

Children's and Youth Work Committee

Children's and Youth Work Review and Five-Year Strategy

Basic Information

Contact name and email address	The Revd Jenny Mills, Convenor: revdjmill@btinternet.com Dr Sam Richards: sam.richards@urc.org.uk
Action required	Decision.
Draft resolution(s)	<p>Resolution 14 General Assembly urges all United Reformed Churches (especially those near universities and colleges) to use Fusion's Student Linkup and SCM Connect, enabling students to explore a wider range of churches and have more opportunity to commit to a place of worship that they feel is appropriate.</p> <p>Resolution 15 General Assembly recognises the climate emergency and challenges all councils, committees and local churches to do everything possible to make URC events and activities eco-friendly, as urged by URC Youth Assembly.</p>

Summary of Content

Subject and aim(s)	Update on work undertaken, and bringing URC Youth Assembly issues to the attention of General Assembly
Main points	Update on the implementation of five-year strategy Summary of work since GA2018 URC Youth Assembly resolutions pertaining to GA2020
Previous relevant documents	General Assembly 2018 Mission Council Report Appendix 5 20-40s Task Group B1 B2 B3 Mission Council November 2018 B1 Mission Council May 2019 B1 Mission Council November 2019
Consultation has taken place with...	Youth Exec 2019; Youth Exec 2020 URC Environmental Task Group URC Equalities Committee URC Education and Learning Committee

Summary of Impact

Financial	Potential short-term financial implications of adopting more eco-friendly practices
External (e.g. ecumenical)	

The Review of the URC's Children's and Youth Work was received at Mission Council in November 2018, along with the five-year strategy developed in response. This is summarised here.

Vision: children and young people playing their part in the mission of God – experiencing, exploring and expressing the Way of Jesus in, through and beyond the church

Ethos: inclusive, intercultural and intergenerational

Five key areas CYWC are seeking to support local churches in their engagement with children and young people (*fanning the flames*):

- faith/spiritual resources
- community/relational resources
- belonging/sense of identity
- engagement/connecting with wider context
- growth/change & development.

Nine key actions were identified, and this is a summary of work undertaken since the start of 2019 in relation to these:

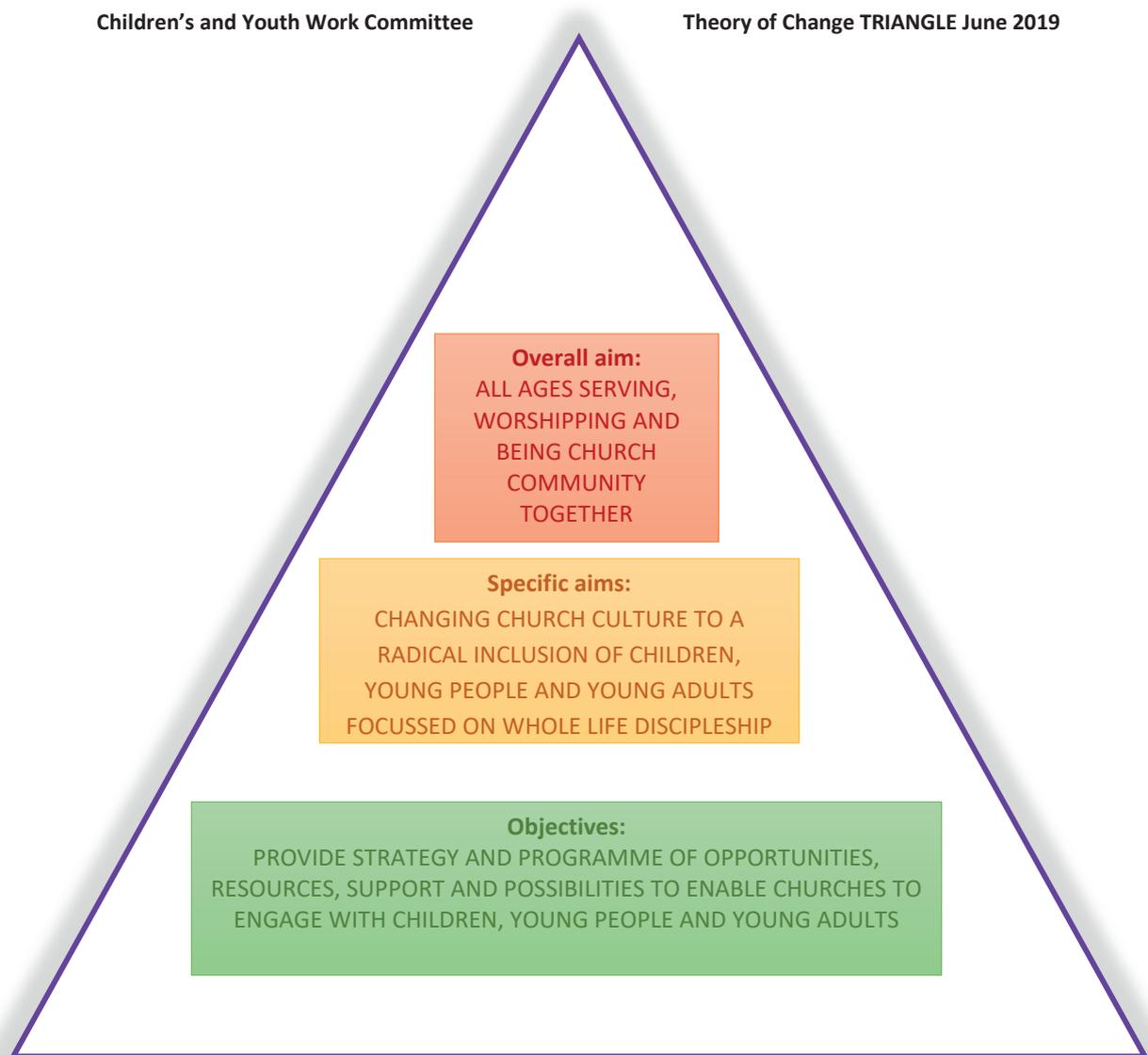
1. Re-unite all the parts of Children's & Youth Work – we have been working with Crossfire Camp and the URC Guide and Scout Fellowship (URCGSF) to establish firm links and good communication. Both now report annually to CYWC. The new Pilots Remit, which replaces the previous constitution, approved at Mission Council November 2019, expresses structurally the integral place Pilots has within URC Children's and Youth Work. The new resources produced to support our theme for the year (One Body in 2019, Common Ground in 2020) include material contributed by URC Youth, Pilots and URCSGF as well as the C&YW team. These resources are suitable for all ages across the range of URC children's and youth work and a range of contexts, and they demonstrate the goal of bringing everything into a welcoming shared space. A single Resources Group has been set up to serve all areas, including Pilots.
2. Initiate deliberate culture change – intergenerational whole life missional discipleship – we have started a two-year research project with Messy Church to deepen discipleship; included Walking the Way challenges in our resources for all ages; and supported Stepwise development in taking an intergenerational approach. A series of resources on Holy Habits for children and young people was produced by the CYDO+ team. At our request, LICC offered a day on Fruitfulness on the Frontline for those working with children and young people. We have contributed sessions on intergenerational ministry at the EM1 summer school, The Well (Methodist webinar) and Joined Up conference. We produced *The Gift* for grandparents and godparents to encourage them to invest in intergenerational relationships. The review of the Charter for Children and proposed replacement for the Child Friendly Church Award are taking an intergenerational approach.
3. Focus on churches with 'no' children and young people – this was a clear focus in 2019, with resources created with these churches particularly in mind, such as *Where Are the Children*, and *The Gift*, targeted mailings, and CYDO+ team being encouraged to visit them. We are inviting churches to become prayer partners to support the new FOFA groups.

