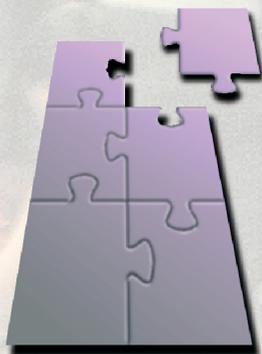


ncounter

Local Partnership Strategy 2008-2010



Working in partnership with local churches and organisations to bring Good News to every aspect of young people's lives, using media relevant to popular culture

emerge



Good news for every aspect of young people's lives

Our experience of follow-on projects to schools work has shown that:

- *if follow-on work is not integrated into an overall strategy for working with unchurched and churched young people, and*
- *when only one church is running follow-on with no support from other local churches, without changing existing programmes*

there is a strong likelihood that numbers attending will decline during the initial six weeks programme, and follow-on will probably not continue in any form or feed into other programmes afterwards.

The opportunity

With less than 15 full or part time paid Christian youth workers in the SN postal district and only one organisation (SYFC) in the whole Swindon/North Wilts area, it is not too surprising that few churches are able to support ongoing work with unchurched young people; especially as most church-employed youth workers are primarily expected to work with those who already have some church background.

On the positive side, our experience and research has shown that unchurched young people are very open to the Christian message. Few know anything about it, however - out of over 37,000 young people in the SN postal area, less than 1,500 are in church fellowship groups. We believe that the time has come to work 'deeper not wider' with specific local churches to find ways to initiate, nurture and develop Christian work with young people, bringing Good News to every aspect of young peoples' lives.

emerge will be led and resourced by local churches with support from ncounter.

We have adopted a framework for strategy which includes the initiation, nurture and development of youth work in a single community. The three modes of operation will be:

- Discover and develop potential
- Explore faith
- Mature and grow

To make it happen, we will set up Local Partnerships with churches, agreeing on a specific plan which incorporates each of these modes as the basis for working together. Here's a description of the three modes in more detail.

emerge - community in 3 modes

Discover and Develop aims to **engage** young people through activities which will interest and benefit them, and through which relationships with youth workers can be built.



It's essential to research what the local need is amongst young people. For example, if the overriding need of the community is an After-School Club then this will become the focus for discover & develop.

An after-school club could, for example, incorporate performing arts sessions, film showing, informal discussion and other activities which encourage young people to explore and identify the person they want to become. This is an essential first step towards 'formative spirituality', the foundation of faith.

Explaining faith will not be the priority in this mode; workers will engage with young people through activities which enhance and develop young peoples' social awareness, talents and skills. Workers will, however, be open about their Christian faith through conversation and testimony (where appropriate). Information relating to other events happening within the emerge community (Exploring Faith & Maturing and Growing) will be on display and advertised to encourage young people to access other parts of the community if they wish.

Explore - explicitly explores 'faith questions' with young people which engage them in formative spirituality, such as : 'Why am I here?'; 'What is the purpose of life?'; 'Does God exist?' Following this, material will be introduced which looks more deeply

at the tenets of Christian beliefs, for example using courses such as DEEP, Youth Alpha, Essence, Exodus 20. Engagement will be through group work and experiential activities. An important part of this mode will be to challenge young people to explore faith issues practically, not just cerebrally, for example through peer leadership of small groups and activities. They will be encouraged to put into practice during the week Christian teaching on different topics, for example, prayer, self-sacrifice, patience, love, faith, self control. This will help young people to grow and mature in faith as they see the results of the practical application of teaching in their lives, providing discussion material for future weeks.

An existing project, such as 'Café Base', 'Rock Solid' etc., which is open to new young people and ideas can form the basis of this part of the community.

Mature & Grow - in this mode young people are given support to work out the personal implications of the Christian faith. Emphasis will be given to prayer, Bible-study, mutual support, and sharing testimony within and outside the group. An essential part of this mode will be to challenge participants to engage in ministry and mission through service in areas such as the emerge community, leading worship, local social action projects and mission programmes at home and abroad.

Again an existing project, eg Youth Cells and groups which can accommodate more young people and is open to new ideas can form the basis of this part of the community.

Measuring success

Success criteria will include:

- All three modes of activity are present within one community.
- Young people are able to move freely between the three modes.

We will look for evidence that:

- Each Local Partnership has developed each of the three modes of activity within one plan
- Young people are moving between three modes



Partnership

ncounter can bring to the local partnership:

- Understanding and experience of current youth culture and training in how to relate this to faith.
- Connections with potential funders of some aspects of the emerge community.
- Schools work through the ongoing work of Collective, a full time Christian band working with ncounter in partnership with the Innervation Trust, Manchester.
- Ongoing support through regular visits and involvement by ncounter staff, including the programme coordinator, schools band and other staff.

Local churches will bring to the partnership:

- A commitment to put unchurched young people high on the youth work agenda
- A willingness to make sacrifices, and to change structures and attitudes where necessary to achieve agreed objectives
- Workers prepared to get involved, and an overall commitment by the church to the partnership, manifest in commitment of time, money and people.

Next steps

Churches interested in developing a local partnership should get in touch with Claire Camm (01793 859619) at the ncounter office. Next steps will include:

- 1 **Open discussions** between church leaders and ncounter staff to understand the potential implications.
- 2 **Agreement** between ncounter and the local churches to form a local partnership.
- 3 **Development** of a local plan, with local youth workers and ncounter staff working together to establish a common plan.
- 4 Local churches and ncounter **sign off** the local plan.
- 5 **Implementation** against the plan. Implementation will be monitored against outcomes agreed during the planning process.