Generation to Generation (Gen2) Project Mid-term Evaluation Report for the Diocese of Peterborough

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Executive summary

Church participation in Western countries over the past fifty years has experienced a decrease (Webber, et al. 2010). The engagement of children and especially young people is among the biggest issues of Diocese and parishes (Webber, et al. 2010). A report developed by Youthscape (2016), a Christian youth organisation, highlighted how churches mainly engage with children (ages 5 to 10) than youth (ages 11 to 18). In fact, the latest research invites churches to participate in understanding if ministries are reaching out to non-religious young people and if they are able to listen and address questions of religious young people about their faith (Youthscape, 2022).

The Generation to Generation (Gen2) project objective is to improve the engagement of children, youth, and families with the church and develop supportive environments that are responsive to their needs. Primarily, with an innovative training pathway, the Gen2 project seeks to fit in two professional narratives, Ministry and worker (either Youth or Children and Family), the former involving the participants' faith journey, and the latter ensuring their positive development (Clyne, 2015; APPG, 2019). This training pathway seeks to improve the engagement of young people by changing the culture of the Diocese, altering the lens through which we view and hear young people in our churches. The Gen2 project is ongoing and it has been delivered by the Peterborough Dioceses since October 2020[1] in several areas: Kettering, Towcester, Corby, Higham, Rutland, Peterborough, and Wellingborough.

This research evaluation outlines the experiences of the participants, the volunteers, the mission enablers, and the overall organisation around the Gen2 project using a mixed method approach mainly driven by qualitative data. Quantitative data were provided by the Peterborough

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[1] The COVID-19 pandemic resulted in delays to data collection in line with Government guidelines.

Diocese from October 2018 to May 2022 and were collected at sessions implemented by the Gen2 mission enablers and the volunteers. Qualitative data consisted of 36 semi-structured interviews with participants, volunteers, mission enablers and broader organisation members (such as the project lead and the rectors of the benefice) and focused on the needs of programme participants and the programme performance.

Overall, the data showed that Gen2 increases the engagement with the Church and that mission enablers are able to respond positively to the participants' needs. The quantitative data showed that the activities have been increasing over time and that Gen2 is able to achieve some of the innovative goals, including creating more outreaching programme, especially for young people. The qualitative data show that the beneficiaries of the programme felt that their needs were being met and that the programme was responsive to their needs, with each participant expressing positive experiences since they engaged.

All levels of the project, the mission enablers, the Ministry training programme, volunteers, and the local stakeholders have positively contributed producing a positive impact. However, there are three key areas for consideration:
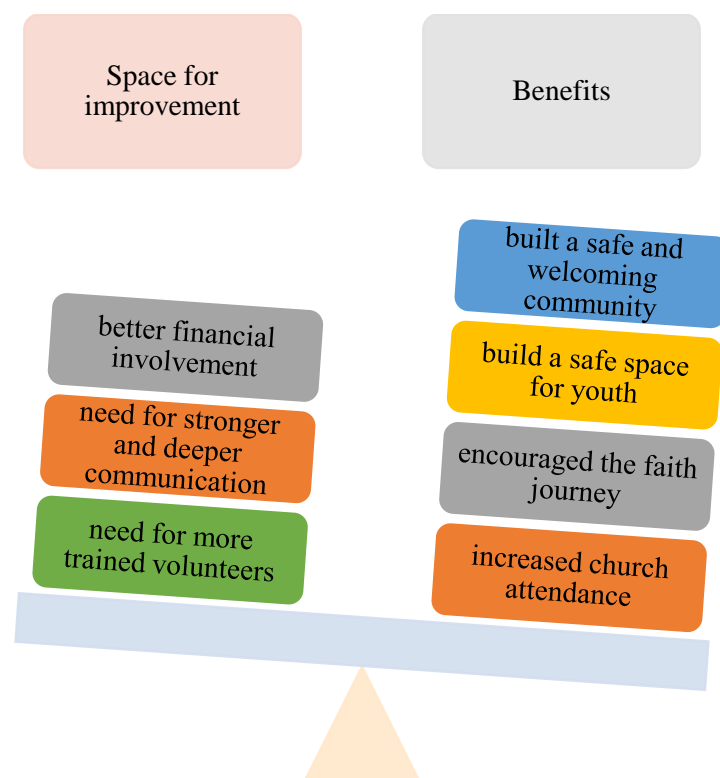
1. Although the project has successfully built a safe and welcoming community, stakeholder perceptions of needs can differ. The prioritisation of the faith journey,

stakeholder needs, financial concerns, outreach, and wellbeing of participants were all noted, and impacted on the delivery of the Gen2 project.

2. The central role of the mission enabler has potentially led to an overreliance on them, with volunteers reducing their responsibilities and stakeholders expanding their duties. The causes of this may be limitations on the host church's resources, the mission enabler's keenness to create change, or volunteers unsure of how to effectively support the ministry. Interviewed stakeholders are aware of the pressure placed on mission enablers and indicated there are problems with creating a supportive culture of volunteers. The evidence also suggests that the ministry is significantly weakened when the mission enabler is unavailable, with volunteers unable to maintain the same level of quality in their sessions as may be expected.

3. The sustainable impact of the programme may be at risk with the institutions highlighting financial insecurity, and potentially being unable to fund the role once the Gen2 project ends. As suggested by the interviewed stakeholders, the goal of the Gen2 project is to encourage new methods of youth, children, and family engagement, and innovative mission enablers, something the Church has historically struggled with. However, due to the low available resources, there are indications that some churches encourage visiting mission enablers to help support the groups or outreach provisions they already have in place, such as Sunday Schools, and are likely to continue to be sustainable should the mission enabler role come to an end. This may limit the effectiveness of outreach in churches that have adopted traditional attitudes toward youth engagement (for example, the assumption that they will naturally return to the church when older) limiting their willingness to engage with new methods, with the mission enabler unable to influence change.