4. Focus on under 5s, then 5-11s, then 11-18s, then 18+ – in 2020 our particular focus is on enabling churches to engage with 0-5s. Each month, a new area is added to a resource bank covering all aspects of early years. We have planned an all-churches mailing and conference for this focus, but plans are currently on hold due to Covid-19 measures. We are developing resources to support infant baptism and dedication. We are developing a breast-feeding policy. The next three years will focus on the subsequent age ranges in ascending order.
5. Reshape CYDO programme – all synods and Church House as learning community and team – a collaborative approach is taken by the CYDO+ team, involving all synods as they are able, identifying projects and programmes, and negotiating 'allocations' and 'invitations' to contribute according to capacity, expertise and passion. Places at conferences and on training events are offered to the team, who then share their learning. CYWC are very appreciative of the initiative and professionalism the CYDO+ team have brought to all areas of the work. They are recognised as representing the team and CYWC on various URC projects and committees. The proposed new scheme to replace the Child Friendly Church Award and the creation of Families on Faith Adventures@Home in response to the period of lockdown are examples of initiatives from the CYDO+ team which have been welcomed by CYWC.
6. **Reshape Pilots** – Pilots has embraced change, updating the Pilots Prayer, replacing a magazine with a more frequent electronic newsletter, integrating their annual worship resources within a whole church resource for 0-25s reflecting the CYWC theme for the year (One Body and Common Ground), and embracing a closer relationship with CYWC. Pilots materials for their annual *Overseas Voyage* (South Korea 2018, Taiwan 2019-20) have been given to visiting church leaders from those countries. Pilots has developed, trialled and launched a new resource for 5-11s, Friends on Faith Adventures (FOFA), designed to help churches set up new groups for children. We aim to have FOFA in 10% of our churches by 2022. This has been a period of flux for Pilots with some companies closing, a couple finding ways to continue after their church has closed, and some new companies starting up.
7. Develop an accessible go-to resource bank – we have been developing URCLÉ as a site to host resources for particular groups such as Pilots, FOFA and the CYDO+ team, as well as public resources for all. Downloadable versions of publications, resources for groups and families, and information packs (such as the 0-5s series) can be found there. We look forward to the redevelopment of the URC website to further aid this.
8. Develop communication – we have a bi-monthly e-newsletter and a twice-yearly training digest, and we have produced additional supplements to highlight resources during the period of lockdown. We liaise closely with URC Communications to ensure a presence in *Reform*, *Digest*, NewsUpdate and the URC website. We have prioritised face-to-face contact, from the URC stand at CRE and offering seminars, to visiting synods and churches around the country. We have developed our social media profile and run campaigns to highlight the 30th anniversary of UN Rights of the Child, Children's Mental Health, and Month of Prayer for Toddler Groups.

9. Celebrate!! – we have established the Lundie Memorial Award for children and young people playing their part in the mission of God, enabling us to share stories of young disciples. We collect and share good news stories from local churches about their engagement with children and young people. We share reports from URC Youth about opportunities they have taken up within the URC and the world church. We share reports from individuals and groups who have received small grants from CYWC. We hold events to celebrate all that the URC is doing with children and young people.

Report of other work since GA2018

10. CYWC have developed their theory of change:



11. A number of events and programmes have been run. For young people, these have included The Big Speak Out (for 11-18 year olds) and Greenbelt Youth Ambassadors (2018 and 2019). For those working with children and young people these have included Making Space day conference and Leaders' Gathering weekends, along with the LICC day.

12. CYWC have prioritised inclusivity, welcoming the newly created post of URC Youth Equality and Diversity Rep as member of the committee (representing the Equalities Committee); buying a group licence for Widget software so that every synod is able to produce more accessible documents with symbols; creating 'Tips and Practical advice for the support of transgender and non-binary young people in church settings'; encouraging Youth Assembly to offer a creche; and monitoring visible diversity in all publications, with support from the Racial Justice Advocates.
13. CYWC have considered their practice in response to the URC Environmental Policy. They have created a checklist for all meetings and events venues concerning energy usage, distance from public transport, single use plastic, recycling, food waste policy and have requested reduced meat menus. All papers are sent electronically, and members are encouraged to use public transport and arrange taxi sharing.
14. We have been engaged ecumenically through active involvement in the CTBI Children's Ministry Network, and Lorraine Webb, Programme Officer, represents this network on the ECCE European Conference planning group; and through actively working with ROOTS to produce and promote resources. We have supported Action for Children, writing material for their 150th anniversary, and CTE's Education Sunday resources. Lorraine Webb, Programme Officer, has joined the committee for 1277 (Toddler Groups) and Sam Richards, Head of C&YW, is a member of the National Youth Directors' Roundtable and HOPE Youth Directors' network.
15. Within the URC, we have continued to champion the 20-40 report from GA2018 and taken on responsibility for building contact with the URC linked schools. Sam Richards, Head of C&YW represents C&YW on the Learning Standards Board, the Fresh Expressions Enabling Group, and the Safeguarding Advisory Board, contributing to the production of Good Practice 5.
16. Recent work has focused on responding to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, and supporting children, young people, families and local churches. Our strategic focus was firstly relational, making direct contact with all Pilots Captains and FOFA leaders, and supporting the CYDO+ team in their roles. Secondly, collating resources that local churches could use themselves and signpost for children, families and young people. Thirdly, producing a weekly URC resource for families to use (Families on Faith Adventures@Home). These draw on the sessions already created for FOFA and expand and adapt these to suit families of differing ages at home together, and for grandparents to use with children they were not able to visit. In addition, we signposted online training and development opportunities in children's and youth work; resources to support children and young people through bereavement; guidance for good practice within online engagement with children, young people and families; and top tips for producing and engaging with online worship intergenerationally.
17. Resolution 22 (2018): General Assembly tasks the Children and Youth Work Committee to re-evaluate the Charter for Children and to bring a Charter to General Assembly 2020 for the URC to commit to, taking into account all that has been referred to in General Assembly 2018 and in the Children and Youth Review and in the wider church.

