

The Centenary Project:

A mid-term evaluation for the Diocese of Sheffield

Full report

Church Army's Research Unit
January 2022

Acknowledgements:

We would like to thank the Centenary Project workers, the central Centenary Project team, wider diocesan stakeholders and those who are involved in the local ministries featured in the case studies who took time to offer their reflections.

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**THE DIOCESE
OF SHEFFIELD**
Renewed | Released | Rejuvenated



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A registered charity in England & Wales 226226, Scotland SC040457, and the Republic of Ireland 20152604.
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Executive Summary

This report presents the findings of a mid-term evaluation of the Diocese of Sheffield's Centenary Project. The Centenary Project (CP) began in 2015 when the diocese set aside £1m of its historic reserves and launched a 10-year plan to employ children, youth and family workers, targeted in the most economically disadvantaged areas.

The evaluation was completed by Church Army's Research Unit between May 2021 and December 2021. It is structured around 12 core evaluation questions identified by the diocese (see Appendix A) and accompanied by six case studies of parishes (section 3) who have hosted Centenary Project workers (CP workers).

Under questions evaluating **vision and values** (section 2.1), this report celebrates the following important achievements:

- 1. The project is reaching parishes who could not otherwise appoint a worker.**
54 parishes have been enabled to share or appoint a worker.¹ Most of these projects would not otherwise have been able to appoint a worker.
- 2. The project is impacting disadvantaged communities.**
Of the 54 parishes, 35 are within the 20% most deprived in England. 16 of these parishes (30%) are among the 5% most deprived in England.
- 3. The project's success is supported by its values.**
The CP values have been deliberately and carefully nurtured by leaders who understand youth work and have significantly contributed to the project's success.
- 4. The project aligns well with the diocesan strategy.**
The CP's important role within the wider diocesan strategy is well-articulated and explained within existing documentation about the project.

Within each section, further '**evidence to date**' is noted along with suggestions for '**looking to the future**', including:

- Consider other ways the project could support parishes who could not afford a worker even with the three-year staggered funding offer.
- Share good news stories of the ways in which workers are uniquely placed to offer pastoral support in their contexts and how this models collaborative ministry as CP workers work alongside clergy.

Under questions evaluating **impact on mission** (section 2.2), this report celebrates the following important achievements:

- 5. The project's impact on parishes has been overwhelmingly positive.**
Churches with a CP worker have a higher proportion of under 18s in their worshipping community than churches without a CP worker. There has been a statistically significant difference between them for every year since 2017.
- 6. The project is making an impact on discipleship and evangelism.**
The project's SDF target of engaging with at least 2,000 children and young people on a regular basis by 2023 has been exceeded already.
- 7. The project is making a difference in the lives of children, young people and families.**
Survey questions about the impact of CP worker-run groups on participants all received high average scores. Statements about feeling 'accepted', 'supported', 'belonging' and 'understood' scored particularly strongly.

¹ Since this evaluation was carried out, the number of parishes that have been enabled to share or appoint a worker has grown to 61.

Further ‘evidence to date’ is noted along with suggestions for ‘looking to the future’, including:

- Consider including more training for CP workers on sustainability strategies, incorporating learning into their practice ‘sooner rather than later’.
- Explore with workers what family discipleship might look like in their contexts and how parents can be encouraged in their faith.

Under the questions evaluating **potential areas for improvement and future exploration** (section 2.3), this report celebrates the following key achievements:

8. The project’s communications strategy is progressing well.

The project has a well thought out, clearly articulated, and recently updated communications strategy. Awareness of the project has grown as a result.

9. The project delivers good value for money.

Compared to volunteer-led models of ministry, the CP is more expensive but delivers significant added value which other, more low-cost models cannot.

10. The project is key to delivering the diocesan strategy.

The CP is recognised by the senior staff of the diocese as playing a key role in the delivery of the diocesan strategy.

11. The project is good at exploring further opportunities.

Ideas for further opportunities were offered by participants; many had already been attempted by the central team who are quick to spot and explore further opportunities.

12. The project collects and uses data well.

The CP has well-developed systems for collecting relevant statistics and use the data collected to good effect through its various communications channels.

Further ‘evidence to date’ is noted along with suggestions for ‘looking to the future’, including:

- Use the ‘lessons learned’ paper accompanying this report to celebrate and promote the work of the project.
- Explore if some CP worker roles may need to shift to include a greater focus on facilitating children and youth work across a whole mission area.
- The quantitative element is commendably strong. Continue to review and refine the qualitative data collection tool to gather evidence of impact on discipleship journeys, especially with families.

Conclusion

As the above evidence confirms, this project should be commended for the way in which it has facilitated workers to prioritise children, youth and families’ ministry in the diocese with care, creativity, humility and determination. This project has also successfully navigated numerous changes and challenges; these include the ‘changing tides’ of a new generation of young people with little awareness of church or faith, COVID-19, falling church attendance, significant financial challenges for most parishes in the diocese, a reduction of stipendiary clergy and a move to focal ministry. Additionally, this evaluation of the Centenary Project has identified significant areas of good practice and learning points that need to be shared more widely. These are outlined and unpacked in the following documents which accompany our full report:

- A promotional summary booklet, celebrating some of the project’s achievements.
- A ‘lessons learned’ briefing note for other dioceses and organisations who want to learn from the Centenary Project’s experience.

1. Introduction

This report presents the findings of an independent evaluation of the Centenary Project six years into its development. This evaluation was commissioned by the Diocese of Sheffield in May 2021 and research carried out between May and December 2021.

The aims of this evaluation are:

- Assessing the impact and value the project is having
- Exploring whether the project is making full use of its current resources
- Identifying potential improvements to the project and further opportunities to strengthen the work with children, young people and families moving forward
- Presenting the evaluation findings in a way that can help secure and lever further funding, as well as identifying learning points for other dioceses

This full report is accompanied by a summary report and a ‘lessons learned’ briefing note.

1.1 About the Centenary Project

As outlined in the original evaluation brief, Sheffield diocese set aside £1m of its own investment from historical reserves in 2015 to initiate a ground-breaking 10-year plan to employ children, youth and family workers, targeted in the most economically disadvantaged areas of the diocese. It was named the Centenary Project as it marked the diocese’s 100th birthday.

This model was intended to equip local churches to effectively engage, nurture and disciple a new generation of young people, children and families. The project employed Centenary Project workers (mixture of part-time and full-time), and a Centenary Project Manager and various other posts who oversee every appointment, work with local churches on setting objectives and support workers through a relational network and regular mentoring sessions.

CP workers build teams of local volunteers to support the ministry, and work in local schools and across parish boundaries as they develop new missional activities for young people and children.

There are 54 parishes that have (or have had) a CP worker linked to them. This was spread across 30 CP worker roles.² There were 21 ‘active’ CP workers linked with 29 parishes as of June 2021.

1.2 About This Evaluation

We approached this evidence-based evaluation with a critically appreciative perspective - looking to celebrate progress and signs of God at work, whilst also asking challenging questions. As much as possible, we have tailored its focus to the questions the diocese wants answers on.

Using a mixed-methods approach, this evaluation drew on two sources:

- 1) **Desk-based review of existing data** about the Centenary Project supplied by the client, including:
 - Statistical data linked to the project’s existing measurement systems
 - Qualitative data and good news stories arising from previous data collection
 - Previous annual reports and highlight reports
 - Project communications plan, diocesan strategy and other key sources

² Since this evaluation was carried out, the number of parishes that have been enabled to share or appoint a worker has grown to 61. There are currently 23 ‘active’ workers linked with 33 parishes as of January 2022.

- CP webpages, newsletters, social media channels, and other communications material

2) Further **qualitative data collected** from stakeholders (as agreed with the client), including:

- A focus group with seven CP workers (plus a one-to-one interview with an eighth CP worker who experienced a difficult situation with a local church while in post)
- Interviews/focus groups with local teams in six parishes who have hosted CP workers
- Conversations with the diocese's central CP team
- Conversations/interviews with wider stakeholders in the diocese

Limitations of this approach

All research has its limitations. Though we believe the methods we have used were the most appropriate way of achieving the evaluation aims, the following limitations need to be acknowledged.

- In tailoring this evaluation to the questions determined by the diocese, alternative issues or perspectives may not have been covered.
- The data used for this evaluation were supplied by the central team or gathered from participants, the majority of whom work for the project and therefore are not neutral. This was countered to some degree by data gathered from those outside the project.
- The six case studies were chosen to be illustrative of the variety of contexts and experiences of workers but are not able to be a representative sample. The commonalities are noteworthy but other parishes might have highlighted different issues.
- In selecting local church interviewees for the case studies, we listened to the views of a number of key people but were not able to gather extensive perspectives. Furthermore, we did not gather data from the children and teenagers involved although we were able to observe some of their activities.

Note: Church Army trains and deploys lay evangelists to pioneer new ministry, including mission to non-churched children, teenagers, and families within Anglican denominations across the United Kingdom and Ireland. We acknowledge this appreciation for pioneering new mission and ministry as a potential research bias alongside researchers being white, middle class, lay and involved in local churches in Sheffield across a range of traditions from conservative evangelical to liberal catholic.

2. Overall Assessment

In this section, we review the Centenary Project with relation to 12 core evaluation questions identified by the diocese. These questions are considered under the following three sub-headings suggested by the diocese: Vision and Values, Impact on Mission, Potential Areas for Improvement and Further Exploration.

2.1 Vision and Values

2.1.1 The project is reaching parishes who could not otherwise appoint a worker

Evidence to date:

- 54 parishes have been enabled to share or appoint a worker (with 30 CP workers working across these parishes since the project began).
- Feedback from CP workers, parishes and wider stakeholders suggests that most of these projects would not otherwise have been able to appoint a worker.
- The Centenary Project has helped parishes overcome:
 - Financial barriers - providing tapered funding to help parishes who are not yet able to cover the full costs of employing a worker but willing to work towards this.
 - Organisational barriers - helping parishes who feel unable to take on the legal and administrative responsibility of employing a worker by managing and supporting workers centrally.
- The CP team are careful and discerning in deciding which parishes receive support.
- The case studies in this report and data compiled by the diocese (for example good news stories and annual reports) provide concrete examples.

Further detail

CP workers interviewed for this evaluation shared their impressions that the parishes of all eight of their posts would not have been able to employ a worker without the help of the Project. This was also backed up in most of the case study interviews.

‘Without Tracey...we wouldn’t have been in a position to develop the kids work.’
(Wheatley Park Incumbent interview)

It was recognised that more than just finance is involved. One worker reflected, *‘they just...they wouldn’t have had...been able to piece together the resources to do it.’* One parish was described by their worker as *‘knowing enough to know the HR is hard’*; they could see the strategic need but couldn’t organise it themselves before this project. The only exceptions appear to be two of the six case studies³ whose parishes previously employed part-time workers in similar roles on a short-term basis.

Comments from wider stakeholders confirmed general or anecdotal impressions that the Centenary Project has enabled parishes in this ministry who would have otherwise not been able to appoint a worker, evidenced by observations that parishes that could appoint a youth worker

³ No. 2 St James Woodhouse and No. 6 St Mary Bramall Lane

themselves, have not been chased to be part of the project. Comments such as *'No brainer. Without a doubt.'* were typical responses from stakeholders.

'I haven't seen so many churches doing it on their own. Parishes are scared by the HR role; generally, they don't have employment expertise.'
(Mike North, Children and Young People's Advisor)

The central team described the way in which they look to help parishes in a strategic way; not every parish who would want a worker necessarily gets one. Knowing a worker 'can't magically transform something from nothing', the central team draws on the wisdom of the Parish Support Team in choosing which parishes should be helped on the basis of potential for sustainability. As outlined on the diocesan website⁴ together they look for evidence of:

- A heart for mission
- Being open to trying something different
- Existing opportunities e.g. 'favour' in school, baptism requests, youth hanging around church or on streets
- A church's willingness to put their 'rainy day' money toward CP

Yet it can still feel fragile. As one of the central team reflected, *'It can all change on the parish end of things if there is a new treasurer who doesn't get it.'* Furthermore, a minority of parishes were not able to make an appointment as hoped or the worker stayed only a short time in post; as far as we can tell, non-recruitment and roles ending early often stemmed from issues around finance. Having identified this as an issue in 2020, the central team now aim for mentors to make contact with line managers on a monthly basis and visit parishes every three months to anticipate problems before they occur.

Suggestions for the future:

- Continue ongoing support of parishes with a CP worker to anticipate problems before they occur by visiting every three months. Review at end of 2022 whether this is having the desired effect.
- Explore whether the annual church wardens conference and the treasurers workshop run by the diocese include sufficient briefing on the project.
- Continue to follow-up on why non-recruitment occasionally occurs or posts end early.
- Consider other ways the project could support parishes who could not afford a worker even with the three-year staggered funding offer.

⁴ <https://www.sheffield.anglican.org/centenary-project-applying-for-a-worker> [accessed 12/11/2021]

2.1.2 The project is impacting disadvantaged communities

Evidence to date:

- Of the 54 parishes who have (or have had) a CP worker, 35 are within the 20% most deprived in England. 16 of these parishes (30%) are among the 5% most deprived in England.
- Interview data revealed comments about the economic challenges experienced by children, young people and families in the communities in which they work.
- Five of our six case studies further illustrate the project's impact in economically disadvantaged communities.
- Not all CP workers are based in the most disadvantaged parishes, but a post must engage with poorer communities or estates within that parish.
- Further evidence compiled by the CP also highlights the project's impact on disadvantaged communities.

Further detail

At a national level, the Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) is a ranking measure that is based on several different factors that may contribute to the deprivation of an area - one of which is economic disadvantage. It should be noted that in the following descriptions of levels of deprivation, economics is not necessarily the sole factor.

Half of the parishes within the Diocese of Sheffield are among the 20% most deprived in all England.⁵ These parishes are found in every deanery in the diocese. And 38 of these parishes are among the 5% most deprived in all of England. In fact, 72% of all parishes in Sheffield diocese are more deprived than the average for England.

There are 54 parishes that have (or have had) a CP worker linked to them. 35 of these parishes (nearly two-thirds) are within this 20% most deprived in the country. And 16 of the CP parishes are among the 5% most deprived in all of England; this is 30% of the parishes linked to CP. Just under 80% of the CP parishes are more deprived than the average for England.

While the CP workers gave only headline descriptions of the more deprived contexts in which they work, some of their passing comments were telling. One mentioned that any trips to annual events such as Soul Survivor must be heavily subsidised always. Another reflected that young people in their area struggle to access private musical education beyond the bare minimum of what local schools can provide.

Five of our six case studies demonstrated impact in economically disadvantaged communities. In one of these five cases,⁶ through the efforts of the CP worker, new people started coming to church, but these new churchgoers were *'very young and very inexperienced and in an area with major issues with drugs and alcohol'*. However, now they run groups Monday to Sunday, including a pre-loved uniform project which provides second-hand uniform to families in the local area.

