

# **Growing Intergenerational Mission**

## **End of project review**

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**November 2022**

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# 1 Executive summary

Hereford Diocese launched its application to grow intergenerational mission in 2017.

The project aimed to stimulate spiritual and numerical intergenerational growth in churches in six communities over five years, three market towns and three of the poorest communities in the Diocese by placing an 'Intergenerational Missioner (IM)' in each location to work with the incumbent and congregation. The hope was that as this advanced it would spur mission and growth across the diocese.

It sought to reach 1,800 unchurched people with the gospel, of whom 450 would become new disciples by the end of 2022. At least half of these would be aged under 35.

The project was expected to cost £1.05m and was supported by £0.53m of strategic funding from the national church.

Overall, given the disruption of Covid, the ages and traditional outlook of the inherited church, and the disruption in some of the locations the project has produced positive outcomes but not reached the goals originally set<sup>1</sup>:

- It has already reached over 1900 unchurched people with the Gospel and 62% of these are under 35 years old
- It has led to the formation of 16 new worshipping communities, albeit most meet monthly rather than the fortnightly frequency expected
- It has so far seen 195 people become disciples, 43% of whom are under the age of 35. Of these over 120 are estimated to have become members of the church

However, it has had a catalytic impact both on parishes and more widely in the diocese, helping to attract new church leaders into the diocese, generating a new pioneer of community of over 40 people and starting to move some churches that previously were not engaging positively in mission. It has also achieved this despite two years disruption with Covid at a critical time for the project.

The project also offers some valuable learning for other dioceses and initiatives:

- 1 The importance of choosing locations for additional missional input where there is both a strategic need **and** solid local support for a missioner
- 2 The need to prepare a church effectively for a missioner so that it mobilises in support of this additional role
- 3 The importance of prayer both centrally and locally to shape the initiative both at the start and throughout its life
- 4 The catalytic impact missioners can have on a church and the value of this turbulence
- 5 The importance of learning from review and flexing plans throughout implementation

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<sup>1</sup> The data provided runs to end Q2 2022, six months ahead of the end of the project

- 6 Lessons on the targets and tracking process to better exploit the inevitable but useful tension that these create
- 7 The importance of a centre/local partnership in management of deployed resource
- 8 The pivotal importance of relationships locally to generate the value from deploying IM's

Some of these points echo learning from other dioceses on similar initiatives.

The review also offers some helpful lessons for consideration by other dioceses:

- The missionary role (paid or volunteer, ordained or lay) is an important agent for change in churches and should be a priority appointment in church leadership teams
- The nature of this added ministry role suggests that the leadership team should be seen as the unit of deployment not an individual
- The importance of creating priorities and greater accountability in the inherited church
- The value to be unlocked by employing a more diverse range of backgrounds, ages and experiences in dioceses

## 2 Background

Hereford Diocese launched its application to grow intergenerational mission in 2017.

The project aimed to stimulate spiritual and numerical intergenerational growth in churches in six communities over five years, three market towns and three of the poorest communities in the Diocese.

The intention was that it acted as a catalyst for intergenerational mission and growth in parishes and benefices of all types and sizes across the diocese.

Overall, it sought to reach 1,800 unchurched people with the gospel of whom 450 would become new disciples by the end of 2022. The aim was that at least half would be young people and adults under 35.

This was to come from the placement of six 'Intergenerational Missioners (IM's)' in chosen parishes around the diocese, who would help to grow:

- New faith pathways providing two courses for enquirers and two for growing disciples in each parish every year,
- A mixed economy of at least two new worshipping communities meeting at least twice a month in each place, and
- Twelve new voluntary IM's (trained or in training) working collaboratively with growing local mission teams.

This project also aimed to support the aim to change the profile of leadership across the diocese - in age, background, and in the balance between lay and ordained ministers.

The IM's were all trained in a common approach to growing faith (Connect, engage, commit, grow) – a process view of evangelism, that offered a framework for growth and provided a framework with scope to work with the incumbent, ministry team and Diocesan coordinator to develop specific activities to suit the context in each place.

The project was expected to cost £1.05m and was supported by £0.53m of strategic funding from the national church.

## 3 Project objectives

The approach to realising these aims was straightforward.

The IM's were recruited as Diocesan employees by a combined Diocesan and local team to be employed 80% of the time in the parish but with 20% of their time in the diocese to help them gel as a team, teach in the Diocesan School for Ministry and offer special expertise and advice in an area of mission for the diocese.

