyman or woman in post. There is a role for them to play if they want it and if they have the competence, in other

words. One councillor expressed this particularly clearly when commenting that if interviewed only five years previously he would have given very different answers. Due to two influential clergymen moving away from Darlington he argues ‘the two main Christian churches have lost the buck seat’ in the town as far as partnership with local authorities is concerned (16m l/el).

Despite this feeling that the Church in Darlington has lost a position and potential for influence that it once had, there is a clear feeling that the churches have good local knowledge in some areas of the town, which can be capitalised on.

The Church is also perceived to have expertise in particular areas including providing spiritual support, space for reflection and support to individuals, but also helping and supporting the vulnerable and deprived and on issues surrounding families. For example, it is, one health worker, opines, for the chance to sit back and reflect that a lot of people turn to the churches, and the Church’s role at individual level could therefore well be about ‘giving people a bit of space and time’ and not just figuratively either, at a practical level too, she argues, ‘the church could do that, take the kids off and let you read a book’ (10f l/el).

#### 7.3.4. Church and Social Work

Only one of the respondents is of the absolute opinion that the churches should not carry out practical social work, although later on in the interview the same interviewee goes on to say that the churches should have a hands-on attitude. This at first seemingly contradictory attitude is in line with the opinions of many others who say that the church should provide practical care. There is a wish to distinguish between social work, which should be left to the professionals, and extra services that the church can provide ‘so as long as there is no direct link to “thou shalt believe and therefore we shall deliver”’ (1f l/em).

Many see a role for the Church in providing services for those who turn to the Church, but wish to see alternatives for those who would not be comfortable with church-based care. In line with this attitude to the Church as a complement, there is again mention of the Church as a partner amongst others. The Church should do what it is comfortable doing and what is appropriate in the local context, but should know its limitations, and has a role to play in informing people of the services available to them, thanks to its good contacts with the local community at grassroots level. Here, too, the opinion is expressed that the Church’s role is ‘in the whole social inclusion agenda’ where churches can be focal points of communities, ‘irrespective of whether you are religious or not’ (5f l/em). For many, the legacy of the Church’s involvement in welfare is something positive that the Church should strive after today, although it is no longer appropriate for them to provide the ser-

vices that they used to years ago. Finally, there are several areas of welfare that it is felt to be particularly appropriate for the churches to work with in providing 'social, emotional and spiritual support frameworks' for people (26f l/em), not least in terms of services and support for the elderly and listening and counselling.

### 7.3.5. Church and the Public Debate

There is little evidence amongst the responses of the old maxim that religion and politics should not be mixed. All respondents feel that there is a role for the Church in the public debate on welfare issues. The Church can say what the public sector cannot and act as an independent voice speaking for the community at both national and local level. As one interviewee expressed it:

Every organisation needs checks and balances [... ] And I think that the Church and faith groups have a role to play in providing some of those checks and balances against the state. [...] We all need critical friends and I think the Church can, that is one of the roles that faith groups can occupy. (26f l/em)

The Church should speak out and campaign alongside other pressure groups and faith groups. This is not to say that people do not have reservations as regards the Church's role here, the Church should make sure it is informed and that it has something to say before it gets involved and should be engaged with society at large and the local community if what it says is to be taken seriously. It is not insignificant that several interviewees mention particular occasions or individuals in the Church who have spoken out on social issues and express admiration for those individuals, while there clearly exists scepticism towards the Church as an organisation, not least because of obvious internal disagreements. A distinction is drawn between this and individuals within it who are seen in a positive light.

Similarly, several interviewees comment here that they feel that the Church of England should no longer be established and that its presence in the House of Lords is outdated, while at the same time critical letters from the Archbishop to the Prime Minister are seen positively. Part of the criticism of the Church's place in the House of Lords is clearly grounded in a feeling that the Church is out of touch at some levels and it may be that it is the levels of expectation of what the church should be that lead to such heartfelt criticism. As one interviewee said when reflecting on the Church:

You just look and think Ghandi was right – I like your Christ and I don't like your Christians [...] I like the Church of England, but Anglicans irritate me [...] Not all Anglicans, the idea of the Church [...] I think that there were always strong individual voices that strove to be heard, it's how do you reconcile the difference of opinion and then the difference of activity, but you

know if we can't have high expectations of the church, what else can we have high expectations of? (1f1/em)

### 7.3.6. Change over the Past Ten Years

The perception of those interviewed is that the role of the Church has changed gradually over a period longer than ten years and that its role has, in the main, diminished during this time. It is seen by many as being distanced from society today. 'Not moving with the times [...] and allowing themselves to become very out of touch' (11f1/el). While most respondents said they knew little about the Church personally apart from the odd attendance at weddings etc., most said they had noticed trends such as fewer priests, empty churches and elderly congregations, either locally or in media reports. 'Well it has changed hasn't it?' one woman remarks. 'It used to be the centre didn't it, the focus of everything that happened in a community and now it is only one of many different organisations, groups that people turn to' (21f1/el). Some also mention issues such as internal rows in the Church over homosexual clergy and scandals over priests and the sexual abuse of children. Such scandals they comment present the Church as a secularised, flawed institution. Finally, the growth of the evangelical wing of the Church and the fact that this form of Christianity has both marketed itself and been increasingly visible in recent years was mentioned.

### 7.3.7. Desire for Change in the Role of the Church

While some feel it is not their place to comment on the role that the Church should play, that this is an issue for those who are involved, there was nonetheless a clear wish for a more outward-looking Church, in touch with the issues that concern ordinary people and able to act as a support for the community. The opinion that the churches ought to capitalise on the interest in spirituality that exists in the country was also expressed and this, and other comments, is connected to a criticism of the Church as preoccupied with internal issues and where it is in touch with society as ineffective in communicating this outside its own organisation. There exists a wish for the Church to express opinions and create policies on issues of social justice and social welfare and to get better at communicating these and then translating them into action. The following comment is a good example of this:

I'd like to see the Church have at least a coherent, and maybe it does and I don't know, but a coherent policy on social justice and social welfare, that that is made known [...] Possibly the problem is that we are all working in silos and we haven't got a clue what's going on in that Church silo and what I might ask for is there, but what has actually happened is although there is a rosy glow from those that have developed them, that know they are there, they haven't hit the likes of me. [...] I think that I should have been aware

and that maybe that it is my failing [...], but my sense still is that a vast amount of this is down to how individuals in local areas carry the message. Of course the other thing is walking the talk as well as talking the talk, you know. (1f l/em)

The health-sector worker quoted above seems to want the Church not only to develop social justice and welfare policies, but also to actively work on communicating these to the community at large, to those who do not actively attend church. In this she is joined by a colleague:

From the outside looking in I would like to see them working in a way that people like me could see, much more openly around areas like engagement and inclusion than they do [...] I am sure they have got policies, I am sure they have got procedures, I am sure they have got strategies, that are filling filing cabinets and floppy disks ad nauseam, but I don't see a lot of evidence of it. Right here, right now in the middle of Darlington as your average person, I guess, I don't see a great deal of evidence and if I don't see it I wonder if other people don't see it either. (26f l/em)

Finally, it must be mentioned that here, as elsewhere, in connection to answers to other questions the issue of the disestablishment of the Church is raised and in particular the role that the bishops play in the House of Lords. While many feel that the Church has a role to play, it is clearly increasingly seen as just one amongst a number of organisations and religions rather than having a particular and distinct place.

### 7.3.8. Significance of Gender

Interestingly, no matter what the interviewees' opinion of the Church and its role in society in general, they express the view that the Church ought to have an input in the public debate on gender equality. Some feel that the Church needs first to address internal issues of the role of women within its organisation and speak through actions by reforming its hierarchies before it can be taken seriously, while others emphasise the fact that if the Church were to speak out more on issues such as gender equality, equality in general and equal pay it could give itself a more significant role in society by proving that it is interested in issues relevant to people's everyday lives. By not getting involved in such debates, in other words, the Church makes itself irrelevant.

In terms of the significance of gender to the services provided by the churches in the welfare area, two issues of relevance appear in responses. The first is a feeling that, just as women are more likely than men to access health and social services provided by the public authorities, not least on behalf of their children, they are also more likely to access services provided by the churches. Interviewees interpret this in three ways. Firstly that women

are more proactive in seeking help in general and are more likely to be prepared to ask for help, and secondly that women are more likely to have an interest in spiritual matters and to seek help from the churches on this front. Thirdly, some note that as the elderly are one major group with significant welfare needs and that as this age cohort is dominated by women, there is also a significant chance that church provision will be dominated by women as the church is seen to appeal to older generations. The second issue is related to the perception of church hierarchies as discriminating against women. The Church as an organisation is therefore perceived to some extent as having an inbuilt gender imbalance which may affect the way it delivers services, not in a conscious way, but because of the way the structures are organised:

It all comes down to individual practice and organisational ethos and I think that there can be individuals within organisations who can struggle to deliver what they consider to be equitable against a background of, this is the foundation, bureaucracy. I don't think that church as commissioners fundamentally discriminate in a front of mind kind of way in how they deliver services, but if you have already sorted out the back of mind [...] that is one I would have to think about a bit more. (1f1/em)

### 7.3.9. Attitudes to Provision run by the Majority Church

For both politicians and employees involved in the local authority, services provided by voluntary and non-governmental organisations are integral to the welfare system of the town, providing services that the statutory bodies cannot provide in a way that would be impossible for them given the bureaucracy of the system. Where the Church provides such services or is involved in their provision this is seen in a positive light, although provision by the churches is not seen as any better or worse than that by other bodies. In connection with this, it is also clear that little or no differentiation is made here between services provided by the Church of England and those which are run by other denominations. The local Baptist church, for example, which runs and is involved in several projects for the homeless in the town was frequently mentioned in this context. The fact that this service is provided is appreciated and the authorities are willing to work with them as long as they do it professionally and do not combine service provision with a mission to convert. The fact that it is a church that provides the service is a secondary consideration. In the words of one politician:

The reality is they should be providing a professional service, if they want to care on top of that it is up to them but I don't pay them to care [...] I don't have a problem with it and they can do it in one of two ways. If they don't like my attitude they can provide whatever services they choose to. Over and above the plat du jour that we provide they can provide à la carte. But it is important that we provide a minimum service that says wherever you come

from, wherever you live, whatever your circumstance this will be the bare minimum that you receive. If you happen to live in an area where the church has decided it is going to do other things then fine, [...] but if it wishes to be part of the mainstream provision then it has to play by the rules and those rules are that you can't discriminate against people because they are atheists or Catholics or because they are Jews or whatever, they cannot do that, it is a business. I don't have any problem with them providing. (16m l/el)

### 7.3.10. The Expectations of the Local Authorities Concerning Welfare Services Provided by the Church

Representatives of the local authority have quite high expectations of the Church as a provider of welfare services, inasmuch as they think of it as one of a number of voluntary organisations which can provide services over and above or alongside those which are provided by the public authorities. They stress, however, that it is up to the Church how much it wants to get involved. If it makes the effort and attempts to build up partnerships or provide services then they expect the churches, as other organisations, to act in a professional manner and are happy to work with it. However, it is also clear that the churches are not particularly high up on the agenda as regards partners for both practical co-operation and consultation on a day-to-day basis. In the words of one respondent:

I have to say that the Church, religion in general, is almost never mentioned. Whenever we talk about partnership working and the need to involve public, which is a huge part of our agenda, [...] we have to consult the public on almost everything we do [...], it is statutory now [...] I suppose occasionally when we are talking about who do we go out to, who do we ask, one area of reaching people is through the churches and that is all. It is not mentioned at all in strategic thinking, operational, anything. (14f l/el)

Although she had made similar comments to those expressed by her colleague above, however, one health-sector worker built on this by going on to say 'I think we probably need to challenge ourselves a bit and say is there not a role in what we do for some official partnership and what would that partnership look like? What particular areas would we focus on and would it be' (1f l/em). It is clear, though, that both in the past and at the present time it is individual relationships that have played a considerable role and many mention individuals within the churches who they have been happy to work with and who they did or would think to contact if a particular issue was pressing.

The comments above focus on the practical issues of welfare provision and more or less formal partnership, however it is also interesting to note that there is a second level of expectation that the Church can and should provide support for individuals. In the words of one councillor:

If somebody is really low and in need, they are often the people who pick that person up, it is the church, because they are where people turn and I think people trust the church a lot more, which is why they turn to the church and I think the church is pretty good at picking them up. (10f l/el)

Here there is a recognition too that the focus of individual clergymen or women in a particular parish will impact significantly on the welfare role the Church plays there and the potential for common goals between local authority and Church. One councillor, referring to the parish priest in her ward comments that: 'He has very much that focus on the welfare of his parishioners and those that aren't involved with the church. I think you could get another one that probably doesn't have the same focus' (21 l/el). Even for those who argue that the Church should be disestablished, there is an expectation that the Church will exist on the ground, know the local community and make itself, and its priests in particular, available to individuals providing pastoral and spiritual care:

I think the best of them would be working in the communities and I do know one or two who sort of walk the talk and certainly [...] if they really are genuinely in touch with the community then yes the pastoral role is incredibly important and it is not something which here, for example, GPs should be expected to do, but of course if priests and clergy don't do it then I think society is in trouble, you know breakdown of society sort of total structure and the extended family all that sort of thing has created huge problems and people just don't know who to talk to. (14f l/el)

## 7.4. Views held by Representatives of Civil Society Organisations and Darlington Residents

### Views held by Representatives of Civil Society Organisations

#### 7.4.1 Welfare

For those who are active in the voluntary sector in Darlington, the term welfare also carries the breadth of associations that it does for the individuals in the other categories. 'Welfare simply means the wellbeing of people' (27mv). For some it has the negative connotations of top-down charity, but is primarily associated with 'looking after people' (22fv), both in terms of the whole community of Darlington and the 'total welfare and wellbeing' of individuals (24mv).

#### 7.4.2 Functioning of the Local Welfare System

On the whole, feelings seem to be that the system works 'pretty well' in Darlington (22fv), but that although some aspects work well, there are gaps

in the formal welfare system and ‘areas that it does not reach’(27mv), not least vulnerable people who are afraid of bureaucracy or hemmed in by the inflexibility of the benefits system. ‘The state welfare is,’ one Darlington Partnership representative comments, ‘I don’t think, geared up to interact properly with people who are very vulnerable and who have a limited comprehension of what is going on around them’ (27mv). Another voluntary sector worker agrees with this stating that the system is ‘stretched’, and that it is therefore easy for people to ‘get left out, but once one knows about them I am surprised at how much there is available’ (12mv).

The voluntary and community sector, the Partnership representative goes on to argue, is good at picking up the people who fall through the cracks in the system, but doesn’t get it right all the time and has a tendency to ‘pick up the easy bits sometimes and then pat ourselves on the back for doing it’ (27mv). One full-time voluntary sector employee argues that the welfare system in general has improved in recent years and that fewer of the most vulnerable are therefore falling between stools. This is interpreted as being not least because of an active commitment to networking (22mv) and the existence of the Partnership resulting in better links between the voluntary and public sectors, as well as between different voluntary groups, than in the past (2mv). In particular there is some pride that despite not receiving extra government funding handed out to areas of multiple deprivation, the ability of the local voluntary and community sector and local authority to work together has resulted in improvements in both systems and individual’s lives in Darlington. This said, however, there is also an articulation of the importance of individuals and personal relationships to the functioning of welfare in a town the size of Darlington. As one voluntary sector worker expressed it, ‘We were talking very recently about a network of stuff that we do and we were saying that it works and it is very, very effective, but there is nothing formal drawn-up about it, so if people left it could collapse’ (23fv). ‘It is’, one man with significant responsibility and influence within the Partnership emphasises, ‘all down to characters and individuals, like everything else in life really’ (2mv).

### 7.4.3 Role of the Church

‘The role of the Church in welfare is to be a community leader’ (2mv). These are the words of one respondent, but also express the sentiments of others. This conviction is based on an understanding of the historical role of the Church, as well as its continued formal position. The Church of England, the same respondent comments later, ‘has the best infrastructure to be a good leader’ (2mv). It should, he argues ‘be the lead church in England and should lead by example and should support all the other churches that are wanting to make an impact’ (2mv).

There is a common feeling that churches have a 'responsibility for highlighting and supporting groups of people, whoever they may be' (2mv), that need support. A responsibility, in other words, for everyone because 'everybody needs some support...whether you are the chairman and chief executive of ICI or the poor soul who is worried because he can't pay for breakfast' (2mv). This is, however, a 'responsibility for ensuring that people are doing something about it... but not necessarily doing it themselves' (23fv), although from amongst the respondents a sentiment is also expressed that voluntary organisations in general and religious organisations in particular contribute something extra in their provision of welfare. As one employee of a welfare organisation with a Christian value base expressed it, a Christian organisation involved in welfare has 'a certain ethos' which 'if you compare it to a non-Christian organisation [...] there is something missing from there that isn't missing from here' (24mv).

For some, the supporting role attributed to the churches is also connected to an understanding that it is important that the churches be seen to be in touch with the needs of the local community if they are to continue to be seen as a credible actor, and that building up such relationships is important to the future of the churches. As one man put it, 'You support people when they need support and they will support you when you need support as the church' (2mv). For others, however, when talking about the Church's contribution in the welfare sphere, it is important to draw a clear line. One respondent focused on the tension between providing services for their own sake and attracting members. As he phrased it, 'I think the churches will always have a role to play, although sometimes I do believe that the motives for playing that role are not as pure and as altruistic as the churches would have us believe' (27mv). While another voluntary sector worker employed by an organisation which was set up by the churches argues that the Church can and does have a role in welfare as long as its efforts are not too 'churchified', as if a welfare service is 'overtly Christian then sometimes that will put people off' (23fv).

Contrasting with this, however, are the comments of respondents who are themselves ministers of denominations other than the Church of England. They, like a number of their Anglican colleagues, stress the central welfare role of the Church as being one of proclaiming the Gospel 'because from that everything else flows...the social side comes from it' (22fv). Connected to this they see the ministers' task as one of motivating individuals in their congregations to get involved in welfare issues and organisations, but also see creating a church community which gives individuals space and place to in which they choose to be and to belong to as a valuable welfare contribution to the local community.