Central team members confirmed the project is designed to empower local churches to engage in this mission and ministry. They work with local churches to help them achieve this, unlike some other projects who deliver short-term help to deprived areas but don't plan for anything to be left behind when the short-term help ceases.

⁵ <https://www.churchofengland.org/about/research-and-statistics>

⁶ Case study 5: St Paul, Wheatley Park

The general perception of wider diocesan stakeholders is that CP workers are disproportionately placed in the less privileged communities of the diocese. As the SDF bid outlined, the project is noted for working to deliberately set up posts in and around Doncaster with its greater pockets of economic deprivation to increase the number of disadvantaged families attending church.⁷

The 2018 Annual Report includes the comment of a church warden: *‘As a group of parishes with high levels of deprivation, we would not have been able to take on a youth worker without the support of the Centenary Project...’* and good news stories note the recognition of deprivation levels by external funding bodies in securing funds for ongoing ministry.

Most notably, Dr Alan Billings, South Yorkshire Police and Crime Commissioner, commented, *‘This funding gives some of the children and young people of Woodhouse a safe place to meet ... where friendships can be made and staff can explore with young people the importance of making positive choices in life.’*⁸

That said, there is a definite cross-section of communities represented in the project.⁹ In some there is more affluence, but wealthier parishes must show a commitment to poorer areas they wish to work in. One worker reflected: *‘I mean I think financially my parish probably could have [appointed a worker].’* Additional comments signalled that for a few churches, they have a modest amount of funding but have to make difficult decisions about what that is spent on. In one case, they are faced with having to use reserves to repair the church roof.

Suggestions for the future:

- Feature more stories of workers engaging with hidden poverty in seemingly more affluent parishes alongside those engaging in more obviously deprived areas.
- Continue to liaise with diocesan staff to identify new and further parishes in a financial position to engage with the project’s current funding model.
- Continue to provide fundraising support and advice to parishes, particularly those in disadvantaged communities.

⁷ *Transforming Children’s, Youth and Families’ Work* Diocese of Sheffield Bid for SDF Second Stage Application November 2017 p. 6.

⁸ <https://southyorkshireviolencereductionunit.com/community/fresh-woodhouse-youth-club/>

⁹ Within the diocese itself there are different levels of deprivation. Of the 54 parishes that have (or have had) a CP worker, 14 (just over a quarter) are in the 20% most deprived in the diocese and 26 (just under half) are more deprived than the average for the diocese.

2.1.3 The project's success is supported by its values

The project's espoused values are: *mentoring, networking, training, setting objectives, measuring outcomes, good line management, and working fair hours for a fair salary*. An explanation of how these values are delivered in practice can be found in Appendix B.

Evidence to date:

- The CP values have been deliberately and carefully nurtured by leaders who understand youth work and have significantly contributed to the project's success.
- The fact that there has been a relatively low turnover of workers suggests that most CP workers appreciate the project culture and values.
- Workers fed back that mentoring and networking are particularly strong. Experiences around objective setting, outcome measurement and line management are mixed.
- The area which is most complex is 'working fair hours for a fair salary', which is a perennial challenge within youth work more generally.

Further detail

The Centenary Project values are recognised by wider stakeholders as having been deliberately and carefully nurtured by Helen Cockayne (Centenary Project Manager) and Mike North who know from experience how isolating posts like this can be. Mark Cockayne, the diocese's Director of Parish Support, remarked, *'I have rarely come across a project with such a clear sense of shared values and identity'* which Bishop Pete called *'one of the keys to [the project's] fruitfulness...'*

Making good appointments is key. Alongside this, stakeholders commented on the relatively low turnover of workers as a strong piece of evidence of the project's values at work: *'When you care for the whole person and their wellbeing, the work people do is much better.'* This was also documented in the 2018 and 2019 Annual Reports, which identified the project's strengths around mentoring, networking and review.¹⁰

The CP workers interviewed shared their impressions of how well the project is demonstrating its values, by responding to questions about which values the project does best at and which values need further work.

Value	Progress in practice?	Illustrative quotes
Mentoring	Very strong	<i>'You always feel fully supported... I have always had a mentoring time once a month [since being in post]...'</i> <i>'I've always found mentoring to be like a really resourceful time... really quite useful.'</i>
Networking	Very strong	<i>'Best thing is networking. Nice to have other people who know what's like to be a [CP] worker at a church.'</i> <i>'I couldn't have survived in lockdown without the like...the times on Zoom we've had together, just that chance to connect with other...workers to see what they're doing.'</i>
Training	Mostly good	<i>'Some of it is new stuff that's like, oh I didn't even know that I didn't know this ... [it] is really good'</i> <i>'We could perhaps do better ... like training on Bible teaching and ... what does it look like to run a children's group in [different contexts]...'</i>

¹⁰ 2018 Annual Report, p. 5 and 2019 Annual Report, p. 4.

Setting objectives	Mixed experience	<i>'I find them very woolly ... It's just this paragraph list and there is everything in there... they need tightening up a little bit' 'When they're process-based, not time-scale based, and growth focused (around relational work), not numbers-focused, they work well.'</i>
Measuring outcomes	Mixed experience	<i>'I love the tracker that they've got. I love statistics... I come from a fundraising background.' '[The stats] show our efforts... [but] they can't show whether we are achieving anything spiritual.'</i>
Good line management	Mixed experience	<i>'Sometimes vicars are really hard to work with...because they are so busy...' '...[It's] useful to have a process with my line manager of remembering all the things that need to be done.'</i>
Working fair hours for a fair salary	Complicated	<i>'Everyone has been pretty brave in saying fair salary and hours. I think it's hard for us to say that because we feel like we shouldn't be in this for the money.' 'The hours eat away at your life, quite frankly... I don't mean that in a negative way, but it can be if you let it... you have to step up your own game to manage it as much as the line manager... it's a tricky one.'</i>

The most complicated value for the project to deliver in practice appears to be 'working fair hours for a fair salary'. This is a perennial challenge, not just for the Centenary Project but within youth work more generally. The level of qualifications and experience that a worker brings to a role are reflected in salary level, and the central team need to balance issues of project sustainability as well as parity across workers within the project and with other lay church workers across the region.

Most workers appreciated the positive support the project gave them to guard their time, not work over their hours and to take good holidays. Others mentioned the guilt of claiming expenses when working for a church with a very limited budget, or having to keep to official hours in churches they've been previously members of, that have overwhelming need and where they have paid colleagues who overwork.

One worker reflected that because the salary level is not much above minimum wage, there is potential for mismatch if ... *'teacher level quality and standard [is] expected but at play leader pay.'* If workers are expected to equip, enable and develop other people locally, these skills should be appropriately remunerated for. In terms of the future of the project, another worker hoped for *'a bit more flexibility and freedom to the roles and reviewing of hours and pay to more regular formats. If you're always excelling on your objectives...?'*

Suggestions for the future:

- Share expertise in mentoring and networking more widely. Feature stories with testimonies and advice for others in the diocese, including how to network virtually.
- Continue existing work encouraging workers to guard their time. Attention to this is so important in a wider church/clergy culture that is prone to overwork.
- Continue to review pathways for career development and salary scales. Explore whether some posts could become more substantial roles in mission partnerships. If there is a way forward here, consider training to anticipate/support.
- Invite questions and comments from workers on a regular basis on all values to avoid any misunderstandings.

2.1.4 The project aligns well with the diocesan strategy

Evidence to date:

- The CP's important role within the wider diocesan strategy is well-articulated and explained within existing documentation about the project.
- Though the vision was developed by the previous bishop, there continues to be a close 'strategic fit' under Bishop Pete, who describes it as 'key to the whole diocesan strategy'.
- Other stakeholders interviewed confirmed that the CP seems 'entirely in keeping with diocesan strategy' and is well-supported by the diocese.
- Section 2.3.3 reflects further on the Centenary Project's impact on diocesan strategy.

Further detail

The Diocese of Sheffield is called to grow a sustainable network of Christ-like, lively and diverse Christian communities in every place which are effective in making disciples and in seeking to transform our society and God's world.¹¹

The diocesan vision statement quoted above was referenced in the original vision document written for this project by Rt Revd Steven Croft, then Bishop of Sheffield, seeking to fulfil this by '*Equipping the local church to effectively engage, grow and disciple a new generation of young people, children and families.*'

Brief descriptions of activity are offered online to deliver this under three strands: renewed, released and rejuvenated. The 'rejuvenated' strand is about 'Growing the church younger and urgently planting new congregations'. The Centenary Project is one of eight key areas listed here, along with the following summary statement: '*Engage an additional 2500 children and young people through the Centenary Project by 2025, bringing at least 250 to baptism and/or confirmation.*'¹²

References to this strategy for growth and particularly 'growing younger' can be tracked through the projects' annual reports. The SDF bid of 2017 draws on 'From Anecdote to Evidence' and 'Talking Jesus' findings that ministry with toddlers, children and families is critical as '*41% of practising Christians in England come to faith as a child, with early exposure to the Christian faith and growing up in a Christian family key influencers.*'¹³ Later sections talk of the 'step change' the Centenary Project is bringing about for '*mission and ministry amongst children, young people and families...as part of the wider cultural change which underpins our diocesan strategy.*'¹⁴

In 2020, Bishop Pete offered his perspective on the project, valuing the '*creativity*' and '*stubborn perseverance*' of the CP workers during lockdown.¹⁵ He went on to refer to the four-headed beast - the challenge of: attendance, budgets, church structures and demographics.¹⁶ '*It's been obvious for decades that across the diocese as a whole we have too little engagement with younger*

¹¹ Summarised online at <https://www.sheffield.anglican.org/diocesan-strategy> [accessed 12/11/2021]

¹² <https://www.sheffield.anglican.org/rejuvenated> [accessed 21/05 2021]

¹³ *Transforming Children's, Youth and Families' Work* Diocese of Sheffield Bid for SDF Second Stage Application November 2017, p. 7.

¹⁴ *Transforming Children's, Youth and Families' Work* Diocese of Sheffield Bid for SDF Second Stage Application November 2017, p. 26.

¹⁵ *5-year celebration newsletter (May 2020)* [accessed 12/11/2021]

¹⁶ *The Diocese of Sheffield (anglican.org)* [accessed 29/11/2021]

people, especially those aged 13-25.' He sees the project as 'key to the whole diocesan strategy' and points to encouraging developments with relation to each strand of the strategy:

- Renewed: '*...young people have already formed their own branch of the diocesan prayer community...*'
- Released: '*...hub coordinators ... workers and interns are exercising real leadership working out your own calling to be lights for Christ in the world and so role modelling something to the children and young people in your care ...*'
- Rejuvenated: '*...reaching out with the good news about Jesus to help children and young people across the diocese to find in Him their Saviour and their Lord.*'

Children and Young People's Advisor, Mike North, commented that '*more often than not, the children and youth brief can feel pushed to the edge of diocesan life*', but because this project sits within the Parish Support Team who oversee all mission and ministry of the diocese, they feel very important in the diocesan agenda. '*CP is a success story for the diocese to be proud of.*'

One of the wider stakeholders suggested there may be further to go with the 'released' strand in that sometimes there can be '*...a mindset of "now we've got someone to do XYZ"... but when it works, it's also about enabling others.*' Other stakeholders offered comments such as '*there is a lot of support for the project...*' and the project is '*entirely in keeping with diocesan strategy*'.

Most of the wider CP workers expressed their feeling that their primary identity is local. They are known first and foremost as their local church's worker. This brings a helpful dynamic of embeddedness to the project but also raises the issue of 'hiddenness' as the impact of the project in delivering the diocesan strategy is not always visible. This 'hiddenness' also occurs to some degree at a local level where ministry flourishes in midweek gatherings not seen by the Sunday congregation. There is beauty to mission work that quietly gets on with what it is called to do; the challenge is making sure key stakeholders see what is occurring.

One wider stakeholder observed that the CP worker cohort has helped to bring a greater diversity to a historically white, grey, male diocese. '*It's still predominantly white but [this project] challenges the grey and male.*' However, one parish priest shared a concern in interview that, as lay workers, Centenary Project workers seemed to be somewhat overlooked in wider diocesan conversations and not valued as much as clergy. One of the CP workers added their sense that being project workers relating to the diocese feels a little like being at '*...a wedding and we're at the kids' table*'. The central team noted how this is reflected in the wider culture of the Church of England which they sincerely hope will change in time.

Suggestions for the future:

- As this project is seen by senior staff as key to the diocesan strategy, draw on their expertise for continued ways in which CP workers can be seen to have a higher profile in the diocese.
- Share good news stories of the ways in which workers are uniquely placed to offer pastoral support in their contexts and how this models collaborative ministry as CP workers work alongside clergy.
- Explore with CP workers this strange 'one foot in both camps' dynamic of feeling a primary identity as local but also being part of a flagship diocesan project. Explore why some workers feel 'one step removed' from interaction with the diocese and consider approaches for more integration.

2.2 Impact on Mission

In this section, we consider the Centenary Project's impact on the following three areas: parishes; discipleship and evangelism; and children, young people, and families. These areas are all inter-related, with considerable overlap between them. To avoid unnecessary repetition, the statistical summaries in this section draw on more detailed material in Appendix C: Commentary on Statistical Data.

2.2.1 The project's impact on parishes has been overwhelmingly positive

Evidence to date:

- Although most churches with a CP worker had some children attending prior to the worker's appointment, they needed support from the project to grow and develop the work.
- Churches with a CP worker have a higher proportion of under 18s in their Worshipping Community than churches without a CP worker. There has been a statistically significant difference between them for every year since 2017.
- CP workers have enabled churches to do things they would have otherwise struggled to do: support volunteers, develop new mission, respond to the unforeseen e.g. COVID-19.
- Our six case studies identify a variety of wider community benefits generated by CP workers.

Further detail

As part of this evaluation, we reviewed the most recently available Statistics for Mission data for the Diocese of Sheffield,¹⁷ comparing the experiences of parishes which had a CP worker with those which had not. To do this, a group of churches that have not had a CP worker was created to act as a control group when comparing data. These control group churches were sampled based on size (AWA attendance) and location (deaneries) to match the characteristics of the CP churches as much as possible.

As Appendix C explains in more detail, we found a 'dramatic difference' between CP churches and the control group concerning the proportions of **Worshipping Community (WC)** members under 18 years of age. In this regard, there has been a statistically significant difference ($p < 0.0001$) for every year since 2017. This means that current CP churches, year on year, have a higher proportion of children and young people as a part of their Worshipping Community than their non-CP counterparts.¹⁸ We also found some difference between CP churches and the control group concerning **the proportions of under 18 years olds in the Average Weekly Attendance (AWA)**. However, this difference is less pronounced and not statistically significant.

¹⁷ Note that throughout this report, all figures for AWA, WC and baptisms are derived from the raw Statistics for Mission returns provided to us by the Diocese of Sheffield. These may differ from the officially published figures produced by Research & Statistics, Archbishops' Council.

¹⁸ Note: this test was only on churches who currently have a CP worker. It was also true for all CP churches (past and present), but this difference was less pronounced.

