

# **Shaping the Future**

## **End of Project Review**

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July 2023

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# 1 Executive summary

This review addresses the programme and impacts of the reformed Shaping the Future (STF) agreed in February 2020. It was a very broad and complex programme seeking to build mission with young people and through schools; develop church plants, new worshipping communities (NWC's) and their leaders; and enhance parish missional capability through mentoring, training and facilitation.

Under these broad areas, it comprised upwards of 20 different sub-projects and represented an attempt to embed and enhance the missional capability of the diocese by building on the Growing Younger (GY) programme that preceded it. Over the space of the five years to mid 2022, its main overall goals were:

- 33 new Christian communities
- 60-80 new leaders for plants or Fresh Expressions
- 5000+ school children to have the opportunity to explore faith
- 180 new youth leaders and 50 teenagers drawn into leadership of their church
- 87 trained new mentors mentoring 124 leaders
- 150-250 vocational discussions for lay and ordained ministry
- 90-190 churches engaged through parish facilitation and learning communities

It was hoped that this would lead to 375-750 new disciples, 150+ children starting to worship with their families in churches and increased momentum throughout the diocese for a younger and more diverse church.

The programme was expected to cost £3.7m (down from £4.3m in the original bid) and was supported by £2.5m of strategic funding from the national church.

It was undermined from inception by Covid, which through the restrictions on meeting together and fear about contagion halted gatherings over 2020/21 and led to many lay church leaders, especially older ones, and premises becoming unavailable. The impact of this will be an underspend on the programme budget of £565k.

The programme fell short in the number of church plants, revitalisations and in many of the peripheral aspects of the overall programme but within STF, there are many areas that have realised or on target to realise their specific goals.

In particular,

- The overall goals shared across the plants to bring new leaders and church participants
- Estimated numbers engaged in new worshipping communities and new disciples
- FXCs started
- The work with youth and schools
- The continuation of GY facilitation
- Vocations and the identification of new young BAME leaders

There is therefore a lot of encouragement from the programme, including those churches that have been planted and their progress.

The review also provides important lessons in a number of areas:

1. The need for and importance of strategy, simplicity and focus to realise the best impact from an initiative.
2. The value of effective, integrated programme governance, especially when pursuing many different strategic projects in the context of pressure on the church as a whole.
3. Maintaining continuity of staffing and goals through a project.
4. Defining and following through with a robust planting model.
5. Local initiative and ownership are a necessary condition for sustainable plants.
6. A reminder of the importance of intentionality and discipleship stepping stones and yet the challenge of implementing these well.

## 2 Background

Over ten years ago, Birmingham Diocese set the aspiration to ‘transform the church’ inviting parishes to set greater priority on missional growth and creating a team to support the reinvigoration of mission across the diocese. From this it has invested in a series of initiatives since 2015 that have sought to build the church and its missional strength.

- 2015 saw the launch of the Growing Younger (GY) programme which invested in the planting of a city centre resource church (Gas Street); 14 Children and Families Missioners and 9 Mission Apprentices with parishes across the diocese and in a programme of facilitation with around 40-50 parishes to support the development of mission with children and families.
- In 2017, the STF was launched. This incorporated some of the learnings from the early stages of Growing Younger and sought to capitalise on the impact and consolidate the various strands into a bigger and broader programme to even better support mission resourcing across Birmingham. The aim being to sustain momentum and build greater capacity to extend the impact of Growing Younger by deploying 6 more church planters, appointing new missional roles for schools and further enabling and support roles for mission and learning.
- As the scale of the challenges in the diocese continued to grow and further experience of running change projects was gathered, in 2019, ‘People and Places’ was launched. This developed the overall approach with a stronger programme structure and management, better tracking and a more holistic approach to church planting and growth. It retained the emphases on children and families, intentional mission and development and the importance of context ministry in support of church leaders.

At the same time, as People and Places (P&P) was launched the decision was taken to modify STF because of:

- Overlaps with P&P,
- The desire to focus the programme on the most impactful elements following further experience, and
- The challenge that the diocese was facing in its funding for STF.

It was therefore reformed under three directors each leading one group of activity:

- Extending and underpinning GY
  - Leading the work in the schools’ project and moving these into worshipping communities
  - Identifying and supporting new youth leaders
  - Extending the GY facilitation
- Developing New Christian Communities
  - Church plants and planters
  - Fresh Expressions development and new leaders
  - Pioneer/planting training
- Mission Learning and Development
  - Mentor and facilitator training
  - Learning Communities
  - Intercultural mission and urban estates

- Vocational discussions

This led to changes in the emphasis on specific projects in the programme and in the approach, resource, leadership and expected outcomes across the range of work being done. This change request was agreed in February 2020, and led to STF reducing in scale from a £4.3m programme to one of £3.7m with £2.4m remaining to be spent of the original budget. However, this was agreed just weeks before Covid and the first national shutdown hit.

