

# **Large youth ministries in estate churches: what affects it?**

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**MA Dissertation 2021**

**Word count 15108**

## **Abstract:**

This dissertation explores the youth ministry of churches with 25 or more 0-16 year olds, in Church of England parishes where there are 500 or more social house, designating them estate parishes. It uses quantitative data collected from church websites combined with Average Sunday Attendance data, as well as qualitative data from 5 interviews with those working in these churches, to explore why these churches have a large youth ministry. Three main themes are noted as being significant in these churches: Sharing Spaces, A Church for All, and Resourcing Leaders. The uniqueness of estates ministry is also explored, suggesting some ways these churches and other estate churches can be supported to help grow their youth ministry.

Large youth ministries in estate churches: what affects it?

What factors affect the numerical size of estates youth ministry?

What makes estates youth ministry work well?

## **Introduction**

‘Ooh good luck (looks sheepish)’ is what someone said to me when I told them I was moving to a council estate in the North West. Estates are often forgotten places. Scorned for a reputation of crime, anti-social behaviour or “being a bit grim,” council estates in England are not desirable places for many people. This has also included the church. Estate young people are unlikely to keep the church financially afloat, so why invest in poorer areas, and especially why invest in children and young people in those areas? The good news of Jesus Christ is good news for everyone, including the children and young people living on England’s social housing estates. It is life changing good news that not only changes an individual but can have a cascading effect on those around them.

In the last few years, there have been a number of General Synod papers on youth evangelism and estates ministry. In 2019: GS 2121 Growing Faith: Churches, Schools and Households, GS2124 Encouraging youth evangelism, and GS 2122 Estates Evangelism Task Group Paper for the General Synod. In 2020: GS2161 Children and Youth Ministry. After experience working in an estate church, I became interested in how the areas covered by these reports overlapped. In consultation with the National Estates Church Network (NECN), and following their preliminary work looking at GS2161 and its application to estate parishes, the overlap between estates ministry and youth ministry seemed like an area that was under researched and would be fruitful to explore. This combined both a project that the NECN were keen to undertake but did not currently have the capacity for, as well as a passion of mine from my time working in the North West. During my time on that estate, we had found multiple ways to meet primary aged children and we wanted to disciple them better. We found it difficult, however, to engage with teenagers, and it was sometimes unclear what particular resources might fit with our context. Estates youth ministry therefore was a topic both useful to my ministry (and perhaps future ministry), and to the NECN who were looking to better resource estate churches for youth ministry.

In 2018, the number of under 16s attending a Church of England church on a Sunday dropped below 100,000 for the first time. Decline across the Church of England is a well-recognized phenomenon. However, the decline in under 16s is greater than the average decline. 'The number of under 16's reported in Average Child Sunday attendance has decreased by 20% over the last five years compared to a 12% decline in average adult Sunday attendance.'<sup>1</sup> Evangelism and discipleship to under 16s needs to be a priority as it is both suffering severely and holds the future for the Church of England.

Approximately 20% of Church of England parishes have 500 or more social houses making them estates parishes.<sup>2</sup> However, of the parishes that record 25 or more under 16s, only 14% of them have at least one church on or adjacent to an estate.<sup>3</sup> Estate churches seem to have smaller youth ministries than the national picture. This suggests there is a greater need to invest in ministry with under 16s in estate parishes. To do that some particular strategies are needed.

One way to explore what might be needed is to look at estate churches that already have large youth ministries and see what they are doing. In GS2161, Jimmy Dale conducted a study of all the Church of England parishes with 25 or more under 16s. He was looking at the factors which led to large children and youth ministry. This was the first time a number of data bases the Church of England kept had been analysed together, especially in relation to child attendance. His aim was to be able to recommend ways that those churches that already had large youth ministry could be supported and resourced, so that in turn they could support other smaller youth ministries. From the list Dale compiled of churches with 25 or more under 16s - which consisted of 903 returns - NECN identified which of those parishes were classed as estate parishes. The NECN defines an estate parish as one with 500 or more social houses, and so in 2018 there were 120 Church of England estate parishes with 25 or more under 16s.<sup>4</sup> Looking at these 120 churches could

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<sup>1</sup> Jimmy Dale and Dave Male, *GS2161: Children and Youth Ministry*, February 2020, p. 2.

<sup>2</sup> *Finding the Treasure – Good News from the Estates: Wythenshawe* <<https://soundcloud.com/the-church-of-england/finding-the-treasure-good-news-from-the-estates>> [accessed 26 May 2021].

<sup>3</sup> Dave Champness, *Estate Churches on the List of 903 Records Referred to in GS2161*, 2020, p. 1.

<sup>4</sup> Champness.

suggest patterns across these churches and ways to support them. I have explored what youth ministry in these churches looks like.

My research seeks to reanalyse part of Dale's work, whilst also digging deeper into the factors that affect church the size of youth ministries. Throughout this dissertation, I will take youth ministry to refer to ministry with under 16s, unless otherwise specified. Although NECN is an ecumenical organisation, I have only looked at Church of England parishes, as this is the data available to me from GS 2161. So, when using the term estate parishes or churches, I am referring to Church of England parishes/churches. Through statistical analysis, similar to that of GS 2161, with the addition of semi-structured interviews with a number of the churches, I have gained some new insights in estates youth ministry which can hopefully be utilised to share the Good News of Jesus Christ with more estate young people.

## **Literature review**

As state-sponsored services in England have declined, churches have become the largest employer of youth workers in the country.<sup>5</sup> As the number of full-time employed youth workers has increased, so has the literature in this area and 'tailor-made courses at training colleges.'<sup>6</sup> One area that seems to be lacking exposure, however, is youth ministry on estates. In this brief literature review, I will explore some key area of discussion around youth and estates ministry, and any possible overlap there is.

### **What is estates youth ministry?**

Youth ministry can be contrasted from youth work, by specifying that part of the purpose of youth ministry is to help young people develop in faith.

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<sup>5</sup> Mark K Smith, 'What Is Youth Work? Exploring the History, Theory and Practice of Work with Young People', *The Encyclopedia of Pedagogy and Informal*, 2013 <<https://infed.org/mobi/what-is-youth-work-exploring-the-history-theory-and-practice-of-work-with-young-people/>> [accessed 8 April 2021].

<sup>6</sup> Leslie J. Francis and others, 'Assessing the Impact of a Paid Children, Youth, or Family Worker on Anglican Congregations in England', *Journal of Research on Christian Education*, 28.1 (2019), 43–50 (p. 43).

Shepherd suggests youth ministry is, ‘providing distinctive learning, intentional relationships and formative practice for young people trying to be Christian.’<sup>7</sup> Senter, Black, Clark and Nel outline some other definitions of youth work. These vary along two axes, development (if youth ministry is for now or later), and fellowship-missional (if youth ministry is for drawing people into church or sending them out in mission).<sup>8</sup> These variety of definitions all posit different purposes or what defines good youth ministry. However, in this essay I want to take a step back and look at all forms of youth ministry. In order to see the whole range of youth ministry churches are involved in, I have taken a broad definition. I take my definition of youth ministry as work a church does with children or young people that has an explicit Christian ethos. This may include activities that are run by church that do not have specific “Christian teaching” but where a Christian attitude is encouraged, and the participants know that this activity is run by Christians. This will help move the discussion past what youth ministry is and instead see what Christian activity with children and young people is bearing fruit. Thus, this may bring new insights, as things that were previously seen as fringe elements of youth ministry are explored and seen to be fruitful.

The National Estate Church Network define an estate parish as one with 500 or more social housing homes.<sup>9</sup> Social houses are houses owned by the council or housing associations. Their rent is linked to local incomes and should provide a ‘more-secure, long term tenancy,’ according to Shelter.<sup>10</sup> Estates are the names give to groups of social houses and often have some communal green space and possibly some amenities. Approximately 1/5 of the Church of England’s parishes are classed as estates parishes. In the podcast, *Finding the Treasure – Good News from the Estates*, Liza Ward describes what it was like growing up on an estate. She says:

‘good earnest folk and a sense of shielding, a need of familiarity of those around you, sharing struggles to get by, sometimes turning a blind eye, even to criminalities, and realizing that the way out, for those who want it, is never going to be easy.’<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Nick Shepherd, *Faith Generation: Retaining Young People and Growing the Church* (SPCK, 2016), p. 6.

<sup>8</sup> Mark Senter III and others, *Four Views of Youth Ministry and the Church: Inclusive Congregational, Preparatory, Missional, Strategic* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Youth Specialties, 2001), p. xv.

<sup>9</sup> *Finding the Treasure – Good News from the Estates*.

<sup>10</sup> ‘What Is Social Housing’, *Shelter England*

<[https://england.shelter.org.uk/support\\_us/campaigns/what\\_is\\_social\\_housing](https://england.shelter.org.uk/support_us/campaigns/what_is_social_housing)> [accessed 14 April 2021].

<sup>11</sup> *Finding the Treasure – Good News from the Estates*.

Estates are places of community and struggle. Their reputations are often outdated. They have often been forgotten by the church. Half of the estates in England do not currently have a Church of England Worship centre within them, leaving a sizeable section of the population abandoned by the Church of England, a church that describes itself as 'a Christian presence in every community.'<sup>12</sup>

### How to do youth ministry?

As stated above, I am taking a broad definition of youth ministry. However, it is important to understand what this youth ministry may include. Furthermore, examples of best practice, methods and projects that have been demonstrated to bear fruit are useful to consider.

Shepherd identifies a number of key practices, and values for youth ministry. He maintains that faith always needs to be generated and does not just develop even when children grow up in Christian families, meaning a greater focus needs to be given to youth ministry. He describes how pastoral care to young people is inherently missional, as helping them understand how things going on in their life in relation to God, and making them feel cared for, helps young people generate faith.<sup>13</sup> He maintains that 'faith today is an issue of identity as much as belief' and thus faith generation needs pastoral mission.<sup>14</sup> This type of youth ministry may not seem to be teaching young people the historic of faith in terms of catechesis; however, it is vital if they are to remain in faith as they wrestle with questions of identity as they grow up. Through helping young people understand how God is involved in their life and feel cared for by him and other Christians, this can help them be encouraged and grow in faith.

Shepherd writes, 'faith generation requires a set of connected practices that contribute to making the implausible choice to believe, making sense of Christian identity and making reliable use of faith.'<sup>15</sup> Furthermore, he suggests that practices can help young people to

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<sup>12</sup> 'Welcome to the Church of England's Official Website', *The Church of England* <<https://www.churchofengland.org/node/1>> [accessed 1 June 2021].