#### 7.4.4 Church and Social Work

Some are of the opinion that the churches should leave practical social work to other people. That is not to say that they do not do it well in some areas, but there is a risk that when organisations such as churches which are amateurs, take on a welfare provision role it can be accompanied by a ‘proprietary attitude’ (27mv), and come to be ‘much more empire-building than for the needs of the people’ (23fv). The churches, it is felt, are not always best equipped to be doing the hands-on work, but can play a significant role in a supporting capacity, raising issues on committees and providing funding and volunteers. In particular, it is felt that churches can play a role in encouraging and supporting people to volunteer for other organisations, such as the hospice, rather than setting up projects of their own. Supporting the ‘little people doing the little things’ is seen as being the biggest contribution the churches can make (22fv), not least because of the resources at their disposal. As one voluntary sector worker, himself working with a dwindling budget and organisation commented: ‘In theory it would be nice if they did [provide practical social care]. In practice with the aging membership and decline in membership I don’t think that is possible’ (12mv).

Here, too, the fact that Darlington is a small town where people know each other and know who has links with the council and the initiatives that already exist is seen as being a key element. Co-ordination and communication are in other words seen as key elements of a church role. Others, however, argue that there is a role in practical social work for churches as long as it provides the same quality of service expected of any other organisation. One active member of his local parish church, who is of the opinion that there is a particular potential in churches which is not always capitalised upon, says: ‘The social services should give us some of their money to support some of the people we are supporting, because we can do it far more effectively’ (2mv). He also draws a parallel to his working life in the private sector in arguing that it is important that the Church is held to account in the same way as other organisations in this field. ‘If you don’t perform – out. You shouldn’t be allowed to hang around for too long if you aren’t performing. If I don’t perform here I am out’ (2mv).

There is also amongst this group of respondents a common theme in responses that the only way to work in welfare today is for local authorities to work in co-operation with other bodies and organisations, and this includes the Church. There is, some comment, sometimes a clash of cultures, but ‘that is no more difficult than working with the voluntary sector, to work with the church groups is no more difficult and no more different’ (27mv).

### 7.4.5 Church and the Public Debate

There is a feeling amongst respondents that not just the Church, but all churches and faith communities have both a right and a duty to take an active part in public debates on welfare. 'I believe,' one man articulates, 'that faith communities and churches, not only do they have a right to contribute to public debate. I think they also have a duty to do so' (27mv). This duty is, for him, based in the churches' self-understanding as Christian institutions. 'Most Christians would tell you that it is their duty and I would not disagree with that' (27mv). Although for him this attitude is not in itself a Christian one, but rather 'a humanitarian attitude' (27mv). Another respondent, who does say he has a belief in God 'in my own terms,' argues the point more strongly: 'Those that say you shouldn't mix religion with politics [...] that is rubbish' (12mv).

Churches have, one woman comments, 'an ability to highlight issues in a way that other organisations don't', and for the established church in particular, 'because they are the Church if they speak out people tend to take a bit of notice' (23fv). Here, as in other groups of respondents, the House of Bishops is seen as having a particular role in this respect, but also a responsibility not to abuse a privileged position:

They should speak out for injustice and I think that there are signs that to some extent the Church still does, but the Church is in a very privileged position where it can make up its own rules that are not allowed in society, like with the gay issue [...] the Church has got a certain obligation because of the laxity it is allowed and I would say that it does not always live up to that. (12mv)

In a similar vein, a minister comments that when the church does speak out, it should do so 'from a point of view of being knowledgeable' (22fv). She argues that it is not always the clergy who should be the voice of the church in society, but that when they do use their position to do so they should be well briefed on the facts.

### 7.4.6 Change over the Past Ten Years

As with respondents in other groups, those interviewed from the voluntary sector and other churches also refer to the change in the influence and action of the churches in Darlington that came occurred when two active and outspoken churchmen moved away from the town. 'We had a couple of people,' one woman comments, 'who were really influential and who did such good things in Darlington, it did change the face of Darlington [...], but we haven't got those type of characters at the moment (23fv). Action is, one representative of the Partnership comments:

Very often driven by individuals in the same way as entrepreneurs build large empires [...] and some of the things that have happened in Darlington would not have happened without those individuals there to drive it and I think it is when those individuals move on that the place suddenly becomes poorer in terms of true welfare action. (27mv)

The Church has, his Partnership colleague comments, ‘lost its plot a bit’ in this field since the departure of these figures (2mv). Otherwise there is a view that churches ‘have always done what they do’ and continue to do so (23fv). In other words, several respondents comment that in their opinion the population of Darlington expect little more of the Church or churches than that they are ‘there for the hatch, match and dispatch part’, as well, perhaps, as in situations of crisis, where ‘it would be the church that people still, on the whole, would look at to have some voice’ (22fv). ‘They see the Church’ one man, who is himself a regular churchgoer commented, ‘as somewhere you go to get christened, you go and get married and then you get buried through it, which is sad really, because there is so much drop out in between’ (2mv). Taking a similar view, another respondent comments that the churches have ‘lost quite a bit of authority. Probably more so at an individual level than a corporate one’ (12m). For another non-churchgoer, the issue is not that the role of the Church has changed, but rather that ‘its ability to fulfil that role is sometimes affected by internal division and wrangling’ (27mv).

#### 7.4.7 Desire for Change in the Role of the Church

The Church of England is still perceived as having a particular role to play, because of its established status, but this is not necessarily seen as being either positive or negative. While it is felt that the Church and all religious communities have a role to play in welfare and that the Church of England retains a position which it should use to the public benefit where possible, for one respondent the key issue is leadership, both by and within the established church. ‘We need,’ he argues, ‘people who can manage the infrastructures in the variety of communities in which we have to operate and touch the real people with real problems’ (2mv). One of his concerns is that both the structures of the Church and elements of its leadership, which are seen as overly academic and out of touch, distance the Church from real life and the needs of people. Here he is not alone in expressing an opinion that the Church can sometimes come across as superior and ‘standoffish’ and that here it could learn much from other religious communities which play a ‘massive part in their local community’ (23fv). A free church minister from the town expresses this in the following way: ‘From an institutional point of view, if you do that together the Anglicans do it their way.’ ‘I get on extremely well with my two Anglican colleagues here,’ she continues, ‘but I

always call it doing ecumenism as long as it is done the Anglican way' (22fv). Here she continues to lament the relative lack of collective responses to social issues from the churches at local level, including her own, and she is joined by other respondents who argue that 'currently the churches are tending to drift back into their little enclaves and not work very well together' (27mv), and that it would be good to see more collaboration between the churches, 'a united front' (23fv).

On a similar note, several respondents comment that they would like to see the churches re-prioritise to re-direct focus away from internal divisions but also re-direct resources that are used to preserve church buildings to welfare issues. In the words of one man who has been an active member of the Church of England but is no longer: 'Frankly for me, if they were to sell off every single cathedral in the land and put that money to good use making disadvantaged people, not just in England, but all over the world, making their lives better, then I might reconsider my position as a Christian' (27mv).

#### 7.4.8 Significance of Gender

It is interesting that in parts of the welfare sector, such as support for the homeless there are more men than women in need of services, but where gender specific services exist these tend to be for the women. In terms of services for the elderly, however, it is felt that there are more elderly women than men needing support, but that it is also the women who tend more to get involved and seek out activities.

In terms of welfare provision, a free church pastor notes that there are more women involved in the welfare activities of her congregation, but that where men are involved 'they do tend to manage' (22fv). Similarly, a woman who manages a large welfare organisation in the welfare sector in the town commented how she had noticed recently that at a meeting of those in similar positions she was the only women present. 'On the ground workers we probably have more women working in the welfare area and the higher up you go the less women you get' (23fv). Or in the words of one of the male respondents, who could well also have been at the meeting she mentions 'We still have a very male-dominated society in the upper echelons and I think that is as evident in the voluntary sector as it is anywhere else' (27mv).

### Views held by Darlington Residents

#### 7.4.9. Welfare

Discussions in focus groups revealed that, like the interviewees, participants associate the word welfare with a number of concepts. For many, the connection is made with 'state support for people who are not able to manage on their own' (G1 am), both with positive and negative undertones. The term is

however also seen as having a wider meaning encompassing ‘care for others and concern for others’ and for the self (G1 bf).

#### 7.4.10. Functioning of the Local Welfare System

Speaking both from personal experience of welfare services and involvement in voluntary organisations, which have brought them into close contact with areas of the welfare system, participants say they feel that the welfare system works at a basic level, that most people have their basic needs addressed most of the time, but that the system does fail some and has gaps in some areas. The following quotation from the comments of one Darlington resident gives an indication of the tone of opinion:

I think that there are some individuals, you know and it is dozens not hundreds, but for whom the system doesn't work [...], but generally the many thousands who need welfare support in this town, from what I perceive get good support through the state and through communities of interest. But there are, I do agree there are notable gaps in it. (G1 dm)

The homeless, the elderly and young families on low incomes were seen in particular as groups most likely to be failed by the system. It is felt that there are services available both in state and voluntary sector if you know that they are there and are able to fight for your right to them. As one woman put it, ‘if you have a tongue in your head, or if you have got somebody to ask for you, you get it’ (G1 cf). This is seen as being a double problem which leaves many without.

#### 7.4.11. Role of the Church

Discussion of the role of the Church took place at two levels: the general societal level and the personal level. Even those who are members of local churches and attend sporadically comment that they ‘see going to church as for my spiritual guidance. I think if I needed help in any other area that isn't where I would go’ (G1 bf). Similarly there is a feeling that, as one respondent commented, the churches, like other ‘communities of interest, get together and look after their communities of interest. I don't see many people working outside of their specific community’ (G1 am). ‘Setting aside the pastoral support that the church can give to certain people,’ one other noted, the welfare services that the churches provide ‘is very much on the margins’ (G2 fm).

At a societal level, when talking about what the role of the Church ought to be, the general opinion is that the Church has and ought to have a role in welfare, both in terms of providing welfare and speaking out. As one man put it ‘I think the behaviours of a welfare nation might be said to be very close to the core of Christian beliefs in action’ (G2 fm). Opinion is, however

divided as to whether the Church of England retains a particular role in contemporary society. For some the convictions of all people of faith give them a particular responsibility to act in society, they are expected to speak out and be concerned for those outside their own group, but the Church of England has no particular role. For others, while the question of whether or not the Church of England ought to be established remains open, the fact that it is currently the established church gives it both privileges and responsibilities which it ought to use for the benefit of all. As one woman noted, 'If they are not going to take a wider responsibility then they shouldn't get the benefit of it [establishment]' (G1 af).

Here, too, the question of the extent to which Church involvement in welfare necessarily means activity at an organisational level is also brought into the discussion. One respondent articulated well a sentiment also expressed by others: 'I think the impact of the Church if not directly having an impact into welfare has a broader impact in that those who do go to church support other organisations which are strongly into welfare' (G2 dm). Churchgoers are seen in other words as making an important contribution to welfare provision in the voluntary sector in the town, 'but not using the Church directly as a vehicle' (G2 dm).

#### 7.4.12. Church and Social Work

Focus groups contained both non-churchgoers and churchgoers from a number of different denominations and of varying degrees of activity. Those who do not attend church say that they have little or no knowledge of any activities that the churches may run in the field of welfare and are in fact surprised when other members of the group mention some voluntary bodies as having church connections, which they had never even considered as having ties to the churches. 'I just don't think', says one woman 'that there is that many people now who know that is what the Church has done in the past, or does now on the welfare side of things. I just don't think people think about it at all' (G1 ef). Both categories of participants, however, agree on the fact that the churches can and should have some involvement in social welfare, either in their own right or in co-operation with other bodies and faith groups. 'Historically', one man who spends much of his own free time working with voluntary organisations which support the homeless, comments that the church communities have been involved in welfare 'and the churches should continue to participate, because many of the things that come from churches and the voluntary sector are innovative things that become mainstream' (G1 dm). The question for a number of focus group members is not one of whether the Church should be involved, but whether it has the resources to be involved. While those who attend local churches feel that the churches do a lot that is not necessarily seen, both as organisations and through Christian individuals, people from both categories agree that the increasingly elderly

congregations of most churches means that the churches lack the human resources to do as much as they or others would like. As one woman with sporadic contact with her local parish church commented: 'Churches have very small congregations and therefore [are] very limited in what they can do because of manpower' (G1 cf). The feeling is, in other words, that the local church has the potential to help in welfare through smaller scale activities 'that can be carried out without financing' such as tackling social isolation, visiting the old and sick and organising luncheon clubs (G2 bm). There is, one woman lamented, 'an awful lot of isolation out there and the Church could get involved with that and I don't feel they get involved enough' (G1 cf).

#### 7.4.13. Church and the Public Debate

As noted above there is a clear expectation that members of faith groups and churches speak out on behalf of those on the margins. In particular, there is an expectation that the Church of England should use its connections to the corridors of power to benefit others. Bishops especially are seen as having access to the media and using it to make points in public debate, which is something which is viewed favourably. There is no feeling that the Church or churches ought to stay out of such discussions, but rather a disappointment that they do not do more. At a general level, one man stressed, 'I think the Church should be involved in terms of campaigning and raising issues and putting pressure on government' (G1 dm). In Darlington, public figures other than the clergy, such as local councillors, are seen as taking the initiative in raising controversial issues in Darlington, where the churches once used to be the most active voice. This is mainly attributed to the fact that some key personalities moved away from Darlington, and they have not been replaced by others equally ready to 'take some risks and raise the issues' (G1 dm). The short-term gains of the activism of key individuals are, one woman comments, lost when they leave and 'it is a shame that it has gone because it is hard to pick back up again' (G1 ff). Both churchgoers and non-churchgoers comment on the particular role that the local clergy have here in line with that of the bishops at national level. The clergy of the town are seen as representing the Church in a way that even the most active lay people cannot, and their leadership in raising difficult questions is both expected and desired, as long as they are speaking for the whole community and not just their churchgoing congregations.

#### 7.4.14. Change over the Past Ten Years

Members of the focus groups commented that the average age of congregations in the town is getting older. In the words of one respondent, 'It is the hardcore people that go to church, that have done for donkey's years, but I

don't think that they are getting the newer people in' (G1 ef). Both churchgoers and non-churchgoers comment on declining congregations, ageing congregations and diminishing human resources, in that there are now fewer priests in the area than there once were. Those who live in villages outside the town are particularly aware that their parish priest now has a much larger area of responsibility. Connections are made here between the lack of priests and the closing of churches and the fact that doctors and post office services are increasingly no longer available in the villages. In this way, the Church is seen as just one more of a number of organisations to be centralising resources.

In terms of the impact of the Church on the wider society, it is also mentioned that general awareness of the church and the biblical stories has declined amongst the younger generations. Even the younger members of the groups, in their mid 20s, remember singing hymns in school and the predominance of the teaching of Christianity in religious education, something which they feel is different for younger relatives and children of friends in schools today.

#### 7.4.15. Desire for Change in the Role of the Church

While there is no desire expressed for a return to a society where the Church has greater power over individual lives, it is clear that the Church, along with other churches and faith groups is seen as a potential force for good in the town and there is a desire expressed that the Church should become more proactive in taking a role for itself. One man, taking the parish church in the centre of Darlington as his example, argues: 'It is the church in the marketplace, right at the heart of things...there is a tremendous amount of potential for that to be more at the heart, perhaps much more than it is' (G1 dm). Neither is this potential to take a more active role seen as being limited to the Church's role alone. The Church of England is seen as a natural co-ordinator of all faith groups in the town, and so its role and responsibility in welfare is, in the words of one respondent, 'to bring the others together ...someone has to take the lead and bring everyone together' (G1 ef).

It is felt that if the Church were to focus more on external issues relevant to the lives of ordinary men and women in the town it could both do a lot of good and build itself up. In the words of one occasional churchgoer, who connected the issue of the Church's own growth to its wider welfare role:

The Church of England, which is what I am, you don't get a lot of people [...] you get the feeling that when these elderly people die off there is going to be nobody coming along. I just don't know what you do about that and I don't know whether that all stems from if the Church had a wider role in what we are talking about, whether that would bring more people in, give them a wider interest.' (G1 bf)

Or as another put it: ‘It may be that the only way that the church can go in Europe is to get involved more socially, otherwise it might decline severely’ (G2 bm). The same man argued earlier in the same discussion that welfare work can be a way in which the church attracts members ‘going out there practically to help people and then drawing people into the more formal aspects,’ and he continues: ‘I think this is perfectly justified, even if it is slightly cynical’ (G2 bm). Even if he is the only respondent to express his opinions in such strong terms there seems to be a general pattern of opinion amongst the respondents that if the Church were to be more active both in the community and in promoting what it already does it could attract more members and win allies in the public sphere, so that when it does speak out it would be taken more seriously.

#### 7.4.16. Significance of Gender

Given the limited size of the sample, it is difficult to perceive differences in responses along gender lines. Of the two focus groups, one was numerically dominated by women and the other by men, but the broad themes emerging from both discussions are very similar. Neither does gender emerge as a significant factor in the content of discussions. What can be said, however, is that in contrast to comments by the clergy in the town, who talk about the church as a community of Christian individuals in society, questions about the role of the Church are for the most part interpreted fairly narrowly as being about activities run or sponsored by the Church and comments made by parish priests. Given that the majority of parish priests in the town are male, it can therefore be seen that the expectation that priests will take the lead is also one that men will take the lead. Similarly the fact that the more high-profile projects are the ones that are commented also shows that the more individual-oriented care provided by many women is not seen outside the churches as a contribution to welfare in the same way as more large-scale projects.

### 7.5. Summary

The case study of Darlington presented in this chapter has along with the results of the mapping process detailed in Chapter 6, provided a picture of the role played by the Church of England at local level in a medium-sized town in contemporary England. Together the material collected in these chapters has detailed what the Church says and does at local level, but also what is expected of the Church in this area and how its role is perceived.

The case study has shown that the Church continues to play a role within the welfare sphere, both as welfare agent and social voice and that it is ex-

pected to do so. This broad-brush-stroke can however, if taken at face value, risk hiding the nuances in the material.

An holistic understanding of the term welfare, which seems common both to representatives of the churches and of other institutions, leads to an acknowledgement that the lines are not always clear-cut. Basic needs for survival have to be met before spiritual needs can be addressed, and a common theme running through the interviews is an expectation that the Church should speak out on behalf of the poor and dispossessed and provide practical help for these groups in society.