To amplify the positive outcomes produced by the Gen2 project discussed above, the research team proposes the following key recommendations:

1. Develop a stronger and deeper communication between the various groups, allowing them to communicate their needs more effectively.
2. More support on helping mission enablers and the churches they work with in increasing the competencies of the volunteers or be more proactive in placing limitations on mission enabler duties.

3. Build of a relationship between Gen2 and the wider community of churches to encourage buy-in into the project's goals and the adoption of innovative practices in outreach, especially to ensure financial sustainability.

1. Introduction

This report presents the results of the evaluation of the Generation to Generation project (Gen2), a project delivered by the Peterborough Dioceses from October 2020 until July 2022[2] (ongoing) in several areas: Kettering, Towcester, Corby, Higham, Rutland, Peterborough, and Wellingborough. The Gen2 project aims to develop a new model for training Youth, Children and Families Ministry[3] composed of three stages: apprentice, trainee, and worker. The objective of the project is to improve the engagement of children, youth, and families with the Church and ensure the creation of a supportive environment that is responsive to their needs. Primarily, the Gen2 project seeks to fit in two professional narratives, Youth Ministry and youth work, the former involving the participants' faith journey, and the latter ensuring their positive development (Clyne, 2015; APPG, 2019). This training pathway seeks to improve the engagement of young people by changing the culture of the Diocese, altering the lens through which we view and hear young people in our churches.

Building on a primarily qualitative approach, the research will evaluate the outcomes of the new pathway for Ministry by capturing the points of view of the mission enablers, the young people and their families, and the staff participating in the Gen2 project. The findings presented in this final report combine both quantitative and qualitative data. The quantitative data were collected by the Peterborough diocese during the activities implemented. Interview data were collected by the Institute for Social Innovation and Impact (ISII) through 36 semi-structured interviews (18 from Towcester, 17 from Wellingborough, and one with the Gen2 director), half in February 2022 (T1) and half in June 2022 (T2). This report provides an evaluation framework capable of assessing the outcome of this approach to Ministry training by evaluating if the Ministry increases engagement and improves the well-being of young people and families.

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[2] The COVID-19 pandemic resulted in delays to data collection in line with Government guidelines.
[3] Within this report we will use the wording 'Ministry' when referring to the activity of ministering to children, families and youth and 'mission enabler' when referring to the participant, who could be either a children's and families mission enabler or a youth mission enabler.

2. Literature review

The Gen2 project aims to develop a new model for training Youth, Children and Families Ministry[4] composed of three stages: apprentice, trainee, and worker. This training pathway seeks to improve the engagement of young people by changing the culture of the Diocese, altering the lens through which we view and hear young people in our churches. Through the Gen2 project, the Diocese of Peterborough aims to increase the number of children, young people, families, schools, and community groups that are engaged with in a Christian context, as well as improving the response to their needs. This research provides an evaluation framework capable of assessing the outcome of this approach to Ministry training by evaluating if the Ministry increase engagement and improve the well-being of young people and families. Building mainly on a qualitative approach, the research will evaluate the outcomes of the new pathway for Ministry by capturing the points of view of the mission enablers, the young people and their families, and the staff participating in the Gen2 project. Moreover, this evaluation seeks to be involved in the context and aware of the environment in which Youth Ministry works, and important requirement when evaluating similar roles such as youth worker (Doherty and de St Croix, 2019).

"Christian work with young people in the UK can be interpreted as an endeavour functioning in two distinctive professional narratives, youth Ministry and youth work" (Clyne, 2015:20). These roles present different connotations, ultimately youth Ministry aims at supporting the young people towards Christianity. Conversely, youth work might be exercised within a religious environment, but it does not aim at engaging participants with Christianity (Clyne, 2015), in fact it aims at the development of the young person socially and personally (APPG, 2019). None of these roles present a higher or lower connotation of professionalism, they are distinctive in their role of engaging the young person in the Christian faith. Within this report, we mainly refer to Youth, Children and Families Ministry, nonetheless, since the aim of the project is to develop a new model for training Youth, Children and Families Ministry also by embedding the positive aspects of the youth workers role, links to youth worker and to the role they cover will be made.

Most Western countries experienced a decrease in the number of participants in churches over the past fifty years (Webber, et al. 2010). In particular, an issue that diocese and parishes still

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[4] Although we acknowledge distinction between the roles of Missioner and Ministry, in this literature review we will use the term Ministry to mention both.

face is the involvement of young people in church and religious activities, especially those aged 15-24 years-old (Webber, et al. 2010). A report developed by Youthscape (2016), a Christian youth organisation, highlighted how churches mainly engage with children (ages 5 to 10) than youth (ages 11 to 18). In fact, children's activities on a Sunday are offered by 92.1% of churches and while youth activities are offered by 71.8% of churches (Youthscape, 2016). This is especially true for small churches (up to 50 congregants) than large churches (more than 150 congregants). This gap intensifies when looking at the quality of the activities. With respect to the children's activities, 53.5% of the respondents rated the activities effective in small churches and 91.8% in large churches (Youthscape, 2016). Conversely, when investigating youth activities, 29.1% of the respondents rated the activities effective in small churches and 75.6% in large churches (Youthscape, 2016). This data displays a gap between small and large churches but especially between youth and children activities. The lack of youth activities become even more significant if we consider that peer-to-peer influence is important in developing youth faith (Youthscape, 2022). Therefore, the challenges faced by parishes and Diocese are dual, from one point of view they aim to increase the number of people (especially young people) attending church; conversely, they aim to improve the impact on the people participating. Another interesting aspect highlighted by the report developed by Youthscape is the lack of discussion of the topics that interest young people within churches and church activities. Topics such as mental health and self-esteem, which are pivotal in the development of young people, are not covered by 42% of churches participating in the research (Youthscape, 2016). Alongside this, same-sex attraction, other world faiths, drugs and addiction, and pornography are never discussed by most of the churches even if the young people interviewed said they are very interested in these topics (Youthscape, 2016). When interrogated about the churches' needs, the responses rotated around different topics, among which increasing youth attendance and the need for youth workers (Youthscape, 2016).