<sup>13</sup> Shepherd, pp. 25–26.

<sup>14</sup> Shepherd, pp. 121–22.

<sup>15</sup> Shepherd, p. 128.

generate faith. Shepherd groups these key practices into 3 types: plausibility practices, 'making distinctive Christian places'; identity practices, 'meaning making for Christian identity'; and reliability practices, 'making faith work in real life.'<sup>16</sup> This suggests that what a church does is more important than merely if it employs someone, run groups or which organisations it has relationships with. Youth ministry that stops at meeting young people, without providing any opportunity to help them generate faith through practices, will lack the necessary space for evangelism or discipleship.

Detached youth work often takes place in areas of deprivation including estates. Thompson and Ballantyne, writing specifically on detached youth work, describe it as 'a distinct form of work with young people which uses the principles and practice of informal education to engage young people in a constructive dialogue within a broad agenda of *personal* and *social* development.'<sup>17</sup> They see it theologically as an 'incarnational approach'<sup>18</sup> in which detached youth workers are '*drawing alongside*.'<sup>19</sup> Detached youth work is unlikely to add to church numbers on a Sunday morning, which means those churches whose main contact with young people is through detached youth work do not feature in my research. Passmore and Passmore write, after being involved in detached youth work with a group of skaters and bikers, 'we saw no mass conversions and no dramatic increase in the numbers of young people attending church in Chard.'<sup>20</sup> They also contend that 'to reduce relational youth work to nothing more than a tool to get young people into church is to miss the heartbeat of the incarnation.'<sup>21</sup> Relating to people as Christ does seems to be a key theme present in this type of work and thus it can be considered youth ministry. Although the churches in my research are not involved in detached youth work, I have explored if the lessons learnt from detached work may be useful to further develop estates youth ministry.

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<sup>16</sup> Shepherd, pp. 131, 136, 140.

<sup>17</sup> Naomi Thompson and James Ballantyne, "Being Church": The Social and Spiritual Purposes and Impacts of Christian Detached Youth Work', *Journal of Youth and Theology*, 16.2 (2017), 89–116 (p. 93).

<sup>18</sup> Thompson and Ballantyne, p. 114.

<sup>19</sup> Thompson and Ballantyne, p. 99.

<sup>20</sup> Richard Passmore, *Here Be Dragons: Youth Work and Mission off the Map* (Chard: Porthouse : distributor Frontier Youth Trust, 2013), p. 7.

<sup>21</sup> Passmore, p. 36.

One example of incarnational ministry, or perhaps more specifically enculturated ministry – ministry deeply rooted in its cultural setting, is Eden. In their own words, Eden says ‘We send and support teams of urban missionaries for these places – to live sacrificially, share the gospel and build authentic community.’<sup>22</sup> This means that teams move into an urban area, often an estate, and commit to live in the area for a number of years, seeking to build relationships with local people, partner with a local church and often work with local young people. Thompson notes that as Eden teams arrive in an area, they experience culture shock as they ‘encountered the depth of cross-cultural difference rooted in class, opportunity and geography.’<sup>23</sup> Over time the teams ‘cultivate a listening approach, an awareness of God at work within a community, and a need to perceive his direction to guide their activity’ as the basis for their missional vision.<sup>24</sup> Some of the focus group Thompson interviewed ‘reflected on feeling “cheated” by the language of revival that has not been realised.’<sup>25</sup> Their time as an Eden team member has ‘added depth to initial expectation and tempered their action with humility.’<sup>26</sup> This article gives important insights into urban mission. Mission work in urban contexts is a slow burn process. If there is to be fruit that will last, this takes time, careful listening and responding to cultural differences. In the case of Eden teams, historically middle-class adults/families have moved into working class areas, these team members need to be especially aware of cultural differences. Sarah Small, however, notes that there is now a bigger mix of relocaters, returners and remainers – with local people joining Eden teams, or people moving back to an area they used to live in.<sup>27</sup> Mission with working class people or people on estates is not always cross-cultural, but where it is, cultural differences need to be understood.

### What causes growth?

For churches with no or a small number of under 16s to be able to develop into having larger youth ministries, growth is needed. Large churches are not necessarily ones that

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<sup>22</sup> ‘Join Eden’ <<https://www.joineden.org/>> [accessed 17 February 2021].

<sup>23</sup> Anna Thompson, ‘Holy Sofas: Transformational Encounters between Evangelical Christians and Post-Christendom Urban Communities’, *Practical Theology*, 5.1 (2012), 47–64 (p. 52).

<sup>24</sup> Thompson, p. 53.

<sup>25</sup> Thompson, p. 53.

<sup>26</sup> Thompson, p. 53.

<sup>27</sup> Sarah Small, Eden Network, 2020.



are growing and so it is important to understand causes or factors relating to growth not just the size of youth ministries.

Through quantitative research, David Voas notes how there is a positive correlation between the child and adult ratio and growth at a local level.<sup>28</sup> Thus, the higher proportion of children at a church, the more likely it is to be growing. He further notes the factors that have the largest effect on the children to adult ratio: having a Sunday school and worship services designed for children, being linked with a Church of England school (especially if it is over-subscribed) and having a youth programme.<sup>29</sup> Churches cannot control if they are linked to a Church of England school or if their school is oversubscribed but they can change and develop their relationships with local schools. Furthermore, having a youth programme, Sunday school, or other services designed for children requires resources. These activities need adults to run them, this could be more difficult in smaller churches or churches with less financial resources. However, there are numerous small scale, free options that could be explored, for example see Diane and Beryl's story.<sup>30</sup>

In contrast, Voas is quoted in the report *From Anecdote to evidence* to say, 'there is no single recipe for growth... what seems crucial is that congregations are constantly engaged in reflection.'<sup>31</sup> This appears to be in opposition to the research described above, but perhaps there is not one simple method that will cause growth. The report outlines a number of 'ingredients' linked to growth. They are: 'good leadership, a clear mission and purpose, willingness to self-reflect, to change and adapt according to context, involvement of lay members, being intentional in prioritising growth, being intentional in chosen style of worship, being intentional in nurturing disciples.'<sup>32</sup> Furthermore, the authors of this report identify that 'a church with no children or under 16s is very likely to be in decline.'<sup>33</sup> Thus this report also encourages 'actively engaging with children and teenagers' in order to help

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<sup>28</sup> David Voas, 'Children and Youth Ministry and Church Growth', *Praxeis*, 1, 2014, p. 5.

<sup>29</sup> Voas, p. 7.

<sup>30</sup> MarimbaLab, *Youth Evangelism - Diane & Beryl's Story*, 2017

<<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hckSfJb8PXQ>> [accessed 8 April 2021].

<sup>31</sup> *From Anecdote to Evidence* (The Church Commissioners for England, 2014), p. 7.

<sup>32</sup> *From Anecdote to Evidence*, p. 8.

<sup>33</sup> *From Anecdote to Evidence*, p. 8.

the church grow.<sup>34</sup> None of these factors seemed to be linked to geography and so does not directly rule out estates as places where youth ministry can thrive. Perhaps intentionally choosing a style of worship, could be seen to be linked to geography. In city centres, churches are able to differentiate from each other more as people will travel to their preferred church, whereas on estate and in more rural areas where people are less likely to travel as transport is poor or expensive, churches need to cater for a wider range of traditions. Voas shows that intentionality, leadership and reflexivity are important, suggesting leadership skills should be prioritized over physical resources.

In the context of the USA, *Growing Young* maintains, through a quantitative and qualitative study of 363 'leading' churches, that there are '10 qualities that your church does not need to grow young.'<sup>35</sup> These are physical things such as, budget, worship style, age of congregation and location. This book looks at how churches can become younger by growing in the younger age groups to shift the average age. Instead, the authors of *Growing Younger* suggest there are 6 commitments of a growing church: unlock keychain leadership, empathize with today's young people, take Jesus' message seriously, fuel a warm community, prioritize young people (and families) everywhere, be the best neighbours.<sup>36</sup> They suggest churches that are growing young have priorities which shape the church's culture, rather than specific physical characteristics. This is encouraging for estate churches as it does not suggest lots of resources are needed for growth. It also corroborates some of Voas' findings in relation to leadership and prioritizing. One resource that is perhaps needed is someone with the responsibility for implementing these cultural changes, and being the type of leader described. Therefore, resourcing ministry with a leader, which in the context of the Church of England may be a priest, still seems important.

*Growing Younger's* emphasis on commitments over physical factors contrasts with the research done by Dale into youth ministry in the Church of England. He found 'certain

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<sup>34</sup> *From Anecdote to Evidence*, p. 12.

<sup>35</sup> Kara Eckmann Powell, Jake Mulder, and Brad Griffin, *Growing Young: Six Essential Strategies to Help Young People Discover and Love Your Church* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Publishing Group, 2016), pp. 25–27.

<sup>36</sup> Powell, Mulder, and Griffin, p. 43.

factors that are associated with... seeing more children engaged in the life of our church.<sup>37</sup> These churches are: large; employ youth, children and families workers; have strong links to schools; from an evangelical tradition; urban; and have big ministry budgets. Whereas Powell et. al. are looking at growing churches, Dale is looking at churches with more than 25 under 16s. His list suggests some things that a church can change, but a number of things are beyond a church's control. For example, a church cannot change how urban or rural it is, but may be able to develop its links with schools. This echoes the suggestion from Voas' research that schools work is something churches can develop that may lead to growth. Furthermore, Dale suggests some factors that the wider church can support, for example 'we [Church of England] could release resource to help fund new roles in churches without [an] employed worker.' His analysis is statistical not qualitative, which means the "culture-related" factors could not be explored, as he could not quantify the culture of the church, their priorities, or how they did youth ministry. It is unclear if including these factors would minimise the effects of the physical factors (as in Powell et al), or would still show their prominence in having a large number of young people.

*Talking Jesus*, research commissioned by Hope Revolution into 'what people in England think of Jesus, Christians and evangelism', found that families are a key influence on young people's faith. 40% of 11-18 year old practicing Christians selected growing up in a Christian family as one of the two or three most influential factors in becoming a Christian.<sup>38</sup> This was the most common influential factor among young people coming to faith. This may be an encouragement to Christian families. However, Shepherd reports that if two parents go to church, they are 46% successful at passing their faith onto their children.<sup>39</sup> Voas reports that the European Values study found that transmission of religious beliefs was only a priority to 11% of Anglican parents.<sup>40</sup> Non-religious parents, on the other hand, are nearly 100% successful at passing their worldviews onto their children,

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<sup>37</sup> Jimmy Dale and Dave Male, *Children & Young People in the Church of England and the Factors That Are Common to Growth* (Church of England Evangelism and Discipleship, January 2020), p. 41.