If the expectation of what should be done and on behalf of whom is clear however, the perception of who it is that should do it is less so. The question boils down to who or what is church? A general expectation that Christian churches have a duty to the poor is often also combined with an expectation that the Church of England has particular responsibilities that go hand in hand with the rights it has as an established church. The Church of England clergy see themselves, as well as the church buildings, as both practical and symbolic expressions of a particular duty of care to the local community. Representatives of other organisations in the town see the Church as an organisation which still has a particular platform, which it can and should make use of. Nonetheless, however they are equally determined that the Church should not expect treatment different from that of any other organisation. Herein lies a difference, however, the representatives of the churches may accept that the Church as an organisation can and should be treated as an equal to other organisations in civil society as far as participating in the running of welfare services is concerned, but they also emphasise a wider definition of church. Here, the welfare work of the churches is seen as encompassing the initiatives and caring tasks undertaken by Christian individuals, members of congregations who undertake such tasks in the course of their secular employment, or as volunteers in their free time. Seen from this perspective the role of the Church in welfare is to encourage and inspire such individuals through the worship and social community of the local church and to bring more people into the churches to increase their numbers.

What both the broad consensus and the tensions related to it revealed by the case study can say about wider issues of the role of institutional religion in contemporary society is the subject of the next chapter.

## Part III – Analysis, Interpretation and Theoretical Elaboration



## 8. Analysis

### 8.1. Analysis and Interpretation of the Findings from Darlington

#### 8.1.1. Introduction

In moving to the third part of this thesis so focus shifts from the empirical study intended to provide material with which to explore the role of institutional religion in contemporary western Europe between individual and society and theoretical elaboration on its results. In the following section the results of the case study are thus analysed in the light of previous research and theory-building outlined in Chapter 2. The current chapter begins this process by drawing out themes from the study of Darlington which are then further developed in Chapter 9.

The study of Darlington has shown that while the Church of England has a role to play in society this role is neither clear cut nor static. At one and the same time the Church's role is as one of a number of organisations in civil society, but also distinct as the established church. The role played by the Church is highly dependent on the actions of and relationships between individuals, but also on the status of the Church within the organisational structures of the welfare system.

These tensions and others can be seen both in the role played by the Church and in the perceptions and expectations of the Church's role. Despite the broad consensus which has emerged supporting a role for the Church in the welfare sphere, tensions exist between what the Church's role is today and what is expected of it. They also exist between and within groups of interviewees. Tensions exist between opinions of the representatives of Church and of other organisations, but also amongst representatives of both the Church and the local authority.

In the following chapter the material from the case study presented above will be analysed, first within the local context and then against the backdrop of the local church's role as part of a national church. In this section, discussion will be centred upon drawing out both tensions and similarities which exist in different perceptions and expectations of the role of the Church in welfare. Here the local case study is used as an example of the situation for the Church of England in its manifestation at local parish level throughout the country. To this end, the Swedish context and the role of the Church of

Sweden in particular will be drawn upon as a mirror to provide comparative elements through which to highlight those elements of the situation which are particularly English, but also where similarities indicate wider European, or even global trends. As was noted in the first chapter of this volume the reasons for choosing the Swedish context for this role are twofold. Firstly, use of a Swedish case for this comparison utilises a perspective in an explicit manner which would certainly have filtered into the analysis in implicit ways due to my knowledge of and situation in Sweden. Secondly, the histories of both church-state relations and welfare systems and the current situations of the national churches in both countries are at one and the same time intriguingly similar and subtly different. The similarities make meaningful comparison possible, while the differences highlight the aspects of the English case study which are specific to the national context. Throughout the chapter that follows therefore, comparisons with the Swedish situation will be made where helpful in raising discussion of findings from the Darlington case to a discussion of the role of institutional religion in Europe at a theoretical level.

Through this analytical exploration, the discussion will therefore be lifted from a consideration of Darlington per se and the case of Darlington becomes, in other words, a tool with which to illustrate wider questions of the role of institutionalised religion in western Europe between individual and society.

### 8.1.2. Welfare – A Broad Concept

Definitions and interpretations of the term welfare which appear in the interview material are similar for all groups of interviewees. All mention both material and spiritual aspects, although it is true that the latter is stressed more by the representatives of the churches. For the clergy, this spiritual wellbeing encompassed by the term welfare involves the idea of a person as being made whole through their relationship with God. Other respondents do not see God as part of the picture, but rather stress the need to take into account all aspects of a person's life and needs when assessing their welfare. Nonetheless, there is clearly a shared understanding that the welfare of individuals and groups in society needs to be addressed in a way that takes the whole picture into account, both Church and public authority representatives talk of holistic approaches and the need to see the whole person.

Understandings of welfare as encompassing notions of wellbeing and not simply material care are frequently connected with the expression of concern that society is becoming more individualistic and that there is an ongoing breakdown in traditional family units, leaving individuals vulnerable at a number of levels. Rising levels of homelessness and increasing numbers of one-person households and of elderly people in residential care are only three factors which provide some measure of empirical back-up for these

perceptions. In fact, the majority of issues expected to be the major challenges for the welfare system in Darlington in coming years are related to these significant changes in the make-up of society in some way. There is no difference here between the ways that representatives of the local authorities and of the churches see the challenges to the system, the differences come rather in the roles which they see for the Church in tackling such issues.

### 8.1.2. A Church-Shaped Space in Society

It is clear from the responses of the clergy in interviews that they see the Church's involvement in welfare as a God-given duty, not only this, the fact that the Church of England is an established church, with each parish having responsibility for the welfare of all individuals within the parish boundaries is taken very seriously. Clergy refer frequently to the task of the 'cure of souls' in the parish conferred upon them at their installation in the parish and emphasise this general responsibility, while at the same time commenting that they are not social workers and that the responsibility for basic material care lies with the public authorities. The church may have been the first provider of general healthcare, they argue, but now there are others who are better qualified to do so and the Church's responsibility is therefore to work alongside these structures, providing its expertise where necessary.

Representatives of the public authorities place the emphasis differently. They see themselves as having primary responsibility for the local community and see the Church as one of a number of voluntary organisations with whom they can co-operate. Questions of this nature, however, frequently prompt comment along the lines that there are areas where the local authority could benefit from closer co-operation with the churches, but that this simply has not come up in discussion. The Church is, several say, never mentioned in discussions over welfare provision.

The tensions shown above, along with the open attitude of those in the public authorities to the possibility of closer co-operation with the churches, shows that there is clearly room for a proactive Church to assume a role should it so wish. The Church representatives are, however, cautious in this respect, not least in terms of practical social care. Citing the restricted resources of the Church, in both human and financial terms as well as the necessity of the Church to focus on areas in which it has expertise the interviewees are careful to guard themselves and their institutions from taking on too much.

It is interesting that the discourse within the public authorities as regards the involvement of voluntary groups, faith groups and the general public in welfare provision is clearly influenced by national discourse and targets expecting or demanding a language and practice of involving faith groups and ethnic minorities. This means that any questions as to the involvement of churches are automatically met by responses encompassing all faith groups,

although Darlington itself has only very small numbers of ethnic minorities and of faiths other than Christianity. It is true that those faith communities that do exist are often concentrated in the more deprived areas of town, so public authorities are obliged to focus on these as a result of explicit targets set to prioritise the areas of town with most deprivation. But despite this cautious language encompassing all faiths, in the majority of interviews an understanding that the Church of England and/or the Christian churches have a particular role to play emerged. This may not be desired, as many commented that all churches and voluntary organisations ought to be treated equally, but the fact that the Church is an established church and present in all areas of the town, along with its history as a natural partner for the authorities means that it is still seen as having a particular role, not least as a voice in public debate.

In contrast to the two groups of interviewees mentioned above the general public has a much less coherent perception of the role of the Church in welfare. Nearly all those interviewed feel that the Church ought to have a role, and that it has the resources to fulfil such a role. They consider that they might turn to their local parish priest for spiritual matters, but knowledge of what the Church actually does in Darlington varied greatly. Those who attend a church on a regular basis have a good idea of what the Church does, both on its own and in co-operation with others, but those who have little or no contact with the Church comment that they would not think to turn to the Church if they were in material need and are not aware of what the churches do in the town. This ties in closely with the Church representatives' perception of the expectations that the general public might have of the Church. Generally they feel that the population has very low expectations of the Church in the area of welfare except, perhaps, in times of personal crisis, such as bereavement.

### 8.1.3. Voice or Action?

Both from the viewpoint of the Church and the public authority it seems that the Church's roles as actor and voice are seen as being intrinsically connected. Responses to a question as to whether, if the Church has a role in welfare, it ought to prioritise practical action or speaking out, were generally that both are equally important and go hand-in-hand. This was not least true for Church representatives, who argue that a church acting on the ground can then speak out more credibly. Representatives of the public authorities feel that both roles are legitimate, but given that the state organises the provision of welfare services they see a more important role for the Church in acting as a critic of society.

This may also be true of other organisations, but the Church has networks in the community, contacts with councillors and still commands a certain amount of attention, plus the fact that it is still an established church. This

means, many argue, that the Church has a duty at a local level to make use of this opportunity, just as the bishops in the House of Lords have a duty to make use of their position. But it is not only this, the Church is to a significant extent seen as an in-between point, a mediator between the population and those in power. The Church has channels which it can use to speak out, but also, when it does do, so it can speak as an independent voice. A parish priest and a social worker may, for example, be equally well aware of failures in the system, but a priest can speak out without fear for his or her job.

Representatives of the Church agree with this assessment and stress the fact that the Church could be more outspoken than it is currently, although some comment that it is not always speaking out publicly that is the best alternative. Diplomacy behind the scenes is also important. Nonetheless, it is striking that the emphasis on the prophetic role of the church is not borne out in practice in Darlington at the current time. Representatives of the public authorities comment on previous vicars and clergy from other denominations, who were a force to reckon with in the town and who challenged them on a range of awkward issues. This, the general opinion is, is not the case at the moment. There is a feeling that the Church could adopt a much more prominent role if it only chose to do so.

This in turn highlights the importance, in a place the size of Darlington at least, of individual personalities and relationships for the role of the Church in general and for its co-operation with other bodies too. There is considerable scope for one or two individuals to be a driving force for change in both town and local Church, but this also makes the processes vulnerable to the movement of individuals to and from the town.

#### 8.1.4. Church Identity – Institution or Community of Individuals?

One clear tension evident in the material, which in turn affects the interpretation of other responses, is the understanding of what is meant by church. Representatives of the local authorities and of the general public refer solely to institutions and their official representatives when talking about the role of the Church or churches in welfare. Church representatives, however, make a distinction between the Church, both local and national as organisation and the church as Christians in the world.

The former view focuses attention on projects that the churches run and classes the Church therefore alongside other voluntary organisations in society. Arguing along these lines, representatives of the local authorities say that there is a place for the Church to be involved in welfare as long as it is prepared to be professional in its provision of services and not mix the giving of care with requirements that recipients accept its doctrines. For the representatives of the Church, however, this argument, while not irrelevant,

is a side issue. The churches in Darlington have little desire to compete for funding for major projects, at least not at the present time. They accept that, should this be the case, they would need to follow the same rules as everyone else (something that recent strengthening of child protection legislation has made them only too well aware of), but maintain that the majority of the welfare work of the church is not carried out in this manner. They interpret questions asking about the role of the Church as including the contributions of all Christian men and women to society as carers, volunteers and paid workers, not limited to the work which they do under the umbrella of a particular parish church. Part of the churches' contribution to welfare is, in this view, then a strengthening of social capital in the area.

#### 8.1.5. Religious Institutions and Local Community Cohesion

It is evident that the clergy of the parishes in Darlington feel strongly that one contribution which they make to the town is the strengthening of the local community, in the sense that there is a church and church hall in every area of the town. Where there was once a doctor and a school teacher living where they worked even in the most deprived areas, the clergy are now often the only professionals who live in the parish. Similarly, the church and parish or community hall are often the only communal buildings in residential areas where people can meet. Both practically and symbolically the church building can therefore play an important role at local community level.

Many church halls have now been turned into local community halls, where the parish church and local residents have jointly applied for money and share the use and running of the building. In these centres and in other buildings owned and run solely by the churches a large number of activities take place every week, which have nothing to do with the church, but which bring people who would otherwise have no contact with the church through its doors. In one community centre, which is used by over 400 people a week, for events as diverse as dance classes and uniformed children's organisations (such as guides and brownies) to baby massage run by Sure Start the parish priest has prioritised being around in the building as much as possible when such events are on and connects a trebling in the number of baptisms performed in the church last year with this policy (6fc).

Amongst those in the local authorities, the fact that the parish church is often at the centre of its local community with important knowledge about the residents, not least schools and the elderly is seen as something which could be capitalised on further, and the fact that the local churches have often taken the initiative and got involved in local community partnerships is appreciated. However the connection made by those in the churches between involvement in the community and the importance of the church building is seldom recognised by those outside the Church. In fact, the opposite is sometimes, though by no means always, the case. While there is an aware-

ness that the Church is not rich in terms of disposable income, the opinion is sometimes expressed that it could do more valuable work if it were to sell off buildings and land and use the proceeds for social projects.

### **Physical and Symbolic Presence**

This said, however, the physical presence of the Church in the town has, in the study of Darlington, been shown to play a not insignificant part in the Church's contribution to welfare in the town. Looking down on Darlington from the town's railway station it is unsurprising, knowing its history, that the clear presence of Christianity in the shape of steeples and spires is not matched by the obvious presence of a mosque or gurdwara, although they do exist. Church buildings dominate the skyline, and the presence of one large church in the marketplace, next to the council headquarters, is witness to the role that the Church has played in Darlington's past. The suspicion that first impressions might not be all that they seem, however, is confirmed by the fact that one church building near the centre of town turns out, on closer inspection, to be a carpet warehouse. The physical structure of the town provides an indication of the changes that have taken place in patterns of religious affiliation and influence, but this study has also shown that these impressions need nuancing.

Both the images painted above are familiar to those who have followed the debate on the Church of England's role in contemporary life. The image of the church building as a carpet warehouse adorns the cover of Steve Bruce's reiteration of the classic theory of secularisation in the west and it is a fitting symbol for the message he wishes to press home (Bruce 2002). *The Church in the Marketplace* is the title of George Carey's (later Archbishop of Canterbury) account of the transformation of the interior of the church of St Nicholas in Durham, which fills the same location in Durham as that occupied by St Cuthbert's in Darlington (Carey 1984). The remodelling of St Nicholas' included removing the Victorian pews and was intended to make the space more flexible for both worship celebration and community use. In Darlington, the church in the marketplace stands unchanged, but with a daughter church, now parish church in its own right, built to the *flexible* model of the church in the marketplace, and the carpet warehouse continues to do business. Alongside these models, however several parishes in the town have entered into partnerships with community groups and handed over some of the control of the buildings from church council to local community representatives (with no personal church commitment). The resulting community centres are one concrete (or brick at least) example of the local church's continued, but adapting role in the field of welfare and a useful illuminator of the ambivalent and varying perceptions and expectations of this.

The investment (both in terms of human and financial resources) in these buildings shows the continued emphasis on the part of the churches them-

selves of the Church's role as being parish-based and of a broad understanding of welfare connected to notions of community building. When one parish priest notes that people attending childcare services run from the community centre in her parish do not connect this with the Church she does not accept that this has nothing to do with the Church. Nor does she argue that the Church should be running such services itself. Rather she sees an opportunity, through her own presence in the building for people to come into contact with the local church and to begin to see the church as a part of their normal daily lives, as somewhere which might have something to offer to them. Neither is this priest alone in perceiving the Church's role in welfare at this broad level, nor in stressing the opinion that the Church is not and should not be an 'alternative social service'. The church at local level is expected to do that which is specific to the church, to care for the spiritual health of parishioners.

#### 8.1.6. Theological Motivation for Social Involvement

The discussion above highlights the fact that Church representatives see a natural role for the Church in society in general and in welfare in particular and that this is shared to a certain extent by representatives of the public sector. Interestingly, where the representatives of the public authorities and of the general population express theological motives or reflections concerning the role of the Church they coincide to a certain degree with those of the Church representatives. Church representatives refer to the example of Jesus and occasionally to the gospels (as a canon of literature, or to more specific passages) as motivation for Church involvement in providing social care and speaking out on behalf of those on the margins of society. Where others indicate theological motives for the Church it is also along these lines. The contrast is not, in other words in the theological motives highlighted, but rather the way in which they are interpreted, while for those looking in at the Church from the outside these motives are seen as reasons why the Church as a corporate body should be involved in society. For many within the organisations of the Church the focus is on individual Christians as the church in the world and the calling to Christians to care for the sick is as much to a nurse at work in a hospital, who serves God through her paid occupation, as it is to the Church to organise hospital visits.

One clear difference in theological motives for the work of the Church is the fact that representatives of the Church frequently refer to the Old Testament and to the prophets in particular, where as representatives of the public sector, if they make any theological reflection at all, confine their comments to references to the New Testament. The clergy, however, name the prophets of the Hebrew Bible both in support of an argument that the Church should actively work for the poor and that the Church should speak out against the powers that be in society if necessary. It is clear that for the clergy, an under-

standing of the Church's mission to follow Christ is also embedded in a longer tradition.

Neither can it be said that the theological motives cited by the clergy for the Church's involvement in practical social work can be said to be any different from theologically grounded arguments for the Church as a social voice. Commonly the two are seen as complementary elements of the Church's calling, as the following extract from one interview shows:

I think they are both important, [...] we should have a voice which speaks to social issues and which is willing to speak out [...] I can't believe that we should try to wriggle out of that one in the end, because I believe in a God who comes into creation in Christ and if the incarnation means anything it means actually rolling up your sleeves and getting on with things to do with the flesh, things to do with material wellbeing as well as the highfaluting spiritual issues. (19 mc)

This clergyman argues, in other words, that the mission of the Church involves getting involved in worldly issues and this, he goes on to say, may include challenging the secular authorities: 'And I don't believe that I see Jesus as actually shirking those prophetic and political issues at all, he spoke out quite clearly, particularly against the establishment, the status quo of the day' (19mc). Theological motivation for the social work of the Church and its role as a voice in the nation is clearly evident in all of the responses from the Church representatives when each interview is read as a complete unit, but is most usefully read as whole against the background of the individual's general theological background. The priests interviewed rarely cite scripture or refer to particular theological streams in the life of the Church, although, as indicated above, they do refer to scripture in passing, generally assuming theological competence on the part of the interviewer. To someone unfamiliar with the Christian tradition and scriptures and even with the theological tradition of the Anglican Church, many references may seem obtuse, but nonetheless different motivations for engagement based on different theological understandings are evident in the material.