This brought the programme to a virtual standstill, even before the revised approach had been operationalised and it disrupted every planned stream of activity.

### 3 Programme objectives

The approach to realising these aims is summarised in the table below, as defined in the change request of February 2020.

Project	Expected Outcomes	Focus
Youth Project (- 4Q/22)	60 youth cells <sup>1</sup> 180 new youth leaders 49 new teenage leaders	Using current ways of working and staff to focus on revised goals. The two-person team worked to encourage, enable, advise and support leaders and activities across churches in the diocese to fulfil these goals.
Schools Project	200 volunteers 5-9000 children reached 150 children and their families regularly within a worshipping community	There had been great success in engaging children and teachers in schools but the transitioning of children and families into worshipping communities was very weak.  This became the focus and prayer spaces were then only run if they have a discipleship pathway attached.  Aim to spend 50% of time on the transition into a worshipping community.
Extending Growing Younger Facilitation	50 churches supported	This aimed to consolidate the work done in the previous three years and work with more churches. The often very basic support needed by churches was continued and more emphasis placed on joining up Messy Church, events etc. into church life.
Church Planting	12 new plants	Work with existing plants to hit intentional goals and encourage them to be part of planting new churches.  Widen approach to planting and incl e.g., sports ministry etc.
Revitalisations (-end 23)	6 revitalised churches	New aim to identify opportunities and models – should align with P&P missional planning
Fresh Expressions (-end 23)	15 Fresh Expressions	Use training, TCAP facilitation and missional support to encourage ambition at a local level
Shared outputs (-end 23)	60-80 new trained leaders 50-100 people trained as pioneers 1000-1500 additional people (mostly under 40) 500 – 1000 new disciples	

<sup>1</sup> This is any type of gathering that connects with youth





## 4 Project Impact

### Summary outcomes

STF was a large sprawling group of projects with many different areas and aims. Despite the onset of Covid-19 almost immediately which disrupted the first two years of the revised programme it managed to achieve several of the immediate aims that it had set.

Perhaps not surprisingly, it fell short in the number of church plants, revitalisations and FXCs, and in many of the peripheral aspects of the overall programme but within STF, there are many areas that have realised or on target to realise their specific goals. In particular,

- The overall goals shared across the plants to bring new leaders and church participants
- Estimated numbers engaged in new worshipping communities and new disciples
- FXCs started
- The work with youth and schools
- The continuation of GY facilitation
- Vocations and the identification of new young BAME leaders

There is therefore much encouragement in the programme – including those churches that have been planted and their progress.

Project	Expected Outcomes	Estimated Outcomes/outputs (endQ2/23)
Youth Project (- 4Q/22)	60 youth cells  180 new youth leaders  49 new teenage leaders	61 youth cells  321 new youth leaders  113 new teenage leaders
Schools Project	200 volunteers  5-9000 children reached  150 children and their families regularly within a worshipping community	239 volunteers  8900 children reached  282 children and their families regularly within a worshipping community
Extending Growing Younger Facilitation	50 churches supported	52
Church Planting	12	7
Revitalisations (-end 23)	6	3

Fresh Expressions (-end 23)	15 Fresh Expressions	11
Shared outputs (-end 23)	60-80 new trained leaders/planters  50-100 people trained as pioneers/planters  1000-1500 additional church participants (mostly under 40)  375-750 new disciples	56 new trained leaders/planters  56 people trained as pioneers/planters  1125  365
Other	2 World mission best practice visits  1 World mission learning event  8 Intercultural awareness training courses pa  30 Parishes considering themselves intercultural  80 People attending urban estates conferences  10 Leaders from urban estate setting supported	2  1  10 covering 122 attendees to date  Course delayed – outputs likely second half 23  23  11
L&D (-end 23)	87 mentors trained  124 mentees  12 young BAME Leaders  Increase missional vision of 50-75 churches through LyCiG  75 churches inspired to mutual peer learning opportunities	72  66  13  38  78
Vocations (-end 23)	50+ ordained discussions  50-100 lay discussions	66  50

## Great examples of the impact of STF

Despite the disruption, there are some exciting examples of impact across the diocese.