The six strategic parish locations were selected, based partly on demography and church penetration and to provide a geographical spread but also because of a judgment on the local desire, opportunity and

potential to achieve spiritual and numerical growth. All had completed MAP's and were each expected to contribute £8,750 pa to the funding. There were three market towns (Bridgnorth, Bromyard and Ross) and three of the poorest communities in the diocese (Ludlow St John's, South Wye and Sutton Hill & Woodside). All met their contribution apart from Sutton Hill & Woodside which received support from Mission and Ministry to meet their contribution.

They had wide discretion in the way that they approached their task locally but were encouraged to work, as a priority, in the areas of opportunity identified (most often opportunities with families and primary age children through activities like Messy Church, Open the Book, and Life Events). The IM's were recruited with this in mind.

This meant that the overall goals for each parish were summarised as in the table below (revised goals reflect any revisions made to the application goals as the project went forward):

Project Element	Initial Goals	Revised Goals
<b>IM's</b>  Deployed locally to lead approaches to growing Christians and communities of all ages and backgrounds	For each  Reach 300 unchurched people, at least half of whom are <35  For 75 of these to become disciples  2 discipleship and 2 enquirer courses established per year  2 new worshipping congregations established (meeting at least twice per month)	These were discussed with SDU as response to Covid and the disruption to 2020/21 plans and volunteers  IM's were encouraged to continue but focus on fewer people, prioritising accordingly, to be able to engage safely and online through the lockdowns

Covid hit 24 months into the work of the IM's who had all been recruited at the beginning of 2018. Sadly, this hit their work at a key time when they had built up the trust with new contacts and communities and activities were well underway. Covid security, the challenges of online work in the communities being served and safeguarding challenges (especially with schools) all served to bring many things to a complete halt.

There was no formal change of the goals in lockdown but it was recognised that IM's would need to focus down on fewer tasks, build up suitable online approaches and nurture what connections could be maintained and this was discussed with the SDU (details of revisions suggested to goals are in appendix). IM's were not furloughed (although this was offered in the second lockdown) because of the desire to continue to reach the community and to assist in the delivery of online services. time.

## 4 Achievements and good news stories

### Summary outcomes

Overall, given the disruption of Covid, the age and traditional outlook of the inherited church, and the disruption in several of the locations, the project has produced positive outcomes even though it has not reached the goals originally set.

- It has made great progress in reaching those who are unchurched with the Gospel and at this point, near the end of the project timeframe, it is actually ahead of the milestones both overall and especially in reaching those under 35 years old. This is despite 2 years of Covid disruption and with a reasonably challenging definition of ‘reaching people with the Gospel’.
- Covid has undoubtedly put the overall progression in winning new disciples back by 18-24 months as it has hindered the buildup of relationships. However, paradoxically, in one or two cases it assisted access to both new and existing schools, as IM’s created pre-recorded materials (e.g., stories, collective worship) which schools used to deliver core parts of their activity plans. In some places, like Sutton Hill and Woodside these were taken up and used by every primary school, church and state.
- In terms of disciples, the numbers have been significantly below the 75 new disciples expected in each location. IM’s estimate that around 34 people on average have become disciples. Some, however, have not become part of the church, but rather joined other churches or have struggled to integrate into the existing Anglican community.

However, the programme was perceived to be going well in most locations when Covid struck and disrupted all activities and plans.

The IM’s have mostly used the growth cycle to good effect with their incumbents, identifying contextually appropriate activities that engaged the community and created relationships. They have created many opportunities for the churches they are based in and these have brought people into faith.

Although no IM has seen the numbers anticipated in the application, a couple have seen numbers close to these and it is clear that the journey to faith is one that can take a while in our society which means that Covid disruption and the failure of a five-year continuous project (in half of the parishes) will have impacted many opportunities.

Project Element	Goals (per church)	Estimated outcomes ( av per church at Q2 2022)
IM’s  Deployed locally to lead approaches to growing Christians and communities of all ages and backgrounds	For each  Reach 300 unchurched people, at least half of whom are <35.  For 75 of these to become disciples.  2 discipleship and 2 enquirer courses established per year	On average:  320, 62% <35 yrs old  34 disciples (21 of whom have joined the congregations)



	<p>2 new worshipping congregations (NWC's) established (meeting at least twice per month)</p> <p>2 new voluntary IM's</p>	<p>Closer to 1 of each pa, with a bias to discipleship courses</p> <p>Closer to 3 NWC's, however 75% of these meet monthly not fortnightly and the rest meet weekly.</p> <p>2 identified</p>
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Further detail on the nature and source of the outcomes can be found in the appendix.

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## Great examples of impact

**Hospitality:** “The Toast Club” in Ross-on-Wye, the IM with a couple of volunteers stood outside church next to the school drop-off point with coffee and toast for mums and toddlers. This simple initiative quickly mushroomed amongst parents and attracted families not only into the hospitality provided but also into the life of the church and to come along to the contemporary service. Up to 90 people attended at its height, by far the majority under 35. Despite the IM having moved on two years ago Toast continues under the leadership of lay volunteers.