From this perspective, the role of Youth Ministry is certainly one that has emerged from the grass-roots level (Ang, 2008). Both Children and Families Ministry and Youth Ministry intentions are to increase the church's understanding of young people and families and thus increase their involvement within the church. Recent research shows that churches with active groups of children and young people tend to grow more than churches without (Church of England, 2014). Moreover, churches with Children and Families worker and Youth worker have higher attendances than churches without (Francis, et al., 2019). Alongside this, the diocese, the parish, and the Children and Families Ministry and Youth Ministry aim to

strengthen what in the past was a strong relationship between the church, families, and schools, as well as the role provided by communities in shaping the young people (de Kock, 2013).

There are multiple archetypes of Youth Ministry, with Arthur Canale (2006) proposing eight different models: "the friendship model, the spiritual awareness model, the servant-leadership model, the liberation model, the biblical–hermeneutic model, the liturgical-initiation model, the social justice model, and the Christian discipleship model" (Canale, 2016:205). The Gen2 project, by implementing a Ministry training programme, which aims to create a new role that will increase the diffusion of the parish and the diocese on the territory, while simultaneously strengthening the relationship with young people (especially those between 11 and 19 years of age). The innovative Youth Ministry and Children and Families Ministry consists of:

- (Year 0) Apprentice- One year of apprenticeship (at NVQ Level 3), this ties in with the ministry experience year and is a year to explore ministry (not everyone who partakes in this year will go onto the Gen2 project);
- (Year 1 – 3) Trainee – three years in which the students complete either a diploma or degree in Mission and Ministry (NVQ Levels 4-6);
- (Years 4+) Worker – full time employment to conduct Youth, Children and Families Ministry within the Parish and the Deanery.

This new model embeds the positive aspects of the apprenticeship, in which the young people and their views are important and shape the teaching discourse (de Kock, 2013). As mentioned above the Gen2 projects main innovative aspects consist of providing a formal training for Youth workers in the Church of England, which currently doesn't happen. The role of the youth worker, which can be considered overlapping in the role of the Youth Ministry, is seen as a key factor to allow for an environment that supports young people (APPG, 2019). Since that youth workers have "young people's interests as the primary focus of our work (as opposed to the interests of the Courts, parents, Councils, Public Health, etc.), youth workers are uniquely placed to be supporting the voice of young people at a micro to macro level" (APPG, 2019:18). Moreover, during the training the mission enabler will be employed 18hrs a week by the parish and will be paid 18hrs a week to study, enabling them to fully engage with young people and their environment. This new model allows for the mission enabler to engage with the young people not only as experienced workers but also to collaborate with volunteers and the other workforce that engage with the young people, aiming at producing a uniform and coherent response which is recommended (APPG, 2019).

Research shows how Children and Families and Youth workers are able to increase the engagement level (Francis, et al., 2019), and that more engagement from Youth Ministry would produce high-quality programmes in the Church (Ji and Tameifuna, 2011). Nevertheless, not enough support is given to youth workers (The Church of England Education Office, 2016). The Church of England Education Office (2016) recommends that Dioceses increase support to Ministers by embedding funding and developmental activities in strategic planning. Studies show that important aspects of the Youth Ministry work involve how the activities and the overall model are implemented (Webber, et al. 2010), in particular, allowing the youth to own the programme and thus stimulating empowerment have been proven to be key factors in the involvement on the young people (East et al., 2004; Strommen et al. 2001). Another successful factor is dynamism (Webber, et al. 2010), allowing the Youth Ministry to formulate a response tailored to the needs and circumstances.

A new figure that embeds both worker (either Youth or Children and Family) and Ministry is not the only element of success, a greater outreach to beneficiaries can be reliant on the support of local volunteers. The impact of volunteers has been generally calculated in economic terms, with volunteered hours used as a proxy for their impact, with an assumed positive correlation (Handy and Srinivasan, 2004; Salamon and Sokowski, 2004). Volunteers offer other benefits, positively impacting organisational reputation and mission advancement (Haski-Leventhal et al., 2011). Beneficiaries are more effectively served by volunteers, seeing their contributions as more altruistic (Ronel., 2009). They are also effective during periods of change when encouraged to adopt new working practices, allowing the expression of alternative organisational systems (McDonald and Warburton, 2003). Volunteer culture is, however, going through a period of change. Volunteers are moving away from organised, collective, volunteering to more episodic and individual involvement (Hustinx and Lammertym, 2003). There are growing changes in volunteer culture regarding expected outcome, with more desire for freedom from management, more influence in creative problem solving, and perception of their presence as a benefit, but absence not a liability (Sandage, 2019). With shorter term engagements, it has become important for non-profit organisations to maintain social networks that allow for the cycling in of volunteers, however, these require depth which may not be available for all organisations. A further consideration is on how volunteers perceive themselves and their role once a paid worker is introduced into the environment. Volunteers may maintain a 'psychological contract' based on a transactional or benefits (likely intangible)

foundation, which will be adjusted when changes are made within the environment (Liao-Troth, 2001; Walker et al., 2016)