**Anchor Church:** Begun with a BMO, Anchor was planted out of St Luke's Gas Street in June 2019. It started in the Jewellery Quarter with 40 adults and children, two start-up grants (£10k from SDF and £25k from Gas Street), and no building. The lack of a permanent building, with its demographic profile and the arrival of Covid has led it to be highly adaptive and creative with a strong digital presence and an emphasis on strong community, deep worship, and spiritual growth.

It has grown to a community of 110, predominantly highly mobile young adults and families (and has therefore reached more but there is a regular turnover). The church revolves around smaller, local communities that meet for 'table' in the week and a strong emphasis on hospitality to our friends and neighbours. It has various outreach activities, including a ministry with rough sleepers, another built around food and music with young asylum seekers, as well as Alpha and prayer for healing on the streets.

**St Mary's Bearwood.** This church revitalisation in the Black Country drew on a team of 30 from St



Johns Harborne and a partnership between St Johns and St Marys PCCs.

It relaunched in September 2022 with community events and a new mixed pattern of services to engage many elements of the hugely varied local population. It has since grown to over 100 with many new disciples and a continuing approach of strong community engagement.

**Christchurch, Summerfield.** This is recent revitalisation of a church in North Edgbaston close to Birmingham City Centre This began in early 2023 and already has a 75 strong multi-ethnic, multi-generational worshipping community.

**Ascension Church, Stirchley.** The outer estate church appointed a children's and youth worker with little youth experience to work in the church in conjunction with another independent church locally. They ran a Friday night open youth cell. She used some of the Flex training modules and support of the diocesan team to build her skills with youth and when the youth worker from the independent church left, she was able to continue leading the group. With coaching on the importance of establishing a discipleship pathway and one of the £200 small grants she started her group meeting an hour earlier to do youth alpha videos over pizza. Three-quarters of her ~20 young people came along and have continued to do so over the 18 months as they hold this once a month gathering. With support from her minister this has since developed into a Forest Church and is continuing to progress.

**St Andrews, Chelmsley Wood.** This 1960's development, once the largest single housing development in Europe is amongst the most crime ridden areas in the country. St Andrews is a long-established church in the centre which is housed in a modern facility (as an LEP with the Methodist church). In 2019, STF put a pioneer minister into the parish to plant a new worshipping community and with the retirement of the existing minister he became incumbent in 2022.

Over this time, he and his wife have led the transformation of the church from a small elderly traditional congregation to one with 40-50 people with a diverse range of ethnicities, ages and outlooks. They run a thriving stay and play group with over 90 on the waiting list, regular community events (e.g. the Christmas film night attracted over 200), a post school coffee (run by local mums and dads that regularly attracts 20-30) and have weekend away on which over 50 have booked.

**Development of BAME lay leaders:** The aim was to develop 12 leaders. Two BAME interns worked in 2020/21 to establish a group to foster leadership in this demographic. Under this time limited initiative, a group of five leaders and 15 young people began to meet. This stopped at the end of the internships and the approach to diversity in leadership is being reviewed.

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## Disappointments

**Church planting/revitalisation:** Against the original approach and expectations this is an area which has struggled badly. It has been hampered by Covid but more fundamentally, the original approach to planting was flawed and this has made for very patchy progress. Only 7 churches have planted as a result of the STF programme and 2 of these flow from the original GY plant in Gas Street.

The flaws in the approach were:

- The process to identify potential sites for plants never happened and so priority sites were not systematically identified
- The necessary local engagement and matching rarely took place
- There was not a sufficient pipeline of plant leaders in the diocese
- The model for planting by and large did not provide sufficient resource – neither team nor financial support for a robust plant, and
- Expectations over time to self-sustainability were unrealistically short (2-3 years)

However, this does not mean that none went ahead and indeed there are some great examples of success despite the flaws in the approach (see above). Also, the experience of STF in planting (which was very limited in the diocese before STF) has as a result, greatly matured and shaped the approach that is now followed by the diocese which is much more likely to work strategically and sustainably.

**Urban Estates:** This is an aspect of the programme that has struggled particularly since Covid. Up until then, leaders from estates had been successfully gathered together for encouragement and sharing in a rhythm of half-termly meetings and retreats. They had also held two annual conferences for a wider audience. The network has continued first by Zoom and now in person but the vision to engage a wider audience via the annual gathering has never restarted because of a lack of appetite and perceived limited value.

**Intercultural work:** This aspect of STF has also been slow to progress effectively. The aim at the point of the change request was similar to that with urban estates - the appointment of a Mission Facilitator who would build an appropriate programme to develop this area of mission. They developed and delivered Unconscious Bias and Intercultural Awareness training (to around 300 people). But as this was vested in one individual, when they left early on the work stumbled.

