Developing Church Growth in Deprived Areas: Executive Summary

Prepared for the Church Commissioners and Archbishops’ Council

By Achill Management
August 2016

Confidential
**About the report authors**

In April 2015 Achill Management was commissioned by the Resource Strategy and Development Unit of the Church Commissioners and Archbishops’ Council as an external consultancy 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* programme.

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 numerical data and evidence, but also 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-focused 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.
Introduction: Context and Funding Rationale

“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

The statistics from 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 across the country on ministry. On these estates that is £5 per head

In 2012 the Church Commissioners and Archbishops’ Council took a positive and determined step towards making ‘hope visible’ when they set up an innovative programme of funding for Church Growth in Deprived Areas. This made nearly £3 million available in the form of development grants 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.

Underpinning the philosophy of the funding programme was the intention to allow for innovation, risk taking and new approaches to growing discipleship which would, in turn, provide both learning and help with developing models that could be replicated and sustained 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.

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1 Statistics supplied by Dr David Jennings to Urban Estates conference
Selection criteria required projects to demonstrate the following characteristics²:

- 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

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

² As contained in the Bishop’s letter 29 June 2011
The resulting projects were as diverse as the communities they aimed to serve. No two areas of deprivation are alike: as one project lead said “people think deprived communities are all the same, but in reality they are all very different – in culture, in attitudes and in the problems they face”.

As such, the projects offered different approaches and perspectives towards growing discipleship: this diversity was part of the challenge facing the evaluation team. To accommodate this diversity, and the added challenge that ‘mission’ means something different in different contexts and communities, the evaluators developed a set of robust metrics (described below) which could be used to compare very different communities.

Throughout the period of grant funding projects were required to self-evaluate and share learning, some employing their own external evaluators as part of the process. However, as there were no set parameters for these evaluations, the results varied enormously in scope and rigour. This evaluation report has drawn on the data and reflections provided by these project specific reports but its intention was a much wider, more systematic review of the grant-funding programme as a whole.

**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.

Evaluation

Achill Management developed an evaluation matrix (see below) to examine and then rate the projects on a numerical basis, allowing the evaluators to compare very different projects on a more even basis and to offset any bias that may occur – an essential consideration, given the small size of the data set. This rating approach made it possible to draw up a set of scores across 12 metrics to measure and evaluate the growth, leadership, sustainability and financial resilience of the projects and, possibly most importantly, to assess the replicability of each project. The factors considered in scoring are also included below.

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.

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.

The weighting and scoring matrix used is shown in Table 1 below, with the factors used to assign scores outlined in Table 2.
### Table 1: Weighting and Scoring Matrix

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Weighting</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Growth</strong></td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Limited growth achieved</td>
<td>Moderate/good growth achieved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Leadership</strong></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>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Worship Style and Approach</strong></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>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dependence on individual(s)</strong></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>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Lay involvement</strong></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>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Financial resilience</strong></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>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Future Planning and Risk Management</strong></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>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Buildings &amp; infrastructure</strong></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>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Geography/ location</strong></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>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Socio economic issues</strong></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>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Replicability</strong></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>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Shared Learning</strong></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>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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### Table 2: Scoring Factors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Metric</th>
<th>Factors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Growth</strong></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 |

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**Representation of results**

The scoring matrix resulted in a score chart for each project showing their strengths and challenges. An example of a scoring chart is shown below:

![Chart Example](chart_example.png)

(Nb. The total possible element score (grey bar) reflects the relative weighting assigned to that element)

**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 impact within 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 resilience**

Using this data, the evaluation aimed to draw lessons from the findings that can be distilled into a set of wider learning points for use by the Church Commissioners and Archbishops’ Council and by the wider Church. Projects have been actively encouraged to share their experiences – this Executive Summary highlights some of these and the key lessons arising from them.
Key Findings and Learning

Evidence of Growth

Successful growth in discipleship - evidence of numerical growth
At the end of the evaluation we estimate the various projects had already seen 600 new disciples. This figure includes both adults and children, and captures monthly as well as weekly attendance. (The figures for those involved in wider activities delivered by the projects, is considerably larger and, in most cases, reflected in the other two growth categories). All projects indicated that it can take several years for people in deprived areas to explore and come to Christian faith, so we consider 600 at this stage of the projects to be encouraging.

Journeys to faith - determining wider growth
‘Journeys to faith’ include a spectrum of church-related activities which create opportunities for ‘conversations’ that start individuals on a journey to faith. While having the potential to contribute to growth, these activities are harder to quantify for several reasons: numbers fluctuate and vary across the weeks and month, and it is hard to determine the numerical growth in discipleship that resulted from such activities. Many projects recognised the importance of creating a route into Church but which is not Church in a formal sense. For some projects these took the form of missional communities 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 mum’s 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 and robust evidential data on the link between activities designed to promote wider growth and the resultant increase in the number of individuals coming to faith for two main reasons: firstly, because of the (relatively short) length of the projects and, secondly, due to the lack of robust metrics and data collected specifically in relation to ‘wider growth’.