Children as a proportion of WC	2020	2019	2018	2017	2016	2015
Currently active CP churches only	21.8%	28.0%	27.1%	24.1%	19.4%	19.4%
Control churches paired with currently active CP churches	8.6%	16.8%	17.3%	19.5%	16.2%	18.2%

Feedback from the central team also suggests that, in many cases, this ‘dramatic difference’ between the experience of CP churches and other churches has also continued during the pandemic. While many churches struggled to engage children, young people, and families during lockdowns, and in some cases were ‘*haemorrhaging children and young people*’, the CP team reflect that:

The vast majority of our CP workers worked throughout the lockdown, finding creative ways to continue relationships in an incredibly challenging time for everyone. This was the key difference between churches who lost contact and struggled to get re-started, and those who jumped right back in when restrictions eased.

Our workers went online, made videos, made packs for families and young people, used the phone to touch base, created outdoor groups and activities when permitted, served hot chocolate outside, sent letters and postcards... some of our workers were even appointed to their jobs during lockdown, and have grown groups and communities without any in-person activities! We were keen to communicate that lockdown didn’t mean stop everything.

Within most of the parishes where workers interviewed for this evaluation were based, some existing ministry was taking place through the work of volunteers, committed clergy and the occasional previous worker employed. However, CP workers commented that there was a feeling that work was not growing or developing. One said, ‘*When I came the numbers had depleted. There has been no growth in introducing new volunteers. They’d got into a mindset of this is how we’ve always done it ... but the numbers have slowly died off.*’

In more cases, talented and able volunteers increasingly ‘*had other commitments*’ and so midweek ministry had been ‘*stripped back*’ before the worker arrived. In another, as much as the parish wanted to, ministry had fallen to a few people who couldn’t sustain it without wider support.

Ageing congregations were also cited as a reason for having only minimal activities for children and families. Despite effective mission to families in years gone by, ‘*families and young people and children are different now and how we need to reach them has changed*’. Ageing congregations need support in responding to these changes.

As one central team member commented, ‘*success and sustainability look different in each context*’, but the following examples of impact to parish life were noted:

- To have a someone working locally with time they can give is a big advantage to **developmental work**
- During lockdown, CP workers **moved ministry online** and continued with outreach.
- The leadership of a parish is helped to do more **strategic thinking** because of their engagement with the project.
- From a HR perspective, the Centenary Project leads to a **culture of ‘can-do’**.
- Through workers, parishes are **supported with expertise** around safeguarding, risk assessments, fundraising and grant applications.

- As outlined in the Bentley Case Study 4, the ‘unintended consequence’ of having a worker gave extra **capacity to respond to crisis**.

How has this impacted the local community? Some examples shared include:

- As above, **additional ministry capacity** of local parishes to respond to crisis such as the Bentley floods and the Killamarsh shootings (where the children had attended a school in the parish of Woodhouse).
- **Ongoing work in schools** through assemblies and classroom work. As the 2020 Annual Report quoted, *‘It is such a joy to see how the children have developed confidence in expressing their thoughts and reflections.’*¹⁹
- **Rotherham Minster’s music activities**. *‘I started a music group for children... from that we’ve been able to engage with [new] families...’*
- In response to COVID-19, moving ministry outdoors and online. A worker shared *‘[Now] we are gonna close the church on a Friday once a term and still be outside, because it is beneficial for people to see what we do and be around in the community.’*

However, participants noted the following challenging issues under ‘impact on parishes’:

- Numbers can be complicated to work with. In one case study, many families stopped attending when the vicar left, which may give the false impression that the worker’s efforts have impacted attendance negatively.
- One incumbent observed there is *‘A lot of middle management in place as support, but sometimes it fills up all the time instead of releasing people in their ministry’*.
- What happens after they leave? Will workers train up teams in parishes? Is it realistic to expect workers to train up/mentor local volunteers as part of an exit strategy?
- Will young people impacted by the project see themselves as part of the parish and part of the Anglican church when they are older? The assumption is that if they have a good grounding in Anglican churches, they’ll drift back eventually, but will that be the case?

Suggestions for the future:

- Continue to review the balance between central team commitments and parish work for those workers on very part-time hours.
- Consider including more training for CP workers on sustainability strategies, incorporating learning into their practice ‘sooner rather than later’.
- Encourage parishes and CP workers to follow up - and share good news stories of - those who are now young adults who benefitted from the ministry of a CP worker when they were younger.

¹⁹ 2020 Annual Report, p. 13.

2.2.2 The project is making an impact on discipleship and evangelism in the diocese

Evidence to date:

- The project's SDF target of engaging with at least 2,000 children and young people on a regular basis by 2023 has been exceeded already.
- By January 2022, an estimated 2,966 children and young people had been regularly engaged. 25% of those engaged (761 individuals) were in regular discipleship groups.
- The most recent data available suggests that there are currently between 75-80 groups run by CP workers, with nearly 1,000 (965) children and young people regularly in groups.
- Alongside this, there are on average 8,000 'additional contacts' with children and young people every three months (for example through school assemblies). In the run up to Christmas 2021, this rose to 16,000.
- When group attendees were asked 'Does being part of our group make you want to know more about God or being a Christian?', the average score, on a scale of 0-4, was 3.1.
- The average score to the question 'Would you say that you are a Christian?', on a scale of 1-10, was 7.2.
- Many respondents also responded positively to questions about the project's impact on Bible knowledge, prayer life and other aspects of faith development.

Further detail

Appendix C contains further information and commentary on the statistical data briefly described above. When reflecting on this data, it is important to note that making comparisons between the project's historic and more recent data is made harder by the following factors:

- A new method for CP data collection was introduced part way through 2020, which makes comparisons with data before this date difficult.
- Due to changing and varying patterns of activity during the coronavirus pandemic, any attempt to compare ministry before and after the start of the pandemic is not comparing like for like.

In CP worker job descriptions and other project documentation, the vocabulary of 'engage', 'nurture' and 'discipling' is often used to differentiate between different depths of faith engagement:

- Engage is about connecting with those not already in church.
- Nurture is about working with those who've shown interest.
- Discipling is for those who've made a step of commitment.

Though these categories were not always explicitly referred to in our research interviews, our research uncovered stories and examples that illustrate the project's impact across all three areas. For example, one worker shared, *'A couple who came to church with their two children two years ago. The mum is now a leader and wants to be baptised and confirmed.'*

Another laughed and said, *'At times we can have more kids and youth than we do adults, which is a bit odd! [Me being here] means these kids get teaching which is designed for them. Before I got here, [they had to] make the most of whatever the vicar could deliver at the time which isn't easy, particularly in our context.'*

One central team member commented that, broadly speaking, discipleship development is easier to do and see in youth work. Conversely, evangelism - especially through the evidence of growing numbers attending church activities - is easier to see in children and families' work. More than one interviewee commented that discipleship of families - and, in particular, adult engagement - needs more thinking about in terms of delivery and impact measurement. A family discipleship questionnaire is in the planning.

While much of the current discipleship questionnaire gathers data through numerical scoring, there is space for open text comments under 'Is there anything else you would like to say?' after each section. The following quotes show how some respondents see the impact of the project:

In the section asking about...	When	Role	Illustrative quotes from open text comments
Community: responding to boredom and isolation, encouraging respect for others	2019	Parent/ carer	<i>'My daughter struggled to engage in RE at school. But the project has helped her to perceive the importance of seeing different viewpoints and the importance of debate. I am pleased to say she is now more engaged with RE as she understands the value of it.'</i>
	2020	Teacher/ volunteer	<i>'The online assemblies ... uploaded each week have been welcomed by all teachers in my school. If I am late sharing them, the teachers email to ask for this week's parable! The assemblies are engaging and thought-[provoking] for the children. One comment uploaded to Seesaw said: "I didn't expect this to be my thing, but it turned out it was really good." We are not a church school, but we can't wait for [worker] to come into school in person.'</i>
	2020	Teacher/ volunteer	<i>'The adults who have been involved, either through volunteering or participating, have found new friendships and trusted friends, and also places where they are able to express their faith and share it with their offspring comfortably and easily.'</i>
Group: wellbeing, feeling supported, accepted, wanting to know more about the Christian faith	2019	Parent/ carer	<i>'I have watched both my children grow in confidence, especially with the adults in the sessions. They are both very shy, but they are gaining confidence around other children. Everyone is caring and patient with the children. My son now has his own children's Bible and will ask for a "God story" at bedtime after Messy Church.'</i>
	2019	Parent/ carer	<i>'The Christian faith aspect of the group is apparent, but it is appropriately pitched to encourage participation in the group by those of any or no faith.'</i>
	2019	Parent/ carer	<i>'G's confidence has massively improved - at one point he wouldn't allow me to leave him in the group, but now he's super confident!'</i>
Faith and faith practices: Bible reading, prayer, whole life impact, sharing faith, volunteering	2019	Teacher/ volunteer	<i>'The toddler group age is very difficult to assess. We introduce them to story time, meaningful activities, prayer time and the church building. Also we show lots of welcoming love and friendliness to all. This seems to radiate through the group.'</i>
	2019	Teacher/ volunteer	<i>'The older children in the group are aware of being a Christian, of the importance of prayer and of sharing their faith. They will speak about these issues openly and honestly. I believe that they encourage the younger ones and that the younger ones learn from them more readily than from an adult leader.'</i>

Suggestions for the future:

- Continue the commendable work drawing out 'engage, nurture, disciple' distinctions which helpfully work at evangelism and discipleship at every stage of a faith journey.
- Consider exploring with workers (perhaps through training) what childhood spirituality and discipleship looks like so it is not measured entirely on numbers attending.
- Explore with workers what family discipleship might look like in their contexts and how parents can be encouraged in their faith. If this is beyond the talents or time of the worker, who else in the parish can help?

2.2.3 The project is making a difference in the lives of the children, young people and families they work with

Evidence to date:

- Survey questions about the impact of CP worker-run groups on participants all received high average scores. Statements about feeling ‘accepted’, ‘supported’, ‘belonging’ and ‘understood’ scored particularly strongly.
- Similarly, questions about the development of respect for others also received high scores.
- Our research uncovered many stories and examples that illustrate the workers’ impact on children, young people and families’ wider wellbeing.

Further detail

The average scores in response to the ‘wellbeing’ and ‘respect’ questions referred to above are detailed below. Appendix C contains further information and commentary on these and other statistical data.

‘Wellbeing’ questions	Average score (range = 0-4)
Stopping boredom	3.2
Grown in self-confidence	3.1
Helped to be yourself	3.2
Developed better friendships	3.3
Feel understood by leaders	3.6
Supported by group	3.6
Feel belonging in group	3.7
Accepted by others in group	3.7

‘Respect’ questions	Average score (range = 0-4)
Respect for others in the group	3.4
Respect for others in my town	3.2
Respect for others from other parts of the world	3.0

Furthermore, the good news stories shared on the diocesan website include feedback from families on Facebook during lockdown.²⁰ Comments included, ‘*We have just sat down to look at our Café 3:30 pack, your thoughtfulness and kindness has touched my heart*’, and ‘*We really enjoyed Messy Together; looking forward to the next one!*’

Here is a selection of further examples from the discipleship questionnaires gathered by the project:

- Children in **yellow**
- Youth in **orange**
- Adults in **red**

²⁰ <https://www.sheffield.anglican.org/centenary-project-news>

In the questions around community: responding to boredom and isolation, encouraging respect for others locally and more widely...

I love it! Learning about Jesus is so much fun. People at school and in my class don't care about Jesus, but I do and I love it! [aged 6]

It's a nice place to relax and think about my faith and discuss with other people. I really love the games and food. Nice atmosphere. [aged 17]

[Our worker] is an amazing person and has become a good friend. She is helping me every day on my journey with Jesus and I can't thank her enough. She is always so positive very encouraging.

The group is a lovely group to attend and it has been a real joy to go to and see other parents and carers with their children. It has provided a space where I could take my son and have fun, while also enjoying company of others...

It's helped me learn more about the Christian life and it's fun. [aged 9]

I really enjoy going. I feel welcome, always have a laugh and get to feel closer to God. [aged 14]

In the questions around the group and wellbeing: confidence in being themselves, feeling supported, accepted, belonging, wanting to know more about the Christian faith...

Would like more groups like this.

I like that we learn about all of God's people and animals. I love animals and God made them all! [aged 5]

The group is very friendly, not just the kids but the adults too. They treat us with respect. Plus helping on tuckshop is a bonus too. Thanks :) [aged 15]

You make friends. [aged 12]

I have found many new friendships within [this church] - a very welcoming place to go.

E always has lots of questions about God and Jesus in everyday life and kids church has helped him to answer his questions and apply God's words to his life. [aged 4]

In the questions around faith and faith practices: Bible reading, prayer, whole life impact, sharing faith, volunteering (and in 2020 the experience of connecting with and being supported in lockdown...)

They are great, they are friendly, they teach us about the Bible, but not in a boring way but that is relevant to me. [aged 15]

Thank you, thank you for being there and being the light in my dark times of worry X

I want to tell all of my friends about Jesus and how he died on the cross and how he loves us. [aged 6]

I love [this church]! By far the best thing to happen in my life over the last year - such a lovely group of welcoming supportive people. I can't thank them enough.

I pray if things go wrong! [aged 8]

I plan to help volunteering/leading/helping in the future. [aged 15]

Suggestions for the future:

- Consider sharing survey feedback more widely across the diocese. Include good news stories that help others see survey work needn't be intimidating.
- Consider more open textbox answers in the discipleship questions to see more nuance behind the scoring in a way that generates further conversation.

2.3 Potential Areas for Improvement and Future Exploration

Having reviewed the CP's progress with relation to its vision and values (section 2.1) and its impact on mission (section 2.2), this final part of our overall assessment considers potential areas for improvement and further exploration.

2.3.1 The project's communications strategy is progressing well

Evidence to date:

- The CP has a well thought out, clearly articulated, and recently updated communications strategy.
- The CP has worked hard to share compelling stories and statistics. Awareness of the project has grown as a result.

Further detail

Appendix D provides a summary of the Centenary Project's recently updated communications strategy, which articulates:

- Long term and shorter-term communications objectives
- Three key audiences: CP parishes, the wider Diocese of Sheffield, and other networks beyond the diocese (including other dioceses, grant funders, and other children's and youth organisations)
- Six key communication channels (social media, newsletter, website, Network magazine, eBulletin, annual report) with key messages identified for each

The consultation undertaken for this evaluation has focused particularly on the first two of the audiences identified (CP parishes and the wider diocese). Findings show that the CP has worked hard to share stories and statistics about the project's successes through effective and timely use of the communication channels identified above and that awareness of the CP has grown as a result. The fact that the communications strategy has been recently updated, alongside the inclusion of this dimension of the project in the evaluation brief, is also an indication that the central team are always keen to improve on communication.

It is worth noting, however, that some of the people interviewed had different and contrasting perceptions of how well-known and communicated about within the Diocese of Sheffield the CP is. If time allowed, telephoning a random sample of clergy, church wardens or children's workers in a parish without a CP worker from time to time would be a helpful test of how the project is perceived from the outside.