**Engagement with schools:** There are many great examples of engaging effectively with schools and not just church schools but state schools. Over half those who have heard the Gospel have done so through the school's work.

In some cases, the IM's have not just engaged themselves but effectively introduced and mentored other congregation members to take on the opportunities. Examples include:

- Telford Sutton Hill – engagement with local schools with Open the Book and festivals which accelerated over lockdown with videos for collective worship reaching over 150 (primary school)
- Sharing videoed “Open the Book” sessions to all local schools, many of whom used them despite limited previous contact
- Ross – help with assemblies, after-school eco-club and leavers services (primary school)
- Ludlow St Johns - on the Sandpit Estate, the IM helps on RE and PHSE and is an active presence, mentoring and supporting pupils and staff, impacting personally on over 100 (secondary school)

**Alpha:** Alpha has been used to great effect in several of the parishes both with existing congregants and the community. Examples include:

- Ludlow – Alpha was run ecumenically with the other churches on the estate. The first course had 80 attendees and the second 50
- Ross – The first Alpha was run for congregants and many found it transformational to their faith. Of the 22 who attended the first course, 15 became active in supporting church mission activities

**Youth activities:** Whilst it has generally been difficult to build and sustain a mission to young people and the IM's have generally focused on families, there are also some encouraging examples of how youth have been engaged by the IM's including:

- Ross – “LEAF” after-school club on Fridays grew from 5 to 15 young people with a mixture of games and faith development activities. This was halted by Covid but has since been restarted by the curate
- Sutton Hill and Woodside – after lockdown a youth church was started, mostly with youth from church families but including some young people who although having connections with church never came. This now has 11 attendees and they are hoping to continue to grow it further
- South Wye – chaplaincy support to the Hereford Academy has led to a group of 20 forming a youth cub that now meets at the church
- Sutton & Bartestree Cross – in this very rural location confirmation attracted 11 young people who wanted to carry on meeting and so launched a pizza club that meets monthly at venues around the deanery (including parents houses)
- Bridgnorth – a youth club was begun on an estate in Low Town, where there was engagement with faith and confirmations but this is no longer meeting

**Sutton Hill & Woodside:** The project started in a very difficult way here because of relationship issues between incumbent and local groups and the IM. However, since the incumbent moved on things have made significant progress. The work using Muddy Church, Messy Church and summer work has reached up to 120 people and developed a good core of families and 12 lay helpers. Whilst it is still early days and there is more work to be done on discipleship, it is starting to impact the church whose average age has dropped into the 50’s as families have started to become involved. The work will carry on with support from the DBF for another three years, with the aim that it becomes self-sustaining by that point.

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## Disappointments

**Covid disruption:** The scale and timing of the impact of Covid is a great disappointment. The disruption was enormous and came just as two years had been invested in developing trust in the relationships and there was a good degree of stability in a vast range of new activities (from Messy Churches and new services to community hospitality events and Alpha courses).

**The overall numbers of new disciples and impact on the church:** The numbers of people who have become disciples is less than the hoped-for numbers in the application. It is impossible to know whether this is simply due to the impact of Covid at such a critical point in the project. This may certainly be the case as the two-year period in the middle of the project derailed all activities and many of the developing relationships.

However, even if the numbers of disciples were greater there is evidence that the wider expectations of the impact of this growth on the churches would not have been met. The respondents indicate a very mixed response from churches not just in terms of growth but also from the existing congregants – some positive but others negative despite the commitments made by churches at the start of the project. In some cases, congregants simply do not seem to have understood how to engage effectively with the new relationships that the IM activity generated.

**Staffing stability around the placements:** There have been large numbers of staffing changes that have impacted the programme over the 5 years since the application. Only one church has the same full-time IM and incumbent at the end of the project as they had at the beginning. The resulting instability has challenged placements and relationships in many cases and has been unhelpful in terms of impact.

**Market towns:** The placements in all three market town locations prematurely ended. In Ross relationship breakdown with the incumbent has led to the IM moving to Sutton & Bartestree Cross In Bridgnorth, a combination of team frictions and changes and the IM's maternity leave have led to the IM moving on early and in Bromyard a serious safeguarding issue and challenges in the church have led to the IM's move to Abbeydore.

When combined with the impact of Covid, it makes any assessment of the impact of the role on church life and community impact in these situations very difficult. However, there is no reason to suppose that successful placement would not work as well as in the deprived areas, only that the parishes selected needed more thorough vetting, engagement and expectation setting.

