

DIOCESAN SYNOD

Title: **YOUTH STRATEGY**

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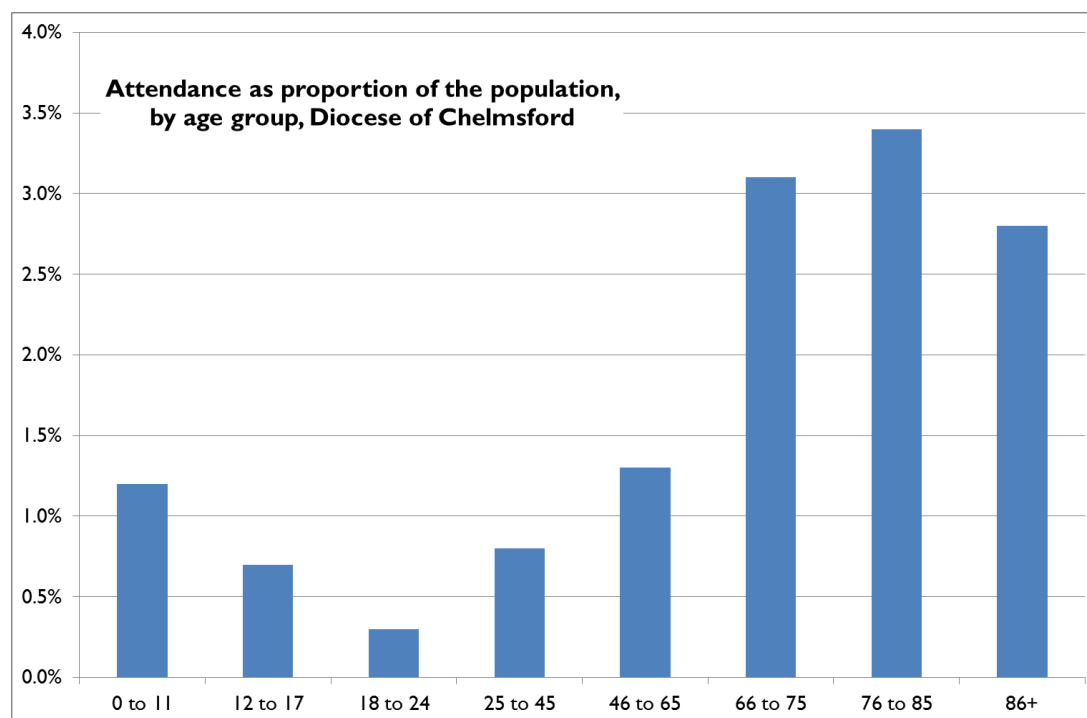
Date: **11 MARCH 2017**

I. INTRODUCTION

Our youth advisers and others, including young people, have been developing a diocesan Youth Strategy. This covering paper provides some context to the Synod motion; the youth strategy document is attached.

2. CONTEXT

‘Anecdote to Evidence’ highlights the correlation between growing churches and those who actively engage with children and young people. However church attendance both nationally and in the Diocese of Chelmsford is at its lowest among the 18-24 age group.



‘An 81 year old is 12 times more likely to be a church attendee than a 21 year old.’

- Philip James – Presentation to Bradwell Area Mission and Pastoral Committee July 2016

Extensive research has shown that a person’s faith position at the age of 20 is a good predictor of what it will be when they are in their 60’s and older. In general terms people do not get more religious as they age. It is a well-worn phrase that young people

(11-18) and young adults (16-30) need to be seen not simply as the church of the future but as part of the church now, but the converse is also true – they need to be part of the church now if they are to be part of the church in the future.

'If people belong in their 20s, they will probably stay for the rest of their lives – but if they don't, it will be hard to bring them in'

- Church Growth Research Programme: 2014

Focus groups with young people and stakeholders along with a Diocesan wide survey conducted in September 2016 demonstrate that there are good examples of youth work and youth ministry in a number of churches in East London and Essex. However mapping shows this to be:

- mainly focused in suburban and more affluent areas where there is a designated youth worker (paid or volunteer)
- separated from the mainstream life of the local church (either school based or midweek groups)
- predominantly open youth work with little focus on discipleship

Conversely there is much less engagement among churches in a rural or urban setting, very little integration with the rest of the local church and little offered in the way of discipleship to young people. This has also been the experience of the Bishop of Bradwell and Bradwell Youth Adviser who have visited 14 (the majority) of the Youth Groups in the Bradwell Area over the last 9 months.

