

INVESTING IN GROWING YOUNG ACTIVE DISCIPLES

Children, Young People (CYP) and Families Good Practice Guide

This is the first in a series of good practice guides for diocesan leadership teams. Guides are based on learning from programmes funded through Strategic Development Funding and Strategic Mission and Ministry Investment and aim to share lessons learned in areas key to delivering the Church of England's Vision and Strategy.

Three takeaway points if you don't read on:



Have a **clear mission design** for how you will reach young people. This should specify why the work will effect change and include each stage on a discipleship journey for each age.



Have a **well-resourced project team** in the diocese to hold vision, provide accountability, implement activity, oversee the people pipeline, and recruit, network, train and nurture ministers.



Ensure there is **clarity of expectation** and ownership at every level. Senior leaders, parish leaders, laity and youth ministers must each understand and agree their roles and how they relate to one another.

Definitions and summary of approach:

The national Vision and Strategy has a Bold Outcome to double the number of children and young active disciples across the Church of England by 2030. The focus is on those aged under 18, and diocesan work to reach this group, such as:

- Seeking to recruit and deploy youth and children's workers or apprentices, deployed to specific parishes that show potential for growing the number of children and young people.
- Investing in churches that have existing strength with children and young people, so that they can support other churches in this work (sometimes known as a minster model).

- Starting new congregations with a specific focus on children and young people, or in areas likely to have a large number of young people.
- Investing in collaborative working between churches and schools, such as through chaplains.

Dioceses are also investing more broadly in effective general ministry and revitalising parishes, which will contribute to having thriving intergenerational worship.

What has the national church already funded?

Birmingham // Apprentices, missionaries, and facilitators, schools project and youth project

Carlisle // Network Youth Church

Sodor & Man // Schools work

Southwell & Nottingham // Younger leadership college and youth & children's hubs

Worcester // Calling young disciples, youth and children's missionaries

Hereford // Intergenerational missionaries

London // Youth minsters

Sheffield // Centenary Project workers

Exeter // Torbay family and youth mission

Lichfield // Telford minster

Blackburn // Youth resourcing church

Manchester // Children Changing Places work with schools and parishes in Bolton

Peterborough // Pipeline of leadership development for youth workers

Norwich // Focus churches working with children and young people

Liverpool // Missing generations, planting and chaplains

Innovation // Movement (gathered worship in rural Somerset); Bubble Church; Choir Church; Youth Mission in Communion (Anglo-Catholic youth work in London); Estates sports ministers; Safe Spaces; Mental health project; New Wine youth minsters; Alban Way young discipleship; KICK sports mission; Weston Community Interest Organisation (CIO)

PPF // Youthscape and Missional Youth Church Network (MYCN), The Centre for Theology & Community

Networks and agencies

Growing Faith // Church, school and home

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Youthscape // Innovation and research on youth work

MYCN // New worshipping communities with unchurched 11-18's in areas of deprivation

Scripture Union // **BRF (Messy Church)** // **Church Army** // **CPAS** // **Royal School of Church Music (RSCM)** // **Bible Society** // All have approaches for reaching children and young people.

Example diocesan programmes

EXAMPLE 1: MANCHESTER CHILDREN CHANGING PLACES

Children Changing Places has invested in work across schools and parishes to develop a pathway for young disciples across different ages in Bolton.

Bolton was chosen because of existing strong relationships between schools and churches. The work has been across the whole deanery in the multi-cultural Northern town.

Investment has gone towards project co-ordination, school chaplaincy assistants, new congregations, and youth work in churches. Volunteers are empowered to work in schools, with innovative groups such as 'wobble worship' being created. In total, they were awarded just over £1m of SDF funding. In 2023 they are applying for follow-up funding to expand the project.

Key critical factors were:

- the quality of individuals called to the roles;
- a prayerful, supportive environment for the team;
- strong agreement on key principles;
- encouragement to be creative about how things were done in order to follow passions and contextual needs.

EXAMPLE 2: SHEFFIELD CENTENARY PROJECT

Sheffield set aside £1m of its own investment from historical reserves in 2015 to initiate a 10-year plan to employ children, youth and family workers, targeted in the most economically disadvantaged areas of the diocese.

The project has employed 30 Centenary Project workers across 54 parishes (with a mixture of part-time and full-time), plus a Centenary Project Manager and various other posts. These people oversee every appointment, work with local churches on setting objectives and support workers through a relational network and regular mentoring sessions.

Centenary Project workers build teams of local volunteers to support the ministry and work in local schools and across parish boundaries as they develop new missional activities for young people and children. There is currently regular contact with 1,600 young people across 74 groups.

EXAMPLE 3: BIRMINGHAM GROWING YOUNGER PLUS LATER COHORTS

Birmingham has invested in children's and youth ministry through three funded programmes, starting in 2014. In the first cohort they appointed 16 Children and Family Missioners (CFMs), as well as Mission Apprentices and Growing Younger Facilitators. This was followed by a schools project, a youth project, and a second cohort of CFMs.

Originally the programme sought 26 part-time roles but found that this was unattractive, and that the quality of work was increased with a smaller number of higher paying roles. They invited parishes to apply for a worker but were over-subscribed for the resource available, creating early resentment towards the programme.

There was a programme of mentoring, support and regular training for the cohort of CFMs and all Mission Apprentices. The Mission Apprentice programme sought to train and develop indigenous young leaders from estates. Mission Apprentices have gone on to take up roles in the DBF team, CFM roles and training for ordination as well as setting up their own businesses. Children and Families Missioners created between 20 and 60 'new disciples' and an average of 20 more people in worshipping communities.