A task group of CYWC members, CYDO+ team members and URC Youth Executive members worked on this across 2019. They have produced a radically different approach to the original charter, proposing 'Marks of an inclusive, intercultural and intergenerational church'. Recognising that this had a much broader reach, following its approval by CYWC and at Youth Assembly 2020, a draft version has now been sent to Equalities Committee and Global and Intercultural Ministries for wider consultation. It is hoped that a final version can be brought to General Assembly 2021 as a joint committee proposal, to be adopted as part of the URC's preparations for our 50th anniversary, and to set out our aspirations for the church of the future.

URC Youth

18. Youth Assembly 2019 was reported to May Mission Council 2019, and in RoundUp 2019. Resolutions included encouraging churches to enable young people to have a meaningful voice in local church structures; supporting young people's mental health and responding to loneliness through championing good practice; and supporting churches in offering wifi and internet services.
19. Youth Assembly 2020 is reported in *RoundUp 2020*. To explore the theme 'Common Ground – where is it?' a discussion panel and buzz groups replaced the normal keynote speaker. Highlights included a wide variety of workshops, a campfire, Ceilidh, a Sensory Assembly session, and late-night communion. Resolutions included setting up a task group to look at the creation of a URC Youth-focused event to celebrate the United Reformed Church's 50th Anniversary; and responding to the GA2018 discussion on isolated members to ensure the needs of URC Youth are considered, by working with the appropriate councils of the URC to create options whereby people can formally recognise their commitment to the URC regardless of personal circumstances. They also resolved to send an official letter to CTE explaining URC Youth's distress over the Fourth Presidency controversy, stating '... URC Youth Assembly 2020 understand ecumenism as 'oikumene,' the whole body of God, which stretches beyond ecclesiastical boundaries. We are therefore disappointed that the full diversity of society and of CTE's member Churches cannot be represented among the leadership of one of the UK's important ecumenical instruments... URC Youth Assembly 2020 feel outraged and not represented by CTE on this matter...[We] request that the necessary reconciling conversations within CTE are prioritised...'
20. Two further resolutions are now brought to General Assembly:

General Assembly urges all United Reformed Churches (especially those near universities and colleges) to use Fusion's Student Linkup and SCM Connect, enabling students to explore a wider range of churches and have more opportunity to commit to a place of worship that they feel is appropriate.

- 20.1 Youth Assembly 2020 highlighted a current lack of awareness and support to help college and university students find places of worship whilst away from their home environments, and noted the positive impact resources such as Fusion's Student Linkup and Student Christian Movement's (SCM) Connect programmes have had on students, aiding them when looking for a place of worship where they

are studying. Both organisations are passionately focussed on enabling students to grow in faith and to connect with like-minded students and student workers at a point in life which is often considered daunting.

20.2 Fusion UK and SCM are charitable organisations whose primary focus is equipping students to engage with local churches and peers. Both offer programmes that are free, easy and effective ways for local churches and groups to grow their congregations. As of January 2020, just under 1% of the nearly 2,500 churches registered for Fusion's Student Linkup and SCM Connect were of URC association. It is encouraging to see a handful of URC churches already involved, but it would be very beneficial for this number to rise, allowing more Christians and yet-to-be-Christians the opportunity to learn about and engage with the URC. Three simple steps are all that stand in the way of churches becoming 'linked-up' with students. 1) Connect: assigning a designated contact from within the church and having them log into the app. 2) Detail: providing basic church information (addresses, names etc). 3) Creating a profile: letting students know who you are and what you're about.

21. General Assembly recognises the climate emergency and challenges all councils, committees and local churches to do everything possible to make URC events and activities eco-friendly, as urged by URC Youth Assembly.

At Youth Assembly 2020, a resolution was passed by consensus by URC Youth stating that they recognise that we are currently experiencing a climate emergency. As part of the resolution, they encourage local churches, synods, committees and task groups consciously to make choices towards being more environmentally friendly. As the future of the URC, they think that the wider church should acknowledge the reality of our current global situation and take heed of the advice given by our government and experts. The Youth Executive are now all green apostles, with one internally elected 'head' who is passionate about the environment. They dedicate time in their meetings to discuss what they are doing and fresh ideas that they can adopt to help our environment. They recommend as URC Youth that the wider church take similar proactive steps to help halt the effects of the climate emergency.