Developing Church Growth in Deprived Areas: Evaluation Report

Prepared for the Church Commissioners and Archbishops’ Council

By Achill Management
August 2016

Confidential
Disclaimer
Achill Management has sought to ensure that the facts contained in this document have been accurately described. However, neither Achill Management nor any of its directors or employees nor any other person makes any promise, guarantee or representation (express or implied) to any person as to the accuracy or completeness of this document or of any other information or materials, whether written or oral, that have been or may be prepared or furnished by or on behalf of Achill Management in connection with this report, including without limitation economic or financial projections and risk evaluation. No responsibility or liability is accepted to any person for any errors, misstatements or omissions in this document, negligent or otherwise or any other such information or materials. Without prejudice to the forgoing, neither Achill Management nor its representatives or employees nor any other person shall be liable for any other loss or damage (whether direct, indirect or consequential) suffered by any person as a result of relying on any statement in or omission from this document. This document is confidential and personal to you. It is provided to you on the understanding that it is not to be duplicated or distributed nor can its terms be disclosed to any other person without Achill Management’s prior consent.

In preparing our report, our primary sources have been the project documentation provided to us by Research Strategy and Development Unit of Church Commissioners on the Developing Church Growth in Deprived Areas and associated materials made available from the 28 church based projects in receipt of funding. In addition, we have used research material collected from interviews and meetings with project leads and from a shared learning meeting. We do not accept responsibility for such information, which remains the responsibility of management. We have satisfied ourselves, so far as possible, that the information presented in our report is consistent with other information which was made available to us in the course of our work in accordance with the terms of our Engagement Letter. We have not, however, sought to establish the reliability of the sources by reference to other evidence.

(Achill Management Southern Ltd 7601109)

About the report authors
Achill Management is an independent consultancy specialising in working with civil society, social enterprise and not for profit sectors. The team have wide experience of working with a range of organisations across many troubled and complex communities, and understand the sensitivities involved in working with projects which serve communities in areas of high deprivation. They also have considerable experience of working with organisations that bring together employed staff with volunteers to deliver outcomes. Their approach to evaluation is to balance quantitative and qualitative analysis to take account not only of the numeric data and evidence, but to recognise the value of human stories, experiences and knowledge that underpin all successful ventures.

The evaluation team at Achill Management, whilst extremely experienced in data collection, evaluations and project management, are not primarily a Church-focussed consultancy – therefore they bring an external objectivity to the process. Achill Management has endeavoured to be respectful of and guided by the faith-based ethos of the Church in the context of this review and the language used in this report whilst still providing an objective perspective from a non-church organisation.
CONTENTS

Section | Title                                                  | Page
--------|--------------------------------------------------------|------
1       | Introduction and Context                              | 4    
       | 1.1 Process and timeline of this report               | 4    
       | 1.2 Rationale and approach                            | 4    
       | 1.3 The evaluation report                             | 5    
2       | An Overview of the Church Growth Development Programme| 6    
       | 2.1 Funding rationale                                | 6    
       | 2.2 Context: Deprivation in Urban Priority Areas      | 7    
       | 2.3 Diversity of projects                            | 8    
3       | Methodology and Approach                              | 10   
       | 3.1 Methodology for data gathering                    | 10   
       | 3.2 Evaluation Matrix and scoring                     | 10   
       | 3.3 Evaluation measures                               | 14   
4       | Measure One: Evidence of growth                       | 15   
       | 4.1 Significant numerical growth                      | 16   
       | 4.2 Wider learning for the Church Commissioners and Archbishops’ Council | 22   
       | 4.2.1 Lessons from the grant making process           | 22   
       | 4.2.2 Factors which influence growth                  | 24   
       | 4.2.3 Other projects exhibiting growth but at a lower level | 24   
       | 4.2.4 Good leadership did not always lead to high growth | 25   
       | 4.3 Journeys to faith – wider growth                  | 25   
       | 4.4 Engagement of wider community through Church outreach or mission | 26   
5       | Measure Two: Replicability – Developing New and Successful Models for Replicating Elsewhere | 29   
       | 5.1 Projects sharing knowledge and learning           | 31   
       | 5.1.1 Learning Meetings                               | 31   
       | 5.2 Learning for the Church Commissioners and Archbishops’ Council from information exchange | 32   
6       | Measure Three: Sustainability and Financial Resilience| 34   
7       | Wider Learning for the Church Commissioners and Archbishops’ Council | 37   
       | 7.1 Governance                                        | 37   
       | 7.2 Finance and Timescale                             | 37   
       | 7.3 Wider Learning from the projects: what works well for Church Growth in deprived areas and how can that learning be replicated and shared | 38   
8       | Identifying Critical Success Factors                  | 42   
       | 8.1 Identifying the critical success factors for establishing and replicating projects to develop Church Growth in Deprived Areas | 42   
       | 8.2 Critical success factors found in successful projects | 42   
9       | Conclusion and Areas for Action                       | 44   
       | 9.1 Areas for action and further consideration         | 45   

Appendices
1. Visit Question Framework
2. Feedback report from Learning Meetings (Oct 2015 and June 2016)
3. Individual Project Reports
4. Summary Project Rating Charts
1 Introduction and Context

1.1 Process and timeline of this report
In April 2015 Achill Management was commissioned by the Resource Strategy and Development Unit of the Church Commissioners and Archbishops’ Council to undertake a monitoring and evaluation study of the 28 projects that were in receipt of funding under the Developing Church Growth in Deprived Areas (“Development Funding”) programme. The evaluation comprised three main strands: project visits and review, learning meetings open to all project leads, and associated teams and an Evaluation Report supported by Case Studies from selected projects.

The original timetable was due to run from early Summer 2015 until late Autumn 2016, culminating with the presentation of the report and findings. At the request of the Resource Strategy and Development Unit the reporting element was brought forward to summer 2016. The evaluation process included document review, individual interviews and project visits and two learning meetings with project representatives.

1.2 Rationale and approach
The 28 projects funded as part of this programme related to initiatives around the Church that were already proving to be effective in terms of mission and growth in deprived areas, with the aim of scaling their impact across the Church. Although many of the activities and initiatives funded during this programme existed in some form before the programme (and many continue), for the purpose of the funding stream evaluation they are referred to throughout this report as ‘projects’.

The evaluation process had 6 key aims:

1. To ascertain whether the projects have been able to deliver the outputs and outcomes anticipated in the original application documents, and particularly the growth in the number of disciples and/or trained pioneers which formed the core of applications
2. To undertake an analysis of why various projects or approaches may have worked (or not), and to try and ascertain the underlying reasons for their success (or failure)
3. To establish, where they can be identified, the key determinants of success
4. To establish, from an analysis of all the projects, the principal lessons learned
5. To draw overall conclusions on the sorts of approaches which have been supported during the programme and their relative suitability for achieving the ultimate objective of growing the church in deprived areas
6. To establish any other significant ‘spin-off’ achievements of the projects (i.e. notable outcomes which have been delivered but which were not part of the applications)

The evaluation approach was based on gathering both qualitative data by means of visits and discussions and, where possible, quantitative data. Although projects had been asked to submit annual review forms during the lifetime of the funding, no common quantitative measures or evaluation framework was in place at the outset of the project. All projects were different, even within themes (e.g. Fresh Expressions of Church), and it was not
intended to attempt a comparison between projects or produce any form of “league table”. However, it was necessary to find some common denominator against which the progress of each project against its original aims/outcomes could be assessed. In the absence of such a measurement framework, the evaluation team developed a set of metrics against which each project was assessed independently. Details of this can be found in section 3 of this report.

1.3 The evaluation report
This Evaluation Report details the findings of the evaluation and includes an analysis of what worked and what was successful. As well as areas of key learning for the Church Commissioners and Archbishops’ Council to inform future grant making, we include illustrative case studies, recommendations for consideration and wider learning for the Church in developing and supporting growth in areas of urban deprivation.

The report is accompanied by an appendix of evaluation charts to allow comparison of project performance across 12 key metrics devised specifically for the Developing Church Growth in Deprived Areas programme.

Although the Church Commissioners and the Archbishops’ Council are moving to larger-scale grants to dioceses (Strategic Development Funding) as part of Renewal and Reform, the innovation and learning arising from this stream of funding provides useful lessons for future grant making – demonstrating as it does the value and impact of relatively small grants to support new models and approaches within the Church.

“There is no single recipe for growth; there are no simple solutions to decline. The road to growth depends on the context, and what works in one place may not work in another. What seems crucial is that congregations are constantly engaged in reflection; churches cannot soar on autopilot. Growth is a product of good leadership (lay and ordained) working with a willing set of churchgoers in a favourable environment.”

Professor David Voas, Data Analysis and Church Profiling strand

---

1 From Anecdote to Evidence – Findings from the Church Growth Research Programme 2011-2013"
2 An Overview of the Church Growth Development Programme

2.1 Funding rationale

The primary purpose of the Developing Church Growth in Deprived Areas programme was to support projects in areas of multiple deprivation. Funding was awarded to 28 projects related to initiatives around the church that were already proving to be effective in terms of mission and growth in deprived areas, with the aim of scaling their impact across the Church. The key aim of the development funding is to learn from and develop existing mission work which is leading to growth in the number of Christian disciples, so that such growth can be replicated elsewhere.

Dioceses were invited to submit applications for project funding by the Rt Revd and Rt Hon Richard Chartres Bishop of London, Chairman of the Archbishops’ Spending Plans Task Group, which reviews spending plans and makes recommendations on the use of the funds managed by the Church Commissioners on behalf of the Archbishops’ Council and Church Commissioners.

Selection criteria required projects to demonstrate the following characteristics:

- Evidence that the work has produced sustained growth in the number of Christian disciples
- A clear strategy for developing the work within its existing context or for replicating the model of work elsewhere

In addition, project applications were assessed as to whether there was:

- Significant learning potential for the wider Church from the project
- A financial commitment to the project by existing church members but a demonstrable inability to meet the whole cost
- A realistic financial plan with a strategy for future sustainability
- A clear set of outcomes (measurable where appropriate) in relation to what the work will achieve and the added value of the national funding

These measures have been used to inform the approach to evaluation taken by the Achill Management team.