## 5 Missional theory/project design

Element	Original theory	Theory changed or validated?
IM's	<p>There had been encouraging pilots running in several parishes ahead of the project and these helped to shape the expected role.</p> <p>The role added dedicated resource for mission in a focused area (unlike the norm of staffing - a multi-parish benefice) and working to a common framework.</p> <p>This role had the specific aim to develop relationships with those not engaged in church, especially opportunities with families and primary age children (Messy Church, Open The Book, and Life Events).</p> <p>From these relationships develop suitable contemporary opportunities for worship and build discipleship alongside the normally traditional forms of worship.</p> <p>Key features of theory</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- IM as an enabler of mission, a door opener and a doer</li> <li>- Outward focus on especially children &amp; families</li> <li>- Ownership and a missional vision in the church</li> <li>- 'Fire-starting' approach and then setting up to sustain when project finishes and IM leaves post</li> <li>- 5-year commitment to establish lasting work in shaping culture and as platform for faith development</li> </ul>	<p>No change.</p> <p>Validated in some but not tested in others.</p> <p>Practice in specific churches did not line up with the theory. Notably:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Some churches were not prepared to change or actively support the IM</li> <li>- In some cases, the relationship with the incumbent was poor and the IM moved</li> <li>- In some cases, the IM did not continuously apply the growth cycle</li> </ul> <p>The IM's were vulnerable to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Church context (clear missional heart and vision and stable leadership)</li> <li>- Effective working with the incumbent and church 'power' leaders</li> <li>- A failure to mobilise the church (through unwillingness or numbers/age)</li> <li>- The need to integrate new activities and provide a discipleship pathway</li> </ul>

## 6 Implementation

The implementation has, despite significant staff changes both centrally and locally, largely followed the application. Despite the impact of Covid, the governance and oversight has remained strong throughout and changes have been in response to learning and challenges as the project has progressed.

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### Governance

The planned oversight for the project was to be through a Steering Group comprising the Bishops, the Diocesan Secretary and the two most involved managers, the Mission Strategy Development Officer and the Lead IM. This group met at the end of Bishops Staff to review progress and agree policy. An Implementation Group met to oversee the day to day running of the project.

This changed in the first year as senior staff changed (including the departure of both Bishop and the Mission Strategy Development Officer) and as it became apparent that the Steering Group was not fulfilling its role. This was facilitated by the arrival of a Strategic Programme Manager in the Spring of 2018. During this period the governance developed to include quarterly high-level reports to the Strategy Steering Group and bi-monthly meetings of the IM Project Group

During the project the IM Project Group was reconstituted and included a Pioneer Minister and a representative of the local Methodists to allow for more robust external challenge. The group meets five times pa.

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### Senior staff

This initiative saw a significant change in the senior staff in the diocese within the first 18 months of its launch. The Bishops and Archdeacons changed and the architect for the initiative, the Mission Strategy Development Officer, who had led the push for Mission Action Plans (MAP's) and IM's also left because of health issues with her husband.

The change of staff and the loss of the key change leader reduced the clarity of direction and push. Elements of the programme did not recover. The MAP's were of variable quality and were not pursued, the LICC Learning Hub pilot was not developed and the life-events programme with the NCI team was explored but not really pursued.

By the time the programme had picked up momentum again with a focus on the IM's it was undermined by Covid and the associated restrictions in early 2020 at the same time as new senior staff were appointed.

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### Recruitment

It was planned to recruit all the IM's at the same time and to have them in post to enable a strong start at the beginning of 2018. This was achieved successfully and all stakeholders locally and centrally were involved in the recruitment process.

The IM's and the Lead IM have largely stayed committed to the project throughout, with only two exceptions which also suggests that appropriately skilled people were appointed to the roles.

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## IM parishes and staffing stability

There were six parishes into which IM's were placed. The three 'deprived areas' were staffed and have remained stable in terms of the IM's. However, in the market towns there has been much more flux. None of these has continued without issue. Bromyard experienced an early safeguarding issue and the minister left the parish. Although the IM stayed for a while, they then moved to another area to do the same role across a deanery close to Hereford. Bridgnorth has continued with an IM but recently moved on as it became clear that the parish was not committed to continuing. In Ross-on-Wye personal tensions with a new minister and members of the leadership team led to the IM moving after 3 years to Sutton & Bartestree Cross, a much more rural area.

In short, the market towns have had no continuity which makes assessment of the impact of the initiative here difficult.

More widely though stability in the leadership of the churches has been an issue. Two of the six IM placements have worked with five incumbents. Only in two cases (Ludlow and one of the two job-sharing IM's in South Wye) have the incumbent and the IM stayed the same through the project period. This is despite great effort being made before placement through discussion and partnership agreements to set the expectations for the project.

Inevitably, where the issue of chemistry between the incumbent and the IM is so critical, this has created issues both for personally for the IM's and for the project.