### 8.1.7. Structural Tensions – Sociological and Theological

If the Church's future role in welfare is, to a large extent, dependent on how churches at a local level respond to the unarticulated social challenge before them, then tensions within the Church will play a significant part in the development of this role. Interviewees who represent the churches see a clear role for churches in welfare and defend this with much the same theological arguments as they defend the position of the Church as an established church. Many are ambivalent towards the establishment in itself, but nonetheless argue strongly for a parochial model where the parish church has responsibility for the whole community. This is, not infrequently, connected

with an understanding of the church not as an organisation but as a community of individual Christians as part of society however, which fits with a more congregational model and this is where difficult questions for the Church as an organisation are raised.

An understanding of the Church as existing for all, both active and passive, in the parochial model, is defended with the same arguments as the freedom and conscience of individual Christians to work in the community and to choose the worshipping community that suits them best. The major question for the Church therefore lies in the issue of how to reconcile the ambiguity of the parallel existence of a formal parochial model and an informal congregational model of church. This fundamental tension in the Church, combined with the existence of such a wide variety of theological models and liturgical styles, as the case of Darlington shows, highlights the fact that the Church's role in welfare stands to become increasingly varied at a local level. Theological divisions evident at a national level play a part in this, but at local level the issue is not one of whether the different theologies support different attitudes to the Church's role in welfare. In general these are very similar and all see a role for the Church as both voice and actor. The point of tension lies in how different theological models are used to support a more active or passive role for the Church as a collective entity.

### **Theological Rhetoric versus Economic Pragmatism**

There are some noticeable differences in the tone which the Church representatives take when presenting theological arguments for the role of the Church in society and even what they say that they do at a local level. Strong theological arguments are given that the Church should be active in providing care for the needy, but when asked what is done in their parish in the field of welfare the clergy are cautious, arguing that it is not the role of the local church to act as an untrained social service and that it does not have the resources to set up large numbers of projects, it must in other words be careful to tailor its coat to the cloth available. This said there is clearly a will to do more where feasible. Several of the parishes have recently, or are about to, carry out audits of time and talent (or gifts) amongst the members of their congregations, to see where the opportunity exists for the development of new initiatives.

In terms of the Church's role as a prophetic voice there is also an interesting tension apparent. Interviewees argue that the Church is called to be prophetic and to question the powers that be on behalf of those with no voice, but there is little evidence that the Church of England clergy currently in post exercise this role on a regular basis, in fact local authority representatives contrast the current situation with that of a few years ago when the local church was more voluble. It may be that the climate is different and that there is more to be gained by taking a more diplomatic approach today, but it is obvious that while the Church representatives argue in theological

terms that the Church should be prophetic, they are more likely to act as diplomats themselves.

### **Theological Difference and Organisational Unity**

If I had been expecting anything, it was that a model of churchmanship would shine though here with attitudes to the role of the Church in welfare equating to a large extent with attitudes to theological understandings of the core role of the Church. The following model illustrates this relation in terms of ideal types. While there are exceptions to the pattern illustrated below there are clear links evident in the Church at national level between churchmanship and attitudes to the Church's role in welfare. The issue of churchmanship has already been discussed; here the issue is simplified taking into account two key elements; conservative/liberal attitudes and high church/low church theologies. An individual or congregation describing themselves as high church conservative would, on this scale, therefore be likely to focus on the Church's responsibility to fill the pews first and would be likely to base their arguments on the primary role of the Church to provide spiritual ministry and inspire individual Christians to care for their fellow human beings. A low church conservative from the evangelical wing of the Church would share this opposition, but focus arguments on biblical interpretation and the mission of the Church.

The clergy interviewed were asked to describe their churchmanship and this information along with attitudes to the role of the Church in welfare allows the development of the following model of ideal types.

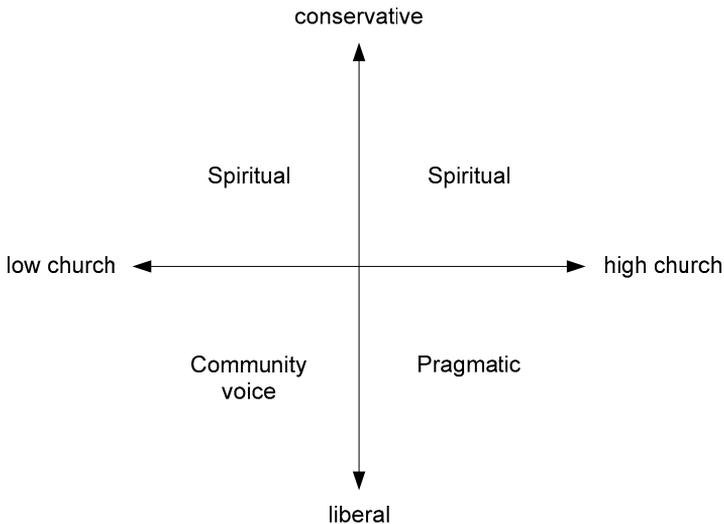


Figure 4. Ideal types model illustrating theoretical relationship between churchmanship amongst Church of England clergy and attitudes to the Church's role in welfare work.

Theological motivation for the social work of the Church and its role as a voice in the nation is clearly evident in all of the responses from the Church representatives in the study of Darlington. The fact that a wide variety of motivations for engagement based on different theological understandings are evident in the material is perhaps not surprising given the historical background of the Church of England. Not only is the Church a broad church including many theological streams within the communion, but also the very tradition which binds them, stemming from Richard Hooker is an understanding of theological thought as encompassing a synthesis of scripture, reason and tradition. It is therefore not possible to say that any of the interviewees makes use of traditional Anglican theological motives to explain Church involvement in society, but rather a number of streams can be seen here which relate to different types of churchmanship within the Church of England.

While this study does not explore how the clergy interviewed fit ideal types of churchmanship, the three models for the role of the Church in welfare, outlined above can be dissected along these lines. Those who propose the *spiritual* model of the Church are likely to have a more conservative form of churchmanship than those who represent the models of *community voice* and *pragmatic provision*. This conclusion also finds support in the conclusions of Douglas Davies et al. in their comprehensive study of the rural church in England published in 1990. Their questions were different, but the emphasis which the clergy place on priorities in their work echo the trends in this smaller sample from Darlington. Those clergy in their large sample who professed what Davies terms ‘Central’ or ‘Catholic’ churchmanships emphasise ‘people’ in general as a major reward of their work. This is echoed in the Darlington sample in the clergy who fit into the community voice and pragmatic provision models, where the emphasis on the Church’s role in welfare is on broad community interaction and service to and contact with a wide range of people in the local area. It also contrasts with the spiritual model in the Darlington case, where the emphasis is on bringing individuals into the church and to a personal faith. An emphasis echoed in the rural church study where the Evangelicals interviewed stressed both church growth and ‘personal growth’ as their primary rewards from their ministry (Davies 2004, 163; Davies, Watkins & Winter 1991).

It is interesting here to compare these three typologies with four models of understandings of church-state relations from within the churches developed in the 1980s by Medhurst and Moyser, outlined in Chapter 2. Their ideal types can, they argue, all be found in the Anglican Church and represent the different attitudes to the Church’s role in society which can be found at the various intersections of the two scales of theological liberalism to conservatism and of interaction with versus isolation from the secular political realm (Medhurst & Moyser 1988, 356–357). The four types can be briefly recapped as follows; the ‘Christ in culture’ type represents a view of the

church as guardian of a tradition in a Christian country, this exists in both conservative and liberal forms, the former arguing for a Christendom model of society, the latter for a church which interprets secular developments in the light of theology. The model of 'Christ as transformer of culture' is inspired by an incarnational theology associated in the Church of England with the high church wing of the Church. Here theological arguments are used to justify radical political values. 'Christ above culture' models, in contrast, argue that Christianity is a personal matter with no political implications and the church is expected to avoid political involvement. Finally, the 'Christ against culture' model, grounded in a theological pessimism regarding the sinful nature of humanity sees no possibility for interaction between church and secular institutions. If these were the models evident in the Church twenty years ago, it is interesting that they do not equate to those that can be seen in Darlington today.

At the end of their summary of the situation in the 1980s, Medhurst and Moyser comment on ongoing theological shifts caused by increased interaction across internal doctrinal divides. Not least, they mention a renewed focus on the 'Kingdom of God' influencing those of a more Catholic persuasion to see the world rather than the church as the focus of divine involvement in the world, and those from the evangelical wing of the Church to move towards more corporate understandings of Christianity and away from a more personal focus (Medhurst & Moyser 1988, 358).

It is certainly the case that none of the Church representatives in Darlington expressed an understanding of the role of the Church as being separate from, or even in opposition to society. This study is not longitudinal, so there has been no opportunity to study changes in Darlington, but if this brief comparison can tell us anything, it is an indication that the theological models of church evident in the Church of England have altered over time as its role as an established church has been increasingly called into question.

Here a comparison with the situation in Sweden can provide an interesting example of the fact that this development is not a uniquely English phenomenon. There are similarities in that in both countries the legacy of a theological discourse underpinning and justifying the role that the national church plays has had a significant impact. In Sweden this is framed in the notion of Folk Church, often associated with the thought of Einar Billing, but the current form of which is inspired by a number of strands of thought (See Thidevall 2002; Ekstrand 2002). In England the discourse is not as easy to formulate in one notion, but can be found in the concept of a Church for the nation advocated by William Temple. Interviews with representatives of the majority churches in Darlington, but also in the Swedish case study in the WREP project in Gävle, indicate the residual strength of such concepts in the self-perception of the churches today (Edgardh Beckman, Ekstrand & Pettersson 2006, 70–72). Clergy in Darlington in particular highlight the importance of the fact that the Church has a responsibility which stretches

beyond congregational boundaries: They cite this both as personal motivation for their own ministry within the Church and as an important element of the Church's ministry and identity.

The study has, in other words revealed a clear common understanding of the functional role of the Church held by its own representatives as a broad institution of broad use to society. It has, however, also shown that differences in theological perspectives have an impact on the ways in which these representatives of the Church approach the Church's function. Differences in praxis in the field of welfare are influenced by differences in ecclesiological understandings despite basic underlying agreement on the Church's role in society.

### **Parish or Congregation**

This said, however, a further tension affecting the continued role of institutional religion at local level highlighted by the case study of Darlington is that between the parish and the congregational model of church, or to use Chambers' terminology between an understanding of the Church as communal or associational institution (Chambers 2005, 208). The study of Darlington has shown that these two models currently exist side-by-side in the ministry of the churches in the town and also that both this fact and potential changes in the balance have implications both for the Church's role in welfare and how its role in society more generally is perceived. In particular, the case study bears witness to an increasing congregationalisation of church attendance. This can be traced to preferences in liturgical, theological and even musical style on the part of church attendees in the town. Interviewees in Darlington, both clergy and lay members of the churches talking about their own habits, indicated that worshippers frequently choose a church to worship in irrespective of parish boundaries. A burgeoning congregational model of church is, in other words, evident in Darlington in contrast to a continued strong commitment on the part of the clergy to the parish model as the framework for the welfare commitments of the Church and of their personal ministry.

This alteration in the status of the parish church indicated by the case study on Darlington is no dramatic revelation in the context of the national religious background sketched earlier. Martyn Percy, writing on the future of the parish system in England has commented that 'the parish church is losing its identity because the concept and feel of parish-type communities has been lost first' (Percy 2006, 12). The response of the Church, he argues, must be to recognise the role of '*local* churches, and that is arguably the key mutation of modernity for the parish church: its identity is shifting from the parochial to the local – as the church that people know and identify with as their own' (Percy 2006, 12). The Church cannot retain its role between individual and society by continuing to hold fast to an unchanged geographical parish model of church. However, as the Darlington study indicates this does not

mean that the role of institutional religion at this level is defunct. Percy's advice to the Church receives, in other words, support from the results of this study. Here it was shown that support for a continued role for the Church in welfare is grounded in both the history of the Church in the geographical area, but also the way in which the Church acts on that position. Percy concludes that in the modern world 'to be a parish church, a church must find a community and locate itself within it' (Percy 2006, 14–15). The territorial model of church may not have lost its relevance, but as Cundy has noted 'being there for all' in modern Britain, also means taking 'networks' seriously' (Cundy, 2006 158). The results of this study support that conclusion. That the continued role of institutional religion between individual and society depends on those institutions engaging actively with their traditional models of interaction with wider society. To what extent they will continue to retain relevance depends on the actions of individuals and the development of institutional structures at local level.

#### 8.1.8. Tensions Related to Gender

It was evident from the replies of both Church representatives and others to questions concerning issues of gender and gender equality that the accepted language of discourse in the public sphere in England today is one of equality in general, with gender equality being seen as one aspect amongst many. Rather than singling it out the issue of gender, therefore, interviewees both from Church and other organisations tend towards making comments on the Church as a voice in the debate on equality in general. Here there is agreement that the Church can have much to say on this issue.

There is, however, some reservation on the part of those who do not represent the Church as to whether the church can speak with a credible voice when its own structures are so patriarchal. Church representatives do acknowledge that the Church's chances of being taken seriously when commenting on gender inequalities have been damaged by internal conflicts, but do not seem to see the hierarchies of the church as they stand as an obstacle to such comment in themselves. Rather the clergy choose to focus on theologically grounded interpretations of human nature, as individuals made in the image of God, unique, but equally valued. This leads in many cases to a discussion of people's uncertainty over their roles in family and society in the modern world, a discussion which does not appear in the responses from those outside the churches.

#### **Gender-determined Roles and Tasks**

It is clear that not only do men and women participate to varying degrees in the work of the Church, but also that they take on different tasks. There are more women active, although to some extent this coincides with the fact that more women attend church too, but in addition women take on more caring

roles within the life of the local church. Those men who do give time to the Church are much more likely to be involved in practical and traditionally male tasks. Alternatively, there are a number of businessmen who will give their time to the church in the form of contacts for fundraising and take on the role of organiser and provider in this way.

Similarly, the pattern of use of services, where women attend services provided with children in mind, such as parent-and-toddler groups, is a replica of that of use of services in the secular milieu, where women are more frequent users of services, not least because they accompany their children, mentioning their own problems while they are there. It seems therefore that the Church in its provision of welfare services, and the population in the way that they use it, mirror to a large extent behaviour in society at large. Women are closely connected with family and the Church in its provision of services makes little attempt to break this pattern. There is, however, little awareness of this on the ground. When asked about activities provided specifically for men or women, few of the respondents make this connection, apart from to say that few fathers come to parent-and-toddler groups.

### **Power and Influence**

In terms of power and influence in the local church it is clear that the male dominated hierarchy evident at national level is also in place at local level. This is not to say that there are not a number of women in significant positions in their local church as churchwardens or as members of the PCC, but the significant majority of the parish priests in the town are still men, and as the only full-time employee in the majority of parishes, they are in considerable positions of power, regardless of whether or not the individuals concerned have made active attempts to involve lay people in the running of the parish church.

Interviews with those representing the local authority, other organisations and the focus groups show that the parish priests have a symbolic value as representatives of the Church and are also the automatic contact point for those outside who may wish to co-operate with the Church. In this respect, the clergy of the town act as gatekeepers, both physically and symbolically, for the interaction of town and Church, an element of power and influence that is easily underestimated by those concerned.

However it is interesting that this did not divide the interviewees in terms of the language that they used to speak of gender equality. Practically all of the Church representatives interviewed who referred to this issue stressed one aspect – difference. In terms of the Church speaking out on gender equality the general feeling was that this was important, but mainly within the framework of calls for equality for all ethnic minorities, faiths etc. as well as gender. In the words of one parish priest:

I think it is an area amongst others. I mean the church has to say something about equality. It also has to say something about difference. By equality we don't mean sameness, I think that could be a problem, but yes the church is called to speak out on equality just as it is called to speak out on injustice and equality of gender is just one facet of equality. (18 mc)

Interestingly this coincides with the opinions of the non-church representatives. Gender equality is often seen as part of a wider equality debate, possibly because in the current media and political climate in England where the overriding rhetoric is one of general equality. This is in contrast to Scandinavian countries where the issue of gender equality is more frequently set aside, and even has its own terminology.

To return to the Church, however, when the interviewees refer to their own situation, personal or local, they place emphasis on the concept of 'equal but different'. It was felt that men and women have different ways of serving the Church or carrying out social work in the name of the Church. In other words, the differences in opinion as to the valuing of men's and women's contributions are more subtle than might first be thought. This can be illustrated with two examples from the material. One a woman and parish priest in the town, the other also a parish priest, a man who has responsibility for a parish church in the town which rejects the ordained ministry of women. She uses the expression equal but different in defining her ministry in relation to that of male clerics:

I think having a woman here has been, and it could have been any woman I don't mean me, has been important, [...]. I would want to say ideally to have a man and woman in a parish would be perfect because they both offer something different just by their nature and I think that when the last vicar was here we made a good team in as much as there were two people with whom we had contact and he had ministered to them for about 5 years, both women, but he didn't know that they had been abused as children. They told me in the first year I was here, but they hadn't told him. That was just because he was a man, wasn't because he was X. (6fc)

Earlier on in the interview, separate from the discussion of gender, she comments:

I make it my business [...], you will probably only hear this from one of us [...], I make it my business to serve teas, coffees and refreshments at the thrift shop. People know that I am there and I have made a lot of contacts with people. Some come for a chat. One lady now comes to church, just through chatting over the hatch, having a cup of tea. I get up at some un-earthly hour in the morning to do scones etc. [...] and I suppose that is the bonus of having a woman, but I would see that as part of my role and my contact with this community. (6fc)

When asked if it was because she is a woman that she could and did take on that role she replies:

It might be but I see no reason why a fella shouldn't do it. They would perhaps do it in a slightly different way, but maybe I do it easier because I am a woman and that kind of thing comes easier. (6fc)

In contrast, the male interviewee here sees clearly defined roles for men and women within the Church, or more accurately does not see a place for women as priests. In response to a question as to whether there is a role for the Church to play in discussions over men's and women's roles in society his reply is 'The Church has got itself into women priests and all that sort of thing and of course we have nothing to do with any of that' (9mc). He is however at pains to stress the balance in his congregation, the fact that women have important roles to play in the life of the parish and shows a photograph to prove his point. He comments further: 'This is not an issue for me at all, you can see it is a balance, from my own experience it is just a [...] I don't know what all the fuss is about' (9mc). He also stresses the need for balance and for different roles for men and women. It is, however, important to note, in this context, the defensive nature of his stance, no doubt because of his role in internal Church debates, and he was more open in discussions once the tape recorder had been switched off.