Projects could use funding for one of three main areas:

- Help expand mission work within its existing context which leads to growth in the number of Christian disciples
- Replicate into different contexts an existing model of mission work which has led to growth in the number of Christian disciples
- Invest in longer-term replication by employing ‘mission apprentices’ alongside the leaders of existing mission work which is leading to growth in the number of Christian disciples, thus helping to develop the pioneers of the future

---

2 As contained in the Bishop’s letter 29 June 2011
“On many urban estates, social issues of unemployment, related poverty, lack of educational aspiration, all of which are present elsewhere, become magnified. The greatest thing that the Church can offer is hope. We must rise to the challenge of making that hope visible through our actions, our words, and the priorities for the Church as a whole”

The Revd Dr Malcolm Brown, Director of Mission & Public Affairs

This programme was successful in many ways, not least because it supported innovation and new ways of developing Church in communities that have felt abandoned but also because it provided these parishes with tangible ways of ‘making hope visible’ within their communities.

2.2 Context: Deprivation in Urban Priority Areas

This funding stream was an innovative part of a wider strategy that seeks to respond to the particular challenges facing the Church in growing discipleship in deprived areas (i.e. Urban Priority Areas): locations characterised by high levels of poverty and unemployment, low levels of educational achievement, large numbers of children living in poverty, crime and disorder (especially youth offending), racial tensions, poor housing and lack of provision of support services.

The majority of projects supported through the scheme reported being in the bottom 10% of deprived areas in the UK, many in the bottom 1% on the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) and there is a significant difference in the conditions of communities between these two measures.

Some shared characteristics of these communities are that the individuals and families living there often have difficult lives and find it hard to plan: this was an issue for many projects who relied heavily on volunteers many of whom struggled to make consistent or regular commitments. The lack of social housing in these areas of deprivation leads to a high reliance on private, rented accommodation which in turn leads to families often having to move at short notice, resulting in transient and changing congregations.

The statistics from these Urban Priority Areas make for worrying reading. There is a disconnect between the level of Church spending, the level of need and the possibility for growth:

- 3.4m people live on social housing estates in England
- If the national Church attendance figure of 1.7% applied to the estates, then 58,000 would attend an Anglican Church. The actual figure is 28,000. The ‘missing’ 30,000 is equivalent in size to the Diocese of Liverpool
- Decline in attendance is nearly 4 times faster on the estates than the rest of the country
- The Church spends £8.00 on average per head of capita across the country on ministry. On these estates the figure is £5 per head

3 Statistics supplied by Dr David Jennings to Urban Estates conference
Many of the projects sought to address the immediate issues facing families by providing a range of support services focused around meeting their social needs as well as offering ministry to meet spiritual needs. In some cases, this creates a tension between meeting the welfare need and the opportunity for discipleship – this inherent tension between ministry and social action is summed up the experience of one of the projects, namely St Andrew’s Clubmoor. In this project, the well-established charity St Andrew’s Community Network, set up to tackle poverty in the local area, works closely alongside St Andrew’s Clubmoor, a church in one of the most deprived areas of the city, with the aim of providing a bridge for community members and people who access support services to enable them to hear the gospel in an accessible way. St Andrew’s, Clubmoor found that while they continued to grow and deliver services at the point of need, few people made the transition from being a ‘client’ – receiving support – to making a faith commitment. They describe this as the “Client to Christian dilemma”:

“The dilemma facing those who deliver services is ‘how can we share our faith with those who come to us for help?’ There is a real concern that we do not hijack someone’s vulnerability to preach to them, and within all activities we have not looked to share faith with service users unless they ask. People are made aware that we offer our services unconditionally and not as a means to get bums on seats”

It is within this challenging and demanding environment that the projects sought to grow discipleship. Where there is success in achieving this, that is a testament to the faith, dedication and gifts of those working there. The success of much of this development funding programme can be measured not just in actual numerical growth in discipleship, but in the value and impact of the intention behind the projects – a longer term intentionality of purpose to grow the wider mission field and to develop and build stable relationships in broken communities with troubled families.

Evidence of this intentionality is reflected in the weighting and scoring awarded through this evaluation to leadership, future planning and risk management and replicability, all of which contribute to a project’s long term sustainability.

2.3 Diversity of projects
There was an extraordinary range and variety of projects in this programme, although they were all based in areas of multiple deprivation. Many areas were ethnically diverse and this diversity often shaped the nature, scope and style of mission and ministry.

Many of the projects had been serving their communities for some considerable time before the grant awards. Therefore, the monies were used as ‘development funding’ to support new approaches to evangelism or to build on existing successful models and plant them elsewhere.
Projects fell into 8 broad categories (although some spanned more than one category) broken down as follows:

- **5 Pioneer Mission Training** projects – 4 of which were Mission Apprentices projects
- **6 Children and Youth work** projects
- **5 projects** based in *churches on deprived* (‘outer’) *housing estates*, including a project that was also a mission community
- **6 Fresh Expressions of Church**
- **2 Church Plants** including a “pre-plant”
- **2 Mission Communities**
- **1 Church in Schools**
- **1 Other Outreach**

As the first grant-funding stream of its kind the scheme was intended as a research and development programme, allowing for some higher risk and more experimental activities to receive funding and providing a wider spectrum of learning opportunities. There is always a greater degree of risk when working in areas of multiple deprivation, particularly in inner city or outer urban environments.

With the exception of two projects (which finished earlier than planned for specific reasons), the remaining 26 all demonstrated varying degrees of growth and have provided useful learning, with some offering strong models for replication. Two projects applied for, and were granted, a five-year term spreading the money over a longer period - these are still operational.
3  Methodology and Approach

3.1 Methodology for data gathering
The evaluation process and the report and recommendations had to reflect the complexity and diversity of mission work within very different communities. Therefore, the evaluation has been based on both qualitative data - often drawing on evidence based on people’s experience of what works - as well as more quantitative analysis where church growth could be evidenced by an increase in numbers of Church disciples or levels of engagement.

The approach was twofold:

- Firstly, to examine the raw data (both qualitative and quantitative) which has been gathered through monitoring visits, annual evaluations and self-evaluations together with the findings from the learning meeting.
- Secondly, to develop a framework against which to compare the very different individual projects which allowed the evaluators to balance the influence of individual environment, personnel, local socio-demographic factors and nature of the individual mission approach against the qualitative and quantitative success measures, and so identify key determinants of success.

Data gathering involved the following stages:

- Review of all published documentation associated with the projects (this included application form, budget, evaluation forms, Bishop’s letter, external evaluation reports (where published), and all supplementary information associated with the project. Reporting and information varied from project to project).
- Visit to the project or a meeting with all project leads, often involving project workers and wider teams.
- Set of standard questions used as a framework for all visits – these can be found in Appendix One.
- Two sharing and learning meetings involving all project leads and some wider team members.

These two learning meeting provided an opportunity to explore in more depth the lessons and experiences from funded projects and for peer to peer learning and support. Findings from these meetings have informed the observations and recommendations in this report and the full feedback from both meetings can be found in Appendix Two.

Each visit resulted in a detailed report and we have used this material to produce a set of individual project summary reports – these can be found in Appendix Three.

3.2 Evaluation Matrix and scoring
‘Anecdote to Evidence – findings from the Church Growth Research Programme 2011-2013’ identified a number of common ingredients strongly associated with growth in churches of any size, place or context.

---

4 http://www.churchgrowthresearch.org.uk/UserFiles/File/Reports/FromAnecdoteToEvidence1.0.pdf
These include:

- **Leadership**
  - Clear mission and purpose
  - Willingness to self-reflect and learn continually

- **Willingness to change and adapt according to context**
  - Lay as well as clergy involvement and leadership
  - Being intentional about prioritising growth

- **Actively engaging children and teenagers**
  - Actively engaging with those who might not usually go to church
  - Good welcoming and follow up for visitors

- **Commitment to nurturing new and existing Christians**
  - Vision

Using these as a starting point, Achill Management developed an evaluation matrix to examine and then rate the projects on a numerical basis. This allows evaluation of very different projects on a more equitable basis and offsets any bias that may occur (which was important given the limited scale of the data set, particularly in relation to numerical growth). This approach allowed the evaluators to measure success against outcomes for each project, irrespective of their differences, in the most objective manner possible. Projects have not been scored in a ‘league table’ but do have a robust and objective metric as part of their individual project feedback.

Ratings were based on 12 metrics (see below), each weighted between 1 and 10, and then scored on a 1-3 scale. Growth carried the highest weighting (10), next Leadership, Replicability and Financial Resilience (all 6). The Scoring Matrix used is included below in Figure One.

Growth was measured both in terms of absolute numbers and also against the outcomes or targets set by the projects themselves as a baseline in their application forms. Growth figures were taken from the numerical data which were collected and supplied by the projects, either through their own evaluation forms, or when the evaluation team visited.

An approach such as this is helpful because it provides a snapshot of how each individual project is doing and allows for a comparison across the whole programme. While there is some degree of subjectivity – given the small size of the data set and the nature of the projects – it seeks to provide a structured approach to evaluate very different projects with a degree of consistency. As a methodology it could be developed further and refined for future evaluations.