The picture in the Diocese of Chelmsford reflects the picture nationally as shown in the recently released research commissioned by the Education Office of the Church of England – 'Rooted in the Church' (November 2016).¹

'Rooted in the Church' identifies 6 actions through in depth research among young people, young adults and parents:-

- *Churches should aim to build a culture of intergenerational relationships*
- *Churches should be inclusive of all ages in both leadership and worship*
- *Churches should recognise young people and young adults as equal members of the Body of Christ*
- *Churches should be encouraged to explore the possibility of admitting baptised children to Communion before Confirmation*
- *Churches should be unconditionally welcoming places for young people*
- *Churches need to do more to support their youth workers and leaders*

'Rooted in the Church' page 3

There is a strong emphasis on the **integration of young people and young adults** into the mainstream life of the local church; the importance of developing **intergenerational relationships**; and the role of **youth workers and youth leaders as bridge people** to enable this.

¹ See: <https://goo.gl/GMvkfj>

Although this may seem obvious it is a reversal of the dynamic of much church based youth work over the last 30 years. It does accord with the strong messages that have come through the research conducted locally in the Diocese over the last 9 months with Young People, Young Adults and stakeholders.

3. YOUTH STRATEGY AND QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

The draft document “Strategic Priorities for Ministry with Young People - 2017-2025” is attached.

Synod members are invited to consider the following questions prior to Synod and reflect on these questions during the discussion:

1. What is happening in your Parish/MMU/Deanery?
2. Does this match with what happens in your Church?
3. What is missing?
4. What do you think is the most important thing to focus on?

4. MOTION

The Bishop of Bradwell to move that:

‘This Synod endorse these strategic priorities; thank and affirm the Diocesan Youth Advisers for their ministry; and ask them to report back in 2019.’

The Diocese of Chelmsford **Strategic Priorities for Ministry with Young People - 2017-2025**

The purpose of Youth Ministry in the Diocese of Chelmsford is to enable young people to grow and strengthen their faith in Christ, enjoy a fullness of life for themselves and serve the church, their community and society.

Each Deanery and/or Mission & Ministry Unit will have their own strategy for youth work with consultation from young people and an appropriate person to have responsible for youth work within the Deanery and/or Mission & Ministry Unit. Every church in the Diocese will have youth work that is relevant to their church and context whether this is ministry within the church, school or across a Mission & Ministry Unit.

What will it look like in 2025?

Transforming Presence challenges each church to be transformational in their communities and wider-world. This vision underpins our ministry with young people.

Young people will grow in their faith and inhabit the world distinctively.

- Young people will be supported in their discipleship journey alongside exploring vocation and being given opportunities to serve. Churches will help young people to move from a family faith/those searching to an owned faith in a way which reaches 'young people where they're at' within the Mission & Ministry Unit/Parish whether that is within the church, the local school/college/university or within wider community groups.
- Young people will be given opportunities to engage with issues of justice and social concern in the world reflecting on how faith can lead to action.

Young people will be equipped to evangelise effectively.

- Young people are often the most effective evangelists to their peers. As a church we can empower them to do this by supporting them and giving them opportunities to develop their God-given gifts as they share in the mission of the wider church to evangelise to young people.

We will serve young people with accountability and help them to serve others with accountability

- Every church will be a safe place for young people with every church adopting and implementing the Diocesan safeguarding policy and complying with good practice guidelines for youth work.
- Youth workers will receive appropriate mentoring and support and opportunities for training, development and retreats.
- The Church, in all its forms (Parish, Fresh Expression, Diocese etc.) will actively listen to the voice of young people with young people represented at every level of leadership, given opportunities to explore and develop their vocation and to be involved in the appointment of incumbents and youth workers.
- Churches and the Diocese will formally recognise the ministry done by both paid and voluntary youth workers through a revised Youth Work Authorisation Scheme and Charter Mark for Parishes/Mission and Ministry Units.

We will re-imagine ministry with young people.

