

Comparison with the Present Team

Team Focus and other papers emphasise that the Team must only do what it uniquely can contribute to putting *Priorities* into practice everywhere and what it can best do on behalf of the whole Church and the Conference. The Team must not duplicate or disable what is better done in local churches, circuits, districts or other Methodist bodies.

^[2] Everything that the Team does must be in support of *Priorities* and in a changing world, that will require development of new ways of doing things as well as learning to do new things. At the same time, the reconfigured Team must be significantly smaller if we are to achieve the necessary reduction in budget of around 30% and continue to work within the given constraints. This means that some work that has been a constant and worthwhile theme in the past, will have to cease being done within the Team as not everything can be covered.

^[3] All of the work themes currently undertaken by the present Team have been examined through what is known as the Filter Process. (Described in Para 7 (iii) of Core Report.)

^[4] The Filter Panels have, in many cases been the first challenging and independent review of much of the traditional work of the Connexional Team. Having been encouraged to think radically, Filter Panels have helped JSG to decide the main areas where permanent Team staff would be withdrawn or substantially reduced due to work being approached in a fresh way. A brief rationale for each follows.

Asylum Seekers & Refugee Support

^[5] The work of ensuring that ministers from overseas complete immigration procedures correctly is important for we would not want the personal anguish or the adverse publicity, nor the possibility of legal challenge which would arise if a person working for the Church did not have the necessary

clearances. This could be part of the responsibility of a personnel function.

There are important and current social justice issues linked to immigration and asylum, and if we are to witness a Christian understanding of these issues to the appropriate authorities, the Public Issues unit will have to continue to provide a support role with ecumenical partners. The caring role of the Church and all Christians needs to be shared throughout the Church and this could be part of an advocacy programme within the Christian Communication and Advocacy Cluster.

^[7] Local action can be very important in certain areas and this need is met by local people. Sometimes they need expert advice and this could be accessed through the proposed Connexional Team Help Desk.

^[8] We do not therefore need a Team member carrying specific responsibility for this work.

Children's Work and MAYC

^[9] The major challenge to the Church is how to reach those children and young people with no current links to the Church or any understanding of what it does or stands for. There are many new opportunities that need to be examined and evaluated and the proposal is that a time limited Project will be developed with a wide brief to explore the challenge of the 21st Century and produce a detailed programme of work for the Church to consider.

Priorities into Practice: Team Focus

[10] This does not deny the importance of work with children and young people already linked to the Church but that work is mostly delivered locally and draws on resources produced from places outside the Team. So we propose that a reduced Team resource will be retained to provide appropriate support to those undertaking this work locally; this would be located within the Learning and Ministries Cluster

Gift Aid Recovery Service

[11] When we were recovering tax as a result of formal covenants, it was a very complex affair needing particular skills, which came together within the unit that was previously located at Rayleigh. The process of recovering tax through the gift aid scheme is much simpler and well within the capabilities of local churches and circuits, as demonstrated by other denominations that do not have a central unit. Indeed many Methodist churches are already making applications direct to the Inland Revenue very simply and successfully. This is cheaper for the Connexion, much quicker and applications can be made to match the local church's cash flow needs, rather than fit into a Connexional Team pattern.

[12] Although many churches will need to make new arrangements, we do not believe that cessation of this service will necessarily create much additional work. The service will be withdrawn in an orderly manner over a period of time.

Mission Education

[13] This is an example of important work being done in a different way in the reconfigured Team.

[14] Currently this discrete unit strives to spread good stories around the church as part of its advocacy work aimed at raising interest in and donations to the major Connexional Funds. This important work will become part of the responsibility of the Christian Communication and Advocacy Cluster.

[15] There will be a range of expertise within that unit, which we believe will enable the Team to deliver a more comprehensive advocacy service covering many issues and, most importantly, in a co-ordinated way.

Pastoral Care

[16] The proposals for change in this area of work do not mean that pastoral care is unimportant or will not feature within the reconfigured Team.

[17] The proposal recognises that there are a number of strands to Pastoral Care in the work of the Team and in the Church at large which should be identified and managed in a clear and transparent way, whereas currently it is true to say that this lack of distinction does cause some duplication of effort, and indeed confusion, which itself can compound difficult situations rather than help to resolve them.

