

THE HOUSE OF GOOD: HEALTH

THE
HOUSE
OF
GOOD



Yours for good.



**THE UK'S CHURCHES ARE OUR
'NATIONAL HELP SERVICE'**

THE HOUSE OF GOOD: HEALTH – AT A GLANCE

For centuries, local churches have been pillars of community health.

Churches founded some of the first hospitals, funded universities to train medical professionals, and delivered hands-on patient care. In many ways, churches laid the foundations for the modern healthcare system, and they continue to play an important role today.

From youth groups to food banks, from drug and alcohol addiction support to mental health counselling, churches offer a growing list of vital services for people in urgent need.

In 2020, we commissioned State of Life economists to produce *The House of Good*, an impact report which put a number on the economic and social value of all the church buildings in the UK.

Now, thanks to new research by State of Life, we can, for the first time, quantify the value of the health-related support services provided by church buildings. This is *The House of Good: Health*.

This study shows that the UK's churches take an immense amount of pressure off the NHS and provide essential support services that it **would cost an extra £8.4bn a year to deliver.**

Churches promote the positive mental and physical health that helps people thrive. They provide locations for health treatments. They prevent conditions that would otherwise send more patients through GP or hospital doors. They're our National *Help Service*.

These findings and figures are remarkable. But they're also alarming.

Because the UK's church buildings are dangerously underfunded, with many in the most deprived areas falling into disrepair and facing closure.

Without urgent support, we risk losing this shock absorber for the NHS, and a vital safety net for the most vulnerable people in our society,

Claire Walker, Chief Executive

Sir Philip Rutnam, Chair

State of Life's methodology

In *The House of Good* (2021), we used a WELLBY (Wellbeing Adjusted Life Year) measure to calculate our figure of £55 billion for the economic and social value of church buildings to the UK.

However, health economists would more typically use a QALY (Quality Adjusted Life Year) so we've followed suit in this report, using it to estimate how much it would cost the NHS to produce the same level of health improvements provided by churches.

This valuation is conservative.

It quantifies the wellbeing impacts of just four key support activities and services: Food Banks (hosted by 58% of churches according to the National Churches Trust survey of 2020), drug and alcohol addiction support (10.4%), mental health groups (29%), and youth groups (42.4%).

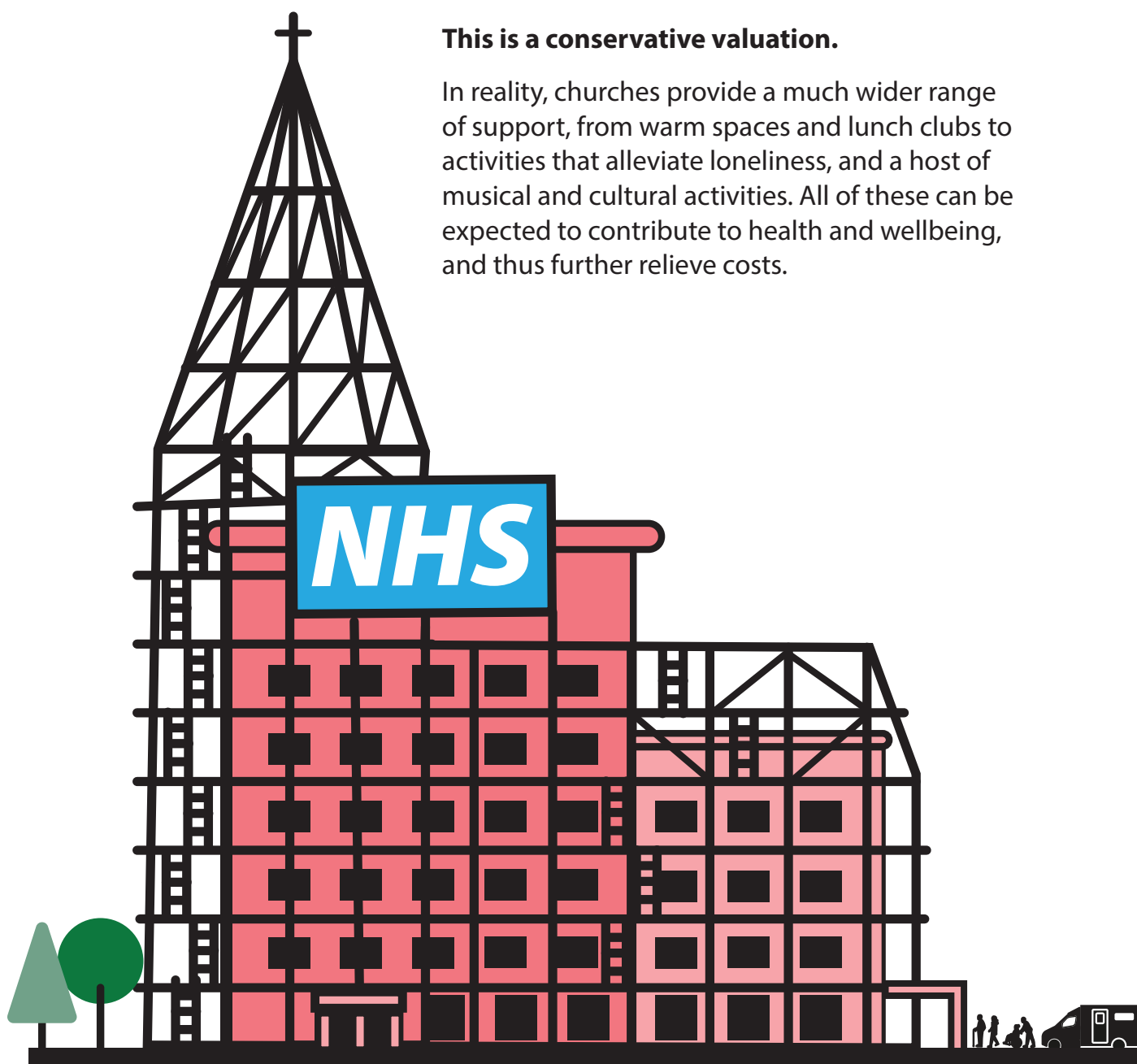
For more details see the full report www.nationalchurchestrust.org/thehouseofgoodhealth

