

Shining Light:

**Stakeholders perceptions of the youth work of
Linwood Parish Church**

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2 Abstract

This study explores stakeholder's perceptions of the youth work of Linwood Parish Church, Scotland.

The research reports and analyses data collected from six focus group interviews with stakeholders and two semi-structured interviews with the Minister and Youth Worker. Themes developed in two main categories; work with young people and organisational issues.

Since its inception there have been a range of expectations about the outcomes of the youth work. A significant number of stakeholders expected, and still expect, the work to result in an increase in the numbers of young people participating in church activities, particularly worship on Sunday mornings. This is despite the clear community focus of the youth worker's remit.

According to views expressed in the focus groups this community focus has led to significant partnerships with two primary schools and a secondary school, raising the profile of the church in the community and facilitating the building of relationships with a wide range of young people. However, a significant number of stakeholders are unaware of this work due to poor communication strategies.

It was evident that the youth work relates to a number of key national policies, even though there is no evidence of deliberate engagement with these documents at a strategic level. The Youth Worker and volunteers are highly valued by the young people and by their partner agencies.

The congregation has struggled to manage and fund the youth work but the youth work still provides a variety of opportunities for young people. Better planning and evaluating would help make clear, evidence based, decisions allowing the youth work to focus on those young people most in need of the high quality opportunities it can provide.

3 Introduction

3.1 This Research

3.1.1 In December 2009 the Kirk Session, the governing body of Linwood Parish Church, commissioned research to explore stakeholder's perceptions of their church's youth work (annex 1). This remit was not to provide a formal evaluation of the youth work but rather to explore the views of a range of interested parties.

3.1.2 Focus groups were used to gain insight into these different perspectives (Silverman , 2005) and "to give participants the opportunity to share their ideas" (Parahoo, 2006)

3.1.3 In conducting this research it was expected that evidence of relevant policies would be visible and any recommendations would be based on these key documents and pertinent occupational standards. Therefore, reference will be made to key current youth work policies, in particular: Moving Forward: a strategy to improve young people's chances through youth work (Scottish Executive, 2007); The Church of Scotland's Strategy For Young People: Guidance for Youth Workers, Congregations and Presbyteries (Mission and Discipleship Council of the Church of Scotland, 2006); and Competences for Community Learning and Development (Community Learning and Development Standards Council for Scotland, 2010).

3.2 Structure Of This Report

3.2.1 This report will address the following areas:

- Background
- A review of the current literature addressing religion in society, social issues and young people, the state and nature of volunteering

- Theoretical and Policy Framework
- Methodology
- Discussion
- Conclusion and recommendations

3.3 Background

- 3.3.1 Linwood was home to car making until 1981 when the Peugeot Talbot factory closed at the same time as the Pressed Steel Company leaving over 13,000 people unemployed (UK Parliament, 1981). It has a population of just over 8,000 and one of the highest unemployment rates in Scotland. In Linwood South 26.2% of the population were described as 'income deprived' , 89% above the national average, 27% of the population were 'workless' and 29.3% of children live in workless households in 2006. Statistics published by The Glasgow Centre for Population (2008) showed the rate of teenage pregnancy as 152.8 per 1,000, 278% higher than the national average.
- 3.3.2 The percentage of Scottish pupils gaining 5 or more awards at SCQF level 5 or above (standard grade credit level or equivalent) by the end of S6 increased from 38% in 1998/99 to 47% in 2001/02. Over the last eight years this percentage has remained fairly consistent.
- 3.3.3 In S4 nine out of ten pupils gained an award at SCQF level 3 (Standard Grade foundation level) or above in both English and Mathematics in 2008/09; this has been consistent over a number of years" (Scottish Government, 2010). In comparison to the national average S4 Pupils in Linwood South are 37.5% less likely to attain 5 GCSE equivalent passes (Glasgow Centre for Population Health, 2008).

3.3.4 Despite the obvious need described in Linwood South, Linwood as a whole community does not meet the requirements to be considered an area of deprivation (Social Disadvantage Research Centre, 2006) as Linwood North has much lower unemployment and better health outcomes (Glasgow Centre for Population Health, 2008).

3.4 Context of the Youth Work

3.4.1 To understand the nature of the work in question it is important to establish its roots.

3.4.2 Prior to 2001 a Deaconess whose remit was to provide pastoral care, bereavement care and funerals and to engage with the wider community served by Linwood Parish Church. At the time of her retirement it was decided to pursue the appointment of a full time Youth Worker.

3.4.3 Conversations took place between the congregation and the Church of Scotland's Board of National Mission, who were responsible for employing and placing Deacons and Parish Project Workers, and in 2001 it was agreed that a Youth Worker would be deployed in Linwood.

3.4.4 This post has subsequently become known formally as a 'Presbytery and Parish Worker (PPW)' but is known locally as Youth Worker, and for consistency will be referred to as such throughout this report.

3.4.5 A review of the youth work took place in October 2004 however there is no written record of this review.

3.4.6 As the work developed a Youth Work Project was formally constituted as a separate organisation from the church in April 2004. This was primarily to facilitate grant applications and, under that constitution, a Management Committee was appointed.

- 3.4.7 In September 2009 this separate Youth Work Project was formally dissolved because the Constitution no longer served the work effectively and it was agreed that a committee of the Kirk Session would now supervise the Youth Work.
- 3.4.8 Today, the Ministries Council of the Church of Scotland is the employer of the Youth Worker following a restructuring of the Church of Scotland's General Assembly functions. Linwood Parish Church make no contribution to the salary of the Youth Worker but is responsible for the Youth Worker's expenses and working costs such as office equipment, telephone and mileage.
- 3.4.9 In December 2009 Linwood Parish Church decided that this was an opportune moment to review the work with young people. This would help them learn lessons from the past and to develop a clear picture of where they are at present and to consider their plans for the future.
- 3.4.10 This research was carried out in tandem with this review.

4 Literature Review

4.1 Search Strategy

- 4.1.1 A search using the terms 'Christian' AND 'youth' AND 'work' OR 'youthwork' of Glasgow Caledonian University library's Athens porthole identified relevant sources appropriate to the topic area. It returned no academic journals dealing exclusively with Christian youth work and only a few dealing specifically with youth work. However, it did provide access to a number of key publications in the related areas of Social Capital, Social Policy and Religion. The Scottish Government and Community Learning and Development (Scotland)'s websites provided access to relevant youth work policies and reports. A range of further resources including the assistance of a librarian, internet search engines, the online Informal Education Encyclopaedia (Infed) and bibliographies of papers and articles were utilised and proved fruitful.
- 4.1.2 Journal Articles are often considered to be the most reliable sources of information on research because the majority are peer reviewed prior to submission, however, this may not always guarantee quality (Seale, 1999).
- 4.1.3 There are also a growing number of academically books on Christian youth work. Among the most influential are:
- 4.1.4 'Joined Up: An introduction to youthwork and ministry' (Brierley, 2003) gives a good introduction to the exploration of Christian youth work in the UK.
- 4.1.5 'Informal Education – a Christian perspective' (Ellis, 1990). A seminal work contrasting practice in Christian informal education with formal approaches.

- 4.1.6 'Growing Up Evangelical: youthwork and the making of a subculture' (Ward, 1997) explores the concept of 'Incarnational Youthwork' as a development of relational work.
- 4.1.7 'The Godbearing Life: the art of soul tending for youth ministry' (Dean & Foster, 1998) is an influential book argues that ministry is something we are part of as an act of service based on building strong relationships rather than something we do to others.
- 4.1.8 There is also a huge volume of work based on anecdote and personal experience and, while these add to the overall depth of understanding, they were not considered for this research.

4.2 Changing influence of religion in society

- 4.2.1 The Protestant church developed in parallel with the industrial revolution, driven by the Enlightenment and the search for reason (Gibbs & Bolger, 2006) and closely linked to the development of capitalism (Weber, 1958). It was no accident that the first book printed on the newly invented Gutenberg printing press was a Bible (Davies, 1996). This invention of mass publication drove a new kind of church where the people, not just the priest, had access to the Bible in their own language rather than Latin (Riddell, 1998).
- 4.2.2 Belief in God has been declining in the UK since 1900 (Bruce, 2002) and "as our culture lurches from modernity to postmodernity, the church finds itself pushed to the edge of the social stage" (Gibbs & Coffey, 2001, p. 31) an institution for a bygone age, with an estimated 53,000 people leaving per week in North America and Europe (Barrett, 1982) and between 1998 and 2005 in the UK half a million people stopped going to church on Sunday (Brierley, 2005). This decline in religious belief and behaviour represents a huge generational movement (Davie, 1990).
- 4.2.3 It should come as no surprise that rates of church attendance across Europe have fallen sharply over the past 100 years (Pollack,

2008). This is particularly true among children and young people (Brierley, 2005).

- 4.2.4 In 2007 53% of the UK adult population describe themselves as 'Christian' but church attendance has continued to decline steadily with just 15% of the UK population as a whole attending church at least once per month (Tearfund, 2007) a 55% fall since 1980 (Brierley, 2005).
- 4.2.5 In Scotland 18% of the population attend church regularly, (more than once a month) which is higher than the UK average of 15%. 5% are Fringe Churchgoers compared to 3% UK average. A below average number of Scots are Closed Non-Churched people (26%) (Tearfund, 2007) as shown in figure 1.
- 4.2.6 Figures from the 2001 Census show there is an estimated 950,114 young people aged 11 to 25 (inclusive) in Scotland (General Register Office for Scotland, 2004). Of this number many are more likely to have grown up with no experience of church and are significantly more likely to be closed to the possibility of attending (Brierley, 2005).
- 4.2.7 LifeWay (2007) found that 70% of American 23-30 year olds stop attending church for at least one year between ages 18 and 22 with 97% of those who dropped out cited 'life-change issues' as the reason. Around 80% of under-15s and 75% of 15 to 29-year-olds do not attend church (Brierley, 2005). Older people (26% of over 75s) are more likely to attend church than younger people (10% of 16-24s) (Tearfund, 2007) and older people have always been more religious than younger people (Davie, 1990).
- 4.2.8 The number of children attending Sunday School has fallen from over 50% to less than 10% over the course of the 20th Century (figure 2).