Another challenge is the encouragement of new ways of thinking into areas of embedded thought. Gen2 seeks to develop new methods of working into the churches outreach. However, traditionally, encouraging entrepreneurial thinking into more rigid hierarchical environments can be difficult if it challenges the incumbent organisational culture (Powell, 2002). Although pragmatic and entrepreneurial activities can encourage reform, there is a need for solutions to align with the pre-existing legal-institutional framework and the garnering of broad institutional support, with outcomes less important than policy compatibility (Levi and Zehavi, 2015). If unable to influence the organisational structure, institutions may remain tied to ineffective and isomorphic means of action, even if within the organisation there is a desire for change (Maher and Karlidag-Dennis, 2022). A means of changing this, is collaborative working, allowing for the communication of the value of change and allowing local stakeholders to influence and buy in to project goals (Ferlie, Musselin, and Andresani, 2008; Stoker, 2006).

Lastly, it is worth mentioning the negative consequences produced by COVID-19 pandemic and the social distancing measures implemented by the government from 23rd of March 2020. This has produced several negative consequences on the young people services, latest research from UK Youth (2021), showed that 88% of the youth services surveyed are likely or very likely to reduce service provision and 17% said that they were likely going to close permanently. The lockdown measures included the closure of churches and chapels and any other space of religious congregation. Moreover, the use of remote tools in the everyday activities is uncommon in the Christian approaches, especially in the United Kingdom (Bryson, Andres, and Davies, 2020). Since Gen2 is active since the end of 2018, the project had to restructure and re-formulate the activities proposed. Whenever possible the current report will consider the disruptions caused by COVID-19 and how they have been overcome.

3. Methodology

This report presents the results from the research evaluating Gen2 project that seek to increase church involvement and the quality of the church activities by incorporating the Youth, Children and Families workers into the Mission Enabler role. The project was delivered by the Peterborough Diocese in several areas: Kettering, Towcester, Corby, Higham, Rutland, Peterborough, and Wellingborough. The research seeks to answer the main research question:

- Is the new Ministry training programme producing better outcomes than the previous systems?

In doing so the evaluation addressed the project's effectiveness in relation to the following research sub-questions:

- o Does the new role of Mission enabler increase the attendance of children and young people involved in church/school/community groups?
- o Does the role of Mission enabler respond positively to the needs (social and spiritual) of the target population (children and young people involved in church/school/community groups)?
- o Does the Ministry training programme (consisting of apprenticeship, followed by a degree or diploma and full employment) satisfy the needs and expectations of the Mission enabler?

To answer the research questions both quantitative and qualitative data were analysed, however the core of the analysis was qualitative in nature. The quantitative data were collected by the Peterborough diocese during the activities implemented and included the type of activities, the attendance level, the age of the attendees, and the number of new contacts made. The interview data were collected by the ISII through 36 semi-structured interviews (18 from Towcester, 17 from Wellingborough, and one with the Gen2 director), half in February 2022 (T1) and half in June 2022 (T2). The breakdown of the interviewees for each area and for each wave of data collection is as follows: 1 Gen2 mission enabler, 5 young people or representatives of families[5], 2 volunteers, and 1 clergy (Deanery Focus or Rural Dean).

This report provides an evaluation framework capable of assessing the outcome of this approach to Ministry training by evaluating if the mission enabler increases engagement and improves the well-being of young people and families. The participants' interviews

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[5] Only four young people were able to participate to the interviews in T2.

investigated: their needs and if the Mission enabler respond positively to their needs (social and spiritual), why they participate in Gen2, the impact of the Mission enabler in their life, what do they think works well in the Gen2 project, if they attend to more activities in the Church thanks to Gen2, the role of the volunteers, and any opportunities for improvement. The questions for the Gen2 mission enablers, the volunteers, and the clergy, alongside the above-mentioned topics investigated also the Ministry training programme, in particular, if the Ministry training pathway satisfy needs and expectations, what works well in the training, what are the advantages/disadvantages of the Ministry training pathway, and what could be improved.

4. Quantitative data analysis

The quantitative data were provided by the Peterborough Diocese from October 2018 to May 2022. Information was collected at sessions implemented by the Gen2 ministries and the volunteers. In total, 1629 activities were organised through the Gen2 project, with the majority in Wellingborough parish (25.0%), Kettering parish[6] (17.0%), and Towcester parish (15.2%) (Figure 4.1).