EVERY YEAR, CHURCH BUILDINGS RELIEVE COSTS AND SUPPORT THE NHS BY AN ESTIMATED

£8.4BN

This is a conservative valuation.

In reality, churches provide a much wider range of support, from warm spaces and lunch clubs to activities that alleviate loneliness, and a host of musical and cultural activities. All of these can be expected to contribute to health and wellbeing, and thus further relieve costs.



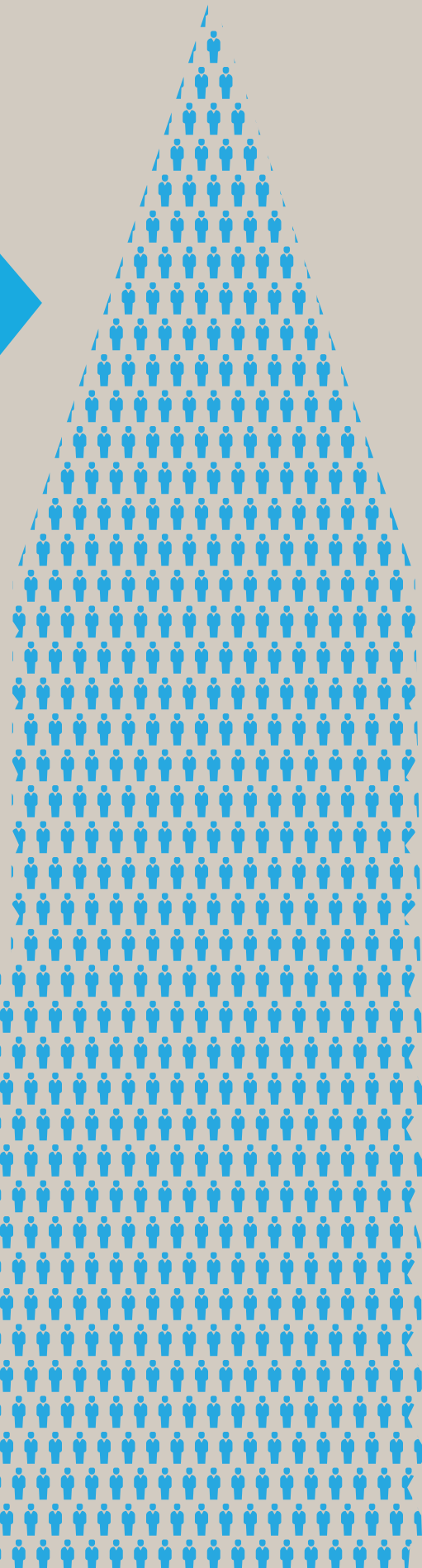
£8.4BN IS THE EQUIVALENT COST OF EMPLOYING