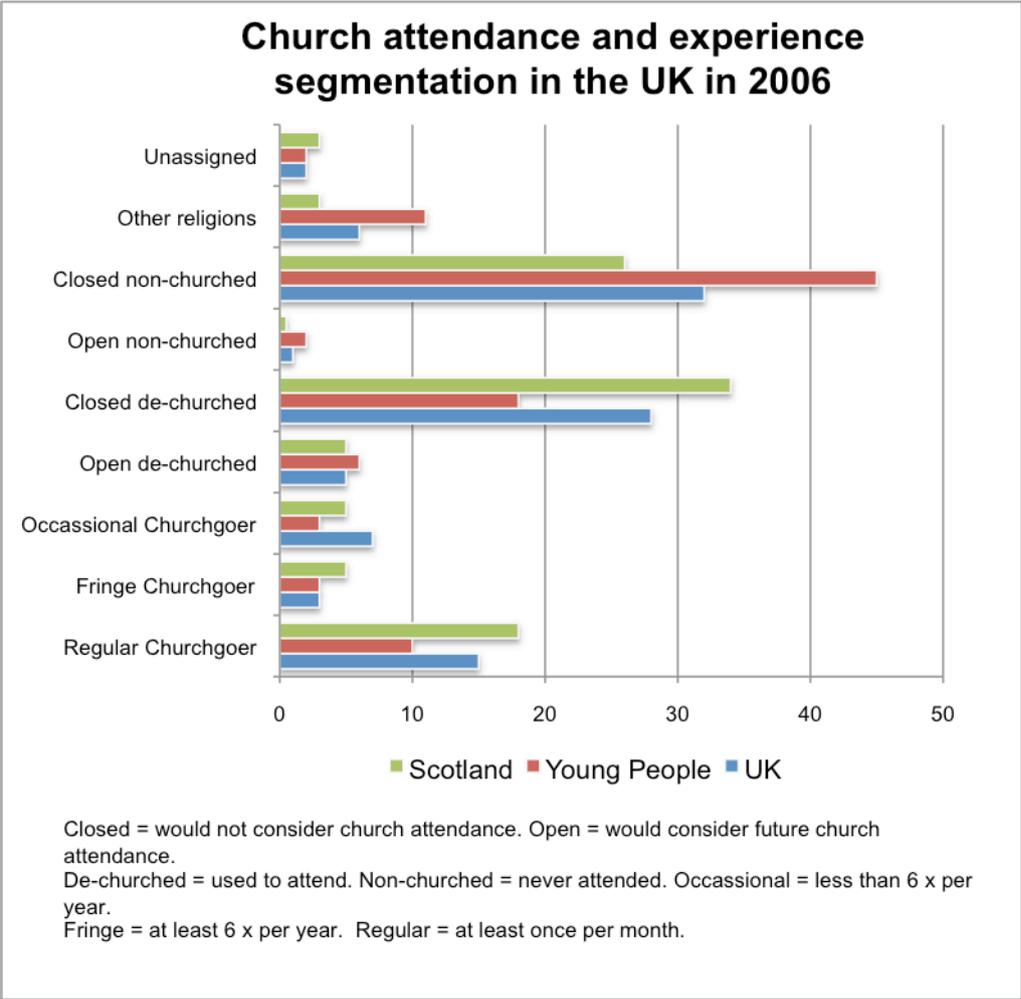


Figure 1 Church attendance and experience segmentation in the UK in 2006

Source: Tearfund: Churchgoing in the UK (2007) Sample un w 7069 w 7000

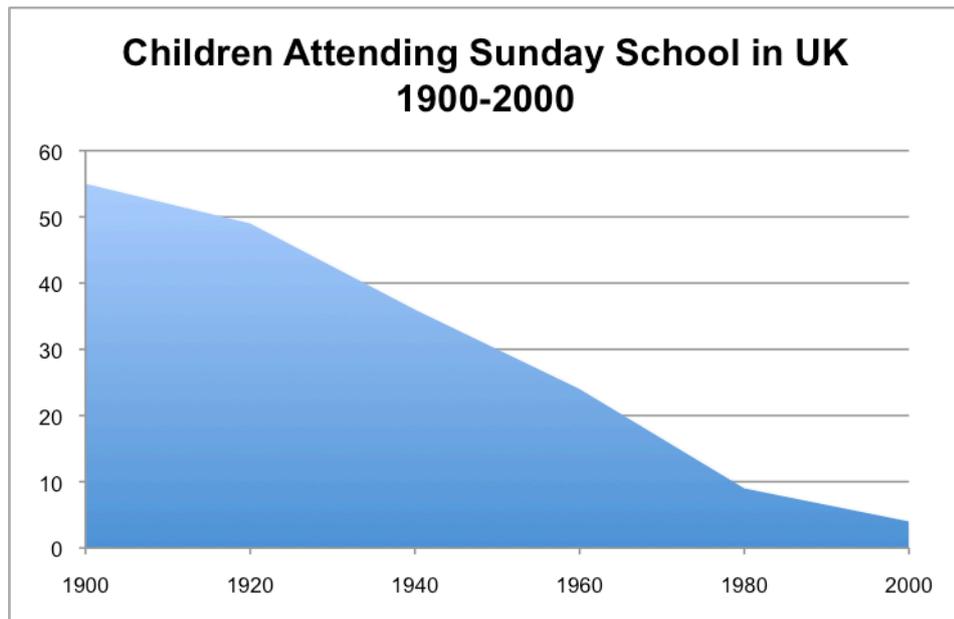


Figure 2: Source: Brierley, UK Christian handbook: Religious Trends: No. 2, (1999) Tables 2.12 and 4.10.2

4.2.9 There are many factors leading to this decline. Riddell (1998) and McLaren (2007) suggest that worship has become dull and routine, truth is presented as fixed and unchanging, personal development is discouraged, despite a growing interest in spirituality people do not see the institutional church as relevant. Societal changes also contribute with a decline in the observance of the Sabbath, both at a personal and legal level (Riddell, 1998).

4.2.10 It is against this backdrop that the Christian church in the UK has begun to explore new models and patterns of church life focused on community, involvement and cultural engagement. This 'Emerging Church', or 'Fresh Expressions' as they are sometimes called, have begun an attempt to address some of the issues causing the decline (Mission and Public Affairs Council, 2004).

4.3 Social Capital

4.3.1 Bourdieu (1983) defines social capital as the potential of institutionalised relationships and Coleman (1994) sees it as social structures facilitating interaction between individuals. For Putnam

(1995) trusting relationships are the key to facilitating and enabling social networks to form, building communities and affecting change.

4.3.2 Baron, Field and Schuller (2000) suggest there are two main types of social capital:

- bonding - links between like-minded people
- bridging - the building of connections between heterogeneous groups

4.3.3 Both are built by connecting people around common experience or interests, both of which are highly normative (Scottish Government, 2008).

4.3.4 The Scottish Government (2008) defines “four main categories of social capital:

- developing social contacts through growing friendships and associations; taking action to solve problems; attachments to a range of social networks, developing trusting relationships
- civic participation through involvement in community/pressure/political groups; membership of networks; voting
- relationships with those with power through the ability to respond to authorities; changes in terms of influencing authorities; expressing opinions and broadening expectations
- bridging social capital through social interactions with people from different backgrounds; sharing information and skills; and changes in beliefs about one’s own life and that of others”

- 4.3.5 Putman (1995) points to the individualisation of society as the cause of the breakdown in social capital. While social capital is seen to positive it can also have the unwanted by-product of creating well-established communities which others feel excluded from (Scottish Government, 2008).
- 4.3.6 Over the past few years there has been a heightening awareness that faith groups can make significant contributions as part of a complex remedy (Pollack, 2008) including working towards government policy objectives, particularly in the area of neighbourhood renewal by rebuilding social capital (Flint & Kearns, 2004).
- 4.3.7 The Scottish Executive (2002) set out similar intentions in their Community Regeneration Statement:
- 4.3.8 “We will work to make sure people and communities have the social capital – the skills, confidence, support networks and resources – that they need to take advantage of, and to increase, the opportunities open to them. To do this, we need to build the confidence of our communities to do more for themselves and to ask for the services they need, develop systems that get people involved and let them have a say in their communities, and provide support and advice to individuals.”
- 4.3.9 In a speech to the Christian Socialist Movement (BBC, 2001) Tony Blair, the then Prime Minister, outlined plans to harness the volunteering through partnerships with faith communities that are known to build on relationships and networks, the very thing that promotes social capital (Smith, 2004).

4.4 Social interventions and the role of religion

- 4.4.1 There has been renewed interest in the role of religion and spirituality across a range of policy areas dealing with poverty and its effects, equality and diversity in areas such as in social work

(Sheridan & Amato-von Hemert, 1999), health care (NHS Education for Scotland, 2009) and community capacity building (Pacione, 1990).

- 4.4.2 The church has at its core the idea of service (Lam, 2002) and prior to the inception of the welfare state in the UK the churches provided much of the social care available (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2010). Indeed, throughout its history the Church of Scotland has played a central role in education, political life and social wellbeing in Scotland (BBC, 2009).
- 4.4.3 Today the Christian churches in Scotland still make a significant contribution to society. For example, CrossReach, the social care provider of the Church of Scotland, supports over 3,000 people daily in the areas of children's services, counseling and support, criminal justice, homelessness, learning disabilities, mental health, older people and substance misuse (CrossReach, 2009). Local churches provide a multitude of projects and services in the community, all of which are reliant on the work of volunteers (Church of Scotland, 2009).
- 4.4.4 A literature review undertaken by Yeung (2004) found a range of opinions on the link, or lack thereof, between religion and volunteering while a UK survey found those actively practicing religion more likely to volunteer (Low, Butt, Paine, & Smith, 2007). Wilson and Janoski (1995) suggest that conservative denominations are more likely to volunteer for church based initiatives and liberals more likely to get involved in projects benefiting the wider community although Becker and Dhingra (2001) found no differences but asserted that social networks and people's impression of an organisation were the deciding factors.
- 4.4.5 The Church of Scotland's Church Without Walls strategic report (2001) places great emphasis on local community and building strong relationships across agencies, organisations and faiths.

4.4.6 The aim to play a role in building social capital has permeated their Strategy for Young People (Mission and Discipleship Council of the Church of Scotland, 2006, p. 5) and states “The Church of Scotland affirms the right of every young person to live a life free from poverty – in all its forms, to have good health and education opportunities and to be fully involved in the communities in which they live.”

4.5 Social Issues and Young People

4.5.1 “Alienation expresses itself in different ways by different people. It is to be found in what our courts often describe as the criminal anti-social behaviour of a section of the community. It is expressed by those young people who want to opt out of society, by drop outs, the so-called maladjusted, those who seek to escape permanently from the reality of society through intoxicants and narcotics. Of course it would be wrong to say it was the sole reason for these things. But it is a much greater factor in all of them than is generally recognised” (Reid, 1972).

4.5.2 Poverty and its associated social issues disproportionately affect the young (Sharma, 2007). For example, young people aged 16-24 are three times more likely to be unemployed than older workers (figure 3). The rate of youth unemployment in Scotland is slightly below the median (figure 4).

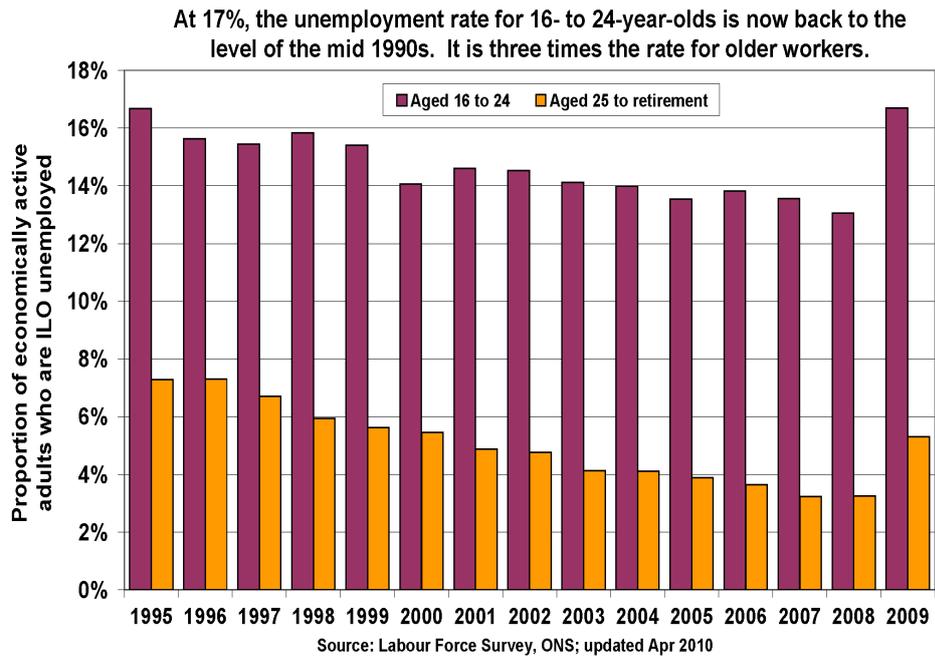


Figure 3 (The Poverty Site, 2010)

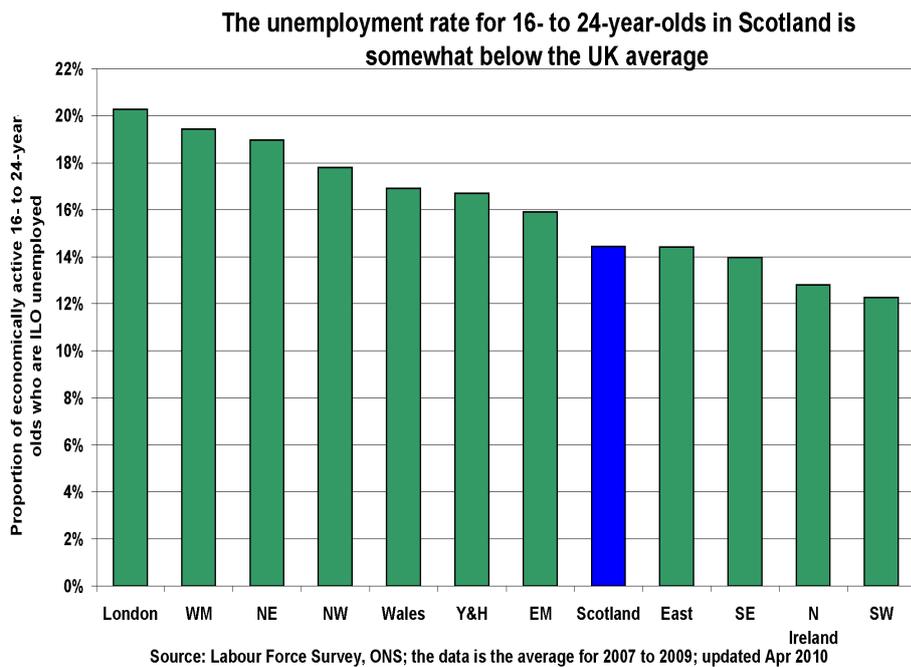


Figure 4 (The Poverty Site, 2010)

