

# The Future of Christian youth work



Over the last year or so Frontier Youth Trust and Worth Unlimited have been talking to youth workers about what might happen in the future with regard to Christian youth work.

We have drawn together the thoughts of many youth workers we have talked to and are calling for some clear, achievable and defining actions to help ensure that Christian youth work takes its place at the heart of effectively serving young people in the UK.

**We are asking that the following commitments be made:**

- 1) That 2009 be a year when young people are invested in, celebrated and empowered in churches, Christian organisations and the wider community.**
- 2) That churches and Christian organisations commit to spending at least 25% of their income on working with young people - especially marginalised young people.**
- 3) That Government commit to long-term funding of Christian faith-based youth work.**

**We are calling for these actions in response to the issues raised in our consultations with youth workers.**

**Please join with us in seeking to bring about these changes by campaigning for positive change.**

**We have set out below some practical ideas to help youth workers, churches and organisations achieve these goals.**

**A report detailing the full findings of our consultations can be found on the FYT web site, [www.fyt.org.uk/resource/pdf,1.htm](http://www.fyt.org.uk/resource/pdf,1.htm)**

## **Commitment 1)**

**That 2009 be a year when young people are invested in, celebrated and empowered in churches, Christian organisations and the wider community.**

Host an event to celebrate all that young people are and can be. This could be an awards type evening, a showcasing of young peoples artistic talent, an evening where adults and young people have meaningful conversations or a good old fashioned party!

Consult with young people over HOW your church or organisation might include their views in decision making more effectively and then implement their suggestions.

Hold a young people's Sunday celebration that is planned WITH young people.

Invite the young people you work with to meet with those who make decisions in your church or organisation. Consider developing some policy statements about how much money is allocated to work with young people and/or enabling young people to decide how money is spent in the organisation.

Use the alternative 'asbo' awards which can be downloaded free from:  
<http://fyt.org.uk/showdetails.pdf,71.htm>

'Talk up' youth work in your conversations with other church members - spread the encouragement!

Develop a "Commitment to Young People" statement - a bit like the Bill of Rights for young people in your church. Involve the adults and young people in developing such a statement.

Work towards appointing a youth representative on your church governing body. Remembering young people are part of what goes on, not just a focus for the future. Integrate them into all aspects of church life.

As a gesture of appreciation for the work they do with young people, take a youth worker you know out for a meal or other treat.

Develop a three year plan for your work with young people, with 2009 being the first year. The plan will show how the work will develop over the period.

Write to a youth worker and encourage their ministry.

Hold a service to affirm the youth and children's workers - followed by a lunch in their honour.

Allocate a percentage of 'the mission budget' to a young peoples group who decide which mission organisations to support.

Invite representatives of a local or national youth organisation to come and talk to your church, organisation or community group about how you could get more involved in serving young people.

Write to FYT to tell us about any action you have taken to encourage and build up youth workers or young people and we will publish and share your ideas with others on our web site.

If you go to church, consider making at least one Sunday during 2009, 'Young People's Sunday'. The young people could plan and run the service or the adults could honour and celebrate the lives of young people.

Ensure that there is a young people's newsletter, notice-board and/or a section on websites which communicate all that is positive and possible relating to young people.

## **Commitment 2)**

**That churches and Christian organisations commit to spending at least 25% of their income on working with young people - especially marginalised young people.**

Inform FYT that you are doing this and we will gather and publish stories of how this radical commitment works out (anonymity is offered if required).

Develop a 'youth strategy' for your church/organisation that details how you will spend this money, what you hope to achieve in doing so and how young people will be involved in the process.

Create a 'budget heading' in your church or organisation that is to be used by young people - help them to decide on the criteria for spending that element of the budget and then let them administer and evaluate its use.

Use the research that shows the link how people come to faith and that most come to faith before the age of 25. Do this by asking people in a church service to stand up if they did come to faith before age of 25 and then leave the service!

Write an article for your church/organisation newsletter or web page about The Future report, highlighting the action points.

Monitor and evaluate (FYT can support you in this) the way in which you are ministering to those young people who are marginal to your church activities.

Invite the young people you work with to meet with those who make decisions in your church or organisation. Consider developing some policy statements about how much money is allocated to work with young people and/or enabling young people to decide how money is spent in the organisation.

Send a copy of The Future report summary to a church leader, minister and/or bishop (or other denominational head). Ask them for a reply, to comment on the report and to commit to the action points.

### **Commitment 3)**

#### **That Government commit to long-term funding of Christian faith-based youth work.**

Write to your MP and Local Council highlighting the work you do with young people and ask them to commit to funding such work on a long-term basis.

You could remind the Government that it appears to have a skewed sense of priority in the funding of work with young people. Bishop Roger Sainsbury (chair of National Youth Agency) says, 'we currently spend £98 per head per annum on adolescent youth services but it costs £25,000 to incarcerate each one convicted. Wouldn't it be better to put a fence at the top of the cliff rather than station an ambulance at the bottom?'

Highlight in your work, letters and campaigning that the church works with tens of thousands of young people each and every week and has done so for many decades. Draw attention to the fact that it receives virtually no Government funding to do this.

Write to a local paper to affirm church based and voluntary youth work – send your letter to the general 'letters page'.

Survey your local young people to ask what they think about the action points. Publicise the findings as widely as possible.

Organise a letter writing/postcard dropping campaign to campaign for better outcomes and funding for work with young people.

Invite local dignitaries/MP/Mayor to a reception/fun day organised by young people, so they can ask them what is happening in their local area for young people. Make it an open invitation to all young people in the area. If there isn't a 'Young Mayor' in your community, as the 'adult' Mayor to commit to electing one.

Develop a scrapbook and/or video diary of what young people 'Want to See ...' in their community. Send this to your local authority or ask them if the young people can come and present the piece to a council meeting.

To contact FYT or to tell us what actions you have taken and the outcome of those actions;

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Tel: 0121 687 3505

Write: Unit 208b, The Big Peg, 120 Vyse Street, Birmingham. B18 6NF.



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Worth Unlimited is part of the Worth Foundation, a company limited by guarantee number 3451215 and a registered charity, number 1068782.