Most of the central diocesan leaders and staff felt that communication was working broadly well, with some suggesting that the Centenary Project seems more visible than other projects in the diocese, citing the CP's monthly newsletters, big social media presence, presentations to diocesan synod, features in Network magazine, video at diocesan development day as examples. Bishop Pete reflected that, though communication can always be improved, the project's annual reports are consistently imaginative and compelling.

'The project is a perfect PR story. If we can't raise money for this, we can't raise money for anything... the diocese might not realise how cutting edge they are. There's a national press opportunity here.'

(a diocesan staff member)

CP workers and central team members recognised the project works hard to showcase their work at a wider diocesan level and appreciated opportunities to be visible at events such as diocesan conferences, but some felt that the project's profile in the diocese was still relatively low. As one person put it: *'It's hard to know why such a flagship project of the diocese still feels uncommunicated about after all this time. People still ask "What is CP?". I have a hunch CP is seen as a grant-making body only.'*

Similarly, another worker suggested that the title 'Centenary Project Worker' may be unhelpful because it *'means nothing'* to anyone outside the diocese. They went on to comment: *'If you said that to someone on the street, they wouldn't know that was linked to church or youth or young people... I know it means something in the diocese ... it is significant about the pot of money it came from and the decision to do it... but it could be we're environmental officers or the cleaning team who have got that name...'*

One area dean interviewed was not sure how much other clergy *'on the ground'* hear or know about the Centenary Project. Another wondered if more communication with parishes might be worth trying *'something more regular and consistent in a digestible form for parish magazines, bulletin sheets, narrative, story-based'* because *'people recall stories... it's the personal things that they remember...'*

The central team also reflected on wider challenges for the project around communication. Some workers are shy and do not want to take the credit away from God, their teams, the children, youth, or families themselves. One worker did comment: *'I often don't give good news stories - that's God department.'* Often workers are busy, trying to keep work contained within the hours they are paid to work.

The central team also reflected that if every parish heard about project and wanted to enquire, they might potentially be *'swamped'*. However, good clear communication is still important for:

- Attracting good workers
- Securing finance for the project and existing posts
- Sharing the realities of how challenging ministry is to encourage others (rather than conveying the impression that the project's ministry is slick or easy)

During the evaluation, ideas and suggestions for stronger communication at various levels were offered by those interviewed. For example, more training on how a worker can promote their ministry within their parish, and wealthier churches sponsoring a worker in a poorer church.

However, nearly all the ideas have been addressed or are being addressed by the central project team. Other suggestions do not take into account the wider existing children's and youth work in the diocese as resourced by Mike North. This includes the Breathe Deep and Joined Up conferences, network gatherings (twice a year), Facebook groups, wider training opportunities and advice.

In response to the communications issues highlighted by this evaluation, the CP team reflect:

'In the way that ministry is quietly serving, loving and caring local communities, not making a song and dance about it, the CP doesn't seek to blow its own trumpet, or draw attention away from other important areas of the diocese's work. It wishes to be faithful, sacrificial, humble and loving.'

However, we also believe in sharing good news stories of God's love in action. We want the whole diocese to know that God is building his kingdom through the work of the CP, and young people, children and families are finding a place to belong, grow, and love others through the many groups and activities.'

We tread a narrow line between these two realities. We want to improve in our storytelling and comms, but we don't want to become arrogant, proud or self-seeking. We are keen to make sure all our workers know they are valued and treasured. We want to praise faithfulness, love in action and new growth. We want to direct ours and others' attention to God, rather than on our own efforts.

As giving should be done in secret, without one hand knowing what the other is doing, we hope the faithful giving of CP workers is in some way secret, hidden and known to God, so that he rewards the faithful.'

Suggestions for the future:

- Continue to communicate the wider diocesan picture to CP workers more often, so they can point others to wider opportunities.
- As new diocesan senior staff take up posts, invite them to network meetings.
- Use the 'lessons learned' paper accompanying this report to celebrate and promote the work of the project more widely.

2.3.2 The project delivers good value for money

Evidence to date:

- Compared to volunteer-led models of ministry, the CP is more expensive but delivers significant added value which other, more low-cost models cannot.
- Parish representatives thought the CP provides good value for money and that the benefits of being supported through the central team significantly outweigh the costs.
- Senior diocesan staff also agreed the project delivers value for money. In the context of wider budget challenges and constraints, they reported that deciding how far to continue investing in such fruitful work is 'a nice problem to have'.

Further detail

As has been previously noted, this project is unusual in employing children's and youth workers centrally who are at the same time deployed locally. Therefore, it is hard to find anything quite like this for any degree of project comparison.²¹

As part of this evaluation, we consulted the Church of England's National Youth Officer to discuss other models of children, youth and families ministry with which the CP might be compared. This led to the identification of a continuum of models (presented in full in Appendix E), which range from 'low cost' volunteer-led models of ministry to 'high cost' models that rely heavily on the employment of paid workers (and with various 'medium cost' options in between).

As Appendix E illustrates, each approach has benefits and limitations. The Centenary Project is clearly at the high cost end of the spectrum because, as well as the cost of supporting local CP workers, there are wider additional costs associated with employing a central CP team. However, as we have reflected in other research reports,²² the question of which approach (low or high cost) offers the best value for money or greatest return on investment is very difficult to answer because the models of ministry are so different. What does seem clear, though, is that:

- Most of the impacts described in Section 2.2, and illustrated by the case studies in Section 3, could not have been achieved without the employment of paid workers.
- Appendix E highlights the following value for money in this project: the sense of vocation, workers are theologically literate, workers use their time well, mission is enabled especially through midweek activities, parishes are well-supported in the recruitment process, clergy are indirectly assisted by the project's ongoing support of workers - in comparison with a volunteer model in which unpaid workers can often draw heavily on clergy time and energy for support (often a hidden cost).
- Compared to the full cost of deploying stipendiary clergy, CP worker salaries are very low. The Centenary Project Manager also shared her reflections that the CP is a relatively 'lightweight' project that provides very good value for money for the diocese.

²¹ Other, not dissimilar, projects that different people we have spoken to have mentioned during the course of our research, include the Diocese of Peterborough's Gen2 project, Network Youth Church within the Diocese of Carlisle and the Diocese of Birmingham's mission apprentice scheme. Researching such projects thoroughly, and providing a full value for money comparison, was not possible within the scope of this evaluation.

²² See Wier, A. (2016) *Sustaining young Churches: A qualitative pilot study of fresh expressions of Church in the Church of England*, p. 47. www.churcharmy.org.uk/Publisher/File.aspx?ID=204264

- The parish representatives we interviewed generally agreed that the CP represents good value for money. Although they recognised that the central project infrastructure comes with an additional financial cost, interviewees commented that the help provided by the central team had been well thought through and brought significant added value. Or as one focus group participant for the Hatfield case study (see Case Study 3) put it:

‘It’s the best project I’ve seen run from a diocesan level. And I’ve seen a good few!’

Case Study 5 (St Paul, Wheatley Park) further illustrates this point. Despite being a small church in a deprived area, St Paul’s were able to find further funding to continue their CP worker’s role after the initial three years of tapered diocesan funding. And though they considered employing the worker directly from year 4 onwards, they concluded that the benefits of continuing to be part of the wider Centenary Project outweighed the additional costs.

The diocesan staff we contacted also agreed with this assessment. This was summed up by Bishop Pete who, in response to the question ‘Does the Centenary Project deliver value for money?’, replied:

‘Yes, absolutely. So much so that we face a significant challenge in the coming years, deciding on how far to continue to invest in what has been such a fruitful piece of work. It’s a nice problem to have!’

Suggestions for the future:

- Promote the obvious benefits (outlined in this report) offered by this relatively high cost model.
- Ensure that the ‘added value’ generated by having a central team (not just individual local workers) is recognised and understood by all parties.

2.3.3 The project is key to delivering the diocesan strategy

Evidence to date:

- The CP is recognised by the senior staff of the diocese as playing a key role in the delivery of the diocesan strategy.
- People we interviewed also identified features of the Centenary Project which may be applicable or relevant to wider diocesan strategy and practice. Other parts of the diocese may be able to learn valuable lessons from the Centenary Project's experience of:
 - Attention to values
 - Modelling lay ministry
 - Gathering statistical data and participant feedback well
 - Resilience and collaboration in ministry
 - Distinguishing between engaging, nurturing and discipling
 - Support with fundraising

Further detail

As section 2.1.4 explains, the Centenary Project plays a key role in helping to deliver the diocesan strategy. Reflecting on this, Bishop Pete noted that the Centenary Project has *'drawn young people into diocesan prayer community; it has sought to enable our young people to live as lights for Christ; it has sought new discipleship and new congregations.'* Other diocesan staff we interviewed also commented: *'It feels as though the diocese can't do without this project.'*

However, we also discern something of a 'hiddenness' to this vital ministry, with many of the activities of CP workers occurring 'below the radar' or 'out of the spotlight' of mainstream church life. In this sense, there may be parallels between the experience of the Centenary Project and that of other 'sodal' mission communities like Church Army.²³ Like Jesus' images of salt or yeast, some of the work of the project is not very visible as workers spend time in schools or with midweek groups (at local level) and at support meetings away from clergy (at project level). Yet the work is highly intentional and highly influential. Furthermore, we have identified the following features of the Centenary Project which may be applicable or relevant to other parts of the diocese:

- **Attention to values.** This project has a lot to offer the diocese going forward in the way it lives out its values, supporting its workers in a way that invests in them. This is a potential starter for other forms of more collaborative working. Though people in posts that are not full-time could easily feel isolated, the Centenary Project has cultivated a strong sense of family and teamwork and workers feel invested in.
- **Modelling lay ministry.** The CP workers offer examples of the ways in which lay people can exercise leadership at parish level. While parish ministry can feel precarious without full-time stipendiary clergy, some of the parishes involved in this project have been able to avoid 'interregnum mentality' (an unwillingness to exercise authority, determine vision or strategically plan financially without a clergy person) as CP workers and focal ministers work together collaboratively.

²³ For an explanation of the terms 'modal' and 'sodal', see <https://churcharmy.org/our-work/research/publications/#modality-and-sodality-thinking>

- **Gathering statistical data and participant feedback well.** The Centenary Project has well-developed systems for collecting relevant statistics (see Section 2.3.5). Valuable learning is being gained about supporting frontline workers with data gathering (for example, by offering sessions where CP workers requiring help entering their data can access support) and inviting feedback from children, youth, and families. In this sense, this project models how to persist in gathering evidence of impact and to invest time in developing systems that are relevant, accessible, and appropriate.
- **Resilience and collaboration in ministry.** Noting how CP workers adapted and supported each other during the pandemic, Mike North cited the example of workers stepping in at short notice if a colleague needed an extra person to run a group. He went to on reflect: *‘It feels like a God thing to encourage one another, supporting one another if they need a leader to make a group run one evening. I see God in the obedience and bravery of not allowing the potential “no” of the pandemic to be a “no” in ministry.’*
- **Distinguishing between engaging, nurturing and discipling.** These are useful categories to ensure important different aspects of mission and ministry are not conflated or obscured. Initial contact with new people, nurture of those who have shown an interest, and discipleship of those who have already made some degree of commitment are all vital to prioritise simultaneously. Often in church life, the word ‘mission’ is used too generally, so this specificity helps.
- **Support with fundraising.** In many contexts, particularly disadvantaged areas, long-term sustainability requires accessing some grant funding. The Centenary Project is therefore wise to have a dedicated Funding Development Officer to support CP workers and parishes with fundraising. As one wider senior staff member commented, *‘The future is matched-funding, approaching DBF with grants already accessed.’* Knowing what funders are ‘out there’ for people to apply to, as well as support for completing paperwork for parishes without local expertise, is vital for the CP. There may be transferable learning here for other parts of the diocese.

Looking ahead, it is also going to be important to consider **how wider diocesan developments around Mission Areas and Oversight Ministry will affect the work of CP workers.** While the diocesan strategy remains consistent, the structures are changing.

Suggestions for the future:

- Explore if some CP worker roles may need to shift to include a greater focus on facilitating children and youth work across a whole mission area.
- Continue to closely monitor CP workers, checking that they are not spread too thin, particularly in disadvantaged or transient areas where developing sustainable volunteer teams is an ongoing challenge.
- If CP workers are to be part of resourcing the focal ministry model, engaging in collaborative teamwork across mission partnerships, consider including more training in collaborative ministry skills for workers.

2.3.4 The project is good at exploring further opportunities

Evidence to date:

- Ideas for further opportunities, making the most of available resources, were offered by participants. However, many of these have already been attempted by the central team who are quick to spot and explore further opportunities.

Further detail

- **CP worker retention and development pathways.** The Centenary Project workers are the project's most important resource. In recognition of this, it is important to have access to appropriate development opportunities. We also recognise that some workers may decide to move into ordained ministry. Though in some ways this will be a 'loss' to the project, we wonder what wider opportunities this may bring, e.g. how might some former CP workers be encouraged to continue to stay connected and become advocates on its behalf?

In response to these comments, the CP team offered the following reflections:

'This has always been a high priority for us, and we have created objectives with each of our CP workers which highlight training opportunities and explore with each worker how they wish to develop and grow in their role. New central roles become available occasionally, which also allow some to grow into new responsibilities. Plans to encourage more CP workers to further develop their ministry through ongoing training and formal education routes to come.'

- **Connecting CP parishes as well as workers.** Some of the parish representatives expressed a desire for a closer relationship with other parishes with CP workers. Though they appreciated the annual networking, they wondered if regional gatherings or subgroups around specific issues (e.g. Messy Church or Church in Schools) might help. However, the project has already explored this and when offered, there has been no interest.
- **Creative qualitative research to capture data on discipleship journeys.** Good research starts with the research question and identifies the best methodology to answer that question. Creative research methods (arts-based research) could collect stories to complement quantitative data. This approach would also potentially suit researching discipleship among children, especially young children. However, all CP workers are encouraged to consider different ways of doing this already.
- **Drawing in other children, youth, and family workers.** Several interviewees were concerned that other workers in the diocese who are not part of the Centenary Project might miss out on all the support and opportunities on offer. However, they are not aware of the Network Gatherings (twice a year) and Joined Up (annual) that take place each year. Furthermore, workers from outside the CP are often invited to take part in training.

- **Support for parishes without a children's, youth or family worker** - such as a database of shared resources, training for parishes in supporting their volunteers, resources for churches with no children's work - e.g. a weekly resource sheet linked to the lectionary²⁴ - or toy bags for churches should children happen to visit. However, all these are already offered.

Suggestions for the future:

- Continue to work on CP worker retention and development pathways.
- Consider potential links with workers who move into ordained ministry.
- Ensure all CP workers and wider stakeholders know of existing wider support for parishes without a CP worker.
- Consider offering some of the support services of the CP to other dioceses on a charged basis.

²⁴ One interviewee mentioned an example from the Diocese of Bath and Wells.

