



# How to ...

## Think more purposefully about children's/youth ministry

Does your church have an established ministry with children and young people? Continually revisiting the question 'why do we do it?' can help prevent your ministry becoming complacent and falling into a pattern of doing only what is necessary or feeling pressured to do too much.

To help churches develop fresh, relevant and evolving ministries, this 'How to' guide encourages churches to think more purposefully about their ministry and mission towards children and young people.

### Health before hype:

First and foremost, remember that programmes alone don't work – God works! Remember that the power of God working in the lives of the leaders is the foundation of a healthy children's and youth ministry. Pray first and invite God to be in everything you do. Placing a higher priority on being rather than doing will strengthen our work with children and young people. Remember that in all you do submitting your lives and abilities to God's power, you can hold on to the promise that His power is available to you:

*"For to be sure, he (Jesus Christ) was crucified in weakness, yet he lives by God's power. Likewise, we are weak in him, yet by God's power we will live with him to serve you (others)" 2 Corinthians 13:4*

### Vision:

What is the vision you have for your youth and children's ministry? If you aim at nothing then that's all you'll hit! In youth ministry it is good to know why you are doing what you are doing. There is no point in even starting the simplest task if you are not sure it will help the young people towards the place that you want them to go. Ultimately you need to pray, think and articulate where you hope that the young people will end up as a result of the ministry with them. What will your ministry produce?

### Values:

What values underpin the ministry you have? Doug Fields says there are five common areas:

1. **Evangelism** – Sharing the "Good News of Jesus" with others
2. **Fellowship** – Coming together to share and care for one another with Christ at the centre of relationship
3. **Worship** – Showing love to God through prayer, singing, poetry, dancing, giving offerings, testimony and other activities
4. **Discipleship** – Discovering how to live a life that pleases God
5. **Ministry** – Helping God's people in the community and the world

If you are able to minister in all these areas in the lives of young people across a range of programmes and activities, then there will be some balance and progression in what you provide. You may have other values when working with children and young people – in my mind the simpler they are, the better it is!

## Purposeful programme:

Children and young people in and around church communities are at different places in their walk with Jesus. Some are very committed and others are not. We cannot assume that one type of activity or programme will be suitable for all young people.

Activities and programmes should reflect where children and young people are at in their walk with Christ with the hope of moving them on. Please note this is not a prescriptive tool but it is designed to help us think about how our activities meet the needs of young people.

The following chart developed by Doug Fields helps identify the potential audience of young people within and outside our church.

- A **COMMUNITY** young person is committed to *not attending church* – they are living apart from Christ.
- A **CROWD** young person is committed to *attending youth group* – they are hearing about Christ.
- A **CONGREGATION** young person *attends a regular church worship service* – they have a relationship with Christ and other Christians.
- A **COMMITTED** young person is committed to *spiritual habits* – they are growing in Christ.
- A **CORE** young person is committed to *doing ministry* – they are serving because of Christ.



If we use the above model and match them with the vision and values of children's and youth ministry it follows that the following can apply:

- **Community:** a child/young person will need to be reached through a programme or activity that is focused on evangelism
- **Crowd:** a child/young person will be served by an activity that facilitates fellowship
- **Congregation:** a child/young person will be worshipping as part of a church
- **Committed:** a child/young person will be involved in activities or relationships that are focused on discipleship
- **Core:** a child/young person will be seeking to serve in appropriate structures

At each stage, young people should have the opportunity to move towards the centre. In this way it is hoped that there is some progression and balance in the activities that you provide. N.B Not all young people will fall neatly into one category! The aim of the model is to focus the purpose/aim of what is done with young people.

## Questions to Consider:

- What is the direction and vision for the children's/youth ministry in your church?
- What do you hope children/young people will gain from it?
- Is what you want, what you get?
- Think about what programmes and groups you run at your church.
- Which values characterise them?
- Are there any values missing? Why?
- Think about where the young people who you minister to are in terms of the purpose of the programmes and groups you run at your church
- With which group do you work the most?
- With which group do you not work with?

- What areas of your youth ministry would you like to change? Maintain? Close?
- What resources and other challenges do you face trying to do the above?
- Have you tried putting together a strategy for your youth ministry?
- What are your priorities?
- What are your long term goals?

### **Further support:**

If you have found this 'How to' guide useful and would like to follow-up any thoughts and conversations from the above questions, Dan Jones (Youth & Children's Adviser) can provide further advice, support and resources to help you and your church think seriously about and apply vision and values to children/youth ministry.

Please contact Dan on 0117 906 0100 | [daniel.jones@bristoldiocese.org](mailto:daniel.jones@bristoldiocese.org)

Written by: Dan Jones, Diocesan Youth and Children's Adviser

The material has been adapted from '*Purpose Driven Youth Ministry*' by Doug Fields