The Rating Metrics are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Growth</th>
<th>Leadership</th>
<th>Worship Style</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dependence on individuals</td>
<td>Lay Involvement</td>
<td>Financial resilience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Future planning and risk management</td>
<td>Buildings and infrastructure</td>
<td>Geography / location</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socio economic issues</td>
<td>Replicability</td>
<td>Shared learning</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Scoring for each metric was evaluated using a set of factors (see Figure Two below), which allowed for comparison between very different projects and balancing out any specific issues relating to geography, buildings or socio economic factors which may have had an undue influence over outcomes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Metric</th>
<th>Weighting</th>
<th>Level 1 Description</th>
<th>Level 2 Description</th>
<th>Level 3 Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Growth</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Limited growth achieved</td>
<td>Moderate/good growth achieved</td>
<td>Significant growth achieved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Limited level of leadership being shown across all aspects of the project (at both delivery and strategic level)</td>
<td>Acceptable/good levels of leadership being shown across delivery aspects of the project (at both strategic and delivery level)</td>
<td>Strong levels of leadership being shown across all aspects of the project (at both strategic and delivery level)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worship Style and Approach</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Little resonance between the style and approach of worship used by the project and the target community</td>
<td>Moderate/good resonance between the style and approach of worship used by the project and the target community</td>
<td>Real resonance between the style and approach of worship used by the project and the target community with evidence that this is contributing to growth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dependence on individual(s)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Project progress and success largely dependent on an individual/small number of individuals</td>
<td>Project progress and success still linked with an individual/small number of individuals – but others in place who are responsible for taking project forward</td>
<td>Project progress and success largely independent of individual/small number of individuals – responsibility devolved and realistic &quot;succession plan&quot; in place</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lay involvement</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Limited level of lay involvement with little or no efforts to transfer ownership to lay members. Project delivery heavily dependent upon ministers and paid church staff</td>
<td>Good involvement of lay members, with project delivery involving approx 50:50 lay members and ministers/paid church staff</td>
<td>Strong involvement of lay members, with most of project delivery in hands of lay members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial resilience</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Project largely dependent upon remaining CC grant or other grant monies with no other sources of funding identified</td>
<td>Project has secured some additional funds but is dependent upon unsecured funding</td>
<td>Project funding secured for next 2-3 years with robust plans for ongoing funding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Future Planning and Risk Management</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Little planning ahead and identification of risks which might knock project off course</td>
<td>Acceptable/good level of planning and identification of risks might knock the project off course and what can be done to mitigate risks</td>
<td>Thorough planning and identification of risks with evidence that steps are being taken to mitigate these risks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buildings &amp; infrastructure</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Church buildings and infrastructure used by the project unsuitable or inadequate to support growth</td>
<td>Church buildings and infrastructure and/or non-church buildings used by the project are adequate to support growth</td>
<td>Church buildings and infrastructure used by the project are ideally suited to support growth OR Growth via the project is independent of buildings and infrastructure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geography/ location</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Geography/location of project presents serious difficulties which are difficult to work around</td>
<td>Geography/location of project has presented no insurmountable difficulties</td>
<td>Geography/location of project is a positive factor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socio economic issues</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Socio-economic and demographic issues have presented difficulties which have seriously hindered the project</td>
<td>Socio-economic and demographic issues have presented no insurmountable difficulties</td>
<td>Socio-economic and demographic issues are a positive factor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Replicability</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Limited ability to scale up or repeat aspects of the project elsewhere</td>
<td>Moderate or good ability to scale up or repeat aspects of the project elsewhere</td>
<td>Excellent ability to scale up or repeat aspects of the project elsewhere OR project has already been successfully scaled up or repeated elsewhere</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shared Learning</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Limited learning which could be shared from this project</td>
<td>Moderate/good amount of learning which could be shared from this project</td>
<td>Significant amount of learning which could be or is already being shared from this project</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure One: Weighting and Scoring Matrix

©Achill Management
Each project has its own rating chart, included in the individual reports in Appendix Three, with a summary of all project charts which allow comparison between projects included in Appendix Four.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Metric</th>
<th>Factors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Growth</td>
<td>• Numerical growth in discipleship – this includes growth in regular attendance achieved during the lifetime of the projects with some weighting for growth of wider mission field for those projects where this was part of the scope</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Leadership                 | • Ability to inspire others to action  
• Responsibility taken for others by allocating tasks  
• Work of others recognised and rewarded  
• Tasks and roles clearly, fairly and objectively allocated  
• Task allocation followed up with support and progress checked  
• Others empowered to be the best they can  
• Clear sense of strategy / vision for church                                                                                                                                                                      |
| Worship Style              | • Worship style is appropriate to social / economic / ethnicity of population  
• Worship style accessible (e.g. for children & young people)  
• Worship style has been considered [“Vitality comes with reflection and choice; the particular style is less important than the fact it has been considered and embraced rather than adopted by default” - Professor David Voas]                                             |
| Dependence on Individuals  | • Evidence of lay involvement in all aspects of church  
• Lay members able to play active role in worship  
• Lay members support governance and management  
• Lay members encouraged to take on training / courses / new responsibilities in both management and worship  
• Clear progression for congregation to leadership / mission roles                                                                                                                                               |
| Financial resilience       | • Project has generated own income from other grants  
• Project has generated own income from other sources including trading  
• Project could be self-sustaining financially  
• Clear evidence of budgeting / bookkeeping and effective systems in place for managing money                                                                                                                                                       |
| Future Planning & risk management | • Good financial management systems in place  
• Risk Assessment in place  
• Clear mechanism for tracking risks and dealing with them  
• Evidence of planning  
• Clarity of roles and responsibilities for risk  
• Clear strategy for continuation of project should that be the case                                                                                                                                               |
| Buildings and Infrastructure | • Fitness for purpose of buildings  
•Extent building present significant barrier to success  
• Dependency of project on buildings  
• Extent physical resources (including buildings) support growth                                                                                                                                                  |
| Geography / location       | • Accessibility -physical location  
• North / south  
• Surrounding areas - affluence?                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| Replicability               | • Clear model that could be used elsewhere  
• Project has captured the replicable elements  
• Project based on techniques, approaches, tools, methodologies that can be codified and replicated  
• Not person specific                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| Shared learning            | • Learning for wider church  
• Learning for similar projects  
• Learning for the Church Commissioners and Archbishops’ Council  
• Participants happy to engage in learning both own and others                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
For Consideration

The Development Funding was designed to encourage innovation, so both application process and evaluation criteria were therefore relatively loose. The methodology developed by Achill Management during this evaluation provides a baseline which could be further refined and utilised in future wide scale evaluations. Weightings for the different elements can be adjusted to reflect the nature of different programmes.

The remit of the evaluation was to measure the effectiveness of the programme as a whole, as well as to assess and evaluate individual project progress against the targets and measures they set for themselves. This section of the report not only explores both the wider lessons for Church Commissioners and Archbishops’ Council arising from the process, progress and outcomes of the Funding Programme but also the specific lessons that can be evidenced from individual project evaluations.

3.3 Evaluation measures

The evaluation measures were drawn up in direct response to the original criteria for the Church Growth in Deprived Areas funding as set out by the Bishop of London, Rt Revd Richard Chartres in his letter of June 2011.

The evaluation team distilled the criteria into three key measures:

- Evidence of Growth – broken down into three categories -
  - Numerical Growth – i.e. attendance figures
  - Journeys to faith – i.e. active participation in a spectrum of Church activities, often starting with simple attendance as a church ‘client’ which have led to (or which could reasonably be expected to lead to) a deepening understanding and, ultimately, Christian discipleship
  - Growth in the Wider Mission Field – i.e. activities which contribute to the common good but also provide opportunities to engage, have conversations about and begin the journey to faith and resultant Christian discipleship

- Replicability
- Sustainability and financial resilienc

For Consideration

Evidence of Numerical Growth: The Development Funding was primarily designed to compare (and learn from applying) a range of different approaches to fostering growth and mission apprentice training in deprived areas. The approaches differed in the extent to which they delivered numerical growth. Looking at a fairly conservative definition of church, however, and accepting that it is still early days for some projects, it is estimated that around 600 additional people now attend Church (traditional or Fresh Expressions of Church) on a regular basis, as a result of these projects. This figure includes adults and children and monthly as well as weekly attendance. The figures for those involved in wider activities delivered by the projects, are considerably larger and many of these represent earlier stages of discipleship.
4 Measure One: Evidence of growth

Growth varied across the projects and took different forms. For the purpose of this evaluation, growth is categorised in the following ways:

**Numerical growth**
The number of people attending some form of Church, including those new to faith (un-churched) or as returning church goers (de-churched). Included in this definition are Fresh Expressions of Church that can evidence that they include Prayer, Praise/ Worship and Discipleship (but not those which are primarily social or outreach based). This is the measure used in this evaluation to rate growth in the Project Charts.

**Journeys to faith – determining wider growth**
It is by definition hard to determine the numerical growth in discipleship that resulted from activities around creating opportunities for ‘conversations’ that start individuals on a journey to faith. Many projects recognised the importance of creating a route into Church but which is not Church in a formal sense. For some projects these were missional community activities led by lay workers, which include prayer or informal worship, while for others they were activities that provide support within a Church setting – such as mums’ and toddler groups. While not Fresh Expressions of Church they were more intentional than simply wider community engagement or one off social based events.

It was hard to collect viable, robust evidential data on the link between these activities designed to promote wider growth and actual increases in the number of individuals coming to faith for two main reasons: firstly, because of the length of the projects (2 or 3 years) and, secondly, due to the lack of robust metrics and data collected specifically in relation to ‘wider growth’.

**Engagement of wider community through Church outreach or mission – growth in the mission field**
Many of the projects were engaged in activities contributing to the common good, which might in the longer term develop a wider mission field: such as running a Food Bank, providing debt counselling, running cafes or drop-ins for young people or holiday clubs as well as organising more social activities like BBQs, fairs and fetes. All these, along with formal outreach to schools, formed part of the wider growth pattern within the overall programme. The numbers of individuals touched through these activities is by definition large and impressive because, for the most part, it is either a one off event or a “light touch”. Such activities do not contain a formal (or in some cases recognisable) expression of Church. However, they do build connections with individuals and communities that might facilitate evangelism in the long term.
4.1 Significant numerical growth

The ability of projects to provide hard data on actual numerical growth varied widely. Where it was possible to evidence numbers they are included in the individual project reports and were used as the basis to measure growth within the scoring matrix.