2.3.5 The project collects and uses data well

Evidence to date:

- The Centenary Project has well-developed systems for collecting relevant statistics and other data from CP workers and those they support.
- The CP team use the data collected to good effect in communicating the achievements of the whole project through its various communications channels.

Further detail

As a research team, we were impressed with the Centenary Project's systems for collecting relevant statistics and other data from CP workers and (through discipleship questionnaires) those they support. These have helped enable the project to demonstrate that it has exceeded quite challenging targets in relation to evangelism and discipleship. And the introduction of discipleship questionnaires has facilitated the gathering of more qualitative data, including the quotes from young people and adults that appear in the 2020 Annual Report.

It is always important, however, to acknowledge the limitations of any data collection system. As we noted in Section 2.2.2, historical comparison of project data over time is complicated by the following factors:

- A new method for CP data collection was introduced part way through 2020.
- Patterns of ministry have radically changed since the start of the pandemic. Comparing life before and after the start of the pandemic is not comparing 'like for like'.

Comments from CP workers and other stakeholders also cast further light on some of the limitations of existing data and the 'health warnings' that should accompany it. Some workers and parish representatives expressed a reticence to push for or read too much into targets based on attendance only. For example, one commented: *'You could get thousands of kids to come to a group if you offer unlimited free sweets, but that's not making a difference, is it?'*

The discipleship questionnaire was seen as a step in the right direction for gathering more qualitative data to accompany the numbers. Discipleship forms were said to work particularly well for gathering feedback from teenagers, but it was *'sometimes quite tricky to get it filled in by families'*. This suggests that the project may need to continue to refine its processes, developing further data collection tools more tailored to different types of participants (e.g. children, parents, teenagers). Another worker suggested the questionnaire design *'wants looking into'* because *'the questions are really no good for people who don't come to church'*.

It also needs to be acknowledged that the current data collection system does not track the longitudinal journey of young people involved, or whether young people who 'age out' of certain groups or activities still stay connected with the parish somehow. The numbers reported do not specify if the same young people are growing up through activities or if different young people are swapping in and out.

As one worker put it when reflecting on the questionnaire: *'I don't think it shows what people think it shows. There are so many variables. I worry about that as a metric. It feels as though the project is trying to capture quantitatively something that is qualitative. And I don't understand how the data is then used.'* In this sense, further qualitative research may be helpful in gathering more nuanced and meaningful data.

All this underlines the importance of enabling CP workers and other stakeholders to better understand the purpose, benefits and limitations of data gathering.

Suggestions for the future:

- The quantitative element is commendably strong. Continue to review and refine the qualitative data collection tool to gather evidence of impact on discipleship journeys, especially with families.
- Consider more data visualisation, animations and stories to convey information in a simple, visual, relatable way to convey the ‘heart’ of the project.
- Check that the responses from the discipleship questionnaires and other data are fed back to workers and parishes who would like them.
- Continue with the plan already underway of providing customised local reports for individual CP workers. These can also be shared with PCCs or potential funders.
- Continue to help CP workers understand the purpose, benefits and limitations of data gathering.

3 Illustrative Case Studies

Case Study 1: St Mary Magdalene, Whiston and St Cuthbert, Herringthorpe

This case study was selected to offer the experience of the first parish to recruit a Centenary Project worker, who started with under 5s ministry and has supported the cohort through to youth work.

Setting the scene

Lucy Luckock is the Centenary Project worker for the parishes of St Mary Magdalene, Whiston and St Cuthbert, Herringthorpe. She is employed in Whiston for 10 hours per week and Herringthorpe for 5 hours per week. Whiston and Herringthorpe are part of a mission area and share two oversight ministers with St James, Clifton. Clifton is not involved with the work of the Centenary Project.

Lucy grew up in Whiston and continues to live in the local area with her family. She was the first CP worker to be employed by the Diocese of Sheffield and has been in post for 6 years.

In this case study, we interviewed Lucy and conducted a focus group with Lucy and three others who are involved with or benefit from Lucy's ministry.

Centenary Project worker activities:

- Toddler groups: two at Whiston (Little Fishes) and one at Herringthorpe. During the pandemic, this provision was adapted to one online group.
- Sunday groups, all age services and fun activity days, including a yearly trip to Cleethorpes with 30-40 people.
- Monthly online service during the pandemic.
- Providing school assemblies in three primary schools, with approximately 500 children hearing Bible stories monthly.
- Development of a youth group.
- Ongoing work with other churches in the local area.
- Nourish: monthly parents' group.

Mission impact

According to Lucy, her original mission has been to:

'...reach out to the families and to the local community to try and provide different activities and engage them with the church [so] ... they can start on their faith journeys.'

When conducting both the interview and focus group, it was evident that this aim and how it fits within the vision of the Centenary Project has been realised in a plethora of ways since Lucy has been in post. One example that highlights this is, due to the pandemic the toddler groups had to be moved online, but in September 2021, Lucy advertised that a toddler group was returning in person. She said, *'within five minutes, I got eight people ... registering'*. Alongside this, a member of the focus group, when commenting on the provision of the monthly online service, said, *'It's still allowed us to be engaged and still feel that we could be part of the church ... and that our faith was still there and prayer [was] being answered.'*

In reaching out to the local families and community, Lucy has been able to develop a youth group with approximately 14 teenagers attending. Lucy is encouraging some of those young people to think about baptism and confirmation. As a result of this developing ministry, a member of the church community is hoping to undertake the Diocese of Sheffield's Aurora course to become an assistant youth leader. Additionally, Lucy has worked with other churches in the local area, and during the pandemic she has created outdoor trails for the families to connect with. *'It has given a link between the local community and the churches. I think probably the church is more seen within the community. It has definitely made an impact.'*

Lucy has worked hard to not just engage the children and young people but also parents, families, and guardians too. As a result of the Nourish parents' group, one couple have become more involved in church and are wanting to be baptised and confirmed. A member of the focus group said about Nourish: *'I've engaged more with the church since being part of church ... it's bringing me back, and I'm finding comfort and help and my faith again.'*

Through both the interview and the focus group, it became apparent that another large part of the missional impact is the presence of a CP worker who works with the ministry team and local community:

'Lucy's really held most of us together as a church. We're an older congregation, and having a younger person like Lucy and all her wonderful talents has just made such a difference. We've had people who've come to church who I'm sure wouldn't have come without Lucy.'

Looking to the future

The parishes of Whiston and Herringthorpe initially accessed some external grant-funding for a year before the Centenary Project helped with the standard three-year supported funding. At present, the CP worker is on a yearly contract with both churches.

In the focus group, the financial impact of paying for Lucy was raised as a concern; however, all felt that the role of the CP worker should continue and become more rooted in the life of the church.

Lucy stated that although she was employed for 15 hours a week, she often works over 20 hours. This raises important questions for the sustainability of the Centenary Project work. The focus group felt it would be excellent if the CP worker was employed for more hours, but they would need more volunteers to support the work.

Regarding long-term sustainability, Lucy felt that although the initial three years of funding were excellent, *'you've not really started to make an impact then'*. This was echoed in the focus group who were concerned about how the Diocese of Sheffield would support CP workers in the future.

Key learning points

- In her experience, Lucy felt that it was good for CP workers to have some prior knowledge of the local community and the context the churches are in.
- As Lucy was the first CP worker to be employed by the diocese, she has a unique insight into how the work with the central team and project has evolved. Lucy mentioned the importance of mentoring to support CP workers:

'Each and every worker is encouraged to be the best they can be, and they celebrate each worker with their unique talents. I really do think the Centenary Project has made a big difference to the diocese.'

- Relating to hours and use of time, one member of the focus group explained that although the Centenary Project was fantastic at training, networking and mentoring, whether a CP worker is employed full- or part-time they do the same amount of training. In their experience, sometimes all of Lucy's weekly hours can be taken up by training although she completes her weekly work as a CP worker alongside this.

'Go for it! Jump at the chance, because it's spreading God's love and God's word to people who aren't necessarily going to hear it.'

Lucy, CP worker

Case Study 2: St James, Woodhouse

This case study was selected as an example of a parish who initially recruited for a youth and families worker but swiftly realised children's work was also needed as part of the post. They have also been successful in applying for external grant funding to finance the post beyond three years.

Setting the scene

The parish of St James Woodhouse is on the east side of Sheffield at the end of the 52 bus route. The village square at the heart of the community is surrounded by a mix of private and social housing and two primary schools - Woodhouse West and Brunswick.

St James church is in a good location on the village square, but it is the parish hall that has the greater footfall. It is always fully booked by community activities such as dancing and Slimming World.

There is a strong sense of community in this urban village, evidenced in an evening vigil held to grieve for the recent tragic deaths of the Killamarsh family whose children previously attended Woodhouse West.

Centenary Project worker Dave Ludbrook was appointed as Youth Worker in April 2016 for 30 hours a week. Under the vicar and a previous locally funded children's worker, ministry with families and children was already underway. Dave was appointed to develop youth work as a follow-on.

However, 14 months later, the vicar left and much of the previous growth among families dissipated. In 2018, Dave's job description changed to include work with families in an attempt to build connections with local families again from scratch. In 2019, Dave's hours reduced to 17.5 a week to take on a new role within the project's central team.

Meanwhile, the parish has been grouped with neighbouring parishes to form a mission partnership under one oversight minister. I spoke with Revd June Fox (now focal minister and SSM at St James and volunteer at Fresh Kids), Martin Ripley (church warden and member of Dave's support group) and Lizzy Rolls (parent and previously a volunteer with Fresh Youth).

Centenary Project worker activities

Dave's activities currently include:

- **FRESH Kids** - weekly games, crafts and Bible storytelling on a Wednesday after school for primary school aged kids.
- **FRESH Youth** - weekly Wednesday evening session for secondary school aged kids, including games, activities, tuck shop, a talk and group work (on relevant mental health/social topics with biblical input).
- **FRESH Café Church** - monthly worship (first Sunday of the month) intended for families, to intentionally involve parents. Held in parish hall.
- **FRESH Glow** group (third Sunday of the month). This is the only Sunday with provision (in an attempt to consolidate resources). Parents are encouraged to drop children at the hall and then participate in the adult service in church.

- **FRESH Christian Union** in Handsworth Grange secondary school. Usually weekly, *although not running at the moment due to COVID-19*. Initial contact came through a congregation member who works/ed as a teacher there and asked for support.
- Termly **FRESH assemblies**, also in Handsworth Grange secondary school, a week of delivering similar content to different year groups over the course of a week. Includes mental health week and a faith topic.
- **FRESH Assemblies in both local primary schools** every half-term or so, six in each school per year, including Harvest, Christmas, and Easter.
- Dave was able to keep activities going during **COVID-19**. FRESH Kids transferred online for a season with a weekly core of nine attending, but Dave also piloted an online Lego club (averaging 12) and Craft Crew sessions in Spring 2021 for six weeks.

Mission impact

Church warden Martin reflected, *'So many people don't know what church is. For example, baptism families look totally lost when you hand them a book.'* While Martin doesn't see many young people journeying with core church community, at least they get some exposure to church and the Christian faith through Dave.

'At the moment, without Dave, we'd struggle to attract anyone young; it's the things Dave is running with the children and young people that are attracting the families. I don't know what we'd do to keep some contact with young people and them having some contact with the church.'

Church members are very committed to the project. The older members may not be able to volunteer, but they pray for the work and come along to what they can, including the monthly café service in the hall. Revd June commented that now FRESH Kids, FRESH Youth, FRESH GLOW and café church *'are the only growth areas in church'*.

At a very basic level, Dave's role contributes to the ministry of the parish in the sense that the local church is still active in the community, playing its part to work collaboratively with the police (violence reduction unit) and local schools, liaising over safeguarding disclosures and providing pastoral support.

Dave isn't just the youth worker - he does a lot to support the wider church community. Having Dave has made quite a difference since they lost their vicar, in particular, maintaining the links with local schools. In addition, June commented, *'The sense of community on Facebook is amazing in Woodhouse. Dave is brilliant at [at being a presence on] Facebook.'*

Dave sees everything he does as evangelism and the team agreed that *'the schools work clearly is'*. The family nights and seasonal events have drawn big numbers and been enjoyed. Even café church (which can gather up to 80 people) feels like evangelism as Dave gets to know parents for the first time.

FRESH Youth ran for three years with steady growth but still relatively small numbers of youth and volunteers. From September 2019, it began to grow dramatically, and after a break during lockdown, numbers have returned to around 30 and the teenagers keep inviting friends. What to develop for those turning 18 is fast becoming a key question.

Looking to the future

Dave has been successful in accessing grant funding from the Henry Smith Charity. This is a huge relief as the church will have to rely on external grants from now on to fund this post. The church did have historical bequests, but they are now *'run down'* with having to pay out for urgent building maintenance.

The wider mission partnership is currently recruiting a capacity minister to work with the oversight minister, but that person will most likely work elsewhere in the mission partnership. Having someone like Dave based in Woodhouse is important to communities like this. For example, June noted *'the vigil [for the Killamarsh tragedy] last week was so well-received'*.

If the team of volunteers continues to be sufficiently built up and St James can get a replacement for Dave if he left, the ministry is sustainable. *'There are all sorts of things we can do if we have space, volunteers and finance'* - the three necessary parts of the equation.

Key learning points

1. Collaboration on HR and fundraising

Without support from the project central team and in particular Sarah Beardsmore, applying to external funders (beyond the Centenary Project) would have been tricky. The application process contains a degree of jargon, plus there are continual changes in safeguarding law, GDPR, and risk assessments which a church must keep on top of. Their PCC secretary did well to write the bid, but not every PCC would have someone willing and able.

2. Prepare well

The team offered this wisdom to other churches considering a CP worker:

- Make sure you budget properly and factor in NI, redundancy and expenses - young people don't deserve 50-year-old chairs and dried out glue sticks that feel like cast offs.
- Think in advance about who is suitable to take over line management responsibilities for a CP worker if the vicar moves on (as was the case here). It always helps to have a Plan B ready.
- Make sure the church has a core group for supporting the CP worker. The PCC have got to want it; it can't be something 'done' to a church.

3. Discipling young leaders

Without a full-time stipendiary clergy person, scope for discipleship development feels limited. Currently, it feels as though they are stretched to capacity, although the team are hoping to run a Christianity Explored course in the autumn.

However, some degree of discipleship is clearly evident in those adults and older teenagers who now volunteer. As June remarked, *'You can see [the discipleship impact] in the teams of leaders more than anything.'*

Case Study 3: St Lawrence, Hatfield

This case study was selected as an example of a relatively affluent parish who recruited a worker through SDF funding.

Setting the scene

St Lawrence is a church with a committed but ageing congregation in Hatfield, a village on the edge of Doncaster. In January 2020, Rachel Ridler was appointed as a Centenary Project worker (28 hours per week) to help St Lawrence build on its successful Messy Church and baptism ministry (60 baptisms a year) and develop further ways of reaching out to and discipling children, young people and families.

Centenary Project worker activities

Rachel was only in post for three months before the first national lockdown and, due to the pandemic, her work developed in many ways not imagined at the outset.