<sup>38</sup> Lucy Olofinjana and Catherine Butcher, *Talking Jesus Dig Deeper: What People in England Think of Jesus, Christians and Evangelism* (Evangelical Alliance; The Church of England; Hope: Hope Revolution partnership, 2016), pp. 1, 26.

<sup>39</sup> Shepherd, p. 15.

<sup>40</sup> Voas, p. 4.

which suggests that evangelism to the whole family may be important.<sup>41</sup> These figures suggest that parents can pass faith onto their children but that it is not inevitable.

Discipling children needs to become a priority for parents and something they are equipped in doing to help generate faith. If churches had a clearer focus on discipling families, not just children, this may lead to more children being brought up in faith.

The *Talking Jesus* research found that only '1% of [non-Christian] young people think of a Christian youth worker, as their first point of contact with a Christian.'<sup>42</sup> Christian youth workers do not seem to be the people who get to know lots of young people, but this does not mean they are not effective. This suggests that the models of Christian youth ministry that are being employed do not bring youth workers into contact with unchurched young people. Perhaps this is because a key part of their employment is to maintain the numbers of young people at a church and help those young people grow in their faith, whilst they evangelise their friends. This is important, as *Talking Jesus* notes 'we can't leave the task of making Jesus known to the "professionals." We all have a story to tell and a unique set of friendships, connections and opportunities.'<sup>43</sup> Outsourcing all youth work to a youth worker is probably not going to work, partly because young people do not know youth workers. This suggests that estate churches should not simply employ a youth worker and expect the numbers of young people attending their church to sky-rocket. Youth workers, however, do seem important for young Christians. '67% of young Anglicans identified youth workers as the people who helped them to think about their religious beliefs.'<sup>44</sup> This suggests that youth workers are predominantly working with Christian young people, helping them to "generate faith," as Shepherd would put it. The benefit of employing youth workers may not be that new young people meeting them and come to faith. However, their main benefit may be in helping Christian young people to evangelise to their friends. Thus, employing a youth worker can still lead to growth but not directly as a result of the youth worker's interactions.

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<sup>41</sup> Shepherd, p. 17.

<sup>42</sup> Olofinjana and Butcher, p. 8.

<sup>43</sup> Olofinjana and Butcher, p. 8.

<sup>44</sup> Francis and others, p. 45.

One common factor that I have noticed across the literature that characterises a church culture where that church is growing, is the ability to welcome disruption. Children can be disruptive to church because they make noise, or cannot sit still for a long time, but also because they ask questions and their emotions do not always match the feeling of the room. It can also be because the culture of a church is not designed for them. They also appear to “take more than they give,” they are unlikely to give in the collection or serve on a rota. Children disrupt the peace with their energy and joy.

Shepherd writes, ‘growing churches, I believe, grow in part because they respond to this disruption and receive this gift.’<sup>45</sup> Barrett and Harley note that this interruption by children is present in Mark chapters 9-10.<sup>46</sup> In Matthew, these disruptions are minimised, and Barrett and Harley wonder if this is Matthew trying to minimise the interruption of children. This argument seems weak, especially as the children in Mark 9-10 do not seem to be an interruption in a way other people in the gospels are not, for example people who want to be healed. However, in Mark 10 when Jesus blesses the little children, Barrett and Harley maintain that ‘Jesus totally subverts that expectation: by word and action, he makes it clear that his disciples should be open to receive children – with all the disruption that entails – to receive from children and through children to receive the kin-dom.’<sup>47</sup> The authors encourage us to identify with the disciples being challenged by Jesus, to realise that we too easily dismiss children and should instead, like Jesus, welcome them on their own terms. This suggests that welcoming and making room in church for the disruption brought by children could be a factor leading to growth.

As mentioned above, enculturated mission is important. This means that if the church is to fully realise its potential in estates, there are a number of things the church can learn from these estates. Shiner notes some important qualities of the people of the Buttershaw estates, an estate in Bradford: ‘service to each other, humour and fortitude in the face of difficult circumstances, vision and ideas about their environment, and energy and zest for

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<sup>45</sup> Shepherd, p. 156.

<sup>46</sup> Al Barrett and Ruth Harley, *Being Interrupted: Reimagining the Church’s Mission from the Outside* (London: SCM Press, 2020), p. 112.

<sup>47</sup> Barrett and Harley, p. 112.

life,’<sup>48</sup> Furthermore, he notes that for the people of Buttershaw, ‘they [children] are very important to the people – it was clear in my interviews that the needs of the children were the first and paramount consideration for parents, so much so that the parents often seemed to have ceased living themselves.’<sup>49</sup> In a church culture where children are often seen as disruptive or a burden, the church could learn from the people of Buttershaw prioritising children, perhaps not to the extent that Shiner notes where they come above the life of a parent, but children’s needs can come above their parents’ needs. The church has something to learn here about the importance of children in the lives on people living on estates.

A number of themes have emerged from the research in answer to the question of what leads to a large or growing youth ministry. Relational ministry seems particularly important, especially if it takes the form of incarnational or enculturated ministry. Another key theme is employing a youth worker – although this does not always seem to be a direct cause of growth. Thirdly, and potentially most important, is the idea of prioritising children, in welcoming disruption and helping families to disciple their children well.

## **Methodology**

For this research, I have used a mixed method approach. After looking at the quantitative work Dale completed, I was keen to repeat his workings, but this time only looking at estate churches. However, as noted above in the literature review, numerical data does not show the whole picture. I therefore wanted to include qualitative data to further look into the factors affecting large youth ministry on estates.

As noted by Bryman, there are some epistemological and ontological differences between quantitative and qualitative research that need to be overcome in a mixed method approach.<sup>50</sup> I have taken a deductive approach, working from the general to look at the specific. I have used the theory explored in the literature review and seen how it applies to

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<sup>48</sup> Phil Shiner, *The Cry of the People of Buttershaw: The Need for Dialogue* (Leeds: Churches and Neighbourhood Action Project: Barnardo’s Yorkshire, 1991), p. 2.

<sup>49</sup> Shiner, p. 32.

<sup>50</sup> Alan Bryman, *Social Research Methods*, 3rd ed. (Oxford: University Press, 2008), p. 606.

the more specific experience of estate churches. In particular, I have taken Dale's work to see if the factors he found also apply to estate churches. In my qualitative work, I have also used a deductive approach, looking where these factors appear in my data. However, by using thematic analysis of semi-structured interviews, some of this work has been inductive, as I was able to capture factors that affect large church youth ministry that could not easily be quantified. Furthermore, I have applied an interpretive epistemology, understanding that the knowledge I generate may be applicable in a number of contexts but may not be universally applicable. In order to combine these research methods, I have used qualitative research to enhance the quantitative findings. This includes both triangulating the findings of the quantitative findings to narrow in on findings, but also to explore other areas that cannot be grasped through quantitative study.<sup>51</sup>

## Quantitative

For the quantitative part of my research, I used existing data from the Church of England Research and Statistics department, plus data from church website which I quantified. I used this data and quantitative analysis to answer the research question: What factors affect the numerical size of youth ministry?

Dale's work looks at 'Average Child (under 16) Sunday attendance (including Sunday church services and fresh expressions of Church, but not including services for schools).'<sup>52</sup> In his report, he explores the different measures of church attendance currently collected and why he uses the ASA data. I support his reasoning, as the ASA data is a more complete data set than other attendance figures the Church of England collects and there is more vigilant counting. All ways of counting church attendance are flawed in some way, and ASA does not reflect the engagement of the congregation or account for activities and services that do not take part on a Sunday. However, this data set seems to be the best given the limitations of measuring youth ministry in any form. Furthermore, it is important to note that the records are a mix of parishes and benefices, as churches can decide how they submit their returns. As Dale notes, each record may include a 'mixture of parishes,

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<sup>51</sup> Bryman, pp. 622–23.

<sup>52</sup> Dale and Male, *Children & Young People in the Church of England and the Factors That Are Common to Growth*, p. 6.

churches, BMO's and fresh expressions. In most cases, the statistics are for one church but sometimes for an entire multi church parish and sometimes for a subset of churches within a multi church parish.<sup>53</sup> However for simplicity, I will refer to each record as a parish.

There are 903 records referred to in GS2161. Dave Champness undertook further analysis of these records and noted that of these, 77 parishes have all their church(es) on or immediately adjacent to social housing. A further 43 have at least one church on or immediately adjacent to social housing. In my research, I have not made a distinction between these two types of records and so will refer to parishes that are in either of these categories as "estate churches or parishes."

I sent the list of parish codes for these estate churches with 25 or more under 16s to the Church of England Research and Statistics department and they provided me with the ASA data for adults and under 16s in 2018 and 2019, the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD), and parish share paid in 2019. Dale was not able to send me his data for each parish that said if the church employed a youth worker, had a link with a school, or what tradition it was. I collected this data, in the same way he did, through looking at each church's website, using the same criteria Dale did. I deemed a church had a good link with a school if the church referred to having links with the school or mentioned school admissions, or if the school mentioned having links with the church. I had access to the number of Church of England schools in each parish, so it was easier to check for links with Church of England schools, especially as schools and churches often share a name. I endeavoured to look for other local schools, but in parishes without a Church of England school, I mainly relied on the church's website.

To identify if the church employed a worker for under 16s (which I will term youth worker), I looked on their website. I initially categorised if churches had an employed person, volunteer leader, or if a clergy member was described as the lead for youth. However, this differentiation was too difficult to make in many cases, and so I categorised churches into ones that employ a youth worker (no matter the number of paid youth workers) and those

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<sup>53</sup> Dale and Male, *Children & Young People in the Church of England and the Factors That Are Common to Growth*, p. 9.



which do not. I was conscious that not all websites are kept up to date, that the data I was using was from 2018, and that the current employment of youth workers may not reflect their employment status 3 years ago. Unlike the other fields I was looking at, employment of a youth worker is most likely to fluctuate, as youth workers are often on short term contracts.

To categorise each church's tradition, I used Dale's definitions of Conservative Evangelical, New Wine network, HTB network, Evangelical, Central, Liberal Catholic, and Traditional Catholic. Dale also identifies some Cathedrals but they did not come into my data set. Some churches were Local Ecumenical Partnerships, initially I categorised them separately but when it came to analysis, it was simpler to categorise them as Central.

I also collected data on Eden teams, recording where churches were linked to an Eden team, as the literature had suggested that this was an important avenue to explore. A very small number of these churches were linked to Eden teams but one of the churches I interviewed did have this link.

