



and parishes around England in 2023.

Diocese of Manchester

The latest [report](#) on the Church of England's strategic investment shows how funding in the last year has prioritised doubling the numbers of children and young people, and revitalising parishes for mission.

In the year 2023, Strategic Mission and Ministry Investment Funding (SMMI) awarded £60 million to Church of England projects and parishes plus an additional £29 million to support lowest income communities around England.

Alongside the focus on growing the church younger and more diverse, funding prioritised parts of society where other sources of support have been withdrawn.

There was also a new structure, with a single Board – the Strategic Mission and Ministry Investment Board (SMMIB) – set up to distribute funding on behalf of the Archbishops' Council.

The latest assessments in 2024 also show that the vast majority of projects funded over the past ten years of strategic funding are proving effective.

The Church of England has committed to £1 billion of local investment across England over nine years, in line with its priorities of bringing Jesus's message to people from all backgrounds especially those who are younger.

Of the 92 Strategic Development Fund (SDF) projects supported since 2014 the vast majority were successfully completed or making good progress towards their targets, with just over 70 projects currently active.



Diocese of Sheffield

## Three funding streams

In 2023 funding was awarded in three streams: The Diocesan Investment Programme (DIP), People & Partnerships Funding (PPF) and Lowest Income Communities Funding (LInC).

The first of these, DIP, awarded £60 million in the form of just under £40 million supporting a range of activities within dioceses plus £20 million to provide shorter term support to address constraints in dioceses' capacity by supporting both ordained and lay staff, and the training of curates.

DIP funding supported around 200 frontline ministry roles in 2023, including curates and youth and family ministry roles.

Nearly half (46 per cent) of the proposals funded through this stream were involved with doubling the number of children and young people in churches, with a further 30 per cent supporting parishes in being revitalised for mission.

Through PPF funding, £0.66 million was awarded to expand or replicate existing projects where proven to be successful, building on mission partnerships and funding research and innovation.

In 2023, £29 million of LInC funding was paid to 28 dioceses to give focused support to dioceses that have high proportions of communities with low income and high deprivation, ensuring ministry is provided in those parishes where it would otherwise be unsustainable and supporting roles such as youth workers in parishes that could not otherwise afford them.

Earlier research conducted in mid-2023 showed that, since the launch of the Strategic Development Programme in 2014, around 27,000 people have newly participated in church gatherings backed by Strategic Development Funding. By the end of 2023, over 50 per cent of the funds allocated to this programme had been spent.



Diocese of Southwell and Nottingham

"These achievements could not happen without the dedication and vision of extraordinary people whose faithful work in their communities invites the Holy Spirit to move."

*Bishop Arun Arora*

The Bishop of Kirkstall, Arun Arora, a member of The Strategic Mission and Ministry Investment Board (SMMIB), said: “After 10 years, it’s clear that strategic investment is making a positive difference to worshipping communities across England, allowing more people from more backgrounds to know Jesus Christ and for their lives to be changed.

“I’m delighted that so much focus in the past year has been on our main goal of doubling the number of children and young people in the church, which is beginning to bear fruit. It is also very encouraging that significant funding has been awarded to revitalise the parish system.

“These achievements could not happen without the dedication and vision of extraordinary people whose faithful work in their communities invites the Holy Spirit to move. We are committed to learning from them and supporting more communities as The Church of England’s substantial financial commitment to frontline parish ministry continues in the coming years.”

In a foreword to the report, the Chairman of SMMIB, Carl Hughes, who took over from John Spence in September, added: “This is a long-term investment programme and the Archbishops’ Council and Church Commissioners have signalled that they will make a total of over £1 billion available for distribution over nine years.

“It has been exciting to see the high levels of engagement with the new funding programme throughout the Church. The Board was delighted to award funding to 12 dioceses and three partners during 2023.

“The proposals include a strong focus on doubling the numbers of children and young people, with investment, for example, in ministers among children and young people in parishes and in schools, in training for youth worker apprentices and in chaplaincy.



and progress.”

Diocese of Bath & Wells

## **St John's, Crawley**

The Church of St John's, Crawley is moving to a new town centre site and hopes to grow and connect with people who are not churchgoers, or who have not been part of a church in some time. A leadership development programme will train apprentices from all backgrounds and ages, with a minimum of 25% from UK Minority Ethnic (UKME) backgrounds.

St John's will work to grow churches in the local districts of Three Bridges and West Green, planting churches in two local housing developments at Forge Wood and Kilnwood Vale.

SDF has also supported the development of UKME/GMH leaders within the Church through these projects, who have moved into developing further SDF projects and into leadership roles in the wider church. The project is part of the Diocese of Chichester's 2022 award. Watch their story below:

## **Mustard Seed - York**

With the support of strategic funding, the Mustard Seed project in the Diocese of York has seen incredible growth and impact working with communities on the edge of the diocese, in Hull, Middlesbrough and the coastal communities, an area where many people struggle to make ends meet.

Working in five deaneries, at the heart of the programme are 'Stepping Up' learning communities, where lay people grow deeper in their faith as disciples of Jesus and explore how to develop mission in their local community. At the end of their year-long Stepping Up journey, people are invited to 'Step Up' in mission, using their gifts and experience to share God's love in the local community. Watch their story below:

## More information

- [Read the 2023 report from the Strategic Mission and Ministry Investment Board - "Seeking the Vision: stories of the church's mission and ministry"](#)
- [More about funding strategic mission and ministry in the Church of England](#)

### Images:

1. *Main image: The Diocese of Manchester received DIP funding in 2023 to build on the impact of its 'Children Changing Places' project which is based in Bolton Deanery.*
2. *Diocese of Sheffield. A Social Supermarket at Rotherham Minster, supported by Sheffield diocese's 2018 SDF award to strengthen mission and ministry in the deprived areas of Rotherham and Goole.*
3. *Diocese of Southwell and Nottingham: Trinity Church Nottingham is a city centre resource church in the heart of the city planted in 2016 supported through SDF. Further SDF has enabled recent investment in emerging generations which is seeing encouraging growth, with young people coming to faith and continuing their discipleship journey.*
4. *Diocese of Bath & Wells: Every school and church dedicated to St Aldhelm was invited to participate in a mini festival & a service organised as part of Bath and Wells' Pioneer Project which received SDF in 2017.*

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