Evidence of significant measurable growth (defined as numerical growth and growth against original project objectives or outcomes) was found in 5 of the 28 projects:

- The Bridge School of Mission (+ Glo) – Fresh Expression of Church/Plant
- Sorted – Fresh Expression of Church/Pioneer Mission Training
- Ignite – Fresh Expression of Church
- Coventry Diocese: 20s-30s Leadership Development – Pioneer Mission Training
- St Luke’s Millwall – Church Plant

---

**The Bridge School of Mission and Church Planting (+ Glo)**

---

*The Bridge School of Mission (+ Glo)* is a combined project training apprentices in mission and church planting after successfully establishing a Fresh Expression of Church in Offerton, Stockport. The funding paid for interns based at Glo for a year and Mission Apprentices on placement. The Project has grown in both missional groups and in Fresh Expression of Church within Glo. Internship placements also achieved their targets. The project is very reliant on the empowering leadership from its Pioneer Missioners. From September 2012 to March 2014 Glo achieved a growth in discipleship from 20 to 30 people, 4 of whom were from the local estate: this is equivalent to a 32% annual growth rate. At the time of reporting the average Sunday attendance was around 60 which reflects a steady growth in discipleship offset by people moving away from the estate.
Sorted is a Church Army project based in North Bradford, working across 8 parishes. The project supported the setting up of Sorted 3 which grew from 80 to 144. As with The Bridge School this project has an element of training: 20 young people were helped to develop leadership skills and are now capable of mentoring other young people as a result of Sorted. Sorted has now been replicated in one other location in Greenwich.

Ignite is a Fresh Expression of Church which used the funding to develop a very different approach to replication – i.e. by taking an existing successful model working with a very marginalised community of refugee or asylum seekers and those with drug and alcohol addiction and building on the success of a weekly church at St Paul’s Cliftonville, Margate to plant the model in a community a few miles away in Ramsgate. Ignite has grown to 30 a week at regular sessions, plus a Monday night house group of 12-20 members and has led to a small increase in Sunday attendance at Church.
Coventry Diocese: 20s-30s Leadership Development is a Pioneer Mission Training project that sought to empower 30 young mission-oriented leaders (20-30 age range), drawn from a range of growing churches in poorer areas (urban and rural), by training and mentoring in leadership using an apprenticeship and 'Communities of Leaders' model over a two year period. The aim was for each young leader to lead a major sustainable missional project in their own church, based strongly on the 'Natural Church Development 8 Essential Qualities' to grow church. Although they were only successful in recruiting and training 25 young missioners, of which 14 remain, the project successfully created 45 new disciples in intensely deprived urban areas. Initially the young people were volunteers and this accounted for some of the 'churn' in numbers, but those that remain are now on a paid basis with a paid Mission Leader co-ordinator.

St Luke's Millwall is a Church Plant from St Paul’s Shadwell in collaboration with Christ Church Isle of Dogs, which brought 18 members to join 12 members of the existing congregation in anticipation of a new church building being available. Although the building has been delayed, St Luke’s has grown to a regular congregation of approximately 60 adults and 30 children. In addition, there are youth and family groups and wider community activities.
One of the defining characteristics of these five projects is they all have empowering, focused and dynamic leadership and they have grown steadily over time (8 years or more for Sorted and Ignite), giving them a really solid base from which to replicate. While it was outside the scope of this evaluation to explore the specific elements that characterise a successful plant, it is clear that in order to be successful Church Plants require dynamic strong leaders - the nature of plants is that they attract these types of individuals. In their report on Church Planting, Dadswell and Ross identify strong leadership, whether entrepreneurial or charismatic, as being at the heart of a successful plant.  

However, Leadership on its own is not enough. What has made these models of Church successful and what makes them replicable is they combine a number of essential elements identified below:

Learning from Significant Growth Projects: key characteristics for success
- Empowering Leadership
- Worship style that is relevant and responds to the needs of the community – not a top down approach
- A strong focus on being local, being accessible and being relevant
- High levels of trust
- Flexibility and openness
- Training is a key element – it is not enough to find individuals and pay them, they must be trained and supported in their own communities
- Adaptability of the model. (Projects such as Ignite and St Luke’s, for example, work because they take a working model and then adapt it to meet the needs of the community in which it is located. Both are working in very deprived communities where a top down approach wouldn't work. Using a more relational or Fresh Expressions of Church approach has allowed these projects to flourish)

For Consideration
While empowering leadership generated successful growth, there was often an innate vulnerability within these projects as they became very person dependent and had little in the way of succession planning or training and strategy for succession. Future funding programmes should encourage projects to address succession planning and develop a strategy as part of the initial bid.

5 Church Growth Research Project: Church Planting November 2013 Oxford Centre for Ecclesiology and Practical Theology Ripon College, Cuddesdon - David Dadswell and Cathy Ross
For Consideration

High growth projects were not financially self-sufficient and, as such, are not sustainable. To replicate these models successfully elsewhere would require significant grant funding over a sustained period of time (e.g. for at least five years).

CASE STUDY:
Two very different approaches to replicating models

Two of the most successful growth projects were St Luke’s Millwall and Ignite, Margate. Although they are very different in style, structure and community, they share common approaches. Each model provides some vital lessons on sustainability, replicability and funding.

St Luke’s Millwall is in the Diocese of London and is a traditional Church Plant. Founded under a temporary 5 year Bishops Mission Order, it brought 18 members of the St Pauls Shadwell congregation to the Parish of Christ Church and St John with St Luke’s on Isle of Dogs. This highly deprived area in the shadow of the corporate towers of Canary Wharf had seen its church demolished and the small existing congregation were meeting in a local school.

The development grant provided space and financial security for the Vicar and his wife (who works unpaid part time) to focus on building the community, providing a variety of outreach from Pub Church to fun days, as well as regular services. St Luke’s has seen strong and sustained growth from an initial joint congregation of 30 to a regular Sunday attendance of 75-90, plus a wider mission field within the community. The church has outgrown its home in the school and now meets in the community centre while waiting for a new building to be finalised and built. The model works well but is very dependent on the vision and commitment of the minister. St Luke’s was, for the first three years, dependent on additional outside funding for financial viability: it is expected to run a balanced budget in year four with only a small amount of outside funding.

Lessons from St Luke’s
Success came from using the well-established pattern for planting: a committed group of planters, many of whom moved to the area, joined a small existing core of worshippers. A strong focus on families, on community and based on a relational approach to ministry saw steady and sustained growth in numbers.

Relational ministry is at the heart of St Luke’s: “It’s important to meet them where they are” and to ensure whatever intervention the Church provides meets the needs of the community as far as possible.

Relationships are central to the success of Ignite but this is a very different model of Planting.
Ignite St Paul’s in Cliftonville, Margate is in the Diocese of Canterbury and is an existing Fresh Expression of Church. Ignite works with migrant communities, asylum seekers and adults with drug and alcohol addiction using an approach based on hospitality, welcoming and greeting people by name, structuring ‘worship’ around a theme and a format that makes people feel comfortable rather than formal Church. From its re-launch in 2008 Ignite now has a regular weekly congregation of 50-70 people.

The Ignite team used the development funding to strengthen Ignite and then to map its “DNA” in order to develop a plant by forming a new worshipping community a few miles up the road at St Christopher’s in Newington (near Ramsgate) where there was a very small Sunday congregation.

Rather than following a more traditional plant approach of taking a congregation with them, Ignite took the model and replicated it at St Christopher’s using the experienced team to attract a new congregation. This now numbers 28 adults and 10 children, plus a Monday night house group of between 12-20.

Ignite has planted the ‘model’ not the people.

The Ignite “DNA”

- The format is fast moving and carefully structured in advance – each service is broken down into short (no more than 10 minutes often less) activities and interventions
- Boundaries are vital for both team leaders and for Ignite congregation
- Food and hospitality are at the heart of an Ignite meeting
- Respect is essential – knowing and using people’s names

Lessons from Ignite

Ignite is wholly dependent on grant and external funding but has had significant success in attracting non-Church funding – including ‘The Big Local’ Lottery funds. The approach can be replicated and materials developed in the project can be used to ‘plant’ an Ignite elsewhere but, as the success is heavily dependent on the original CME team, new teams would need training and support in the Ignite approach to make other plants successful.
4.2 Wider learning for the Church Commissioners and Archbishops’ Council

4.2.1 Lessons from the grant making process
The Developing Church Growth in Deprived Areas programme was designed to encourage Churches to apply for development projects in deprived areas and as such the application process was relatively simple and unrestrictive. The benefit of this approach was that it allowed dioceses, mission organisations and individual parishes to put forward projects that were developmental and, in some cases, try new approaches or take risks. The disadvantage of this was that many projects set unrealistic targets, or weak baseline data from which to assess growth and there was little in the way of systematic evaluation across the 28 projects. Comparing like with like was difficult.

Areas of particular learning are set out below and cover the need for realistic targets, having stronger baseline data, being clear about the overall purpose and desired outcomes of the programme and stronger evaluation processes.

**Realistic Targets**
The funding programme has resulted in evidenced growth in discipleship measured by increased regular attendance. Some projects reported an increase in numerical terms but it was at a much lower level than predicted in the original application bid, often because many of the projects set far too vague (using terms such as “many” or “more”) or too ambitious targets. Consequently, although they achieved considerable success against our measures, they did not reach their planned targets. This made for a significant challenge when creating a post-project set of robust metrics by which to measure growth.

Any future funding schemes of this type would benefit from a clearer set of guidelines and principles around the type of growth that is anticipated and how this can best be evidenced and measured: i.e. is the project intended to grow mission capacity (for example by training Mission Apprentices) to facilitate and achieve future growth in disciples beyond the timeframe of the project or is it intended to grow direct mission programmes with a more immediate increase in discipleship. The outcomes of a Church Plant or Fresh Expression of Church see a faster numerical growth pattern than that found in the type of mission that seeks to bring non-churched into contact with Church and the Gospel message by facilitating growth in discipleship in the longer term such as Children and Youth Work.

