



The Church of England is embarking on an ambitious programme to grow a nationwide network of support for people to help them take action on money and debt.

A pilot scheme based in churches in London, Southwark and Liverpool dioceses will be expanded to dioceses in the rest of the country under plans put forward by the Just Finance Network, formerly known as the Church Credit Champions Network.

More than 260 'credit champions', or volunteers in local churches have been trained so far within the pilot scheme to help people tackle issues from promoting budgeting skills to work on increasing the size of credit unions.

Over 300 churches are already involved in the scheme carrying out mass sign-ups to credit unions, setting up credit union branches in church buildings and encouraging local employers to set up pay roll saving for their staff.

The programme is on target to bring in more than 3,000 new credit union members by the end of this year and have saved more than £2 million by helping people access affordable credit rather than high cost pay day lenders.

The proposals for an expansion to the network are the latest stage in work first started by the Archbishop of Canterbury's Task Group on responsible credit and savings. The network, now managed by Church Urban Fund, will build on initiatives already under way in churches across the country.

Churches and individuals are being encouraged to take part in fundraising to support the expansion of the network through the [Archbishop of Canterbury's Mustard Seed Appeal](#), which is being launched today.

Paul Hackwood, Executive Director of Church Urban Fund, said: "More than eight million people in the UK are struggling with debt, with many resorting to high cost loans to cover the cost of basic necessities.

"Church of England parishes have shown amazing initiative in tackling this real need through work such as promoting budgeting skills, championing credit unions and supporting community-led finance schemes.

"The leadership of the Archbishop of Canterbury and the work of the Church of England parishes have been crucial to the success so far of the pilot scheme. We hope that people will be generous in responding to this appeal to allow us to build further on this vital work."

The Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, said: "Churches across the country have responded enthusiastically and with great generosity to the work of supporting credit unions and other forms of responsible credit and savings.

"I hope that by contributing to the Mustard Seed Appeal, we will be able to carry this work forward to dioceses across the country."

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Source URL: <https://www.archbishopofcanterbury.org/church-expands-network-support-money-and-debt>