

## Renewal and Reform Symposium

Friday 15 June 2018

### Workshop 2: SDF projects: What does it look like? What have we learnt so far?

**Diocese of Liverpool**

**Project Name:** Transforming Wigan

**Dates:** 2014-2021

**Vision:** 1 in 10 people attending church by 2022

Tim Montgomery: **Director of Transforming Wigan**

Find out more at: <http://www.churchwigan.uk/>

#### Key Learning:

**Engage your stakeholders, influencers and target groups:** A guiding value of the project has been the need for permission from key stakeholders, especially those people (and sometimes processes) which can stop or delay a change. To create this permission and buy-in for the restructuring of Deanery under 7 parishes, partnerships between involved parish clergy have been established, consultation periods have been run and wider relationships built with local councils and service providers. A key expectation to manage in these forums is that whilst opinions will be listened to, they will not all be acted upon.

**Building relationships; creating trust:** To be able to challenge a culture, trust built upon strong relationships needs to be present. It has been useful in the project to get the right people working together and having conversations. However, it is essential that conversations are framed around experience over argument and thinking; the project needs to win people not an argument.

**Building capacity:** Capacity is often sought from outside of a diocese. This project, however, has sought to increase capacity from within the Deanery of Wigan. Where possible, expertise within the church and local community e.g. police, council, schools etc. has been used which has resulted in local knowledge and locally relevant solutions which has helped to increase sustainability.

**Supporting leaders:** Through the restructuring of the parishes, the project has sought to identify missional teams who can lead parish hubs and redevelop the traditional role of church leadership e.g. vicars. It has been essential that the roles and responsibilities tied to these teams are clearly articulated and understood by the leaders themselves and the wider parish hubs. Additionally, the project has been identifying what they need to be in place e.g. coaching structures to be able to do their job and create change.

**Understanding change:** When on a journey of change its important to identify and understand your intended end goal and the milestones that you may visit along the way. The milestones will help keep motivation (especially when working on an ambitious project like this) and will be a key source of learning along the way. Whilst attempting to shift culture, the project has gone beyond measuring numerical growth in church to look at the 'soft' changes in relationships and behaviours including with those who sit outside of the direct project line of sight e.g. community groups, schools etc. Additionally, measurement should be flexible and open enough to identify unexpected change.

**Hard questions and decisions:** The project has continually asked hard questions to enable strong decision making. This has been supported by the creation of a guiding coalition which meets every week to ask the difficult questions about direction and implementation. This group has been effective because it has bought the right people to the table who can steer the project and increase the accountability of the project team.

**Diocese of Birmingham****Project Name:** Transforming Church: *Growing Younger***Dates:** 2016-2021**Vision:** 'To help develop a spiritually enriching children's and youth ministry in every parish and church school'Rhiannon King: **Director of Mission** (NB Directors of Growing Younger: Liz Dumain & Ruth Hassall)Find out more at: <http://www.cofebirmingham.com/growing-younger/home/>**Key Learning:**

**Vision:** A good vision attracts good people. This project developed a Theory of Change to map how it would seek to create change across the diocese. With hindsight, more front-loaded training for core staff on how this works would have been beneficial.

**Good Preparation:** Although the *Growing Younger* Team and *Mission Apprentice* (MA) Steering Group did some good preparatory work with parishes about to receive a MA or *Children's and Families' Missioner* (CFM), experience has now shown that investing far more time far earlier on with parishes (before an individual started) would have been time very well spent. More widely, expectation management across the diocese about the intensity or reach of input (e.g. having a MA, CFM or GYF) with hindsight should have been thought through further to avoid a sense of disappointment in some places.

**Investing in the right people:** Getting the right people in post can transform more than just the project e.g. the new recruits have brought a renewed energy and buzz to the diocesan office team. The CFMs and Growing Younger Facilitators (GYFs) in particular were selected through a rigorous recruitment process where the aim was that only exceptional candidates were selected. Though some mistakes were made, the project is generally finding 2/3 years on that resources will be found to retain exceptional people. Whilst this is harder for centralised management roles, 14 out of 15 CFM posts have now secured future funding from their parishes.

Even in a 'super diverse' diocese like Birmingham, BAME recruitment remains challenging with only 13% of *Growing Younger* post holders coming from a BAME background.

**Supporting change makers:** Mentoring and regular gatherings for the MAs, CFMs and GYFs, which bring together change makers to train, support, pray, evaluate and reflect have created a vital support network. This model is now also being requested by clergy supervisors who see the benefits. However, managing expectations amongst some of this group (especially GYFs) is also key as frustrations can arise from the [slow] speed and level of change in some parishes. To offset this, some small quick wins & achievable milestones can help to maintain motivation.

**Challenge perceptions:** The project has supported a mixture of 'starting new things' (e.g. Breakfast Churches) alongside strengthening existing initiatives (e.g. Toddler Groups/Messy Churches). One such example of 'starting a new thing' has been setting up *Gas Street* (a Resourcing Church) in central Birmingham, which has seen more than twice as many attendees in two years as originally predicted (700+ rather than 300). Challenging mindsets about what is possible can create a willingness to try new things.

**Adapt approach:** The project has made room for adaption and failure. E.g. the project employs three p/t GYFs to work primarily in areas (often 'lower income' as most of the diocese is 'lower income') which need additional inputs to get them to a stage where they can meaningfully engage with children and families. Originally, the GYFs were going to work with a small number of parishes to drill down on issues in detail; but it was found that the parishes didn't have the capacity for this, so the approach was opened to more parishes but with a lighter touch.