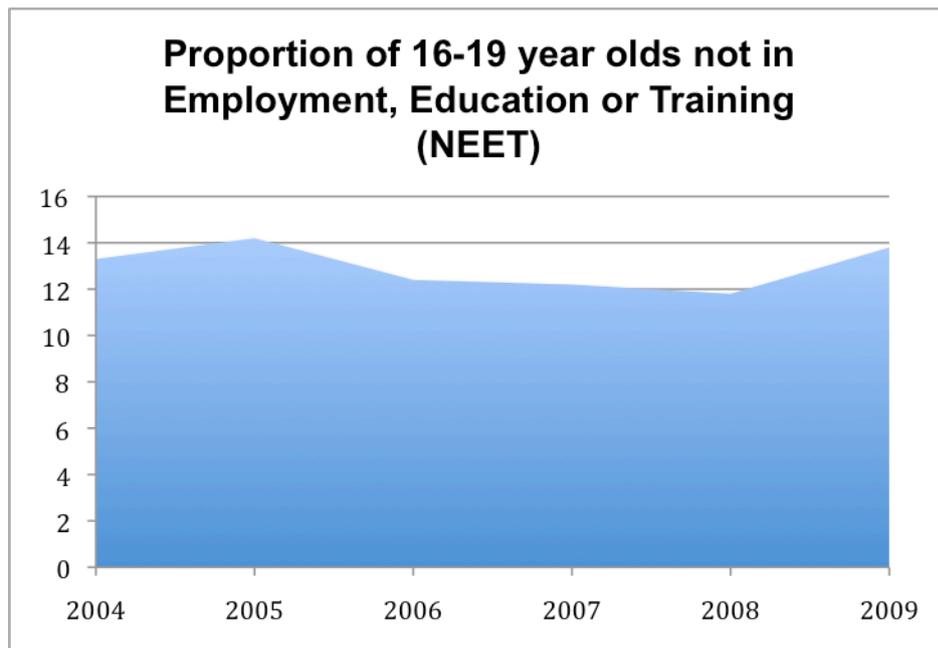


Figure 5: Proportion and level of 16 to 19 year olds not in employment, education or training (NEET), Scotland, 2004-2009. Source: Annual Population Survey (Jan to Dec)

- 4.5.3 The proportion 16-19 year olds Not in Employment, Education or Training (NEET) in Scotland has not varied significantly since 1996 with the proportion ranging between 13% and 15% (figure 5). Males generally have a higher proportion of NEET than Females (Scottish Executive, 2006, p. 26). Renfrewshire has 12.6% of 16-19 in the NEET category (Scottish Government, 2006).
- 4.5.4 The link between poverty and crime has been well documented (Taylor, 1997; Jarjoura, Triplett, & Brinker, 2002) with those suffering the greatest economic disadvantage living closer in poor housing resulting in greater levels of crime (Atkinson & Helms, 2007).
- 4.5.5 It is estimated 43% of all crimes and offences in Scotland are committed by young people under the age of 21 (table 1) (Scottish Government, 2005).

Table 1 Youth crime as a percentage of total crime in 2005 (Scottish Government, 2005)

Crime	% of total crimes committed by people under 21
fire-raising	86%
Vandalism	75%
theft by opening lockfast places	65%
Handling offensive weapons	59%
Housebreaking	55%
Indecency	41%
Fraud & Reset	30%
Motor vehicle offences	26%

- 4.5.6 Messerschmidt (1993) suggests that white working class boys experience school as emasculating and try to reassert their masculinity through aggressive and risky behaviours inside and outside of the school environment. Messerschmidt also states that white, lower working class boys are unlikely to find regular, well paid employment. As well as resorting to violence these young men often engage in criminal behaviour to gain access to money and expensive items.
- 4.5.7 Youth work, in particular interaction with positive role models, helps young people experiencing social problems and provides diversion from criminal activity (House Of Commons Home Affairs Committee, 2010).
- 4.5.8 The Scottish Executive (2003) states that community learning can “make a significant contribution to reducing social exclusion and to closing the inequalities gap” as it helps to “strengthen social capital by improving the knowledge, skills, confidence, motivation, networks and resources that the individuals and groups in a

community have”. It is also helps to tackle issues including health, education and transport, employment and crime.

4.6 Volunteering

- 4.6.1 Youth work “is a process through which key adults work with young people to create opportunities for them to meet, make friends, enjoy a range of experiences together, and reflect on their personal and group development” (University of Strathclyde and The Princes' Trust Scotland, 2003) or, put another way, youth work builds social capital with young people.
- 4.6.2 Youth work is part of a broader range of informal learning provision facilitated by Community Learning and Development (Scotland), which aims to “...develop the capacity of individuals and groups of all ages and through their actions, the capacity of communities, to improve their quality of life” (Scottish Office, 1998). In Scotland the majority of youth work is provided by volunteers and it would be impossible to build community capacity without their help (Scottish Government, 2007)
- 4.6.3 There is, however, a serious lack of adult volunteers willing to work with children and young people. The Scottish Commissioner for Children and Young People (SCCYP) (2007) found that only 5% of people currently volunteer to work with children or young people. 69% said that they would consider volunteering in the future but the research found there are a range of barriers to people’s voluntary participation in work with young people (table 2).

Table 2 Reasons adults do not volunteer to work with children and young people (Scottish Commissioner for Children and Young People, 2007) Sample: 1093 adults in February 2007

Barrier	% of all participants
fear of accusation of harming children	48.4%
fear of teenagers	33.9%
children and young people have too much power / say in what happens	15.4%
too bureaucratic – lots of forms to fill in first	12.4%
lack of appreciation by children and young people	10.5%
lack of understanding of children's rights	9.5%
don't know	4.7%
kid's lack of respect; their behaviour / attitude	4.4%
friends will think I'm weird / pervert	3.0%
legislation; (too many) restrictions / rules; political correctness	2.2%

4.6.4 The research by the SCCYP highlights that there are real issues around the perception of adults about the nature of working with young people, particularly around criminal record disclosure and fear of teenagers. A steady influx of new leaders is essential to the health and growth of any youth work based on small groups (Brierley, 2003) but the lack of volunteers means that youth work provision has decreased. For example, the Church of Scotland estimates that around 15,000 volunteers work with over 100,000 young people in their churches and projects every year (Church of Scotland, 2010) and the Girl Guides have over 50,000 girls waiting to join but do not have enough volunteers to provide the places necessary (Girlguiding UK, 2010).

4.6.5 The financial value of volunteering to the economy is substantial. In 2008 Gweini, the Council of the Christian Voluntary Sector in Wales, estimated that Faith Communities contributed £102.5million to the UK economy based on the number of hours worked by

volunteers and paid employees in addition to the use of religious buildings (Evans, 2008).

4.6.6 The lack of adults volunteering to work with young people has serious implications for youth work provision. It seems clear that youth work has a significant positive impact on the lives of young people but the decline in traditional forms of religious observance coupled with a wider understanding of spirituality presents a range of challenges to churches, particularly those hoping to engage with young people who have no connection with organised religion and are sceptical of its motives for providing opportunities for young people.

4.6.7 There is a growing body of work around the contribution of churches to the building of Social Capital but very little research on Christian youth work and social capital. While youth work strategies (Mission and Discipleship Council of the Church of Scotland, 2006; Scottish Executive, 2007) and volunteering strategies (Scottish Government, 2007) have been produced at national level there is currently no research to assess the level of impact of these strategies in Christian youth work at local level. This research hopes to make a contribution to this gap.

5 Theoretical Framework / Policy Review

5.1 Scottish Government Policy Framework

5.1.1 In Valuing Young People (Scottish Government, 2009) the Scottish Government identified the policy areas which impact the lives of young people. These were situated in a wider policy context with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (United Nations, 1990), Getting It Right for Every Child (Scottish Government, 2010) and the Early Years Framework (Scottish Government, 2008) providing a comprehensive view of youth policy (figure 6).



Figure 6 Policy areas impacting the lives of young people (Scottish Government, 2009, p. 12)

- 5.1.2 Although wide-ranging, Valuing Young People does not list any faith group as partners to its nine areas of delivery.
- 5.1.3 The work of Linwood Parish Church touches on a number of these policy areas. Primarily 'youth work opportunities and approaches' but it also makes a contribution to 'supporting transitions' and 'preventing offending' and, through the relationship with the local schools, makes a significant input to 'curriculum for excellence'.
- 5.1.4 "As well as enhancing the lives of young people from all backgrounds, universal youth work opportunities can have an early intervention and prevention role. It can engage in positive activities young people who might otherwise become involved in anti-social behaviour, alcohol or drug misuse, or who would leave school with few qualifications and skills, perhaps not progressing into education, employment or training (entering the 'NEET' group)" (Scottish Executive, 2007, p. 6).
- 5.1.5 As work with young people makes a significant contribution to all fifteen of the Scottish Government's National Outcomes (Scottish Government, 2009) impacting across a range of Government departments and agencies, there are a number of policies and strategy documents relating directly or indirectly to the delivery of work with:
- Valuing Young People (Scottish Government, 2009)
 - Better Community Engagement: a framework for learning (Scottish Community Development Centre, 2007)
 - More Choices, More Chances: A Strategy to Reduce the Proportion of Young People not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) in Scotland (Scottish Government, 2006)
 - Working and Learning Together to Build Stronger Communities: Community Learning and Development Working Draft Guidance (Scottish Executive, 2003)

- Building on "Working and Learning Together to Build Stronger Communities": A joint statement on community learning and development (CLD), including adult literacy and numeracy (ALN), by the Scottish Government and COSLA. (Scottish Government and COSLA, 2008)
- Community – Scottish Community Empowerment Action Plan (Scottish Government, 2009)
- Volunteering in the Youth Work Sector: An Action Plan (Scottish Government, 2007)

5.2 The Purpose of Youth Work

5.2.1 Step It Up: charting young people’s progress (University of Strathclyde and The Princes' Trust Scotland, 2003) stated “the purpose of effective youth work is to:

- Build self esteem and self confidence
- Develop the ability to manage personal and social relationships
- Create learning and develop new skills
- Encourage positive group atmospheres
- Build the capacity of young people to consider risk, make reasoned decisions and take control
- Develop a ‘world view’ which widens horizons and invites social commitment”

5.2.2 In its Statement on the Nature and Purpose of Youth Work (2005), made as a contribution to the development of Moving Forward (Scottish Executive, 2007), YouthLink affirmed this definition of the purpose of youth work and went on to state that “there are three essential and definitive features of youth work:

- Young people choose to participate
- The work must be built from where young people are
- Youth Work recognises the young person and the youth worker as partners in the learning process”

5.2.3 Similarly, the National Occupational Standards for Youth Work in England (Lifelong Learning UK, 2010) state:

5.2.4 “The aim of youth work is to offer young people both planned and spontaneous programmes of personal and social education. There is a wide range of practice to meet the needs of young people, including youth clubs, uniformed (e.g. scouting and guiding) and non-uniformed organisations, faith groups, specialised centres for art or sport, counselling, information and guidance, voluntary service, detached, outreach in schools and colleges”.

5.3 Moving Forward

5.3.1 In 2007 the Scottish Executive published its first national youth work strategy, *Moving Forward: a strategy for improving young people’s chances through youth work* (Scottish Executive, 2007).

