

The Springfield Project, St Christopher's Church Diocese of Birmingham

ChurchCare



16,000 buildings. One resource



The Springfield project is based at the unlisted St Christopher's Church in Springfield, 3 miles to the south east of Birmingham city centre.

The area has a rich ethnic mix, with an increasing proportion of Asian people, the majority of whom are Pakistani Muslim and has levels of deprivation higher than the city average.

Vision

The Springfield Project's vision is to provide care and support to people nationally and internationally, and in particular to children, young people and families in the ward of Springfield, Birmingham.

This care and support is provided in accordance with the tenets of the Christian faith as understood by the Church of England, In particular but not exclusively by the provision of spiritual and other support, advice, services and facilities in the interests of social welfare for education and recreation with the objective of improving the conditions of life for the residents.

How did you start?

With a small play-and-stay group set up by mums from the church. The Springfield Project is now the major arm of the church's mission in a purpose built Children's Centre which replaced the original church hall.

The services provided within include nursery, family support, English classes, after-school clubs, play-and-stay, dialogue and youth training amongst other things.





Who were your main partners in developing and implementing this project?

Birmingham City Council, Church Urban Fund, Tearfund

What was the total cost of the project?

The building costs for the new centre were £2 million, paid for from central government Children's Centre funding via Birmingham City Council with an obligation for us to provide the core delivery of those services.

The church contributed £120k for greater space to allow for church admin. and larger conference facilities.

How did you raise the funds?

The building costs as above. For our ongoing costs for wider delivery our funding has come from local church, partner local churches, Church Urban Fund, Tearfund, individual trust funds and supporters.

How long did it take from start to finish - from initial proposal to the building being completed and opened?

The possibility of the new build had been live for about two years but from the original formal proposal it was another year and then a year of actual building. The project ministry has been in existence for ten years though.



A children's group meet within the church

What lessons were learnt?

Lessons learnt: taking the church with us at every step of the way. Maintaining good relations with key stakeholders like our local mosque. Being courageous enough to challenge and present the Christian distinctive of what was being done in the project and being unafraid to walk away if it wasn't what God was calling us to do.



Embarking on a building project from the starting point of known needs and services being provided rather than expecting the “mission” to evolve from the building.

The significance of a high degree of ownership by the church fellowship in the day to day volunteering in the services provided and in staff positions has been vital for the protection of the vision and ongoing church-project overlap.

What would you have done differently?

It would probably have been good to have been firmer with the Council about legal documents needing to be signed at different stages of the negotiations.

Successes:

The building is a genuine shared space for the community. The community (which is majority Muslim) know that the church is engaged, serving and clear about its passion for Jesus and has grown in respect for the church as a result.

We are able to do so much more through the building and opportunities are coming up all the time to bring transformation for the common good.



The Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams, joins a children's group at The Springfield Centre

Has there been an increase in income?

Yes, but we are not profit making: the services in the centre are targeted at a deprived community.





What management structures are in place for the running of the building?

We have a board of trustees for a soon-to-be separate charity with a church foundation and publicly stated Christian ethos. Day to day running is by a “Head of Centre” with associated management structures for operations, finance, nursery staff etc.

To what degree has this project contributed to the sustainability of the building itself?

We are already short of space! Being tied in to the government’s Children’s Centre agenda has brought some risk that we are not naive to. There has been real risk in the decision making but the growth and widened opportunities to serve should help us weather any squeeze in public sector spending.

Sustainability of the Project: how are you looking to sustain what you have achieved in the long term?

Through fundraising with a “friends of” scheme, through expansion of our volunteer base which is the core Christian impact of the work, and widened links with other local supporting churches.

Any future plans for the building?

None to date but we are looking at other properties for the burgeoning dialogue and training work that is constrained by limitations of space at the moment.

To find out more visit The Springfield Project website at:
<http://www.springfieldproject.org.uk/>

