

Basic Information

Title	Youth Participation Strategy Interim Report
Contact Name and Details	Doug Swanney, Head of Discipleship and Ministries, 0207 467 3791 swanneyd@methodistchurch.org.uk
Status of Paper	Interim
Resolution/s	<p>16/1 The Conference receives the report and thanks the Youth Participation Reference Group for its work.</p> <p>16/2 The Conference notes the contribution that London Weekend and Breakout have made to the life and witness of the Church since 1945, and expresses its sincere gratitude to all those volunteers and staff who have contributed so much throughout that period.</p> <p>16/3 The Conference directs the Methodist Council to ensure that the Connexional Team explore new ways to continue the core elements of Breakout, developing existing strengths and exploring new models to continue to support ministry amongst children and young people.</p>

Summary of Content

Subject and Aims	<p>An update on the Youth Participation Strategy from the reference group.</p> <p>A request to look at Breakout in a new way in the future.</p>
Main Points	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Progress to date - Implications from budget changes - Changes to Breakout as part of the development of the YPS
Background Context and Relevant Documents (with function)	<p>Youth Participation Strategy Report Conference 2009 (46) – first year update</p> <p>Youth Participation Strategy Report Conference 2008 (21) – initial proposals for the Strategy</p> <p>www.childrenandyouth.org.uk</p> <p>www.methodistyouthassembly.org.uk</p>

A. Youth Participation Strategy – Interim report 2009/2010

1. The Youth Participation Strategy (YPS) exists to engage young people with the Methodist Church in all its forms and at all levels. It exists fundamentally to engage young people with God and the Christian Gospel. The aim of the strategy is to see young people collaborating with adults in the mission of both creating and being disciples in the communities in which they are a part. This year has been one of much progress, the details of which are outlined below.
2. The One Programme has been developed to employ young people age 16–23 for 15 hours per week for one year from September to August. The programme enables young people to take a year on rather than a year off, based within a project/circuit or church. The programme itself – and the opportunities it offers – has been and will continue to be extremely flexible. It is not a one-size-fits-all programme at all.

This year there have been 12 young people on the programme. They have been engaged in a wide variety of work, from the setting up of Street Pastors, to working in youth cafes; from facilitating Messy Church, to working as a break dancer in a Christian Arts project. The young people on the programme are known as OPPs (One Programme Participants). OPPs are unique individuals, giving one year of their time, committed to one place and project, and part of a bigger whole, God's family. Each OPP this year has experienced and participated in a programme of work tailored specifically to them and their development. The One Programme is about saying that everyone can make a difference; even just one person. It is an investment in young people. The OPPs are rooted in one place, right where they live and they have been grounded in their context, enabling them and those they work with to experience and achieve something real, deep and long-lasting. Each and every location and circumstance is unique. This means that each project needs to be unique. Each job description is therefore different, and the outcomes from each placement are also different.

The OPPs are employed by the Methodist Council and they are line-managed by the Participation Project managers, whilst having local support and supervision.

3. This year five Participation Project managers (PPM) have been recruited. These highly skilled and experienced children's and youth workers operate from home and are located within the Regional Training Network areas. Three started in November 2009 and two in January 2010. Their remit is to agitate for excellent, participative practice in children's and youth work throughout the Methodist Church. Working with the Children and Youth Development Officers they are able to help projects and churches to develop strategies specific to their needs to engage with young people in creative and innovative ways. Working with District Chairs, Training Officers, DDEs and other local staff they act as consultants to those working on the ground.
4. Youth Assembly 2009 elected Pete Brady as Youth President and Christy-Anna Briggs Youth President Elect. At Youth Assembly in November 2010 the Youth President for 2011/12 will be elected. A review of the role of the Youth President has been undertaken with consultation of young people and adults within the Church. The post will be part time from September 2010 with an emphasis on hearing from young people both inside and outside the structures of the Church and reporting those views to the President and Vice-President of the Conference and the strategic leaders in the Connexional Team on a quarterly basis.
5. The budgetary restrictions that are likely to be imposed on the YPS will curtail its activity in some areas (for example it may be that not every district will be able to have an OPP placement funded connexionally), but there will still be the opportunity for locally funded OPP's to join the programme. There will be a need to bring forward the search for long term sustainable and external funding, and this will therefore be a focus over the next year. Follow up of the young people and projects taking part in the ONE programme will be vital in providing evidence of the effectiveness of this strand of the strategy. Youth Assembly will be

expanded to cope with the increased demand for places, and, to cater for the wide age range, will also run more age differentiated sessions. The PPMs will continue to assist districts, circuits and churches to develop their youth work practice in a participatory manner. Consideration is being given to how best to support Children's and youth ministry within Scotland and Wales and in Synod Cymru. This will involve the core children and youth staff working alongside the respective Learning and Development teams. Children's Participation continues to be a foundational element of the Youth Participation Strategy. Changes in the provision of resources and the experience to date means that this work will be integrated into the work programme of the whole Children and Youth team.