Figure 4.1. Distribution of the activities among the Parishes (%).
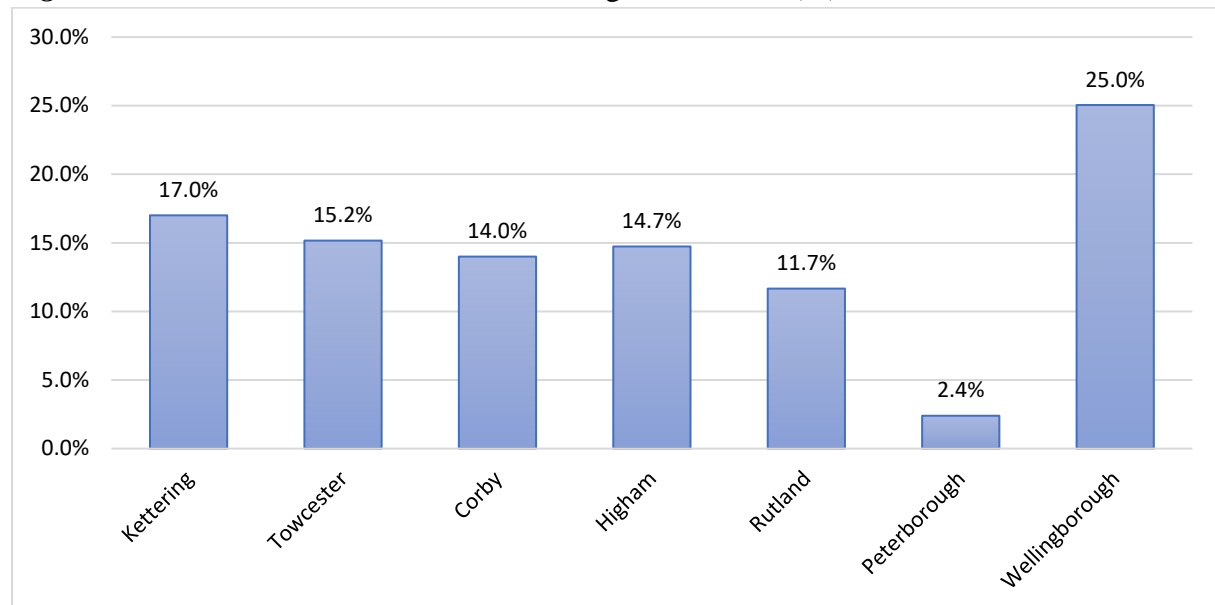
The distribution of the sum of the total attendance shows that all parishes beside Rutland had a regular pattern through time, with all of them experiencing a cessation of the activities during the lockdown and while the distancing measures were implemented in response to the COVID-19 pandemic (Figure 4.2). As mentioned in the literature review, the role played by remote tools in the everyday activities is uncommon in the Christian activities (Bryson, Andres, and Davies, 2020), implicating a cessation of the activities at the beginning of the lockdown. Nonetheless, Figure 2 and qualitative findings presented in the next section show that the Gen2 project has rapidly moved to remote activities allowing an uprising of the total attendance from the third quarter of 2020. With respect to the last two quarters[7], Peterborough, Towcester, and Wellingborough experienced an increase in the total attendance, while Rutland continued in the path with high level of attendances.

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[6] Not all parishes started or ended the Gen2 project at the same time, in Kettering ended in June 2021 whilst in Peterborough started in May 2021 (this explains why Peterborough presents fewer activities)

[7] Presumably the last quarter of 2022 shows less activities because the quarter is not complete as June is missing.

Figure 4.2. Distribution of the total attendance through time in the Parishes (%).
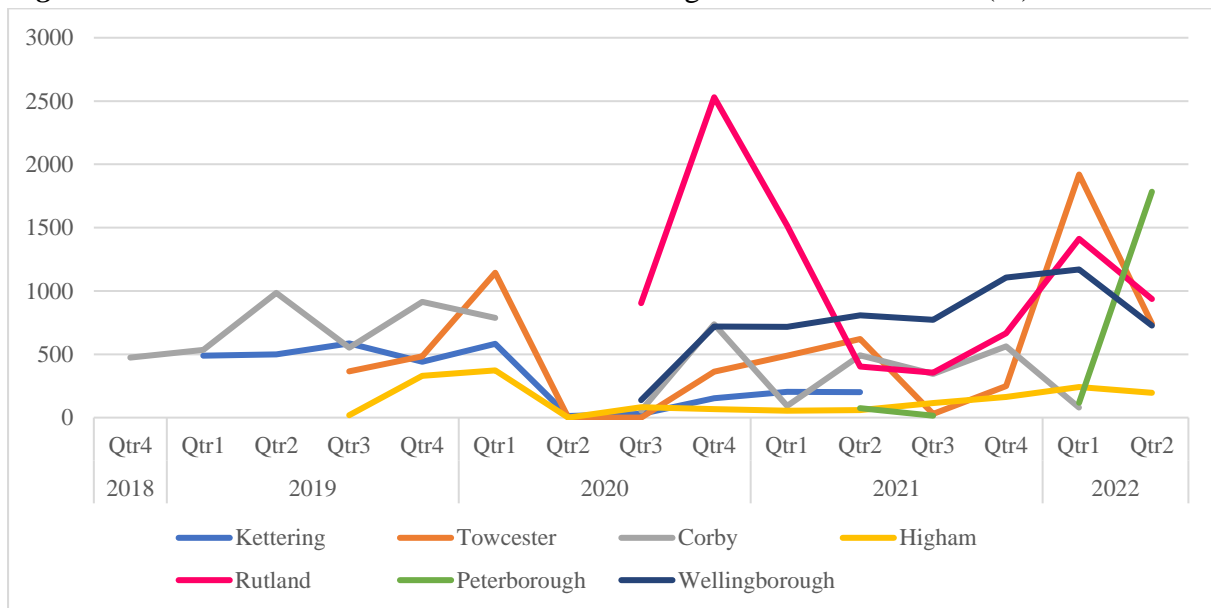

Figure 4.3 shows the distribution in time of activities divided among discipleship, outreach, and other. Outreach activity is meant to build relationships with people and has the primary focus of engaging people that don't attend church (for example, the toddler group and the youth club). Discipleship activities are held regularly, and members have chosen to meet to explore or grow in faith together (for example, bible studies). Other activities encompass activities that fall outside the above two categories. These are events where the mission enabler has contact with people but not necessarily on a regular basis (for example assemblies, one-off events, festivals, annual community events, or collective worship). As we can see from Figure 3, the number of the activities changed over time until May 2022 (last data available)[8], especially considering that the regularity of the activities varies. Moreover, these were impacted by the COVID-19 restrictions that took place in the UK. In total, 45.2% of the activities were outreach, 38.3% were discipleship, and 16.5% were categorised as other. This results in innovative approaches in respect to the UK scenario as the latest research shows that 39% of the youth workers surveyed come from churches that focus exclusively or mainly on activities that seek to retention and only 8% from churches that focuses exclusively or mainly on outreach (Youthscape, 2022).