## 8.2. Comparative and Theoretical Expansions from the Case of Darlington on the Role of Institutional Religion

### 8.2.1. Institutional Religion in Society – Change and Continuation

Some of the most interesting aspects of the material are the indications of processes of change and the tensions evident between Church and society and within the Church. In interviews with representatives of the public authorities it is clear that there is a discrepancy between what they feel ought to be the role for the Church in welfare, given a neutral starting point, and what is expected, given the current situation. Many express the opinion that the Church ought to be (and is in many respects) treated as just one of a number of voluntary organisations in the local area. The accepted official discourse is one of co-operation with faith communities in general. However, this is coupled with an expectation that the Church should speak out and act on welfare issues, both because of its ideological and theological foundation and because it remains the established church. There is, in other words a clear tension between what is expected of the Church in theory and what is expected in practice, given its historical legacy. The opinion that the Church

ought to be seen as just one voluntary organisation is not seen to be at odds with the understanding that the churches have unique knowledge of their local communities, something which could be utilised more, by nurses and social workers supporting the elderly, for example.

In Darlington there is also an awareness that the Church had a stronger position in the past as the result of the activism of a couple of clergymen in particular. Even those who argue that the Church should have no particular role, note that this independent voice is lacking in Darlington today. They argue that there is a role for the Church there for the taking, if only it were more proactive.

If these observations can say anything at a more general national level, it is that there remains an openness on the part of the general public and many of those who work within the public sector towards the Church as both actor and social voice. Partnership with the churches may not be sought actively, but there are opportunities for the Church if it wants them. In light of this it then seems that the future for the Church's role in welfare could look very different in different parts of the country. The extent of Church involvement at a local level will depend hugely on the individuals on the ground and in positions of power in different localities. It can therefore also be argued at a broader level that the potential for religious institutions to play a role between individual and society is as dependent on individual relationships and actions at local level as on the position of the institutions in societal structures.

To a large extent this also holds true of the situation in Sweden, although the differences in the bureaucratic framework mean that it manifests itself in a different manner. Despite the continued close connections between church and state in Sweden following disestablishment, the Church of Sweden does, however, now have more freedom in a number of ways. One of these is of particular relevance to the discussion in hand. As the Church is no longer a state body, it is able to act in competition with state and local authority services in a number of fields, including childcare and welfare provision. This is something that it was unable to do up until the year 2000 and this means that unlike in England, where the Church's established nature has never meant it is subject to controls on its ability to provide welfare services which could be said to be competing with local authority provision, the Church has a new opportunity to act within the welfare sphere. The different reactions of the representatives of the parishes in Gävle to this new situation serve to show that here too what the Church makes of this situation is highly dependent on the response and initiatives of individuals in the local area. This holds true for the initiatives of individuals representing the Churches, but also the response to such initiatives by representatives of the local authorities.

### 8.2.3. Institutional Religion and Civil Society

#### **Sweden as a Comparative Example**

It was noted at the beginning of this chapter that Sweden is a particularly appropriate and useful comparative example in the context of this study. The reasons for this are twofold: Firstly, the combination of significant similarities between, and smaller differences in, the composition of the welfare systems and situations of the national churches provides potential for fruitful comparison. Secondly, the use of Sweden as a mirror here allows the study as a whole to fully capitalise on personal experience and knowledge of both contexts.

In the following section results from of the study of England will be set against the Swedish context. To this end a certain descriptive element is present in the text where detailed information on the Swedish situation is deemed necessary for the comparisons being made. The comparisons that follow focus on the key issue revealed by the case study, namely the notion that the established church in England continues to play a role in society distinct from that of other organisations. The extent to which this result can be said to be applicable only to the English situation or extendable also to a wider European context is explored by testing it as a hypothesis in the Swedish situation. To this end two areas have been chosen around which the comparison will focus: firstly, the religious situation and history of the majority church and secondly, the composition of civil society in the context of the national welfare system.

#### **Folk Church in a Plural Society**

In contrast to Britain's gradual pluralisation Sweden has, until very recently, been a relatively homogeneous society in terms of both ethnic and religious diversity. Immigration at levels which have a significant impact on the composition of the population is a fairly recent phenomenon, only really beginning in the 1950s. When this is seen alongside the notion of the state as the 'home of the people' it is therefore perhaps unsurprising that freedom of religion, including the right for the first time for Swedish citizens to opt out of membership of the Church of Sweden also came late to this society (Religious Freedom Act 1951), which is otherwise known internationally for a progressive approach to issues of equality.

The Religious Freedom Act was also the starting point for formal discussions on the nature of the establishment of the Church of Sweden, beginning a process of separation of church and state (Bäckström, Edgardh Beckman & Pettersson 2004, 47). This culminated on 1 January 2000 with the passing of a statute defining the Church of Sweden as an Evangelical Lutheran Church independent of the state. It continues, however, to have close links to the state and this raises the question of whether this process of separation in fact can justifiably be called disestablishment. Certainly the split was not total

and Ekstrand (2002, 67–8) argues that the legal ties between church and state remain so strong that it is not relevant to speak of a disestablishment (see also Edqvist 2000, 27). In fact, Ekstrand claims that the strength of these bands is such that it is, to a certain extent, possible to continue to consider the Church of Sweden a state church (Ekstrand 2002, 23). Apart from the fact that the Church is defined by the new laws regulating its relation to the state Church membership fees continue to be collected on its behalf via the tax system. Although 76% of the Swedish population remain members of the Church of Sweden (Church of Sweden 2006), it has, in recent years begun to feel the effects of declining membership figures, which have a direct impact on income levels (see Bromander 2003; 2005).

Despite the similarities in the current ambiguous positions of the Church of Sweden and the Church of England in relation to the state in their respective contexts the brief sketch above also indicates where some differences lie, which in turn affect the way in which the Churches play a role between individual and society. One practical consequence of the separation of church and state in Sweden is that the Church of Sweden is no longer formally a state institution. This means that laws which hindered it from carrying out practical social work, if such activities could be said to be in competition with those provided by other state authorities, no longer apply and the Church is able to co-operate with local authorities on such matters. This aspect touched on above is one factor which has been identified by those researchers who studied the town of Gävle as contributing to a perception that the Church is ‘more closely related to the public service sector (the state) after its formal separation than it was before the separation’ (Edgardh Beckman, Ekstrand & Pettersson 2006, 67). This, they argue, however, only partly explains the change and ‘a longer-term process in which the Church of Sweden has organizationally and ideologically developed a separate identity from that of the state’ must be taken into account (Edgardh Beckman, Ekstrand & Pettersson 2006, 66). The Church of Sweden is, they argue on the basis of their study of Gävle, both more involved and expected to be more involved in the public sector than before 2000. So they claim ‘the Church, from having been hidden and ignored under the state umbrella, appears in a new way as a resource’ (Edgardh Beckman, Ekstrand & Pettersson 2006, 69). Thus, they maintain ‘it is even increasing its presence in the public sphere in a new way which is different from its public role in the old agricultural society’ (Edgardh Beckman, Ekstrand & Pettersson 2006, 68). The formal change in relationship between church and state has, in Sweden, been one factor in bringing about a change in the role of the Church in society. What is of particular interest here, however, is that while there has been no parallel process of formal change in England, the informal development of an ambiguous relationship is similar. So, too, is the current picture in the sense that that in both contexts the Church’s role as a resource for both individual and society is stressed. This supports Edgardh Beckman, Ekstrand &

Pettersson's argument that longer processes of change in institutional identity are as important a factor in understanding the role of institutional religion in contemporary society as are the formal structural frameworks.

### **Church as Complement**

Historically the national church in Sweden was a significant provider of welfare, for much of that time as part of the state system. This was, however, gradually eroded throughout the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries and as Karen Anderson has pointed out: 'Church-state fusion was accompanied by the gradual secularization of political life, and the transfer of important welfare functions from the church to the state (poor relief) strengthened the secularization process' (Anderson 2009, 230). By the early twentieth century the relationship between church and state clarified as one where the Church of Sweden as the *folk church* was understood to bear responsibility for the spiritual wellbeing of the people as distinct from the public welfare responsibility of the state (Pettersson, Ekstrand & Edgardh Beckman 2004, 27; Ekstrand 2002). Writing on the role of the Church of Sweden in its national context today, Anders Bäckström has argued that following processes of differentiation the role of the Church in society has altered. Where the Church of Sweden once formed the framework for society, it now plays a complementary role (Bäckström 2001, 152). Against the background of a number of surveys undertaken in Sweden over the past twenty years, he contends that a clear majority of the population are of the opinion that the Church of Sweden has a welfare role to play in caring for the vulnerable in society. He also demonstrates, however, that this same majority see the function of the Church as complementary to the provision of the welfare state. In particular he stresses that:

It is when national values are on the line (different forms of crises), when care for the elderly and sick needs strengthening and when care for those on the margins of society (the new social exclusion) requires attention, that the churches are judged to have a societal role to play. (Bäckström 2009, 40)<sup>80</sup>

Furthermore, Bäckström argues, within this complementary role the activities of the Church in the welfare sphere can be categorised under two headings, direct and symbolic (Bäckström 2001, 135–6).

This general principle of complementarity does not, however, apply solely to the Church in the field of welfare today, but can be connected to the history and development of the Swedish welfare system and applied to other organisations as well. The fundamental structure of the Swedish welfare

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<sup>80</sup> My translation from the Swedish: 'Det är då nationella värden står på spel (olika former av kriser), då omsorgen om gamla och sjuka behöver stärkas och då omsorgen om grupper i samhällets marginal (det nya utanförskapet) skall uppmärksammas som kyrkorna bedöms ha en samhällsroll.'

system is a textbook example of Esping-Andersen's social democratic model, and despite changes to the system since its conception the state and local authorities are still seen as the guarantors of the basic needs of all citizens. The system, based on utilitarian principles of universal and equal provision, developed alongside the notion of society as the 'home of the people' (*folkhemmet*) and intended to replace the family based welfare of pre-industrial society. The 'home of the people' with its focus on the collective interestingly, however, created the conditions for an increasing focus on the rights and freedoms of the individual which underpin contemporary service-based society and are reflected in changes made to the welfare system (Bäckström, Edgardh Beckman & Pettersson 2004, 43; Ahrne et al. 1996). These changes including processes of decentralisation and privatisation began to alter the Swedish welfare system in the 1980s and accelerated throughout the 1990s. Gradually the notion of the state as sole provider of all welfare from the cradle to the grave has been whittled away and family, voluntary organisations and private companies have begun to be seen as potential actors in the welfare sphere as a complement to basic state provision (Pettersson, Ekstrand & Edgardh Beckman 2004, 34–5). This means that while the notion that the state should provide support and security for the people continues to have strong support in Sweden, as does the connected notion that other organisations should not take over essential tasks, but rather complement the basic provision of the state (Wijkström & Lundström 2002, 205–6).

There is general agreement from respondents from all groups in Gävle that the role of the Church in welfare is to act as a complement to services provided by the authorities, which act as a general safety net (Edgardh Beckman and Pettersson 2006, 66). This connects to a wider theoretical argument outlining the close connections between state and civil society in Sweden. The distinctive Scandinavian welfare model and corresponding trust for the state as the 'home of the people' has itself both impacted and been impacted by the development of an equally distinctive sphere of civil society (Svedberg & Lundström 2003). This too is undergoing change, and as the very use of the term civil society, itself a term imported from the Anglo-American context, shows is increasingly impacted upon by European and global influences (see Trägårdh 2007). Historically the home of the people has been supported by and has itself supported a significant and distinctively Swedish role for popular mass movements (Wijkström & Lundström 2003). As Eva Jeppsson Grassman and Lars Svedberg have pointed out, membership in such associations has been seen as a prerequisite for a functioning democracy and basic element of citizenship (Jeppsson Grassman & Svedberg 2007, 130). The emphasis, both in state initiatives to strengthen the sector and research surrounding it has therefore often been placed on political orientation (Jeppsson Grassman & Svedberg 2007, 131). It is therefore far from the case that a strong state has led to a weak civil society in Swe-

den, but rather that this sphere has been characterised by active membership, in contrast to the Anglo-American model of volunteering (Jeppsson Grassman & Svedberg 2007, 132).

Here the perceptions and expectations of the national churches in the welfare sphere in England and Sweden can be seen as one element of the development of civil society in more general terms in the two countries. In other words, differences between the way that the role of the Church is perceived in Sweden and in England are, to some extent, bound up in the different directions in which civil society has developed in the two countries and not only in the specific role of the established church. Trägårdh suggests that in Sweden ‘the ideal-typical vision of the relationship between state and society is much closer to the Hegelian than the Anglo-American conception of the state-civil society dynamic’ (Trägårdh 2007, 32). If interpreted in the context of understandings of civil society in their respective countries the expectations of the churches’ roles in welfare expressed in Darlington and Gävle support this interpretation of fundamental differences between the two countries. Despite the fact that in both countries the churches are seen as natural partners for the state in the welfare sphere in both direct and symbolic ways, where in Sweden the complementary role of the Church is stressed from all sides, in the English context the role of the Church is more ambiguous.

### **Voluntarism in Civil Society and Church**

Despite the fact that the civil society model in Sweden lacks the emphasis on voluntarism present in the Anglo-American model a large voluntary sector in Sweden nevertheless exists (Svedberg & Lundström 2003, 221). Little of this, however, takes place within the domains of welfare and care, and neither is the sector characterised by ‘professional’ service provision (Trägårdh 2007, 34). There has been an increase in volunteering in this sector in recent years and to some extent this supports the theory that cuts in the welfare system lead to more volunteering (Jeppsson Grassman & Svedberg 2007, 153). However, as Jeppsson Grassman and Svedberg stress, the ‘Swedish voluntary sector is coloured by a “lagging traditionalism”’ which continues to impact both civil society and the provision of welfare (Jeppsson Grassman & Svedberg 2007, 156). Given this fact it is therefore also useful to take a broader view when assessing the impact of civil society on the welfare sector. While organisations specifically devoted to providing social services may not be common in Sweden, local voluntary social welfare work characterised by social support and mutual help, arranged in a more informal and non-professional manner, exists and appears to be growing (Svedberg & Lundström 2003, 226–7). What may often be seen simply as a positive by-product of social activity serves to blur the boundaries between social activity and welfare activity (Jeppsson Grassman & Svedberg 2007, 145). In addition, a percentage of the Swedish population, equivalent to that in the United Kingdom, provide informal care for others outside of their own home

(Jeppsson Grassman & Svedberg 2007, 143). This form of informal care plays a significant role in the care, not least of the elderly, in both countries. It is on this blurred boundary that much welfare activity of both the Church of England and the Church of Sweden can be found.

Even within the organisation of the churches, however, there is evidence of the differences in both development of civil society and the historical role of the Church. This comes to the fore if the role of volunteers in the two churches is compared. While the Church of Sweden does rely on considerable numbers of volunteers in many areas of its work, not least choirs and youth work, the dependence on volunteers for the day-to-day running of parish churches is considerably less than that of the Church of England. The Church of Sweden can, since 2000, be classed as the largest voluntary organisation in the country, but this is based on the fact that it is a membership organisation and most of the work of this *voluntary organisation* is done by paid employees. This is not least because the Church of Sweden is a rich church when compared with others in Europe and this is particularly reflected by the number of salaried employees. In 2003 the Church of Sweden had 22,000 full or part-time employees (Bäckström, Edgardh Beckman & Pettersson 2004, 78–9), which in an international comparison is a relatively high figure (Bäckström, Edgardh Beckman and Pettersson 2004, 42–3).

Despite this legacy, however, following an empirical study at parish level of the Church of Sweden, Eva Jeppsson Grassman has argued that the Church's role in welfare is changing. The Church in Sweden today, she argues, is caught between an awareness that the Christian view of the person is an important foundation for the social work of the Church and expectations of the Church as a 'service church' (Jeppsson Grassman 2001, 204). There are she claims questions as to how the two roles of active participant in civil society and social services institution can be combined. Perhaps, she says, 'the Church is facing a choice to be made for the future. Or the Church is facing a superb opportunity to pursue its tradition in a new way and unite these different roles through social work under the aegis of the parish' (Jeppsson Grassman 2001, 204). This tension which Jeppsson Grassman has identified is clearly evident in the churches in Darlington and Gävle although the recognition of this tension is much more prominent in the responses of the interviewees in the English study than in the Swedish.<sup>81</sup> What is less clear cut, however, is the extent to which this tension is seen as a choice between two options which has to be made by the Church in the terms expressed by Jeppsson Grassman. Despite recognising and lamenting the difficulties of combining the two tasks, representatives of the churches in both countries tend rather to stress the necessity of the social and community-building role of the Church as the enabling factor in allowing the Church to

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<sup>81</sup> For a collation of the interview results from the study of Gävle to compare with that of Darlington see Beckman and Pettersson 2006

fulfil its service-provider role. Although this is evident in both churches, however, it comes across most forcefully in the English case and this in turn, perhaps, can be explained by the different histories in the development of civil society, the role of volunteering discussed above, and the place of volunteers in the churches in particular.<sup>82</sup>

Amnå argues that changes in Swedish civil society in general mean that its role as a ‘trustworthy ally of integrated democracy’ should no longer be taken for granted (Amnå 2006). He is writing about civil society in general and not the position of churches in particular, but in the light of results from the study in Gävle this position raises questions for the Church of Sweden too. If it is now part, albeit with a particular role, of civil society, the question is: What is that role today in relation to both state and citizens? This question is as pertinent in the English context as in the Swedish, despite the national differences in the histories and composition of civil society.

### **The Fruits of Comparison**

Here it is possible to say that the results of this comparison of the results of the English case study with the Swedish context support the conclusions of Anne Pessi, who has commented that the majority churches in Europe are ‘both at the crossroads in relation to their agendas and visions and on the ‘borderline’ of societal structure; they are no longer majority institutions shared by most, but neither are they just one institution among many’ (Pessi 2008, 957).

