



Set up youth ministry in your church

This guide will help you think through a few things as you prepare to set up your youth ministry. The Go Team will travel alongside you with practical advice and resources. As with setting up any new ministry in a church, we recommend that you spend a focused period of time in prayer, so that God can speak into your plans.

When setting up youth ministry here are some questions to consider:

- Why do you want youth ministry in your church and what are the expectations?
- Who have you spoken to?
- What permissions might you need?
- What needs to be in place so it can run safely?
- What will you do and what resources might you need?
- What team might you need?
- How will you evaluate?
- What additional help is out there for you?

Why do you want youth ministry in your church and what are the expectations?

You will need to be clear about why you want youth ministry in your church, as this will help to set out your aims and objectives. Here are some statements to help:

- There is a need to get young people off the street
- You would love to offer young people something to do because they are bored
- You want to provide a safe and caring environment where young people can hang out and have fun
- The church feels that it is important to pass on the Christian faith to the next generation
- There has been a tragic incident affecting young people and the church wants to help
- There is a good relationship with a local school, but there isn't a way to follow this up with the young people, because attending church services is a step too far for them
- You long for young people to encounter Jesus, develop faith, grow as disciples and tell others about Jesus
- You have been running a successful Bible holiday club or Messy Church type service and the older children have dropped off and you no longer see them
- Church numbers are dwindling and you want young people to keep the church going
- You want young people to feel inspired to change their communities and the world

There may be many reasons why the church wants to set up youth ministry. Just be clear, as this will help shape your vision and help manage expectations. Remember that any youth ministry vision should complement the overall vision of the church.

Often youth ministry and the church have different outlooks so their expectations may also differ. Where possible be clear from the start and your expectations and outcomes should firmly link with 'why' you are doing youth ministry.

Here are some examples that may help:

The young people:

- Learn about God, grow as Christians and tell their friends about Jesus
- Have a great time, feel safe, loved and valued
- Attend church services more regularly
- Get involved in the life of the church and help to shape what happens at church
- Develop new skills and achieve more
- Are off the streets and there is less antisocial behavior in the local community
- Grow emotionally and make better choices about life and faith
- Learn about the Bible and pray more

Who have you spoken to?

- The church leadership and the Parochial Church Council (PCC)
- The young people
- The congregation and potential helpers / leaders
- Parents
- Others who may be affected or want input (schools, other local groups)

When setting up youth ministry the PCC will hold overall responsibility. However, the most important group to consult with is the young people. If they don't want the youth ministry then you are wasting your time. The church may not be able to provide all the young people ask due to practicalities or restrictions. If so, be honest and say why, they will understand.

Here is a sample young people consultation:

The church is thinking about setting up a new youth group

- Do you think this is a good idea and why?
- What sort of things would you like to do?
- How often should it happen?
- What would be a good day and time?
- Where would be a good place for the group to meet?
- Who should the group be aimed at (this might include age)?
- In what ways could the group connect with the church?

This will indicate if the youth ministry is viable and if the young people want it. Feedback from the young people will help you identify the best times and days to run the youth ministry, who they think it should be aimed at, if there is anything you might be competing or clashing with and they are very good at saying how the youth ministry can link better with the church. All this is useful information when you discuss it with the PCC, church leaders, potential helpers and any other stakeholders.

What permissions might you need?

Before starting anything new in the church it needs the backing of the PCC and the church leadership. Depending on who else is involved and where the youth ministry takes place you might need additional permissions. For example, if the youth ministry links with a local school; you will need permission from the Headteacher and possibly the Governing Body. If you use a village hall or outdoor space; you might require permission from the Village Hall Committee or Parish Council. If the youth ministry is an open youth club or a drop-in; you might want to inform the police or other groups so they can be aware and also promote it.

What needs to be in place so it can run safely?

This will depend on the type of youth ministry you set up. It is recommended that you have a budget for things such as:

- Running costs and hire of any premises
- Programme costs and resources
- Refreshments or tuck
- Equipment
- Volunteer expenses

You will require some policies and procedures (the Go Team can help supply samples):

- Safeguarding and Safe Recruitment (find Diocesan policies on our [website](#))
- Health and Safety (including Risk Assessment, First Aid, photograph/videoing policy)
- Inclusion and diversity
- Code of conduct / behaviour
- Anti-bullying
- Social Media and Electronic Communication

What will you do and what resources might you need?

Again, this will depend on the type of youth ministry you set up. Here are the three most common types of youth ministry used in church-based youth work contexts (YP = young people)

Drop-in youth club	Evening open youth group	Discipleship group
Aims & objectives:	Aims & objectives:	Aims & objectives:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Get YP off the street • Give YP something to do • Provide a safe and caring environment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide a safe and caring environment • More structure with organised activities / themed sessions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be a Christian community • Organised bible study and fellowship • Engage faith with real life

- | | | |
|---|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Informal with minimal structured activities • Build relationships amongst peers and leaders • Focus on mission not ministry | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop meaningful relationships within the group and leaders • Informal opportunities for leaders to share faith | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop meaningful relationships within the group • Build relationships with God • Focus on ministry not mission |
|---|--|--|
-

When you have decided on your youth ministry approach, you will need to consider what you need to do get it off the ground. Here are some helpful pointers:

- **Drop in youth club** - your first steps are to secure a suitable venue if you haven't already (e.g. a hall), allocate funding for equipment/furniture (e.g. Xbox, pool table etc.) and to build your volunteer team with relevant training to equip them in their roles (relationship skills, dealing with difficult behaviour, safeguarding etc.).
- **Evening youth group** – select the right venue (the church or elsewhere) and confirm financial support from the PCC. This model of youth ministry is quite resource-heavy and investment will also be needed into the equipping of an energetic and creative team of leaders to allow for the spread of roles/responsibilities and to keep things fresh.
- **Discipleship group** – the venue is not as important as for the other group types. What is important is that the youth leaders feel confident and competent sharing the Bible and conversations with passion and creativity.

It may sound obvious, but set a realistic start date to allow for plenty of time to prepare, plan and promote.

What team might you need?

Here are the recommended staffing ratios for the age group you may be working with:

9-12 years = 1 adult to 8 young people. **13-18 years** = 1 adult to 10 young people.

Ideally a minimum of three adult leaders should be present at each session. Mixed gender groups should include both male and female adult leaders wherever possible. In certain situations, it will be necessary to have a higher number of adults; for instance, when children/young people have additional support needs. It is also important to schedule enough time for the team to meet, pray, identify skills, allocate roles, carry out relevant training and bond beforehand, as this will benefit the youth ministry to come.

How will you evaluate?

After each session/calendar year, evaluate as a team. These simple questions may help:

- How was the session or year?
- What went well and what are the highlights?
- Did anything go wrong and if so, what was learnt?
- What can we do better next time and do we need to change anything next year?

What additional help is out there for you?

<https://youthscape.co.uk/store/product/youth-work-from-scratch>

<https://grovebooks.co.uk/products/y-31-starting-from-scratch>

Other relevant How To Guides: (available on our [website](#))

How to develop a vision for youth and children's ministry

How to listen to the voice of children/young people in the church

For any further advice or help, contact your Archdeaconry based Go Team Adviser:

<https://www.bathandwells.org.uk/ministry/children-young-people/>

Written by: Tony Cook and Dan Jones, Diocesan Youth and Children's Advisers

Revised December 2021