5.3.2 The strategy’s long-term vision presents two main elements:

- for young people in Scotland able to benefit from youth work opportunities which make a real difference to their lives; and
- a youth work sector equipped and empowered to achieve ongoing positive outcomes for young people now and in the future

5.3.3 While the consultation process informing *Moving Forward* was in process the Church of Scotland (Mission and Discipleship Council of the Church of Scotland, 2006), the Free Church of Scotland (Free Church of Scotland, 2006) and the United Reformed Church (United Reformed Church, 2008) were all developing their own strategies for youth work.

5.3.4 There is a great deal of overlap in the ‘nature and scope’ (Mallon, 2008, p. 39) of *Moving Forward*, the Church of Scotland’s strategy and the Community Learning and Development Value Base and Competence Framework (CLD Standards Council for Scotland, 2010).

- 5.3.5 The Church of Scotland's Strategy for Work with Young People sets out the following vision statement (Mission and Discipleship Council of the Church of Scotland, 2006)
- 5.3.6 "The Church of Scotland, through this Strategy, makes clear its concern for all Scotland's young people, whether they are involved in the Church or not. Today's young people need to be given opportunities to thrive in all areas of life including their spiritual development and the Church will stand alongside other agencies in trying to offer such opportunities.
- 5.3.7 The Church of Scotland affirms the right of every young person to live a life free from poverty – in all its forms, to have good health and education opportunities and to be fully involved in the communities in which they live.
- 5.3.8 The Church of Scotland commits itself to respect every young person who comes into contact with its congregations and agencies regardless of their personal circumstances or social background. This respect is unconditional and will not be affected by the choices made by young people in terms of whether or not to get involved in the life of the Church and/or the Christian faith or in choices made by young people in terms of lifestyle."
- 5.3.9 It also has a "commitment to:
- Treat all young people with respect
 - Respect and promote young people's rights to make their own decisions and choices
 - Promote and ensure the welfare and safety of young people in their communities
 - Contribute towards the promotion of social justice and inclusion for young people
 - Allow young people to have a voice in all aspects of church life and to help to be heard in the wider community

- Allow young people to identify their own learning needs and be involved in the preparation and delivery of appropriate learning programmes and experiences”

5.4 Community Learning Competences and Code of Ethics

5.4.1 In 1995 Community Education Validation and Endorsement (CeVe) published competences for youth work (Community Learning and Development Scotland, 1995). These set out the core requirements for professional youth work for the first time. The competences were refreshed in 2010 (CLD Standards Council for Scotland, 2010) (figure 7).



Figure 7 The CLD Competence Framework 2009 (CLD Standards Council for Scotland, 2010, p. 55) Competences are in the outer purple circles, ‘Values’ in the white area.

5.4.2 The similarities between the national strategy and competences and those of the Church of Scotland should mean that youth

workers working to either policy should be able to work in partnership (Scottish Government, 2009).

5.5 Delivering Effective Youth Work

5.5.1 One further useful contribution to the policy context was Step It Up: the report of the National Development Project entitled “Defining the Purpose of Youth Work and Measuring Performance” (University of Strathclyde and The Princes' Trust Scotland, 2003, p. 14). This report surveyed literature from a range of youth work providers and formulated a statement on effective practice and a resource for measuring performance in the areas of social and emotional literacy.

5.5.2 Step It Up states “that effective youth work must:

- Respects the rights of young people
- Affirms the rights of individual young people and the communities they belong to
- Affirms diversity and confronts discrimination
- Is young people centred
- Takes an inclusive approach which recognises that those young people most in need should have greater priority
- Recognises that ‘process’ is of crucial and central value – but also product and programme have an important part to play in achieving outcomes
- Values implicit learning as much as that which is explicit
- Is based on the relationship between a young person or a group of young people and a trusted adult
- Is non-judgemental
- Is participative and empowering and allows young people wherever possible to play a full part in shaping the project / programme / activity
- Is concerned with enabling young people to change, in a positive way, the world in which they live”

5.6 Reflective practice

- 5.6.1 Work by Schön (1983) highlights the effectiveness of reflective practice but the concept is not new. Dewey (1933, p. 19) believed that people should 'acquire the general habit of reflecting' on experience, making it purposeful through a line of questioning and feedback (Kinsella, 2009).
- 5.6.2 Both Community Learning and Development (CLD Standards Council for Scotland, 2010) and the Church of Scotland (Mission and Discipleship Council of the Church of Scotland, 2006) cite reflective practice (figure 9) as one of the foundational elements underpinning the competences for youth work.
- 5.6.3 Engaging in reflective practice offers the chance to assess the rationale for action and to question the very reasons a project or piece of work exists. This can be of huge benefit as it can not only provide insight and opportunities for improvement but also lead to a position where the practitioner can come to question the whole nature of the organisation (Schön, 1983).

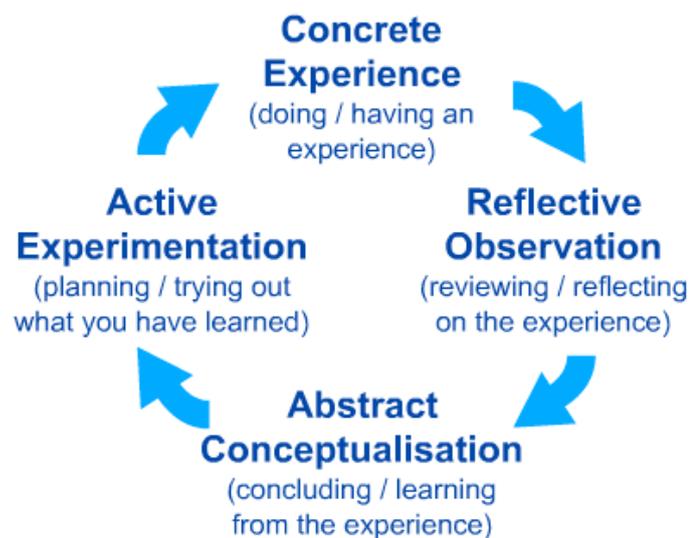


Figure 8 Kolb (1984) 'Experiential Learning experience as a source of learning and development'

5.7 Spiritual Development

- 5.7.1 While the long overdue publication of Moving Forward was welcomed positively, there are a number of significant omissions (Smith, 2007).
- 5.7.2 In common with the English (HM Treasury, 2007) and Welsh (Welsh Assembly Government, 2007) youth work strategies, Moving Forward fails to meaningfully address provision for the spiritual health and development of young people (Smith, 2007). The only time it mentions faith is to highlight the use of church buildings by youth work providers (Scottish Executive, 2007, p. 46) and to ask how statutory provision can help young people with ethical, moral, discrimination of faith issues (Scottish Executive, 2007, p. 35).
- 5.7.3 Very few Christian denominations or organisations participated in the Moving Forward consultation. Of the eleven agencies asked to provide specific feedback as part of the consultation only one, the YMCA, is a faith-based organisation and they were asked to provide responses from young people living in rural areas.
- 5.7.4 Mallon (2008) speculates that the churches' lack of participation was possibly because of the churches' preoccupation with their decline but whatever the reason, their lack of input is significant.

5.8 Volunteering

- 5.8.1 Volunteering in the Youth Work Sector: an Action Plan (Scottish Government, 2007) supports Moving Forward (Scottish Executive, 2007), recognising that volunteers provide much of Scotland's youth work. It seeks to ensure the "value and impact of volunteers" (Scottish Government, 2007, p. 4) is recognised and emphasised. The action plan focuses on helping people to recognise the value of their contribution, develop skills and awareness through training in youth work methods, legislation, management and leadership and

to help volunteers to progress and take advantage of new opportunities.

5.8.2 Volunteers are vital to the success of the youth work of Linwood Parish Church and a volunteer development strategy would be beneficial in both promoting and sustaining volunteering and in making explicit the benefits of volunteering (Chinman & Wandersman, 1999).

6 Methodology

6.1 Choosing a Methodology

- 6.1.1 This research focuses on 'key stakeholders perceptions of the youth work of Linwood Parish Church'.
- 6.1.2 Copies of the minutes of various committees, reports, job descriptions and a project timeline were provided for context (McKie, Barlow, & Gaunt-Richardson, 2002) with the assistance of key supporters from within the organisation (Rossi, Freeman, & Lipsey, 1999). These documents helped formulate the areas of interest.
- 6.1.3 Given the timeframe and resources available it became obvious that gathering the relevant stakeholders into focus groups was the best approach to collect the data required (Robson, 2002).
- 6.1.4 The Minister and Youth Worker were interviewed individually (Arksey & Knight, 1999) to remove the possibility that their leadership positions might influence the conversations (Bell, 1999) although it is acknowledged that this influence can never be completely eliminated (Denscome, 2002).
- 6.1.5 Focus Groups are particularly suited to obtaining several perspectives about the same topic (Gibbs, 1997) and are useful for exploring people's attitudes and experiences as well as examining what they think and the reasons why (Kitzinger, 1995).
- 6.1.6 There are some potential sampling advantages with focus groups (Kitzinger, 1995; Gibbs, 1997; Mason, 2002). They do not discriminate against people who cannot read or write, they encourage participation from those who are reluctant to be interviewed on their own and can also encourage contributions from people who feel they have nothing to say. Focus groups enable participants to interact with each other, asking questions of each

other to help re-evaluate and examine their own understandings (Kitzinger, 1995) and, by doing so, they are able to discover why certain issues are important and the reasons why (Morgan, 1998). As focus groups help to explore the disconnection between stated and actual behaviour (Lankshear, 1993) they can be a catalyst for change (Race, Hotch, & Parker, 1994).

- 6.1.7 There are also limitations to this method so it is important to be cognisant of the number of pitfalls and possible stressors (Corbin & Morse, 2003). Peer pressure, perceptions of others and embarrassment can all affect the quality of the interview (Sturges & Hanrahan, 2004). If a participant perceives that the line of questioning relates to someone with a level of power over them they may be less likely to speak freely (Rapley, 2004) because interviews conducted in groups cannot be fully confidential or anonymous (Gibbs, 1997). It is possible that participants will answer in ways they feel are acceptable, rather than disclose what they believe to be true (Bryman, 2004). Field & Morse (1989) suggest that interruptions, competing distractions, anxiety, awkward questions and individuals who jump from one subject to the other can also be problematic.
- 6.1.8 People also interpret language differently. This gives rise to variations in understanding and therefore variation in the ways in which participants choose to answer questions (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). This can lead to a possible breakdown of meaning where key terms of a question are interpreted differently by the interviewer and interviewee (Bryman, 2004).
- 6.1.9 Research is situated and positional (Cook, 2003) and both the position of the researcher and interviewees impact on the meaning and understandings portrayed. The researcher understands the significance of this and was mindful throughout all stages of the research process. Professional interest meant that the researcher potentially approached the interviews with a positive agenda, which

may have influenced question selection and overall tone (Silverman, 2005).

6.2 The Stakeholder Groups

6.2.1 The Minister and Youth Worker jointly identified the members of each stakeholder group.

6.2.2 The groups were: the Kirk Session, the ruling body of the church; the Management Committee established during the period when the youth work was governed by a separate constitution; volunteer Youth Leaders; the members of After8; teachers from Linwood High, Woodlands Primary and East Fulton Primary Schools; Parents & Supporters; and people from the Congregation who did not fall into any of the above groups but who hold strong opinions on the work.

6.2.3 During the selection process there is always the potential to select only people known to be supportive and exclude those who might be critical (Rossi, Freeman, & Lipsey, 1999). However, only the Parents and Supporters Group and the Congregational Group could have been compromised in this manner as the other groups consisted of all people elected or appointed to those particular groups or bodies.

6.3 Consent

6.3.1 Stakeholders were invited by letter to participate in a focus group lasting 45 minutes. The letter explained the purpose and format of the research and also that the data collected would be used by the researcher in a dissertation for Glasgow Caledonian University. The various reports generated would be available to anyone who wished to read them (Flick, 2009).

