

Final Report From Mission and Discipleship on Children/Family Ministry within Edinburgh Presbytery

Instructs the Mission and Discipleship Committee to review how best to resource and support congregations in the work of ministry to families and young people, and Safeguarding, by consulting with all congregations in the Presbytery, and all other relevant bodies.

Instructs the Mission and Discipleship Committee to bring an interim report on resourcing and ministering to families and young people, and Safeguarding, to the October meeting of Presbytery and then to bring a firm proposal to the December meeting of Presbytery.

1. Introduction

Before approaching these deliverances the Mission and Discipleship Group sat down to examine what we were being asked to do. As we saw it there were two main thrusts: Firstly to offer recommendations on the position of Children's Ministry Co-ordinator and secondly (more importantly) to deliver a Presbytery wide strategy for effective Christian work amongst those aged 40 and below.

1.1 As we approached the task we realised we did not know the situation on the ground. How many congregations already had effective work ongoing? How many did not? What were the differences and what were the contexts that allowed some churches to succeed where others struggled? What had churches identified as their main challenges and dreams for the future? Where did Presbytery currently fit in this mix? These and many more questions would have to be addressed before an adequate response could be made.

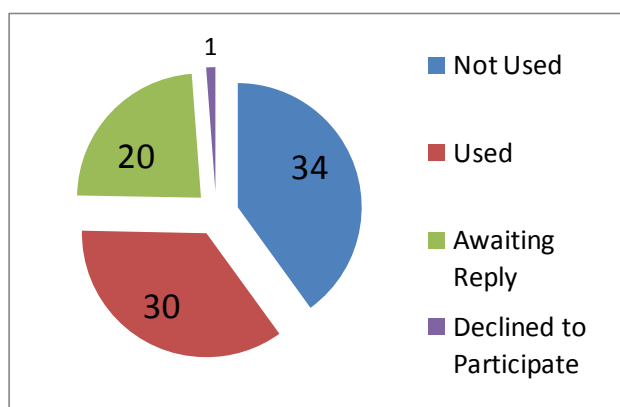
1.2 A fuller picture was needed so it was decided to survey each congregation with a range of questions involving children/families ministry seen in their wider mission context. It was and still is our belief that children/families ministry does not exist in isolation but needs to be held in the context of a healthy body of believers across all age groups. Rather than send out a pro-forma it was decided to phone each congregation in order listen to their story and hear more than statistics.

1.3 At the time of writing this report responses have been received from 64 congregations. Of the remaining 21 almost all have been contacted. If any have been missed we apologise.

2. Statistical Analysis

Having recorded the responses received they were then collated against the questions.

2.1 Over half of our congregations have not used the co-ordinator. When looking at those who have and why others have not there are a variety of reasons.

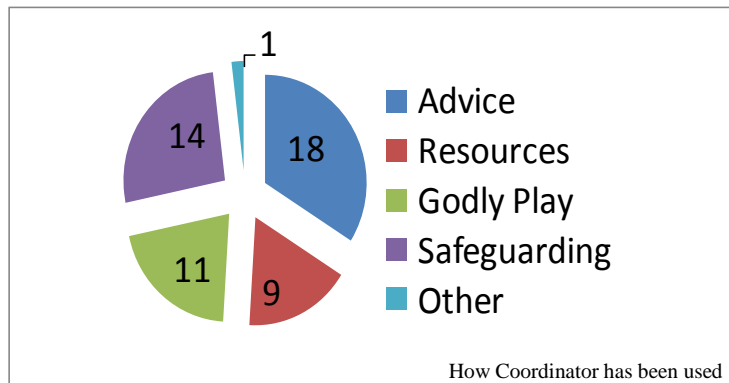


Numbers above represent number of congregations

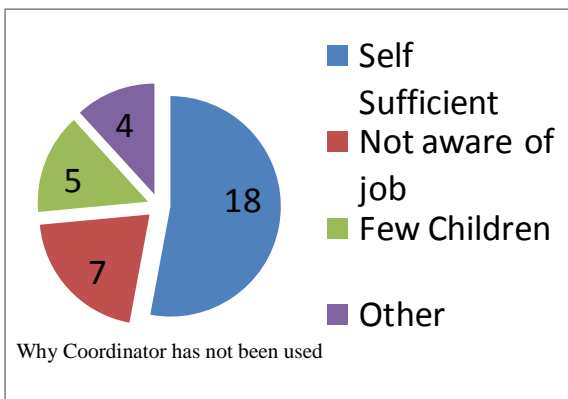
2.2 To 30 congregations our co-ordinator is a central focal point where they can go for a range of issues all related to youth.