This led to a rethink to try to equip churches to better engage across cultures. An education module for churches has now been developed with carefully selected external experts. This will be launched in June

in the hope that over 30 churches will use it by the year end. It will be supported by a continuing programme of UB and IA training.

## 5 Missional theory and key success factors

The three streams of STF, following the change request, consisted of two streams of largely well supported missional activities:

- Underpinning and extending of GY working with youth and children, and
- The church planting/revitalisation and leadership pipeline development.

There was then a third stream that was more of a patchwork of activities around engaging specific communities and learning and development.

Element	Original theory	Theory changed or validated?
<p>Youth Project (- 4Q/22)</p>	<p>Supporting existing youth cells and encouraging new ones (church based and others) by the central team engaging with and encouraging volunteers to start them locally.</p> <p>Connecting these to the Diocesan Bishop directly or indirectly and with coordinators organising termly or more frequent larger gatherings (hubs) which in turn encourage participation in termly big events.</p> <p>The hubs and big events are organised by the coordinators.</p> <p>The aim being both to encourage the local and build a cadre of teenage leaders and deepened discipleship.</p>	<p>Validated as approach</p> <p>This stream was working well up to Covid with very positive results in the evaluation of 2019 (though still early on) and good engagement and growth in cells, youth hubs and leaders and connections.</p> <p>The mix local and wider worked well.</p> <p>However, since Covid although the focus on supporting cells has worked the wider hubs and connections across the diocese have not.</p>
<p>Schools Project</p>	<p>Aiming to engage with schools (especially church) in proven ways (e.g. Prayer Spaces and Open the Book) and encourage an interest in faith. Aim that this would encourage 3-5% to explore further with the churches.</p>	<p>Partially proven. Theory modified.</p> <p>The programme achieved good engagement in schools with pupils and teachers even within the first two years but it did not generate the connection into the church family and worship expected.</p> <p>This was progressed later in STF and needs identified:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- A stronger engagement with the church than simply in-school activities provide</li> <li>- A focus on building personal relationships</li> <li>- Understanding and pursuit of an intentional relational pathway to deepen engagement</li> </ul>

<p>Extending Growing Younger Facilitation</p>	<p>For churches with no missional vision or children. The opportunity for the leadership to work with an experienced external facilitator who would:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Work flexibly with them (as needed)</li> <li>- Aim to build a cultural change in the church on its approach to mission and children and families</li> <li>- Establish a vision for mission <b>and/or</b> start one or two new activities that help them progress</li> </ul> <p>Represents a mixture of coaching, facilitating, training and fire-starting</p>	<p>Still to be proven</p> <p>There has been successful engagement with churches through the flexible approach. However, it is difficult to see the intended impact on cultural change and missional focus in the churches.</p>
<p>Church Planting</p>	<p>Aiming to identify opportunities for the starting of a church with clear missional intent in a community.</p> <p>Candidates identified by Mission Team meetings with all synods and chapters and by working with already identified churches.</p> <p>Planting to be spearheaded by stream of planting curates (primarily through Gas St) who will also help identify teams to accompany the leaders.</p>	<p>Approach not validated</p> <p>The original process for identifying planting opportunities did not happen and there was inadequate attention to developing the leadership pipeline beyond Gas Street.</p> <p>Additionally, there was insufficient local engagement to marry top down and bottom-up and confirm real opportunity.</p> <p>However, the experience of the process has radically changed the approach such that as STF finishes it is much stronger.</p>
<p>Revitalisations (-end 23)</p>	<p>Aiming to renew local churches and kick start into growth (as above).</p> <p>Archdeacons to identify 2 pa each and steering group to find team and lead to plant.</p>	<p>Still to be proven</p> <p>Insufficient capacity at senior level to execute this and as a result the process did not take place.</p> <p>There were few revitalisations as a result but this process has since been incorporated into a new planting strategy.</p>
<p>Fresh Expressions (FXC) (-end 23)</p>	<p>'Seed scattering' encouragement of FXC's by talking to all deanery chapters, taking leaders to FXC conference and fifty 1-1 conversations with the FXC enabler plus encouragement through the learning communities.</p>	<p>Not validated.</p> <p>Educational FXC Enabler post did not work. Expertise did not succeed in encouraging and fostering start-ups.</p> <p>A more promising model has emerged through the deployment of the oversight areas across the diocese. This contextually specific work lets central resource walk alongside local leaders to</p>

