

# Paper B1

## Towards a formal ministry for children's, youth and/or family work

### Children's and Youth Work Committee

#### Basic information

<b>Contact name and email address</b>	Paul Robinson, Convenor <b>paul@pjr-robinson.co.uk</b> Sam Richards, HCYW <b>sam.richards@urc.org.uk</b>
<b>Action required</b>	Discussion and decision.
<b>Draft resolution(s)</b>	<b>Assembly Executive agrees to seek funding for the establishment of a formal ministry for children's, youth and/or family work from <i>either</i>:</b> <b>a) by empowering CYWC to ask sources within and beyond the URC for funding or</b> <b>b) within the M&amp;M budget.</b>

#### Summary of content

<b>Subject and aim(s)</b>	Developing proposals for a formal ministry for children's, youth and /or family work, and seeking direction for securing the funding for this.
<b>Main points</b>	A new commissioned ministry is proposed, to complement existing ministry deployable to serve the denomination. Confirmation of this direction of travel is sort along with clarity about how it should be funded.
<b>Previous relevant documents</b>	General Assembly 2023 Paper B1 – Recognition of Children's, Youth and Family Ministry.
<b>Consultation has taken place with...</b>	Worship, Faith and Order Committee, Synod Moderators, CYDO+ team, Discipleship Team Leaders, General Secretariat.

#### Summary of impact

<b>Financial</b>	Funding is required for the training and ongoing support of those being called to a new formal ministry to serve the URC.
<b>External (eg ecumenical)</b>	Other denominations, particularly the Church of England, are exploring how to recognise and increase the number of those serving in this type of ministry. The Baptist Union of Great Britain recognise specialists including children, youth and families within the calling of Minister (having previous had Youth Specialist Ministers as a recognised joint calling as Baptist minister and qualified youth and community worker).

General Assembly 2023 passed the following resolutions:

- 1) General Assembly recognises the work of many people in local churches amongst children, young people and families as ministry and celebrates the gifts, time and energy that are shared to introduce and journey with children and young people in faith in Jesus. Local churches are warmly encouraged to commission these people to these key ministry roles.**

CYWC believes this should encourage churches to recognise and support all the army of volunteers engaged in children's, youth and family ministry. The C&Y and CYDO+ team offer a range of training, resources and wider support to supplement and promote this. A sample service of commissioning, which may be used in conjunction with the Statement of the Nature, Faith and Order of the URC as appropriate, can be found here: [www.urch.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Service-of-dedication-for-workers-children-and-young-people-and-the-church-family.pdf](http://www.urch.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Service-of-dedication-for-workers-children-and-young-people-and-the-church-family.pdf)

- 2) General Assembly acknowledges the ministry of Children's, Youth and Family Leaders in local churches and invites Synods to work with the Children's and Youth Work Committee and Ministries Committee to develop appropriate schemes to offer accreditation and recognition of these roles.**

CYWC believe this should enable local church employed workers and lead volunteers to be recognised beyond their local church, and more formally supported by and able to contribute to Synod children's, youth and family ministry. Yorkshire Synod have led the way in developing a scheme, and Synods are keen to ensure coherence and consistency with support from CYWC and the CYDO+ team in moving forwards. CYWC wishes to strongly encourage the employers of such workers to provide appropriate pastoral support and supervision, and hope such a scheme of Synod recognition with help enable this.

- 3) General Assembly is minded that there should be a formal ministry of URC Children's, Youth and/or Family Minister and asks the Children's and Youth Work Committee, the Ministries Committee and the Education and Learning Committee to consider what would be needed to introduce such a ministry and bring proposals to General Assembly 2024.**

This resolution is the most radical. To bring proposals to General Assembly 2024 requires us to have many and varied conversations about the theological, practical, and financial aspects of the envisaged posts. The CYWC would like to take the opportunity to share findings from recent conversations, give details of conversations still to take place, and request further guidance with regards to their proposed direction of travel, so that work is focussed appropriately. That's the focus of the rest of this paper.

## **1. Theological considerations**

This is the area in which we have developed our thinking and the proposals the most. At General Assembly 2023 we were instructed to engage in conversation with the Worship, Faith and Order Committee to ensure any proposals for new ministry posts lay within the theological understanding and polity of the denomination.

It may be helpful to summarise something of the varied recognised ministry posts within the denomination.

## Ordained ministry

### **Stipendiary and non-stipendiary ministers of Word and Sacraments**

Ministers are office holders, not employees. Their posts are Synod approved pastorates or other roles. They are under the Terms of Settlement which sets out terms and conditions for service and for stipendiary the Plan for Partnership which sets out remuneration, housing etc.