There were a number of categories that Dale also collected data for, including links with other organisations for example Open The Book or Boys Brigade, but I was not able to collect this data within the smaller scale of my research.

There were a number of limitations with the data I collected. The main being how up to date websites were. There were a number of churches that only had A Church Near You (ACNY) page, which does not provide much information apart from when services are. Some of the websites which were linked from ACNY had clearly not been updated for a number of years, and some did not provide the necessary information. In these cases, I tried to find other sources of information such as Facebook pages. If I could not find the required information, I presumed that the church did not employ a youth worker as churches often like to advertise the fact they are employing someone. I categorised these as Central churches, as if I could not find them on the data bases that are listed by Dale, this seemed the best place for them to land. I recorded them as having no link with school if I could find no evidence on the school's website or information I could find about the church.

I analysed this data in a number of ways, always using the Child ASA for 2018. I primarily used regression models. Bartholomew maintains, 'the object [of regression] is to obtain a prediction of one variable, given the values of the others.'<sup>54</sup> Multi-variable linear regression predicts the effect changing variables will have on an outcome (y value), taking into account other variables ( $x_1$ ,  $x_2$ ,  $x_3$ ...). In my case, I am predicting the effect changing a variable, such as adding a paid youth worker, will have on the number of children attending church, whilst accounting for the size of church or how much parish share it pays. Regression models also indicate the confidence with which you can say an equation/model will predict an outcome, this is the  $R^2$  number, and also how separate the x variables are, this is the p-value.

As well as regression, I also used the same type of analysis that Dale did, by grouping churches into 25-50, 51-100, 100+ under 16s, and then grouping variables into ranges, to look by eye if there is any correlation between the size and value of other variables.

As part of the discussion of findings, I have compared patterns to those Dale presents in GS2161. However, because we are not using the exact same data set, some comparisons may be unfair. I did use the 2018 ASA figures, as Dale did, however the data set for information gathered from websites will be different. This is both because the collection of data was at different points in time and so websites and the status of churches change, and also because Dale had access to some additional data banks because of his position in the Church of England.

## Qualitative

I used qualitative research to answer the question: What makes youth ministry work well? From the 120 parish records I looked at, I selected 5 parishes to interview using semi-structured interviews. I tried to interview a cross section of parishes, varying by geography, as well as the variables explored in the quantitative section of my research: size, tradition, and if they employed a youth worker. I found it hard to contact some churches, and the time pressure of this research meant I did not have ample time to continue to pursue churches that did not reply. Because I was using contact details on churches' websites, I

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<sup>54</sup> Penelo Peterson, Eva L. Baker, and Barry McGaw, *International Encyclopedia of Education*, 3rd ed. (Amsterdam; Boston: Elsevier/AP, 2010), p. 16.

did not try to contact those churches with very out of date websites as there was a risk that the contact details would be out of date as well. I found it more difficult to contact churches that were central, liberal catholic, or traditional catholic. This has led to more interviews with evangelical churches. Due to the time constraints, I could not keep trying to contact other churches, and was unable to redress this balance.

The interviews took place on Zoom and lasted from 30 mins to 1 hour. When I made contact with each church, I asked them to put me in contact with the best person to talk about children and youth work at their church. This meant I talked to people with a range of roles, comprising a youth (11-18) worker, volunteer children's coordinator, vicar, and two curates. It would have been very interesting to have talked to young people, however because the interviews were on Zoom, having the right safeguarding and ethical approval in place would have been too difficult, so I decided to stick with those leading youth ministries. I prepared a similar set of question for each church but added follow up questions as appropriate. After asking people to describe their context and the youth ministry that went on, I asked what works well or has not worked well and why; their links with other organisations, like schools; and what the concerns, barriers and gifts of the young people from their local estate were (or might be). I ended each interview with the same two questions: if you had all the money and resources in the world, what would be the next thing you would do for children and youth ministry; and if a church that was in a similar context to yours wanted to start some youth work, what would you suggest as three top tips or first steps? I also gave time at the end of each interview for the interviewee to add anything else they would like to. I then transcribed the interviews and analysed them using thematic analysis. I firstly coded the interviews using the following criteria: activities, buildings/location, growth and good things about the church, partnerships, personnel, joys from the estate or youth ministry, Covid, and other things that seemed significant to answering the research question. These criteria were both related to the qualitative work I had done as well as things that had struck me as I interviewed participants. I then grouped these sections into different themes and those themes into other themes, until three overarching areas emerged from my research.

I have anonymised both the quantitative and qualitative data. I felt this was important in creating an environment in which people could speak freely. I removed the names and parish codes before analysing the data. For the interviews, I have changed the names of

all the people mentioned in the interview. In any description of their location below, I will not use their town/church name. Instead, I will describe the type of location, e.g. small town. Because of the limited number of churches included in the project, and the fact that their names are accessible as an answer to a General Synod question<sup>55</sup>, I have not referred to any locations or regions within England when describing these churches.

One particular challenge was the Covid-19 pandemic. With churches having been shut for some time, and with my interviews taking place in different stages of lockdown, I asked churches both what they did before the pandemic and what they are doing at the moment. There was a consensus that youth ministry was especially hard now and most people were looking forward to getting back to being able to do in person youth ministry.

## **Findings**

### Quantitative

After collecting data about each church, I analysed the data using regression models. These models showed there were a employing a youth worker could be seen to have made a small impact on Child ASA, with most factors having an insignificant effect. There were no factors that made a sizable difference to Child ASA. Furthermore, the factors seemed to be linked due to the large p-value, suggesting there was not an easy one fit solution. See Appendix. Thus, in response to the research question being asked, none of the factors I investigated affected the numerical size of youth ministry.

Unlike Dale's analysis, I found no distinctive patterns in my work. Although this does not show what can be done to increase the size of estates youth ministry, it does have some implication on national youth work assumptions. It suggests that there is a difference between youth ministry on estates and the national picture. Either there is no one-size fits all solution to estates ministry, or the factors that Dale and I looked at are not significant for estates whereas other things may be. This means a policy that suits the patterns of

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<sup>55</sup> 'Q91 Skrine.Pdf' <<https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2020-02/Q91%20Skrine.pdf>> [accessed 26 April 2021].

national youth ministry, may not best support estates youth ministry. I will discuss some of these differences below.

### Qualitative

Through analysis of qualitative interviews, I found a number of key themes which participants described as being important in their youth ministry. These themes were: sharing spaces, a church for all, and resourcing leaders.

### **Sharing spaces**

Physical space appeared as a key theme in the interviews, being mentioned in every interview, either as a positive aspect of their existing youth ministry or something they would prioritise improving. Reference to physical space included both the church being involved in community spaces and the community being in the church building. Among the community spaces, there was a particular emphasis on schools' work. Alexander remarked, 'we support the schools and they seem to be at the heart of the communities.'<sup>56</sup> This seemed a common thread among all interviews, with all the interviewees describing some positive interactions with their local school. Daniel remarked, 'One of the things I saw a growing need for was integration and interaction with the primary school – it was a key mission field.'<sup>57</sup> For youth work, schools are a place where nearly every child and young person attends, and so it is a place to make new interactions with young people. The types of involvement in local schools varied between contexts. In the suburb where Alexander was based, as well as across the rest of the city, a sports ministry team ran after-school clubs, assemblies, and active RE lessons. The clergy from the local church would lead assemblies, support staff and connect with family support workers present in school. Charles and Elliot described that their vicar was on the board of governors, or helped the school in their responsibilities as a church school. Daniel described how he had found funding for a one day a week chaplain for their local primary school, so they could do more with their local school. Daniel reflected, it 'meant that we had a church leader ensconced and embedded in our primary school and to really help to tighten that link and

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<sup>56</sup> Interview 1, 2021.

<sup>57</sup> Interview 4, 2021.

those relations between the kids at school.’<sup>58</sup> All interviewees wanted to continue to develop their link with their local school(s). Burt noted that their church found it hard to maintain this link because they lacked a full-time minister, but they would like it to be one of their priorities.

Relationships with other community organisations, including family centres and other local support charities, were all seen as important. Daniels’ church had good links with a local art project and family centre. Alexander’s church engaged often with the council run community support agencies. Being involved in their space was one way to make new connections. Another way to connect with community organisations, especially those without a space of their own was to invite community organisations to use the church building or grounds. Hosting events in collaboration with community organisations, for example inviting support charities to the foodbank, or renting out the space to a community art project that was struggling to get people to go to their space, were ways to make new relationships.

Having the right kind of space that community groups can share is important if you are going to invite people in. There were two main themes among this discussion of the church’s space: the space was good, in terms of facilities; and the space was in a good location, in relation to other parts of the local area. Alexander and Burt described that the church was either very near, or on the way, to school for many young people. Daniel described how their parish had a very low amount of green space, as lots of people lived in flats, and so the community enjoyed using the church grounds, which they had developed to include a playground and a café. Getting people into the building was important for three of the interviewees. They felt that inviting people to events in their church building, even if it did not have a particular Christian element, was important. The community enjoyed sharing the church’s space because it was a trusted space. When a variety of events were held in the church building people came to trust it and so felt more comfortable. Alexander noted that there is ‘something safe about the building as well we found. In an estate where there can be difficulties and challenges it’s quite nice to have a

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<sup>58</sup> ‘Interview 4’.

peaceful place to go to – that’s one of the things we can offer.’<sup>59</sup> Offering this safe space to the community was important to two of the interviewees.

The sharing of spaces between those who went to church and those who did not was important in many of the interviewees’ experiences. Locations were acknowledged as important, but it did not always need to be events in church. By both being involved in community spaces and inviting people into the church building, people “bumped into each other” in a number of different spaces and thus deeper relationships were formed. These led to more people knowing about, and being interested in joining in with, things going on at church. Daniel said:

‘all of those relationships were cross fertilising. And it meant a whole load of people, who were accessing Tulip Road family centre never [would] have accessed something in the church, started building relationships...[one of these people said] if she had met me first as a vicar she would have been totally prejudice against me and would not have listened to anything I said but because she met me as my kid’s dad before she knew what I did [she listened].’<sup>60</sup>

Meeting both children and adults in a variety of settings, especially in schools, and offering the building to the local community not just for church services, was a theme that many of the interviewees described as important in their interactions with young people in their estate parishes. Being involved in the school meant young people were more likely to become involved in the local church as they both knew the adults involved and the building. Sharing spaces was a key theme that led to numerical youth ministry growth.

