

Some learning about growing younger and more diverse from SDF

Growing younger - overall learning points:

1. The current SDF criteria say that funding must go to urban areas, and one or both of younger generations or deprived communities. To date, £62.8m has been awarded to projects focused on younger generations, 42% of funding. The focus is to reverse trends in the age profile of those attending church – an 81 year old is eight times more likely to go to church than a 21 year old.

Growing younger – children and youth:

2. Keep the bar high for children and youth ministry – and resource it properly. It is a vocation with specific charisms, and projects have excelled where they have aimed for a small number of excellent ministers, properly resourced, rather than a large number with a necessarily lower bar.

3. In engaging with schools, the key gap is in moving young people from school engagement to an intentional discipling community (at school, church, youth group) – in one project, 80% of school students were engaged with, and of those who were in a community, 50% were developing in discipleship and leadership, but only 1% from school engagement joined an intentional community.

4. Intentional discipleship pathways not just for children, but for their parents as well, are important for sustainable growth.

5. There are two broad approaches to engaging more children and youth – either explicitly targeting the group, or creating healthy intergenerational churches (which will attract children and youth and may have greater sustainability) – both need to be part of a strategy to grow younger.

Some examples of projects:

6. **Children & youth missionaries**- Sheffield, Hereford, Worcester, Birmingham [interview link](#)

7. **Youth Minsters** in London – investing in existing strength to grow further and multiply

8. **Discipleship pathways through 0-18+ with schools, parishes and FXCs** -Manchester

9. **Younger leadership college** – Southwell and Nottingham

10. **Resource churches** in areas with families – 21% under 18 on average.

11. **New Christian Communities** including Fresh expressions of Church – Carlisle network youth church, sports ministry in Norwich – FXC more generally have high youth engagement.

Growing younger – young adults:

12. Young adults tend to be more concentrated in particular locations – in each one of these places, the Church should invest in a ministry which resonates with them (of course not forgetting those who don't live in these places).

13. Community is important to young adults who increasingly live atomised lives. Authenticity is also important – the Church is practicing what we preach (e.g. in deep discipleship and social action).

14. We commissioned [Church Army research on mission among young adults](#) – three principles are: 1. Spaces to belong, 2. Spaces for exploring faith together, 3. Not as difficult as you think.

Some examples of projects:

15. **City centre resource churches** – 31% of attendees are age 18-29 (compare to 6% C of E wide). Can include some students, but leaders suggest this is more difficult ground than young professionals etc. Some examples are St Luke, Gas St, Birmingham, St Thomas Newcastle, and St Nicholas, Bristol, but many dioceses are choosing this approach to reach young adults.

16. **20s-30s Minsters and new congregations** – in York, and Coventry, ministers for reaching young adults have been deployed to start new congregations alongside existing ministry.

17. **Student ministry** – Winchester and Liverpool have sought to co-ordinate and invest in partnerships between university work and churches with student ministry.

Growing more diverse - overall learning points:

18. Growing more diverse covers a wide range of groups – here we have concentrated on working class people, and cultural, ethnic and linguistic minorities as groups under-represented in the Church and where there is learning from projects.

19. The current SDF criteria say that funding must go to urban areas, and one or both of younger generations or deprived communities. To date, £56.2m has been awarded to projects involving deprived areas, 38% of funding. The focus is to reverse trends in investment and attendance in the most deprived areas – only 0.9% of those living in these areas attend a C of E church.

Growing more diverse – working class - learning:

20. Don't write areas off or offer second best – the Church is struggling in these areas in part because of lack of investment, but when investment is made growth is seen, with a range of different models working provided there is appropriate contextualisation.

21. There is significant leadership potential among working class disciples, but it will look different and existing culture will deter people – how can policies be changed to tap into these gifts?

22. Sustainability looks different where giving is inevitably lower and local agency and responsibility is important. This might be as part of the whole diocese's budget, through continual national funding (e.g. LInC) or through partnerships with other churches. Current diocesan systems for support are not predominantly channelling funds to healthy churches in deprived areas.

Some examples of projects:

23. **Clergy or paid-staff led estates plants:** Chelmsford, Blackburn, Plymouth [interview link](#)

24. **Lay-led communities in estates:** Manchester, York, Liverpool

25. **Communities combined with social enterprise:** Durham, Carlisle (Opshops)

26. **Estates resource church** – Southwell and Nottingham

27. **Town-wide working in deprived towns** – Ely market towns, inspiring Ipswich

28. **Resource churches in working class towns** – Goole, Rotherham, Gateshead, Grimsby

Growing more diverse – culturally, ethnically and linguistically - learning:

29. Be clear about what you want to achieve – different cultural minorities have very different (sometimes almost opposite) requirements. What are the needs of people living in your area? Are you seeking to evangelise unreached groups, to provide diverse offers to people with diverse needs (e.g. in different languages), integrate communities for inter-cultural ministry, or empower groups whose gifts have not been recognised and made the most of?

30. Under-resourcing of urban areas has created challenges (is it feasible to react to different cultural needs in a parish of 20,000+ souls?) but conversely, if you invest in mission, you see impact. SDF criteria have a focus on urban areas and younger generations, which have a higher proportion of UKME people.

Some examples of projects:

31. **Inter-cultural worshipping communities** – Leicester (including work with parishes)

32. **Small-to-small multi-cultural plants** – Manchester [link to interview](#)

33. **Congregations in other languages** – Southwark, London, Chelmsford, Liverpool

34. **Promoting BAME leadership** – Hackney church (Saint) and plants (London and Chelmsford)