

## Growing Younger – Equip

### Our Vision for Growing Younger

In Manchester Diocese we want to see children, young people and their families actively involved in and sustained in their faith by our parishes, supported in their discipleship at school and committed to continuing with their faith as they step forward to become the church leaders – lay and ordained - of the future.

To achieve this, we want to *double the number of young active disciples and ensure there is a flourishing children, youth and families ministry within reach of every young person*, aligning fully with the vision of the national church. This will mean, by 2033, increasing the number of children and young people who actively engaging on a discipleship pathway in our churches and schools from around 4,700 to 9,000; and increasing the number of flourishing CYP ministries from the 57 to 80 – at least two in each of our mission communities – so they are in reach of every young person in our diocese.

#### Scripture – Matthew 18.1-5

<sup>1</sup>*At that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked, ‘Who, then, is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?’*

<sup>2</sup>*He called a little child to him, and placed the child among them. <sup>3</sup>And he said, ‘Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. <sup>4</sup> Therefore, whoever takes the lowly position of this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. <sup>5</sup>And whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me.’*

Many of our churches now cater to an older demographic. With ageing and declining congregations, they lack the financial and volunteer resources to engage with new generations of younger people. Our congregations are often fearful for the bricks and mortar rather than being courageous about sharing the Gospel. A significant number of clergy are overseeing this process of steady decline and lack the skills, motivation and wider support to bring about the changes necessary to attract children and young people to church. Some clergy are not doing enough to empower the lay people in their parishes, to take the lead in this important area of ministry.

This passage reminds us about the role and importance of children to Jesus and what it means to *‘become like little children’*. Fully involving children and young people in the life of our church has implications for how we understand our position and status, and also about our welcome. The role and importance that children and young people have in our churches tells us a lot about how we see ourselves and our parishes and what is important to us in our church lives and beyond. To achieve our vision of *growing younger*, it will be important to think about what we need to do differently in our churches and make practical and significant changes in our parishes and mission communities, and across the diocese as a whole.

## Overview of our Growing Younger programme

The key elements of our Growing Younger Programme are:

- The **Encounter** project – to be delivered by specialist teams supporting all stages of the discipleship pathway working directly with parishes – a new approach combining the best element of Places and ManDio Growing Faith. Support will be targeted to those parishes which are likely to benefit most.
- The **Equip** project – a comprehensive development and training offer for those – lay and ordained – providing children and young people’s ministry across the diocese.

Other elements of our strategy will help us achieve our vision for Growing Younger including:

- Ensuring that children and young people’s ministry is prioritised in our **resource churches**.
- Strengthening our investment in **vocations** with a particular focus on supporting young people with their calling to leadership roles.
- Extending the **Shades** racial justice and faith project to churches and schools across the diocese, with funding from the Racial Justice Unit.
- Revitalising our **University Chaplaincy** provision in Manchester city centre and at Bolton and Salford Universities.

## Equip

Equip is a development of the diocese’s existing Equip training offer, serving those involved in delivering CYP ministry across the diocese and covering all stages of the discipleship pathway. With Equip we are looking to broaden our offer and establish its relevance to: people just starting out in CYP ministry; those who have oversight of it in their parishes; those who are seasoned CYP workers; and those who are growing a vocation in this key ministry. With a dedicated team rolling out the various strands of Equip, we aim to focus our invitation, delivery and training to increase the confidence and skills of lay and ordained leaders in CYP ministry across our diocese. The Equip Young Leaders project will also focus on developing children and young people as leaders.

The key objectives of Equip are to:

- increase the confidence and skills of lay and ordained people across the diocese at all stages in the CYP discipleship pathway;
- increase the number of qualified CYP workers in the diocese;
- increase the number of lay volunteers leading CYP work in parishes in the diocese;
- increase the number of clergy actively engaged in leading CYP work in their parishes;
- develop a strong pipeline of young leaders for children’s and young people’s work.

Equip will contribute significantly to achieving the objectives of the national 30k programme which are to: support churches in identifying, equipping and enabling volunteers to serve children, young people and their families; invest in the recruitment and initial formation of new CYP ministers to service in paid roles; and enhance the continuing ministerial development and wellbeing of employed CYP ministers through improved resources, networks and training.

