

CHURCH ON THE EDGE

A partnership between Frontier Youth Trust (FYT), CMS and the Diocese of Exeter and local Churches.

A unique approach to emerging church and young people at risk that has at its' heart the intentionality of growing church with young people on the edge as a missionary endeavour.

Aim:

Building on the partners strengths and knowledge of working with young people on the edge of society to develop a fresh approach to challenging young people's behaviour through good youth work processes with the critical intention to grow a relevant expression of church with marginalized young people.

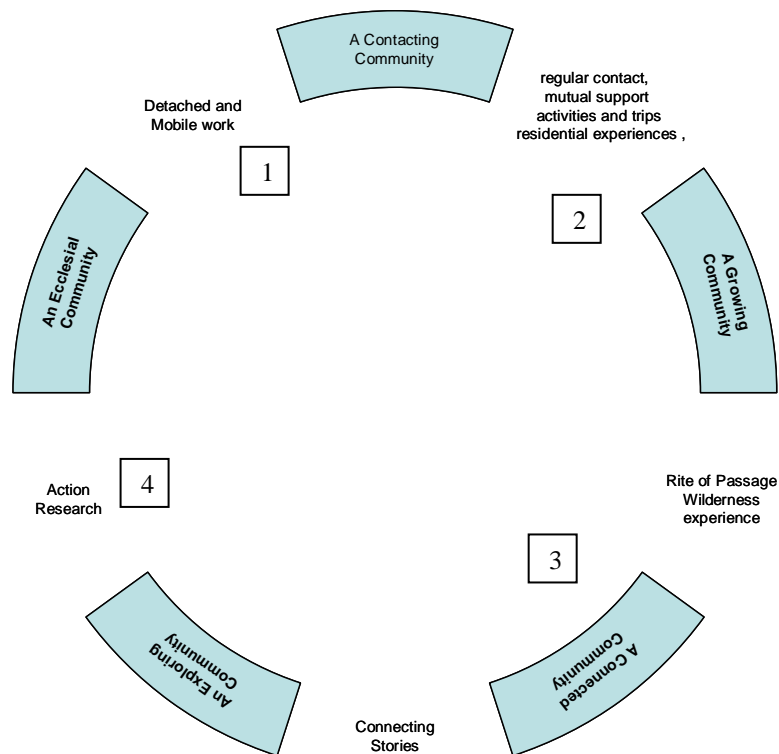
To identify the key issues in establishing church with marginalized young people through the process and disseminate this through the Christian community in the UK to facilitate locally grounded and resource light expressions of church.

The project will to seek to work within a professional framework and believe good youth work is participatory, empowering, educative and promotes equality of opportunity. We seek to enhance the personal, social, emotional and spiritual development of young people that they may realise their full potential.

Objectives:

1. To build meaningful and purposeful relationships with young people in three areas of the South West (Chard, Tiverton and Chagford) through detached youth work.
2. To build a sense of community with the young people through a variety of means including, regular contact, mutual support, activities and trips, and residential experiences.
3. To identify and develop a second step project, where young people go through (with the worker) a wilderness or rite of passage experience, that consolidates them as a group and develops a sense of openness to one another and desire to change/grow.
4. To work with the young people through action research to develop a culturally relevant expression of church.

Process



Measurement

Measuring this type of work is challenging, however as well as using the process diagram above, we will adapt the strategy identified in *Meet Them Where They're at*¹ to include church as the outcome and will use the Evalu8 programme based on Ofsted criteria. Session recordings will be made at the end of each session and incorporated into six month development plans that can be measured against the strategy².

Dissemination

Develop an ongoing web-log to chart the progress and engage in discussion with the emerging church community, to facilitate the project and its development. Building on FYT roadshow events and CMS Blah to undertake a series of events outlining the processes and lessons learned along the way. To produce a publication around the issue of growing church with young people, possibly in partnership as a Grove publication.

The Partnership

Frontier Youth Trust (a registered charity no 1059328) was established over 40 years ago and has a strong history in developing missionary initiatives with marginalized young people throughout the UK, and in developing thinking around mission and kingdom based approaches to youth work. Over the past 5 years FYT has developed its thinking in a more systematic way, through the development of 'Flagship projects'. A flagship is a piece of work that, is a fresh approach we can develop and learn from, and go on to disseminate good practice throughout the Christian community, In the last year our contacts with youth workers has exceeded 7,000 (doing direct youth work) and 2,000 (involved in youth work management). In the past, flagships have included rural initiatives, community partnerships and developing a youth work approach to working with young women abused through prostitution³. Flagships will be locally grounded, continuing after our involvement, but the learning is of national significance.

