

# MANCHESTER DIOCESE BISHOP'S CERTIFICATE IN CHILDREN'S MINISTRY LEVEL 1

## INTRODUCTION

### SHOULD OUR PARISH DO THIS?

The Church of England's Children's Strategy (2003) stated, 'It is highly desirable that those responsible for nurturing children in Christian faith should have appropriate skills, values and knowledge for this important ministry.' It is the responsibility of each parish to decide how such skills, values and knowledge should be fostered but Manchester Diocese is offering the Bishop's Certificate package as an easy, ready made way of facilitating this aspect of good practice.

The **Level One** Certificate is designed for all those who work with children on behalf of the Church. Many of those who volunteer for Church children's work may not be used to the idea of going on training or 'equipping' courses. For this reason the **Level One** material is designed to be as enjoyable, user friendly and non-threatening as possible. Not only that, it is a largely 'do it yourself' resource – other than for the Safeguarding Children (Child Protection) element, participants don't have to leave the comfort zone of their own parish or the people they know to do it. For sessions 2 to 6 there are no outside 'leaders' involved – the facilitators for the sessions are provided from your own team – and the venue is wherever is convenient for your volunteers. The sessions are designed to be short (90 minutes maximum, including all important refreshments) and your team decides when and how often to hold them.

A pilot of the material was run in the diocese during summer 2008 and of the 133 participants who completed feedback questionnaires, 80% agreed that the session they had experienced could be run by volunteer facilitators in their parishes; and 86% said they would recommend other children's work volunteers to take part in the Bishop's Certificate in Children's Ministry (Level One) programme. Ultimately the aim of the programme is to improve the quality of the experience that children have in our churches, and 97% felt that participation in the programme would achieve this aim. For a parish to offer the Bishop's Certificate (Level One) to its volunteers was seen as an effective way of showing the importance of Children's Ministry by 95% of those who gave feedback from the pilot.

A final point worth noting is that churches are often concerned in case their Children's Ministry volunteers are not being spiritually fed themselves. The pilot material was the session on 'Children and Prayer' and 99% of questionnaires showed that participants had been encouraged to think about the variety of different ways that people can pray, whilst 86% agreed that the session would have a positive effect on their own prayer life. Participation in the Bishop's Certificate programme may therefore be one way of providing for the spiritual needs of our volunteers.

## HOW DO WE 'SIGN UP' ?

The decision to take part in the Bishop's Certificate scheme should be a matter of parish policy, so it needs the support of the incumbent/priest in charge and PCC. This introduction, together with the session details in the Record of Participation sheet, and the sample session (both on the website) are designed to help your parish to make that decision. But do contact the Diocesan Children's Officer (Steve Dixon: [stephendixon@manchester.anglican.org](mailto:stephendixon@manchester.anglican.org) or phone 0161 828 1433) if you would like further information.

Once you have decided to run the programme, then contact Steve to register and he will send you the DIY instruction pack for the rest of the sessions. He will also ask you if you would be willing for him to let other parishes and individuals know that you are running the scheme so that they could perhaps join in some of your sessions.

## HOW DO VOLUNTEERS QUALIFY FOR THE BISHOP'S CERTIFICATE?

To receive the **Level One** Certificate, a volunteer must have:

- participated in the six training sessions detailed in the DIY pack **or**
- participated in the diocesan Safeguarding Children (Child Protection) session together with training sessions (put on by your church, or other organisations) that meet the aims of the other five and enable the volunteer to do the things listed in the session introductions from the DIY pack.

The incumbent/ priest in charge and PCC must decide who is authorised to sign the Records of Participation. When a volunteer has taken part in a session or its equivalent, they should have it 'signed off' on their Record. When all six sessions have been signed off, then the Record should be sent to the Diocesan Children's Officer at Church House, Manchester, with a covering letter from the incumbent/ priest in charge requesting the award of the Bishop's Certificate in Children's Ministry (Level One). The award of the Certificate will be confirmed to the volunteer straight way, but the actual certificates will be presented at an annual diocesan celebration service, usually taking place in the autumn term. **The Children's Officer must receive completed Records by 1 September, for recipients to be presented with their certificates at the autumn service that year.**

(NB if a volunteer attends a training session run by an organisation other than your church, and wants to claim it as part of their Bishop's Certificate training, they should be asked to provide evidence in the form of their own notes or session handouts to demonstrate that the session is equivalent to material provided in the diocesan pack).

## CAN WE CHANGE THE CONTENT?

The instructions for each session start with an aim and a list of things participants should be able to do by the end of the session (also reproduced in the Record of Participation). These aims and lists are the most important parts of the instructions. If you can think of other activities you would rather do that would achieve the aim for a session and give participants the skills on the list then you may substitute your own activities for the ones provided.