## **Missional Design**

We will achieve this by:

- Offering a rich, diverse and accessible platform of training and support, meeting people where they are and providing a trajectory of further training to enable them to step into leadership roles in their local context and train and mentor others.
- Providing young leader training programmes, which will include providing placements for young people to serve in their local church with shorter placements in other contexts and support from a mentor.
- Adopting a user-centred approach, enabling individuals and teams to create and access their own training and support provision with support from the Equip team.

Equip will provide support to CYP leaders working at all points on the discipleship pathway through access to development and training opportunities and a wide range of resources. Wherever possible national resources will be used and full advantage taken of nationally commissioned programmes, for example the Incumbent CYF Ministry Development Programme recently commissioned from Emmanuel Theological College.

*Having joined the Children's ALM in 2023, Christine came along to Equip in May 2024 and during the weekend's teaching started to think more deeply about intergenerational/All Age worship services. Two other people from her church were on the Worship ALM and engaged in the All Age worship session. Once the courses had finished, the three got together and developed an All Age worship service for their church, which brought more children and families into the church.*

Equip will be delivered by a team of six, comprised of the three existing specialist CYP posts for Early Years, Children and Families and Youth Work, and three additional new posts of two Equip trainers and one person leading on Developing Young Leaders.

The **key audiences and delivery methods** for Equip are:

**ALM and GLP Weekend** – this annual event is designed for those with limited experience of children's or youth work, offering them foundational skills and fresh perspectives. Led by experienced diocesan staff and supported by guest speakers, the weekend provides a transformative learning environment with a focus on practical skills and spiritual insights. The teaching material aligns with the ALM/GLP curriculum while offering specialised children's and youth electives to address specific ministry contexts. Continued development is encouraged through 'going deeper' sessions.

**Equip Spotlight** – comprising four specialised events held throughout the year for clergy and CYP workers, paid and volunteer, designed to deepen and expand their understanding in specific areas of CYP ministry. The events are held in different locations in the diocese to maximise participation and accessibility. Led by field experts, these events inspire and equip participants to pursue further training opportunities. Each session addresses topics relevant to current church challenges in discipleship and evangelisation, providing practical wisdom and fresh perspectives.

**Equip Bespoke** – this seeks to meet the distinct needs of each deanery, mission community or church. We are able to meet with local leaders to create a bespoke training package to address a specific issue not covered directly through the other elements of Equip. This operates on a flexible, responsive basis.

**Equip Hubs** – providing practical gathering spaces for CYP leaders enabling them to connect with colleagues, share best practice and create supportive relationships across deaneries. With the aim of meeting quarterly, each hub will develop its own character reflecting the particular opportunities and challenges of the local context, with opportunities for support, networking and resource sharing, complementing our other training opportunities.

**Equip Clergy** – delivering a grounded development offer to support clergy in specific aspects of their church leadership role in relation to their work with children, young people and their families. Working closely with the Director of Mission and Ministry and their team, the curriculum will be shaped to meet the evolving needs of clergy equipping them with the practical tools and theological foundations to confidently lead intergenerational faith communities where children and young people can flourish. Issues to be covered include: establishing effective children and youth ministries, nurturing volunteer teams, fostering discipleship among children and young people and creating meaningful mid-week opportunities. Elements of this offer will be tailored for specific Initial Ministerial Education (IME) levels and key stages in Continuing Ministerial Development (CMD) working closely with the Head of Clergy Development.

**Equip Connect** – this will offer bi-monthly online drop-in sessions for those involved in CYP ministry. These accessible forums will provide spaces where leaders can seek advice, gather practical tips and receive guidance and support. They will also create valuable opportunities for signposting participants to additional support, conversations and training available through other elements of the Equip framework. Equip Connect will bring together paid CYP workers from across the diocese, fostering meaningful opportunities for professional networking and include an annual 24 hour residential.

**Equip Podcast** – this will deliver focused insights into CYP ministry through a carefully structured seasonal format, enabling listeners to engage with specific topics relevant to their needs. It will feature conversations with inspiring leaders from across the diocese and beyond, creating a rich tapestry of wisdom and practical experience. Our aspiration is to cultivate a vibrant visual/audio community where leaders can find immediate practical guidance and the deeper theological reflections to sustain transformative ministry with children and young people.

**Equip Growing Younger** – seeks to develop and deliver focused conferences across each deanery working closely with the Area Deans. These enriching events will provide church leaders, including PCC members, with the dedicated space to explore pathways for reaching and nurturing younger generations through a choice of workshops and seminars. These events will also foster collaboration between parishes, mission communities and deaneries.