- 6.3.2 The participants were advised that data would be anonymised as far as possible in the reports (Rapley, 2004) but given the groups were small it may not always be possible to ensure identification would be impossible (Nisbet, 1977; Silverman, 2005). Participants were invited to make comments confidentially following the group interview by letter or email directly to the researcher if necessary (Gibbs, 1997).
- 6.3.3 The Focus Groups met in neutral venues to ensure that everyone was comfortable and that there would be no interruptions (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005).
- 6.3.4 No signed consent or submission for ethical approval was sought. This was decided following consultation with the module leader who determined that as the research was commissioned by an organisation people were members of there was no requirement for university ethical approval, as long as the researcher adhered to the usual ethical considerations for any other study falling within the social research context (Homan, 1991).

6.4 Young People

- 6.4.1 The focus group with the members of the youth group used the same basic list of questions but took into account the age and nature of the group (Save The Children, 2000). The group met in their usual venue providing comfortable and familiar surroundings (Rapley, 2004). The youth worker had explained the purpose of the research and the process, which the researcher repeated in more detail prior to the session (Parahoo, 2006). A range of media was used including simple post-it responses and visual prompts to help stimulate discussion and to allow comments they may have been uncomfortable making in the presence of their peers (Save The Children, 2000) as well as helping to confirm meaning (Hess-Bieber & Leavy, 2005).

6.5 Schools and Parents

- 6.5.1 The Schools Group and the Parents and Supporters Group met at the same time in Woodlands Primary School. The methodology was adapted by dividing into the two constituent groups gathered around two tables. Each group discussed their answers to the same questions and listed them on large pieces of paper. These answers were then discussed allowing instant comparison between two groups who had very different relationships to the youth work (Gibbs, 1997; Parahoo, 2006).
- 6.5.2 Questions were created and based around areas outlined by the research brief. Each group was also asked some questions specific to their role and relationship to the youth work (Mason, 2002).

6.6 Interviews

- 6.6.1 Individual one-hour semi-structured interviews were selected as the most appropriate method of gathering data from the Youth Worker and the Minister (Morgan, 1998) as they are two key stakeholders involved in both the direction and delivery of the youth work (Seale, 1999). The Minister and Youth Worker were interviewed in venues that would allow them to speak freely and express any opinion which might seem critical of the other (Barker & Johnson, 1998; Rossi, Freeman, & Lipsey, 1999). Following the same questions as the focus groups allowed direct comparison to the focus group responses but the semi-structured nature of the interviews allowed for tangents to be explored (Barriball & While, 1994).

6.7 Recording and Storing Data

- 6.7.1 Each focus group conversation, except the schools and parents group, was recorded on mini-disc and then fully transcribed on a laptop. The discs were stored in locked drawer. The computer and

files are password protected. Printed copies for analysis, post-its and other written feedback were stored in a locked drawer (Bell, 1999).

6.7.2 Participants volunteered freely to take part and understood the scope of the study and therefore have an interest in the outcome of the research (Silverman, 2005). It can, however, be difficult to anonymise participants from small communities (Nisbet, 1977) so great care has been taken to disguise participant's views. No one is referred to by name in either the transcripts or reports (Seale, 1999; Richards, 2005; Silverman, 2005).

6.8 Analysis

6.8.1 The quality of the analysis relies on the quality of data recording and the ability to translate them from ideas to ideas and explanations (Richards, 2005). It is also the case that a large range of stakeholders has a dual effect, allowing a broad range of voices to be heard but with the secondary effect that the range of voices can make focusing the research difficult (Rossi et al, 1999). However, in this case consistency of responses meant this was less problematic.

6.8.2 The researcher transcribed the interviews using Microsoft Word (Tesch, 1990), read the transcript and written feedback and recorded his thoughts on paper paying particular attention to the questions 'why is that interesting?' and 'why am I interested in that?' Asking these questions begins the process of analysis (Mason, 1996). When approaching the analysis stage the researcher was aware that there is a continuum between description and interpretation (Kvale, 1996). Describing a phenomenon is valid but where possible the researcher hoped to ascribe meaning and insight into the wider relevance of the topic under consideration (Silverman, 2005).

6.9 Themes

6.9.1 Qualitative coding is about data retention, not data reduction (Walford, 2001). During discussions a number of themes were identified as pertinent: expectations of the youth work; connections with the church and the wider community; the way the work is managed; strategic planning; and volunteers. These will be explored in this report.

6.10 Problems

6.10.1 Several practical issues impacted on the research process. Some of the focus groups were a little larger than the 6-12 desirable (Lankshear, 1993; Mason, 2002) meaning that the dynamics of the group were altered impacting the likelihood of some people to speak (Jaques, 1992; Kitzinger, 1995).

6.10.2 Extending the focus groups to one hour would have allowed people to settle down, understand the purpose of the research more fully and facilitated a wider conversation (Silverman, 2005).

6.10.3 Many new researchers tend to collect too much data and, given time constraints, under-analyse that data (Wellington, 2000). The process in place to follow up this study with the participants and wider community should ensure that all the information gathered is considered.

6.11 Dissemination

6.11.1 Participants have been promised access to research they have been involved in (Seale, 1999) and this research will be presented in a range of formats to meet the needs of the wide range of stakeholders and interested parties (Silverman, 2007):

- A formal research report for Glasgow Caledonian University

- A report for Linwood Parish Church and the Church of Scotland's Ministries Council
- An executive summary, primarily for stakeholders and focus group participants
- The report will be published on the researcher's blog, <http://stewartcutler.com>.
- A presentation and discussion with interested parties in September 2010
- An article will be submitted to Scottish Youth Issues Journal
- An article will be submitted to Youthwork Magazine

6.11.2 In particular, the presentation to interested parties in September will allow the meaning and detail of the research report to be checked and for the church to begin the process of deciding how to respond to the findings (Lankshear, 1993).

6.11.3 This research will inform the researcher's practice in youth work development.

7 Work With Young People

7.1 Beginnings

- 7.1.1 Linwood Parish Church has experienced the same decline in numbers and difficulty reaching young people discussed earlier (Brierley, 1999; Tearfund, 2007). There are no statistics available for the numbers of young people in activities related to Linwood Parish Church from the time a full time youth worker was being considered but anecdotal evidence confirms that numbers have fallen.
- 7.1.2 “There was do-nut time on a Sunday. That was a bible class on Sunday mornings but it doesn’t happen now”
- 7.1.3 “The BBs (Boys Brigade) stopped a while ago. They just couldn’t get new leaders”
- 7.1.4 “There used to more kids in the Sunday School but now they have other things to do”
- 7.1.5 The congregation recognised this decline and sought to develop new forms of youth work but it is clear that there was no meaningful consultation with young people about their needs, interests, hopes or aspirations (Mission and Discipleship Council of the Church of Scotland, 2006; Community Learning and Development Scotland, 1995). Adult members of the Kirk Session entered into conversations with The Church of Scotland’s Board of National Mission who agreed to deploy a youth worker.
- 7.1.6 It is difficult at a distance of more than ten years to comment on how this process related to policy at this time, especially as there was neither a national youth work strategy for Scotland or a strategy for work with young people in the Church of Scotland. There was, however, another department of the Church of Scotland, the Board of Parish Education, whose remit was the

development of work with young people. They were not involved in the process.

- 7.1.7 The Board of National Mission was the employer at the time of the initial deployment of the Youth Worker. As such, they had a responsibility to ensure that the congregation in which the Youth Worker would be placed had a clear understanding of what having a youth work specialist would mean for their church.
- 7.1.8 It could therefore be reasonably expected that preparation for a youth worker would involve National Mission staff, or staff from another department with a Youth Work development remit, visiting the congregation to engage them in a conversation about their hopes and expectations. This would have helped clarify what a project of this nature could involve and highlight the responsibilities of the congregation (Cutler & Swanney, 2000). This did not happen.
- 7.1.9 It is also clear that consultation with young people and working towards meeting their needs and aspirations were by this time established areas of good practice (Cutler & Swanney, 2000) with Community Education Validation and Endorsement (CeVe) publishing competences for youth work in 1995 (Community Learning and Development Scotland, 1995).
- 7.1.10 This lack of preparation was not only around the focus of the youth work.
- 7.1.11 “We didn’t know that the Youth Worker would need a computer and an office. We just didn’t have the resources to cover all of that kind of stuff”

7.2 Remit

7.2.1 The remit for the Youth Worker was agreed by the Kirk Session and representatives from the Board of National Mission (figure 9) and has remained consistent throughout the period of employment.

Remit of the Youth Worker

- Identify the needs of young people and encourage the congregation to find ways to meet them
- Liaise with the local community youth initiatives and establish links to build bridges into the church community
- Help identify volunteers, encourage and train them to support and lead youth initiatives
- Develop a system of monitoring the work of volunteers to give support and develop skills
- Give all necessary and all relevant support to present youth organisations and their leaders to strengthen existing links between the church and these organisations
- Share in the Chaplaincy work, especially in the high school
- Share in the promoting, publishing and exploring of possible sources of further funding, to develop the work as outlined above
- In consultation with the minister and support team, prepare written reports and follow agreed targets

During the period where the youth work was a separately constituted project the objectives were:

- The provision of creative and unique youth activities to complement existing services in the Linwood area
- To offer opportunities for young people in the Linwood area to develop socially, emotionally, morally and spiritually
- To offer support and guidance on a one-to-one basis as and when appropriate
- To help and encourage young people to strengthen their relationships with the local community and with the church

Figure 9 Parish and Presbytery Worker Job Description, Church of Scotland Board of National Mission

- 7.2.2 Despite a clear and unchanging remit people have had different expectations of what the outcomes of the youth work would be.
- 7.2.3 “It is important to acknowledge from the outset that every context is different. Every church, group, community and team will need to consider their own situation in terms of the culture of the young people they are engaging with, their interests, needs and aspirations” (Plimlott & Plimlott, 2008, p. 62)
- 7.2.4 Across the stakeholders there were two perceptions of what benefits a youth worker would bring.
- 7.2.5 This first group wanted and expected the number of young people in the church on Sunday morning to increase, or at least for more participation in explicitly church-based activities to be in evidence.
- 7.2.6 “We hoped more kids would come on Sunday to worship”
- 7.2.7 “There would be organisations focused on children. Things that would attract young people into the building and connect with the church”
- 7.2.8 Many churches still measure success by attendance at Sunday worship (Plimlott & Plimlott, 2008) even though there has been a steady decline in attendance at worship in most denominations.
- 7.2.9 There are many adults who have grown up in church who would have been exposed to what Jones (2001) terms the “entertainment model” where youth work was based around a fairly rigid programme of activities or the “bait and switch” model which uses secular music, film and activities to attract young people then sneaks in a ‘God slot’ at the end. Neither of these models starts with the needs of the young people or takes their spiritual and social development seriously (University of Strathclyde and The Princes’ Trust Scotland, 2003), assuming that young people are not interested in faith or moral issues (Jamieson, 2002).

7.2.10 This experience would go some way to explaining the expectations of the stakeholders.

7.2.11 “When I was a kid everyone went to Sunday School. It was just what we did. It’s no’ like that now”

7.2.12 This lived experience shapes the way in which older people perceive work with young people towards a paternalistic model, which is at odds with the nature and purpose of Youth Work (University of Strathclyde and The Princes’ Trust Scotland, 2003). In many well-established groups strong norms can lead to a homogenisation which prevents members from seeing beyond their own world view (Baron, Field, & Schuller, 2000).

7.2.13 It should be noted that these expectations are not, and never have been, uniformly held across the whole congregation. Rather, they are generally held by those with little or no involvement in the delivery of the youth work or no involvement in the Kirk Session, the body that the Youth Worker reports to.

7.2.14 The second group had quite different expectations. They were very clear that the Youth Worker’s remit was not to bring young people into the church on Sunday mornings. They wanted to develop the existing work with the local schools and with the wider community which is much more in line with the partnership agenda (Mission and Discipleship Council of the Church of Scotland, 2006; Scottish Executive, 2007; CLD Standards Council for Scotland, 2010).

7.2.15 “People expected a lot of kids to be sitting in the pews. That’s not what it was about. It was to grow chaplaincy work.”

7.3 Explaining Expectations

7.3.1 Cummings-Bond (1989) suggests that youth ministry, a term often used inter-changeably but incorrectly with youth work, exists as

separate from the church congregation but connected as represented in figure 10.