Ministers may be appointed to Special Category Ministry posts (eg chaplain). Ordination is for life (unless removed from the Roll of Ministers).

### **Elders**

At ordination, an Elder becomes an Elder of the denomination, not just the congregation. Elders, like ministers of Word and Sacraments, are ordained for life.

There are 'marks of ministry' for the Elders Meeting to embody collectively.

## Commissioned ministry

### **Stipendiary and non-stipendiary Church Related Community Workers**

CRCWs are office holders, not employees. Their posts are URC accredited CRCW Projects. They are under the Terms of Settlement which sets out terms and conditions for service and for stipendiary the Plan for Partnership which sets out remuneration, housing etc.

Commissioning is for life (unless removed from the Roll of Ministers).

## Accredited or Recognised ministry

### **Assembly Accredited Lay Preacher**

### **Locally recognized worship leader or lay preacher**

### **Assembly Accredited Lay Pioneer**

Formally recognised ministry requires a process of mutual discernment of calling. The individual, with appropriate support from others, discerns a call to a particular area of ministry; the URC (through the local church/Synod or denomination processes depending on the type of ministry and level of recognition) discerns a need for a particular ministry and calls people to serve through acknowledgment of call, training, support and deployment to need.

**To establish a new formal ministry of URC Children's, Youth and/or Family Minister, CYWC have explored the following options (we have presumed a denomination-wide level of recognition and deployment to differentiate this from Synod recognition):**

#### Option A

Opt for this to be a recognised specialism within an existing form of ministry – eg ministry of Word and Sacraments.

#### Option B

Create a new category of ministry that is parallel to an existing form of ministry – eg CRCW.

## Option C

Propose a re-ordering of existing forms of ministry that incorporates Children's, Youth and/or Family Ministry – eg an umbrella 'commissioned ministry' that includes community work, lay chaplaincy and/or lay pioneering as well.

Discussion and prayer around these three options have led us to the following conclusions at this stage.

Option A has been discarded. Worship, Faith and Order Committee have advised that a separate category of minister of Word and Sacraments for these posts would be outside the URC's theological understanding of such ministry. The only way the new proposed post could be shaped by our understanding of the ministry of Word and Sacrament would be to recognise specialist posts (like we do for pioneering or chaplaincy roles for instance). Whilst some ministers of Word and Sacrament may be able to fulfil these posts, in general, we do not believe that a minister of Word and Sacraments holding a Children's, Youth or Family Minister specialist post would do justice to the specialist knowledge, skills and attitudes this would require, nor do we believe this would be welcomed by the URC when many pastorates are in vacancy.

Option C has much to recommend it. However given the review of Special Category Ministry awaiting response, the very early stages of Lay Pioneer Ministry development, the forthcoming review of CRCW ministry, and other potential developments following the work emerging from the Church Life Review, this would involve a long delay before it could be properly explored. CYWC therefore wish to remain open to this as a future possibility, but in the meantime develop a 'stand alone' recognised form of ministry to serve the denomination.

Option B is the proposed choice at this time:

A commissioned ministry, with stipendiary and non-stipendiary options, to follow a parallel path to CRCW ministry in terms of assessment of call, training through RCLs using Common Awards and placements, deployment to approved specialist posts as post holders – to be incorporated within the Terms of Settlement and for stipendiary the Plan for Partnership.

This would enable Synods, in dialogue with local churches, to create, approve and declare vacant posts to which they could call recognised children's, youth and/or family ministers. The processes for this will require further conversation with Ministries Committee and would draw on learning from SCM and CRCW post creation and appointment processes.

If option B were introduced, CYWC understands that, in exceptional circumstances, local authorisation to administer the sacraments may be conferred by the Synod on a post holder if this is deemed necessary and appropriate for the context and ministry being undertaken in a particular post. However this is not an attempt at 'ministry of Word and Sacraments' by the back door and creates clear water between the proposed new ministry and this in general.

We believe option B could also enable Certificates of Eligibility and Limited Service to be offered in the same way as they are for ministers of Word and Sacraments and CRCWs, although the exact detail of this will require further conversation with Ministries Committee.

Option B supports a specific call to children's, youth and family ministry and identifies this as a ministry the church needs. It enables the URC to proceed relatively quickly, potentially with the first student ministers in training in Autumn 2025 and completing EM1 in 2029.

Questions the CYWC would like to hear Assembly Executive's view upon:

- Do you believe creating a new commissioned ministry, as per option B, is the correct direction of travel for the proposals coming to General Assembly in 2024?
- How do you see this ministry being exercised fruitfully in local contexts?