## **Church for all**

Although the focus of my work was on the attendance of children and young people at church, a key theme that came out of the interviews was the importance of church being a place for all people, including people of all ages. Churches were encouraged to be welcoming, especially welcoming disruption, to support youth ministry and to develop inter-generational relationships. When churches are truly diverse, a greater diversity of young

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<sup>59</sup> ‘Interview 1’.

<sup>60</sup> ‘Interview 4’.

people are attracted to church. Daniel noted that ‘the tribalist instincts that want to kind of rally together and find strength and solidarity are just intensified in adolescents because everyone is so flipping scared of what other people think’; having a more diverse church means that young people can both find people like them but also be opened up to a wider community.<sup>61</sup>

Burt, after noting the number of unaccompanied children who came to church, said ‘to have an adult congregation who are prepared to accept behaviour that’s not quite the norm, that’s huge.’<sup>62</sup> Daniel noted that there was a time when 45% of their worshipping community were under 18. He says, ‘It was awful and wonderful at the same time.’<sup>63</sup> Realising that having more under 16s at church services will cause some disruption but receiving it as a gift seemed to be important for two of the interviewees. Churches looking to attract more young people must be prepared for things to change in some way. Churches are shaped by the people in them, so if adult members are keen for growth, it must be acknowledged that as the make-up of the church will change, so will those shaping the church.

Although not all church members are involved in youth ministry, there were numerous ways interviewees suggested they could be supportive. Burt remarked how a supportive church was key to the success of youth ministry. When being asked what advice he would give to a church trying to start up children’s ministry, he said ‘I would say pray, ask God to give you a supportive church community because you can’t do it on your own.’<sup>64</sup> He described this support as financial, for example providing funding when they wanted to buy small Christmas present for members of their children’s club; as familial, taking children and young people under their wing acting as an extended family; and as welcoming disruption. Alexander and Daniel both described the benefits of mentoring relationships within a church, especially as some young people from estates may not have access to adults in particular careers who can mentor them. Daniel, in reference to one of the young people at his church, said ‘he’s a 17-year-old black British Nigerian kid who’s in a

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<sup>61</sup> ‘Interview 4’.

<sup>62</sup> Interview 2, 2021.

<sup>63</sup> ‘Interview 4’.

<sup>64</sup> ‘Interview 2’.



mentoring relationship with a 33-year-old Irish structural engineer woman and so that's church at its best.'<sup>65</sup> Elliot said, ' I always think a sign of a healthy church is that there is no way these people would be in the same building except if they were coming to worship God.'<sup>66</sup> Encouraging inter-generational relationships is a way churches are investing in young people and bringing them into the wider community, thus helping young people to feel at home in church and more invested.

Burt noted the importance of evangelism to the whole family. The children's club he ran was well attended and a number of the children came unaccompanied to church on a Sunday. There was little engagement from these children's families, so they started using the children's group as a way to reach out to parents and family members too. They run mum's pamper nights, dad/uncle/big brother nights and family fun nights as part of their children's club offering. At these nights the children put on the pampering/activities and welcome their parents and guardians to their version of church. A church for all is one where parents and children feel welcomed. A church that is only full of children and young people is still missing people who need to hear the gospel. Burt used a children's club to help invite those who were unfamiliar with church to feel welcome and hear about the gospel. He also discussed that some parents were keen to help out at the children's club, even if they did not have faith, and this again gave them an opportunity to share faith with those adults.

### **Resourcing leaders**

Interviewees raised a number of issues around resourcing the people who run youth ministry. One key concern for a number of interviewees was that employed youth workers were normally on short contracts and so could not stick around for the long term. Burt, who had been leading children's work at his church for more than 40 years as a volunteer, remarked 'I think that consistency and building relationship is fundamental to the success of children's work... it's building relationship for the long term.'<sup>67</sup> In relation to schools work, a number of interviewees said how a consistency was needed to develop work with

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<sup>65</sup> 'Interview 4'.

<sup>66</sup> Interview 5, 2021.

<sup>67</sup> 'Interview 2'.

the schools, otherwise you are back to the start every time a new person goes into the school.

Daniel described how he ‘massively bemoan[s] the lack of mature professional Christian youth ministers in this country,’ saying, ‘I think the Church of England has not resourced youth ministry properly.’<sup>68</sup> He went on to describe that youth ministers who are pastorally caring for 30 or 50 young people might receive £26,000 if they are lucky, where as priests, who may have smaller congregations, receive a house, a stipend and a pension. He suggested that if the Church of England wants youth workers to remain in the Church of England for the long term, it needs to invest in them, as otherwise they cannot afford to stay in the job. These mature Christian youth workers can then ‘mentor, train [and] develop junior leadership.’<sup>69</sup> In his church, Daniel was running a 12-week paid work experience scheme for 16 and 17 year olds to be involved in youth work. This scheme was developing local young people, providing them with employment and giving younger youth peer leaders. This type of programme, he maintained, ‘needs to be run by resilient tenacious, inquisitive, entrepreneurial and responsible leaders, with authority and training and resources to run all that stuff.’ Thus, youth workers with more experience need to be retained within the Church of England if the potential of youth work is to be fully realised.

Employing a youth worker was especially important for two interviewees. Having an employed person meant that more youth ministry could be done, as vicars did not have enough time to do as much as they would like. There were many opportunities to engage with young people in their local area and so employing a youth worker increased the capacity of the church. It also meant that expertise could be brought in. For example, Daniel explained that their children’s minister was a qualified teacher who could have great links with the school because of her professional background. He further described how after employing a children’s pastor, and also after employing a full-time youth worker, youth work ‘took off,’ suggesting that there was a causal link between employing a youth worker and youth ministry growth. Alexander outlined the importance of sports ministry in engaging with young people and how an employed sports ministry team working across

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<sup>68</sup> ‘Interview 4’.

<sup>69</sup> ‘Interview 4’.

the city were vital for providing this. Employing people brought in expertise and released time so that more youth ministry could be done.

A number of interviewees noted the importance of utilizing and supporting volunteer teams. Both Charles and Elliot described how more volunteer involvement from their church would positively impact on their youth ministry. This was both in terms of having more people involved, but particularly in having more members of the congregation invested in the lives of young people. This would help 'young people feel welcome in church,'<sup>70</sup> Elliott suggested, and would help with 'integration.' Charles said, 'there's not been as much buy in as hoped [in their local Eden team]'<sup>71</sup> and so he lamented the missed opportunities of people from church engaging with the young people from the local estate. Developing volunteers was both needed for youth ministry to take place but would also help it grow as young people were invested in by caring adults.

Three of the five interviewees described the benefits of wider links to other churches or networks in their youth ministry. Alexander described the benefit of being in partnership with other churches across the city, including a central resource church. This partnership provided them with children's ministry support including prepared materials, as well as the sports ministry outlined above. Elliot described how his church were involved in the early stages of forming a network of churches from a eucharistic tradition. He hoped this would lead to 'conversations about working together in that [youth ministry] and how to help resource one another.'<sup>72</sup> He noted that a lot of his diocese's resource in terms of youth work was in church of a particular style and was keen to acknowledge that there is more than one style of church that young people like. He said, 'I would hate that we would assume that if you are in a particular age bracket the only way you are going to encounter God is in one particular style.'<sup>73</sup> Elliot was looking forward to the mutual support that could be set up, as well as the possibility of shared activities between the different churches involved. Burt also suggested that inter-church activities could both be beneficial for the young people as well as adults. He described a collaboration between evangelical

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<sup>70</sup> 'Interview 5'.

<sup>71</sup> Interview 3, 2021.

<sup>72</sup> 'Interview 5'.

<sup>73</sup> 'Interview 5'.

churches in his local area. They put on shared events for adult evangelism, as well as some shared youth work activities. He said, 'you see the Christian world isn't just your little church, there is something bigger out there.'<sup>74</sup> Being part of this local evangelical fellowship changed the gaze of both young people and leaders and encouraged them, as they moved from looking only at their particular church to seeing they were part of the wider Christian church. However, Burt also noted a mixed response with trying to be in partnership with another local church. His church was in a benefice with another church, who both shared the same vicar. He noted when the current vicar came 'he showed an interest in children's work that was very welcomed, we'd never experienced anything like that before... we had really paddled our own canoe for quite a long time.'<sup>75</sup> However, this new interest also came with some difficulties, as the new vicar wanted to decide what the children were being taught and Burt did not feel the material suited the children's club. Although thankful for the support, Burt and his team still wanted flexibility and to be trusted with the group they had run for many years. Being part of a network, partnership or benefice seemed to help support the leaders of the youth ministries I interviewed. These networks helped to provide resources, expertise and encouragement, however local autonomy was also regarded as important. Daniel reflected on the tension between being in partnership with other organisations whilst still focused on local youth work. He said:

'I think the church-based youth work is critical. I think that if you want to see young people forming relationships across the generations and integrating into all-age intergenerational communities, your youth ministry has to fundamentally be your staff, your team, your leaders, your volunteers, people in the church doing it.'<sup>76</sup>

Supportive networks that help churches to do good local youth work was important to supporting leaders, according to the interviewees I spoke to.

Two interviewees remarked on the importance of safeguarding and the difficulties that there were surrounding it. Burt, a volunteer coordinator, said that safeguarding 'administration became so onerous.' He thought that it was very important but as a volunteer did not have time to do some of this work. This meant the children's club he ran could not go on as many exciting trips as they had in the past because he did not have the

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<sup>74</sup> 'Interview 2'.

<sup>75</sup> 'Interview 2'.

<sup>76</sup> 'Interview 4'.

capacity to complete the safeguarding administration for more complicated activities. Supporting volunteers with safeguarding admin seemed to be an important area in order to release leaders to do more. Furthermore, both Burt and Daniel raised the safeguarding difficulty of unaccompanied minors coming to church and so perhaps some more guidance here could be helpful in creating more effective and safe youth work.

Two of interviewees described the possibilities of evangelism and discipleship through volunteering. Burt described how some parents who helped at the children's club were sympathetic to the gospel and helping out on a Friday night gave them the chance to hear about Jesus. Daniel also suggested that those new to faith could find community and develop in faith through helping to lead some youth work. He remarked that mature Christians were still needed to guide and set the tone of events.

Supporting and resourcing those involved in youth ministry was important for all interviewees. Whether this was through employing someone, more people volunteering, training or discipling, a well-resourced team meant churches could do more and reach more young people.

There were a number of other interesting things that I do not have space to discuss in this section, including churches' responses to the Covid-19 pandemic. There is also not space to discuss how churches share Jesus at different events they run, such as through opportunities for prayer at the food banks. However, I have identified three main themes in growing and sustaining youth ministry. These are: sharing spaces, a church for all, and resourcing a team.