		support local initiatives and there are indications that this is more productive.
Shared outputs (-end 23)	<p>From above it is expected that it will develop 60-80 new, trained leaders and 50-100 people trained as pioneers.</p> <p>This aims to reach 1000-1500 additional people (mostly under 40) and lead to 500 – 1000 new disciples</p>	
Other	<p>2 World mission best practice visits</p> <p>1 World mission learning event</p> <p>8 Intercultural awareness training courses pa</p> <p>30 Parishes considering themselves intercultural</p> <p>80 People attending urban estates conferences</p> <p>10 Leaders from urban estate setting supported</p>	<p>Still to be tested. Weakened by metrics being output rather than outcome oriented.</p> <p>Turnover of staff undermined timings. Course only just launching.</p> <p>Pre-Covid there were some encouraging gathering and networking but Covid halted this and there has been little local enthusiasm to restart.</p> <p>Validated - the local ministry pathway met the target and is continuing to develop such local leaders</p>
L&D (-end 23)	<p>87 mentors trained</p> <p>124 mentees</p> <p>12 young BAME Leaders</p> <p>Increase missional vision of 50-75 churches through LyCiG</p> <p>75 churches inspired to mutual peer learning opportunities</p>	<p>Overall outputs achieved but theory not proven.</p> <p>Metrics output oriented not outcome focused.</p>
Vocations (-end 23)	<p>50+ ordained discussions</p> <p>50-100 lay discussions</p>	Validated but overall end impact data not gathered.



## 6 Implementation

The nature of the application and complexity of the content, combined with the immediate onset of Covid made implementation very challenging. This has led to significant diocesan learning in the implementation which has been used to put in place an entirely new structure for strategic development across the diocese.

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### Programme approach

There has been an evolving approach to the governance of STF and indeed strategic programmes since the inception of STF in 2017.

Originally, the programme was expected to be led from within the line structure of the central diocesan team. Responsibility was held in specific roles for different aspects of the initiative. After the change request, it was similarly expected that the three directors would lead the work and deliver the expected outputs.

In practice this did not work well. Several factors drove this:

- Covid disrupted the implementation from the start
- The discontinuity created by the leaving and replacement of people in the central team produced dislocation in relationships, work execution and differences in approach as tasks were passed from one person to another
- The gathering momentum behind the P&P programme pulled management attention away to a newer initiative and one with significant structural change that impacted all links between the central resources and local churches
- There was a very high penetration of 'programme' funded staff with specific, short term goals vs 'core' staff with longer term areas of responsibility and less defined goals in the central team. This created friction and an instability in the operational processes as senior team members strove to achieve their personal goals; struggled to identify clear areas of separate responsibility; and found it difficult to access clear and stable core organizational processes into which to integrate
- The programme management disciplines required to run, especially the diverse range of smaller projects in STF were not well understood, experienced or practiced well.

STF became, in effect, a learning experience for the diocese in the issues of running a complex programme in an organisation unused to a high level of change. The diocesan team started to grasp more of this with the implementation of P&P and now, as senior team members have become familiar with this way of working, it is perceived to be working much better.

The learning has led to the development of a single strategic programme structure for strategic change projects which is now incorporated into the governance of the diocese and will, once STF is concluded, incorporate all strategic projects individually, working to plans and subject to regular review. It is supported by an accepted and well-resourced programme office.

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## Governance

The original governance structure for STF was through the Transforming Church Committee. This was chaired by the Bishop of Aston and reported to the Bishop's Council but it did not use a programme management structure to operate with and therefore tended to only report progress. It did not review budgets nor actions and outputs against a plan.

By the time of the change request, this became more focused on a group still chaired by the Bishop of Aston with the Diocesan Secretary, the three Directors and the Programme Manager. However, this still operated to a similar process with relatively infrequent meetings, largely for reporting rather than monitoring and responding to deviation from a plan. Furthermore, with two Directors new to the diocesan team and almost immediate Covid disruption across the diocese, the programme faced enormous challenges.

It was therefore extremely difficult to maintain coherence and progress against the plan in these circumstances, especially with such a complex set of activities and weak networks between some of the Directors and local churches.

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## £200 easy access grant funding

With the pandemic having disrupted and halted so many aspects of church life, an initiative was tried at the end of 2021 to encourage restarts by providing £200 grants in response to local applications with a missional focus.

These were remarkably successful in enabling local leaders with clear needs and no finance to take the initiatives that they wanted. In response to a clear reason and with very little process they were able to access these grants and a number of respondents emphasised the powerful local empowering to mission that they provided (See Ascension case in section 4). This is validated in the review feedback provided by the churches which claimed them.

These grants were used for example to buy bibles or books for groups, equipment to do Christingles or to provide food or refreshments for events. These were so useful that the youth team have kept them in budgets for subsequent years.