## **2. Practical considerations**

### **2.1 Training and education**

Option B would require CYWC to work closely with Education and Learning to develop proposals for training people for this ministry. This is a current priority, and it may be that a verbal update can be given at Assembly Executive of conversations taking place between the drafting of this report and the meeting of the executive. The following early reflections give a flavour of what may be possible.

Appropriate modules in youth work and children's and family work already exist within Common Awards. Delivery of training could, for instance, use the Cambridge Theological Federation block week pathway currently accessed by Westminster College for training ministers of Word and Sacrament, already used by Ridley Hall to deliver lay ministry training in youth, children's and family and sports ministry. Training through URC RCLs should ensure appropriate URC ministerial formation alongside those training for other ministries within the church.

The Church of England are actively exploring an Apprenticeship model for training lay ministers which would attract Government funding, but require trainees to be employed during their training. This may be an alternative model if it comes to fruition with Durham University Common Awards programme.

The marks of ministry and levels of competence which will define this Ministry need careful development in consultation with practitioners, the CYDO+ team, Synods, E&L and Ministries.

### **2.2 Title of the ministry**

We are aware that at the moment we have called those within this ministry 'URC Children's, Youth and/or Family Minister'. Over the next period of time, the title of the ministry will need to be clarified reflecting both the work and ministry, as well as theological considerations. It should be possible, within the call to the ministry, to specialise to some extent within training through selection of modules and courses at EM1, 2 and 3 (as ministers of Word and Sacraments may do so), and posts may carry more specific titles to reflect the particular ministry required in that context (as SCM posts do for ministers of Word and Sacraments).

### **2.3 Introducing new posts**

We are aware that there will be people fulfilling children and youth worker posts within the URC currently who may be interested in discerning whether they are called to this new post. Options will need to be explored as to how those with prior learning and

experience may fulfil these new posts, whilst also ensuring that pathways for those exploring this kind of ministry for the first time are also encouraged.

In due course, it may also be appropriate to develop a pathway to support those wishing to transition from Synod Recognised Children's, Youth and/or Family Minister to the denominational formal ministry.

These last two practical considerations will be explored amongst the CYDO+ team and other practitioners in this ministry.

Questions the CYWC would like to hear Assembly Executive's view upon:

- What should this ministry be called?
- What long term support would be necessary and appropriate for these ministers?

### **3. Financial considerations**

We are aware that introducing a new recognised ministry will cost. The fear of an overburdening the denomination with this cost lay behind some of the points raised at General Assembly 2023.

The financial implications of the education and training elements of introducing the posts will be part of the conversation to take place with Education and Learning as details of the training programs becomes apparent. We may need to consider limits on the numbers of those responding to the call to such ministry – both a minimum required to make the training viable, and a maximum that is affordable.

Education aside, there are obviously long-term financial implications if the URC pursues this new form of recognised ministry. It would seem fair to support these new ministers in the same way that current ministers of Word and Sacraments and CRCWs are supported. However, to do so through the current M&M budget could put huge strain on that budget, ultimately to the detriment of other ministries and areas of work, which would be inappropriate.

It currently costs approximately £70K over three to four years to train a minister, and £41K per year from M&M funds to support a minister. (Other costs, such as appropriate housing, expenses etc, would be met by Synods and local churches.)

If we were to train a cohort of three people per year from 2025 that would cost approximately £53K per year at current costs.

If we were to have three people per year commissioned from 2027 that would add £123K to the M&M budget each year at current costs until this became neutralised by those leaving ministry (through retirement etc) in approximately 20 years.

An alternative approach would be to secure new ring-fenced funding for this new ministry. The potential sources for such funding are Synods, local churches and grant funding (both existing URC funds and wider sources). In this way, investment for growth could be in part focussed on children and young people, fulfilling some of the desires of the Church Life Review and the recent Assembly Executive discussion about future budgeting. An example might be to seek match funding for a substantial grant from a URC source such as the New College fund to enable the first 10 to 15 years of this new ministry to be funded.

What is clear, of course, is that serious time and resources needs to be given to the process of nurturing vocation to this and other ministries. If we are to be bold in our financial investment in any area of Church life, it is the CYWC's view that doing so to support ministry amongst children and young people, could lead to the growth in the church that would provide future stability.

Questions the CYWC would like to hear Assembly Executive's view upon:

- How high a priority is this for future funding and resourcing?
- Would you favour including this within M&M (as we do other ministries) or establishing a separate fund to finance this development?