230,000 NURSES

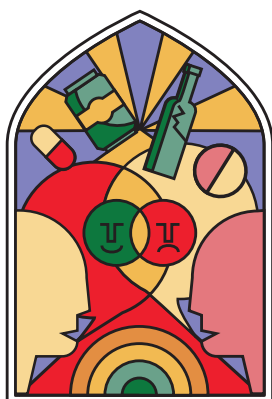
PER YEAR

This figure is based on the current average salary of £36,000 for a Registered Nurse in the UK.

The £8.4 billion in annual cost relief is also equivalent to 4% of the £225 billion that the UK spent on healthcare in 2022/23 (Institute for Fiscal Studies, 2024).



REAL STORIES OF GOOD HEALTH



Drugs and Alcohol: St Martin in Roath Church, Cardiff

Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) is a community of people who come together to stay sober, and help other alcoholics who want to stop drinking.

There are over 4,000 AA groups in the UK, and many of them meet in church buildings. In Cardiff, five churches provide space for AA groups, including a group of around 15-20 at St Martin in Roath Church.

"Many of the people in our AA Group comment on how much they appreciate the stillness, silence and beauty of the church," says Fr Irving Hamer. "Perhaps it helps calm and focus them for the session, or when they return to their busy lives."



Mental Health: North Shields Methodist Church

In 2023 Jackie Lincoln became involved with Parish Nursing at North Shields Methodist Church. Parish Nurses are registered nurses who promote health through education and practical support to people of all faiths and none.

At a healthcare event run for fishermen, a working skipper asked for help with his mental health. When he told Jackie he was scared of what he might do if he went out to sea again, she quickly arranged a GP appointment for him that day.

The Fishermen's Mission clinic now runs bimonthly, and the skipper is a regular. He's since told Jackie: "If it wasn't for you, I don't know what would've happened."

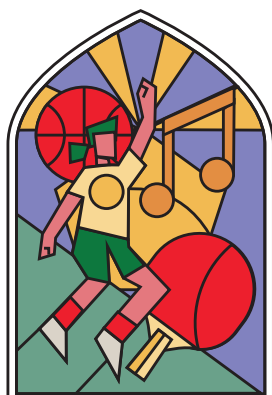


Food Banks: Trussell, Northern Ireland

In the last five years, the charity Trussell has seen a 143% increase in demand for its 23 food banks in Northern Ireland. Between 1 April 2023 and 31 March 2024, almost 24,000 local people had to turn to a Trussell-run food bank for the first time.

Most found help in a church building. "Our food bank operations are usually carried out in church halls within church grounds," says Jonny Currie, network lead for Trussell in Northern Ireland. "Church buildings are vital to [our work]."

Trussell food banks support people of all faiths and none. For Mike, who stopped working due to ill health, they've been a lifeline: "When I go, they say 'Get something to eat, I know you're struggling. It's nice to know that people do care.'"



Youth Groups: The Madoch Centre, Perthshire

Many church buildings are venues for youth clubs and other activities that bring young people together, helping improve both physical and mental health – particularly for those from underserved communities.

Opened in 2017, the Madoch Centre is run by St Madoes & Kinfauns Parish Church. It opens seven days a week for both church and community activities, and runs a range of sports activities for local school children.

Anthea Bircham, Community Development Coordinator said: "Serving a semi-rural community, we can offer sport and other activities for young people in an inclusive environment which provides good role models to help them build strong relationships with others."



OUR NATIONAL HELP SERVICE IS ON LIFE SUPPORT

There are around 38,500 churches in the UK. None gets guaranteed funding. They all rely on charity.

With no long-term strategic national or government funding, church buildings are falling into disrepair and facing closure at a record rate.

In fact, in the past 10 years alone, more than 3,500 churches in the UK have closed.

For the Church of England alone, the backlog of repairs is at least £1 billion, and the annual need is estimated to be £150 million a year.

Many churches in the greatest danger of closing are in the country's most disadvantaged areas. This means they serve some of the most vulnerable communities in our society.

If they close, the impact on the health and wellbeing of these communities would be huge. The burden on councils and a stretched NHS would be severe.

We need to save them for the future. Now.

INVEST IN THE NATIONAL HELP SERVICE

It's vital that we keep churches open and use them more.