CMS (Church Missionary Society) is an international mission agency (Charity number 220297) founded in 1799, and now working in 60 countries. It supports people and projects engaged in evangelism, healthcare, training and education. CMS heartlands have historically been Africa and Asia but with the church in those parts of the world stronger in many ways than the church in Europe, CMS now works in mission in the UK as well, a mission context in its own right. The wealth of experience gleaned from years of cross cultural mission is invaluable in resourcing the church with the challenges of cross cultural mission in the various cultures in Britain. This includes the challenges of mission amongst young people and mission in the emerging/post modern culture.

The Diocese of Exeter have CCYP (Council for work among Children and Young People) is one of the council's of the Church of England in Devon. Their aim is to help resource children's and youthwork in parishes and church schools. The involvement with the project is through Steve Jones the Diocesan Youth Officer and FRED (Fresh expressions in Devon) Team part of the missions department.

Churches in Chagford area (Anglican, Methodist, Roman Catholic and Gospel church) started exploring a youth project in the area a number of years ago to address the growing needs of young people in the area and in preparation for the growing number of primary age children in the area. As a local ecumenical body they have agreed to partner with us to offer a rural experience and base for the project.

Policy and Procedures

The project will seek to adopt a best practice approach, and work to the policy or procedures of FYT. Child protection policies are already in place, and where necessary, the partners policies will be incorporated into the project guidelines. This will enable the project to have the most appropriate and up to date guidelines e.g. Equal Opportunities, Risk Assessment, Health and Safety.

¹ *Meet Them where they're At* was published by SU in 2003 and formed the base for an FYT training roadshow that was delivered to 200 youth workers in 13 venues across the country, and resulted in several new projects starting.

² Full details available on request

³ For more information on the One 25 flagship project fund by The Lankelly Foundation see <http://www.fyt.org.uk/one25.html>

Staffing and Management

There are two aspects to the management of the project⁴. Local Management Groups (LMG) consisting of local people in the project areas overseeing the youth work and the Partnership Group made up of representatives of the partner organisations. Each organisation will appoint a member to the partnership group who will oversee the development of the project. The local management committees are also able to appoint a representative to the partnership group. The partnership group is where the vision for the church on the edge project rests but it also supports and facilitates local work through the LMG. FYT will professionally manage any staff, the accounts and funding of the project. Bristol Centre for Youth Ministry have offered support to FYT for two years to release Richard Passmore to operate as the project development worker under the oversight of the partnership group as a part of his FYT role (half a day a week), and a project researcher has been seconded from a local church for a day a week.

The delivery of the direct work is happening in a variety of ways, in Tiverton a local youth worker has been seconded, in Chagford a student youth worker has been appointed for three years, and in Chard Richard Passmore leads a small team of volunteers.

Context and Timescale

Chagford is a small rural village with a local group committed to facilitating work with young people. Tiverton is a key market town in mid Devon with a good demographic profile and mirroring many of the social issues affecting larger cities. Chard is in Somerset, with a diverse community. It is considered an area of higher social need with three sections rating 7th, 8th, and 9th on the Index of Multiple Deprivation in South Somerset⁵. The three areas provide a good balance for the project and have a variety of local people and organizations supporting the projects, including, Community Crime reduction partnerships, local people, local youth forums and churches.

The project aims to build on our strengths and experience in work with marginalized young people, and the shift in thinking around emerging church and mission in the UK. The new thinking within the emerging church and practice based mission⁶ is beginning to give a new language and way to describe growing church with young people. FYT's background in detached work and the diocese's and local presence provide a good platform to develop a new approach to youth work based on **the critical intention to grow an emerging church with marginalized young people**. CMS with the links to the emerging church, would bring the third part to the partnership, helping us maintain and develop the critical intention as the project develops. The hope would be, to develop a flagship that would enable us to learn, describe and communicate what the new place may look like in contemporary UK culture *"In working with young people, do not try to call them back to where they were, and do not try to call them to where you are, as beautiful as that place may seem to you. You must have the courage to go with them to a new place that neither you nor they have ever been before"*⁷.

