

More than Sundays



Looking at the contribution of the Church to the Children's Workforce in England

Report Summary

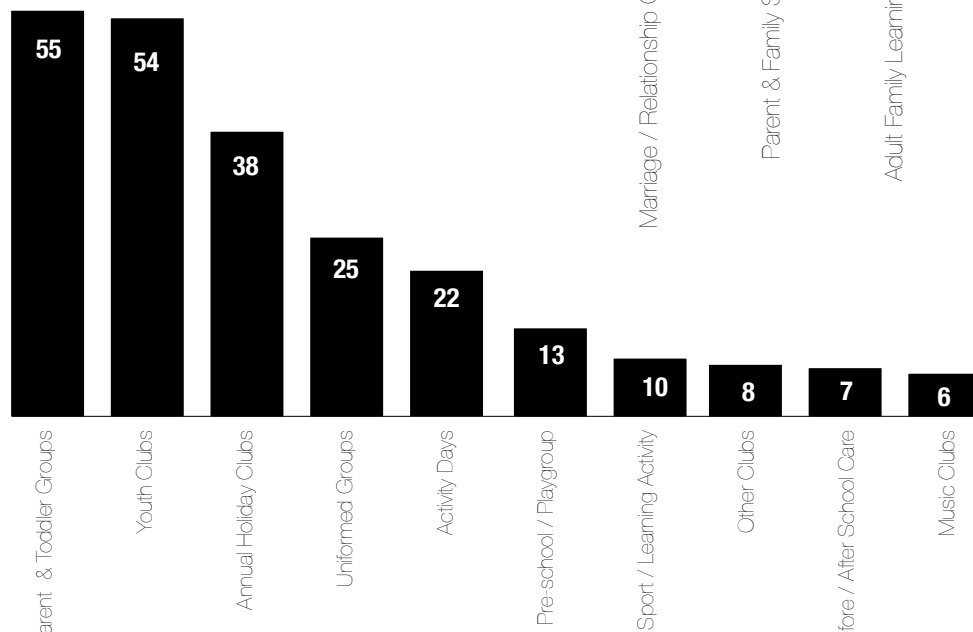
Why?

Family Matters Institute is a national Christian based charity working to address issues relating to and affecting children, young people and families. This is achieved through research, accredited training, supporting engagement and production of resources.

Whilst there is evidential success of the WSPP Local programmes in engaging commissioned VCS services, “non-commissioned services” such as those provided by the Christian Church in England are not robustly addressed. The Christian Church provides a large volume of non-commissioned early intervention services.

Working with Christian Research and The Consultative Group on Ministry Amongst Children (CGMC), this pilot project has mapped the activities and levels of engagement with workforce reform amongst Churches.

CHART 1. Percentage of Churches in England Providing These Activities



What?

The work done by churches in the community with children, young people & families

86% of churches provide activities for children, young people and families in the community.

Churches were integral to the development of frontline community & social welfare work in England. Our research shows that this theme is still very much alive in the modern Church.

CHART 2. Percentage of Churches in England Undertaking Parenting & Couples Support Activities



“The benefits of improved engagement with faith communities are considerable.”

(City of Westminster July 2007: A Tolerant and Open City: Improving engagement with Westminster’s minority communities)



Who?

The people who make up the workforce

There is a substantial volunteer workforce involved in providing activities and support for children, young people and families in the community in addition to the paid workforce.



Ratio of Volunteer/Paid Workforce Hours

Paid workers in churches who engage with children, young people & families in the community provide an average of 45 hours per week per church. Volunteers provide an average of 38 hours per church.

Churches have a creative range of approaches to the structure and management of services provided.



“Faith communities make a valuable contribution to the regional economy and the drive to improve our local communities. They have an excellent record of bridging the gap between the affluent and the deprived with their volunteer networks and community infrastructure.”

(NorthWest Regional Development Agency)

How?

How churches access support & funding

A huge 79% of churches receive no funding for their work with children, young people & families.

Recent developments in Children’s Workforce reform have not yet established a pathway to effectively engage this sector despite the declaration of value from the Prime Minister, Gordon Brown:

“Government ... cannot ignore the rich resources of the Third Sector and must not marginalize the massive contribution of faith communities across the UK”.

(Gordon Brown, July 2008 at a No. 10 reception celebrating the work of faith based community projects)

85% of all churches access safeguarding training to equip volunteers and staff working with children and young people. Approximately one third use the Churches Child Protection Advisory Service (CCPAS), whilst two thirds commission or deliver their own safeguarding training.

Many church-based projects have developed partnerships with statutory or VCS providers to enable volunteers and staff to access quality training & supervision on a range of topics. This indicates a clear commitment and a proactive approach to workforce development.

In addition, there are several professional Christian-based agencies with which Churches partner, in order to exchange ideas, good practise and access resources. The promotion and enabling of these agencies could address cultural differences between statutory agendas and Churches.

The main partners identified include:

- CGMC (Consultative Group for Ministry amongst Children)
 - CCPAS (Churches Child Protection Advisory Service)
 - Mothers Union
 - CTF (Churches Together for Families)
 - CCCF (Christian Child Care Forum)
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Are churches really willing to attend training?

Yes – of the churches who provide any services to children, young people and families in the community, our research indicated that 94% access some kind of training.

Don't churches only want to work with each other?

No – our research indicates that almost half of these providers work with other VCS organisations and up to 86% work with schools and preschools. Other links identified were extended schools, health visitors, children's centres, youth offending teams, education welfare officers and social work teams.

Shouldn't churches be engaging with mainstream workforce reform?

Perception is that there has been no established route, either formal or relational for churches to engage with the wider workforce reform agenda. Efforts to remove the level of mutual uncertainty between statutory services and churches about how their values can be respected could bring together the diverse organisational cultures and provide this route.

Isn't it all about Sunday School?

No – we have aimed to eliminate from our results all activities that are an integral part of practising religion. Churches clearly provide more than Sundays.

Case Studies

A group of churches in Leeds run Saturday morning clubs for up to 600 children each week. In addition, they hold assemblies in 24 schools, and in 2007 they made over 31,000 home visits to children and their families. The clubs are funded entirely by the Churches & donations. Over 90% of the workforce involved in these projects are unpaid.

As well as running a Local Authority funded preschool, a Church in Cheshire also runs its own Mums & Tots, holiday club, youth club, after-school club, and works in local schools. The Church employs two full-time children's workers but also has a team of around 20 volunteers.

An Independent Church in Bedford has been involved in a new community project from its inception. The project provides space for over 80 groups working primarily to help improve and develop lifestyles and community relations. Only two part-time members of staff are employed along with a large volunteer workforce from within the Church.

An Inner City project based in London opens up a local Church Hall for children of all faiths to come to during the school holidays. The project has excellent links with the local school and builds relationships within the community.

In Birmingham, one of the early Children's Centres has been set up in partnership with a local Church. The Centre currently provides core services targeted at under fives but hopes to develop services further. The Project's new building enables voluntary and statutory sectors to come together sharing expertise on both sides to deliver better quality services to the community.

Royston is a small market town in Hertfordshire with a successful youth drop-in which is funded entirely from Christian sources and is managed by a team of volunteers from the local Church.
