

Paper K2

Place of URC Youth

URC Youth Assembly

Basic information

Contact name and email address	Kacie Hodgson urcyamoderator@urc.org.uk Alexander Clements urcyamodelect@urc.org.uk
Action required	Decision
Draft resolution(s)	<p>Resolution 47 General Assembly instructs business committee to establish a task group to explore the identity, purpose and future development of URC Youth.</p> <p>Resolution 48 General Assembly instructs the task group to report to Youth Assembly on the progress of its work in 2027, and bring final recommendations to Youth Assembly 2028, which if adopted would form the basis of recommendations to be brought to General Assembly 2028.</p> <p>Resolution 49 General Assembly accepts the remit, membership and timescale of the task group.</p>

Summary of content

Subject and aim(s)	To enact a task group to explore the identity and future development of United Reformed Youth
Main points	The report outlines the suggested remit and scope of the task group
Previous relevant documents	Youth Strategy document – currently being developed by Children and Youth Development (CYDO+) team and Youth Executive URC Youth Exec and Youth Assembly Moderators' Review, 2025 by John Steel – URC website
Consultation has taken place with...	Youth Executive, Faith in Action

Summary of impact

Financial	Potentiality to use money from Bill Snelson Fund
External (eg ecumenical)	

Introduction

“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.” – Book of Jeremiah 29:11

In recent years, the United Reformed Church has undertaken a significant period of reflection, review, and structural change. Through the Church Life Review and the outcomes of the Extraordinary Meeting of General Assembly, the denomination has begun to reassess how it is organised and how it responds to the realities of contemporary church life.

Within this context, it has become clear that URC Youth must also examine its identity, purpose, and place within the life of the Church. While changes have been made to the Youth Executive, Youth Assembly recognises that structural revision alone does not address the deeper questions now emerging.

Many existing frameworks supporting URC Youth were developed for a different context and may no longer adequately reflect the experiences and needs of young people today. There is therefore a need, not simply for adjustment, but for a more fundamental exploration of what URC Youth is, what it is for, and how it should develop for the future.

In response, Youth Assembly has instructed General Assembly to establish a task group to explore the identity, purpose, and future development of URC Youth. The intention is to bring findings and a proposed resolution to Youth Assembly 2027 and, subject to approval, to General Assembly 2027.

It is our hope that the task group will work in partnership with the CYDO+ team, which is developing a five-year strategy for URC Youth. A document is being produced with a statement of what URC Youth currently is, but work is being paused until a decision is made at General Assembly, in order to integrate pieces of work together.

This report sets out the proposed scope, remit, and structure of the proposed task group.

Facts about URC Youth, Youth Assembly and Youth Executive

We have compiled a few statistics on the current numbers of previous Youth Assemblies and URC Youth across the denomination.

Average number of participants at Youth Assembly over the past six years: 93 people

Youth Assembly 2026 participants (including denominational reps): 96

All aged <26 worshipping at main service: 8,166 – This is a great number, but Youth Assembly barely reaches this number in-person. It is unknown how many of this number are reached with Youth Assembly mailings like the round-up newsletter.

Total Average Congregation: in person children <18: 3,407 – Youth Assembly only targets young people of 14-years-old upwards. How can we make the connection to the youth below that age and URC Children?

All aged <26 associated with the life of the Church: 25,437 – We have a lot of young people who don't attend on a Sunday but are still involved in the life of the Church. How do we connect with them?

Total Average Congregation: digital <18: 231 – Although a small number, there are still a lot of people that we may not be reaching currently but who might be easier to reach with them being based digitally.

Current challenges facing URC Youth

In undertaking this work, it is necessary to recognise the challenges currently shaping URC Youth. These are interconnected and reflect wider changes within both the Church and society. It is important to note that there is significant variation in experience across the denomination. As such, the experience of young people within the URC differs widely depending on local context, with inconsistency in opportunity, engagement and support, sometimes leading to an uneven sense of belonging.

There is also a disconnect between local, synod, and national expressions of URC Youth. While Youth Assembly and Youth Executive provide important structures for representation, these are not always clearly connected to local experience and can be perceived as distant or inaccessible – a common issue across the wider URC.

The limitations of existing structures are increasingly evident. The current model has provided continuity but may not fully reflect how young people engage with community, faith, and leadership. Participation is often centred on events rather than sustained, relational engagement.