## **Discussion**

Three themes have arisen out of my research: sharing spaces, a church for all, and resourcing leaders. The aim of the following section is to discuss their significance and how they are supported by the literature. I will also compare this research with Dale's work, to see if there are any key differences or if any particular emphases are needed in estate churches compared with the national average.

## Sharing spaces

Sharing spaces brings together previous anecdotal remarks about the importance of schools' ministry and being involved in the community. Rather than a focus on going out into the community or getting the community into church, sharing spaces emphasises the importance of cross-pollinating relationships, where people come into contact with Christians in all different locations.

The general synod report GS2121 *Growing Faith* states the importance of the links between churches, schools and households. These are the three main areas where young people spend their time, and *Growing Faith* suggests that the intersection between these areas are where the church needs to invest. *Growing Faith* notes the need for,

‘A clear focus on churches serving the life of schools and all Church of England schools committed to working in partnership with churches, building meaningful long-lasting relationships with children and young people which help them navigate the transitions from pre-school to primary, primary to secondary and secondary into further and higher education or employment.’<sup>77</sup>

This highlights the responsibility of both churches and Church of England schools in the relationship. It can be difficult for churches to be involved in schools. However, this suggestion from GS2121 shows that churches and Church of England schools both need to sustain engagement, as forming fruitful links is not always easy or quick. There are, of course, many schools that are not church schools, and so this may limit how a church can be involved in their local school. Alexander noted however, ‘I think it may well be easier that they are not church schools as you’ve got a blank canvas to go in.’<sup>78</sup> It is clear that it is worth trying to be involved in local schools. It is not always possible, but in many cases this can be a successful, fruitful relationship.

The qualitative data really stressed the importance of work with schools, however the quantitative data showed a negligible effect. I suggest this may be for a few reasons. Firstly, accurately recording if a church has a good link with a school is difficult. From my

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<sup>77</sup> Debbie Clinton, Nigel Genders, and Dave Male, *GS 2121 Growing Faith: Churches, Schools and Households Summary* (General Synod of the Church of England, 2019), p. 4.

<sup>78</sup> ‘Interview 1’.

quantitative research I found four out of the five churches I interviewed people from had good links with schools. However, during the interviews, I found that the church that I had not found evidence for having a good link with schools, worked incredibly closely with many local schools. Conversely one of the churches that I had found data for having a good link with schools, did not in reality have much involvement with them. The subjectivity and difficulty in evidencing this factor may have led to a very low result. Another problem that may have added to the difficulty of recording this data is schools work is unlikely to affect Sunday attendance in the short term. School services are not included in ASA, and however engaging, evangelistic or discipling work with schools is, it is not recorded as part of ASA. As Burt noted, if parents do not want to attend church, it is a big ask for children to get themselves to church on their own, and is also complicated in relation to safeguarding. Burt said that because of this difficulty, their children's club had adapted to become more like church so that these children had their version of church on a Friday night. Thus, the crossover from schools' work to Sunday attendance is not simple and may happen most between schools' work and youth activities run by the church. Two interviewees described how meeting young people in school meant that it was easier to invite them to a youth club, which helps them grow in faith. Although the quantitative data did not emphasise schools work, the interviewees stressed its importance in helping youth ministry grow, even if this was not Sunday growth.

My research suggests that other community spaces are also important. Inviting the school into church, letting community groups use spaces in church, being involved in the local children's centre, running prayer meetings in school, these are all important parts of sharing spaces and helping people to feel comfortable and welcome in church, to get to know Christians and for relationships to form. GS212 does not mention other community spaces, but my research highlights the importance of looking for many different spaces where people, especially children and young people, congregate. Daniel said, 'go to where people have already gathered and listen.'<sup>79</sup> It is important to acknowledge children and young people gather in a variety of different spaces and to see where those spaces are locally.

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<sup>79</sup> 'Interview 4'.

Green describes his interactions with young people when he lived and worked on estates. He suggests that a balance between meeting local need, whilst not merely providing entertainment can be achieved through “hanging out ministry” that focusses on meeting people rather than programmes.<sup>80</sup> He describes that estates ministry, and the social action and evangelism that takes place as part of it, should be ‘an incarnational, listening and socially concerned kingdom ministry – a journey downwards,’<sup>81</sup> ministry that is embedded in the local culture. In order to meet young people and be able to take part in this “journey downwards” members of the church need to go to the places where people are gathering to hang out. Green’s use of “hang-out” reminds us that a mutuality of relationship is needed. When church members both go out from church into community spaces and welcome people into the church building, the power disparities of welcoming non-Christians into church is reduced because relationships have already been established. This makes hanging out, rather than providing a service, more likely.

It also seems to be similar to the detached youth work described by Passmore and Passmore. Those working with young people become “friends” or trusted adults, rather than people who provide entertainment. This type of ministry prioritises relationships over curriculum, activities or church attendance. It may appear that there is some contrast between this type of ministry and the faith generation practices Shepherd suggests, as practices are relegated below relationships. However, Shepherd describes how the drop-in youth work project gAp could adapt to incorporate these practices into its already established style.<sup>82</sup> In a similar way to detached youth work, there is not a strict programme of activities, however some small changes or additions would help it support young people in better generating faith. Alexander and Daniel both mentioned some kind of drop-in youth work in their interviews, however none of the interviewees were involved in detached youth work. If sharing spaces is an important theme for engaging young people, then perhaps this could be an avenue churches should explore to meet young people that are not in the spaces they currently share.

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<sup>80</sup> Laurie Green, *Blessed Are the Poor?: Urban Poverty and the Church* (London: SCM Press, 2015), p. 194.

<sup>81</sup> Green, p. 195.

<sup>82</sup> Shepherd, p. 167.



Jesus, a wandering teacher was present in lots of different spaces. He met people in streets, in homes, in the temple and synagogue. People also came to him, not necessarily to hear him preach but for other needs too. The example of Jesus encourages us to engage in a variety of different spaces in our communities, not to be limited by people coming to the church building. But we can also welcome them into our space, the physical building of the church, not expecting in the first instance that they are here to hear the gospel preached, but that they would like some need met.

## **Church for all**

A church for all is one in which people of all different backgrounds can feel welcome and comfortable. This theme emphasises both the need for inter-generational churches but also the need for the desire to welcome people of all ages. When a church is made up of people of all different ages, inter-generational relationships can flourish – something that is missing from much of modern society. Church can be a place where young people feel welcomed, accepted, invested in and given space to flourish.

The report *Rooted in the Church*, which asked what makes good soil for the fruit of faith to grow in, identified four important things concerning the culture of a church. These were: inclusion, equality, space, leadership.<sup>83</sup> These themes reflected some of the themes that emerged from my work. By inclusion, the authors of *Rooted in the Church*, meant young people 'do not want to be artificially separated from the main church.'<sup>84</sup> They emphasised the need for inter-generational relationships, in terms of relationships, mentoring and leadership.<sup>85</sup> This is similar to what I found in my research. A church for all is one where all ages are present and can relate to each other. Alexander and Daniel stressed the importance of mentoring relationships. Other interviewees raised the importance of supportive or welcoming churches, showing that relationships between adults and children are important and help children feel integrated into the whole church.

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<sup>83</sup> *Rooted in the Church: Summary Report* (The Church of England Education Office, November 2016), p. 16.

<sup>84</sup> *Rooted in the Church: Summary Report*, p. 16.

<sup>85</sup> *Rooted in the Church: Summary Report*, pp. 19, 29–30.

*Rooted in the Church* describes equality as receiving young people for who they are and treating them as equals, rather than as a token youth. In my questioning, I asked interviewees about the gifts that young people bring to their churches. A number did not want to give blanket statements, and instead retold particular stories about young people from their church who brought specific gifts. These included gifted leaders and kind friends.<sup>86</sup> They modelled receiving these young people as individuals and pointed to a church where all are welcome on their own terms.

Welcoming disruption was an important theme that emerged both in the literature review and in interviews. Churches were encouraged to welcome disruption as children both behave differently to what can be expected in church, and also disrupt the status quo. As Barrett and Harley note, Jesus welcomes the interruption of children. If we want to live like Jesus, in the messiness of life, then we should also welcome this disruption. Sharing spaces can increase disruption. It reduces the control churches have over an experience, either because they are guests in a space, or because there are lots of people in their space who they either do not know or who are not accustomed to the behaviour normally demonstrated in church. However, a church for all encourages us to make space for all different kinds of people, no matter the disruption they might cause. This will lead to continuing to invest in spaces, even when it may appear to disrupt your “aims” as it can lead to new relationships and people meeting Christians for the first time. For churches to be places where all are welcome, so that young people feel at home and can also benefit from inter-generational relationships, disruption needs to be welcomed and perhaps seen as a gift.

## **Resourcing leaders**

There are a number of different ways that a youth team could be resourced. One often discussed option is employing a youth worker. From Dale’s research, employing a youth worker seems like an important factor in affecting the attendance of young people. *From Anecdote to Evidence* found that ‘those [churches] who employ a youth worker are only half as likely to be declining as those who employ another type of paid worker.’<sup>87</sup> Most

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<sup>86</sup> ‘Interview 4’. Interview 5, 2021

<sup>87</sup> *From Anecdote to Evidence*, p. 26.

churches would aim for growth rather than not declining, but given the current trends of the Church of England, especially among under 16s, anything that will help a church not decline seems to be bucking the trend. *From Anecdote to Evidence* shows correlation between employing a youth worker and growth, however Shepherd goes on to show causation. Shepherd uses evidence from talking to young people to show that employing a youth worker has an effect on growth, not only among young people but that it has an effect on growth more widely in the church.<sup>88</sup> He suggests that when churches prioritise ministry to young people, this ‘acts as a stimulus for growth within church communities,’ meaning it is not only the number of young people that increase but also other areas of the church grow too.<sup>89</sup>

Francis et al. maintain that in the 1980s there was a big push to employ youth workers ‘in response to the reported decline in the numbers of young people attending church.’<sup>90</sup> In the 1990s fewer young people left the church than predicted which could have been down to employing more youth workers.<sup>91</sup> In statistics collected in 786 Church of England churches in England, one third employed a children, youth or family worker. Using weekly attendance data for these churches, a 43% correlation was found between 5-18 year old attendance and a paid worker. Furthermore, this analysis found, using a regression model, that ‘churches that employed a paid children, youth or family worker had seven more young people compared with churches of comparable adult attendance.’<sup>92</sup>

When I repeated this analysis with my data set my research found that, statistically, employing a youth worker only made a small difference to the number of under 16s who attended church. Unlike Francis et al who found a youth worker added 7 young people to church, when I undertook the same analysis with my data, I found employing a youth worker only added 2 young people to church attendance. I also only found a 18% correlation between employing a youth worker and Child ASA. There were a number of differences between Francis’ and my data set. Firstly, the parameters for being included in

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<sup>88</sup> ‘Faith Generation Author, Nick Shepherd’, pp. 3, 8 <<https://www.youthscape.co.uk/podcast/ys-18-nick-shepherd>> [accessed 14 August 2020].