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## Church planting and revitalisation

It was recognised that CofEBirmingham was starting from a relatively low base in terms of plants and FXCs. An initial draft list of planting churches and sites was in place for the reset in 2020 and was felt to be practicable given the support of some of the larger churches in the Diocese.

This rapidly changed with the arrival of Covid as planting churches backed away quickly to focus on their own position. The wider proposed identification process was never operationalized because of Covid, the long time it took to get the new full-time Area Deans in place and pressure on the senior team. This left a gap around potential sites which has only recently been closed.

Additionally, the pipeline of potential leaders was not strong enough to sustain the planting plans and far more effort and networking was needed.

The initial approach to planting/revitalising has also proved not to be resilient enough to offer an assured and sustainable model. It requires more human resource (than simply a minister), and more financial resource (both per annum and for more years) than had been provisioned in the original plan.

There have still been some successful plants (see section 4) and all these factors are being strengthened now we have come through Covid but the programme was not able to address them, only the newly emerging structure and process in the Diocese.

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## Tracking and measurement

As is common with applications launched in 2017 the tracking was not as rigorous as desired. However, this was not due to a lack of effort. Detailed reviews were done on the GY programme which STF followed on from and a significant evaluation stream was in the plan. The common challenges on outcomes, like the number of new disciples and the complexity of the range of activities included in STF, made it challenging but appropriate proxies were selected and tracking was conducted well across the programme as a whole.

The tracking and evaluation of activities was followed through for the first two years of STF but from the change request in 2020 it was partially undermined by the onset of pandemic restrictions and the pressures on church leaders. Some components (e.g. TCAP facilitation and youth cells) continued to track progress but the pressures on local church leaders made evaluation of especially impact challenging and in some parts of the programme the focus was on output metrics rather than outcomes which limits their value.

The tracking was further complicated by the launch of another big strategic programme in P&P in 2019 which had a number of common aims and measures (e.g. around church planting and leadership) and became the main focus around the diocese once it was underway. This raised challenges in terms of which programme should count which outcomes and created as much friction amongst staff as light in terms of evaluation.

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## Budget and Programme Duration

The disruption to the programme is reflected in:

- The current underspend of the budget by £565k, and
- By a desire to run three key elements of the programme into 2024 (the planned end date was end 2023).

£000	Budget			Actual			Difference
	Total	SDF	DBF	Total	SDF	DBF	
Director of Mission L&D	254			228			-26
Enablers, planters & pioneers	1727			1310			-417
L&D facilitators and support	582			380			-202
GY Schools and youth	356			251			-105
GY extension roles	253			106			-147
Programme manager	197			188			-9
<b>Staff costs</b>	<b>3369</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2463</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>-906</b>
Staff related costs	362			163			-199
Seed funding for GY	165			214			49
Underpinning support for GY course devp, LyCiG, events	378			257			-121
Addition programme costs comms, evaluation, fundraising	54			62			8
							0
							0
							0
<b>Non staff costs</b>	<b>959</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>696</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>-263</b>
<b>ORIGINAL TOTAL</b>	<b>4328</b>	<b>2566</b>	<b>1762</b>	<b>3159</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1169</b>
<b>REVISED TOTAL (from change request2/20ff)</b>	<b>3740</b>	<b>2566</b>	<b>899</b>	<b>3159</b>	<b>2393</b>	<b>710</b>	<b>581</b>

## Notes

1. Actual refers to spend to March23 plus projected spend to end of programme (End 2023/24)
2. Split between SDF and DBF was not allocated by line item but was an escalating % over time
3. DBF spend in revised total include £82k of additional externally raised funds of which only £66k was secured in the end - reducing the overall funding difference to £565k

The three elements that CofEBirmingham want to allow to run into 2024 (whilst shutting down the rest of the programme) would be managed under the new strategic governance process as individual projects:

- Two of the revitalisations (Bearwood and Summerfield)
- The remaining planned FXCs (which will then hit their STF targets)
- The intercultural training (which is only launched this month and is likely to promote take up in late 23 and early 24)

It is recommended that this flexibility on the end date for these projects is allowed because of the disruption that Covid created in the planting and FXC streams.

Allowing for this the team believe that many of the key metrics will have been hit by the end of 2024 with existing allocated funding, so there is no plan to spend or claim any additional funds other than that already committed.

## 7 Learning

STF was CofEBirmingham's second strategically funded programme and ended up being tightly wedged between two programmes, GY and P&P, which meant that the latter stages were being run in parallel with a major structural change. This, combined with the onset of Covid, has provided a rich set of learnings which has led to the diocesan team substantially changing their approach to the way that they handle all change initiatives to strengthen the impact, resilience and coherence of their work, especially over the topics of governance and strategy. These are perhaps the most significant items in the learning.