Growth in the wider Mission Field - engagement of wider community through Church outreach or mission
Unsurprisingly, given the nature of the communities they served, many parishes focused their attention and energies on providing activities which contribute to the common good which, in time, might develop their impact in the wider mission field: for example, running a Food Bank, providing debt counselling, cafes or drop-ins for young people, holiday clubs, BBQ or socials including fairs and fêtes. All these, along with formal outreach to schools, formed part of the wider growth pattern within the overall programme. The number of individuals reached 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” activity. While such activities do not contain a formal (or in some cases recognisable) expression of Church, their significance lies in how they build connections with individuals and communities that might facilitate evangelism in the longer term.
Overview of projects in respect of growth:

- All the 28 projects generated useful learning (although 2 closed early due to unexpected circumstances)
- 19 out of 26 projects recorded significant or good to moderate growth
- Significant growth in church attendance occurred in 5 projects
- Good or moderate growth in church attendance occurred in 14 projects
- Where the remaining 7 projects scored low for growth, there were clear reasons for this – usually a mismatch between expectations and the ability of the project to deliver, or as result of overly ambitious targets

Projects that demonstrated significant growth included:

- St Luke’s Millwall and Ignite Canterbury – two very different kinds of Church ‘plant’
- The Bridge School of Mission (& Glo) – a Fresh Expression of Church combined with a Church Plant
- Sorted – a Fresh Expression and Pioneer Mission Training project
- Coventry Diocese: 20s to 30s Leadership Development

These five all demonstrated sustained and significant growth in discipleship over the lifetime of the funding.

**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.

**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.

**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. 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.
**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 of Mission, 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.

**Coventry Diocese: 20s to 30s Leadership Development** is a Pioneer Mission Training project that took 25 volunteer young leaders and trained and supported them to run a major sustainable missional project in their own church. Although the project lost young people on the way, it successfully created 45 new disciples in intensely deprived urban areas. A new full time funded post has been created to support the remaining leaders who are now also working on a paid basis.

The defining characteristics of these five projects is that they all have empowering focused and dynamic leadership and they have grown steadily over time. These two elements are significant for a number of reasons: strong leadership is important for successful growth, yet it can bring with it an innate vulnerability with an overdependence on a single individual and little in the way of succession planning. The evaluation found evidence of instances where good leadership did not lead to high numerical growth in two cases: the Church in Schools Development Worker, where the brief changed mid-way through from implementation to research, and Sensing Salvation, where there was considerable success in reaching small numbers of children in local primary schools and growth in one section of the community (balanced by a decline amongst existing church congregation).

Timescale is important within this evaluation for two reasons: firstly, because it takes significant time to build trust and grow new worshipping communities and, secondly, because evaluation at the end of a relatively short funding period (two or three years in the case of some projects) is often too soon to gain a real measure of success.

**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)
Factors which influence growth

Other factors that support growth which it was possible to identify include:

- Growing leaders within the church – particularly young leaders
- 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

“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 with God far more things are possible than we think”

The Rt Revd Alison White, Bishop of Hull

Of the remaining 21 projects, 14 were evaluated as having good to moderate growth, and many exhibited particular strengths around the other evaluation measures.

Replicability

Developing Models for Church Growth in Urban Areas

Across the country there is strong evidence that mission means something different in different contexts and communities. As such, trying to identify and develop models of Church and discipleship that can be replicated, while remaining sensitive and mindful of the differences and contexts in which each of the projects operate, would at first appear to be a contradiction.

In order to assess replicability and the aspects of a model which could be used and implemented elsewhere, projects were measured on the tangible aspects of their approach which included: how a project was defined and described; a clear statement of the approach taken; what if any materials were produced (such as case studies or toolkits) and where there were codified methodologies for others to follow.
Elements that contribute to replicability 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

Projects that demonstrated replicability and offer good models for learning include Sorted and St Luke’s Millwall, as well as Birmingham Mission Apprentices, the Children and Families Worker in Radford Parish and Opshops in Carlisle.

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.
Sustainability and Financial Resilience

Funding of up to £100,000 per project was available over a limited period, and was designed to develop or extend work in areas where initiatives were already proving to be effective in terms of mission and growth. As all projects were located in areas of high multiple deprivation, financial sustainability and resilience is a key issue. In some cases, the funding paid for an extension of an existing scheme and this provided a degree of financial sustainability. However, very few were able to develop a strong and resilient financial model and remained wholly dependent on church growth funding or other forms of grant such as the Church Urban Fund. Many projects were only sustainable through reliance on volunteers, trainees or part time staff, or – as is the case with Church Plants – where they have financial resilience built into the design of the project from the outset.

Others were particularly notable for their financial sustainability and resilience, including Opshops, Carlisle, whose model of community charity shops provides a sound business base which supports mission and outreach, and St Andrew’s Clubmoor, Liverpool, where the associated charity St Andrew’s Community Network has an established track record of attracting funding to support missional community work and social outreach.

Wider learning in relation to sustainability and financial resilience
The focus of the Church Commissioners and Archbishop’s Council funding was on supporting wider evangelism and innovation and, as such, many projects were able to include a wide range of social action or wider growth activities. The result is that many projects have experiences and learning, or alternative models of Church, which deserve further investigation and analysis. Some have attracted additional funding – such as the Birmingham Mission Apprentices, where the programme is being rolled out for a further 10 years. Others have strengthened existing approaches or relationships which can continue to provide learning and opportunities for replication – such as St Andrew’s Clubmoor with St Andrew’s Community Network, where the interdependence of Church and a community charity is exploring the ‘client to Christian’ dilemma, as outlined in the Case Study below.

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

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 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
- 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.
Learning from Fresh Expressions of Church and outreach projects (continued)

- 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
Summarising the Learning: Identifying the Critical Success
Factors for establishing and replicating projects to develop
Church Growth in Deprived Areas

"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

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. The evaluation found that,
while the communities and projects were very different in scope, size, ambition and nature,
it is possible to identify many similar or common approaches that can lead to success for
Church growth.

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.

Critical success factors found in successful projects

**Leadership and teams**
Successful projects need strong 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.

“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.
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.