<sup>89</sup> Shepherd, p. 5.

<sup>90</sup> Francis and others, p. 43.

<sup>91</sup> Francis and others, p. 44.

<sup>92</sup> Francis and others, p. 48.

the data were different. Francis looked at 786 churches that had 20-250 people. However, I looked at all churches with 25 or more under 16s. This meant my data set was more likely to include larger churches. By definition churches had to be larger than 25 and in reality, ranged from 74 to 838 attendees. The definition of children was also different, I used ASA data which classes children as under 16s, however Francis defined children as 5-18 year olds.

Francis' records were gathered from a secondary source which used surveys to collect their data. This meant churches opted-in to complete the survey. My data set, as with Dales', was a list of all Church of England parishes that met a certain threshold: 25 or more under 16s. This means that my data set included both churches that would be proactive in answering surveys and those which would not. One third of the churches included in Francis' work employed a youth worker, whereas Dales' work found that figure to be 7.9% across the country.<sup>93</sup> This suggests that the churches with youth workers are more likely to respond to surveys. 48 of the 120 records I looked at employed a youth worker, which is 40% of the records. This is slightly higher than the proportion of churches in Francis' work. This makes sense as the churches I looked at were more likely to be larger than Francis' and larger churches are more likely to employ a youth worker as they are more likely to have the funds for this.

This being said, there does appear to be a significant difference between Francis' work and mine. Francis found a stronger correlation and a larger coefficient. This may suggest that estate churches are able to engage youth well, even if they do not have a youth worker. This may be from necessity, as many may not have the budget to employ someone. Another option which emerged from the people I interviewed, was that someone else was given specific oversight. Churches that did not employ a youth worker were still successful because people were investing time and oversight into work with young people. This person could be a curate, volunteer leader, or the vicar, but whoever they were, they had responsibility for overseeing the youth work. In much of the literature, church culture was seen as a key factor for growth and I noted that someone is needed to oversee this change. Having people in oversight positions in order to be responsible for youth ministry,

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<sup>93</sup> Dale and Male, *Children & Young People in the Church of England and the Factors That Are Common to Growth*, p. 24.

and to help shift the culture of either the youth ministry itself or the wider church, can help these ministries grow.

Francis' and my regression modelling can show the impact different variables have on children's attendance, but it cannot show causation. Shepherd used qualitative work to show that employing a youth worker led to church growth, and I have found a mixture of views in my research. Daniel noted that both after their church employed a children's worker, and again after they employed a youth worker, these areas of ministry grew rapidly. Alexander's church did not employ a youth worker but did utilize a paid sports ministry team that was employed across the city, which led them to be very active and make good links in the local schools. Elliot's church had just started employing a children's worker and had already seen the benefit of her existing relationships leading to a critical mass to start a youth group. In these three cases, financially investing in people resources led to growth. Furthermore, the pattern in all of the interviewees' churches is that they had someone who was dedicated to overseeing the children and youth ministry, and in four of the five interviews this seemed to lead to growth with estates young people. Having someone to invest time in and to build relationships with young people, and bring in other young people with whom they may have formed relationships in other spheres were important factors. This person did not have to be someone employed, however if there is not someone in the congregation or existing member of the ministry team who could take on this leadership, then employing someone may be a good option.

Having mature Christians leaders with the time to lead in estate churches can be difficult. After describing how some of the activities run by the church are volunteer led, Alexander said, 'but to get that you really need to have people who can lead, have got the time, capacity and inclination to do that, so building up those volunteer teams is not straightforward.'<sup>94</sup> There is a need for discipling in adults' ministry in order to grow leaders who can competently oversee and lead youth ministry, and disciple the children and young people. However, it is also likely that employing someone to lead youth ministry will help in this as they can both develop other leaders who are less confident and stand in this gap that Alexander was referring to.

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<sup>94</sup> 'Interview 1'.

## Keeping it simple

As well as the three themes I have identified, one thing that came up in a number of interviews was how the youth ministry activities that churches were doing was nothing new. One interviewee described their work as ‘a traditional Sunday school,’<sup>95</sup> another, a ‘classic Sunday school.’<sup>96</sup> Daniel said, ‘really everything we do is very old fashioned, it’s just solid good local church Anglicanism really.’<sup>97</sup> There were some common elements the different interviewees mentioned as important, including sport, creativity, food and music. Alexander ran messy church and found it worked very well in their context, saying that if the materials they produced ‘allow for creativity, they allow people to do things not just read things - to create things - that seems to go down very well.’<sup>98</sup> Whatever activities were run in a church, a key element was building relationships and sharing Jesus. Alexander noted, ‘young people seem to be really accepting of having prayer, testimony, or a story from the Bible. That seems to be attractive. You wouldn’t necessarily think that’s the case.’<sup>99</sup> Interviewees did not suggest new snazzy ways of doing youth ministry, instead they emphasized taking opportunities to discuss Christian faith. Alexander and Charles also described the importance of ‘safe space.’ By this, they were referring to a place where young people could have open discussions and ask questions, a place where they felt welcomed and could trust the adults around them. These ‘safe spaces’ were where they could be open and honest with the adults and young people they had built relationships with. Activities were a method of building relationships and sharing Jesus. Different activities connected with different young people, but through all of them, Jesus could be shared.

Like Green’s emphasis on people over programme, the underpinning of the “keep it simple” theme is that a clever or new programme is not needed. Activities that help churches build relationships and share Jesus are what is important. The types of activities that I suggested work well are a means to the end of deepening relationships. Burt talked

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<sup>95</sup> ‘Interview 2’.

<sup>96</sup> ‘Interview 3’.

<sup>97</sup> ‘Interview 4’.

<sup>98</sup> ‘Interview 1’.

<sup>99</sup> ‘Interview 1’.

of teaching ministry and what he wanted to teach young people. This could have been taken as an emphasis on curriculum but this was framed in his very strong emphasis on consistency in order to build long term relationships. He said, 'I used to be almost a big brother to the children I was teaching, then I became a dad type of figure to the children I was teaching, and now a grandfather figure to the children.'<sup>100</sup> His desire to teach children comes from his deep care for them and the long-term relationships he has built with them. This is a truly people over programme.

These three themes with an underpinning of keeping it simple have helpful implications for estates youth ministry. They encourage us to spend time in a variety of spaces in the local community as well as welcoming people into our space. They remind us that churches are places where everyone should be welcome and the benefit of inter-generational relationships. We are also encouraged to invest in the leaders running youth work.

### **Uniqueness of estates youth ministry**

Throughout this research, I have focused on what we can learn about youth ministry from estate churches. This has led to a number of insights. One thing, however, that has not particularly been explored is the unique challenges or joys of estates ministry. I have quantitative data allowing me to compare estates parishes and the national picture, using Dale's data. Although I cannot present a qualitative comparison of estate and non-estate parishes, I did ask interviewees if there were any particular joys and challenges of the young people on their estate.

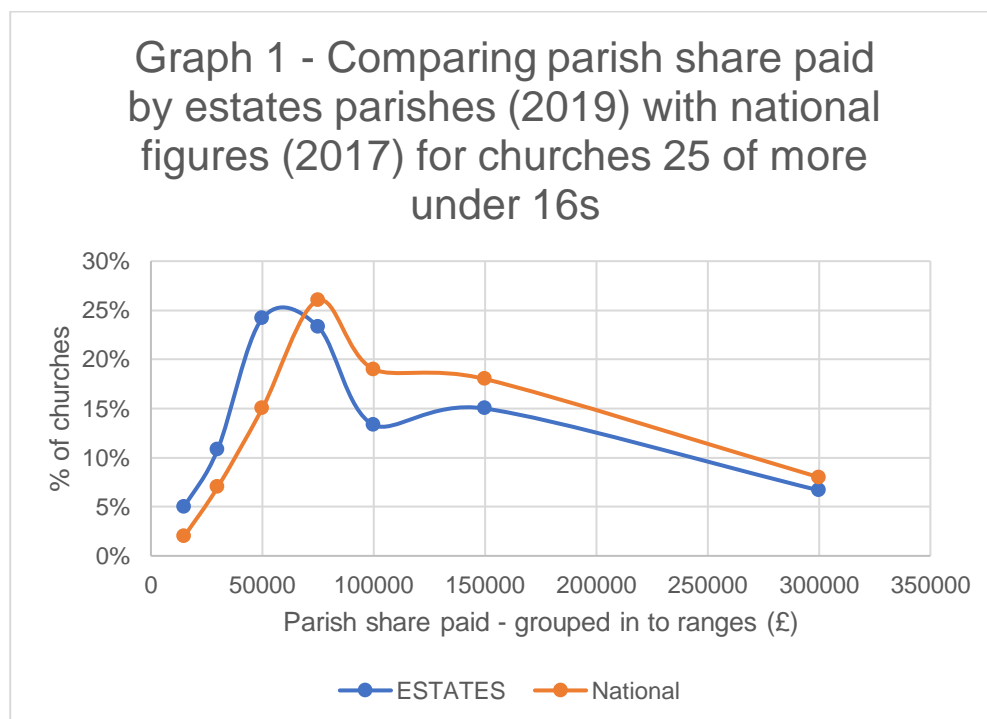
One of the ways of measuring the affluence of a parish is using Parish Share data.<sup>101</sup> Although the churches Dale and I looked at are of a similar size (all over 25 under 16s), the difference in Parish Share suggests dioceses are adjusting for contextual factors. This therefore suggests estate parishes are more disadvantaged. Graph 1 shows parish share from estate and national figures grouped into ranges. Although the data is from different

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<sup>100</sup> 'Interview 2'.

<sup>101</sup> Dale and Male, *Children & Young People in the Church of England and the Factors That Are Common to Growth*, p. 34.

years, a pattern is clear which would be made starker if inflation was accounted for. Large estate churches are asked to, or pay less, parish share than the national average.