It is important to recognise the freshness of this proposal, as many emerging expressions of church are either with young adults, or not focused on at risk young people. Whilst some projects with at risk young people have discipleship as a part of their work, **the intentionality of growing church with young people on the edge as a missionary endeavor and disseminating the learning nationally is unique**. The nature of the project demands a long term approach. We envisage tracking the work for up to 7 years but should be able to start disseminating the learning and developing training after two years (beginning April 08). We are seeking funding for the core partnership work and local project work from a variety of sources. We envisage local projects needing full funding for the first 4 years and decreasing giving over the next 3 as the projects becomes self sustaining⁸ and specific funding for the partnership group's work relating to specific areas e.g. to facilitate the research, or training.

⁴ See appendix 1

⁵ www.southsomerset.gov.uk/media/pdf/c/h/Index_of_Multiple_Deprivation_2004.pdf -

⁶ See Off the Beaten Track A fresh Approach to Youth work and Church by Richard Passmore 2004 Christian Education Publishing

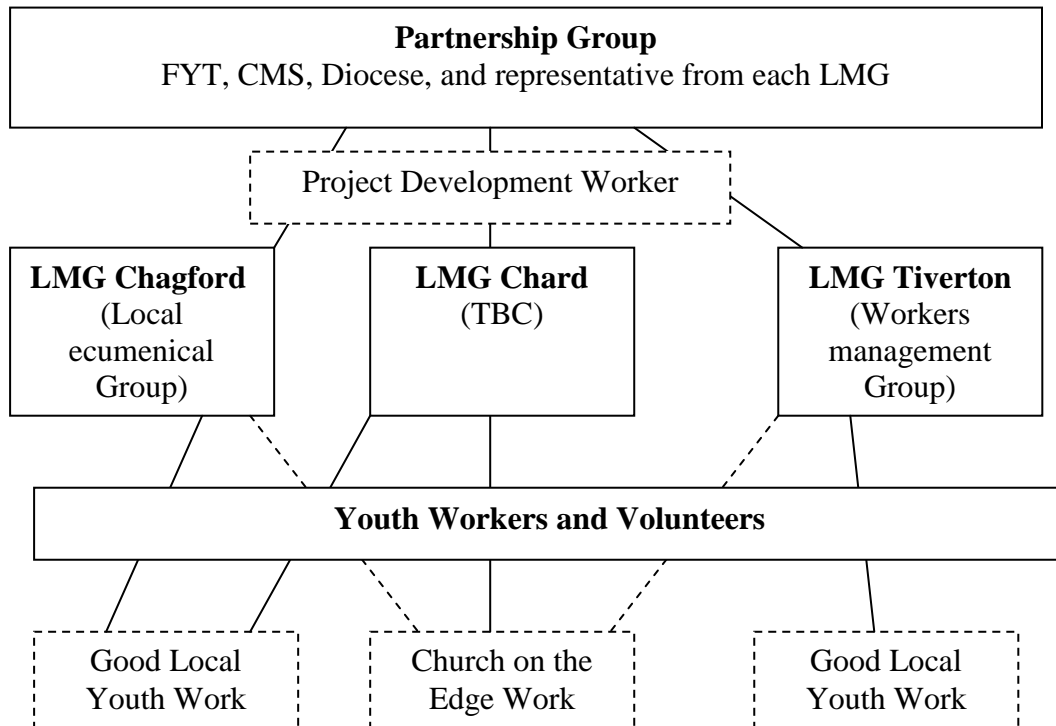
⁷ Donovan V *"Christianity Rediscovered, An epistle from the Masai"* SCM Press 1982 page vii second edition

⁸ Experience from other areas shows that sustainability is possible and a full action plan will be developed within one year of the project start.

July 2006

Appendix 1

Oversight Structure



The LMGs will be responsible for ensuring that the project responds to the needs of local young people and develops good youth work processes. They are able to get support and advice on this from the partnership group but it is envisaged that this work would continue even if the church on the edge element did not take off. The partnership group will support the LMG's where needed to ensure they become self sustainable.

The Project Development Worker will meet directly with LMGs from time to time to facilitate the above. The Project Development Worker will also give non line management supervision and training to support to local staff and volunteers to begin the church on the edge developments locally, pulling in where appropriate the expertise of the partnership group.