- As we take a kingdom-focused approach to youth ministry it is important that we explore how we can support young people during key times in their life. This will take shape through engaging with transition work with young people (Year 6's as they move to secondary school and year 13's as they move onto university/jobs) in order to nurture faith and enable them to develop their own ministry.
- Churches will encourage young people to serve alongside the wider church family, leading in ministry and mission where appropriate and enabling young people to regularly take a lead in the worship of the church alongside engaging in mission opportunities locally, nationally and globally.
- Young people will be integrated into their wider church congregation, giving older young people opportunities to be part of home groups and to be involved in leadership celebrating the diversity that young people bring to our congregations.

What do we need to do?

1. Listen to the voice of young people
2. Support growth in faith amongst young people through discipleship and the encouragement of intergenerational ministry within churches
3. Provide and distribute resources for working with Secondary Schools, Further Education & Higher Educational institutions, training, supporting and linking in with established para-church organisations and developing new opportunities
4. Continue to put on Diocesan and Area Events to draw young people together from different contexts to strengthen their faith – including SOLID, Bradwell Festival, Sanctuary and mission trips alongside new initiatives.
5. Support to each Mission & Ministry Unit provided by the Deanery Youth Champions & Youth Advisers
6. A simplified Youth Work Authorisation Scheme for Youth Workers, training and support/mentoring, and a Charter Mark for Parishes/Mission & Ministry Units

Cross cutting themes

There are two cross-cutting themes underpinning this strategy.

Rural/Urban

The diverse nature of our Diocese means that we need to ensure that we are enabling and equipping churches to effectively work with young people in both rural & urban settings, providing relevant resources and support for these very different contexts. Currently much of our Youth Work is focused in suburban areas.

Integrated and Intergenerational Ministry

The current research (e.g. 'Rooted in the Church') suggests that giving young people opportunities to serve and to become integrated within the wider church body are key elements in enabling young people to become adult members of the church. Therefore, it is vital that we are encouraging, supporting and resourcing participation, integration and intergenerational ministry.

What might this look like?

Relaunched and revisited youth council/synod

Our commitment to listening to young people needs to be realised throughout the Diocese (as parishes, Mission & Ministry Units, deaneries, diocese). Young people's voices need to be heard and responded to not just in an act of tokenism.

'Learn to listen' workshops for Mission & Ministry Unit/Parishes and youth workers

As we continue our commitment to listening to children and young people we will facilitate conversations and share ideas with churches and youth workers on how we can hear the voice of young people using the Church of England resource 'Learn to Listen'.

Resources to help Mission & Ministry Unit/Parishes develop a youth strategy

Develop a toolbox of resources that churches can use to help them develop a Youth Strategy for their Mission & Ministry Unit/Parish. This resource will include listening to young people's voices (if they have young people) and engaging with the youth adviser.

Archdeacons' visitations

Using the Archdeacons' visitations as a way of engaging with the Youth Advisers and Deanery Youth Champions. This is a natural development of the Serving with Accountability framework now being used as part of the visitation process and will enable the Archdeacons and Youth Advisers to work more closely together to encourage churches to continue thinking about youth ministry.

Authorisation and charter mark

A simplified Authorisation process that acknowledges Youth Workers and volunteers (alongside those already part of the existing authorisation scheme) and acknowledges good ministry to young people. To accompany this a Charter Mark scheme for churches to acknowledge commitment to young people and paid/voluntary youth workers.

A chaplaincy network so every school can offer some form of chaplaincy

Schools, colleges and universities wanting chaplaincy to be able to have an opportunity whether that be in the form of a youth worker, volunteer or a member of clergy (in some cases a designated clergy may be appropriate). These chaplains will meet regularly for sharing ideas and praying for the schools they serve. Creating a prayer network for our local schools.

A Diocesan programme for young people focusing on mentoring, discipleship & leadership

A course involving one long weekend a term and an evening a month over one year.
Regular meetings with a mentor from the young person's church or Mission & Ministry Unit.
On application a young person meets with their incumbent and Youth Adviser/Deanery Youth Champion to set out the programme and ensure they have a significant role within the church.
Book to study over the term and links to Whatsapp group/Facebook.
Following participation in the scheme young people are invited to help lead in subsequent years.
Mentoring relationships and church leadership roles are encouraged to continue beyond the course.

Encounter Young Vocations Programme.

For older young people a possible feeder from the diocesan programme.

At home mission trips/social action

A possible team of people (not just young people) ready to serve if needed (E.g. A team who could help residents at risk of flooding in Jaywick)