Key activities during the pandemic included:

- Moving Messy Church online (something others at St Lawrence did not have the confidence or capacity to do), with Facebook Live events accompanied by the delivery of craft packs to 65 families in the parish.
- Video assemblies and relationship building for the parish's five local primary schools.
- Building up a database of local people and organisations (200-300 contacts by the end of lockdown) to invite to in-person events as and when restrictions eased.
- A virtual summer club, combining online content with chalk path walking trails and creative prayer activities (engaging 50 children).
- Online Christingle and Nativity services - keeping church and community traditions alive in the parish.
- Starting a new parent and toddler group (initially online) which proved to be a valuable source of support for parents of babies born during the pandemic.

As lockdown restrictions began to ease during 2021, the CP worker began to help St Lawrence establish a more regular pattern of activities for children, young people and families, with increasing amounts of face-to-face interaction. Key elements of this included:

- Monthly Messy Church - relaunched in person in September 2021, with 17 families (60 people) attending. They are also hoping to develop a Messy Home Group - an opportunity for adults to dig deeper and explore faith further.
- Little Lions Toddler Group - during the spring and summer of 2021, this mostly met outside in a field next to the church but moved indoors in autumn 2021.
- Hatfield Heroes youth group - a follow-on activity for young people in Y6-9 who come through from Messy Church. Up to 10 young people involved.
- Schools work - various forms of engagement with the parish's five primary schools, including:
 - Assemblies and other input around the major Christian festivals
 - 'Moving up' sessions and reflective prayer with Y6 leavers moving up to secondary school
 - Backpack Blessings Roadshow - a fun assembly and prayer activity for children at the start of the school year; approximately 1,500 children given a tag with a Bible verse on to put on their backpack

Mission impact

'We're able to serve our parish in a way we would never have been able to do without having [a Centenary Project worker].'

'There has been a remarkable increase of children and young people engaging with Messy Church, Little Lions and Hatfield Heroes youth groups.'

'Rachel has been like a breath of fresh air. She heads up a team of volunteers and she is both dedicated and inspirational.... She has almost single-handedly revolutionised online events and teamwork, whilst developing risk assessments and safeguarding.'

These comments from people at St Lawrence who have worked closely with Rachel illustrate how much the parish has benefited from having a Centenary Project worker. Key dimensions to this include:

- Helping Messy Church move online during the pandemic - something St Lawrence would otherwise have been unable to do so quickly: *'The confidence would have got there eventually but it would have been 6-9 months later.'*
- Helping the church keep community spirit alive in Hatfield during the pandemic. Many other local organisations were slow to move activities online and the church played a valuable role by responding so quickly. As one focus group participant commented, *'During Covid, Rachel's outreach got us into places we wouldn't have got if she wasn't here. We wouldn't have managed that without her.'*
- Setting up new groups and raising the profile of the church in the local community.

Focus group participants described the approach to evangelism and discipleship facilitated by the CP worker's appointment as *'gentle but effective'*. Evidence of the emerging impact of this includes:

- Children remembering the 'Little Lions Prayer' used weekly at toddler group and the 'backpack blessings' Bible verse, or saying things like, 'This is my church' (story of a six-year-old boy told by a research participant).
- Parents as well as children joining in creative prayer activities. One interviewee mentioned seeing a dad write down a prayer at Messy Church, which they knew was *'a big step for that family'*.

The local incumbent, Revd Liz Turner-Loisel, also told us: *'Because of things that Rachel's been putting up, I've been getting lots of enquiries through the Facebook page.... People I don't know have rung and said: "Can I chat please?" It's small steps, but you can begin to see the big picture coming together.'* Another interviewee commented that children, youth, and families ministry at St Lawrence often involves a *'softly, softly approach'* to evangelism, but this approach is effective because it *'eventually gets conversations going'*.

Looking to the future

At the time of our visit, Rachel had been in the role for less than two years and reflected: *'If I left at the moment, a lot of it would probably stop because I am the main driving force.'* But she is working to strengthen and build up existing volunteers, as well as drawing in younger leaders.

Financially, the longer-term sustainability prospects for this post currently seem promising. Financial sustainability here is aided by the following factors:

- Rachel came to the role with a professional background in fundraising and is working with others from St Lawrence to develop a sustainable funding strategy that combines several different income streams (e.g. regular giving, fundraising events, and trust funding).
- St Lawrence is a reasonably affluent parish and the PCC has agreed to fund any shortfall in income from its endowment fund.

Key learning points

1. Local and central support

For both the CP worker and wider focus group, a key strength of the Centenary Project has been the strong mix of local and central support available to Centenary Project workers.

- Locally, Rachel has benefitted from a supportive and experienced line manager and a wider support group of 4-5 others from the parish who she is able to call on (via a WhatsApp group) for advice and support.
- Relationships with other Centenary Project workers (via a Messenger group and network events) have been highly valued. Reflecting on these, Rachel told us: *'I don't think any of us [CP workers] will have got through lockdown without that.'*
- Support from the central Centenary Project team (including mentoring and help with objective setting) has been a further valued layer of support. In this regard Rachel told us that the central team's input has helped her to focus and prioritise. Focus group members commented:

'The help that's been provided by the Centenary Project has been well-thought out, targeted and researched.'

'It's the best project I've seen run from a diocesan level (and I've seen a good few!).'

2. Flexibility and focus

Those from the parish involved in the project reflected that the experience of applying for a CP worker had been *'quite an arduous process'* because it was extremely thorough. Though at times that thoroughness had been slightly frustrating, it had been worth it in the end.

Focus group members also reflected that, though the Centenary Project's emphasis on targets and objective setting helps to give CP workers a focus, a degree of flexibility is also important in responding to changing local circumstances.

3. Tapered funding

For this parish, it was felt that the Centenary Project's tapered funding model worked well because it allowed time to *'build the credibility of the project before you start asking for money'*. Within this context, it was felt that it would be realistic for the parish to fully fund the CP worker within three years, but participants also acknowledged that this may not be the case for poorer parishes. As one put it, *'We're okay, but I suspect some other parishes may struggle.'*

Case Study 4: St Peter, Bentley

This case study was selected to offer the experience of a parish who, when they first expressed an interest in the project, were not in a position to apply financially but took time to prepare and subsequently appointed a worker two years later.

Setting the scene

Bentley is a small, relatively deprived, ex-mining village two miles to the north of Doncaster. It hit the headlines in November 2019 when parts of the village were affected by the unprecedented flooding of the river Don.

Bentley is served by no less than five churches. St Peter's CofE church is situated in a prime location right next to the Bentley High Street Primary School.

When the local incumbent, Revd Dave Berry, and his young family arrived in 2016, there was no children's work at St Peter's. Requests for infant baptism were common, but enticing young families to become regular members of the church was the ongoing challenge.

Dave and his wife Catherine introduced a weekly 11.15am family service on a Sunday, Little Fishes (mothers' and toddlers' group) and Cuppa in the Car Park.

In 2018, the PCC began to explore the possibility of working with the Centenary Project to develop these ministries. In June 2019, Steph Darbyshire was appointed as their Children and Families Worker (20 hours per week) on a three-year contract.

In the preliminary discussions, there was some thought that neighbouring parish Spotborough might be included in the remit of the post, but it was realised a worker would be stretched too thinly working over two parishes.

Centenary Project worker activities

Steph was in post only nine months before COVID-19 meant ministry moved online. In and out of lockdown, she helped lead the family service via YouTube, was streamed live into school to deliver classroom assemblies and maintained a permanent presence on social media, posting YouTube craft videos and hosting Facebook Live chats.

Emerging from COVID-19 in 2021, Steph's activities currently include:

- The weekly **Sunday 11.15am family service** (now back in church) jointly led with the vicar, which sets a good example of collaborative teamwork and a variety of male/female/younger/older leaders 'up front'. A few parents have started to come to this service with their children.
- Tuesday morning **Little Fishes** offering pastoral support to local families with children under 5. It meets weekly in term-time, but the group asked to meet in school holidays too with older siblings attending (Mixed Fishes).
- **Lighthouse** every Wednesday evening. This is a discipleship group for churched children. It has grown from two children attending to now six.
- **Cuppa in the Car Park** on Thursday mornings in term-time to meet new families, offer prayer and pastoral support, and serve hot drinks whatever the season/weather. The last one of term is always hot chocolate and games.

- **Schools work.** Though not a church school, one senior staff member is a Christian. Steph has developed a strong link with the school, delivering material onsite and hosting events in church that school bring the children to.
- **Connect (now called Connexion)** meets on a Wednesday afternoon every fortnight for families. It is predominantly a social gathering of a meal and board games, with up to 30 attending.

Mission impact

‘...we’re a better church for having a CP worker ... we have good foundations now and are sowing seeds.’ Revd Dave Berry

There are multiple factors which make numerical growth challenging for this parish. While the church has *‘quite a big front door’*, making contact with new people through midweek activities and baptism requests, there is a degree of *‘churn’* as others leave for a variety of reasons.

However, since Steph has been in post, there are noticeably more families and children in church on a Sunday. Parents warm to Steph because she is genuinely interested in their children. At Lighthouse, numbers are growing and - as the older children will soon move up to Y7 - Steph and Dave are beginning to think about youth work.

Recognising that Dave and his wife were *‘just muddling through’* when they initiated these activities, the appointment of a CP worker has made a huge difference in terms of increasing the capacity of the leadership team. It’s possible that the church’s debt support, led by church warden Karen Jones, wouldn’t have got going when it did had Steph not been on team.

When the floods hit, this extra team capacity meant Dave and his wife Catherine, a social worker, were freed up to offer an immediate and substantial response to the crisis. Through this, the church gained a reputation of being a force for good in the community which felt like a *‘game changer’* in terms of mission momentum. In retrospect, Dave called this an *‘unintended consequence’* of having a CP worker in post.

Steph commented that the hardest thing about the job is keeping to the hours. Everyone has high expectations of the post, including herself. But the project helps workers look after themselves, making sure they are not overworking and not being taken advantage of.

‘I love my job. It’s the best job I’ve ever had ... I used to be a teacher’s assistant which was high stress with no support. This job is totally opposite.’
Steph CP worker

Looking to the future

Even though the parish has increased its financial contribution to the post incrementally, sustainability is a significant challenge. After three years, the parish won’t be able to afford to fund the post, but they know there is plenty of funding out there. With help from Sarah Beardsmore from the Centenary Project, a church member with experience of applying for grant funding is working on raising money for Steph’s post beyond June 2022. If funding proves to be difficult to secure, Steph is open to working reduced hours (maybe term-time only) and developing volunteers who can run further ministry in the holidays.

Members of the team expressed some hesitancy over whether the existing ministry was sustainable if only volunteers were left to take it on. In Bentley, it feels as though anyone with skills to facilitate this kind of ministry would need to work, and they recognise *'it takes an enormous amount of work to prep and deliver multiple things in a week'*.

Key learning points

1. Teamwork

Steph, Dave, Karen and St Peter's volunteer, Sue Depledge, all agree that teamwork is key to the success of the post. They recommend that such posts be integrated as much as possible into church structures and leadership for mutual support and the sharing of ideas. A church looking to appoint a worker should never think *'Oh, they'll get on with it [by themselves]'*.

For their context, this works because all mission and ministry is integrated. Like a jigsaw, different pieces of ministry draw newcomers into church life as they see different faces that care about them through Cuppa in the Car Park, debt advice, Alpha or Sunday morning.

'When I started at St Peter's, the vicar and wife did everything. Now there are four of us in office which is amazing.'

Dave reflected that having Steph involved in the worshipping life of the church on a Sunday makes all the difference. It's all part of integrating new families who connect with Steph midweek into worship on a Sunday. If Steph wasn't present on a Sunday, it would be very odd.

2. Recruit a CP worker who is at ease around non-Christians

Karen and Sue described Steph as *'fearless'* in offering to pray with parents and were *'amazed'* by what she achieved in lockdown in staying connected with families.

Karen and Sue described the interview process for Steph's role and reflected on Steph's ability - demonstrated on the day - to interact with non-Christian mums in a very natural way. Looking back, they recognise this as a crucial element of the job and advise others to look for similar gifts when recruiting for posts.

3. Realistic expectations

Don't expect the post to pay for itself in the space of three years. In this team's experience, it takes two years of regular attendance for newcomers to give regularly to the church and it feels like Steph is starting from *'scratch'*. In terms of the Engel Scale, the team are working with people navigating the very earliest stages of faith journey.

The way the project works with named objectives takes a bit of getting used to, but the objectives meetings work well in setting realistic short-term aims.

'It's been a great success here that can be mirrored in other parishes.'

Case Study 5: St Paul, Wheatley Park

This case study was selected to share the experience of a relatively deprived parish which found external funding for their worker after the initial three years of Centenary Project funding.

Setting the scene

St Paul's is a small church on an urban estate in Doncaster. In 2017, Rev Adam Priestley arrived, initially as Interim Minister, and soon after that, began exploring the possibilities for appointing someone to work with children, young people and families. One of the initial triggers for this was that, in the words of the church warden and treasurer, *'We had lots of kids coming into church without their parents, sometimes more children and youth than adults.'* St Paul's wanted to appoint someone to help respond to this mission opportunity and explore other ways of reaching out to children and families. Discussions with the Centenary Project culminated in the appointment of Tracey Leigh as Children, Youth and Families Worker (35 hours per week) in October 2018.

Centenary Project worker activities

The main activities supported or developed by the Centenary Project worker include:

- Little Fishes - a weekly toddler group.
- A monthly after school club.
- Family Faith at 4 - a monthly midweek family service.
- A weekly youth group for 10-15-year-olds.
- Coordinating St Paul's youth and children's work on Sundays.
- Talks, assemblies, and other input in two local primary schools - including a regular Messy Church style session for nursery and reception children in one school.
- Seasonal events - including community bonfire and fireworks, a Christingle event (with 150 oranges) and outdoor nativity.

During the pandemic, some activities transitioned quickly online (e.g. girls discipleship group and youth group), but others were not able to continue. The weekly toddler group stopped, but activity packs were delivered to families every month. Maintaining connections was a particular challenge and the experience of losing touch with young people was *'soul destroying'*. But various new activities were also established during the pandemic, including the 'Faith at 4' midweek service and a food ministry.

Mission impact

The church representatives we interviewed commented that the project had had *'some hits and some misses'*, with some of those engaged in staying the course but others dropping off. But memorable highlights include:

- The story of a family who Tracey and the team have supported in various ways, most of whom now come to services or groups at St Paul's. *'They just get it and want to come every week and talk about Jesus.'*
- A young woman who the church has been engaging with for several years is now doing an internship with a Christian organisation.
- A local mum we met and interviewed at the after school club who has grown in confidence through the experience of volunteering with various activities at St Paul's.

When we interviewed Adam (Tracey's incumbent), he told us:

'We'd be in a lot worse place without the CP work... Without Tracey we wouldn't have been in a position to develop the kids work... Growth has been off the scale compared to where we were.'

He also went on to reflect that investment in a Centenary Project worker was *'worth more than salary'* because *'it leaks into all aspects of church life'*.

