

young leaders' community



THE DIOCESE OF
SHEFFIELD

How can **your**
church grow and
support **young**
leaders?



As a diocese, we're committed to:

- Growing **younger** and **more diverse**
- **Hearing the voices** of children and young people
- *"Putting children, young people and families **instinctively at the heart** of all the mission and ministry of the Church by changing the culture of the Church of England."* – **Growing Faith Foundation**

Jesus highlighted the importance of children throughout the gospels (**Matt 11:25, Matt 19:13-15, Mark 10:13-16**) and **Proverbs 22:6** reminds us of our duty to raise children in the way they should go. Children are part of the church now, and will be leading the church in the future. **Can we invite them into the process of shaping church today?** Without them, we are missing out on so much of what God wants to do with us!

Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith and in purity.

1 Timothy 4:12

This booklet has been made with input from children and young people, and from churches who are learning to grow and empower young leaders. On the next page are some quick thoughts and tips that might be helpful.

- **Get to know** the children and young people in your church.
- Try to do things **with children and young people**, rather than just putting things on for them.
- **Young people want to stay in church when they are known and feel valued** – inviting them to be involved in leadership helps them to see that they belong.
- **Trust** your children and young people, and see what God does through them! They might do things differently to you.
- Leadership isn't just "leading" from the front of church – there are lots of different ways to lead and **lots of different kinds of leader**.
- Don't be afraid to ask children or young people if they want to do something – they might find it difficult to volunteer if they're not used to seeing children lead, so **it's good to invite them**.

Our young leaders have said:

"Young people have gifts and capabilities just like adults do, and they can also be of equal value to the church."

"We are not supposed to save our gifts for later - we're not the next generation of the church, we're the current generation of the church."

"We can contribute to church in ways perhaps adults can't. they can teach people who are older than them as well, not just the older ones teaching them."

"I can make a real impact in my community and amongst the diocese."



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All churches are different

Young leadership will look different in every church. You might have a large children's ministry or lots of young people, or you might have very few children at your church. **How could you create opportunities for young leaders through...**

Worship

How could you involve children and young people? Could they lead songs or actions in church? Could they help choose songs? Could they lead prayers? Could they help plan all age services?

Families & friends

Really young, or nervous children might not want to do something by themselves, but they might get involved if they're with a parent, sibling or friend. What opportunities do you have for this?

Listening

How are you finding out what's important to children? What opportunities can you create to listen to children? Could PCC members visit children's and youth groups to listen to their ideas?

Special services

Are there services or seasons when there are more children in church, like Christmas, or uniform group services? How could children and young people shape services around these opportunities?

Everyday church

Would a new person at a regular service or activity at your church know you value young leaders? It's great to highlight young leaders with special services, but they also need to be a normal part of church.

Children's and youth work

If you have a children's or youth ministry in your church, what are the opportunities for children and young people to lead in this context? How can children and young people practice leading in their groups?

How do we start?!

Getting started can feel daunting! Here are some practical ideas to help you think about what might work at your church.

Do some prayerful planning. **Make a list of everything that you do as a church** - services, midweek gatherings, special services, monthly events etc. Where are under 18s involved? Where are they not? **Think outside the box about when and where children and young people could be involved** - whether you have children in your church yet or not!

Look at how well your existing church services and activities actually lend themselves to children and young people being involved and feeling included. Are some elements inaccessible for under 18s? What changes could you make to ensure children and young people are able to engage fully? E.g. are events often during the day on weekdays? Are examples used in talks relevant to children? Avoid being patronising or tokenistic, though.

Get to know your children and young people. Some ways of doing this could be:

- Host intergenerational activities so children and adults meet each other. Examples could be meals, fund raisers, quiz or games nights, talent evenings...
- Make space for conversations in services.
- Play games together as part of church.

Reach out to **local schools**, and **uniform groups** if they meet in your buildings. Are there any opportunities to share what's happening at your church with these groups, or to **listen to what the children have to say about church?**

What could young leaders do in our church?

Here are some ideas that could work in different contexts...

Younger children (5-10) could

- Do Bible readings.
- Help with intercessions.
- Serve on welcome teams with family or friends.
- Find other volunteers to help them with tasks.
- Share a testimony or story.
- Lead actions for worship songs, with support.



Consider having **open rotas** for small jobs in a service that anyone, including children, can sign up to.

Ideas for open rotas:

- Choosing biscuits.
- Bringing up the gifts.
- Serving refreshments.
- Clearing away chairs.
- Short Bible readings.
- Operating the words.
- Leading actions for songs.
- Joining in with prayers or dramas.