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[8] It is possible that the last quarter of 2022 shows decreasing activities because the quarter is not complete as June is missing.

Figure 4.3. Distribution of the type of activities through time (N).
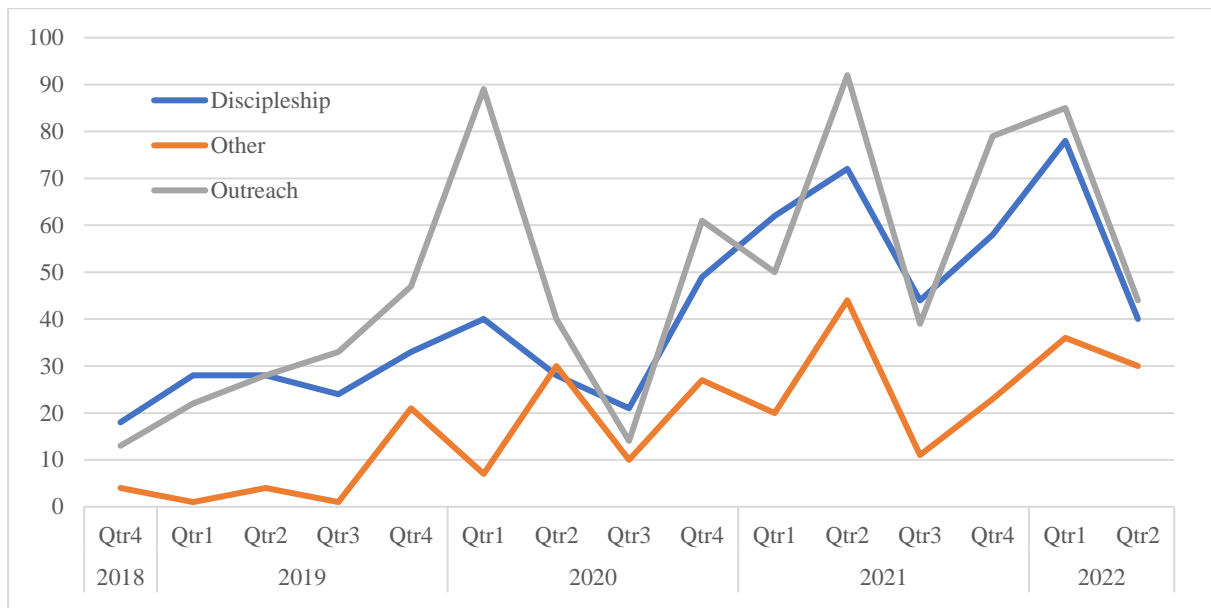
The majority of outreach activities were conducted face-to-face (78.5%), whilst, the discipleship and the other activities were almost equally distributed, with a propensity towards face-to-face (respectively 59.9% and 64.3%) (Figure 4.4).

Figure 4.4. Distribution of the types of venue in relation to the types of activity (%).
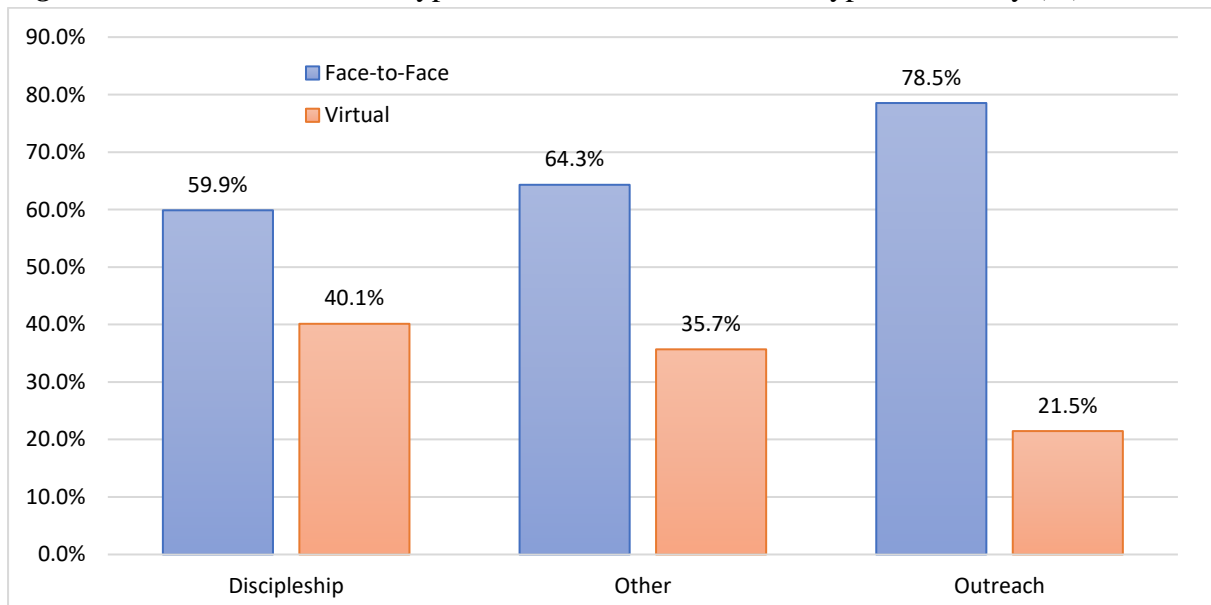
As mentioned in the Methodology section, the mission enablers are either youth workers or children and family workers, therefore they develop targeted activities and focus on a specific audience according to their area of expertise: Towcester and Corby mission enablers focus on children and families, while Kettering, Higham, Rutland, Peterborough, and Wellingborough mission enablers focus on youth. Figure 4.5 shows the distribution of the activities' target group

