



Cathy Corcoran OBE

Chief Executive of the Cardinal Hume Centre

Cathy has worked at the Cardinal Hume Centre for over 12 years. Prior to that, she spent 25 years at CAFOD in various posts including International Director. She lives in South London though she still calls Yorkshire home. She is pretty fond of cats.

Tell us a bit about your current work

The Centre works with homeless young people, badly housed families and hundreds of individuals from the local community helping them tackle poverty and homelessness. We offer a residential service for 16-24 year olds; and a whole range of day services for all age groups ranging from employment support to housing and benefits advice; from English and IT to adult literacy; from a nursery and crèche to an immigration advice service.

What does a day in your life entail?

Each day is different for which I am thankful. Having travelled the world with CAFOD in many different roles, I might get itchy feet if I was undertaking the same work day in day out. My day is a mixture of meetings on and off site, staff supervision, planning, fundraising, networking and public speaking.

What is most rewarding about your job; what makes it all worthwhile?

By far, it's seeing people achieve their life goals or simply taking one small - but for them mega -step in the right direction.

How did you get to where you are today?

When I joined CAFOD I was the 12th member of staff and so I grew up with CAFOD. I had four different roles from establishing the first education and awareness campaign to taking on the Africa desk. I spent 15 years as the International Director travelling to all continents including Eastern Europe. You couldn't help but pick up a wide range of skills making me quite a generalist which really helps when you are a CEO – I also developed a lifelong passion for championing the underdog.

Tell us about someone you have always admired?

That's a hard one to call. There is a whole army of unseen and largely uncelebrated women especially who I have known both here and overseas who have such courage and determination in the face of some very tough situations, who just get on with it, helping and supporting others in need.

How does your faith link with what you do?

It seems to flow in and from my engagement with the people the Centre works with – and before that in CAFOD. It's about living out Gospel values and giving witness though I don't think I would be all that brave if asked to put my life on the line.

What is the biggest misconception that people often have about your work?

That working with people who are homeless or living in poverty is depressing. It's not. It's frustrating however and can make you very angry to see the odds stacked against them but their willingness to improve their lives really cheers you up. I work with some great people and we do have fun alongside the tougher stuff.

What words of wisdom/advice would you give to students?

Decide what you would really like to do and don't let anyone dissuade you; no matter how long it might take you to get there, believe in yourself, and just take the first step.