One difference between the national picture and the estates specific picture is that nationally there is a higher percentage of churches employing youth workers. Across England, 56.3% of churches with 25 or more under 16s employ youth workers.<sup>102</sup> This compares with 40% of estate churches. There seems to be a significant difference between estates parishes and the national picture. Using the information about parish share above, I suggest that one reason estates parishes may be employing fewer youth workers is that they have fewer financial resources. It has been suggested above that having someone dedicated to the oversight of youth work helps youth ministry grow. However, it can be difficult to find the right volunteer person in estate parishes. Employing someone can spur on growth and fill this gap. In order for estate churches to be able to employ a youth worker, perhaps some more funding or access to resources is needed. This could be, as in Alexander's case, through a shared paid team across a city, in his case sports ministry, with local leads in each church. Other options perhaps include diocesan or other charity funds to support estates ministry.

<sup>102</sup> Dale and Male, *Children & Young People in the Church of England and the Factors That Are Common to Growth*, p. 24.



One very notable difference between estates churches and the national picture was that there was a much higher proportion of estates churches with a central tradition than the proportion that Dale found in his research. Part of this variation can be explained by my tendency to categorise a church as central if I could not find any data about them, or if they described themselves as Local Ecumenical Partnership, however this does not seem to account for the significant variation. 66% of estate churches were central tradition, whereas Dale found 34% of churches across England were of central tradition. When evangelical and catholic categories are added up, the distinction is even more dramatic (see Table 1). There are far fewer evangelical churches with large youth ministries on estates than nationally. This could be either because there are overall fewer evangelical churches on estates, or because they are less successful at attracting young people. One of the factors that Dale concluded was linked to the size of a church's youth ministry was if it was evangelical. For estate churches, we can see that this does not apply. Perhaps, further support or investment is needed in supporting central churches. Many evangelical churches and some catholic churches are part of networks and these can help support and resource youth work. These links seemed very important to the people I interviewed and helped encourage and resource their youth ministry. There is a gap in networks for central churches and investing in this may further support estates youth work.

**TABLE 1**

	Evangelical	Central	Catholic	Total
<b>ESTATES</b>	35	76	9	120
	29%	63%	8%	
<b>NATIONAL</b>	501	259	111	871
	58%	30%	13%	

Sharing spaces, a church for all, and resourcing a team are themes found, not only in my research but are also present in the literature. I have offered new insight into the importance of physical space and other community spaces, the benefit of inter-generational relationships and the need for oversight of youth work. I have suggested that youth ministry does not need to be reinvented because simple, traditional youth ministry still works well. I have also highlighted differences between estate churches and the national picture, suggesting the relative monetary disadvantage of estates parishes and the need to further support central churches.

## **Conclusion**

Over the course of this research I have found a number of things that affect estates youth ministry. I have also found some things that do not. Like *Growing Young's* list of ten qualities that your church does not need to grow young, I have found that the numerical factors I investigated do not have a large effect on the numerical size of estates youth ministry. Employing a youth worker, having a good link with schools, the amount of parish share paid, IMD index and what tradition a church is, all have no effect, or a very small effect on Child Average Sunday Attendance. There are, however, some broader factors that seem linked to large estates youth ministry. They are sharing spaces, a church for all, and resourcing leaders. School's work and employing a youth worker were seen as important factors for estates youth ministry growth in the qualitative data even if these factors did not appear significant in the quantitative data. Youth ministry often exists mainly in spheres outside of Sunday attendance and so the qualitative factors that were seen as linked to growth represented a much larger understanding of growth than was quantified in the ASA data.

I have brought to this discussion the importance of physical space, both inhabiting community spaces, but also the importance of well-located, well-equipped physical space that the church utilises. Of course, many churches cannot change the location of their building, however in places where there are funding applications for purchasing or restoring buildings, perhaps a thought to its location should be considered and how the community interact with that space.

Churches that cannot find someone from the congregation to oversee the youth ministry should be encouraged to employ someone or to have one of the existing clergy make it a priority in their time. To have a well-resourced, well-trained team, a mature experienced Christian leader is needed. This does not need to be someone employed but this might be the best fit. For churches that do not have someone who can take on this role and do not have the finances to employ someone, I suggest better access to financial resources is needed. This could be through the diocese, a local church that is willing to share some of its resources, or other charities.

Throughout my research I have been privileged to hear exciting stories from a number of different churches, all of them committed to sharing the Good News of Jesus Christ with their local young people. I heard of people being healed whilst coming to the food bank, young people coming to faith, passionate volunteers reaching out to local young people on their estate, local community groups including the church working together to improve their local area, and the church using its connections to support struggling families in the Covid-19 pandemic. I have been encouraged that churches on estates are still building relationships and sharing Jesus, and that youth ministry is still growing. The statistics of decline at the beginning of this report tell a depressing story, but I hope and pray that the things I have noticed in my research – sharing spaces, a church for all, and resourcing leaders – might help churches to better engage young people on estates, so that they might come to faith and be transformed.

WORD COUNT: 15108

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## **Appendix – quantitative analysis**

TABLE 1. REGRESSION MODEL OF CHILD ASA 2018 – 2 VARIABLES

	<i>Coefficients</i>	<i>Standard Error</i>	<i>t Stat</i>	<i>P-value</i>	<i>Lower 95%</i>	<i>Upper 95%</i>	<i>Lower 95.0%</i>	<i>Upper 95.0%</i>
<b>INTERCEPT</b>	19.33	2.82	6.86	0.00	13.75	24.91	13.75	24.91
<b>YOUTH WORKER Y/N</b>	2.26	3.10	0.73	0.47	-3.88	8.39	-3.88	8.39
<b>ADULT_ASA_2018</b>	0.14	0.01	9.39	0.00	0.11	0.17	0.11	0.17

When controlling for adult attendance, adding a youth worker to a church adds 2.26 children.

TABLE 2. CORRELATION OF PAID YOUTH WORKER AND CHILD ASA

	<i>Youth worker y/n</i>	<i>Child_ASA_2018</i>
<b>YOUTH WORKER Y/N</b>	1	
<b>CHILD_ASA_2018</b>	0.176636	1

There was a poor correlation between having an employed youth worker and Child ASA

TABLE 3. REGRESSION MODEL ON CHILD ASA 2018 – 5 VARIABLES

	<i>Coefficient</i>	<i>Standard Error</i>	<i>t Stat</i>	<i>P-value</i>	<i>Lower 95%</i>	<i>Upper 95%</i>	<i>Lower 95.0%</i>	<i>Upper 95.0%</i>
<b>INTERCEPT</b>	19.00	5.96	3.19	0.00	7.19	30.81	7.19	30.81
<b>LINKS WITH SCHOOLS</b>	-0.14	3.04	-0.05	0.96	-6.17	5.88	-6.17	5.88
<b>YOUTH WORKER Y/N</b>	2.20	3.14	0.70	0.48	-4.02	8.42	-4.02	8.42
<b>IMD SCORE</b>	0.00	0.15	-0.01	0.99	-0.30	0.29	-0.30	0.29
<b>PARISH_SHARE_PAID_2019</b>	0.00	0.00	0.39	0.70	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
<b>ADULT_ASA_2018</b>	0.13	0.02	7.80	0.00	0.10	0.17	0.10	0.17

When controlling for other variables, adding a youth worker adds 2.20 children. All other factors have a negligible effect.

The P values are all large (apart from Adult ASA), which shows the variables are not separate.

TABLE 4. IMD INDEX COMPARED TO CHILD ASA

IMD index	1<x<=10	10<x<=20	20<x<=30	30<x<=40	40<x<=50	50<x<=60	TOTAL
<b>100+</b>	1	1	2	0	1		5
<b>% OF 100+</b>	20%	20%	40%	0%	20%	0%	
<b>51-99</b>	1	9	3	5			18
<b>% OF 51+</b>	6%	50%	17%	28%	0%	0%	
<b>25+</b>	5	25	31	20	11	5	97
<b>% OF 25+</b>	5%	26%	32%	21%	11%	5%	
<b>TOTAL</b>	7	35	36	25	12	5	120
	6%	29%	30%	21%	10%	4%	

TABLE 5. CORRELATION OF IMD AND CHILD ASA

	IMD score	Child_ASA_2018
<b>IMD SCORE</b>	1	
<b>CHILD_ASA_2018</b>	-	1
	0.15923	

Table 4 and 5 show no correlation between IMD and Child ASA.

TABLE 6. PARISH SHARE PAID IN 2019 COMPARED TO CHILD ASA

	£1-15k	£15,001-30k	£30,001 - 50k	£50,001 - 75k	£75,001-100k	£100,001-150k	£150,001-300k	£300,001+
<b>100+</b>	0		2	0			2	1
<b>% OF 100+</b>	0%	0%	40%	0%	0%	0%	40%	20%
<b>51-99</b>	0		2	5	2	7	2	
<b>% OF 51+</b>	0%	0%	11%	28%	11%	39%	11%	0%
<b>25+</b>	6	13	25	23	14	11	4	1
<b>&amp; OF 25+</b>	6%	13%	26%	24%	14%	11%	4%	1%
<b>TOTAL</b>	6	13	29	28	16	18	8	2
	5%	11%	24%	23%	13%	15%	7%	2%

TABLE 7. CORRELATION OF PARISH SHARE AND CHILD ASA

	Parish_Share_Paid_2019	Child_ASA_2018
<b>PARISH_SHARE_PAID_2019</b>	1	
<b>CHILD_ASA_2018</b>	0.37032	1

Table 6 and 7 suggest there is a small positive correlation between parish share paid and child ASA.

TABLE 8. CHURCH TRADITION

	Conservative Evangelical	New Wine	HTB	Evangelical	Central	Liberal Catholic	Traditional Catholic	TOTAL
<b>100+</b>	1				4			5
<b>% OF 100+</b>	20%				80%			
<b>51-100</b>		1	3	4	8	2		18
<b>% OF 51+</b>		6%	17%	22%	44%	11%		
<b>25-50</b>	5	5	3	13	64	3	4	97
<b>% OF 25+</b>	5%	5%	3%	13%	66%	3%	4%	
<b>TOTAL</b>	6	6	6	17	76	5	4	120
<b>%OF TOTAL</b>	5%	5%	5%	14%	63%	4%	3%	

TABLE 9. CORRELATION BETWEEN CHURCH  
TRADITION AND CHILD ASA

	<i>Tradition of church</i>	<i>Child_ASA_2018</i>
<b>TRADITION OF CHURCH</b>	1	
<b>CHILD_ASA_2018</b>	-0.10688	1

Table 8 and 9 show no correlation between church tradition and child ASA.