in relation to the parishes. In line with the type of Ministry, some parishes implemented more activities dedicated to youth, in particular, Kettering (96.8%), Wellingborough (93.4%), Peterborough (89.7%), and Higham (80.8%). Other parishes implemented more activities dedicated to children, in particular, Towcester (73.3%) and Rutland parish (37.9%). Corby implemented more intergenerational activities (57.9%).

Figure 4.5. Distribution of the target group of the activity in relation to the Parish (%).
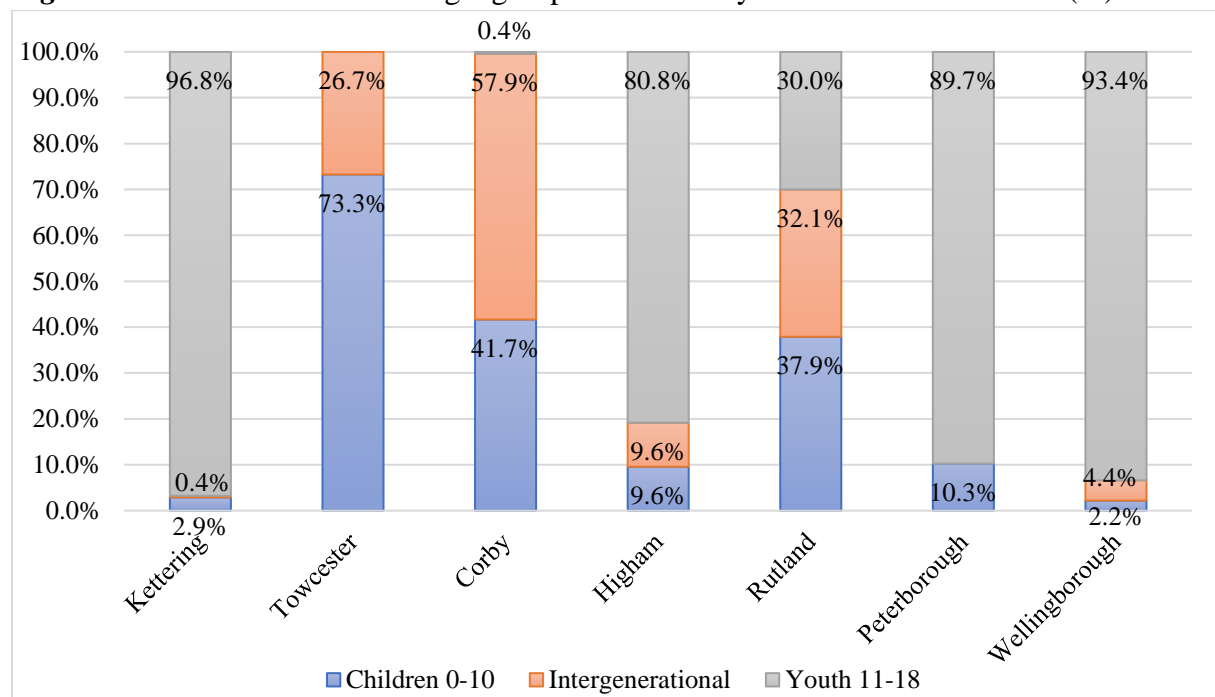

Figure 4.6 shows the distribution of the activities' target group in relation to the activity types. Most discipleship and outreach activities were primarily aimed at the youth, with attendance of 11 to 18 years old, respectively at 75.9% and 46.7%. This is a positive aspect considering that only 8% of the youth workers surveyed in the Youthscape research come from churches that has an exclusive or main focus on outreach activities but yet 51% of the young people participating in the research agreed that sharing their faith remind them why they are Christian and again 50% agreed or agreed strongly that most of their friends that do not have a Christian faith are pleased to hear about their faith (Youthscape, 2022). Moreover, it is interesting to notice that most discipleship activities which aim to explore the faith target young people. This is understandable considering that older teenagers engage more than children, however, the qualitative section will discuss how the younger participants expressed the needs for faith activities more tailored to their age, meaning that there is a need for improving the discipleship activities targeting young people. Lastly, the other activities are slightly more evenly distributed, with the majority being for children from 0 to 10 years old (36.4%).