Tracey herself comments: *'We've built a level of trust with our community that we didn't have before.'*

Looking to the future

At the time of our visit, Tracey had been in post for just over three years. In keeping with the Centenary Project's tapered funding model, diocesan funding had stopped, but St Paul's had secured external grant funding from other sources to continue to fund Tracey for a further two years. Though they considered employing Tracey directly from year 4 onwards, they concluded that the benefits of continuing to be part of the wider Centenary Project outweighed the additional costs.

The St Paul's leadership team acknowledge that *'these next two years will go very fast'* and that, given the high levels of deprivation in Wheatley Park, further grant funding will be needed beyond then to continue employing a Children, Youth and Families Worker.

Looking to the future, it is currently unclear how wider parish reorganisation will affect the Centenary Project worker's role moving forward. Although there is some potential for the CP worker having a wider role that includes more coordinating or oversight, developing sustainable volunteer teams in this context is an ongoing challenge. As one of our interviewees reported, *'we live in an area where things are quite transient'*, and many of the people in the community have quite complex or chaotic lives.

Key learning points

1. Discerning

For other churches considering appointing a children's or youth worker through initiatives like the Centenary Project, the St Paul's team highlighted the need to:

- Prayerfully discern - *'Just because one [a CP worker] is available doesn't mean you should have one necessarily.'*
- Think carefully about whether to employ a specialist children's worker, youth worker or families worker, or appoint a more generalist combined role - there are pros and cons to each approach.
- Appoint someone you know you can work with, including a good enough 'theological match'.

2. Leap of faith

As a small church in a deprived area, the St Paul's leadership team were initially unsure about the Centenary Project's tapered funding model which involves parishes paying 100% of the CP worker's salary after year 3. But as they told us in interview:

'Our advice would be don't let it [funding] be a stumbling point.'

'We took a leap of faith that God would provide. And he did. We found that grant bodies really liked what's been going on...'

3. Fundraising

One of the main reasons why St Paul's have been able to continue employing a CP worker beyond the initial three years is that, right from the outset, they have been *'always firing off'* funding applications, as well as putting money aside from internal church funds. In this regard, the support of the diocese has also been appreciated, with one interviewee commenting: *'The diocese have been fantastic. They've got people to help with fundraising.'*

Case Study 6: St Mary, Bramall Lane

This case study was selected to tell the story of what happens in a parish a few years after a post has ceased and the worker moved on.

Setting the scene

St Mary's Church is nestled between the southern stretch of Sheffield's busy inner ring road and Sheffield United's home football ground - Bramall Lane. For a city centre church, they call themselves a 'small-yet-growing' congregation (around 60 on a Sunday morning) of diverse ethnic backgrounds and churchmanship.

In 2017, St Mary's appointed Centenary Project worker, Amy Hitchmough, as Families and Youth Worker (18 hours per week) to develop the existing Sunday morning youth group and begin new youth work midweek. This wasn't the first time they had a youth worker on staff, but the team at St Mary's were grateful for the tapered funding and central support for a worker that came with a Centenary Project post.

With a longstanding community centre as part of the church premises (remodelled in the 1950s), and the well-established Timebuilders Project (based on the Asset community development model), Amy joined a parish already known for its work in and with the local community.

Two years into the three-year contract, Amy went on maternity leave and, in time, resigned from her post to be a full-time stay-at-home mum.

Centenary Project worker activities

When in post, Amy's role included the support and development of:

- **Sunday Morning Youth Group** (14 attending), often followed by lunch together and board games at a local café, with members inviting their friends. As well as one-to-one mentoring, Amy also developed these churched young people to plan and lead at the St Mary's Messy Church.
- The monthly **Messy Church at St Mary's** on a Friday after school (around 50 attending). These were mostly families who weren't attending on a Sunday morning.
- (In a background role helping with risk assessments and initial planning for...) The monthly Messy Church gathering in **Porter Croft Primary School**, called Faith and Fun for Families, on a Wednesday after school for an hour, plus assembly work and Y6 transition work.
- Planning and leading **Community days** at St Mary's every six weeks (in school holidays) for local families.
- **Mission Partnership Activities** (with St Peter's & St Oswald's, St Augustine and St Mary's Psalter Lane taking turns to host) - inviting children of church families to a bigger activity four times a year: Light Party, Shrove Tuesday, Covenant Service and summer picnic.
- Organising and accompanying the young people to **Breathe Deep and Shine, both diocesan youth events**. Amy also worked with Phillipa, the youth worker at St John's Millhouses and St Peter's & St Oswald's on joint youth activities.
- One-to-one mentoring.

Mission impact

Amy's work developing the youth group in terms of their depth of friendship (rather than the old Sunday school model of teaching about faith) enabled an important shift in dynamics. The teenagers were pleased to have their own dedicated worker in Amy (rather than have youth work covered by rota), and her passion in that role helped them feel like active and valued members of the church. In addition, *'with happy teens through Amy's ministry, that kept families coming to church on a Sunday morning'*.

Amy's relational work behind the scenes helped disciple individuals within the group. Getting to know them over Sunday lunch and board games, one-to-one mentoring work, and encouraging them to have a go at leading Messy Church gatherings all helped them grow.

'The [Sunday morning] youth group were really shy when I first went, but when I left, they - bar one - were all able to share highs and lows of their week with each other.'

Amy expressed regret that she was not able to do more one-to-one mentoring during her two years in post; mentoring is time-intensive and, as she was working mostly on her own, there was a limit to how many teenagers she could mentor at any given time.

Without more of a team, it was difficult to launch new youth work midweek. Amy described church volunteer George as a delight to work with, but he could only give his time once a month. Taking the young people and their friends to wider events such as Shine or Breathe Deep (chatting about faith on the bus there and back) became the only way they could develop more youth work during the week.

Reflecting on Amy's time in the parish, Associate SSM Revd Karen Cribb described the impact of the post as *'small numbers, but we are small numbers [at St Mary's]'*. Karen, along with lay pioneer minister Miriam Cavanagh, talked about how much they valued Amy's collaborative approach. Amy too reflected that their provision for local families in poverty in the holidays was enhanced by teamwork. Amy planned and led these events, providing valuable crossover with the existing Timebuilders project.

The team reflected that Amy brought rigour in terms of risk assessments and safeguarding to a small church needing to tighten up these areas, which is the *'kind of impact you can't measure'*. Amy shared ideas and supported others. She was highly capable and confident without needing to be a big personality. Karen shared...

'Everything was better with Amy. She was an extra injection of experience and energy ... and resource in its widest sense... all that training and experience [she brought] rolled out into a lot of things over a long period. The project does so much more for youth, children and families' work in terms of economies of scale.'

One example of this was Amy's support of lay volunteer Heather Waller in Porter Croft Primary School. Amy brought fresh ideas and introduced good reflective questions for prayer spaces and Y6 transition work. Heather appreciated Amy's support with planning: *'Amy gave me confidence in the stuff I wanted to do'*, and she saw Amy demonstrate her evangelistic skills with the children as she explained concepts like repentance in a way they could understand.

Looking to the future

Between Amy leaving her post and the first lockdown, there was not enough time to sort out whether a replacement CP worker would take up the work. Maternity cover had been tentatively explored as an option, but it was not pursued by St Mary's as lay volunteer George was able to help a bit more during this period.

During 2020 some activities transferred online, and in summer 2021 activity days were re-launched but held outside. In Amy's absence, a few more volunteers have 'stepped up' during lockdown, but inevitably the decision to re-appoint has been 'on the back burner' during COVID-19, despite there being a bit of funding 'in the pot' still.

In September 2021, there is a 'beginning of term' feel, and the team at St Mary's know they need to reassess needs as some of the young people are starting to 'age out' of youth work. The parish are aware of the opportunity to work with non-churched teenagers in their community, including those from Muslim families, but realise Centenary Project workers would come with a priority to develop explicitly Christian ministry.

Whatever decisions are made going forward, the team expressed a wish for any future youth worker at their church to be able to access some degree of support or training through the Centenary Project even though they may not be fully-fledged project workers. Amy added her hopes that the Project might develop in this direction too: *'It's so good, I don't want anyone to miss out.'*

Key learning points

1. Be clear about objectives

From St Mary's, there was a gentle hope originally that a CP worker might kickstart more youth initiatives in the community, possibly in conjunction with Tenants and Residents Association (TARA). Despite initial conversations, this never quite got off the ground.

It is important to be clear about what should be prioritised within a worker's role and for the worker and parish to support one another in that. Being adaptable and reviewing objectives regularly ensures everyone's expectations are met.

2. Wider network

The team praised the project for its support of workers, recognising that this kind of role can be so isolating. They would recommend other churches to explore working with the project, citing benefits such as help with advertising for the post through to networking support and supervision for a worker in post. *'For a church like us, it opened us up to different opportunities, including a youth worker interview process.'*

As outlined above, Amy valued the wider youth events as a way to develop youth work midweek with a limited team. Hearing about project's hub work (wider youth networking) that has come online since she stepped down, Amy confirmed this as much-needed, both to support a CP worker and for a small youth group to feel they are part of something bigger.

3. Gather a team from the start

For sustainability and further development, securing ongoing finance is part of the picture. However, Amy's advice for any parish thinking of appointing a youth worker is to gather a committed team before appointing. Finding volunteers who are willing and able to help run sessions is the ongoing challenge. Safeguarding obviously requires more than one leader, but the valuable one-to-one mentoring is only effective with a ratio of 1:3 or 1:4 (one worker to three or four teenagers).

4 Appendices

Appendix A: Evaluation Questions (as articulated by the diocese in the evaluation project brief)

Vision and Values

- Q1. Has the project been successful in enabling parishes to develop children, youth, and family ministry, who otherwise would not have been able to appoint a worker?
- Q2. Is there evidence that the project has impacted economically disadvantaged communities in the diocese?
- Q3. How do our values support the success of the Centenary Project?
- Q4. Does the Project fit well with the overall strategy of the diocese?

Impact on Mission

- Q5. What missional impact have CP workers made in parishes with little or no history of children's/families/youth ministry? How has this impacted the community and local church?
- Q6. What impact is CP making on discipleship and evangelism in the diocese? To include statistical analysis of church attendance, other missional initiatives and discipleship.
- Q7. What differences are CP workers making in the lives of the children, young people and families they work with?

Potential Areas for Improvement and Future Exploration

- Q8. Is the communication strategy of the Project effective and how could it be improved?
- Q9. Are we delivering good value for money compared to other models of children, families and youth ministry? (Suitable projects to be discussed with the evaluator)
- Q10. In what ways does the Centenary Project impact the diocesan strategy?
- Q11. What other opportunities could we capitalise on and are we making the most of the resources available?
- Q12. Are we making full use of the statistics that we collect - what more could we use them for?

Appendix B: Description of Project Values

As outlined in evaluation brief...

Mentoring	Each worker is mentored monthly on a 1:1 basis by a central support team from the Centenary Project.
Networking	All the CP workers meet together once a month for a time of sharing, worship, prayer and training. In addition, key representatives from all churches with a CP worker meet together every 12 months at an Action Learning Network to share and learn from each other.
Training	We provide good quality training relevant to all workers at regular intervals within the Network (such as mental health, unconscious bias and gender awareness) and signpost to bespoke training happening in the area and beyond.
Setting objectives	Clear, detailed and achievable objectives are established by the CP worker, parish line manager and a member of the central Centenary Project team. These provide a framework for mentoring conversations and ensure that everyone is clear what the CP worker is aiming to achieve. These objectives are reviewed every six months.
Measuring outcomes	At the end of each month, each CP worker submits attendance figures for the groups and activities they have enabled, along with anecdotal stories and some measurement of the impact of the project on their community and on discipleship. We have recently developed a comprehensive electronic system to collect this data.
Good line management	CP workers are locally line managed, often by clergy or other leaders in the parish. Support and guidance is provided centrally.
Working fair hours for a fair salary	CP workers are all paid within an agreed scale which reflects the responsibilities and demands of each role. Working patterns are often flexible, but workers are protected from unfair expectations on their time.

Since this evaluation was commissioned, the following values have been added to the above list:

- Prayer partners
- Virtual network
- CP 'family' helping each other out, sharing together

Appendix C: Commentary on Statistical Data

Several different statistical data sources are referred to in the main body of the report. In this, more technical, appendix we describe and report on the data from these sources in more detail.

Statistics for Mission

Each year the national church asks churches to return a range of information about the number of people coming to church through the year and about various other aspects of church life.

Comparing CP parishes with other parishes

As part of this evaluation, we reviewed the most recently available Statistics for Mission data from the Diocese of Sheffield,²⁵ comparing the experiences of parishes which had a CP worker with those which had not. To do this, a group of churches that have not had a CP worker was created to act as a control group when comparing data. These control group churches were sampled based on size (AWA attendance) and location (deaneries) to match the characteristics of the CP churches as much as possible.

The key findings of this exercise are summarised below.

The All-age **Average Weekly Attendance (AWA)** is a measure that estimates the number of people who attended Sunday and weekday services at a church in an average week in the month of October. The table below shows the proportions of AWA attenders that are children (under 18 years) and shows some level of difference between current CP churches and the control group of churches. For every year, the proportion of children is larger in the churches with a CP worker than in the control group of churches; however, in more recent years this difference is just outside the range of being considered statistically significant ($p=0.056$ for 2020 and $p=0.063$ for 2019).

Children as a proportion of AWA	2020	2019	2018	2017	2016	2015
Currently active CP churches only	11.9%	15.2%	14.6%	16.9%	15.5%	17.5%
Control churches paired with currently active CP churches	9.0%	13.1%	12.6%	12.5%	12.5%	13.4%

The **Worshipping Community (WC)** is defined as any person attending the church regularly (e.g. once a month) and is considered by some to be a better measure than AWA which may diminish the value of people who attend less than weekly. In the cases of groups and activities initiated by CP workers, WC may be a more useful measure as their groups may not meet weekly or attenders may still be being drawn into church life. The table below shows the proportions of WC members that are children (under 18 years) and illustrates a dramatic difference between current CP churches and the control group of churches. For every year since 2017 this is a statistically significant difference ($p < 0.0001$). This means that current CP churches, year on year, have a higher proportion of children as a part of their WC than their non-CP counterparts. Since 2017 the proportions of children in Worshipping Communities at CP churches is also higher than the diocesan average of 20-21%

Children as a proportion of WC	2020	2019	2018	2017	2016	2015
Currently active CP churches only	21.8%	28.0%	27.1%	24.1%	19.4%	19.4%
Control churches paired with currently active CP churches	8.6%	16.8%	17.3%	19.5%	16.2%	18.2%

²⁵ Note that throughout this report, all figures for AWA, WC and Baptisms are derived from the raw Statistics for Mission returns provided to us by the Diocese of Sheffield. These may differ from the officially published figures produced by Research & Statistics, Archbishops' Council.

Baptisms may be viewed as one sign of missional impact; however, there is no difference in the number of baptisms seen at CP churches when compared to the control group of non-CP churches.