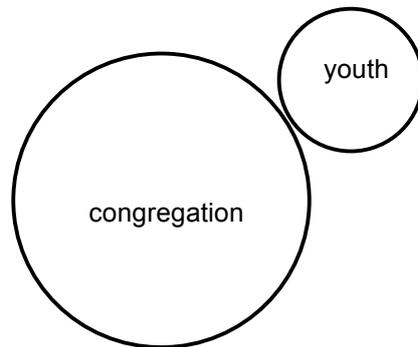


Figure 10: One-eared Mickey Mouse Model (Cummings-Bond, 1989)

- 7.3.2 This model suggests that the congregation is aware of the work that goes on with young people and might support it financially but most of the adult congregation have little or no contact with the young people. However, even though the congregation has little contact with these young people they would probably still lay claim to them.
- 7.3.3 This model would certainly describe some of the stakeholder's understanding of the relationship the congregation has with the youth work but the model is overly simplistic, failing to consider the full range of understandings expressed (Dean & Foster, 1998).
- 7.3.4 It does, however, describe what the stakeholders understand as 'church work', where the work with young people takes place in the church and has some kind of explicit Christian teaching or content but would ignore any work in the wider community which did not have an obvious Christian content or evangelical agenda.
- 7.3.5 The discussion about what is and what is not 'Christian Youth Work' and what its purpose is has raged since Hannah More first began a programme of basic education, religious instruction, domestic training and social welfare in what she saw as her Christian duty in the 1790s (Pugh, 1999).
- 7.3.6 In the 1880s two friends, William Smith and Robert Baden-Powell, created the first uniformed organisations for boys. Smith's 'Boys'

Brigade' was founded in 1882 with a very clear evangelical object, 'The advancement of Christ's kingdom among Boys', while Baden-Powell's 'Scouts' acknowledged faith as central to life but chose to focus on adventure rather than drill and discipline (McFarlan, 1982). The YMCA and YWCA recognised that it was impossible to separate the sacred and the secular and aimed instead to meet the spiritual needs of their members alongside social, physical and educational needs (Pugh, 1999).

7.3.7 Doyle and Smith (2009) suggest Christian Youth Work falls broadly into five categories (figure 11) with some degree of overlap with formalised Christian education at one end and evangelical youth work at the other.

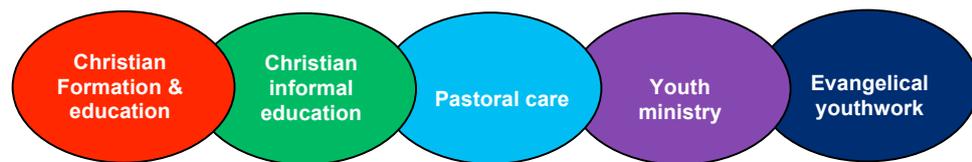


Figure 10 Doyle & Smith (2009) Categories of Christian Youth Work

7.3.8 Of course, there is a huge degree of overlap between each area. Many churches and projects work with a range of young people in a variety of settings and adopt some or all of these methods of working depending on the client group and the objectives of that particular piece of work (Pugh, 1999).

7.3.9 Ward (1997) cautions that blending youth work skills and methods with evangelical concerns and expectations is difficult and this has indeed been the case for Linwood Parish Church with its range of expectations and understandings.

7.3.10 For many the defining factor of the work is its evangelical content. Some people express a desire for the youth work to "share the Gospel" and to "encourage young people to take part in worship on a Sunday". Others want the youth work to approach the young

people “as people who we value and want to serve”. This tension between evangelism and social action is at the heart of some of the expectations of the stakeholders and is in many ways impossible to reconcile as it is, ultimately, a matter of belief (Pugh, 1999).

7.3.11 People with these two different expectations were spread across the Kirk Session and Congregation stakeholder groups even though some of them had been involved in the process of recruiting the Youth Worker and formalising their remit with its clear community focus.

7.3.12 These two perceptions have persisted throughout the nine years the youth worker has been in post although involvement in the focus groups has enabled people to discuss these expectations (Kitzinger, 1995) and begin to have a clearer understanding about the role of the Youth Worker and the nature and purpose of youth work (Gibbs, 1997). The Youth Worker’s remit is to focus on building community links and sharing in the school chaplaincy and clarifies the developmental and supportive nature of the post.

7.4 Defining Young People

7.4.1 At present the age range of the young people involved in some way with the youth work stretches from age 9 to age 22 but the age range of those young people involved in the youth work of Linwood Parish Church has been an area of discussion. Some think that the work should be confined to P7 (age 11) to 18 but others think the work should continue to support young people up to 25.

7.4.2 This discussion reflects the range of thought in policy. No definition of ‘young person’ is given in Moving Forward even though it had been defined as being people aged 11 to 25 years old with a focus on those aged 11-18 (YouthLink Scotland, 2005). However, the Scottish Commissioner for Children and Young People looks to the legal age of majority, defining ‘young people’ as including “all

children and young people under 18, and all children and young people up to 21 who have been in care or looked after by a local authority, and are living in Scotland” (SCCYO, 2007).

7.4.3 At present the youth work engages with children younger than 11 through two primary schools although the majority of work with these schools is with Primary 7 who are aged 11 and 12.

7.4.4 Defining the target age group is vital to begin to determine where efforts should be focused and appropriate resources sought.

7.5 Work with Young People

7.5.1 “Good youth work is therefore characterised by approaches that start from the interests, hopes and aspirations of young people” (University of Strathclyde and The Princes' Trust Scotland, 2003, p. 13). To do this youth workers need to develop significant relationships with young people, and conversation is the key to this (Ward, 1992). Youth workers need to create opportunities for young people to talk, both to their peers and to youth workers, addressing young people’s issues and concerns and they should value the young people (McKinley & Watson, 2008). The starting point is one where the youth worker provider looks to build relationships with young people, to discover their needs and to help empower them to address those needs (University of Strathclyde and The Princes' Trust Scotland, 2003). In short, building social capital.

7.5.2 The core youth work provision has been two youth groups, Pulse8 for young people in Primary 6 to Secondary 2 (age 10-14) and After8 for those in S3 and above.

7.5.3 Pulse8 was a weekly activity based group meeting in the church buildings catering for up to 70 young people.

- 7.5.4 This group ended in 2008. Reasons given for stopping the club included “a lack of volunteers”, “volunteers were tired”, “it was only supposed to be a break but it never really got going again” and “other opportunities appeared so we decided to focus on them instead”.
- 7.5.5 It was also clear that the group was too large to facilitate building meaningful relationships with the young people (University of Strathclyde and The Princes' Trust Scotland, 2003). It was also felt that the work in the schools provided a better opportunity to work with that group of young people.
- 7.5.6 “Just around that time we had the chance to do some work in the High School. That was just too good an opportunity to miss”
- 7.5.7 The Youth Worker is a school chaplain in two primary schools, East Fulton and Woodlands, and also more recently in Linwood High School.
- 7.5.8 Representatives from the three schools noted in a focus group that the Youth Worker:
- Takes part in school services and assemblies
 - Helps devise school policies
 - Encourages links with community
 - Attends residential visits as a leader (as well as helping build relationships with the children this also saves the schools money as they don't have to pay a member of staff to go)
 - Facilitates a COSY (Church of Scotland Youth) Café at Linwood high, a lunchtime activity giving leadership opportunities
 - Is involved in P7 positive behaviour initiatives (East Fulton)
 - Delivers elements of P5/6 Health & Wellbeing programme (Woodlands)
 - Provides direct link to former students (Linwood High School)
 - Delivers citizenship lessons (E Fulton)
 - Provides programme of events for focus weeks

- Co-ordinates a project to provide art installations for National Youth Assembly
- Supports all school events (cluster)
- Involved in preparation and delivery of Religious Observance

7.5.9 It should be noted that the Minister is also involved in this activity but the focus group concentrated their answers on the Youth Worker as this was the person they connected with the youth work of Linwood Parish Church.

7.5.10 In any measure this is a large range of activity.

7.5.11 The School highly values the input of the Youth Worker both professionally and personally.

7.5.12 In addition to supporting staff in terms of workload and the financial benefit to the school of having partners involved the school staff recognised that the youth worker “is able to build relationships with children in a way which teachers are not able to” (HMIE, 2009). This partnership work brings a different perspective to school as a whole, allowing teachers to see pupil’s development and because the youth worker and minister have a wider knowledge of the young people and their families they can suggest more appropriate support and interventions (Scottish Executive, 2007; Scottish Government, 2009).

7.5.13 Further, the youth work makes a significant contribution to “normalising faith and respecting other’s beliefs” which “enables young people to be confident about their faith” (Halsall, 2006). Wider knowledge of this outcome would contribute positively to those seeking a more evangelically oriented project understanding the benefits of partnership working.

7.5.14 In the discussion between the School focus group and The Parents and Supporters focus group it emerged that the Parents and Supporters were mostly unaware of the extent of the youth work

activity in the schools and the Schools focus group were mostly unaware of the range of activities offered in the other contexts.

7.6 After8

7.6.1 Working in a community for a long period allows time for strong relationships to be built (Holman, 2000). This is particularly evident in After8.

7.6.2 Many of the young people first became involved with Linwood Parish Church through Pulse8, the former group catering for young people in P6-S2. The group began by approaching young people who were too old for Sunday School. Some of those who were recruited when they were in Primary 6 and are still involved nine years later. Some of them have gone on to become Youth Leaders. Those recruited later have all joined through friends or relatives who are part of the group (Mission and Discipleship Council of the Church of Scotland, 2006; Scottish Executive, 2007).

7.6.3 The group does not advertise for members, preferring instead to have “a mini-bus sized group” to create a small group where “relationships are central” and where “everyone can take part”.

7.7 Young People’s Contribution to the Congregation

7.7.1 Each focus group was asked how young people involved in After8 contribute to the life of the church.

7.7.2 Interestingly, in every focus group except the Young People’s and the Youth Leaders’ groups people initially reacted by saying that there was very little interaction. However, when asked to give examples the same people went on to list a wide range of ways in which the young people contribute. This included music, leading worship, speaking to the congregation, helping with fund raising events, clearing out the church grounds and hosting social events.

- 7.7.3 All of the groups were surprised at the number of ways in which the young people are involved in the life of the church.
- 7.7.4 Several participants commented on the young people's lack of participation in Sunday morning worship, the traditional focal point of the congregation's week. Some gave reasons why young people might not to come to church:
- 7.7.5 "Some of them work on Sundays because that's the only time they can work"
- 7.7.6 "There are less kids coming to church anyway. They don't have families who come to church"
- 7.7.7 "Well... I've got to say that I don't think the teenagers are made very welcome in the church. That's being quite frank... by older members, they're not made welcome"
- 7.7.8 "Years ago a lady said to me "Who does she think she is? She keeps bringing all these young yins into the church!""
- 7.7.9 These comments expose a range of issues and understandings. They highlight the disconnection between traditional worship and young people (Jamieson, 2002; Rankin, 2005) but also the different perceptions the adults and young people have of each other.

7.8 Outcomes

- 7.8.1 Young people listed "fun", "social stuff" and "doing stuff you wouldn't normally do" and the things they liked most about After8 but when asked about the difference it makes to their lives the answers showed the real worth of the work.
- 7.8.2 Many of the young people spoke of their relationship with the youth leaders as one of the most significant relationships they have with an adult. They feel able to approach the leaders for pastoral

support and many of the members told of their gratitude for the support, assistance and friendship they have received.

- 7.8.3 These kinds of mentoring outcomes are difficult to assess as they are often based on changes in values and attitudes (Gibb, 1994) but it is clear from the responses of the young people that their lives have been positively impacted by being part of After8 and by extension having a relationship with Linwood Parish Church.
- 7.8.4 “It has influenced what I want to do with my life. The course I’m doing at college is because of the stuff we do here”
- 7.8.5 This is further evidence that the youth work of Linwood Parish Church does make a contribution to transition support and the NEET agenda (Scottish Government, 2006; Scottish Government, 2010).
- 7.8.6 The youth work also makes a significant contribution to the social and emotional development of young people as well as helping young people to consider faith (University of Strathclyde and The Princes' Trust Scotland, 2003). “The Church of Scotland has an opportunity to help young people who come to church and those who do not, to enjoy the benefits of having some sort of faith system that can add value to life” (Mallon, 2008, p. 47).
- 7.8.7 “It gives you ideas about stuff. Helps you think about God. We don’t mind talking about Jesus and stuff”
- 7.8.8 It provides diversionary activities (Scottish Executive, 2007).
- 7.8.9 “I’d be in bother with the police if I wasn’t here. All my pals are out gettin steamin and fighting and stuff”
- 7.8.10 The youth work of Linwood Parish Church is not delivered in the manner any of those involved in its inception anticipated. What is clear is that it does make a difference to the lives of young people

but it should be acknowledged that there are still significant challenges to the planning, enabling and delivery the youth work.