The case study of Darlington had already highlighted this ‘borderline’ role (to use Pessi’s language) for the Church in England, but the comparison with the Swedish situation indicated the relevance of this interpretation within the Swedish national context too. The comparison above has shown both that elements of the results of the case study are particular to the English context and can be better understood when interpreted as such and that the broad conclusions have relevance when applied to the situation in another European country. By extension therefore, the comparative analysis performed above shows, that if contextual differences are taken into account and included as an integral part of analysis that in-depth studies of one European country can produce results which can be helpful in studying Europe as a whole. Such detailed studies of one case can be useful both in revealing potential Europe wide trends and tendencies, but also in drawing out national specificities when applied to other national situations.

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<sup>82</sup> For a collation of the interview results from the study of Gävle to compare with that of Darlington see Beckman and Pettersson 2006

### 8.3. The Church ‘In-between’

Having established that the conclusions of the case study can have interpretative power in other contexts, but also that knowledge of the local and national situation is crucial to an understanding of the extent to which these results can be applicable beyond national boundaries it seems pertinent to return analytical focus to the local level. The study has already established that the Church of England has a role to play in society which is distinct from that of other organisations and that this conclusion can also be fruitfully applied in other European countries as an interpretative hypothesis. In returning to the English case the section that follows is an attempt to further specify and nuance this understanding.

In Darlington it is clear that ambiguity reigns regarding both the Church’s current role and what that role ought to be. This is true at several levels. Representatives of the local authorities have clear perceptions of what the Church ought to do and yet say in the same breath that they know nothing of the Church and it is not their place to comment. They argue that, in the field of welfare, the Church is a voluntary organisation like any other, but then go on to subscribe the Church having a particular responsibility or expertise. Those who represent the Church take it for granted that the Church should be involved in welfare issues, and yet, faced with the realities of parish ministry and secular regulations, are equally quick to dismiss many courses of action as unfeasible. The Church is, in other words, given more or less consciously a particular role by the interviewees, a role that is seen as different from that of other voluntary groups or faith groups, yet which is not guaranteed.

This particular role which the majority church is ascribed can be broken down into three different categories. These have been distilled from the interview material because of their prevalence and because they are areas where representatives of both authorities and Church paint a similar picture. This is not to say that there are no tensions here, but in the common ground identified here the tensions that appear give a more nuanced picture of the situation on the ground.

As the discussion above shows, the expectation from both Church and authority perspectives that the Church has a role to play in welfare is not an expectation that the churches will provide practical welfare services. Representatives of the local authority say that the churches can do so if they want, but see other bodies as equally desirable partners. The Church representatives for their part are willing to play this role where resources and competence allow, but are eager to stress both that the role of the Church is not to be an alternative welfare agency and that resources, regulations and the need for professional competence in many fields are factors which limit such enterprises. Focus is rather placed on a more diffuse and less clear-cut role that the Church can have, yet a role that is seen as being specific to the Church of

England. The Church's role as community-builder and collective space is one example of this 'in-between' role.

### **The Church as Neutral Ground**

The fact that the Church of England has a presence in all areas of the town in its parish churches, and has resources, both human and financial which most other churches do not, gives it a natural role in the local community. The parish priest is, in a number of areas, the only professional serving the community who is also resident in that community. Similarly the church building and connected church hall is often the only communal space in a residential area. This physical presence is familiar to local residents who use church premises not only for family events such as weddings, funerals and baptisms, but also for meetings and social clubs and who are used to the local vicar's involvement with the local school, visiting local old people's homes and so on. In recent years in Darlington this relationship has been formalised in many areas, as local community partnerships have been formed and in most places the local vicar has been active in the process and sits on or chairs the relevant committee. In some areas, co-operation has gone further and a deal has been struck whereby the local church has ceded control of its hall to a joint committee representing both the church and the local residents, which gives the opportunity to seek funding intended for community groups for refurbishment. This has the direct result that a wider variety of people use the building and thereby come into contact with the Church. One vicar interviewed is convinced, for example, that efforts to be around when the building is being used for parent-and-toddler activities run by state-sponsored initiatives has increased the number of baptisms in the church. Irrespective of whether or not it is true that such initiatives have an effect on attitudes to the Church and involvement in local church life though, it is clear that the churches do have a role to play in creating and preserving a sense of local community. The Church representatives themselves see this as an important part of their ministry and of the Church's contribution to welfare in the town. The Church can, in other words, function as an arena for welfare, a space in which individuals can meet both with official welfare systems and with each other and which despite its ideological and theological foundation is seen in some way as a form of neutral territory, which all, regardless of religious affiliation or lack of it have a right to make a claim on.

### **Church as Mediator**

One further example can be articulated to demonstrate the Church as mediator. That representatives of the Church, and the parish priest in particular, have a good knowledge of the local community, and expertise in areas connected to welfare is recognised by many within the health and welfare sector in Darlington. This can be said to be an example of what Harris has called the 'care catalyst' role of churches, by which she means their particular abil-

ity to identify those in need of support and to pass this information on (Harris 1998a, 156). There is, however, a feeling in Darlington both on the part of those representing the welfare system and those within the churches that this competence could be used to greater advantage for individuals in the community if channels of communication between churches and local authorities could be improved. Both where this communication functions well and where it is seen as lacking it is felt that the Church is often in a position to act as a mediator between individuals in need of support and the official welfare system. The Church is, in other words, seen as a potential source of information and support in both directions in the interface between individuals and the welfare system.

In addition the Church is seen as a place to turn when support from the official systems has not been sufficient, or when individuals lack trust in the authorities and therefore refrain from making contact via the official route. This is either because of general lack of trust in authority, fear that support provided by authorities comes at a price, i.e. for homeless under 18s the requirement to return home, or particularly amongst the elderly because of a sense of stigma attached to means-tested benefits, although it must however be noted that similar preconceptions of the Church and stigma attached to the services it may offer can also exist. Also this preference for non-official routes of support may not be something which brings people to the Church specifically or even to churches in general, but rather seems to be a tendency connected to the voluntary sector. However, the clergy in Darlington witness an expectation that the Church has a duty to help people in need, including numerous examples of people knocking on the door of the vicarage to ask for money or food. For respondents from both the Church and other organisations in this study, however, the fact that the Church is one such institution which people turn to when they do not trust the authorities is one further example of the position which the Church holds between state and individual, not part of the official welfare system and yet an assumed actor in the field.

### **Church as Critical Voice**

The third element of the Church's 'in-between' role is its social voice, that is to say the extent to which the church engages in the public debate over welfare issues at all levels. All Church representatives interviewed argue that the Church has a duty to speak out on moral issues and for most this is a theological duty which touches on the very nature of Christianity and the role of the church in general. Interestingly those interviewees who are connected to the public authorities share this view, although not always the theological motivation behind it. All Christian churches are seen to have a particular duty to speak out about injustices given the moral stance which they claim and the Church of England is also seen as having both a duty and an opportunity over and above this. A duty to speak out, because of the privileged

position it has, and an opportunity to make use of its unique access to the corridors of power. Many refer in particular to the position of the bishops in the House of Lords, but also feel that even outside of this forum their status gives them a voice in dialogue with authorities and in the media. At local level, similar responsibility is seen to rest with parish priests. Those clergy who are school governors or sit on other committees which oversee aspects of welfare provision in the town, in particular, both see themselves and are seen by others as having a unique opportunity. They are knowledgeable about the local area and the workings of the system and yet, unlike those employed by the system, are able to speak out without fear of losing their job. As one representative of the local authorities says:

Every organisation needs checks and balances [...] And I think that the Church and faith groups have a role to play in providing some of those checks and balances against the state. [...] We all need critical friends and I think the Church can, that is one of the roles that faith groups can occupy.  
(26fl/em)

Despite the general agreement on the ground in Darlington that the Church can and should have a public voice as a social critic there is little evidence of representatives of the Church doing so in the public domain and the clergy stress the role of bishops rather than their own role in this context. Here there are clear similarities between the Swedish and English cases. In both situations the representatives of the Church at local level think that the Church should speak out, but rarely do so themselves.

That the Church should speak out alongside other pressure or faith groups seems to be taken for granted on all sides in Darlington. Over and above this, as Thomas Ekstrand has noted in his comparative analysis of the material from the WREP project, in none of the other seven countries in the project is the role of the national church as a critic of social and political order as clearly stated as in Darlington (Ekstrand forthcoming). There is, in the case study of Darlington, little evidence of the old maxim that church and politics do not mix. But this is not to say that people do not have reservations about the Church's role. Both Church and interviewees representing other organisations feel that the Church should make sure it is informed before it gets involved and that it should be engaged with society and the local community if what it says is to be taken seriously.

It is not insignificant that several interviewees from organisations other than the Church mention particular individuals in the Church who have spoken out on social issues and express admiration for those individuals, while clearly harbouring scepticism towards the Church as an organisation. Not least because of its tendency to focus inwards and its obvious internal disagreements, such as the long running debate over the ordination of women to the priesthood, which for many with little or no involvement in the Church

itself serves as proof that the Church is out of touch with modern society. A difference is made between the Church as organisation and individuals within it who are seen in a positive light. Part of the criticism of the Church here is clearly grounded in a feeling that it is out of touch and it may be that it is expectations of what the Church should be that lead to such harsh criticism. To return to the words of one welfare sector employee uttered when reflecting on the Church: 'If we can't have high expectations of the church, what else can we have high expectations of?' (1f l/em). This quotation illustrates one of the central results of this study, namely that in late modern society a need is felt for ethical voices and that the Church is assumed to be fitted for the role. This is one element of a role between individual and society that the Church of England has been shown to play and which a comparison with the Swedish situation has indicated can also be said of religious institutions in other countries in Europe.

## 8.4. Summary

The discussion above has illustrated the aim of this study to explore the role of institutional religion in contemporary western Europe between individual and society by discussing the key results from the case study of Darlington at a theoretical level and in doing so developing an understanding of the situation in England – namely that the Church has a role to play in-between individual and society. Furthermore, this conclusion has been tested against the Swedish situation. An exercise which has indicated that there is some benefit to be found in applying conclusions pertaining to England to other European countries if contextual variations are taken into account.

The study indicates, in other words, that the legacy of the historical presence of the churches as religious institutions has created an opening for institutional religion to play a role in late modern society in Europe that it has not had in the past. The historic role which the national churches in Europe have had as powerful institutions providing a framework for society has disappeared, but a new role is emerging. Churches no longer provide the structure for society within which individuals orientate themselves, rather they can provide space for interaction and act as a mediator between individual and society in both practical and symbolic terms. They can also take on a role as social voice in the public domain and are seen as having the right and even duty to do so.

Furthermore, as the Darlington study has shown, far from emerging despite the historic legacy, this changed role seems to be developing precisely because the Church as institution is seen not only as a bearer of religious and moral values on behalf of society, but also as a guardian of the common good.

## 9. Institutional Religion in Late Modern Society

### 9.1. Institutional Religion between Individual and Society

The ‘in-between’ role which the Church of England has, in the previous chapter, been shown to play in England is an indication that there is a role for institutional religion in contemporary western Europe between individual and society. Far from signalling an end point, however, this statement raises as many questions as it answers and the questions for further theoretical discussion of the issue must be: What does it mean to speak of a role for institutional religion in Europe today, what forms is it likely to take in the future and how will changes in both individual religiosity and welfare systems impact upon that role? The chapter that follows is an exploration of these questions.

#### **Institutional Religion and Religious Pluralism**

A public opinion survey from 1998 showed that the majority of the population in every western European country holds the view that religion is ‘intolerant’ (Greeley 2003, 78, Table 5.2). José Casanova has picked up on this, arguing that, as it is unlikely that people are expressing a recognition of their own intolerance, they must be thinking either of someone else’s ‘religion’, or a memory of their former religion, which they feel they have outgrown (Casanova 2007b, 15). He continues with the observation that:

What would seem obvious is that such a widespread negative view of “religion” cannot possibly be grounded empirically on the collective historical experience of European societies in the 20<sup>th</sup> century or on the actual personal experience of most contemporary Europeans. It can plausibly be explained, however, as a secular construct that has the function of positively differentiating modern secular Europeans from “the religious other”... (Casanova 2007b, 16)

The material from Darlington shows that the Church of England at local level is often not equated with religion with a capital ‘R’. Church involve-

ment in the public sphere is tolerated, or even welcomed as long as it is not seen to be overly 'religious' and yet one reason why it is welcomed as a partner for the secular institutions is because it is an institution which purports to hold a clear set of values. Or, to put it another way, it supports Casanova's assumption that negative attitudes to religion as a phenomenon in European society today bear little relation to individual's experiences of the historically present religious institutions.

Here it is also of relevance to make use of the thought of Jürgen Habermas in his exploration of Rawl's notion of political liberalism and its application in contemporary society (Habermas 2006). Habermas has argued that the success of a liberal response to religious pluralism depends upon both religious and secular citizens being 'prepared to embark on an interpretation of the relationship of faith and knowledge that first enables them to behave in a self-reflexive manner towards each other in the political public sphere' (Habermas 2006, 20). Habermas's argument is that for a plural democracy to function religious citizens must accept secular motivations for policy, while secular citizens, must also be able to accept that religious citizens present arguments based on religious belief and tradition. Habermas refers to the work of Paul J. Weithmann, who has described churches in America as actors in civil society with a functional role to play in the upholding of democracy in that country (Habermas 2006, 7). Weithmann's findings, that the churches both provide arguments for public debates on moral issues and inform and encourage members to active participation in democratic processes are echoed in the findings of this study at the local level in England in terms of the role of the Church in the welfare sphere. It would therefore seem appropriate in this case to accept Weithmann's conclusions with reference to the American situation as also applicable to the European, namely that the commitment of churches to civil society would be eroded by an obligation imposed by the state to frame their religious statements in universal 'secular' language (Habermas 2006, 7).<sup>83</sup>

Be that as it may, the case study in Darlington revealed an interesting paradox, which renders Weithmann's observations particularly important. In Darlington the Church is expected to speak and act in public and is expected to do so precisely because it is perceived to do so from a basis in a particular moral tradition. It is, however, expected to regulate itself and refrain from including any explicit Christian message in its contributions to the welfare sphere, both practical and spoken. Here it seems that what Casanova terms the *secular identity* of European elites and ordinary citizens has gained the upper hand (Casanova 2007a, 63). He continues, however to comment on the 'barely submerged Christian European identity' and it is in the space between this complex combination that the interesting and nuanced discussions of religion's role in contemporary Europe must take place.

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<sup>83</sup> For detailed exposition of Weithmann's argument see Weithmann 2002.

Casanova argues that it is issues connected with the integration of Muslim immigrants into European societies that has raised issues relating to the role of religion in the public sphere that European societies thought that they had solved with the acceptance of the norm of the privatisation of religion (Casanova 2007a, 66). That Islam has become the symbol for such discussion and brought the issue to more general media and public attention would be hard to deny. I would, however, argue that it is not necessary to look 'so far' for examples of questions posed to the secular ideal in Europe. This study has shown that the Christian identity, to be found just below the surface in European societies, itself gives rise to a questioning of the privatisation of religion within the framework of the traditional religious institutions. The expectation that the Church of England will continue to play a role in welfare and that such a role is not only accepted but even expected is one example.

Despite the conclusion drawn above it is pertinent to consider the notion that expectations that the national churches in Europe will continue to play a role in welfare are influenced not as much by the 'religious' nature of the church, but by the fact that it is the welfare work of the church that is the 'access point' for many individuals with the church in late modernity. Anne Yeung has developed this notion with reference to the Finnish church, which is a not insignificant provider of welfare services in its national context (Yeung 2008, 16). Yeung adopted Giddens' notion of access points, the point of connection between lay people and professionals in late modern society that maintains trust, to explain the possibility that welfare work could be the connecting factor between individuals and church (Yeung 2008, 16. see also Giddens 1990). The situation of the Church of England, however, is somewhat different from that of the Finnish church. As Per Pettersson has noted amongst the eight countries compared within the WREP project the case study in England was that which seemed to demonstrate the lowest level of involvement in practical social work (Pettersson forthcoming). In addition in Darlington it was not so much the work which the Church does which was highlighted, but the potential which it has to protest and influence. In short it seems unlikely that welfare is the access point in England which it can be said to be in Finland.

It has been seen in Darlington that representatives of the council, while happy to work with the churches on welfare matters, tend to use the term faith communities rather than churches and in addition see faith communities not primarily as religious institutions as such but rather as one part of the voluntary sector, or civil society. This lends support to the notion that the central institutions of society connected with the state, while tolerant of religion and acknowledging the fact that faith communities can be harnessed in community-building exercises, support what can be termed a *diffuse secularity* in society rather than the *diffuse religiosity* of earlier generations. This is a tendency which is evident not only in England, but also in Sweden and in

other countries in Europe and begs the question of to what extent this shift represents a shift in the importance of church-state relations as a phenomenon with impact on the development of society in general as has been true historically.

At a theoretical level, one way to explore the extent to which the European situation continues to be influenced by church-state relations is to assess this phenomenon within the framework of Beck's notion of the risk society of reflexive modernity (Beck 2000). Despite emphasising simultaneous individualisation and globalisation as the primary characteristics of contemporary society, Beck is at pains to stress a continued role for the nation state. He sees the nation state as providing a structure which assists individuals in balancing the demands of the global and the local. When placed within this framework the case study of Darlington provides a clear example of this continuing role. The 'in-between' role which the Church of England has been shown both to play and to be expected to play at both local and national level demonstrates the continuing link between Church and state and a sense of national identity. These results therefore also provide an interesting counterpart to national quantitative surveys indicating public support for a role for religion in public life, such as that carried out on behalf of the BBC mentioned in Chapter 4 (ComRes 2009).

## 9.2. Institutional Religion and Welfare

As indicated at the outset of this chapter, however, it is not enough to halt at the conclusion drawn above, that the Church of England is expected to play a role in welfare in its national context. If interpreted within the framework of developments in late modern society in general the pertinent theoretical question is not whether it does so, but why and what will that role look like in the future?

If late modern society is characterised by 'rampant individualism' (Heelas 1996, 6), and the focus on individual self-fulfilment that Charles Taylor has called the 'culture of authenticity' (Taylor 1991, 25), the question is not only how to explain the role of religious institutions in the welfare systems of Europe, but also how to explain support for collective welfare systems at all.