'Every Church Counts', our six-point plan to save church buildings, calls on all local authorities and public bodies, such as the NHS, to engage with faith groups, and to make more use of churches and church halls to host public and community services, helping to upgrade facilities where needed. The UK Government should encourage public bodies to engage in this way.

The Faith Covenant, an initiative of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Faith and Society, offers a good framework for open, practical working. More local authorities should adopt the Covenant.

To help keep the UK's churches open and serving local people additional ring fenced annual public funding of at least £50 million is required for major repairs, with proportionate funding provided for the devolved administrations. It is also vital that the Listed Places of Worship Grants Scheme, which allows listed churches to reclaim the VAT on repairs, is extended beyond 2025.

Please use this report to show local authorities and the NHS the value churches bring to your community by applying its national findings to your church, chapel or meeting house.

Get involved today at nationalchurchestrust.org/thehouseofgoodhealth

For centuries, churches have supported the health and wellbeing of local communities.

In 2023, The National Churches Trust was able to help over 250 church building projects with funding of over £2 million.

We can do much more with your help. So please:

BECOME A FRIEND

As a Friend of the National Churches Trust, you'll help us protect even more church buildings. Choose from individual, joint or lifetime membership.

► nationalchurchestrust.org/membership

MAKE A DONATION

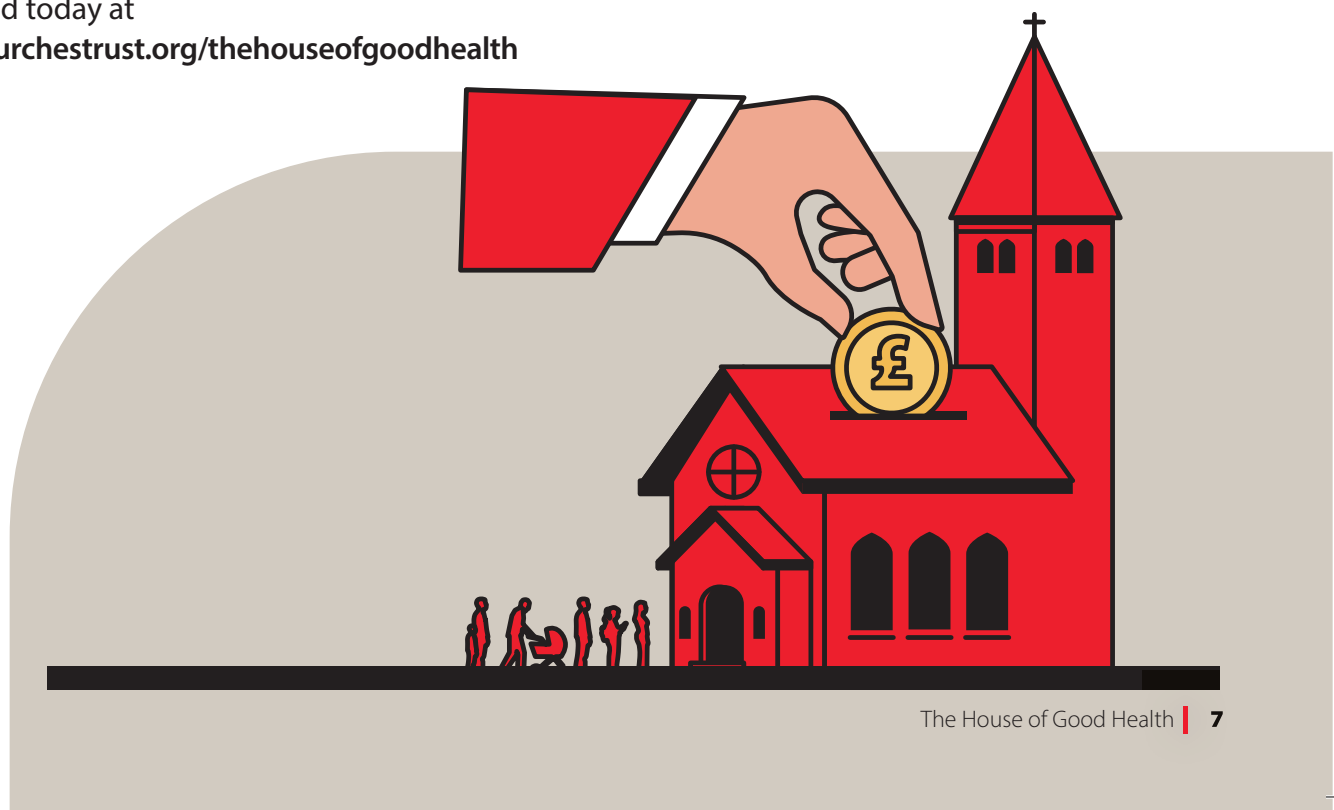
A one-off or monthly gift will fund community facilities and essential maintenance – and ensure more church buildings remain at the heart of their local communities.