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## Budget

The project had a very simple funding structure at application:

- Six posts at £35,000 pa for five years totaling £1.05m
- Financed three ways 25% DBF, 25% the local church and 50% SDF

In practice the finances were slightly more complicated because of project management, start-up costs (advertising, interviews etc), provision for redundancy, IM's expenses and IT, maternity pay and costs associated with partners (Messy Church, Life Events and evaluation). Changes in the IM's and parishes complicated this further.

Overall, though, the project is financially on track at the 54 month mark.

### INTER GENERATIONAL MISSIONERS

Budget vs actual	54 months Actual £	54 months Budget £	Variance £
<b>Income</b>			
Archbishops' Council income (50%)	438,249	466,813	-28,564
Parishes (20.83%)	183,225	196,875	-13,650
Diocesan match funding (29.17%)	275,625	275,625	0
<b>Total income</b>	<b>897,099</b>	<b>939,313</b>	<b>-42,214</b>
<b>Expenditure</b>			
Salaries/stipend	668,780	693,239	24,459
Less: HMRC furlough grant	-11,050		11,050
Pension and NIC	101,978	137,262	35,284
Housing costs (council tax, water, rent)	10,849		-10,849
Redundancy	0	10,500	10,500
Advertising and interviews	1,134	3,885	2,751
Equipment	5,691	6,100	409
Missioners expenses - mileage etc	15,532	25,640	10,108
Training costs, courses and training resources	14,455	25,200	10,745
Phone contracts	8,771	6,355	-2,416
IM resources (incl event costs)	812	9,420	8,608
Communication	0	1,617	1,617
Partnership costs*	7,845	14,410	6,565
Project management costs	30,580	0	-30,580
<b>Expenditure</b>	<b>855,377</b>	<b>933,628</b>	<b>78,251</b>
<b>Net position</b>	<b>41,722</b>	<b>5,685</b>	<b>36,037</b>

*\*Partnership costs include: Life events, messy church fees, project evaluation*

There is a small net underspend of ~£70,000 largely due to the lower amounts spent on salaries because of the changes in IM staffing over the project (including lost roles, moves, maternity and some furlough payment). This is helping to cover project management costs and the housing cost of the IM who is now ordained.

## Tracking and measurement

The application had a comprehensive set of proposed measures, with lead measures being based on counts and the age profiles of those involved in the pathways to faith gatherings. These lead on to criteria for the new worshipping communities and ultimately to attendance and giving indicators for the churches.

The intention was that these would be compiled on a monthly dashboard by the IM and incumbent together, alongside reporting on forthcoming opportunities and actions. These would then be compiled into the overall evaluation of the project through its life.

Tracking has not quite followed this pattern. However, careful monitoring of the lead measures has continued throughout the project, compiled on a quarterly basis and providing good insight into the numbers and profiles of those involved in gatherings hosted by the church and key events that the IM's have been involved in (e.g. with schools).

Whilst Covid did disrupt the tracking and reporting, it has continued successfully through the life of the project facilitated by the Strategic Programme Manager and the Lead IM.



## 7 Learning

*These represent multiple mentions from stakeholders interviewed*

### 1 Placement location

Several respondents commented on the need to ensure that locations were selected both on the basis of strategic need *and* local energy for mission. It was clear that there was a strategic need in the market towns selected but despite the prep work done with the incumbent and PCC and the requirement of a financial contribution from the parish (amounting to over £40k over the five years) the market town locations were very difficult to work in and none of the IM's completed their term.

In one case this was due a difficult safeguarding issue with the minister, in another due to changes in team that led to relationship problems and in the third because of relationship issues and limited desire for an outward facing role by the congregation.

This emphasises the need to ensure that even more work is done to ensure that:

- There is a strong alignment between church leadership and the IM before a role is introduced, and
- Good working relationships and practices are established in the team.

Practically, it was suggested this might include a clear commitment from the PCC to support through action the IM role (not merely finance it), careful vetting of the incumbent's commitment and line management capability and an assessment of the capacity (even down simply to size and age) of the congregation.

Respondents also identified the need to probe more carefully to identify influential leaders in the church who need to be enrolled. It is clear that practical congregational 'buy-in' to mission and the role is critical for its success but it seems difficult to secure and sustain. This demands even more effort before placements are made (see below).

### 2 Preparation of a location for an IM

Different suggestions were made as to what preparation might have helped to strengthen the work of the IM's locally, as even where they completed their term, the level of church mobilisation often disappointed. Although prep work was undertaken, the initiative was explained and PCC's signed up and financed it, it is clear that churches did not live up to these commitments.