If the welfare state is, as Will Hutton predicted, on the wane now that the 'political circumstances of its creation have passed away', then Bauman's hypothesis that it is now an impotent protector against existential insecurity seems incontestable (Hutton, 1995, 49). In that case it would seem logical to assume that individuals are looking elsewhere for that security. Anton van Harskamp has argued that the advent and growth of 'new religiosity' in late modern societies can be attributed to such existential insecurity. In an individualised society, he argues, in facing the pressures that go along with what he calls the "cultural facts" of death, ennui, evil and time', religiosity is one

of the coping mechanisms which individuals utilise (van Harskamp 2008, 19). It is just these 'cultural facts' which are often actualised in individual's meetings with the welfare sector and in considerations of the welfare and wellbeing both of themselves and others. Can van Harskamp's hypothesis therefore also be applied to the notion of the continued existence and public role for religious institutions? The picture which emerged from Darlington indicated a support for the Church as a welfare agent and not least as a protector of the weak and vulnerable against the evils of society. It is not that individuals seem to want that protection for themselves, or that they subscribe to the beliefs of the religious institutions. Here they subscribe to both the political message of individualised society that individuals are responsible for their own security and the more ideological imperative that morals and beliefs can and should not be imposed the individual. Rather the fear that 'I am not secure' leads to a desire for the preservation of those institutions, which not only represent security and tradition in some nostalgic form, but also that stand for a collective. This connects to the thought of Danièle Hervieu-Léger who has argued that processes of individualisation in society mean that the 'religious collectives' are now particularly needed, not least in times of crisis, at the same time as these are disappearing, affected by the same processes of individualisation (Hervieu-Léger 2000, 94). In the case of the Church as an actor in the welfare sphere it can be argued that the Church represents a challenge to that individualism and freedom, which also lies at the root of existential insecurity. The individual therefore seeks to allay fear of the later, by invoking the continued presence of the traditional religious institution with an adaptation of the war cry of late modern society: 'Somebody should do something!'

Here, before proceeding, it is important to note the subtlety of Taylor's notion of a culture of authenticity in that, far from precluding the need for community, Taylor's concept requires its presence. Taylor argues that for the choices that we make to be meaningful they must be based on values, which cannot be plucked out of thin air, but only make sense against the background of a belonging to a culture and community (Taylor 1991, 62). Thus for Taylor the key issue is not that community needs to be created or preserved, but that it needs to be recognised (Taylor 1991, 105–6). Anne Yeung has argued, on the basis of an analysis of the role of the Finnish church in welfare, that in representing values of solidarity with weaker members of society in both actions and deeds the churches can be seen as what she terms 'institutions of authenticity' (Yeung 2008, 15). The churches, in other words, represent to individuals frames of meaning, which stand against the worst excesses of modern life. Following Yeung's line of thought it is therefore possible to argue that the churches' presence is expected in the welfare sphere because they are communities to which a connection can be claimed and which in this way can be invoked as protection against the insecurities of risk society.

### 9.3. Moral Leadership and Symbolic Status

As the discussion above indicates, the question of moral leadership, or even, to put it less strongly of providing a moral voice, is a thorny one in a late modern society. Just as the Church is expected to act in the sphere of welfare in the interests of society in general and the weak and vulnerable in particular it is also expected to speak out on moral issues. But who should speak out? Who or what is Church in this context? Speaking out in Darlington, it seems, is often perceived to be someone else's responsibility. That the Church should speak out is taken for granted and at local level this seems often to mean that the parish priest should be the one raising his or her voice against injustice. While the parish priests are not averse to doing this in a local and, particularly, a committee-level setting, they in turn emphasise the platform which the bishops of the Church have, both at local and national level. Two issues are of importance here. Firstly the further example this provides of the Church being desired as an institution, but not one to which individuals themselves wish to make a commitment. Secondly, the importance of individuals, not least in a symbolic role.

In tackling the second issue first, the work of Mathew Guest and Douglas Davies analysing the place of bishops of the Church of England in British society provide a helpful observation:

Politicians too, came to be interested in engaging with and supporting 'faith communities', not only because of matters of conflict but also because of their potential as voluntary agencies of social welfare provision provided. The Church of England often played important roles in these changing interests, not least because of the recognized place of bishop's as social networkers with a recognized political voice. (Davies & Guest 2007, 17)

The bishop's play this symbolic role at national level and, as the Darlington study has shown it is not only politicians who expect bishops to play an active role in the public debate on welfare issues. Bishops in particular embody the Church in the eyes of the population, but are also representatives of the secular authorities. However this symbolic figurehead role takes on different forms at local and national level, demonstrating in the person of the bishop the tensions which exist in the Church's perceived role and place in society at national and local levels. Davies and Guest, have reported the difference in relationship, which bishops themselves feel that they have to local and national media respectively (Davies & Guest 2007, 58). Naturally other factors come in to play here, including the inherent differences between the types of media reporting common at national and local level. However, the fact that the bishops themselves report having a positive and cooperative relationship with local media, compared to the antagonism they feel from the national media, provides a complementary perspective which confirms elements seen in Darlington. While the Church is a marginal player in the wel-

fare system in practical terms its symbolic role is by no means marginal. In particular the Church is expected to speak out and this expectation is focused on the clergy in the form of bishops and priests. The general positive attitude, however varies depending on the level at which these interventions are seen to impact.

As Kahl has noted in her historical studies of the impact of varying Christian traditions on poverty policy throughout Europe, denominational social doctrines are not easy to trace, but can nonetheless be seen in the shape which the different welfare states have taken (Kahl 2005, 122). The contemporary study of Darlington has teased out at local-level, expressions of varieties of a tradition of Anglican social thought amongst the Church representatives. This both highlights the difficulties Kahl notes in pinning down such denominational social doctrines and their impact, but also serves as evidence of the fact that such factors continue to have an impact on the application of welfare systems, at least at local level. Kahl's argument is that the secular principles of welfare state provision are clearly rooted in Christian doctrines and because of this a 'loss of secular power by the church does not equal loss of spiritual power; it does not mean that the already existing institutions and the principles they embody and perpetuate are abandoned' (Kahl 2005, 122). Kahl is thinking here of the Christian value tradition, which has become a part of the ideological underpinning of the statutory secular institutions. In other words, when she argues that the 'existing institutions' are not abandoned she is not thinking of the religious institutions. But the current study provides evidence that the religious institutions have not been abandoned either, at least to the extent that they are still expected to play an active part not only in taking responsibility for the spiritual welfare of those individuals who choose actively to turn to them, but also within the framework of public welfare provision.

#### 9.4. Church, Civil Society and Social Capital

One element of this is the emphasis placed on parishes and congregations as sites for the generation of social capital in the sense that even those activities organised by the churches not directly as welfare provision but as 'community building' are seen as an important element in civil society at local level, which is an integral part in the current welfare consensus. To a certain extent church-based activities can be compared to those run by other interest-based organisations for those who choose to make use of them, but there is a two-fold difference which is connected both to the value base and the structure of the Church. The first refers to the fact that the parishes organise activities, not just for the active churchgoers, but for all those in the local area who wish to make use of them. In this way social activities organised by the churches provide a service different from that provided by other 'member-

ship organisations.’ Secondly the structure of the Church, with its network of parishes covering the entire town (and at national level the country), gives the Church a particular role in that the knowledge and involvement in the life of the local community is seen both as a justification for giving Church representatives a platform that might not be given to others and as an asset which the Church could use more actively in co-operation with the secular authorities. Casanova has noted that congregations act as schools of democracy in the United States in a way which sets it apart from Europe (Casanova 2007a, 73). But the question is whether the very different system of parish-based welfare provision and community engagement demonstrably evident in Europe is not equipping the churches equally well, albeit in a different manner from the American congregations, to continue to play an active part in civil society.

As this study has indicated, confirming the conclusions of quantitative studies in the field, churches’ contribution to welfare provision can be seen in terms of social capital not just in respect of the activities carried out in the churches’ own domain, but also through the fact that volunteers for churches tend to also volunteer for other organisations too. In Darlington individual narratives witness not only the extent of active voluntary work on the part of churchgoers, but also to the internal interpretation of this as church-related work. Charles Taylor, considering the future of the traditional religious institutions in Europe, takes such conclusions as a starting point when commenting on the fact that in the past those ‘embedded in ordinary church practice’ have also sought other forms of spiritual practice, including charitable work (Taylor 2008, 215). He raises the question, however, of whether this tendency is not beginning to reverse. First, he argues, people are drawn to an activity such as a pilgrimage or study group ‘and then later, if they move along in the appropriate direction, they will find themselves embedded in ordinary practice. And there will be much movement between such forms of practice, and between the associated faiths’ (Taylor 2008, 215). Taylor’s focus is on spiritual practice but the fact that he includes in his account of associated practices the issue of voluntary social work means that his conclusions are of particular interest in the context of a study of church and welfare. The Darlington study showed that there is continued movement along the ‘old’ pathway, the people active in the churches are also active in local civil society, but it also gives indications which support Taylor’s assertions. Those who come into contact with the Church through welfare activities in its buildings or those run by the Church can also begin to attend worship. These indications raise important questions both for the continued potential of the Church as a source of social capital and for the continued status of the majority church as an ‘in-between’ church, indications which appeared in the course of this study, but deserve further considered attention.

The ‘in-between’ church is an important example of the role the majority churches continue to play in European society as a link between individual

and society. A role that aligns with that which Anders Bäckström has termed the ‘communicative arena’ function for institutional religion in late modern society (Bäckström 2001, 159–162). All over Europe the organisational models of society may be very different from that at the time of the conception of the various welfare states, but as the continued role of the Church as part of the current welfare system in England demonstrates it is not the case that the institutional religions are disappearing from that model, more that their roles are changing along with those of other institutions. In England individuals no longer expect to receive all welfare services directly from the local authorities, rather the involvement of civil society is an accepted aspect of welfare provision, which is even taken for granted, as is the notion that the individual ought to be free to choose between welfare service providers as between religions. However, there is still an expectation that the state, through the local authorities, has and will retain some overarching responsibility for welfare services, just as the expectation remains that the established church has a responsibility to fight for the values which underpin this notion of a general safety net. The question that this prompts is twofold: How is this to happen if this consensus is disappearing – someone has to do the work? But also, given the clear levels of support for the institutions, is it really disappearing as fast as some would have us believe?

These questions are relevant questions all over Europe, but as this study has shown, surface at different levels and to different degrees in the various countries. This study has demonstrated that it is possible to apply lessons learnt from an in-depth study of church and welfare in England to Europe more broadly, but it has also highlighted the importance of a contextually aware approach which takes into account differences in models of welfare and of church. That which has been shown to be specifically English has, in other words, to do with the interaction between the liberal welfare system, the composition of civil society in England and the Anglican model of church and its establishment form.

### **Limits of Religious Social Capital**

John Coleman (2003) asked in a United States context: What are the possible limits to religious social capital? What happens when faced with the choice between heating the church and feeding people? (Coleman 2003, 46; Wuthnow 1997, 196) The very question asked shows the differences between the United States and Europe. While the tensions are not the same in Europe, both in terms of differences in welfare systems and (particularly in a United Kingdom–United States comparison) funding for the churches, the essential problem is the same. This is the case not least as churches in Europe are often perceived as being rich precisely because of the historic buildings which they occupy. Also the choices made will be different in different localities and even amongst churches in the same locality, but as the Darlington study has shown, one option open to churches facing a choice between

building and community service is a pragmatic one. The best example here is the move by several churches to relinquish some control over church halls in order to secure funding to make them more accessible to the local (mainly non-worship attending) community. This shows that the possible limitation of the potential social capital of the local church is not necessarily directly connected to financial constraints.

If finances do not necessarily have a determining role in the potential realisation of the social capital of churches and indeed all faith communities it is clear that other contextual and structural factors do. One of these is the connection between religion and politics and the question of the level of influence religious groups can expend on social policy. In the United States John Coleman has argued that 'fears and taboos' against connections between religious groups and political parties mean that religious groups remain on the margins in terms of influencing public policy. Thus he stresses caution should be exercised when drawing conclusions about the extent to which religious groups and communities can foster general social capital (Coleman 2003, 46). Despite the differences in the place of religion in public life in Europe and the United States, as discussed in Chapter 2 Coleman's comments are pertinent to the European situation when seen in the light of the current study. At both national and local level a continued expectation that the Church will speak out on social issues in Britain has been noted, as has the political discourse encouraging 'faith community' involvement in welfare and development initiatives. The question remains however, whether this materialises in practice. The Darlington study would appear to indicate that this is dependent on the functioning of both formal partnership structures and informal co-operation and partnerships at individual level. These appear to be of crucial importance to both the functioning of the welfare system at local level in general and the potential for churches to act effectively within it. This confirms what Maloney, Smith & Stoker argued almost a decade ago, that political involvement is important in stimulating the social capital of bodies in civil society (Maloney, Smith & Stoker 2000, 224). Seen in this light the issue of co-operation and partnership between local authority and local faith communities or churches therefore becomes an important one as a factor in the extent to which latent social capital in civil society (and the faiths element of civil society in particular) can be realised. Churches contribute to social capital and are to some extent a latent value at local community level, but are not a radical alternative and are only really effective in the welfare sphere when working in partnership with local government. One further indication that a significant element of the role of institutional religion in the various national contexts of contemporary Europe between individual and society is as representative and upholder of overarching common values in the public sphere.

### **Continued Role, but What Role?**

This study has shown that there is a continued role for the Church of England in public life at the present time, a role which has been shown to align, in many respects, with Grace Davie's notion of vicarious religion. Davie has written that she thinks that vicarious religion in Europe will last until at least the middle of the century, but perhaps not much longer (Davie 2006, 34). In addition she forecasts that while the actively religious will increasingly make choices based on the market model, these will nonetheless include the historic churches. So any model wishing to predict the future of a public role for the Church of England, or indeed any of the historic majority churches in Europe must take into account the fact that in Europe these two options are not mutually exclusive.

As this study has demonstrated, in England at least, the two remain in fact inextricably entwined. Or, to draw a wider inference from the results of this study, institutional religion in western Europe, for the moment at least, retains a role between individual and society. It is even possible to say that this role is developing, but that process, however, runs parallel to a declining influence for institutional religion in the private sphere. Future studies must therefore address the implications of these simultaneous and opposing, yet interconnected, trends. A pressing question is whether the role in-between individual and society that religious institutions continue to play in western Europe today can be sustained, given their decreasing role in the private sphere.

# 10. Concluding Reflections

## 10.1. Implications for Church and Nation

### 10.1.1. A Church for the Nation

The Church of England's important report published in the 1980s *Faith in the City*, which addressed many of the issues which churches and local authorities in Darlington continue to address today in the welfare sphere, bore the subtitle *A call for Action by Church and Nation*. To a large extent this study is an attempt to consider the relevance of that phrase in England at the beginning of the twenty-first century. In analysing perceptions and expectations of the Church as both agent of welfare and social voice in England today the study can be seen as a search for an answer to the question not only of whether the role of the Church is perceived and expected to be one of action in the welfare sphere, but also whether it is seen to have the right and duty to call for action on such matters. The question is in other words what role does institutional religion have to play in contemporary English society and to what extent is this peculiar to England or also applicable to the broader European context? William Temple, Archbishop of Canterbury from 1942 to 1944 once said of the Church of England:

The Church of England, like other churches has often failed to be completely Christian – always indeed, if we take those words in all their proper depth of meaning; but it has never failed to be utterly, completely, provokingly, adorably English. (Temple 1958, 89–90)

Underlying this comment for Temple was the assumption not only that the Church was English, but also that England was indisputably Christian and that the Church was the symbol and guardian of that heritage. He spoke of a church both of and for the nation. This thesis was not necessary to show that this is no longer the case, this has been done more than adequately by others and it is clearly the case that the role and position of the Church of England and the perceptions and expectations of it as an actor in the public sphere are no longer those of the 1940s. What this thesis has shown, however, is that the Church continues to be perceived as a national church with particular responsibilities and that the expectations on the Church as an actor in the public sphere are high, both from those who claim to represent the Church and from those who claim no direct affiliation with it as an organisation. It

has also shown that in this continued role Temple's assessment of the Church's nature as peculiarly English still stands.

It can be argued that that Church is particularly English, notably here in the ways in which it adapts to developments in society and also in the ways in which society relates to the Church. The comparison with Sweden in particular shows that despite many similarities between the two national situations – indicating European peculiarities, or perhaps more specifically peculiarities of western European societies with a history of a Protestant majority church – the Church of England's role in society is very English.

If it is to be argued that the Church's role in society is very English, the converse of the argument cannot be ignored either, namely that English society and the structures of the political establishment are typically 'Anglican'. Alistair Marwick has argued that the response of the British establishment to the countercultural provocations of the 1960s were characteristically Anglican in their tolerant approach to mainstream culture (Marwick 1998, 35).<sup>84</sup> Similar strands can be seen in this study in the reactions at local and national level to the potential involvement of various faith groups in the welfare sector. The temptation must be resisted, however, to overemphasise the role of Anglicanism in the development of the characteristic of consensus in British politics, to prove that connection would require a separate investigation. The tendencies that have been highlighted, however, of the historical and to some extent continuing cross-pollination between Church and political establishment, are important indicators of possible future scenarios.

If Bauman is correct and a security state is on the rise at the expense of a waning welfare state and that the decline in the welfare state in turn is both a sign of and compounded by a decline in politically active citizenship, does this also mean the disappearance of the notion of a common good? Far from confirming Bauman's gloomy predictions of the triumph of the individual consumer at the expense of solidarity, the picture that has emerged of life in Darlington raises some questions. The lively voluntary sector itself indicates a thriving civil society, while the fact that faith communities in general and the churches in particular are expected to play a role here, especially where welfare issues are concerned, is some indication that institutions which represent and preserve collective solidarity are valued. Others have demonstrated the new directions which civil society seems to be taking in relation to the increasingly questioned role of the nation state and the local-level picture which has emerged here serves to enhance that picture with reference to faith communities and their role in civil society. Over and above this, however, it has shown that, not least in the field of welfare, a particular role continues to exist for the Church of England as a critical partner to the state.