**For Consideration**
Be clear at the outset of any funding programme about the parameters. Have a stronger evidence base from which to measure - this may mean having better baseline data or encouraging SMART target setting and achievable objectives. Agree what ‘type of growth’ is anticipated and how this can best be measured.
Purpose of the Funding
The projects were funded for a range of outcomes; to build capacity, develop new models of Church, support experimentation or support directional change or sometimes all four at once.

While making a direct like for like comparison difficult this approach is not necessarily a bad thing. The Church Commissioners and Archbishops’ Council must be commended for the innovative and unrestrictive approach to funding that resulted in a wide variety of new approaches, risk taking and innovation within the projects. The downside of this innovation is that some projects might be classed as failing or at least failing to meet their original objectives and targets; yet these “failing” projects have yielded many useful lessons.

For Consideration
Support innovation and ensure projects have the ‘space to fail’ to encourage new approaches to growing discipleship, while supporting them to manage and learn from those “failures”.

Evaluation
The discrepancy in reporting and measurement made it challenging to evaluate 28 diverse projects across a wide range of communities. One of the project leads commented that for those who do not live in them the view is that “deprived communities are all the same, but in reality they are all very different – in culture, in attitudes and in the problems they face”. This diversity can only be measured effectively if evaluation is part of the process from the outset with clearly defined parameters and measure as outlined above. Many projects employed external evaluators who were more like accompaniers and whose evaluation was therefore more of a narrative description rather than a genuine evaluation of success and progress against clear targets.

For Consideration
Build in robust, regular evaluation from the beginning and use a baseline of clear, measurable, realistic and agreed targets.
Encourage all projects to use external evaluators who are not afraid to ask challenging questions and who will focus on success measures
4.2.2 Factors which influence growth
Other factors that support growth which it was possible to identify include:

★ Growing leaders within the church – particularly young leaders - e.g. the Coventry Diocese: 20s-30s Leadership Development which has now become a catalyst for Diocesan wide emphasis on 20s-30s mission and ministry
★ Flexibility and willingness to adapt or adopt new models – e.g. Liverpool Cathedral growing a new congregation from the Iranian refugees and asylum seekers - ‘Sepas’
★ Being relevant and rooted in the needs of the congregation you serve – e.g. Sepas and Ignite particularly
★ Enabling individuals to make the journey to faith easily – making it accessible, through language or an approach that recognises the needs of the local congregation
★ Having a strong core that supports growth – both paid staff and trained volunteers
★ Ability to learn from mistakes as well as successes, and adapt accordingly

4.2.3 Other projects exhibiting growth but at a lower level
While many of the projects did not achieve significant numerical growth, there were 14 that have been rated as scoring moderate or good level of growth (on the matrix this equates to a score of 20 out of 30). This comprised some numerical growth coupled with growth in the wider sense. These projects tended to receive a lower score for growth because either they did not meet their original targets (which in many cases were perhaps over ambitious in terms of numbers and outcomes) or it was hard to evidence the transition from a mission group outreach activity to Church or, where it did occur, it was very small.

It is important to recognise that they all achieved some growth in terms of new or returning disciples as well as developing a wider mission field for evangelism. As success measures these are important to note and learn from.

**Fresh Expressions of Church**
★ Open Door St Paul with St Luke Tranmere
★ Liverpool Cathedral Mission Project
★ Poole Missional Communities

**Children and Youth Work**
★ Sensing Salvation
★ Mentoring for Children and Young People St Paul’s Stonehouse
★ St Francis Dalgarno Way Youth Worker
★ Children and Families Work Radford

**Projects in churches in deprived outer housing estates**
★ Xtend
★ Jesus Shaped People

**Pioneer Mission Training**
★ Mission Apprentices Birmingham
★ St Barnabas Theological Centre & YMC
★ This is Not a Project Hull

**Church Plant**
★ Tottenham Hale, Priest Missioner

**Mission Communities**
★ St Andrew’s Clubmoor Mission Development
4.2.4 Good leadership did not always lead to high growth

Although there is a correlation between leadership and an increase in discipleship, it is not always a given that good leadership will result in significant growth. Two projects demonstrated this: the Church in Schools Development Worker and Sensing Salvation. Both scored highly for leadership with the individuals (either project worker or clergy incumbent) but did not evidence strong growth. It is worth noting the factors that led to these discrepancies, which are different in each case.

The Church in Schools Development Worker is an anomaly because the original project brief changed mid-way through, from one focused on delivering church in schools work to a more specific focus on research. This change of scope and outcomes led to misunderstandings about the role and remit of the worker in the project.

Sensing Salvation reached small cohorts of children at a time and worked well with very local primary schools (those that were a walk away). However, despite strong charismatic leadership, many of the larger scale community events did not lead to a significant rise in regular church attendance. The outreach into the Eastern European community in and around Wisbech has been strong but it has been balanced by a decline in attendance amongst the more established Fenland residents.

4.3 Journeys to faith – wider growth

For many projects the core of their work was the intention to build wider faith communities and reach out to those beginning on a discipleship journey that does not always result in measurable Sunday attendance or a significant increase in numbers of disciples attending Church.

Mission Apprentices in Birmingham is a prime example of this: Growth in disciples and church attendance was only one of the objectives as the scheme equally sought to develop and equip individuals to become leaders of urban church and mission, while trying out the viability of an ‘apprenticeship’ model.

The seven Mission Apprentices (MAs) were placed in seven very different communities - a mix of outer and inner city and multicultural parishes, with a MA embedded in their parish and community. This approach allowed them to focus on wider growth and connections: most of the growth and discipling happened outside of formal “church. The MA often worked with individuals or small groups ranging in size from 3 to 10, which did not then translate into large increases of Sunday attendance.

In Birmingham these small or more informal examples of growth were often coupled with wider engagement activities happening at a “whole” community level. In Hodge Hill, for example, the MA developed a pop-up tea station, ‘Hodge Hill Cuppa’, to facilitate community conversation in public places and attracting 70-80 people. He also became involved in a wide range of community initiatives including a job club, after-school club and bicycle social enterprise.
Data from the Mission Apprentices Evaluation Report produced by Dr Ian Jones of the St Peter’s Saltley Trust shows that, while in some instances congregations grew, the change in leavers and joiners meant that overall numbers of worshippers stayed the same in regular Sunday attendance.

“The success of the Birmingham Mission Apprentice Scheme should be measured as much in relation to the development of the individual Mission Apprentices themselves, and the creation of a viable apprenticeship pathway for emerging urban missional leaders, as much as on growth in disciples and church attendances in the participating parishes.”

Dr Ian Jones, St Peter’s Saltley

**For Consideration**

For the Mission Apprentices in the Birmingham project there is a strong sense that the quality and nature of these conversations and interactions have contributed to creating a culture which makes it possible for non-churched individuals to begin a journey to faith. However, it is hard to evaluate this as evidenced wider growth as the numbers are so small and, while the ‘intentionality’ is there, the evidence of growth in Church attendance is not.

A number of projects evidenced success and growth in their work with the wider community usually through social support or wider social activities. Notable examples of this are:

*St Andrew’s Clubmoor*, where church attendance fell even though participation in the Missional Communities remained constant, while demand for support services (such as debt counselling, addiction support or the foodbank) rose.

*Opshops Carlisle*, a network of 6 charity shops providing goods and clothing at low cost within deprived neighbourhoods and working to build missional communities that are based within the shops themselves. Pre-evangelistic work is strong (social provision and support for marginalised and damaged communities is high) but this has not yet led to established communities, to increased church attendance, nor to the growth in mission leadership. Opshops does offer a strong, replicable financial model that could be used elsewhere.

### 4.4 Engagement of wider community through Church outreach or mission

As part of this evaluation the areas where large scale, wider evidence of community engagement occurred were examined. These by definition include large numbers where the interaction is at a much higher level – such as Sensing Salvation, which held a Children’s Bethlehem procession through Wisbech and a one off memorial service attended by 300 people, and *St Paul’s Stonehouse* who ran an awayday with 40 people.

---

6 Mission Apprentice Report Dr Ian Jones June 2014 (http://www.saltleytrust.org.uk/publications)
Projects which focused on children and families work, particularly in schools, demonstrated wider outreach by working with whole schools at a time – usually through Christingle or Easter Services or via school assemblies. Others provided social events such as Family Activity Days or occasional services. In Worcester the Tolladine Mission started a regular afternoon craft and tea event to attract non-churched local families (‘Tea@Tolly’), with an average of 40 people attending each time and, while the main focus was crafts and tea, there was always a short prayer and an opportunity for families to talk to the Mission team about faith.

Measuring and tracking growth in discipleship from these wider community-based events is much harder and more intangible. However, it is important to acknowledge and recognise the role that a wider outreach strategy plays in creating the right environment for individuals to begin conversations and start on their journey to faith. The experience of the Mission Apprentice schemes in both Birmingham and Coventry bear this out.

Time is also a factor in wider evangelism work - for all communities but particularly so in areas of deprivation where the irregular nature of many people’s lives means it can take a considerable length of time for people to begin their journey to faith.

**For Consideration**

Perhaps this is a journey that can be traced across the continuum of **connections, community, conversations and commitment.**

**CASE STUDY:**

**Growing the wider Mission Field and responding to the challenge of “the Client to Christian dilemma”**

St Andrew’s, Clubmoor, Liverpool is in a very deprived area of Liverpool with 6.5% of the ward in 1% most deprived nationally and a further 65% in the 5% of most deprived nationally. St Andrew’s Church is supported by and works closely with the well-established charity St Andrew’s Community Network, set up in 2003 to tackle poverty in the local area. The aim of the development funding was to bring the mission and this practical work closer together by developing principles, practices and programmes to help move people along their faith journey.