Whether it be the legislative aspects of safeguarding training or advice on where to find the latest curriculum, the Co-ordinator is a valued and identifiable resource.

2.3 Other congregations make their own provision either through using outside agencies such as Scripture Union or the employment of dedicated youth work staff. Of those who were unaware of the Co-ordinator's role, the majority were inducted after the Co-ordinator stopped regularly reporting to Presbytery meetings.



2.4 Being such a varied Presbytery there were also a number of congregations where there were few children/young people in the Parish. In these instances congregations had other priorities.



2.5 Across the whole spectrum of our churches there is a desire to see young people active in the practice of worship. From being part of welcome teams to leading prayers and readings, right through to overseas mission trips, there was such variety it was hard to quantify. It will come as no surprise that in those places where full time dedicated youth workers were employed there was a higher profile of activities dedicated to youth/families.

2.6 When it came to training and identifying leaders for childrens/families ministry a number of congregations found this difficult. Many congregations had vision and a strong desire to engage more with childrens/families but could not bridge that desire to make it a reality. Identifying resources, be they people, space or funds was an ongoing issue. Identifying and training of leaders broke down as follows:

- From within the organisation (16)
- Regular meetings (7)
- On an Ad Hoc basis (5)
- By gradually getting more involved (5)
- The Minister's Responsibility (5)
- Youth Worker's responsibility (5)
- Scripture Union (3)
- Youth With a Mission (1)
- Others (4)

2.7 There is a degree of overlap within these categories where congregations employ a variety of approaches depending on where they find themselves. So for instance it may be that leaders come from within an organisation but the congregation chooses to send them to SU training whilst meeting regularly with the Minister.

2.8 Only 5 congregations out of all those who responded said they had few young people in the parish. Of the rest, 41 church buildings are placed where young people do not naturally gather. Seven churches have a positive reaction to young folks gathering on their doorstep including laying on a BBQ for them once per month, inviting them into the services and inviting them to the church cafe. Seven others have a mixed response where it depends on which church member meets which youth and 3 were negative where young people were not welcome on church grounds.

3. Facilitation

3.1 Given the varied nature of our Presbytery congregations were asked ‘How do you think Presbytery could best facilitate children's and families work in your missionary context?’ This was asked because we were aware that the people who know their context best are the people who are living in it. What is needed in inner city parishes will be different to what is needed in the suburbs or the city centre or the housing schemes and vice versa.

Results were as follows: A wide variety of responses reflect the wide variety of situations where local congregations find themselves.

3.2 Whilst no single common thread can be found, sharing best practice was the largest grouping.

- Sharing best practice (19)
Sharing resources (3), Use the Website (2), Share training (2), Through visiting others (2), By showcasing (2), By learning together (1), Conferences (1)
- Offer resources (6)
- Offer people (5)
- Offer training (5)
- Offer funds (5)
- Pool what we each have (2)
- Reduce our central allocations (3)
- Close 1/2 the buildings and use money on the rest (1)
- Run Presbytery wide Events (3)
- Help with a particular missionary need (4)
For a Holiday Club , For a neighbourhood worker,
For Sunday Club leaders, For a local Youth Worker
- Hire an experienced person in this work (8)
- Make Presbytery Appointees more proactive (1)
- Use Scripture Union (2)

3.3 As will be reflected elsewhere the recognition there are things we can all learn from each other, even across contexts is apparent.

3.4 Tied closely to this question was ‘There are exciting things happening in many churches in many different contexts round the city. What do you think would be the best way to share these ideas in order to strengthen the church in Edinburgh?’

3.5 Results show a clear desire to share our story. What was particularly encouraging here was recognition there are things happening in our churches worth hearing and people want to be told.

3.6 Having 64 responses to look at and compare shows there are activities happening in our churches that are creative and worth speaking about. Almost all churches mentioned being good at something, everything from being good at decline to excelling in food or worship or welcome. There are things to celebrate and where one congregation excels there is an opportunity to help others. As one responder put it ‘Why do we have to always reinvent the wheel?’ We have much to communicate and to share including our dreams.