Baptisms	2020	2019	2018	2017	2016	2015
CP churches	134	893	895	978	1054	1112
Control group: non-CP churches	145	764	897	1025	1069	1034

Centenary Project Reporting Data

Benefits Realisation Plan

The Centenary Project's Benefit Realisation Plan outlines a set of lead and lag indicators against which the progress of the Centenary Project is measured and reported. A simplified summary of the most recently available progress update (from the project's 2020 SDF Project Report) is outlined below.

Lag indicator (output measure)	Progress update (as reported by the diocese)
Active engagement with at least 2,000 children and young people on a regular basis by 2023	January 2021: 2,334 children and young people regularly engaged Original target now exceeded
15% (300) of the 2,000 to have moved to discipleship by 2023	January 2021: 460 in regular discipleship groups which is 20% of the total we have engaged. Last year this was 11%. Target exceeded numerically and in % terms
30 new missional activities with children, young people and families (25 to 35 per group), leading to engagement with an additional 750 to 1,050 people (included in the 2,000)	January 2021: the total new missional activities is now 85
2 new hubs formed in Doncaster by the end of 2018	December 2018: Achieved!
Work with 24 target parishes on financial sustainability	January 2021: Since starting in September 2019 the Funding Development Officer has had meetings with 16 parishes and worked intensively with 6 parishes, plus working alongside parishes applying for a worker
10 FTE CP workers by 2023	January 2021: We currently have 10.5 FTE (SDF) in post (13 CPWs), with approval from SDF for 12.8 FTE
18 intern posts to create job opportunities for young people and develop a pool of quality CP workers	January 2021: 7 interns started in September 2019. 2 of these were also with us in 2018. 1 of 2018's interns has now secured a CPW post. 1 intern started in September 2020.
Employment of 3 Area Co-Ordinators	Achieved April 2019!
Employment of 2 additional part-time Hub Coordinators for Doncaster	December 2018: achieved!
Employment of part-time fundraiser	Achieved September 2019!
Partnership with large churches on intern recruitment, training and deployment	April 2020: Haven't needed this so far

Recent data collection developments

When we consider more recent data that has been recorded on the activities and events that CP workers are involved with, there are several factors to consider:

- A new method for CP data collection was introduced part way through 2020 which makes comparisons with data before this date difficult
- The various and changing restrictions on physical gatherings that were in place throughout 2020 and part of 2021 in response to COVID

The table below shows the activity figures since the implementation of the new data collection system.

These figures show that there are (as of the most recent data) between 75-80 groups run by CP workers. Before the pandemic began there were around 80 groups. While the number of groups dropped greatly during the pandemic, the number of groups has now returned to pre-pandemic levels.

CP workers are engaging with nearly 1,000 (965) children regularly in groups.

The number of ‘additional contacts’ (e.g. through school assemblies) is currently on average 8,000 children every 3 months. In the run up to Christmas 2021 (4th quarter) this rose to 16,000.

	No. of CP workers	Regular groups				Additional /one-off events		
		No. of groups	No. of sessions	Unique individuals engaged with (under 18)	Unique individuals engaged with (18+)	No. of events	Contacts (under 18)	Contacts (18+)
2020 (3 rd quarter)	18	25	38	114	111	25	1763	313
2020 (4 th quarter)	21	62	379	354	174	83	8841	1198
2021 (1 st quarter)	21	40	319	249	54	59	7745	700
2021 (2 nd quarter)	21	64	408	562	245	70	4425	670
2021 (3 rd quarter)	23	74	318	814	370	102	4313	1313
2021 (4 th quarter)	23	78	556	1228	484	223	15992	3061

Discipleship Questionnaire

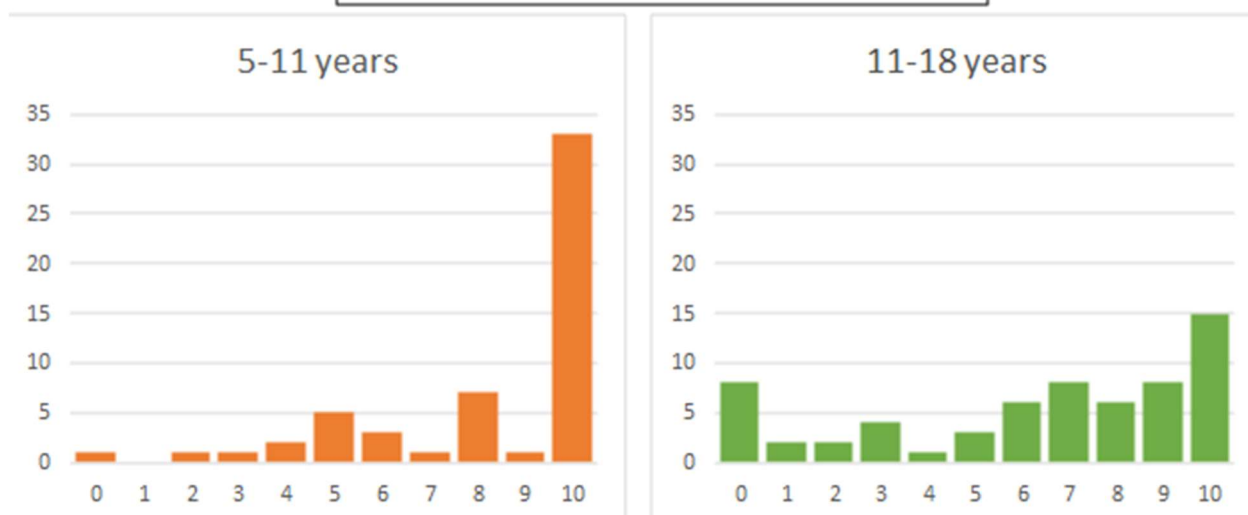
The Centenary Project Discipleship questionnaire has been used in 2019 and 2020 by CP workers to gain the views and opinions of those they engage with in their work. Separate questionnaires were designed for young children (5-11 years), teenagers (11-18 years), parents/carers, teachers/volunteers and adults, each using age-appropriate language while covering the same topics. Each of the young children and teenagers were asked to respond to the questions in relation to themselves, while the teachers/volunteers were asked to respond in relation to the children they were responsible for. The parents/carers were asked to respond in relation to their children and/or themselves.

Faith Development Questions

There are two questions within the discipleship questionnaire around exploring and identifying with Christianity.

	Average score (range = 0-4)		Average score (range = 0-10)
Does being part of our group make you want to know more about God or being a Christian?	3.1	Would you say that you are a Christian?	7.2

Would you say that you are a Christian?



The above two questions are interesting to consider together as they approach this topic from different angles. In both cases the younger children gave a higher average score than the teenagers (5-11s average score was 3.4 and 8.3 respectively, 11-18s average score was 3.0 and 6.3 respectively); however, all of these are well above the midpoint of the scoring range and so demonstrate more agreement than disagreement with the question. When we look at the breakdown of these scores, we see that while the younger children gave much more 'certain' answers, the teenagers' responses are much more spread along the scoring scale. While this does mean that fewer of the teenagers in CP groups are absolutely certain of their faith, it also shows that the CP workers are engaging with a wide range of teenagers at all stages of their faith journey.

A range of questions were asked around faith practices and these show that the CP workers are having some impact on the faith practises of those they are engaging with. Respondents were able to score from 0 (not at all) to 10 (fully).

Faith practices	Average score (range = 0-10)
Bible knowledge has grown	7.4
Prayer life has grown	6.5
Faith impacting life	6.7
Sharing faith with others	5.3
Supporting others in their faith	5.8
Helping/leading in church, home or community	4.7

The average scores for all but one of these potential faith practices is above the midpoint of the scoring range and so demonstrate more agreement than disagreement with the statement.

There are some differences between these average scores of faith practises when we consider the different age groups responding to the questionnaire. The younger children were more likely to report that their knowledge of the Bible and prayer life had grown (5-11s average score of 8.0 and 7.2 respectively, 11-18s average score of 6.4 and 5.5 respectively) whereas the teenagers were more likely to report that they were supporting others in their faith (5-11s average score of 5.3, 11-18s average score of 7.0).

Wellbeing questions

A range of questions that could be described as covering ‘wellbeing’ show the CP workers having a positive impact on the lives of those they are engaging with. Respondents were able to score from 0 (not at all) to 4 (always/definitely/very well). All of the questions have received high average scores, and particularly the questions around the dynamics of the groups (feeling understood, supported, belonging, accepted) have scored very highly.

‘Wellbeing’ questions	Average score (range = 0-4)
Stopping boredom	3.2
Grown in self-confidence	3.1
Helped to be yourself	3.2
Developed better friendships	3.3
Feel understood by leaders	3.6
Supported by group	3.6
Feel belonging in group	3.7
Accepted by others in group	3.7

The survey also asked a series of questions about respect, and while some commented that they didn’t feel that the aim of the groups and activities was to teach about respect, these aspects still scored highly.

‘Respect’ questions	Average score (range = 0-4)
Respect for others in the group	3.4
Respect for others in my town	3.2
Respect for others from other parts of the world	3.0

Appendix D: Summary of Updated Communications Strategy

Ongoing objectives

- Celebrate success within the project through sharing good news stories.
- Give ongoing encouragement for CP workers and help them to feel part of something bigger.
- Sharing what we are doing with wider networks, both in diocese and National Church.
- Use our platform to share good practice in children's and youth work.
- Develop the general understanding of CP and how it's different to other children's and youth work and help our audience to understand the vision for the Project.
- Develop an evidence-based narrative to explain the difference CP makes to our workers and the churches and communities they work in.

Short-term objectives for 2021

- Share the difference the Project is making despite COVID.
- Give encouragement to our workers and their parish teams amidst difficult circumstances
- Review the Increase engagement (x%) with our social media posts.
- Grow engagement for CP in the wider diocese (other churches and their communities) by engaging with diocesan media.

Key audiences identified:

- Our parishes (motivation, encouragement and inspiration)
 - The CP workers and interns
 - Line managers
 - Project volunteers / Action Learning Network
 - Adult project users
 - Congregation and wider parish
- Wider diocese (networks, best practice, faith stories)
 - Other churches in the diocese
 - Other children and youth leaders
- Other networks (best practice, innovation, partnering)
 - Grant funders
 - Other children and youth organisations (Youth4Christ, Reign, Cliff College, etc)
 - Other dioceses and wider church

Six key communications methods: social media, newsletter, website, Network magazine, eBulletin, annual report with key messages for each

Appendix E: Continuum of Youth Models (ranging from low cost to high cost)

1. **Volunteer-led** - (sustainable until they move on / step down)

Pros	Cons
<p>For a worker...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some have had previous training which they can utilise through this opportunity • Can be more attuned to needs of group they have - agility in planning • Less scrutiny over job 'performance' - general gratitude for time volunteered <p>For a local church...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Embedded in church/community so more sustainable • Opportunities for intergenerational interaction/older Christians as role models <p>For mission...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good at pastoral care of church youth • Can be a great space for growth and discipleship as YP can be very comfortable and secure in the space • The need for critical mass is less of a problem 	<p>For a worker...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Often had little or no official training - may be difficult to access training • May need help with safeguarding, risk assessments, etc <p>For a local church...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If dependent on a few leaders, they move on and all can stop • Limited oversight/line management possible • More support needed from clergy team (hidden cost in terms of time) <p>For mission...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Less suited to outreach • Dependent on volunteers' availability - only certain times of week/month • Easily disrupted by change in group • Size of group can be limited

2. **Gap year model / internships** - e.g. larger evangelical churches or networks such UK/USA ministries, New Wine Discipleship Year

Pros	Cons
<p>For a worker...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An opportunity to test vocation • Becoming common <i>after</i> university as a year to pause/consider next move • Part-time can be combined with other work or activities outside church which may be good for mission/life experience <p>For a local church...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High level of commitment from anyone undertaking this pre or post university • If <i>after</i> university, post-holders bring more life experience • Variety of different leaders coming through (also a con) <p>For mission...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If one worker is in coordinating role, they can nurture youth as leaders or work across a partnership 	<p>For a worker...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low take-up of model currently - possible reasons: COVID? Cost of university? • Rare its only focused on youth; worker has to muck in with all jobs (dogsbody) <p>For a local church...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A step to something else for worker • Fixed time frame only temporary so sustainability a challenge • Demanding to recruit for • Post-holder less experienced • Assumes young adults/student have skills to lead teams (which they may not) • Post-holder needs significant support and help • Suitable for larger churches only • Gap workers often have little to no experience of work and so aren't great at using time well - can have difficulty setting boundaries <p>For mission...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Theological literacy can be low, as can ability to teach - often default to a 'let me tell you' model of teaching rather than an exploratory one

3. **Taking on someone less experienced and training on the job** - 3 years e.g. CYM, Oasis, St Mellitus, Moorlands, Oak Hill

Pros	Cons
<p>For a worker...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides accredited academic training • An attractive balanced full-time package with study and practice for an individual <p>For a local church...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Costs are shared • Because of the links to education, funding sources are reasonably assured • Someone reflecting theologically on ministry • High level of commitment <p>For mission...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More availability midweek to run activities and sustain weekly patterns • If one worker is in coordinating role, they can nurture youth as leaders or work across a partnership 	<p>For a worker...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Someone needs to feel committed enough to undertake academic study or needs to have it as contractual obligation - not always done so willingly <p>For a local church...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A challenge for small churches to access • Expectation that after three years, the person will automatically leave (also a pro) • Church doesn't <i>quite</i> get a full-time person (depending on training commitments) <p>For mission...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Government funding linked to education so strings attached • Person is using the most recent thing they learnt so can be unbalanced in their delivery/work • Similar cons to internship in terms of maturity

4. **Employ someone** - ranging from very part-time / hybrid model to several full-time posts depending on level of resourcing available

Pros	Cons
<p>For a worker...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More likely to feel vocational - bringing passion and a sense of calling • Potentially more clarity on role aims through job description <p>For a local church...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safeguarding training and wider support usually available • Can sustain weekly rhythms and available to facilitate midweek ministry • Can assume some level of training or previous experience • Time to nurture a team • More capacity for extras/crisis <p>For mission...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More scope to tease out how much of role is mission to non-churched youth or pastoral care of churched youth • Allows for investment of time and energy in young people beyond set activities e.g. engaging over meals, hang out socially • A paid role might mean easier access to schools for mission opportunities • If one worker is in coordinating role, they can nurture youth as leaders or work across a partnership 	<p>For a worker...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pay often very modest <p>For a local church...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can be hard to recruit to posts • Often this is a step to something else ministry-wise - many move on because they can't afford to stay in post • Employees need to be up-to-date with safeguarding, risk assessments. Some may not value or won't give them the time needed. • All ministry could become dependent on one person, disempowering volunteers • Two adults needed for activities, so further volunteers need to be recruited - a church mustn't think worker can do it all (also a pro) • Good line managers rarely available <p>For mission...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Age cohorts come in waves (especially in smaller churches), so long-term posts working with very specific age-groups may end up with quiet periods or more challenging periods of outreach?