The question of URC membership for young people remains unresolved. Many young people are geographically mobile, frequently moving areas and synods due to family life and education. This can make membership difficult to engage with due to no longer being permanently fixed to one location.

This has raised broader questions about how belonging and commitment are recognised within the Church. There are also ongoing concerns regarding voice and representation. While structures exist for participation, there is a need to ensure that the voices of young people are consistently heard, valued, and acted upon within wider decision-making processes, including those of General Assembly.

Finally, the wider social and cultural context must be acknowledged. Changing patterns of community, communication, and engagement continue to shape how young people relate to faith and church life.

These challenges underline the need for a more coherent, connected, and contextually relevant approach to URC Youth, and provide the basis for the proposed work of the task group.

Current happenings of URC Youth Assembly

Youth Assembly is changing along with the wider URC, with a recent change of venue, based on the reduced numbers attending, being a driving force for this.

Youth Executive is also changing with its most recent re-structure, which was officially put into action at Youth Assembly 2026. Youth Executive has now been split into three working groups: a Youth Assembly Planning Group, the Synod Representatives

Network, and the Officers of Youth Assembly. This allows for those wanting to be involved in the planning of Youth Assembly without having to be a Synod Youth Representative. This has meant that more young people have been able to be involved with the national processes and also allows those who only want to represent their synod to do so. This has raised the number of people in Youth Executive, with many of the new faces only a part of it due to this restructuring.

The paper related to this re-structure can be found in the URC Youth Executive and Youth Assembly Moderator's Review 2025 on the URC Website.

Identity and purpose

Questions of structure must be grounded in a clear understanding of identity and purpose. The task group will therefore begin by exploring what URC Youth is and what it is called to be within the life of the Church.

Key areas of exploration include:

- **Issues Facing Young People:** To explore how the Church responds to issues of belonging, participation, and membership among young people.
- **Purpose in a Post-Church Life Review Context:** To clarify the role of URC Youth within the changing structures of the Church, including its contribution, voice, and relationship to the wider denomination.
- **Structural Evolution:** To assess whether the current "Youth Assembly/Youth Executive" model remains the most effective framework, and to consider alternative approaches – such as community-based or "Youth Church" models – that may better support participation, discipleship, and leadership.

This work will establish a clearer and more coherent foundation to inform future development.

Remit of the Task Group

The task group will operate within a defined remit, enabling both reflection and practical recommendation.

It will:

- **explore identity:** considering what it means to be a young person within the URC today;
- **review current ways of working:** examining the operation of Youth Assembly and Youth Executive, identifying both strengths and limitations;
- **consider future development:** proposing potential developments, including structural changes, naming, and any necessary constitutional updates.

The task group will be expected to produce clear, actionable recommendations.

Membership of the Task Group

The task group should reflect a breadth of experience across the Church with at most 12 members of the task group – At least half of the group should be under 26s.

Suggested membership includes:

- Youth representatives, including current and former Youth Assembly Moderators, Youth Executive representatives, and members of Youth Assembly
- Synod representatives, including Children's and Youth Development Officers

- A representative from the Business Committee, Faith In Action, and other committees if relevant
- The Head of Children, Youth and Intergenerational Discipleship
- Power to co-opt people where needed

This ensures a balance of lived experience, governance insight, and institutional knowledge.

Safer Recruitment Suggestions

Synod/Youth representatives to apply through nominations committee to follow the correct safer recruitment process.

There has been thought of bringing in someone external, like Eido Research. This is something that might be considered by the task group if formed.

Desired Outcomes and Timescale

The purpose of this work is to move from reflection to clear and agreed action. The proposed timeline is:

- Enactment of task group and planning of work – till end of 2026
- Research and Consultation (end of 2026 – 2027)
 - Engagement across synods with young people, CYDO+s, Youth Executive
- Consultation with Youth Assembly and General Assembly 2027
- Reporting findings and decision to Youth Assembly 2028 and submission to General Assembly 2028
 - Subject to approval, submission for final consideration and enactment

Summary

The task group is expected to deliver:

- a clear articulation of the identity and purpose of URC Youth
- recommendations for future structure and development
- proposals addressing membership and participation
- guidance on how URC Youth relates to the wider life of the Church

This process will enable URC Youth to move forward with greater clarity and coherence within the United Reformed Church. “For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.” – Book of Jeremiah 29:11