- Share Best Practice (28) with an ecumenical dimension (2)
- Better use of the Website (20)
- By a Presbytery Newsletter (10)
- Share congregational stories at Presbytery (10)
- Meet with others (9)
- Workshops (5)
- Visit other churches (5)
- With Open Days (4)
- Conferences (3)
- Fraternal (3)
- Create centres of excellence (1)
- Use email—there are too many meetings (1)
- Put together case studies (1)
- Exciting? (1) ← Didn't believe anything exciting was happening

4. Dreams

4.1 When asked to identify and share the main dream each congregation would like to achieve these were the answers:

Get a laptop/projector (1)
Start a Fresh Expression of Church (7)
Too snowed under to dream (1)
Have more people (2)
Run a Youth Cafe (3)
Employ more staff (4)
Hire Full Time Youth Worker (9)
 Outreach Worker/Evangelist (2)
 Families Worker (4)
 Specialist worker for Gay Community (1)

Develop a thriving Youth/Families Programme (1)
Renovate the Buildings (4)
Develop Youth Activities (4)
Have more time (2)
Get more physical space (2)
Open Church through the week (2)
Start a project to relieve poverty/debt (1)
Initiate Older People's Activities (2)
Motivate the Congregation to engage with the community (1)
Run/Operate an organic garden to help the homeless (1)
Have more local funds available for local projects (1)
Run pilgrimages to Iona (1)
Set up a local Cinema (1)
Develop a Family Caring and Support project (1)
Do a complete Parish Visitation (1)

4.2 Such a wide variety of aspirations reflects the disparate contexts within which our congregations operate and the differing stages these congregations are at on their journey of faith.

4.3 Looking through this list there are **opportunities** for congregations who share the same dream to pool resources and ideas, also to learn from congregations who may already have developed that area of work.

4.4 For instance if your congregation is already open during the week you may be able to share your expertise with the 2 congregations seeking to do this. In the same way, if your church has a ministry to homeless

you could be an outlet for the congregation wishing to start an organic garden. The church wishing to start a project to relieve poverty/debt may wish to speak to another congregation already involved with Christians Against Poverty. The possibilities for mutual sharing and support are evident.

5. Challenges

5.1 Coupled to dreams are **challenges** and each congregation was asked to look at their particular context identifying what they saw as most challenging. Clearly it is the varied nature of our parishes that we struggle with. 25 Congregations identified different demographic/age groupings as ones they struggled to reach.

- Connect with a different aspect/context of our Parish (25)
- Connect with Teenagers (8)
- Connect with 20's—40's (6)
- Youth (4)
- Declining numbers in worship (2)
- Young Adults (1)
- Ecumenical Issues (1)
- Not enough time (1)
- Older People (1)
- Drugs/Violence (1)
- Our Denomination's public Image(1)
- Perception the Building is closed (1)
- Moving a congregations mindset (1)

5.2 Please note the question asked for what congregations saw as their greatest challenge and not a list of all their challenges. Is it true that only 8 congregations in our Presbytery are challenged by teenagers, that the other 77 excel in this area? No. Within the timeframe of reporting we did not

feel able to collate complete lists of everything facing our congregations so chose to identify only that which they reported as most significant.

6. Further/Wider Consultation

6.1 Beyond the questionnaire projected demographics of Edinburgh City as held by the General Register Office of Scotland from 2000 through to 2014 were included. Our thanks are expressed to Edinburgh City Council for supplying these.

Demographic breakdown of Edinburgh by age band in 2000		
Age band	Number	Percentage
0 to 15	74,733	16.7%
16 to 29	102,023	22.8%
30 to 49	133,024	29.7%
50 to 64	69,404	15.5%
65 to 74	36,538	8.1%
75+	32,708	7.3%
Total	448,430	100.0%
Source: General Register Office of Scotland		

Projected demographic breakdown of Edinburgh by age band in 2014		
Age band	Number	Percentage
0 to 15	68,000	14.3%
16 to 29	109,500	23.0%
30 to 49	143,300	30.1%
50 to 64	81,800	17.2%
65 to 74	37,900	8.0%
75+	35,800	7.5%
Total	476,300	100.0%
Source: General Register Office of Scotland		

6.2 Between 2000 and 2014 there will be a decrease in under 16's of 6733 alongside an increase in working ages of 30,149 and retired of 4454. In many parishes the number of young people will decrease whilst those of working ages increases. It may well be that congregations struggling to engage in youth work find it increasingly difficult because there will be less young people in their area. Similarly unless we as a Presbytery begin to offer activities for the working ages there will be a sizeable portion of our city population for whom their local church is not accessible.