The funding paid for two ‘community pastors’ providing intensive resource towards missional communities, the equipping and training of staff and volunteers, to research and share learning, and to work towards equipping of other churches locally. Over the two years the charity expanded and developed its social action work significantly and, while some Missional Communities closed, new ones were started. A range of outreach activities include Celebrate Recovery, family fun days, Christmas programme, ‘Client to Christian’ evangelism and mission training, women’s and men’s breakfasts and community film nights. All of these social settings provided a bridge for community members and people who had accessed support services through the Network to hear the
gospel in an accessible way. They sit alongside the community support activities – e.g. a well-used Foodbank (20,000 people supported in last three years), a debt advice service (900 cases per year), and complex mental health work including depression support groups.

Many clients see the Missional Communities as ‘church’ and while the Missional Communities are small, they provide an alternative form of church – where Church is defined as gatherings of people exploring faith. However, there was very little growth in the congregation at St Andrew’s congregation there, continues to fluctuate - largely reflecting the challenges faced by those supported by the network.

The charity continues to grow and deliver activities that meet people at a point of need. This continues to attract financial support in the form of grants and clearly develops a wider mission field. What is apparent from the project is that few people made a transition from being a ‘client’. i.e. someone who receives support through the charity, into making a faith commitment. The only area where this happened is through volunteering – where clients go on to work with the organisation and this relationship is then framed differently. Church growth has happened, but this has largely been through Missional Communities or the greater focus that the church has put on mission.

This is clearly a complex issue. One the one hand, social action ‘models kingdom work’, it builds the reputation and standing of St. Andrew’s in the community, and provides avenues for people to get involved, exercise leadership and make a community contribution. One the other, tensions exist between the social objectives of the charity (and its workers) and the community pastors about how to introduce faith safely and ethically, or how to build relationships with ‘clients’ beyond the service that is being provided.

St. Andrew’s experience also indicates that those who are prepared to engage with faith as well as practical support may have made more progress along their practical recovery. The implication is that engaging with faith may be part of the long term success in support for debt, addiction, food insecurity, or mental health recovery.

**Lessons from St Andrew’s Clubmoor:**

- Missional Communities are Church for many
- Significant social action provides opportunities to model Christ-centred compassion for the most vulnerable, and provides avenues for greater involvement.
- The direct evangelism strategy that seeks to move people from ‘client’ to ‘Christian’ is not universally effective and warrants greater investigation.
- The financially self-sustaining charity with ability to attract inward investment helps to support the Church in its ministry
- Church and Charity staff work closely together – this creates pathways to Church for those who want to take it
5 Measure Two: Replicability – Developing New and Successful Models for Replicating Elsewhere

A key measure of overall success within the programme is the likelihood that specific models or approaches can be replicated elsewhere. The evaluation explored which elements of each project could be replicated and asked specific questions regarding development of materials or models. While all the projects have some aspects which could be replicated elsewhere and the learning they offer is certainly worth recording and sharing widely, some offer greater potential than others.

Projects were measured on their ability to define clearly the model or approach they were using, to produce a bank of materials, case studies or easily codified methodologies for others to follow and on a capacity for succession planning.

Elements that contribute to replication are:

- Clear articulation of faith and a vision for Church
- Lack of dependence on one individual
- A well-developed team
- Good models (preferably already well documented) of how the project works
- Financial resilience and good financial and risk management systems

Interestingly, some of the projects which score highly on the weighting and scoring matrix for replicability (often because they are already being rolled out in other areas or they have well documented models for others to follow) do not score highly across all the key metrics. Two notable examples of this are:

- Sorted – already being rolled as new plant in Greenwich but financially less robust
- Jesus Shaped People – a replicable model, which is already being rolled out and has a good resource of materials for others to use – however, regular attendance in the original parish is down and Jesus Shaped People is very person dependent which makes succession planning an issue of concern

Others that score highly for replication are already either plants themselves or are beginning to replicate within their local area:

- Birmingham Mission Apprentices has secured some additional funding and as sufficient additional funding is secured plans to roll out the model across the city for another 14 apprentices over a 10 year period. Individual host parishes will be required to fund part of the mission apprentice costs on an ongoing basis
- OpShops is a highly replicable model for self-sustaining charity shops as Missional Communities – while growth in discipleship is relatively low there is a clear business model that has potential for rollout in other urban areas
- St Luke’s Millwall is the most successful plant in the programme and demonstrates the key attributes for replication elsewhere. Its current financial sustainability is dependent on the original plant members, but growth predictions for the future are positive
CASE STUDY:
Developing replicable models for Church Growth.

The Bridge School of Mission and Church Planting (+Glo) andSorted, while both quite different in scope and the nature of their mission, demonstrate that providing the right ingredients are present it is possible to propagate and transplant ideas to achieve wider potential growth.

The Bridge School of Mission in the Diocese of Chester was funded under a BMO to provide a centre for training mission apprentices giving them hands-on experience by working alongside the mission team at Glo Church, the “God Loves Offerton” project connected to All Saints, Marple. Glo Church’s physical presence is a meeting space in an arcade of shops in one of Offerton’s "sink" estates, offering both a place to worship and practical social support including counselling, food and clothing bank.

The Bridge provides the support and training for interns to become mission apprentices: two have been trained and returned to Scunthorpe, two more interns are in training as a result of the funding and two qualified Mission Apprentices are setting up an additional church plant in a neighbouring estate. While The Bridge provides the administrative support, Glo Church provides the tangible mission field in which trainees can gain experience and develop their gifts – linking these two organisations ensures that practical and theoretical experience and learning come together.

The model itself is replicable but is dependent on strong leadership, good succession planning and finances. The Glo project is underwritten financially by All Saints Marple and replication would require significant investment as provision of this type of training programme is resource intensive, and the project was less successful at generating its own income through events such as conferences.

Sorted (aka Bradford Centre of Mission) is a youth evangelism project based in the multi-cultural communities in deprived areas in eight parishes in North Bradford (Diocese of West Yorkshire and the Dales), engaging with young people in parks, streets and local areas (although most of the significant work has developed through contacts made with young people in two local secondary schools). Established in 2005, Sorted has grown into three separate youth churches with a focus on teenagers and young adults from non-church backgrounds. Sorted is largely dependent on the Church Commissioners and Archbishops’ Council’s grant money and Church Army funding for its work. The replicability of a similar project is therefore heavily dependent upon a source of funding being secured for at least 3-5 years, and ideally a model being established which helps to pay for itself.

Sorted has already been replicated in Greenwich.
As with Glo Church, a firm connection with a local church and a shared vision is critical as this enables the leadership team to establish and build relationships with the local community. A dedicated Youth Worker was invaluable to the success and growth of Sorted.

**Learning from The Bridge and Sorted:**
- Rapid initial growth often tails off, especially with younger people
- Working in partnership with a range of stakeholders such as the local council is vital to avoid duplicating good practice happening elsewhere
- Bringing administrative & training resource together with opportunities to work in the mission field enriches the experience of mission apprentices
- It is essential to gain visibility and support within the local community as well as with wider church community
- Strong leadership, good succession planning and adequate resources (including financial) underpin the success of both Sorted and The Bridge

### 5.1 Projects sharing knowledge and learning

One of the main purposes of the original grant funding of nearly £3 million over three years was to create an opportunity to research and develop ideas and approaches within particularly challenging communities for church growth. The benefit this brought to individual churches and communities has been significant – but perhaps the greatest benefit has been the learning that has been generated.

**5.1.1 Learning Meetings**

At the first of two learning meetings in October 2015 the project leads and teams had an opportunity to come together for the first time for a facilitated peer to peer workshop designed to allow them to share ideas and experiences, learn from one another and develop new approaches based on what works elsewhere. The evaluation asked what success looked like to the projects and how they achieved it: responses are taken verbatim from the participants.

**Success characteristics that were common to nearly all projects were:**
- Growing people
- New enthusiastic disciples
- People becoming followers and making disciples
- Sowing seeds – persistence
- Projects have greater success where there is buy in
- Impact on wider Diocesan thinking and strategy
- Sustainability
How do we achieve that success?

- Discipleship is key
- Long term vs immediate
- Growing people through relationships
- Flexibility – adapt to changing circumstances and context
- Trust
- Got to work with people who want to work with you
- Sustainability – there is a difference in success measures for “parachuted” projects as opposed to those that are home grown / owned – not that one is better than another, just different
- Allow time – a three year timescale is too short
- Evaluation and targets helped projects to focus
- Got to balance the immediate vs longer term
- Money helps

Participants also shared their experiences, hints and tips and requests for support and help. A full report can be found in Appendix Two.

The second learning meeting was held in June 2016 and allowed for project leads to receive the headline feedback from the evaluation and to discuss the wider learning and lessons for the Church from the overall programme. Among the topics discussed were the ‘client to Christian dilemma’, how best to support volunteers, how to grow and support leaders (especially young leaders) and whether the Church of England takes financial sustainability seriously enough.

The participants felt strongly that future programmes should offer an opportunity to meet together earlier to build a network for sharing and exploring good practice and ideas. The feedback from the evaluation should also be fed into the wider Church Commission Estates conference and task force.

5.2 Learning for the Church Commissioners and Archbishops’ Council from information exchange

There is a clear appetite to share ideas, learning and best practice as well as to have an opportunity to work with colleagues and peers from across the country. The project leads and workers found the opportunity to share and network with one another invaluable. However, there was less use of the online resources available on the Church Growth website than expected. This was perhaps because there was no sense of being part of a wider programme of activity, so there was no ‘buy in’ to the shared learning element of this programme at the outset. A learning meeting at the start of the project (or at least after the first year) would have contributed to generating a learning culture.
For Consideration

In addition to the measurable growth in discipleship and the wider mission field, the learning that all projects, not just the successful ones, have to offer is a major benefit.

Future large scale funding programmes need to build in opportunities for Dioceses and Parishes to actively share and exchange ideas and information, to build learning sets initially established with central resources and then allowed to develop into “self-managed” learning sets supported with an IT resource.