*** RESOLUTION

16/1. The Conference received the Report and thanked the Youth Participation Reference Group for its work.

B. Breakout and Participation

7. 'Breakout' is the Methodist Connexional Youth Event. It is the successor to 'London Weekend' (LWE) which started in 1945, based at the Royal Albert Hall. The first Breakout was held at the National Exhibition Centre, Birmingham, in October 1999, with subsequent events taking place at London Docklands Arena 2000, Birmingham National Indoor Arena 2002, Blackpool Winter Gardens 2004, 2006, Cliff College 2008, 2010. Breakout is a valuable resource for the whole Church. The past 65 years of LWE and Breakout have provided the Methodist Church with a unique opportunity to share the Christian message in a culturally relevant context with tens of thousands of people many of whom had little or no interest in organised religion.
8. These events have provided opportunities for inter-generational work as young people have been trained, supported and mentored by older generations to develop skills for worship, creative and performing arts, sports ministry, event production and management, social and world development. As these young people have matured into adults they have frequently continued to serve the Church through the event, progressing to the role of mentor. Throughout its history, LWE and Breakout has relied on the generosity and commitment of volunteers who have given up large amounts of time often at the expense of other commitments. Breakout has provided opportunity for many people to discover and develop a sense of calling and service often exercised within the Methodist Church.
9. However we have now reached a stage where it is necessary prayerfully and carefully to plan for the future. As a Church we need to consider how resources are allocated and the effectiveness of that allocation and how this connects with the Youth Participation Strategy. The number attending Breakout 2008 was 1,500. This is the result of a steady decline throughout the past two decades. There are multiple reasons for this which include:
 - decline in the numbers of young people and volunteers associated with local churches;
 - changes in the way young people view and engage with Church;
 - increasing event costs which have directly impacted ticket prices;
 - competition/ duplication with similar youth events;
 - a biennial cycle.

Numerous reviews have been carried out into the effectiveness of London Weekend and Breakout. The results of these consultations have always highlighted the importance of a large Youth Event, acting as focal points for youth clubs, giving new energy and new ideas to youth workers and young people and inspiring many people to make new commitments. The impact of large numbers of young people gathering together for a weekend has made many

realise they are part of a global Church with social and global responsibilities. Currently the Methodist Church makes an investment of approximately £85,000 into the lives of 1500 young people through this event. In previous times it has been possible to both finance a Connexional youth event and support local youth ministry. However recent experience indicates that with great sadness this approach may no longer be viable.

10. The Church needs to resource and encourage ministry in places where the majority of children and young people are, by providing training, support, experiences and specialist resources. It may now be time for Breakout to evolve into different formats that retain essential core elements, build on existing and emerging strengths and continue to support ministry with children and young people at a local level. Alternative models need to be explored that continue to:
 - communicate that the Methodist Church recognises the significance large Christian events can have in the lives of people (no matter what age), demonstrate that Methodism is part of the larger global Church, and give opportunity for Christian growth and challenge;
 - develop new opportunities through the Youth Assembly and the Youth Participation Strategy whilst combining strengths and experience of previous models;
 - ensure programmes, such as spiritual retreats, worship events, sports ministry, creative and performing arts and ongoing training and equipping for children and young people, and those working with them are affordable and accessible;
 - encourage effective use of resources through partnership and collaborative working with other denominations and agencies.

A series of options need to be assessed with children, young people and workers during the coming weeks to determine the most appropriate ways forward.

*****RESOLUTIONS**

- 16/2. The Conference noted the contribution that London Weekend and Breakout have made to the life and witness of the Church since 1945, and expressed its sincere gratitude to all those volunteers and staff who have contributed so much throughout that period.**
- 16/3. The Conference directed the Methodist Council to ensure that the Connexional Team explore new ways to continue the core elements of Breakout, developing existing strengths and exploring new models to continue to support ministry amongst children and young people.**

C. Conclusion

11. The continued commitment that the Methodist Church provides to ministry with children and young people provides vast opportunities to impact the lives of thousands within Britain and beyond. Changed resourcing and the experience to date meant that aspects of our work have needed to be considered with priorities and approaches revised accordingly.
12. The Methodist Church does not want to do this work alone, and over the coming months will be continuing to consult with ecumenical partners to seek out ways of partnership and collaborative working to prevent unnecessary duplication, ensure effective use of resources and to enable pioneering models of ministry and participation with children and young people to be developed and promoted.