6.3 Ecumenical partners and outside agencies were consulted to see how they supported youth and families work. The Scottish Episcopal Church have employed Michelle Brown who is their Youth and Children's Officer. There are similarities between her remit and that of the Children's Ministry Co-ordinator although one big difference is the Youth and Children's Officer is also responsible for development amongst young adults.

6.4 Previous work by Deployment of Resources was referenced when looking at the relative percentage of different age groups that attend church. Cross referencing attendance results from Deployment of Resources with age bands as supplied by the G.R.O.S. show the percentage of a particular age group currently attending a Church of Scotland congregation in Edinburgh:

1.89 % of under 16's	}	These represent attendance not membership
1.17 % of 16-64's		
7.58 % of over 65's		

6.5 Due to time constraints there remains analysis which could still be done. The question on community engagement can be analysed to inform on how missionally minded a Kirk Session is in seeing the opportunities within their parish. The question on lifestyles is about understanding the reality of where young people of our parishes are at. Things stopping, things starting about churches reflecting the dynamic changing nature of life. Each question asked was designed to illuminate work being done amongst children and families as seen in the context of wider congregational health.

7. Childrens/Families Recommendations

7.1 Taking all these factors into account it is clearly evident the situation facing our congregations today is increasingly grave. We are living in a context where 2.4% (See Deployment of Resources Survey Results) of our city are worshipping in a Church of Scotland congregation regularly.

7.2 Within this context can Presbytery justify a full time salaried worker to support youth/families work? Yes. Looking at these figures Presbytery could justify more than 1 person. In the same vein Presbytery could also justify a working ages support worker or a retirement support worker. Yet to do so would place an increased financial burden on congregations already stretched.

7.3 Purely from a statistical standpoint the greatest gap is in the 16-64 age group. Proportionally numbers of youth relative to the whole city population will decline over the next 5 years whilst working class ages will increase. When taken in the context of increasingly missing 20-40's in our congregations we will have a growing challenge to reach this group. It *could* be argued if Presbytery can only employ one worker they should be employed here.

7.4 *However* most of our congregations will fall within the retired demographic if current projections are accurate and most of our activity is already geared towards this age group. If we are to support our congregations as they are then this should be the area for priority resourcing.

7.5 Through hearing the story of our congregations and looking at the demographic statistics of our churches we cannot recommend Presbytery prioritise youth over middle aged or elderly or any particular age band; there are significant challenges across them all. In a perfect world where resources were plentiful justification can be made for Presbytery investing specialist workers in all these areas.

7.6 For our world where Presbytery has limited resources we suggest to get the best return these should be employed to support the development of healthier churches. In other words, *if Presbytery has only one salary available it should be to support churches across the age spectrum.* Numerous different contexts can then be supported, those with youth/families and those without. Should age demographics change over the life of any post funded it will continue to be relevant.

7.7 For a fuller understanding of healthier churches please see "The Healthy Churches' Handbook" by Robert Warren. (ISBN 0-7151-4017-5)

7.8 Going back to the beginning of this paper, as we saw it there were two main thrusts: Firstly to offer recommendations on the position of Children's Ministry Co-ordinator and secondly (more importantly) to deliver a Presbytery wide strategy for effective Christian work amongst children/families.

7.9 It is suggested in light of where we are as a Presbytery and the challenges facing us that the post of Children's Ministry Co-ordinator is not renewed in its current form. Instead a new one year contract be offered to the present Co-ordinator with a very clear emphasis to develop and put in place a system of mutual support/learning for those involved in youth/families work.

8. Facilitator for Peer Support/Learning

8.1 There is successful childrens/families work going on in our Presbytery, there are young people growing in faith, young people playing their part in our expression of church life. There are others who have a desire to engage but do not know where to start or how to go about it. Those with an ability to understand in depth this area of work are those currently doing it, they live with the everyday practicalities and they have the expertise. As a Presbytery we need to affirm / support those doing this work whilst drawing on that expertise to help.

8.2 Sharing best practice was identified as a desire across many churches in many different contexts. Introducing a system of peer learning would be one way of achieving all these things.

8.3 The Mission and Discipleship Group suggest offering 3 gatherings per year headed up by those involved in childrens/families work who can share their stories/best practice through a conference programme offered to all. Not only should this share information, it should also affirm those involved and allow good stories to be celebrated.

8.4 Plenary sessions coupled to workshops can highlight latest available resources, curriculum development, safeguarding issues, integration with worship planning, training, development and many more. New mediums of communication such as Facebook or the Presbytery Website can be utilised to offer mutual support between these gatherings. Local fraternals of those involved in youth/families work can be set up. There are many opportunities. After the first year it is hoped those involved in delivering the programme of support would set their own agenda.