Encourage greater shared learning to avoid duplication and re-inventing the wheel. A number of projects spent time and money developing models or resources that were very similar to those available elsewhere. There is far more that could be done to pool these resources and begin to generate easily replicable models for Church growth and associated evangelism.

The lack of take up of the web-based resources and the poor use of IT was noticeable across the projects and existing resources were underused. Future nationwide programmes which involve multiple grant recipients could build on an initial face to face learning meeting to allow connections to be made that are then supported and built upon via effective use of online resources and fora.
6 Measure Three: Sustainability and Financial Resilience

As might be expected, given that all projects were located in areas of high multiple deprivation, financial sustainability and resilience is a key issue. Very few of the 28 projects visited had been able to develop a strong and resilient financial model - many were wholly dependent on the Church Commissioners and Archbishop’s Council funding or other direct church funding sources. Many projects are only sustainable as they rely heavily on volunteers, trainees or part time staff or, as is the case with Church Plants, they have financial resilience built into the design of the project from the outset.

Three projects scored the maximum score for financial resilience although for different reasons: Birmingham Mission Apprentices, St Andrew’s Clubmoor and Opshops.

Birmingham Mission Apprentices

were successful in using the original funding to leverage additional income to extend the project and develop new expressions of Church in the city, due in part to empowering leadership and a clearly articulated vision for Church growth.
CASE STUDY:
Developing Financial Resilience in Church Growth Projects

Opshops in the Diocese of Carlisle was among the most financially robust and self-sustaining of all the 28 projects funded through the scheme. Opshops run an existing chain of six charity shops based across the city, meeting local community needs for clothes and household goods. This provides a base for outreach and mission, practical support for local deprived communities and a home for a new ‘church’. The Church Commissioners and Archbishops’ Council’s funding covered the cost of warehouse and driving staff, freeing up manager time to oversee the running of the shops and extend mission work largely led by the Development Manager. Where the challenges have arisen they have been to do with the nature and extent of the mission work – communities are fragile and need ‘home grown’ evangelists – it is not possible to parachute in a vicar or missioner.

Opshops have been underwritten financially by the Diocesan Board of Finance until the chain is able to become totally financially robust and self-supporting, although by the end of the project the deficit was significantly reduced and break even looked achievable. Expansion into a slightly more prosperous area of the city will allow for greater income generation, which in turn will subsidise the less profitable shops in the chain.
The model is primarily a business one and, while the pre-evangelistic work is strong with social provision and support for marginalised and damaged communities, there is less measurable growth in church attendance.

Opshops is a model that with some further analysis, business planning and robust modelling including development of toolkits case studies etc., could be replicated in contained urban areas – other cities or large towns would be viable. This is a business first and foremost and robust management, safeguarding and related policies and practices need to be in place to ensure continued success.

Local congregations did not engage with the practical aspects of Opshops by volunteering - they did however provide donations. Pairing up congregations who can donate with the charity shop outlets increases stock and turnover.

Learning from Opshops

- This takes time – Opshops started in 1991 with one shop based in St James but developed into a franchise in 2009 onwards
- Social enterprise model allowing all profits to be ploughed back into the shops
- Each shop is different and needs its own catalyst to create a missional community within the shop
- Central support and planning is vital, with economies of scale across the charitable trading enterprise
7 Wider Learning for the Church Commissioners and Archbishops’ Council

7.1 Governance
There have been cases where projects have suffered due to poor management, HR, safeguarding or recruitment processes. This is an area where stronger local deanery or Diocesan support would have been beneficial. Resources and support in the form of policies, guidance and best practice is available both centrally through Parish Resources and at local Diocesan level but perhaps these need to be more widely publicised and promoted. Of the 29 original projects one failed to start at all, one closed early due to significant financial and personnel issues, and one finished early due to maternity leave, and one did not draw down all the allocated budget.

However, the general level of oversight and scrutiny varied from project to project and the time constraints on the central resources within the Research Strategy and Development Unit meant that projects were not subject to as much on-going monitoring and support as would ideally have been desirable. Evaluation visits were welcomed and many of the project leads and Clergy who were spoken to suggested that they would have welcomed more contact with the Church Commissioners and Archbishops’ Council during the lifetime of the project.

For Consideration
With future funding likely to be on a larger scale, stronger governance and scrutiny processes and infrastructure should be built into the project management system from the outset, linked to the measurement and evaluation process.

7.2 Finance and timescale
As mentioned above, for the churches in this programme a little goes a long way financially but developing momentum and gaining trust for new ways of working takes a long time. Most projects would have benefitted from having the funding granted over 3-5 years rather than 2-3 years. Given the levels of deprivation in the parishes, large scale fundraising is unrealistic. A requirement for applicants to demonstrate an ability to raise an appropriate percentage of match funding towards the costs would help to create a focus on financial management and sustainability.

Although many projects submitted detailed budgets at bid stage, there was a surprising overall lack of attention to financial planning (particularly with regard to financial sustainability). A stronger focus on financial management, good budgeting and developing a greater awareness of the need for longer term financial sustainability would be beneficial. Two good models emerge from the projects: Birmingham Mission Apprentices and OpShops, both of which have robust financially sustainable operating models.
**For Consideration**

Robust and well-managed budgeting processes need to be in place before projects receive grant funding – where financial skills are weak project applicants should be encouraged to nominate someone to attend basic financial or budget training.

Future funding programmes of this kind should permit projects to be funded for a period of up to 5 years with a requirement they develop post funding sustainability strategies – these to be monitored as part of the annual evaluation process with recommendations for action made each year to keep projects on track.

Applicants should be required to raise an appropriate percentage of match funding as part of any future programme to encourage greater sustainability and realistic budgeting.

### 7.3 Wider learning from the projects: what works well for Church growth in deprived areas and how can that learning be replicated and shared

The great benefit of a large research and development programme of this kind covering 28 areas, all with common aspects of deprivation, but with very different cultures, and with 8 different types of growth intervention, is that it generates a rich seam of data for analysis. What this evaluation has found is that while the communities and projects were very different, there are many similar or common approaches, interventions or activities that can lead to successful Church growth.

In order to make sense of all the learning, shared ideas and feedback gathered during the evaluation and review, it is grouped into categories. This learning comes from the visits and conversations had with Clergy, project workers and lay members of staff, and much of it is recorded verbatim with added commentary by the evaluation team.

#### Learning from Mission Apprentices & Pioneer Mission Training

† Selecting Mission Apprentices (MAs) from within the Parishes contributed significantly to their success – the ‘home grown’ and easy to relate to nature of the MAs in both Coventry and Birmingham Dioceses underpinned their success.

† A well-structured supervisory and learning programme not only helps the individuals but allows for shared learning – all the MA programmes offered some form of shared learning and mentoring but, where the learning programme was more structured and had a dedicated resource in the form of a co-ordinator, this lead to the greatest success and helped recruitment and retention. A paid MA co-ordinator (practitioner not just a facilitator) is also essential to provide support and coherence to the scheme.
(Learning from Mission Apprentices and Pioneer Mission Training - continued)

✓ Often there was less learning across the different church communities than between the individual MAs themselves. Learning sets proved useful for this. For some projects (such as Coventry and Hull) the focus on supporting young people was at the heart of the MA programme
✓ Volunteer MAs have a role to play but expect greater turnover and loss during a project: therefore, a strong recommendation would be for future MAs to be paid.
✓ Get the right people then give them ‘authority’ to have conversations – empower them to say “This is who we are and what we stand for” – empowering MAs is seen as crucial to success

Learning from Children and Youth Work projects/Church in Schools

✓ Adopt an approach of “by young people, for young people” rather than “come to us and fit in with what we do” as this is a good way to engage young people - this gives them an opportunity to experience practical outworking of the Christian message
✓ Working with young people (particularly those from challenged backgrounds) requires care: (1) young people need to feel they can trust leaders; (2) there needs to be continuity; (3) leaders understand them and their situation – skilled and trained leaders are vital in this context
✓ Really important to transfer leadership to young people - by empowering them and supporting them to take on leadership roles which they may have not been aware they could do
✓ Start with a clear strategy and then engage whole church community
✓ Success with older young people based on ‘ad hoc’ approach rather than formal regular commitment – this means it is important to be flexible
✓ Need to refresh and change activities even if they are successful – i.e. Messy Church – to prevent boredom or people dropping out

Learning from Church projects in deprived outer estates

✓ Events work well if they build on what is already going on rather than trying to duplicate or replace. A good example is football, where players from the church could join in existing arrangements (not ostensibly as a “church” team) and take opportunity to chat about their faith and church afterwards where appropriate
✓ Relationships are key. Need to provide space where people can talk, develop relationships. Less about formulaic programmes and more about facilitating relationships
✓ Cannot parachute in a vicar – has to be home-grown by the community: and as such has to be rooted in the community
✓ Overlapping ministries – i.e. ensure a joined-up, co-ordinated and cohesive approach
✓ Indigenous leadership – grow leaders and unlock dynamism that already exists in the community. This is true for leadership at all levels and it is important to work with what is there
Learning from Fresh Expressions of Church and outreach projects

✔ Be clear whether the intended outcome for a project is to build a bridge for new people into an established church or to be a congregation or church itself
✔ Trust, starting small, lots of encouragement, being seen and being visible in the community are all important. This is particularly important in deprived areas where community cohesion is fragile and there is a highly transient population
✔ Establish a clear shared vision which allows everyone to understand and engage in Church
✔ Make time to speak to all the team members individually, allowing the quieter members to have an equal voice. Work with those who want to be involved. One of the key lessons of Ignite and other Fresh Expressions of Church was that it takes a long time for some individuals to feel ‘brave enough’ to take on a visible or formal role
✔ Keep it simple and sustainable and be flexible and adapt where necessary
✔ Running a business can create a strong context for mission but it needs two pioneers, a business entrepreneur and a pioneer missioner. Separate their roles clearly and enable partnership through regular communication and prayer – the lesson from many projects that started or ran social enterprises is that they take different skills and often require different types of individuals to ensure success
✔ Importance of “top down” intentionality of mission and growth (i.e. leadership of the church must be advocates for and involved in this work)
✔ Less about increasing size of congregation but developing a more “mixed economy” congregation – growth is slow in many of the outreach based projects
✔ Need project support team/ committees with local clergy ‘buy in’ to help on the ground