[18] There is the responsibility of caring for each other in appropriate ways wherever we are, and that is clearly the responsibility of the whole Church. From time to time, reminders about that might become necessary and would form part of the co-ordinated programme within the Christian Communication and Advocacy Cluster; and there is likely to be specific projects in that area from time to time.

[19] The next strand is to do with the Conference oversight of presbyters and deacons and that will form part of the range of responsibility within the Learning and Ministries Cluster.

[20] There is then the formal strand to do with issues like complaints and discipline, employment and keeping up to date with changes in legislation. This area of work is very important, can be very detailed and intricate and therefore needs certain expertise, which is to be part of an enlarged personnel function.

Racial Justice

[21] The JSG agree with the Filter Panel that there is a British and worldwide problem about racism within and beyond the Church and this needs to be addressed through Christian education. The Connexion has a responsibility for this and so has the Connexional Team.

[22] However, we are persuaded that there needs to be a change of direction in what we try to achieve through the reconfigured Team. Recent years has seen the roll out of a training facility which is still relevant but the efforts of the staff within the Team need to be refocused.

[23] There are some parallels with other issues currently being explored through the time limited project about Equality and Diversity. Awareness of racial justice and all sorts of disabilities needs to become part of our usual way of working within the Team and in the wider Church. We therefore conclude that this area of work should in the first place be developed into a wider Project, time limited, that would help us discern the actions we need to take in order to embrace these crucial issues in our very culture.

[24] This might mean that we will need to employ a different range of skills within the Team in the longer term to support this responsibility.

Rural and Urban Officers

[25] The Filter Panel recognised the importance of Christian work in rural areas, when communities face collectively face particular issues, such as the foot and mouth crisis. Similarly, there are other Christian issues faced by those living and working in highly concentrated urban areas. As there is good evidence that churches often work inter-denominationally in such circumstances, there was a question raised about whether these posts could be funded ecumenically.

[26] Another observation was that local councils, central government and other public and charitable bodies encourage churches to

become involved at times of crisis, and celebrate with relief what is sometimes achieved. Arguably some of this work fulfils a responsibility which rightly belongs to the public authorities, who could perhaps be approached to provide some resources towards it.

[27] JSG concur with these observations and intend to explore other potential funding opportunities. Being confident that this will be possible, paid permanent Team posts for this work do not feature in these proposals.

Women's Network

[28] This mature organisation has flourished for many years and has been the point of entry to the Church, or only contact with the Church, for a great many women. It has grown over the years and the Network regards around 300,000 women as part of its life.

[29] In addition, Women's Network has prompted and helped the Methodist Church to face many uncomfortable social issues such as Domestic Violence and the current campaign against Trafficking.

[30] Whilst valuing the work and service that has been given over many years, the JSG and Filter Panel believe that Women's Network should now be encouraged to be independent of the Team and the constraints that that brings. They believe that this would give the Network more freedom in deciding its own agenda, without precluding it from feeding ideas and observations into the work areas within the Team or the decision-making processes of the Church.

[31] Magnet Magazine, produced by Women's Network, is one of the most popular resources of the Church with a wide readership, and the JSG encourage it to continue, considering that it could become fully self-financing without placing a financial burden on the funds of Women's Network.

World Church Office

[32] This area of work was examined by Project 6 and the Project Management Group developed the paper "Partnerships: Purpose and Practice" which explores what it means for the Church to be in partnership with other Churches around the world. From this paper flow the recommendations of the PMG that were then considered by a Filter Panel, and the JSG has used all of this material in developing this part of the proposal.

[33] Further work is still to be done in reviewing issues such as mission partners, scholarships and Experience Exchange.

[34] Some of the other functions currently undertaken within the World Church office can be achieved by utilising skills that will be held elsewhere in the reconfigured Team. For example, there will be very clear links around the Christian Communication and Advocacy Cluster through the International Mission Relationships Co-ordinator. Issues to

do with recruitment and vocational exploration of mission partners, or formational experience of presbyters and deacons, will be part of the responsibility of the Learning and Ministries Cluster.

[35] There will also be significant changes in the way in which the maintaining of relationships with partners is shared throughout the Connexion, and in the nature of regular contact and visits to and from partner churches. This will be within the area of responsibility of the smaller International Mission Relationships unit.

These proposals represent a major change in the nature of our relationship with partner churches to a style that we believe is more appropriate for 21st century. The JSG anticipate that the Connexional Team will be able to achieve this work with fewer dedicated, paid staff.