**Equip Young Leaders Conference** – our annual conference for those aged 14+ will equip participants with the practical skills to make positive contributions across different areas of church, school and community life. The conference will combine relevant teaching with worship, activities and shared meals. Young people and youth leaders from across the diocese will help shape the Growing Younger programme, ensuring it addresses current needs and interests.

**Equip Young Leaders Deeper** – the annual conference will serve as a gateway to Equip Young Leaders Deeper, a more intensive follow-up offer for those showing a particular interest in vocation and leadership. This element of Equip will offer appropriate and carefully chosen placements to develop the leadership potential of young people, within and beyond church settings. Personalised mentoring will be offered along with the opportunity to take ownership of planning and delivering the next Young Leaders conference. Their journey will culminate with a commissioning ceremony at the conference, marking the transition to the next stage of their leadership journey. This work will be developed in close collaboration with the Young Vocations/Internship Officer (see the *Developing Missional Leaders* element of the bid).

Equip will cover the following specific topics:

\*indicates use of national resources

<b>Early Years – 0-5</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Distinctly Christian Toddler Groups</li> <li>- Wiggle Worship</li> <li>- Spiritual Development</li> <li>- New Early Years ALM elective</li> <li>- Child Development/how young children learn</li> <li>- Practicalities of setting up Early Years work</li> <li>- Approaches to Early Years work – Wiggle Worship, Lift Off, Bubble Church*, Messy Church*</li> </ul>
<b>Children and Families – 5-11</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Children’s Work Essentials</li> <li>- ALM/GLT training (Children’s work elective)</li> <li>- Intergenerational ministry</li> <li>- Effective strategies for reaching children and young people</li> <li>- Forest Church</li> <li>- Meeting the needs of neuro-divergent children and their families</li> <li>- CMN and Intergenerational Ministry – available nationally from autumn 2025</li> </ul>
<b>Youth – 11-18</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Youth Sacred Spaces</li> <li>- Forest Church</li> <li>- Adolescent Development</li> <li>- Developing understanding of outreach and detached youth work</li> <li>- Youthscape Launchpad course*</li> <li>- Youthscape Youth Essentials*</li> </ul>
<b>Chaplaincy and Developing Young Leaders– 5-18</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Collective Worship</li> <li>- Engaging mid-week worship</li> <li>- Discovering Chaplaincy course – available nationally from September 2025</li> <li>- Supporting and facilitating young people’s vocational pathway.</li> </ul>

The Equip Team will engage with other national resources as follows:

- Digital engagement with young people will be further developed through promotion of The Way UK and possibly Emmaus Gaming.
- Equip will promote and use 'How To' films through linking to our Padlet resource as well as making use of the 'Find your Joy' films as part of our work with volunteer and paid CYP workers.
- We will explore the CMN Family and Intergenerational ministry training programme and also the 'Discovering Chaplaincy' training programme.
- As now, our team members will participate in the Growing Faith Strategic Leaders Programme.
- Our team members will participate in and contribute to specialist national networks as appropriate.

## Outcomes

The Growing Younger programme has been designed to achieve the following outcomes by 2033:

- A doubling of the number of young active disciples to over 9,000 including a 30% increase in CYP regular weekly attendance from 4,700 to 6,100;
- At least two flourishing CYP ministries in each of our 33 mission communities.

Along with other evaluative work to establish the impact and success of our strategy, we have agreed the following key indicators for Encounter and Equip:

	<b>2026 - 2028</b>	<b>2029 - 2033</b>	<b>Total</b>
# new distinctively Christian toddler groups	12	80	<b>92</b>
# new Fresh Expressions	12	80	<b>92</b>
# new Youth Sacred Spaces	12	80	<b>92</b>
# CE secondary school discipleship groups	6 pa	12 pa	<b>12 pa</b>
# new children and young active disciples	950	3,940	<b>4,890</b>
# young leaders	30	50	<b>80</b>
# ALMs CYP elective	15 pa	15 pa	<b>120</b>
# Spotlight events (av. 75 attendees)	4 pa	4 pa	<b>2,400 attendees</b>
# clergy engaged in Equip (includes 30 curates pa)	90 pa	100 pa	<b>770 clergy engagements</b>