8.5 It would be the responsibility of the Children's Ministry Co-ordinator to set up and initiate this conference/support program over the course of the contract and put in place a group to take on the leadership/delivery role in successive years. This group would then have ongoing responsibility for delivering such a programme annually. Whomever convenes the leadership group would become a member of the Mission and Discipleship group so they could feed any concerns into Presbyteries agenda.

8.6 Whilst safeguarding is an issue core to children's/families work it is not exclusively so. Over past years safeguarding has moved from 'child-protection' to include 'vulnerable-adults' and all situations where people are present. For this reason we suggest it should be overseen by Business Committee in the first instance. Should a safeguarding issue arise, Mission and Discipleship would not hold the required expertise.

9. Summary

9.1 At this point Mission and Discipleship do not feel able to offer a comprehensive strategy exclusively for youth. Local congregations are at different stages of their journey, in differing contexts. They have available different levels of resources, be they people, financial or material. Their immediate concerns are different as are their hopes and dreams.

9.2 Any all encompassing strategy to take account of these myriad connotations is beyond the time frame of the deliverances.

9.3 Even if the timeframes were more generous we still would not offer a strategy purely for youth or families as we believe they can only be healthy where the whole people of God are healthy.

9.4 Presbytery has undertaken a process to survey every single congregation in 2010. It would be prudent to wait for the results of this work before allocating any resources as it will help identify exactly where Presbyteries limited resources will have the greatest impact.

10. Wider Recommendations

Engaging in such a survey as this highlighted a number of areas other than children's/families work. These are offered for Presbytery to consider:

- The majority of those unaware of the Co-ordinator's role had arrived after the Co-ordinator had stopped delivering a report to Presbytery. Presbytery should revisit at the information it gives to new ministers and the process of introduction to the various people who have specific tasks within Presbytery such as Children's Ministry Co-ordinator, Elder Trainer, Prayer Correspondent, etc.
- It was noted by a number of churches that Presbytery does not receive regular updates from those with specific tasks about what they are doing and how they are fulfilling their function. There is an opportunity now for them to contribute to the regular newsletter which the Clerk sends out and they should be strongly encouraged to do so.
- A significant number of responses expressed the desire for improved communications, identifying both Website and Newsletter as opportunities to do better. Presbytery should look again at the Website and how it can be used to the full. Likewise the Newsletter offers unused opportunities.
- The clearest desire expressed by congregations was to share best practice using Website and Newsletter but also finding ways of hearing from congregations about their story. One way this can be done is at the Presbytery meeting. We would therefore ask Business Committee to consider ways of giving congregations a chance to tell their story and share their best practice at Presbytery meetings. There is much good out there we could all learn from.
- We have a tendency to reinvent the wheel. There are opportunities for collaborative working and for pooling together on projects. It may well be congregations in different parts of the city are working on similar projects when one in another part of the city has already developed an expertise in that area. Presbytery is encouraged to think of ways it can 'match make' between congregations to maximise effort.

Conclusion

Whilst a challenging task it has been very rewarding to hear congregations stories. There are many good people working very hard for the Gospel in our City. They are aware of the difficulties but they have not given up hope. We commend the people of our congregations and this city to you all.

Deliverances

1. Receive the Report
2. Thank those churches who have responded and encourage those who have not to do so
3. Implement recommendations contained in sections **7.6, 7.9, 8.3, 8.5, 8.6, 9.4**
4. Encourage Business Committee to consider the proposals contained in section **10**
5. Commend this paper to Kirk Sessions for study
6. Thank members of the Mission and Discipleship Group for due diligence

Study Questions For Kirk Sessions

If you wish to use this paper for study within your church leadership we offer these questions to help:

As a Presbyterian congregation in the city of Edinburgh:

- If we look at ourselves has God blessed us such that we have resources we can share with fellow congregations in our city?
- Through engaging with the context in which we find ourselves has our congregation got anything to share with those facing the same issues?

Who lives around us and how do we connect with them?

- Can we identify the various sociological contexts that exist within our parish and, if so, how does our worship connect with their lives? Can or should we be doing anything in addition?
- How far does church life as practiced reflect the rhythms of those who live in the parish? What aspects of church life answer the questions they ask?
- We have 1.17% of working age people attending Church of Scotland Congregations on Sundays. What can we do to enthuse/inspire this group?
- What gospel are we presenting?