Young people (11-18) could:

- Do Bible readings.
- Lead intercessions.
- Set up tables and chairs.
- Serve on welcome teams.
- Serve at the altar.
- Lead or preach with support.
- Work alongside wardens.
- Help lead children's work.
- Operate audio or visuals with training.
- Help plan community social action.
- Help with comms e.g. social or printed media, websites.

Case studies: Junior Jobs and Post-It rotas

At St Paul's Norton Lees, Curate Rachel has created **lanyards with different roles** on them for children to wear if they'd like to do or help with a job in church. These include jobs children can do on the day, and ones they can prepare for next week.

One church has a **Post-It note rota** with jobs anyone can choose as they come in. You may want to indicate which jobs children might need support with.

Taking the next steps

Maybe you have a core group of children or young people, and you've got some volunteers who lead the ministry. You might even have a paid youth or children's and families worker.

Young people aged 16 and over can join PCC - consider sharing this with young people in your church, and encouraging them to think about putting themselves forward.

Lots of elements of **worship services** can be carried out by people under 18. Could you invite young people to be on a **regular rota** for these things, and **commission them for this role** in a church service? (See page 15 for more info)

It's a really good idea to arrange mentors for young leaders who lead regularly in any area of church life. They need support and the opportunity to ask questions and be challenged so they can grow as leaders. Encourage their learning and development by providing mentors to walk alongside them. Mentors need to be "Safer Recruited" and safeguarding trained. The YLC can help with training on how to be a mentor. More information about safeguarding can be found on page 14 of this booklet.

Could you invite young people to speak? Young people offer different perspectives to adults, and we can learn from what they have to say! Could someone who is experienced in preaching support them with planning and delivering a talk in a church service?

If children or young people don't feel ready to write and present a full talk, consider steps to help them build confidence. Could you interview them for "This Time Tomorrow" to ask them about what they do during the week and how we can pray for them? Could they share a short testimony in a service?



If you have youth or children's groups, you could:

Encourage children and young people to be involved in the running of their groups and activities. This might involve children saying prayers, leading or choosing worship songs, sharing a testimony, leading individual Bible studies or running games.

Ask children and young people about church and their groups. Listen to young people about things like: the food they want, the songs they want to sing, what they want to learn about.

Create opportunities in church services for children and young people to **share meaningfully about what they're learning** in their youth and children's groups, and **encourage adults to share what they're learning about** with the children.

Learn about the gifts and skills of the young people in your groups. If they play an instrument, this could be a great opportunity to start providing ways for them to be involved with leading worship in the youth group, and church services when they're ready. If they're sporty, they might be up for running a game in their youth group or a service. If they're interested in the Bible, or ask a lot of questions, could they lead a Bible study? If they like photography or design, could they take photos or create graphics for your church's social media or website?

Advanced young leaders

What are the next steps to embedding young leadership into the culture of your church?

Provide opportunities for children and young people to share their ideas about your vision as a church. This might be as part of existing planning structures, such as being part of a Mission Action Planning group, or it might be a new meeting you create. Ask specific questions of young people, but also leave space for them to share their own thoughts and ideas.

After consulting young people, feed back to them what you've done differently and what you've not changed, and tell them why. It's really important for young leaders to know what difference they've made, and to be given the reasons why something couldn't be done, so they know that their input is really being taken on board.

Give opportunities for young people, with support, to pioneer new mission and ministry activity. Young people often have great ideas, and we sometimes say to them, "that's a great idea, I'll think about that." Challenge yourself to trust them and ask them to help you plan it and start it. If they have an idea and they've got the vision, they're probably the best person to put it into practise!

Hold a regular youth or children's-lead service. This will need more supervision and support if children under 11 are involved. For a youth service, young people can make more of the decisions and do more things by themselves.

Make sure children and young people are adequately supported with this – if they're out of their depth and don't receive support, this could have a detrimental effect on their confidence and willingness to lead in the future.

Case study: Youth-lead services at All Saints Ecclesall

Cam, youth minister at All Saints, alongside young people in the church, plan a youth-lead service each month. Here's the process they use to plan these services:

- Have initial conversations with young people in the youth group and ask for volunteers to do readings, be on the welcome team and things like that.
- Invite young people who are in discipleship groups to preach or lead the service, reminding them that they can say no.
- Give young people a framework for roles like intercessions, and allow them to ask questions – we do this through a safe group chat.
- If a young person is preaching or leading, we meet to go over the task. I ask the young people what they think they want to say and we plan together. Eventually, young people who have preached a few times are able to write their own talks without support (although they can always ask questions!)



Create an intentional structure in your children's and youth ministry for young people to grow and take the next steps in leadership.

This needs to include mentoring for young leaders, and some training and supervision as they take on more responsibility. The YLC can support with developing a structure for this.