7.8.11 “This may mean changes in how we, in government, and in the youth work sector, work and approach the challenges we face. We must accept that the young people we work with are interested in what is relevant in the 21st century and we must adopt the same mindset. Challenges for all of us include modernising our thinking and our working practices to be meaningful to young people, making sure we evaluate and measure where appropriate and that we know the outcomes we want to achieve” (Scottish Executive, 2007, p. 9).

8 Organisation

8.1 Decision Making

- 8.1.1 The Youth Work of Linwood Parish Church is in many ways an organisation within an organisation. The youth work exists as an area of work that relates to the rest of the work of the church but also exists in some ways as a semi-autonomous organisation. This relationship is complex and the culture of the church can and does have an effect on the nature of the youth work (Tyler, Hoggarth, & Merton, 2009) and on the perceptions of the stakeholders.
- 8.1.2 As discussed previously, confusion around the purpose and nature of the youth work has persisted, even though the youth worker's remit relates well to current youth work policy and practice (University of Strathclyde and The Princes' Trust Scotland, 2003; Mission and Discipleship Council of the Church of Scotland, 2006; Scottish Executive, 2007).
- 8.1.3 This difficulty has been compounded by problems finding a management structure that both enables the youth work and facilitates the involvement of the wider church community in this work.
- 8.1.4 "The Minister and Youth Worker decide what happens. If it's anything out of the ordinary then they bring it to the Kirk Session for approval"
- 8.1.5 "I think the Kirk Session has found it difficult to feel a sense of ownership. They try to help with funding but that's about it"
- 8.1.6 The original (Community Learning and Development Scotland, 1995) and refreshed competences (CLD Standards Council for Scotland, 2010) for community learning and development workers both highlight the need for workers to "understand the culture of organisations, the responsibilities of those involved and how

organisation and management styles, practices and governance relate to sustainable organisations". In particular a "competent practitioner with an understanding of planning, organising and managing resources will be able to demonstrate that they can:

- develop and plan programmes and project activities;
- manage and monitor programmes and project activities;
- promote and manage a culture based on equality;
- organise, deploy and monitor resources effectively;
- recruit, manage and support people (staff, volunteers);
- identify and access funding/ resources;
- understand and manage risk;
- interpret and apply relevant legislation (e.g. equalities, Child Protection, Health and Safety)."

8.1.7 These areas of competence should apply not only to the Youth Worker but apply to volunteers and also to those responsible for managing the work. The Youth Worker as the professional member of staff will have some responsibility for those areas particularly related to the face-to-face work with young people but the Kirk Session in particular should take responsibility for the areas of strategic planning and resource management which fall under its remit (Mission and Discipleship Council of the Church of Scotland, 2006; Scottish Government, 2007).

8.1.8 The volunteer Youth Leaders talk about their work with the young people in broad strategic terms but there has never been any formal written strategy. There is a pattern to the year for After8 and between the usual six residential opportunities the group decides on its weekly activities and fundraising ventures.

- 8.1.9 “The group decides what it does. We have a chat about it and everyone can make suggestions then we decide together”
- 8.1.10 “Sometimes the leaders tell us what’s happening, like if there is something special coming up. But most of the time we decide”
- 8.1.11 This allows young people to take responsibility, to set the agenda around their needs and aspirations and to feel a sense of ownership (Scottish Executive, 2007). This approach does have an effect on planning and resources. It requires flexibility and can have an impact on preparation (Cutler & Swanney, 2000).
- 8.1.12 Within this there are strategic decisions but there are a number of major elements are not addressed in the wider context of the youth work. These are targeting, age range, progression and future planning.

8.2 Targeting

- 8.2.1 As previously discussed, After8 is a deliberately small group which does not advertise for members but instead recruits through relationships. There is much to commend about this approach. It helps maintain a stable group and allows relationships to grow and deepen (CLD Standards Council for Scotland, 2010) and means that youth work opportunities are open to all (Scottish Executive, 2007).
- 8.2.2 It could, however, be criticised as exclusive as age and knowing a current member are the criteria for membership. Services are not targeted at those most at risk of offending or becoming NEET (Scottish Government, 2006).

8.3 Transition

- 8.3.1 Transition between primary and secondary school and from secondary school into further or higher education and employment

are areas where young people may require particular support. “There is a need to establish clear transition pathways from children’s to adult services for all individuals at risk of missing out on the opportunities available for education and training. Special attention needed for young people with additional support needs moving to adult support services” (HMIE, 2009, p. 20).

- 8.3.2 There is wide concern among stakeholders about the lack of church-based provision for young people in the Primary 6 - Secondary 3 age range. This was partially a concern for support for young people in transition stages. Participants recognised the value of young people being involved in activities bridging primary and secondary school and the unique position the church was in to provide those kinds of opportunities.
- 8.3.3 “The kids were meeting other kids from different schools and getting to know them”
- 8.3.4 “I made friends with people then that I’m still pals with now”
- 8.3.5 With the ending of Pulse8 there is no clear progression of these kinds of church-based activities for young people after leaving Sunday School at around Primary 6. Participants commented about the previous success of Pulse8, but also recognised that sustaining a weekly club for 40 young people over a number of years is demanding, particularly with limited resources, and this has an impact on the Youth Worker’s work load.
- 8.3.6 “There are a number of children reaching P6 and P7 who will soon be too old to attend Sunday School. There’s nothing for them now”
- 8.3.7 Similarly, there are no exit strategies in place for young people leaving at the upper end of the youth work (Scottish Government, 2006). This is partly because there has been no agreed upper age limit but also because the youth leaders have recognised that some of those members of After8 in their late teens and early twenties still

need support. This need for services to extend beyond 18 is recognised as significant in reducing NEET and offending and supporting better outcomes for young people (Scottish Executive, 2007).

8.4 Planning Ahead

- 8.4.1 As discussed, there has always been a community focus for the Youth Worker's role. This has mostly been realised through the development of relationships with the schools, which is a very significant commitment and contribution to the life of the community.
- 8.4.2 "Given that (the Youth Worker) does all that we would worry that it is too much and that the church don't really know the range of work being done"
- 8.4.3 There was a concern expressed by a number of people in different focus groups that the Youth Worker may take too much on board and also may not have the understanding or support they require from their home church.
- 8.4.4 Much of the decision-making about the youth work provision is opportunistic or reactive.
- 8.4.5 For example, when asked why Pulse8 stopped the Focus Groups found it difficult to give reasons. Those who expressed an opinion gave different answers:
- 8.4.6 "not enough leaders"
- 8.4.7 "leaders were exhausted"
- 8.4.8 "falling numbers of young people"
- 8.4.9 "competing demands and difficulties getting adults to bring young people along"

8.4.10 “exhausted / sickness”

8.4.11 “leaders had young families”

8.4.12 Some suggested that Pulse8 was meant to restart but did not. No one was sure why it did not, although an opportunity to become more involved in chaplaincy work in the Secondary school arose at around the same time and was pursued.

8.4.13 This example shows how unclear the decision-making has been. The reasons given for the ending of Pulse8 are all valid but none of the leaders involved could give a clear rationale for its closure. The decision to take advantage of the chaplaincy opportunity is a valid one and is in line with the remit of the Youth Worker but there was an opportunity cost which, in this case, was not fully explored.

8.4.14 Being a small, agile organisation has allowed the youth work to take advantage of new opportunities like chaplaincy in schools but lack of strategic planning and clear decision-making structures could also result in missing other new opportunities, lead to gaps in provision, non-completion or putting other things aside to facilitate the new more interesting piece of work. This lack of planning may also mean that it is difficult to decide what pieces of work to stop and when (CLD Standards Council for Scotland, 2010). Clear strategy facilitates this kind of decision-making as it allows pieces of work to be considered against clear criteria agreed collectively (Smith, 1994).

8.4.15 The Management Group, Kirk Session and Congregational focus groups all expressed a desire for provision to be made for young people who were now too old for Sunday School and that such provision should be at some time more appropriate to young people other than on a Sunday morning.

- 8.4.16 “There are quite a few who’re going to be too old for the Sunday School soon and there’s nothing for them now. They won’t come into the church”
- 8.4.17 In short, they did not want Pulse8 to stop but there was not the opportunity for a wider conversation to take place about priorities. This frustrated and disappointed some stakeholders.
- 8.4.18 It was clear from responses that initially a Support Group appointed by the Kirk Session should have been in place to keep an overall view of the youth work and that the Kirk Session should have fulfilled a strategic planning role.
- 8.4.19 “The opportunity was always there (to have an input or direct the work) but whether we did or not is a different story”
- 8.4.20 This Support Group set up found it difficult to find a remit.
- 8.4.21 “We tried to support the Youth Worker. We met when there was a decision to be made but that wasn’t that often”
- 8.4.22 The weakness of this Support Group is that it was not explicitly located in a management structure. The Support Group seems to fulfil three separate, and possibly conflicting roles: to support the Youth Worker; to keep an overall view of remit and direction; and to provide administrative support. These roles should have been clarified and separated into manageable parts (Smith, 1994).
- 8.4.23 The terms of the former constitution required a Management Committee to be responsible for setting policy and strategy for the youth work as well as assisting in accessing funding. This development should have addressed the problems with the role of the Support Group but it was clear from the focus groups that the Management Committee has never played that strategic role fully.

- 8.4.24 “We never had any help at the beginning (from National Mission). They just left us to get on with it. There is no real understanding of our part in making strategy or anything like that”
- 8.4.25 This lack of understanding is at least in part due to a lack of training and support from National Mission coupled with a lack of clarity about what their role was and what the Youth Worker was responsible for. The Management Committee had, and still has, no clear remit and no clear relationship to the Kirk Session or to the Youth Worker.
- 8.4.26 “Maybe we should be more involved with the planning and what we expect and if we are setting targets then thinking about how you will achieve that. Then when reports come back we can think about how we can help achieve those targets. We haven’t ever taken the time to do that”
- 8.4.27 A clear strategy would help to address many of the concerns raised by stakeholders about the management, direction and decision-making relating to the youth work.

8.5 Youth Work Budget

- 8.5.1 The former Board of National Mission gave no clear guidance to the congregation at the outset about the costs of having a Youth Worker so there was no initial expectation that the congregation would have any responsibility for contributing funds to the delivery of youth work or to the Youth Worker’s equipment and expenses. The Church of Scotland’s Ministries Council meets the salary of the Youth Worker but they do not provide funds for the work and there is no budget for youth work as part of the congregational finances.
- 8.5.2 “We just don’t have funds”
- 8.5.3 “We used to be able to get small grants quite regularly from a local funder but that has ended”

- 8.5.4 This was recognised as problematic and was the primary reason for the establishment of a separately constituted Youth Project. It was hoped that this separation between the youth work and the Church would allow the youth work to attract funding that was not open to the church as a body whose primary aim is the promotion of religion. The separately constituted Youth Project did attract some funding but most of these were small grants for individual projects, all of which were applied to by the Youth Worker.
- 8.5.5 As the youth work project was clearly not a separate organisation the recent changes in charity legislation, and a desire to bring the youth work back within the structures of the congregation led to the dissolution of the Youth Project in 2009. Like many small organisations, the congregation finds managing the finances of the youth work difficult and still does not contribute directly to the youth work through its budgeting process (Nunan, 2010). Some funds are donated from the Friday Café but this is on an ad hoc basis. There is a separate account for youth work, a hangover from the Youth Project, which is administered by the Management Committee, also a hangover from the constituted project. As at the end of March 2010 this account contained a little over £200.
- 8.5.6 For most After8 activities the young people either pay themselves, fundraise or both for residential work. Fundraising activities have become part of the programme for After8 and have contributed greatly to the development of the group. They have promoted teamwork, organisational skills, creativity and a sense of purpose.
- 8.5.7 Something significant would be lost if these fundraising activities were to stop. Young people gain valuable skills through planning, organising and budgeting (Mission and Discipleship Council of the Church of Scotland, 2006). It builds their networking and negotiating skills and further increases social capital (Scottish Government, 2008), however the uncertainty around funding makes forward planning extremely difficult.