Learning from Church Planting

✔ Experienced team needed with dedicated time to get it off the ground
✔ Need to work with the people who attend – their needs and experiences drive the process
✔ Each restart and church plant is unique - Starts with the community then grows into Church
✔ Excellent support needs to be in place before pioneering new mission activities
✔ Look for the needs which are present in the local community and try to meet these freely – aim to be a blessing to the community, look for open doors
✔ Partnership with local agencies
✔ Work with what you have
✔ Journey to be taken before you get other organisations to walk alongside you
Learning from Missional Communities (MCs)

- People have complex needs and come to the network for support – this does not always translate into church attendance - this was particularly the case for St Andrew’s Clubmoor but also for other MC projects
- Missional Community leaders need to feel supported in their discipleship journey
- Strengthening relationships are emerging as the most effective way of moving people along their faith journey. Attendance in activities is highest through personal invite, discipleship works best in community, leadership development requires investment from existing leaders
- Paid workers are essential to developing MC work
- Base project on a mixed economy of Parish and Mission
8 Identifying Critical Success Factors

8.1 Identifying the critical success factors for establishing and replicating projects to develop Church Growth in Deprived Areas

While it would be simplistic to suggest there is a formula that can be applied to these different and often challenging communities, by examining the wealth of evidence gathered both during the lifetime of the projects and through this evaluation, it has been possible to identify and define some of the likely key determinants that contribute to successful growth, without which funded projects are less likely to succeed.

These determinants are identified below and it is the recommendation of this report that any future funding programme uses these key determinants to support the structure, bidding and evaluation of projects as they provide a framework and a model which can be replicated across the country.

8.2 Critical success factors found in successful projects

**Leadership and teams**

Successful projects need empowering leaders with a clear sense of vision who are able to engage with and empower those around them - whether volunteers or staff. Successful leaders in these projects built teams with clear roles and responsibilities that could sustain themselves and were not reliant on one person to be effective. Succession planning is a key element in maintaining a successful project team.

**Intentionality and planning**

Successful projects demonstrated a clear understanding of the need to plan for success, identify what realistic, measurable growth looks like and then being able to evidence that growth.

**Mission**

Across the diversity of different communities evaluated, one clear message which was received was that ‘mission means something different in every parish’. It is essential to realise and recognise that no two urban deprived areas are the same even though they may share common characteristics. Effective Mission and Ministry has to reflect the community it serves and therefore it needs to be recognised that growth and discipleship may look different from parish to parish. It is important to always work *with*, and not *to*, communities and by doing so ‘make faith possible’ by giving people space and valuing their views.
The importance of paid staff
Paid staff are essential: many of the projects tried to recruit and rely on volunteers. However, volunteering and commitment are not easy to achieve and maintain in deprived urban parishes where some individuals often find it difficult to plan and commit to regular activities. Without paid staff to lead and to provide on-going support the projects would have failed. The experience of the Coventry Diocese: 20s-30s Leadership Development project is that unpaid MAs can struggle to balance the need to earn a living through paid work elsewhere with their commitment to a leadership role in the parish. Following a successful funding bid the leadership project now has a part time paid co-ordinator and paid leaders in MA roles across the Diocese.

Benefiting from shared learning and experience
The evaluation visits highlighted how isolated many of the projects felt from Diocesan and wider Church recognition and support. Working in a UPA brings very specific challenges and where the projects were able to share experiences (between themselves - such as Mission Apprentices - or through the Learning Meetings) there were huge benefits to be gained.

Future large-scale funding schemes of this kind need to develop a learning network at the outset that both encourages project to project learning but also reinforces a commitment from the wider Church to provide practical and spiritual support.

Allow time and build trust – growth is a slow process
All the projects at whatever stage and wherever they were located said ‘growth is a slow process’. - Although projects were not limited to 3 year funding, most chose to work within that timeframe and many felt that, as bringing new disciples to faith takes time, 3 years was too short a timescale

Trust is essential but it takes time to develop between those leading Church, whether as ordained ministers or lay leaders, and members of their congregation. Trust is particularly important within the context of these deprived urban parishes where authority of any kind is often viewed with suspicion. The emphasis on hospitality, welcome and belonging is vital to build this trust - in the words of one Missioner: “these are powerful communicators of the Gospel to a sceptical society”.

Focus and simplicity
The projects that evidenced the greatest growth, or sustainability were those where there was a clearly defined and articulated purpose, and often one which was relatively bounded in terms of size and scope. - focusing on one aspect of building and growing discipleship with a clear message for staff, volunteers and congregation to do something tangible.
9 Conclusion and Areas for Action

"The solution to so many of these issues already exists in the people living on our estates. As a Church we need to learn how to nurture what is already there, remembering that with God, everything is possible!"

Rt Revd Alison White, Bishop of Hull

The Developing Church Growth in Deprived Areas fund has been successful in what it set out to do – to support new ways of discipling and growing Church in some of the most challenging areas of urban deprivation in England.

While the criteria included ‘sustained growth in the number of Christian disciples’ which some projects delivered and others did not, there have been many other examples of successful outcomes. Overall numerical growth, recorded at the time of the evaluation in Spring 2016, stood at approximately 600 new disciples brought to faith across the projects.

Other areas of success:

Success through Innovation
The diversity of the communities and parishes involved in this project demonstrate that, while urban deprived areas share many common characteristics, they are as diverse and rich in their make up as they are similar. Providing a secure funding stream for three years allowed these parishes to explore and innovate - creating new opportunities for discipleship and building additional capacity within their community which in turn will lead to greater sustainability. Whether it was developing young leaders, engaging with children through puppets and art or running men’s football sessions – the scope and breadth of opportunities for discipleship and Fresh Expressions of Church were innovative and imaginative and above all rooted in their local communities.

Success through re-energised communities
Many of the Urban Priority Areas used the project funding to support fledgling but fragile initiatives that they had started previously on a very small scale. Some were successful in scaling up and growing (such as Birmingham Mission Apprentices or Ignite Margate) while others used funding to keep projects going that would have foundered (such as Hull). What struck the evaluation team particularly was the resilience and faith of the leaders in these deprived communities who were able to provide Church in the most challenging of circumstances – as one leader said at the second Learning meeting “we do a dis-service to poor people if we do not offer Christ.”
Success in capacity building
Linked to the re-energising of UPAs is the success in many of the projects to build capacity, whether through larger congregations - in some cases such as the new worshipping community in Liverpool Cathedral of 130 – or through increasing numbers of volunteers through recruitment or retention. For many of the projects a ‘little goes a long way’ and using this opportunity for recruiting, training and funding additional staff represents a significant opportunity for projects to enhance their resources and increase their sustainability.

Success in capturing learning between communities for the national Church
As identified above there are numerous examples of learning from the widely diverse projects and this has been summarised throughout the report – without the opportunity to explore and innovate that the three year funding provided, and the detailed external evaluation and reporting, much of this learning would have been lost.

One of the greatest benefits this funding programme has brought is the identification of some clear, replicable models for growth which can be adapted to suit the most challenging and deprived communities within England. For these to be scaled up across other communities requires a commitment to developing and extending the growing ‘learning culture’ within the Church of England, accompanied by a commitment to sustained funding for these new expressions of Church. What is striking is that the amount of funding needed to set up models of growth need not be huge, but it must be maintained over the medium to long term (5-10 years) for the models to take root.

9.1 Areas for action and further consideration
Throughout this report within the narrative, case studies and the metrics the evaluation has sought to make a series of recommendations for future consideration. It is suggested that these can be distilled into 8 areas for action or further consideration moving forward that could and should be considered as part of the wider funding programme and strategy:

1. Models for church growth in deprived urban areas exist and are replicable. As the case studies demonstrate, models will differ from community to community but they share common characteristics. These could be distilled into a set of key requirements to be borne in mind for future growth programmes.

2. Financial sustainability is difficult for the early years but must be built into the long term modelling for these expressions of Church – this includes extended funding, improved financial management, strong governance and an approach which uses funding as Capacity Building rather than as a prop.

3. A little goes a long way in deprived communities, but continuity and sustained commitment are essential within the projects through well-resourced leadership and from the wider Church.
4. There is significant good practice and expertise, learning and experience out there but more needs to be done to share it between communities – both peer to peer and from the centre outwards. Existing IT resources and networks need to be supported by improved communication. Learning networks once established can use IT as an enabler - but online forums and connections don't happen in a vacuum.

5. Funding programmes such as these are vital to allow for experimentation and sometimes for failure, but with an evaluation programme built in to capture lessons and learning from the outset.

6. Robust metrics have a role to play in ensuring data is gathered accurately and can be evidenced for both attendance and for the wider mission field. Rigour in collecting and monitoring data helps and more rigorous accurate and realistic target setting at the outset is essential.

7. Training is vital, both for paid staff and volunteers and alongside training ongoing support and mentoring.

8. Growth in Church attendance needs to be supported alongside the development of a wider mission field with an acceptance that it is a slow process in deprived urban communities.

**Closing remarks**

The funding was intended to support innovation and new approaches. One significant outcome has been the amount of shared learning about new ways of Church that have emerged. Urban Priority Areas are home to some of the most vulnerable, troubled and fragile members of our society, often living chaotic and difficult lives. However, that does not mean they are not open to faith or the opportunity to come to faith, and what these projects have proven is that, while growth in traditional regular Sunday attendance may be in decline in many of these communities, growth in discipleship is increasing – albeit slowly and through different routes.

It is within this challenging and demanding environment that the projects sought to grow discipleship and their successes in achieving that is testament to the faith, dedication and gifts of those working there.