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<sup>84</sup> I am indebted to an article by Bernice Martin for bringing Marwick's conclusions on this subject to my attention. See Martin, Bernice 2003, 9

### 10.1.2. A Critical Partnership for the Common Good?

That this partnership is critical, in other words that the parties are critical of each other within this framework for the purposes of improving conditions for all citizens, seems to be something that is both taken for granted and sought after. Questions that remain are: Is this partnership between Church and nation critical for the common good and has the partnership reached a critical phase?

The case of Darlington indicates that in a time of individualism, when the foundations of the welfare state seem increasingly unsteady, the Church is no less sought after both as a voice and as a visible presence in the welfare arena than it was at the conception of the welfare state. As the historian Matthew Grimley has observed:

Whilst the principles which underlay the welfare state at the end of the twentieth century were very different from Temple's, its actual operation—a partnership of state, voluntary groups, and churches—was actually rather close to Temple's original idea of a welfare state. (Grimley 2004, 222)

The Church of England is no longer the church for the nation, which Temple envisaged, that shared its Christian values with the population at large, but it is sought after as a partner for the state in the establishment of the common good not least because of its worldview. Herein lies the rub, of which the representatives of the Church are only too well aware. The Church is needed and sought after as a result of the very processes which contribute to its own declining influence and inhibit its ability to act as the institution it is expected to be.

## 10.2. Methodological Reflections and Suggestions for Further Research

### 10.2.1. Reflections on the Research Process

During the first interview I conducted in Darlington the healthcare representative to whom I was posing questions posed one of her own. She wanted to know why the focus of the interview was on the Church of England and its role in welfare and not more broadly the role of religious groups and communities in general. From her perspective, the singling out of the established church in this context was an irrelevance and, she argued, detracted focus from more relevant and interesting questions related to religious diversity and pluralism. I responded then that the intention was indeed to explore the broader issues of the role of institutional religion in society, but from foundations in an exploration of the religious institution historically dominant in England. This thesis is an extension of that brief response and its results a

justification of the approach. Despite this, however, her question has remained with me throughout the entire process. At the level of the empirical research, a comprehensive study of all religious institutions in Darlington and their roles in welfare would not have been feasible for practical reasons, but this does not mean that it would not have been interesting, or have brought further dimensions to the theoretical analysis. Given the results of that analysis and questions as to the extent to which conclusions relating to the role of the Church can be extended to other religious institutions that aspect which I would have liked to have included reveals itself as a potential topic for a future study against which to test the conclusions drawn here.

One further decision to limit the scope of the empirical study taken early on was the decision to include only priests as representatives of the Church in the study. This made sense at the time and fitted the practical constraints of the project, however, if given the chance to repeat the project, the inclusion of more volunteers as Church representatives at the outset of the interview phase (and while the interview guide was still being developed) could have added an extra dimension to the study. And had more volunteers been involved in the study, than the two who were added at a later date as a way of including this perspective in an already ongoing study, this would have allowed for the exploration in the study of potential tensions in attitudes to the Church's role in welfare between lay and ordained representatives of the Church and also between the opinions of those employed by the Church and those who work for the Church in their spare time. Practically this could have been achieved by including more interviewees in the study, or by the addition of a small-scale questionnaire as part of the case study.

In addition this perspective, if included at an early enough stage to also influence the interview guide, could have had an impact on the case study material so as to enable further aspects of the relationship between institutional religion, welfare and social capital to be explored. The study as it stands has proved helpful not least in showing the potential which a nuanced application of theories of social capital can have on an analysis of the role of religious institutions in the welfare arena. If I were to begin this study again tomorrow I would include a social capital perspective much more clearly in the design of the case study in general and the interview guide in particular.

One further aspect of the research process which has been both a blessing and a curse has been my physical location in Sweden throughout the whole process. The positive side of this geographical fact has been considerable. As noted earlier, it introduced a further dimension to the study in that my knowledge and experience of the Swedish context both inspired and enabled use of Sweden as a mirror to the English case. On the negative side, however, it must be recorded that my distance from the fieldwork site constrained the empirical research. Not living in or near the town meant that research trips had to be concentrated into small periods of time and this allowed for little flexibility when arranging interviews. It also meant that par-

ticipant observation in either welfare or worship activities had to be limited to visits to a few buildings and events. Living much closer to the site for at least a period of time would, in hindsight, have given the opportunity to expand the empirical research in this way.

These regrets, however, are minor ones as no one study can ever contain all the strands that seem appropriate and attractive at the beginning. Some regrets too are paradoxical as it is often the results which the study produces which highlight those elements which seemed less important at the outset, but appear lacking later on. In the case of this study results pointed clearly to a function for religion in society that is part of processes of general social change. Theorising around these processes has formed the foundations for entire paradigms of secularisation and thus also the ways in which such questions have been discussed and this debate is touched on above. An investigation of the relevance of the secularisation paradigm was however not the principal aim of this study and therefore not integrated fully into the design of the empirical study. Were it possible to redo the study now I would choose to place further weight on this aspect.

### 10.1.2. Further Research

The process of cataloguing my shortcomings as documented above proved to be a helpful exercise. Not only in terms of rounding off this study by attempting to indicate where it is lacking, but also in exposing those elements which the study has touched upon, but could not adequately address. One such area is the intersection of the issues of religion, gender and welfare. The inclusion of gender as one aspect on the margins of this study has been productive in highlighting a number of issues only exposed in a study which combines all three perspectives. The combination of these issues and the question of the role of gender in particular which only played a supporting role in the current study is one aspect that could easily have taken more space in the analysis. The elements that have been included here indicate the significant potential which the inclusion of the gender dimension brings to work which engages with issues of religion and welfare and highlights the fact that this is an area that needs more research.

A further theme is the issue of the role of volunteers in the intersection between church and welfare. Some work has been done on this subject in recent years as noted in Chapter 2, but the field remains relatively under-researched. The gap observed in the present study in this respect only serves to further highlight the potential for further research on this issue. More specifically, this study has indicated the particular lack of work exploring the tensions between volunteers and religious professionals in the welfare arena. This would be a fruitful theme for further research as one aspect of a generally neglected field.

The field of interaction between volunteering in the welfare sphere and the place of churches and religious organisations in general however also deserves more attention. One aspect touched upon in the current study is the question of the possible reversal of a trend in contemporary society away from affiliation to churches and regular religious practice leading to individuals deciding to volunteer in the welfare sphere, to a situation where participating in one-off activities, or volunteering for a secular charity with a church connection can be the impetus to further religious involvement. While the decline of associating thesis is well explored this possible trend remains little more than a hypothesis and deserves empirical exploration touching as it does on key issues at the intersection of religion and welfare in contemporary society.

A further area where research interest has increased over recent years is into the notion of social capital and religion. The majority of work in this field at present comes from the United States and while this study has attempted to contribute to empirical material from the European context in the field it is far from filling the gap. While studies carried out in the United States make interesting comparative reading in Europe there is need for empirical work exploring European religious institutions and congregational social capital in the European religious environment. Furthermore, this study has also drawn attention to the focus in much existing work on social capital and religion on membership of religious institutions. The continued social role of the churches in Europe demonstrated in this study indicates the valuable contribution to our understanding of the role of institutional religion in the contemporary world which new studies of religion and social capital could provide.

In particular three as yet neglected themes deserve attention. Firstly, informal relations and the potential which churches and other religious groups have to contribute to social capital in this manner at a local level. Secondly, the symbolic role which religious institutions can play as agents of welfare, and thirdly questions of the role of co-operation or partnership between religious institutions and secular authorities in realising the social capital potential of the former. This study has indicated that co-operation between local authority and local faith groups is important if the social capital potential of churches and faith communities in the welfare sphere is to be fulfilled. For, despite the evidence of some co-operation between churches and local authorities, the interviews in Darlington revealed perceptions and expectations of the Church's role at a local level normally unreflected upon and unarticulated, but nonetheless present beneath the surface. This in turn shows both the impact which research such as the current study, which reveals such hidden expectations, can have on policy formation at a local level and the need for further studies in this area.

All of the above are thematic areas, which the results of this study have highlighted as fruitful areas for further work. Taking an overview of this

thesis, however, centred around a case study conducted using qualitative methods it is also important to mention that in indicating tendencies it has also created questions. A quantitative study focusing on the role of institutional religion between individual and society would, therefore, be a fruitful way of following-up the results of this qualitative project.

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# Appendix 1: The Project Welfare and Religion in a European Perspective: A Comparative Study of the Role of the Churches as Agents of Welfare in the Social Economy (WREP)

The WREP Project which ran from 2003 to 2007 aimed to **analyse the function of majority churches as providers of social welfare in a comparative European perspective.**<sup>85</sup> It was preceded by a Swedish research project analysing church-state relations in Sweden after 2000 and the formal separation of church and state which took place in the same year. This meant that both on a theoretical and practical level the starting point for the research was Sweden. The Swedish welfare system formed a background to the project as a whole, the leadership and coordination of the project was based in Sweden and the funding for much of the research came from the Bank of Sweden Tercentenary Foundation.

The project was to comprise qualitative research and to contribute new knowledge within the following five areas:

- How local (public) authorities view church-run provision as a part of the social welfare system.
- Local attitudes to the function of churches as both providers of social welfare and as advocates of moral standards in the welfare debate.
- The actions of majority churches at local level, both as producers of welfare services and as opinion formers.
- The theological and ethical statements/positions of majority churches. Here the focus lay on the tensions between local understandings and official statements as they appear in official documents, primarily at a national level).
- The importance of gender issues within the above areas. Given the general dominance of women as care providers within various welfare systems all studies and analyses will include a gender perspective.

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<sup>85</sup> For further information on the project aims and composition see the Project description. *Welfare and Religion in a European Perspective: Project description* (2003) Uppsala: Diakonivetenskapliga institutet.

Stress was placed on collecting data which would allow for a comparison in three areas: 1) How representatives of both church and local authorities view the role of churches in their respective welfare systems. 2) How the general public views the role of churches in their respective welfare systems. 3) The actions of majority churches at both local and national level as welfare providers and opinion formers. This data was to be collected bearing in mind the three perspectives to be used in analysis of the material, namely sociological, theological and gender.

The focus on the dynamics at local level was achieved by centring on case studies in one town in each of the eight countries involved in the study. These countries were chosen partly for practical reasons, but also to provide a range of studies which would allow the project to represent both the different majority church traditions present in Europe and the corresponding welfare systems categorised using Esping-Andersen's typology. The following table shows the countries involved and the church traditions and welfare systems represented.

Countries studied in the WREP Project, their welfare system typology and historic majority church

	<b>Liberal social state</b>	<b>Nordic social-democratic</b>	<b>Continental (corporative)</b>	<b>Southern European (conservative)</b>
<b>Lutheran /Protestant</b>		Sweden Norway Finland		
<b>Evangelical Lutheran Reformed</b>			Germany	
<b>Roman-Catholic</b>			Germany France	Italy
<b>Anglican</b>	England			
<b>Orthodox</b>				Greece

### **The research process**

The research process was divided into two parts. First researchers collated background reports detailing both welfare system and majority church situation at national level in each of the countries involved. This provided background to the in-depth case studies that were to follow, but also highlighted differences in the availability of statistical and other practical information

available in the respective contexts. Such insights led to a flexible approach being adopted to the local case studies and it was decided to adopt a number of common criteria upon which to base the case studies, but also allow the researchers freedom to adapt to the local situation, rather than steering everything centrally.

Given the focus on welfare systems in the contemporary world, as well as the project's starting point in the Swedish situation, a decision was made to choose towns in each of the countries concerned that were of medium size, relative to the national situation. It was also decided to concentrate on towns which had an industrial heritage but are now dominated by the service sector in terms of employment opportunities.

The work on the local case studies was also divided into two sections. First a mapping process documenting the welfare situation in the respective towns and the actions of the local churches in relation to this was carried out. Once a picture had been provided of each of the towns, which in itself comprised an unprecedented documentation of the situation at local level all over Europe and the welfare role of churches within their local context, researchers were able to use this as the background for in-depth interviews designed to ascertain individuals' opinions. Central decisions were made to include in each case study semi-structured interviews with representatives of churches and local welfare providers in the localities studied and to supplement these with focus group conversations with representatives of the general public. Finally seven questions were developed and agreed upon that were to be included in the interview guides used in all case studies. While many other common questions were also used these seven formed the thematic division of the reports of the case studies and provided material for the core of the comparative analysis.

During the course of the project the researchers from the countries involved met regularly, at the early stages to develop common research methods and later to work together on compiling and producing research reports and to assist the Swedish researchers charged with producing the comparative analysis.

Over and above the research reports the project has so far resulted in a number of conference presentations and articles as well as two commercial volumes documenting both local case studies and comparative analysis. In addition undergraduate courses based on the project material have been developed.

## Appendix 2: Interviewees

Gender, (m = male; f = female)

Interview category (C = Church of England; l/el = Local Authority, Elected;

l/em = Local Authority, Employee; v = Voluntary and Community Sector)

Interview No.	Gender	Interview category	Additional information
A	m	Fact-finding preliminary	Priest (March 2004)
B	f	Fact-finding preliminary	Priest
C	f	Fact-finding preliminary	Diocesan Social Issues Officer (March 2004)
1	f	l/em	Healthcare Employee
2	m	v	Darlington Partnership Elected
3	f	l/em	Healthcare Employee
4	m	c	Priest
5	f	l/em	Healthcare Employee
6	f	c	Priest
7	f	c	Priest
8	m	c	Priest
9	m	c	Priest
10	f	l/el	Social issues Elected
11	f	l/el	Social issues Elected
12	m	v	Voluntary sector Employee (other denomination connection)
13	m	c	Priest
14	f	l/el	Healthcare Elected
15	m	c	Priest
16	m	l/el	Social issues Elected
17	m	c	Priest
18	m	c	Priest
19	m	c	Priest
20	m	v	Minister other denomination
21	f	l/el	Social issues and Health Elected
22	f	v	Minister other denomination
23	f	v	Voluntary sector Employee
24	m	v	Voluntary sector Employee (other denomination connection)
25	m	c	Priest
26	f	l/em	Social issues Employee
27	m	v	Voluntary sector Employee
28	m	c	Priest
29	f	c	Church of England Laity (January 2006)
30	f	c	Church of England Laity (January 2006)
G1 a-j		Focus Group 1	Mixed age and gender. In employment (professional and secretarial)
G2 a-f		Focus Group 2	Older. Employed or Retired.

# Appendix 3: Interview Guide

- Those questions which are common to all interview guides in the WREP project and which were posed to all interviewees are in bold text.
- *Those questions which were only posed to the Church representatives are in italics.*

## **I Introductory questions on welfare**

**1. In your opinion, what is welfare?**

**2. In your opinion, how well does the *English* welfare system function in *Darlington*?**

3. How do you think that welfare has changed in England over the past ten years?

*I will now ask you about your opinions on the roles of different actors in welfare; the public sector, non-governmental organisations and the Church. I will start with the public sector.*

## **II Expectations of Public sector and non-governmental organisations in welfare**

4. What are your expectations of the role of the public sector in welfare?,  
( Local authority, Regional authority , National authority )

5. What are your expectations of the role of non-governmental organisations in welfare? (churches, denominations, voluntary bodies.)

## **III Expectations of the role of the Church in welfare and the social economy**

**6. In your opinion, does the *Church of England* have a role to play in the welfare and the wellbeing of people?**

**7. (If yes) How would you describe the role of the Church?**

**8. In your opinion, should the Church of England carry out practical social work?**

**9. (If yes) What type?**

10. What is your opinion on co-operation between state/local authority and Church? (If co-operation is encouraged) Within which areas do you think it is good to co-operate?

*11. Can you give examples of any such co-operation currently ongoing in Darlington?*

**12. In your opinion, should the Church of England speak out on welfare issues?**

**13. (If yes) How should the Church contribute?**

14. *Have the parish or representatives of the parish been actively involved in any societal issue (for example in the media, demonstrations) during the last year?*

15. Do you think that the Church of England should prioritise being an active agent or a voice in the welfare debate?

**16. In what ways do you think that the Church of England's role in society has changed over the past 10 years?**

**17. Is there anything you would like to change regarding the Church's current role in society?**

18. Do you think that the Church of England has a particular responsibility for certain groups of people in society? (Why?)

19. Are there any areas of welfare which the Church of England should not be involved in?

20. Do all churches and denominations have the same role to play in welfare? (If their roles are different, how are they different?)

**IV Other's expectations of the role of the Church**

21. What expectations do you think that the population of Darlington have of the Church's role in welfare?

22. What expectations do you think that the representatives of the local authorities (both employees and politicians) have of the Church's role in welfare?

**V The Church's societal involvement in Darlington**

23. What role do parishes, associations and organisations play in the life of society in Darlington in your opinion?

24. What is the most important contribution to society that your parish makes here in Darlington? (Why is that the most important?)

25. *What role do worship services have in the Church's social/ diaconal work here in Darlington?*

**VI Questions about the role of voluntary activity**

26. What is your view of voluntary activity regarding welfare in society?

27. *What is your view of voluntary activity in the social work of the parish? What are the respective advantages and disadvantages?*

**VII Questions on gender**

28. *In the social work of the Parish is there any difference between women and men's involvement in speech and action?*

29. Do you have any understanding as to whether it is primarily men or women who benefit from the social work of the parish?

30. *Do you have any activities which are meant particularly for women or men? (why/ why not?)*

31. Do you think that equality between women and men is an important question for the Church?

32. *Does a goal of equality between men and women have any influence on the direction of the social work of the parish?*

33. *Do you feel that the parish treats all employees, elected representatives and volunteers equally, regardless of gender?*

### **VIII Questions on influence**

34. *Do you think that any individual or group of parish workers has a particular responsibility for the social role of the parish or does everyone have an equal responsibility for social questions?*

35. *Which individuals or groups have the greatest influence as regards parish priorities within the social/ diaconal field?*

36. *What opportunities do inhabitants of the parish have to influence what the parish does within the social/ diaconal field?*

### **IX Developments in the Parish in the coming years**

37. What is your view of developments in coming years in the social /diaconal field in Darlington? Are there needs which it is particularly important to meet?

### **X Closing questions about yourself**

38 c asked to all Church representatives. 38 a and b asked to all others

38. a. Do you belong to the Church of England or to any other denomination?

b. Do you have any form of belief in God?

38.c *What religious profile would you say that you represent (churchmanship)?*

39. How long have you lived in Darlington?

40. How long have you been employed by (held a position of responsibility in) the Church in Darlington?

41. Is there anything you would like to add which we haven't covered?

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