Suggested stronger commitments included:

- Commitment to a locally financed budget for expenses for hospitality and activity undertaken (£2-3,000 pa)
- An incumbent and PCC explicit commitment to be willing to change (service formats, times, use of locations, stopping of existing activities to prioritise new initiatives etc)
- Envisioning/facilitation of congregations to explore God's mission through church and understand what practically they might do each to welcome and engage newcomers
- Clearer communication of what can be expected (in terms of the approach taken, the role of the IM as 'fire-starter' and facilitator facing externally (not simply a 'doer'), the timeframes it takes

to build trust and engagement, what people are likely to want to attend, how the existing church needs to engage etc.)

- Training for incumbents on good line management and collaboration

### **3 Prayer**

Both on the ground and in the diocesan support activities, people reinforced the central role of prayer in the areas where impact has been made – identifying people of peace and listening to the needs of the community, addressing obstacles and challenges and praying for people and their journey of faith.

The importance of beginning in prayer for the initiative and then leading it in prayer throughout was emphasised by many respondents and has been captured in recent evaluations.

### **4 IM's are catalytic**

Several people used the term 'catalytic' to describe the impact of the IM's. Even where the impact of their presence has been more limited, the overall effect of the turbulence created by their presence is perceived to have been worthwhile by most people and to move the church in the diocese forward in mission.

It has served to either help mobilise congregants or bring to fore where congregations really stand, roughly in 50/50 proportions. It is also seen to have been significant in bringing a more missional edge to the diocese, epitomized in the changes in senior staff, the now active pioneering community and the language and discussion in the church.

### **5 The importance of learning and flexibility**

This was emphasised by some respondents, including several of the IM's who explained that one of the key aspects of the role is to listen to the community and then try actions that respond to the perceived opportunities. Inevitably some of these work and others don't and whilst things need to be tested properly there is a real value in using test to learn what will work and modify accordingly, often exploiting opportunities as they come up. This was evidenced in Covid when pivoting online provided access to schools that had previously been closed and promoted smaller more personal group gatherings rather than wider ones.

### **6 Tension over targets and tracking**

Many of the respondents found the tracking, especially the compilation of numbers for activities and events, challenging. This was exacerbated by the low level of scrutiny being conducted on inherited church activities. Nonetheless, most recognised that it is a fair request for the investment that is made behind the role.

However, the targets were felt by many to be high or not in their gift to reach despite these being understood upfront (notably the numbers who become disciples) and these aspects were energy sapping. This may be partly due to the character of those who became IM's but it also reflects attitudes more widely by staff even in secular organisations. Furthermore, they evidently did not impact the chosen activities or strategies adopted by the IM's.

These factors might be better handled by:

- Ensuring that the overall expectations are clear before a role is accepted
- Clarity over the nature, expectation and parish ownership of the numbers so that these remain a joint endeavour for PCC's, incumbents and IM's (rather than an individual target for the IM). The Partnership Agreements signed with the parish did include the project targets but ownership of the aim was not transferred
- The approach adopted by the Diocese (i.e., quarterly discussion) rather than monthly is used to manage friction
- Expectations are explicitly adjusted when events occur (such as a pandemic) or it becomes clear that expectations need to be adjusted for other reasons

They would also be much readily handled if the inherited church roles and teams were clearly understood to have specific and measurable goals.

## **7 Diocese and parish relationship**

There were mixed comments on the value of the 80/20 split parish/diocese and the employment of IM's by the diocese. The original intentions of the application about their wider diocesan role did not emerge and by and large they focused their time in the parish.

However, the 80/20 commitment, employment by the diocese and support and reporting structure helped to make sure that the role was not easily blown off course locally. This is likely to have been a strong possibility, given the levels of turbulence created with incumbents and established church members by this new role.

It also enabled support to be given to IM's when difficulties arose and to move them to other places when it was no longer possible for them to continue locally.

Overall, it seems to have played a key stabilizing role in the project and should be maintained as a principle in future roles.

## **8 Relationships are key**

This was something that was highlighted by almost all respondents. Key dimensions mentioned were:

- Clergy/IM – personalities and attitudes, respect and understanding of what their respective roles involved for the project, working expectations and churchmanship
- IM/church (PCC, key leaders) – personalities and attitudes to mission, discipleship (vs attendance), clergy vs lay roles, change and trust
- Inherited church/new members/fringe – engagement and friendship, expectations on what joining church means
- IM/community – becoming part of the community on an estate so building trust and acceptance

The IM's emphasised that mission is about building relationships with people through relevant service and activity. The trust and strength of these relationships build the bridge through which discipleship can develop. This is not well understood nor practiced in many traditional church settings and which it would be helpful to make more explicit.

Three of the IM's (two deployed to the work in deprived areas and one other) felt that it was very important to become part of the community and live in the area, as a basis for trust and commitment and to allow hosting of guests and meetings more easily.