### 1. Importance of strategy, simplicity and focus

STF was a very wide range of initiatives which in practice was very difficult to manage, even after some consolidation through the change request in 2020. Respondents repeatedly talked about:

- The difficulty of prioritising the activity against too many different objectives with only limited time and resource
- The complexity of coordinating and adjusting resources as things changed between very different elements (e.g. between church planting and schools work)
- The lack of alignment and cohesion that mitigated against the sense of it being a coherent programme
- The presence of too many objectives and measures in some areas of the programme

These factors reflected the way that the programme was put together originally. With hindsight, it represented a lot of 'good ideas' when the application was submitted. The resulting complexity and lack of focus was a significant weakness that undermined the realisation of the most important outcomes and helped to conceal key process weaknesses.

Almost all respondents talked about the vital importance of being able to set and follow clear priorities in their role and of being able to understand where their projects fitted with each other and the overall operation of the Diocese.

### 2. Value of integrated programme governance

The weakness identified above, plus the increasing experience of the senior team in handling change programmes has led to significant changes in governance. It is expected that the high level of change needed will only continue and so the Diocese needs to both meet the challenges of managing many strategic projects effectively and maintain a healthy focus on core target outcomes.

The implementation of an integrated process of project governance is now underway with important characteristics that all respondents comment favourably upon:

- Projects working to an agreed plan against which they report by exception in a common way
- An experienced, single programme office to support governance on all change projects
- The governance process is integrated into the 'business as usual' forums and processes that govern the diocese
- The abolition of potentially overlapping goals across projects which fragments joint working
- Closer support and monitoring by a programme office to help earlier with challenges and changes
- Greater clarity and experience in balancing the pastoral and performance oversight of roles

### 3. Continuity of staffing and goals

Another point identified by several respondents was the importance of continuity in staffing. The turnover in staff in the run up to the change request weakened the relationships and networks that help enable effective action especially locally. They reduced contextual knowledge, trust and prior organisational learning. Conversely, where staff remained in role for significant periods, they were often able to achieve much more progress and tweak their approach to make it more effective.

This puts a premium on:

- Understanding the nature of the roles (and the qualities of the people to fulfil them) in the team to lead a programme or project and communicating this effectively
- Understanding how these roles interface with each other and the business-as-usual processes
- Recruiting to a clear role and person specification and with an explicit expectation that people will stay the course of their role
- Ensuring that onboarding of staff is thought through to help them navigate the organisation and start to build the informal network that they will need to undertake their role successfully

### 4. Choose a robust planting model

The church is rapidly building up experience in planting and revitalising Christian communities. There is a wide body of experience and research to support planting and provide guidance on key factors in plants:

- Different types and locations of plants
- Identification of sites bringing local needs and strategic insight together
- The number of leaders, amount of resource and time required for successful plant
- The qualities of the leaders involved and the nature and value of a team
- The support structure – role of senior leaders, strawmen resources (e.g. on health and safety, Safeguarding, Chart of accounts etc), role of the planting church
- The requirements and time and growth path to sustainability
- The impact on surrounding churches

This learning needs to be used by programmes in the design of planting approaches to ensure that an essentially resilient approach is adopted. This would be a useful counter to the pressure coming from tight finances in the church which often encourages a ‘do more with less’ attitude that ends up planting with transparently weak models.

### 5. Local initiative and ownership is a necessary condition for sustainable plants

Many respondents highlighted the importance of local leadership and commitment and its impact in determining fruitful planting. FXCs rely on local initiative, revitalisations on commitment from the existing host group and plants on the lead from the sending churches.

STF provides examples of expertise from the centre of the diocesan team being insufficient to generate local mission. This was evident in a number of the strands (e.g. The ‘enablers’, initial schools work) employed in the early part of the programme). Equally there are examples of a much more effective engagement model which has been increasingly adopted which seeks to build relationship and have senior leaders or central resources walk along with local leaders, and foster their ideas and enthusiasm (e.g. in youth and more recent work on FXCs).



This implies that:

- The focus for strategic resource should be to work with the willing rather than the resistant
- The assessment of local commitment prior to investment is essential and needs to be more penetrating than is often done, as other studies have shown
- The encouragement and nurturing of local initiative and leadership by central and senior leaders is a key role in missional capability building.

Local enthusiasm and commitment is often ultimately the determining factor in whether a new community is sustainable in terms of finance and people in the longer term and hence often determines the return on any investment.