## **IS THERE HOMEWORK?**

To qualify for the Bishop's Certificate (Level One) participants don't *have* to do anything apart from take part in the six sessions. However, it is a good idea to take notes during or after a session, so that they don't forget what they have done. Participants should be encouraged to jot down the things they have learned during the session, and afterwards to make a note of any ways they think their work with children might change because of what they have learned. There is a handout from each session and participants should keep these and their notes together in a portfolio with their Bishop's Certificate Record of Participation.

## **HOW OFTEN SHOULD WE HOLD SESSIONS?**

The package has been designed for maximum flexibility. Your parish can work through the six sessions at its own pace, as and when convenient for your volunteers. However, the series might have more of an impact if the sessions are held reasonably regularly (perhaps once a fortnight, or once a month). You might also want to consider the possibility of holding some sessions on a Saturday – it would be possible to cover two sessions in a day, with time for socializing over lunch. The sessions can be done in any order, and if you are doing two in a day you might want to put a faith based session such as *Children and Prayer* together with a session about children such as *How Children Develop*.

Volunteers come and go in children's ministry, and the series should be repeated from time to time, whenever a small group builds up who haven't taken part in it. It might be helpful to cooperate with neighbouring parishes – after the initial series, perhaps your parish and your neighbours could take it in turns to repeat the series on alternate years. If there are sufficient parishes interested, the series could be organised across the deanery. An advantage of working with other parishes is that you get to hear about different ideas and approaches. If you are willing to welcome other parish volunteers, please post details of your sessions on the diocesan website using the instructions on the 'Events on Website' sheet.

## **WHERE SHOULD WE HOLD SESSIONS?**

This will depend on the numbers attending, but if numbers and the nature of the activities permit, why not meet sometimes in people's homes? Wherever you meet, try to make the place warm and welcoming. It is important that the participants feel comfortable and at their ease and there is a relaxed, social atmosphere. Make sure there are facilities for refreshments! NB if you are a small group then you will probably need to stay together for the 'split into groups' sections of the sessions. If you *are* splitting into groups try to have more than two groups in any one room – two groups can overhear each other and get distracted but this tends not to happen with three or more groups in a room.

## **HOW LONG SHOULD SESSIONS LAST?**

Sessions should last between an hour and an hour and a half maximum – including time for a drink and a chat. It is important to make sure the sessions start and end on time.

## WHO SHOULD COME TO THEM?

It is good practice for *all* those who work with children on behalf of the Church to have some training for their role and so the Level One course is designed for all your volunteers. All adults helpers are influential in a children's group, not just those who 'lead from the front'. The adults who sit with a group and chat quietly to the children as they help them with their cutting out can have a profound effect and need to see themselves as an important part of the team.

Outside the Church, there is a growing trend nationally for those involved in children's work of any kind to receive some form of basic skills training, and it may eventually become a legal requirement for volunteers to have demonstrated certain 'core competencies' in children's work.

**Please note** that it is a requirement of diocesan Child Protection guidelines that **everyone** who works with children on behalf of the Church must receive training in Safeguarding Children (Child Protection).

## WHO SHOULD LEAD THEM?

If possible, the leadership of each session should be shared between at least two people. It is probably helpful to think of the 'leader' as more of a facilitator. The sessions have been designed so that there is no need for an 'expert' to give input. The role of the leader/facilitators is simply to explain how to do each activity, to keep an eye on the time and make sure that the session doesn't over-run, and to chair any discussions. Try to find facilitators who have the kind of 'people skills' to make participants feel welcome, encouraged and valued. It is important that the incumbent/priest in charge and PCC have approved the list of facilitators.

Facilitators should take part in the session activities themselves, and will therefore gain a credit towards the Bishop's Certificate (Level One) for each session they facilitate.

## HOW SHOULD SESSIONS BE LED?

- **Always start and end with prayer**  
It would be good to take it in turns to lead this. Don't put anyone under pressure to take a turn, but it's an opportunity for people to have a go at this amongst friends. Make sure people understand that prayers should be brief – 5 minutes **maximum**, and 2 minutes is fine!
- **Make sure you are well prepared**  
There is a list of 'what you will need' for each session – make sure everything is prepared and to hand. Read through the instructions several times. Some people are good at 'ad libbing' but don't be worried about reading bits of the instructions out like a script.
- **Welcome everyone's contributions**  
Make sure that everyone feels valued and that it is clear the leader/facilitators are not 'the experts' but equal members of the volunteer team.

- **Make sure everyone gets an opportunity to contribute!**

One of the most difficult tasks is to make sure that discussions are not dominated by one or a small group of enthusiastic members who have lots to say on every topic! It's important not to squash their enthusiasm, but there needs to be space for the quieter members to contribute. It is also important not to embarrass quieter members by making an issue out of the fact that they 'haven't said much'.