Tips and ideas from young leaders

*“At the end of each service, **ask young people** if they would like to do anything in the church and if they would, **arrange a time to talk about it.**”*

*“Include young people in planning services and events - **talk to them** and ask them what they want to do.”*

*“**Invite** young people to volunteer.”*

*Provide “opportunities for **small steps**. For people who have less confidence/experience.”*

*“Ask youth more often for **feedback about church.**”*

Involve children by having “more groups / talking with everyone in church and not having all the time there listening to someone on a stage”

Support us by “not treating us as people with less knowledge.”

*“Include youth groups in **planning services** to address questions”*

“Let youth preach.”

*Have “funner services with more activities, **more participation** from **everyone.**”*

*“Youth to be **encouraged** to take up more roles in church”*

How does the Young Leaders' Community help?

The Young Leaders' Community is a network for young leaders (10-18) to belong to for support, leadership training and opportunities outside the parish.

If there are young people in your church who would like to join for all these benefits, please get in touch with Rachel, the Young Leaders Community Enabler:

rachel.baker@sheffield.anglican.org

We support young leaders by:

- Running events and gatherings for young leaders to network and learn from each other.
- Providing training and support.
- Inviting them to be involved with diocesan leadership opportunities and opportunities to share their voices.
- Helping young leaders to develop further opportunities to lead and share their voices locally and in the diocese.
- Helping them pioneer new mission and ministry.

We can support churches by:

- Helping you develop local leadership opportunities for young leaders.
- Giving safeguarding advice and support.
- Providing and signposting to training for young leaders.
- Providing training for mentors of young leaders.

Spond

Spond is an app we use to enable young leaders, alongside their youth leaders (and parents/carers for under 13s) to communicate safely across the diocese. Through this app, we invite young leaders to take on new opportunities, ask questions of them, encourage them in their discipleship journey, and connect them with other young leaders through safe chat groups. Spond can be used on a phone, or on a laptop or PC for those who don't use a smartphone.

Safeguarding

Giving young people opportunities to lead does inevitably raise some safeguarding considerations. This might feel like a barrier to getting started, but we're here to support you.

Important to know:

All leaders of children's and young people's activities and groups (including mentors) should be **"Safer Recruited"** following the national guidelines and receive **regular safeguarding training** to at least Basic and Foundation level.

Your church should have a **safeguarding policy** in place which is reviewed every year by the PCC / church council.

Your **Safeguarding Policy** and a picture of your **Parish Safeguarding Adviser** should be displayed publicly in your church.



[Safeguarding - The Diocese of Sheffield](#)



[Children and youth ministry social media guidance](#)



[Safer Recruitment and People Management](#)



[Booklet - checklist for youth and children's workers](#)



[Church of England Safeguarding e-Manual](#)

Diocesan Safeguarding Officer:

Sian Checkley

07741 013775

sian.checkley@sheffield.anglican.org

Our Parish Safeguarding Officer is:

Email:

Phone:

Resources

and useful information



[Young Leaders' Community - The Diocese of Sheffield](#)



[Children & Youth Ministry - The Diocese of Sheffield](#)



[Children & Youth Resources - The Diocese of Sheffield](#)



[Aurora Training - for all children, youth and families ministry](#)



[Growing Faith Foundation: Techniques for listening to children and young people](#)



[Church in School - The Diocese of Sheffield](#)

Commissioning

It's really important that children and young people who take on leadership roles are encouraged and recognised in their church. Consider commissioning your young leaders locally, alongside other leaders, to publicly affirm your commitment to them and the value they bring to the church.

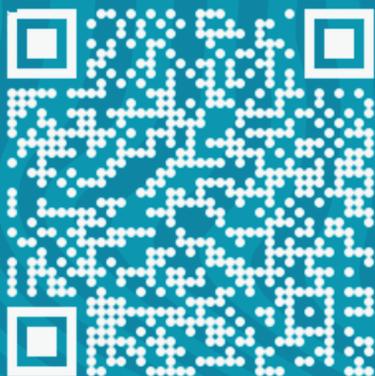
Get in touch with the Young Leaders' Community Enabler (rachel.baker@sheffield.anglican.org) if you'd like to commission young leaders in your church - we can provide support with training young leaders and provide a short commissioning liturgy which can be used in a Sunday service.



[Commissioned Lay Ministries - The Diocese of Sheffield](#)

The **young leaders' community** is a place where **Christian 10-18 year olds from all backgrounds**, supported by their local leaders, can grow in leadership both in their churches and across the diocese.

We encourage young people that show leadership qualities, courage, people skills, enthusiasm, a commitment to spiritual growth and a willingness to serve to join the community.



Scan or visit
sheffdio.org/ylc to
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