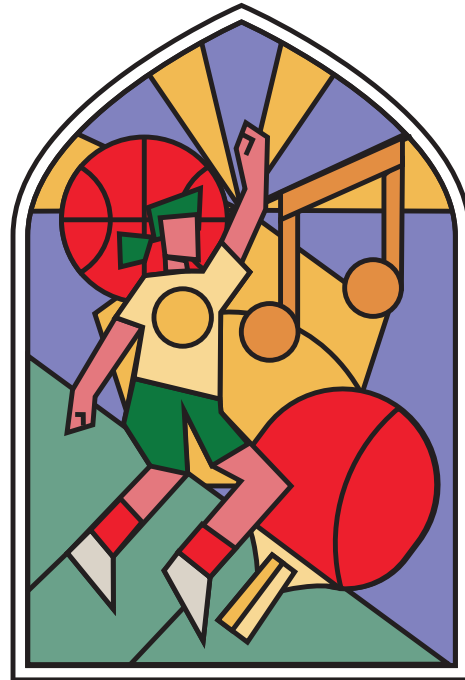
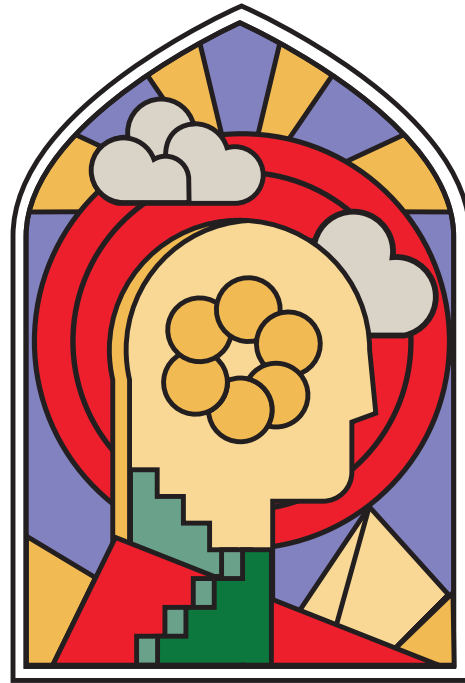
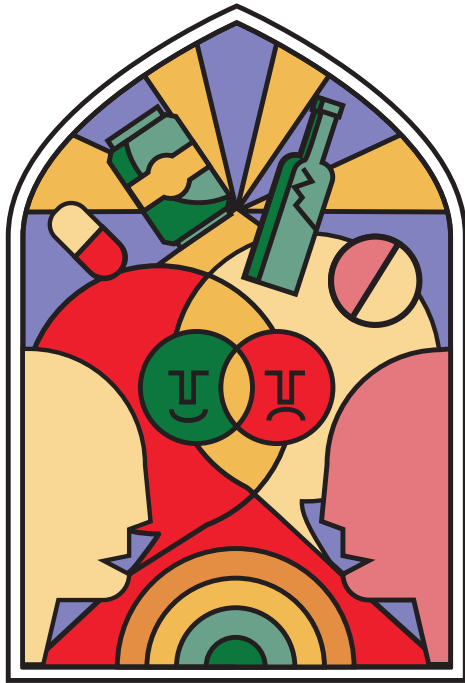
► nationalchurchestrust.org/donate

STAY CONNECTED

Sign up for our e-newsletter and find us on social media to see more about how we're saving the UK's church buildings.

► nationalchurchestrust.org/enews





ABOUT STATE OF LIFE

State of Life use open data and economic analysis to help organisations demonstrate their value and social impact.

Find out more at stateoflife.org



ABOUT THE NATIONAL CHURCHES TRUST

The National Churches Trust is the charity for people who love church buildings.

nationalchurchestrust.org

The National Churches Trust
7 Tufton Street
London
SW1P 3QB

020 7222 0605
info@nationalchurchestrust.org

[f](#) [X](#) [in](#) [ig](#) [yt](#) @NationalChurchesTrust