*Respondents' observations echo learning from other dioceses on the deployment of missionaries:*

## **9 Preparatory work in parish**

The need for an outward community facing understanding of church among the adult members is seen to be a vital enabler of the effectiveness and sustainability of this sort of initiative (even when focused on children and young people) and a key point for church leadership to address.

Securing the understanding and buy-in of the church to the priority of mission and the aims and to the role of leaders and members of the church are vital for the effectiveness of the initiative.

## **10 The importance of a well understood discipleship pathway**

The contrast between the high initial number of contacts, large numbers in the tracked 'new disciples' and lower overall numbers evident in church membership reveals the challenge of moving to ownership of faith

In many of the annual evaluations and again with interviewees it is recognised that a clear pathway is needed with small steps that help people progress to owning their own faith and that this relates to the need for the church to provide different activities and encourage movement to deeper faith.

## **11 The importance and opportunity of the church's approach to children and families.**

This area of mission and ministry provides many opportunities to engage the community and to introduce them to Jesus but it also requires changes in the way we are church to capitalise on the opportunity effectively and sustainably.

## **12 The importance of being active in the community on social media**

The activity of the IM's made good use of social media in several cases to promote community and church events. Especially with families and increasingly in most age ranges, community social media and online communications provide the baseline method of communication.

The church and key members therefore need to be active on these pages and using them in conjunction with posters, word of mouth and other approaches to build interest and maintain community.

Even in the more deprived areas, being active is important as a smartphone is seen as a necessity and will be used for communication at all hours of the day.

## **13 The leadership culture in church**

Of the seven IM's five explored ordination during their time as a missionary, with one moving all the way through the process and others becoming formally trained and licensed. Furthermore, in six of the seven placements there were significant frictions in the relationships between clergy and the IM's.

This all reflects a culture which emphasises the difference and importance of ordination in church life but in doing so undermines the role and security of lay leaders. The time and exploration that IMs then gave to possible ordination ended up being a distraction to the role and work that the IM's did and also to a need for increased moral support from the diocesan team.

## 8 Next steps

The diocese has taken several steps to incorporate lessons from the IM programme:

- It is using total return funding to enable it to deploy additional staff in appropriate situations, using this to prime growth within areas. This is being used to extend current IM roles where there are clear cases to justify them. This applies to two of the six locations.
- It has redeployed one of the IM's previously in Bromyard to a Deanery and funded another IM who is also deployed to a deanery. In both cases they concentrate their work in certain areas. Deanery deployment is bringing the benefit of being able to scale work, especially amongst youth and other focused demographics, more easily, to concentrate where positive hearts and opportunities are more evident and to support collaborative church approaches (important as fewer clergy are retained in role).
- One IM was redeployed from Ross to a more rural, cross-benefice setting. This has enabled the IM model of ministry to be tested in this environment.
- It is reinforcing the role of key churches (e.g., SPSJ in Hereford) to fulfil a stronger and wider role in reaching the area they are in and thereby strengthening a team not merely adding an individual to an existing church leadership group.
- A learning-community has been set up to support and network the increasing number of people involved with missional initiatives and new expressions of worship. This now has 40 members in a diocese that before the project did not have even have the language used in this space.
- Lessons on the importance of schools has already led to the appointment of one school worker and funding for two secondary school chaplains as a direct outcome of the project.
- One of the main strands of the refreshed diocesan strategy is to grow younger and intergenerational mission remains a key element in the delivery of this.
- The IM project has highlighted the need to reach young people in the diocese with the Gospel and the formation of youth churches is also a part of the refreshed diocesan strategy.

## 9 Advice to dioceses

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### Key lessons for the wider church

#### 1. The Missioner role is an essential journey but not a step change

The outcome from the project cannot be described as having generated a step-change in mission. The growth in disciples is modest, the impact on the churches is mixed and the initiative demonstrates fragility in the ability to sustain it both behaviorally and financially.

However, it has had a catalytic impact on both diocese and churches and the points of friction are key missional topics: what the church is here for, how best to live out faith, outward vs inward facing views and relationships with the community. It is highly unlikely that these issues could have been tackled as straightforwardly without the use of a missioner-type role, be that an existing church leader or an implant. An agent of change is needed to kick-start the germination process of growth.

The important lesson from this is then that churches need to have people fulfilling this role and it needs to be given a priority in church leadership.

#### 2. Plan teams not individuals

The care taken in co-opting parishes, involving stakeholders and selecting individuals was as high as I have seen elsewhere and yet despite this the process ended up being very fragile, with other leadership relationships being a critical dependency.