8.5.8 “We operate on a shoestring”

8.5.9 “There’s hardly enough money to keep the church going”

8.5.10 The lack of financial commitment to work with young people could promote a sense that it is peripheral to the priorities of the ‘real’ church, which meets on a Sunday morning (Gibbs & Bolger, 2006). Participants were not hopeful of a change in financial circumstances.

8.5.11 “The financial position isn’t going to get better. We’ve got a building here that costs us money and we’re struggling to keep up”

8.6 Communicating Youth Work

8.6.1 A recurring theme of the focus groups was the perception of a lack of support for the youth work among the wider congregation. Stakeholders in every group felt that a lack of communication about what happens with the young people was at least partly the reason. Many feel the work of the project is not well communicated to the wider congregation and community.

8.6.2 “People in the church don’t really take an interest beyond the Sunday service. They know about the Youth Worker but they know very little about what goes on”

8.6.3 There has been a tendency to avoid the task of preparing communications or of formalising a reporting system in favour of what are perceived to be more immediately beneficial tasks. The Youth Worker often feels that the time necessary to prepare reports on the activities could be time spent with young people.

8.6.4 “Because no one has really asked for reports until recently they just haven’t been a priority, especially if there are opportunities to be working with the young people”

- 8.6.5 The focus groups provided a chance for some stakeholders with more negative views were given evidence of the value of the work by those who knew a little more and they became more open to hearing about the possibilities the work offers to young people (Kitzinger, 1995).
- 8.6.6 “There are huge benefits (for the young people) but we aren’t aware of all of them”
- 8.6.7 There has been a deliberate effort to involve different people in the youth work to help them understand what is happening and equip them to advocate on behalf of the project, building understanding and trying to integrate young people into the wider church community. This has been problematic because the established church community shares very strong norms and has become in many ways a homogeneous community (Baron et al, 2000), difficult for ‘outsiders’ to break into without accepting all of the associated norms. This has been a successful strategy but it needs to be supported using different kinds of media to reinforce those positive messages.
- 8.6.8 The vast majority of focus group members appreciated the times when the young people have made presentations to the church congregation on Sunday morning during worship. This type of communication reaches people who will never have any direct contact with the youth work and addresses some people’s wishes to see more of the young people involved. It does not address the appropriateness of either the worship format or of Sunday morning as a time for young people to participate fully.
- 8.6.9 “Sunday morning is rubbish. (timing) We’ve all got jobs so we work on a Sunday”
- 8.6.10 “Church is social suicide”

8.7 Evaluation

- 8.7.1 A culture of reflective practice creates an environment where evaluation based on the participant's experience informs future planning at all levels (Kolb, 1984), particularly the work with young people (Mission and Discipleship Council of the Church of Scotland, 2006; CLD Standards Council for Scotland, 2010).
- 8.7.2 Recording work is good practice for a number of reasons. For example, keeping attendance records helps to meet safeguarding requirements (CLD Standards Council for Scotland, 2010). Youth workers should also record their work to enable regular reflection on their practice (Mission and Discipleship Council of the Church of Scotland, 2006; CLD Standards Council for Scotland, 2010). A number of tools are available based on the work of Dewey (1933), Schön (1983) and Kolb (1984) that can help practitioners to evaluate and develop their practice. This reflective practice helps identify learning which has taken place and to inform evaluation and appraisal.
- 8.7.3 The Minister appraises the Youth Worker annually and the result of this appraisal is submitted to Ministries Council. Although this management arrangement works well locally in terms of managing a post (the Youth Worker), it leaves open the possibility that the youth work agenda could be driven by the Minister and the Youth Worker without any real consultation with the Kirk Session.
- 8.7.4 Throughout the history of the youth work there was often no clear reporting structure. No one was responsible for receiving reports or acting on them and no one asked for reports so none were made. The Youth Worker's remit requires regular reporting but there are very few written records of what has happened with young people.
- 8.7.5 After8 evaluates its work informally. This is especially true of residential work where the group always discuss their experience on their return. That said, there is no written record of this

evaluation process so it is difficult to see how the findings are carried forward, acted upon or learned from.

8.7.6 “When we come back from a residential we always talk about it to see what was good and what wasn’t”

8.7.7 “If something needs changing we discuss it and sort it out”

8.7.8 “Nothing changes”

8.7.9 Work with young people is based on building positive relationships (CLD Standards Council for Scotland, 2010). Relationships are obviously hard to measure, but this does not mean that there are no tools to evaluate the effectiveness of the work (Gibb, 1994). For example, the Step It Up resource was developed specifically because “social and emotional competence underpins all youth work” (University of Strathclyde and The Princes' Trust Scotland, 2003, p. 17).

8.8 Volunteering

8.8.1 No matter what financial and physical resources are available, the key to delivering effective youth work is trained, sensitive youth workers (University of Strathclyde and The Princes' Trust Scotland, 2003; Mission and Discipleship Council of the Church of Scotland, 2006; Scottish Government, 2007). It should be noted that the Youth Worker’s role is not to deliver all the youth work personally. Many of the areas of work focus on identifying the needs of young people, encouraging and enabling the congregation to meet those needs and supporting them through training and resourcing.

8.8.2 The effectiveness of any voluntary organisation depends on the effective recruitment, training and empowering of volunteers (Scottish Government, 2007) but it is clear that adults are less likely to volunteer to work with young people (Scottish Commissioner for Children and Young People, 2007).

- 8.8.3 The perception is that youth work is very reliant on the Youth Worker taking the lead in delivery. This is not unexpected as the Youth Worker is the full time member of staff responsible for this area of work but it does pose a number of questions about the sustainability of the work with young people.
- 8.8.4 “It would be disastrous for the church and for the community if the youth worker was to leave”
- 8.8.5 The Youth Worker has played a vital role in recruiting and supporting volunteers. When asked why they are involved in youth work almost all of the volunteers cite the Youth Worker as a key reason.
- 8.8.6 “(the Youth Worker) is more than a leader. (the Youth Worker) is our friend. You can talk to (the Youth Worker) about personal matters that you can’t take to other people”
- 8.8.7 The focus on strong relationships has helped to build a team of volunteers. Some of them have been involved in the youth work since their early teens as members of Pulse8 while others have become involved through their children’s membership in the groups.
- 8.8.8 Each focus group was asked about the impact the Youth Worker leaving would have on the work. Few of the responses showed confidence that the work would continue without a full-time Youth Worker to support it.

9 Conclusions and Recommendations

9.1 Reflections

- 9.1.1 This research set out to explore stakeholder's perceptions of the youth work of Linwood Parish Church. The process has been assisted by the researcher's fourteen years experience as a professional youth development officer working in local churches with young people, volunteers and congregations. This knowledge of the context was one of the deciding factors in Linwood Parish Church's decision to commission the researcher and in the researcher's acceptance.
- 9.1.2 Although the researcher had no prior knowledge of the work of Linwood Parish Church in particular, an understanding of church structure, culture and language as well as the community context has helped in the understanding and interpretation of responses.
- 9.1.3 It has, at times, been difficult to separate perceptions of the Youth Work from perceptions of the Youth Worker. This is because the Youth Worker plays such a significant part of the delivery of the work. This is also partly due to the relational nature of the work.
- 9.1.4 It would be impossible to generalise the experience of one church but the researcher's experience, coupled with these findings, would suggest that Linwood Parish Church is not unusual in the difficulties it faces or in the value it adds to its community.

9.2 Initial Expectations

- 9.2.1 The majority of stakeholders initially expected that having a full-time youth worker working for their church would result in more young people coming to worship on Sunday mornings. This was despite the remit of the worker clearly stating the community focus of the post.

- 9.2.2 This was at least in part due to the poor support and information they received from the Church of Scotland's Board of National Mission at the beginning of the process and the current responsible body, the Ministries Council, have failed to remedy the situation.
- 9.2.3 Research to discover if these expectations are replicated in similar situations would be beneficial and if this proves to be the case then a review of the process for deploying a PPW to any congregation should take place. This review could address issues including finance, volunteer recruitment and congregational expectations.
- 9.2.4 Support structures should be put in place for congregations who already host a PPW. This should include Management Committee training, training in funding applications and in planning and evaluating.

9.3 Communicating About the Youth Work

- 9.3.1 A clear factor in stakeholder's unrealistic expectations is communication. A significant number of stakeholders were unaware of large parts of the youth work. Steps should be taken to remedy this using a range of media and, where possible, by involving young people, partner agencies and members of the congregation.

9.4 Partnership Working

- 9.4.1 The youth work of Linwood Parish Church makes a significant contribution to the community. The work is highly valued by the young people it serves and by the school community. It is also evident that, through its partnerships with the schools, the youth work makes a contribution to a range of Scottish Government policy objectives, particularly around the provision of youth work opportunities and partnership working. Further exploration of how these partnerships could be developed and evaluated would be

beneficial to both parties and to the wider educational and youth work communities.

9.5 Management and Strategy

9.5.1 It is important that a clear management structure be in place to consider strategy, policy and financial arrangements (Nunan, 2010). The Kirk Session should address this as a matter of urgency. This management would operate alongside the more practical day-to-day management of the Youth Worker by the Minister and be a standing committee of the Kirk Session. It should be responsible for oversight of the implementation of the strategy for youth work and include young people and representatives from the schools as members.

9.5.2 The Ministries Council, in partnership with relevant others, should develop a tool to assist strategic planning and evaluation.

9.6 Volunteering

9.6.1 Those people who volunteer to work with young people within Linwood Parish Church feel that their contribution is significant and that the young people they work with value them. Further opportunities for training and development should be explored and volunteers enabled to lead groups without the direct participation of the Youth Worker in line with the Youth Worker's job remit.

9.7 Implementation of National Strategy at Local Level

9.7.1 Although both the Scottish Government (Scottish Executive, 2007) and the Church of Scotland (Mission and Discipleship Council of the Church of Scotland, 2006) have had youth work strategies in place for several years there was little evidence that these strategies are being implemented deliberately at local level or that

local churches are aware of their role in promoting and delivering youth work.

9.7.2 Further research to discover if this is in fact the case and, if so, what factors have caused this disconnection between the national and local contexts.

9.7.3 “There remains a fundamental need for community based youth work which has been eroded as a service in recent years, at a time when young people are under greater pressure than ever, especially the most disadvantaged” (YouthLink Scotland, 2005).

9.7.4 From the evidence gathered, it can be concluded that Linwood Parish Church makes a valuable contribution to meeting this need through high quality youth work.

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11 Annex 1

Linwood Parish Church

Youth Work Review

What We Want To Do

A process of consultation with all stakeholders in LPC youth work who have been involved since its inception up to the present:

Consulting as broadly as possible with different stakeholders, find out

- Benefits from the Youth Work since Youth Worker came into post
- Has the work met expectations of those involved in achieving the appointment of a Youth Worker
- Were the expectations realistic
- How has the work impacted the lives of people who have been associated with the work (youth and volunteers)
- What have been the difficulties and disappointments
- What do people see as the future of the Youth Work at LPC
- What about the young people who are now 18+ - how do people perceive them in relation to the Youth Work at LPC and to LPC in general
- How has the Youth Work at LPC been funded
- Has the funding been sufficient
- How was the organisational management of the work undertaken
- Was that satisfactory

12 Annex 2

Focus Group topic questions

LPC = Linwood Parish Church

- Benefits from the Youth Work since Youth Worker came into post?
- Has the work met expectations of those involved in achieving the appointment of a Youth Worker?
- Were the expectations realistic?
- Do you know how the work impacts the lives of people who have been associated with the work (youth and volunteers)? How?
- What have been the difficulties and disappointments?
- What do you see as the future of the Youth Work at LPC?
- What about the young people who are now 18+ - how do people perceive them in relation to the Youth Work at LPC and to LPC in general?
- How has the Youth Work at LPC been funded?
- Has the funding been sufficient
- How was the organisational management of the work undertaken
- Was that satisfactory?
- How do you know?