#### 6. A reminder of the importance of intentionality and discipleship stepping stones

‘Anecdote to Evidence’ and other studies have highlighted the importance of intentionality in determining the impact of churches and missional initiatives on their community. STF provides further reinforcement of the importance of this.

Realising this practically means that leaders of initiatives both:

- Need to believe that it is a life changing blessing for God to be the central focus to people’s lives
- Must create a pathway or set of ‘stepping stone’ forums/relationships for people to engage progressively more deeply with God.

The first provides the motive for and shaping of the latter and the latter the opportunities that allow people most easily to advance. They also encourage church members to focus on the relationship and deepen friendships rather than allowing the focus to become much more transactional.

It is clear, however, that these pathways are quite challenging to design. Non-one was able to offer a good example of one that had worked well despite their value being identified in, for instance, the schools work.

## 8 Current and next steps

The diocesan team have substantially changed the way that they handle all change initiatives, including those that are under the P&P programme that followed STF.

In missional terms the focus of effort remains on the main elements that constituted the thrust of STF and P&P: church planting, leadership development and reaching out to families, young people and children. Revisions have been and are being made to the underlying processes and criteria which support these to help to increase resilience.

However, in governance the Diocese has made major changes as a result of the learning from these programmes. The complexity of both STF and the management of multiple programmes has led to the appointment of a Director of Strategic Transformation, the creation of a single programme consisting of all strategic projects in the Diocese, the establishment of a clear programme management approach and the formation of a rhythm for managing these.

The programmes have been broken back into individual projects and all those that are planned to continue have to pass through a launch gate before work can start on them. Each project has a clear responsible lead who is supported by the programme office in managing progress, risks, outputs etc against plan. These are fed into a Change Board consisting of the bishop's staff and Director of Strategic Transformation which reviews and resolves issues on a highlight basis. This is underpinned by equivalent boards in the two archdeaconries which roll up into the main board.

## 9 Advice to dioceses

In addition to absorbing the learnings identified in section 7, there are two specific topics prompted by discussion with respondents which are worth consideration by other dioceses and are common with other recent reviews:

### 1. Encourage a 'testing and learning' approach

STF, through the people that it employed and, in its breadth, tried a wide range of approaches to encourage mission and start and sustain church. This sort of innovation inevitably increases the likelihood that elements of planned activity will not work as expected - that issues will arise, things go wrong and situations will change. This happened with STF but equally it led to further experimentation to seek to find better ways of undertaking mission.

The small £200 grants, the learning around pathways in school/church relationships, the senior leader encouragement and the new Diocesan approach to strategic projects all come from the earlier learning. Having a clear aim and encouraging local leaders to work away at it is important and for many is a new way of tackling things. Yet it helps to build:

- More acceptance of risk-taking and things not working (for good reasons)
- Agility to pivot as some areas bear fruit and others don't
- A more diverse and sustainable church that reaches a wider range of communities

This should be pursued. It would involve:

- Encouraging a 'try it and see' approach in churches and activity, recognizing that some will be blessed, others not
- Placing greater emphasis on 'testing and measuring activities, not merely sticking to an agenda set upfront
- Greater scaling of that which is bearing fruit and stopping that which is not (the latter often being more difficult)
- Greater clarity in thinking over strategic goals versus the tactical approaches to realising them

### 2. Increase accountability in the inherited church

There has, despite the evident challenges of the pandemic, been an enormous amount of effort put into seeking to measure and track progress in the activity of STF in order to understand what is working well. This is healthy and helpful. However, it contrasts quite sharply with the understanding and tracking of action and mission in the inherited church, where the sense of accountability for resources and development is much less.

This creates an artificial and unhelpful divide between 'new' and 'old' worshipping communities and ministries which promotes a lack of understanding and unity, friction, and tensions over risk and security.

This would be helpfully alleviated and the church more widely mobilised if there was a greater level of measured attention and reflection in the inherited church, in the context of a stronger culture of experimentation and learning.



## Interviewees

<b>Person</b>	<b>Role with respect to STF</b>
Andi Thomas	Minister, St Andrews Church
Emma Sargeant	Parish Mission Support, Youth lead
Guy Donegan-Cross	Director of Learning for Discipleship and Mission
Jan Smart	Diocesan Secretary
Jenny Tomlinson	Archdeacon of Birmingham
Jon Turner	Director of New Christian Communities
Liz Dumain	Director of Parish Mission Support
Steve Cooke	STF Programme Manager

## Glossary of terms

FXC Fresh Expression of church

GY Growing Younger, the first Birmingham Diocesan strategically funded programme

STF Shaping the Future

TCAP Transforming Church Action Planning, a facilitated process with churches