This suggests that the evaluation approach needs to be more team-based, looking at the whole leadership of the church for any placement of additional ministerial support:

- Evaluation of the line management skill and experience of the incumbent and the health of relationships in the church leadership
- Asking for a project length commitment from the whole leadership not just the IM
- A more extensive preparation of the wider church for the role of becoming a missional church not merely having a missioner
- Use of team-based action and reflection with leaders in the church to pray, set actions and assess progress

#### 3. Create priorities and greater accountability in the inherited church

The disparity in the level of scrutiny and expectation between projects like this and the inherited church should be addressed by increasing the clarity of parish priorities and the expectation of missional progress in every church and not merely maintaining the day-to-day running and adequate attendance, buildings and finance.

#### 4. Diversity benefits dioceses

Diversity acts as a catalyst to unlock value and reform in the church structures. Bringing into roles people who are not ordained, are much younger, who bring different backgrounds and experiences and whose outlook is different from the dominant clerical mindset can be very helpful.

However, it is challenging and uncomfortable for both those coming in and many in the church. This needs to be recognised especially by church leaders, who need to ensure clear support and close working and embrace the tensions it creates. This will itself support a helpful dialogue over what it means to be a church member and assist church to itself change.

*These echo points of learning from other dioceses on the deployment of missionaries:*

5. There is a significant challenge in ageing churches because of resistance to the sorts of changes needed to engage younger adults more effectively – in terms of visible leadership roles, meeting approaches (e.g., interactivity, social gathering), communications methods (social media) and experimentation.
6. The importance of mobilising the local church for mission. This factor seems to shape the sustainability of growth. It demands work by leaders before and during any local initiative, elements include:
  - An outward facing church looking to bless the community
  - A shared desire to encourage relationships with Jesus
  - Willingness to volunteer to lead and staff activity - not rely on paid staff only
  - A focus on building personal friendships within the community
  - A commitment to 24/7 discipleship

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## What might you do better with the benefit of hindsight?

The few things that were suggested by respondents

- An outward facing church looking to bless the community
- Rethink the deployment of IM's into the market towns. It was felt that the choices ended up being made more to prioritise locations identified as strategically important but without ensuring that the local desire was strong enough. Areas like Leominster which were in the pilot were dropped but may well have been more appropriate.
- Train the IM's (e.g., through CMS as two are doing/have done themselves) both for practical skills (e.g., a language to use, validated approaches for pioneer work) and as a mark of the significance of their role alongside clergy.
- Make more use of furlough and halt the initiative in places (so as to extend funding in the post-Covid period by restarting afterwards).
- Prepare the parishes better (points incorporated in the learning above).
- Line management training for the incumbents who had IM's working with them.



## Interviewees

<b>Person</b>	<b>Role with respect to Growing Intergenerational Mission</b>
David Bland	Intergenerational Missioner
Christine Cattanach	Intergenerational Missioner
Derek Chedzey	Project Board member and Archdeacon of Hereford
Wayne Davies	Intergenerational Missioner
Rebecca Dotson	Intergenerational Missioner
Lizzie Hackney	Lead Co-ordinator for IM's
Mark Hackney	Intergenerational Missioner (with a follow-on initiative)
Kate King	Intergenerational Missioner
Geri Miller	Intergenerational Missioner
David Morris	Strategic Programme Manager
Kelvin Price	Incumbent, Ludlow
Dawn Taffinder	Incumbent, Sutton & Woodside
Simon Tarlton	Curate, Ross, and then Incumbent, Sutton & Withington
Jo Yair	Project Board member, Methodist Mission and Ministry Coordinator

## Appendix – supporting notes on goals and outcomes

Outcome	Indicator measurement	Original Goal	Revision discussed at Covid	Estimated outcome
Reaching People with the Gospel (half under 35)	Identified by the IM's through the monthly feedback sheets. These are individuals who have chosen to engage with the Gospel message when given the opportunity.	1800	1600	1931
New Disciples	Identified by the IM's through the monthly feedback sheets. These are individuals who the Missioners believe have chosen to follow Christ as a result of the work of the Intergenerational Missioners and there is evidence of them being a disciple through changes in their lifestyle.	450	250	195
New Worshipping Communities	These have been established since the start of the IM Project and are meeting at least monthly with both scripture and worship included.	12	8	16 (3 wkly, 13 mthly)
Number of Enquirer courses delivered	These are courses relating to the engage/commit section of the Growth Cycle aimed at giving participants an opportunity to respond to the gospel	60	40	30
Number of Discipleship Courses delivered	These are courses aimed at growing the church i.e., increasing the confidence folk have in their faith and their willingness to share it.	60	55	45
New Leaders	Individuals who would identify themselves as a leader within intergenerational mission as a result of the work of the IM's. Identified through the IM monthly feedback sheet.	12	18	12