- **Be flexible and keep to time**

How long an activity will take can be very unpredictable. If a group really get their teeth into a discussion, or some issue comes up that is a major concern then 20 minutes can go by before you know! Keep an eye on the clock and be ready to adapt or shorten activities so that you can avoid over-running. You may even have to leave an activity out, just telling people briefly the points that it covered.

If a discussion on an issue that is vital to your group starts to become over lengthy, you may have to suggest that time is set aside to explore the issue in depth on some future occasion.

On the other hand, be comfortable with silence! Sometimes a discussion takes a little while to take off so don't rush on to the next thing in the session if no one says anything for a moment or two when you ask a discussion question.

## AND FINALLY ... WHAT ABOUT THE OTHER LEVELS?

The Bishop's Certificate, **Level One** package is designed for *all* volunteers who work with children on behalf of the Church. However, there may be *some* members of your team who want to develop their skills and knowledge at a higher level.

**Level Two** of the Bishop's Certificate in Children's Certificate is awarded to those who have successfully completed a *Core Skills for Children's Work* programme. These programmes consist of six sessions and are run ecumenically at various locations across the diocese on a rolling programme throughout every year. Details are given regularly in electronic mailings from the Diocesan Children's Officer, and are posted on the diocesan website. Topics introduced in the Level One certificate are covered in greater depth and there is the opportunity to share experiences with children's work volunteers from other churches and denominations. Successful completion of the programme requires the production of a short portfolio of notes.

For those who want to take their skills and knowledge in children's ministry to the highest level of the Bishop's Certificate – **Level Three** – there is the *Church Colleges' Certificate*. This is a part-time course held over three terms, validated by the University of Chester. Each term, students are required to attend six evening sessions, two Saturday sessions, complete two assignments and make two visits to a placement church. Details of the course fee can be found on the diocesan website.

**Please note**, it is not necessary to have achieved Level One before enrolling for Level Two, or Level Two before enrolling for Level Three. Those who have been awarded the Bishop's Certificate in Children's Ministry at one of the higher levels do not then need to complete any lower levels; however, but they may be ideal facilitators for a parish Level One programme.

## FURTHER READING

Below are some of the general children's ministry resources available at Church House. Volunteers may want to 'dip in' to this material to take their knowledge further. **PLEASE NOTE** anyone wishing to borrow a specific item should ring Steve Dixon before coming to Manchester to ensure it is not out on loan.

- Jeff Astley (Ed) (1991). *How Faith Grows*. London: National Society/Church House Publishing
- Sue Clutterham (Ed) (1997). *The Art of 3-11's*. Warwick: CPAS
- Terry Clutterham (1996). *The Adventure Begins: a practical guide to exploring the Bible with under 12s*. Bletchley: Scripture Union
- Kathryn Copey (2005). *From The Ground Up*. Oxford: Bible Reading Fellowship
- Rosemary Cox (2000). *Using the Bible with Children*. Cambridge: Grove Books
- Caroline Fairless (2000). *Children At Worship – Congregations in Bloom*. New York: Church Publishing
- Nick Harding (2003). *Kids' Culture*. Bletchley: Scripture Union
- Nick Harding (1998). *Raising the Standard*. Bury St Edmonds: Kevin Mayhew
- Bob Hartman (2002). *Anyone Can Tell a Story*. Oxford: Lion
- John Holdsworth (2006). *The Same but Different: the synoptic gospels*. Norwich: Canterbury Press
- Marlene LeFever (1995). *Learning Styles: reaching everyone God gave you to teach*. Eastbourne: Kingsway Publications
- George Lihou (1996). *Time for Children*. Warwick: CPAS
- Rebecca Nye (2009). *Children's Spirituality: What it is and why it matters*. London: Church House Publishing
- Betty Pedley & John Muir (1997). *Children in the Church?* London: National Society/Church House Publishing
- Claire Saunders & Hilary Porritt (2004). *Pretty Much Everything You Need to Know about Working with 8-10's*. Bletchley: Scripture Union
- The Archbishops' Council (2010). *Protecting All God's Children*. London: Church House Publishing
- United Reformed Church (1999). *Wholly Worship*. London: United Reformed Church
- Sue Wallace (2000). *Multi-sensory Prayer*. Bletchley: Scripture Union
- Sue Wallace (2005). *Multi-sensory Scripture*. Bletchley: Scripture Union
- Judith Wigley (2005). *Pretty Much Everything You Need to Know about Working with Under 5's*. Bletchley: Scripture Union
- Margaret Withers (2001). *Fred Up ... Not Burned Out*. Oxford: Bible Reading Fellowship
- Margaret Withers (2006). *Mission Shaped Children*. London: Church House Publishing