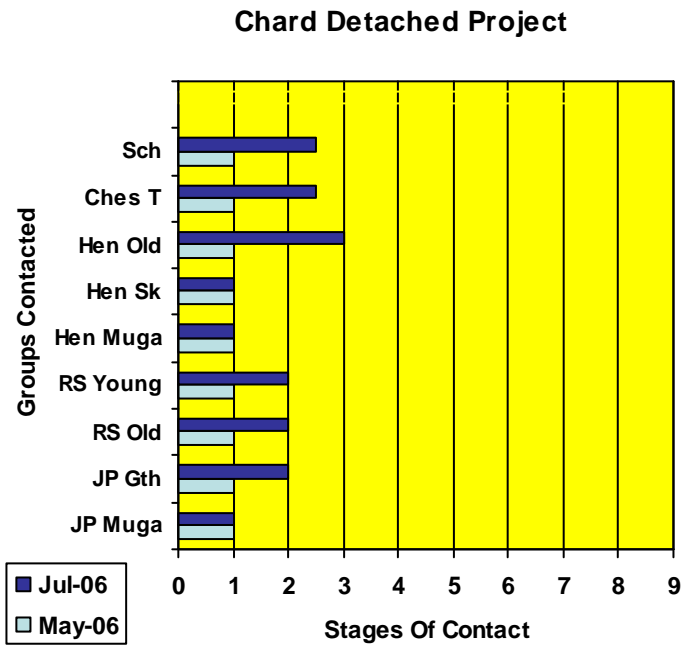
Local Delivery and Developments

Chagford

In September 2006 Paul Tilley will start as the student youth worker. Chagford has a strong LMG and the project was formally launched over the summer.

Chard

The project was developed in Chard through negotiation with Chard Churches Together and is run in partnership with Chard Baptist Church. Detached work was started in May 06 and 9 groups of young people have been identified. Richard Passmore leads the work with two Local volunteers Carol Murray and Dan Shortland, and detached work happens on alternate Tuesday and Wednesday nights.



An example from Chard

The project will develop detached youth work with young people in the Chard area, contacting young people where they are, on the streets, in parks, and hanging around. The project will work with these young people towards their personal, social, and spiritual development in line with youth work principles. **This will be an ongoing project.**

The project will also invite young people to take part in action research into how young people would shape and define an expression of church relevant to them. This is part of an initiative of FYT called Church on the Edge, in partnership with Church Missionary Society, Diocese of Devon, and local churches.

Detached Work Stages⁹

1. SURVEILLANCE -Working out which geographical areas or groups of young people to engage
- 2 COLD CONTACT. Visual stage where we acknowledge the groups
- 3 COLD CONTACT. Introductions where we introduce ourselves and the project (could be interesting for Church on the edge project as it is one time I have had more of an agenda)
4. AREA BASED WORK This is when starting in an area or patch and a wide variety of contacts are being made.
5. PEER GROUP WORK This happens as the work becomes more defined and consists of natural groupings of young people. This stage is often where larger groups are identified usually around a shared interest. e.g. football or hanging out and may be too many work with or inconsistent attendance.
6. BASIC SMALL GROUP WORK As key young people are identified the work should be forward to this stage. This group is made up from the groups that exist within the larger peer group.
7. RISKY SMALL GROUP WORK This is about taking calculated risks to move the work and relationships forward such as 1-1 work, a relaxing , perhaps having a meal with the young people etc. However this is not about putting yourself or the young people at risk. This will be the key stage for Church on The edge project
8. EXPOSURE AND EXPLORATION OF SPIRITUALITY Young people should be introduced to aspects of Christianity in practical supportive ways. It can range from events to raise their consciousness of Bigger things, e.g. watching the sunrise, exploring creation, to going to an event. The worker should explain some of the things that may happen at events and translate what is happening at the event and use the opportunity to explore spiritual issues in a supportive way. This stage will centre around definition for the Church on the edge process and will be part of the action research stage
9. PEER EDUCATION DEVELOPMENT or CHURCH ON THE EDGE Enabling young people to become active participants in their community or to choose to take part in the action research

Between each stage there are tools or mechanisms that enable work to progress from stage to stage. These are varied and depend on the interests of the young people you are working with it could be kite flying, sports, hobbies, issues explored, trips etc Anything you do as group together that helps the relationships deepen. It is possible to identify the groups you are working with and guesstimate where you are on the development plan. From there decide where you wish the group to be in six months time and how you propose to get there, e.g. explore doing a residential. This enables you to gauge your progress in some way.

⁹ Adapted from Meet Them where they're At published by SU in 2003