EXAMPLE 4: SOUTHWELL & NOTTINGHAM, BEYOND THE TIPPING POINT

The Diocese of Southwell and Nottingham has sought to make a step change in their work with children and young people by establishing ten children and family flagship churches, and five youth hubs, as well as supporting 25 further churches with the potential to become flagships/hubs through investing in leadership and volunteers.

The churches were chosen with criteria balancing demographic and attendance data, local opportunities, and local and diocesan wisdom. The work builds on previous applications to

- plant resource churches in city centre, rural, market town and estate locations,
- revitalise parishes,
- start fresh expressions,
- and develop younger leaders.

This has meant that there was a cohort of parishes and leaders ready for further growth, and expertise in the diocesan team.

EXAMPLE 5: PETERBOROUGH GENERATION TO GENERATION

In Peterborough, they have worked on the long-term career requirements of youth workers by designing pathways in their Generation to Generation programme. The project invests in developing apprentices, who become trainees, who are then released as workers. There are therefore flexible options in a one-year course that can lead into a five-year programme. They are also giving each of their curates responsibility for youth and children's work – in which 50% have experience.

Originally, the project had planned to form collaborative work across churches in a location to build linkages to schools through diocesan employed missionaries. This proved challenging and they adapted their approach so that the missionaries would operate out of schools and this would then build back to churches. However, there are sustainability challenges and the diocese is pursuing crowd-funding.

Learning questions

WHAT NEEDS TO BE IN PLACE FOR A DIOCESE TO SUPPORT EFFECTIVE WORK WITH CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE?

Clarity of mission design is important – there needs to be a clear, focussed, evidence-based design, working with those with experience in youth and children's ministry, and a thought-through discipleship pathway. Funded roles need clear job descriptions and expectations.

Successful projects also **work with those who have committed to change and mission**. For both parishes and schools, this means both leaders and people in the wider culture have bought into the design and agree to the clear expectations of them. This commitment is required *before* deploying a worker.

Work must start from the current reality. In some places this may mean preliminary interventions in providing mission energy, establishing a welcoming culture, or establishing discipleship and leadership pipelines before investing in youth ministry. Conversely, for those already successful, dioceses should listen and seek to multiply these proven models, not work against them.

A clear requirement is for **effective programme management and delivery**, with capacity at a diocesan level to enable this.

HOW HAVE DIOCESAN-BUILT PROGRAMMES FOCUSED ON PARTNERSHIPS WITH LOCAL SCHOOLS?

Projects have been successful at getting high levels of engagement in schools (e.g. 80% of schoolchildren on the Isle of Man), **but there is a critical gap between this engagement and being part of a discipling community**. Building and iterating this discipleship pathway based on learning is a feature of effective projects.

In Birmingham they found prayer spaces enabled interaction with children, but not ongoing discipleship. Choir Church is seeking to provide clear steps from school assemblies, to afterschool clubs, to in-school services, to in-church services. Children Changing Places in Manchester has a joined-up approach from 0-18 including church, school and family.

HOW HAVE DIOCESES CREATED EFFECTIVE PIPELINES OF YOUTH WORKERS AND ENSURED ON-GOING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT?

Promising work has **clear responsibilities** for support for ministers with children and young people **situated in the right place**, with collaboration between parish (management and local vision), project (training and diocesan vision), and diocesan business as usual (safeguarding, HR etc).

The whole pipeline of formation of workers among children and young people should be considered:

1. Improve the quality and quantity of **potential people** for CYP ministry by celebrating CYP ministry visibly, improving the perception of this ministry, looking proactively for people with potential, and nurturing these people.
2. When looking to **recruit** to CYP ministry, prepare thoroughly, look in the most promising places, proactively identify candidates (especially career changers), present the opportunity attractively, keep an open mind, be prepared to be flexible, and be patient.
3. To **retain and nurture** those working in CYP ministry, invest in people through training and development; demonstrate love, care, appreciation and respect; ensure that your ministers are disciplined; and manage and lead people well.

These findings were underpinned by research by Benita Hewitt from 9dot research, and are feeding into a national programme to increase the number of leaders among children and young people.

Top tips - checklist for project development

- ✓ Research the current state of CYP ministry in your diocese. Are there areas of good practice to multiply? Churches taking first steps you can expand? Is capacity or culture change needed?
- ✓ Create a project team with good governance in the diocese to support the delivery of any project. This should include owning the vision for the project, and the nurture, development, and networking of any missionaries on the ground.
- ✓ The parishes and schools you are working with must co-own the vision, and demonstrate a clear commitment to change before any resource is given. Participating churches will need to maintain being an effective place of formation, investing in the programme as co-owners and demonstrating 'whole church commitment' in terms of resources.
- ✓ Write down clear expectations of what will be provided by the diocese, parish, school and/or local worker. Communicate these consistently and clearly. Sustaining good relationships with partners, such as between church and school, by investing in clear and effective channels of communication, is critical.
- ✓ Programmes should deliver a 'whole life' programme of discipleship in churches to avoid creating cliff edges, in terms of transition moments for children and young people, and should engage whole families in children's work. Is there a plan for every age group, including parents?

- ✓ Create a discipleship pathway for young people (e.g. reach, explore, commit, grow). The pathway will depend on context, but will explicitly name the interventions and test them over time.
- ✓ Create a recruitment strategy for the roles you are seeking to fill. Don't compromise on the quality of individuals, but do make flexible working possible, and be open-minded about who to recruit. Work with parishes to identify people, including career changers.
- ✓ Create an environment where the first steps of volunteering with young people are easy, and where volunteers and workers among young people are respected and valued.
- ✓ At a project level, have a clear plan for networking, training, nurturing and discipling youth and children's workers and volunteers in different contexts in your diocese.
- ✓ Listen to young people, involve them in design, understand what they say will reach their peers. Invest in leadership, discipleship, mission and prayer among young people, and share power.

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