Figure 4.6. Distribution of the target group of the activity in relation to the activity type (%).
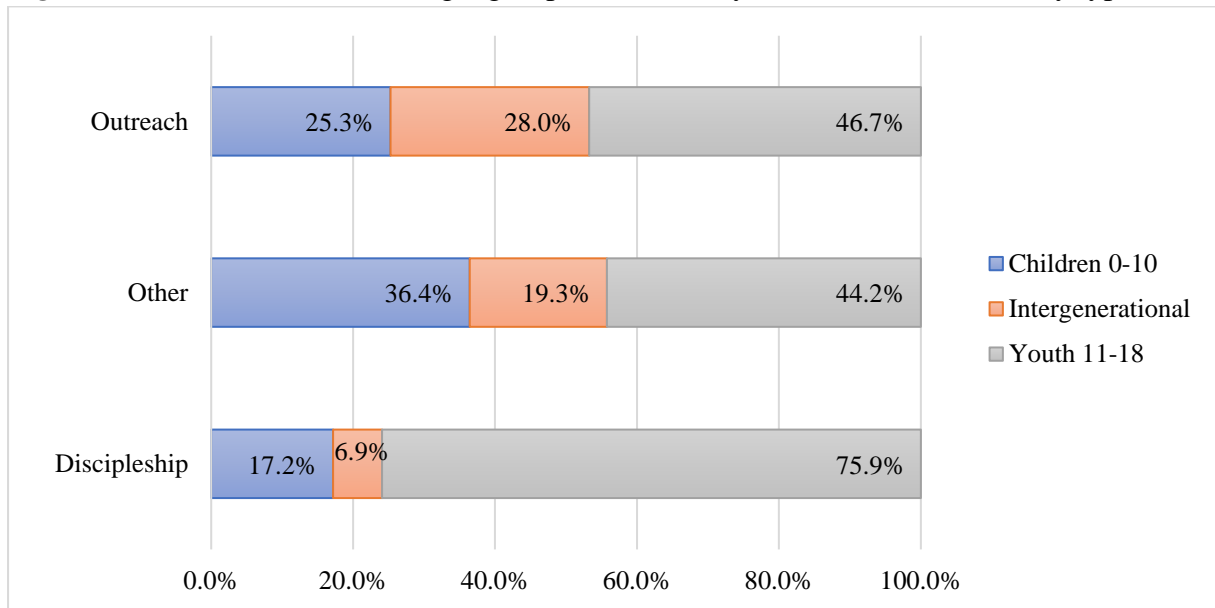
The breakdown of the total attendance shows that the parishes were focused on different audiences. Rutland, Corby, and Towcester had more children's engagement, while Wellingborough, Higham, Kettering, and Peterborough (although lower) had more youth attendance (Figure 4.7). This reflects the specialism of the workers involved in those areas.

Figure 4.7. Breakdown of the total attendance (N).
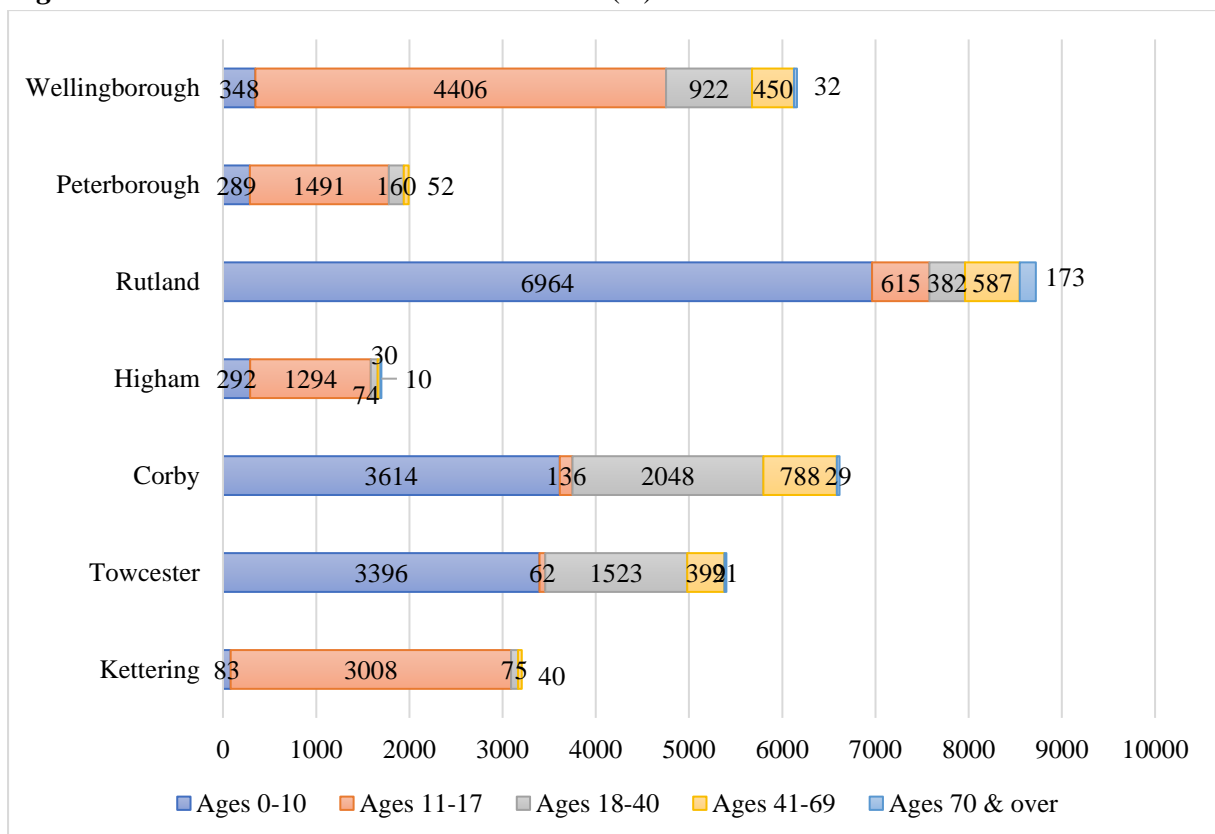
In most activities the mission enablers are supported by the volunteers, Figure 4.8 shows the number of times someone volunteered over the years[9]. It is clear that the number of times someone volunteered dropped during COVID-19 pandemic but then it increased[10]. However, since this is the number of times someone volunteered and not the numbers of volunteers, it is not possible to fully discuss the volunteers' engagement.

Figure 4.8. Distribution of the number of times someone volunteered in relation to the types of activity (N).
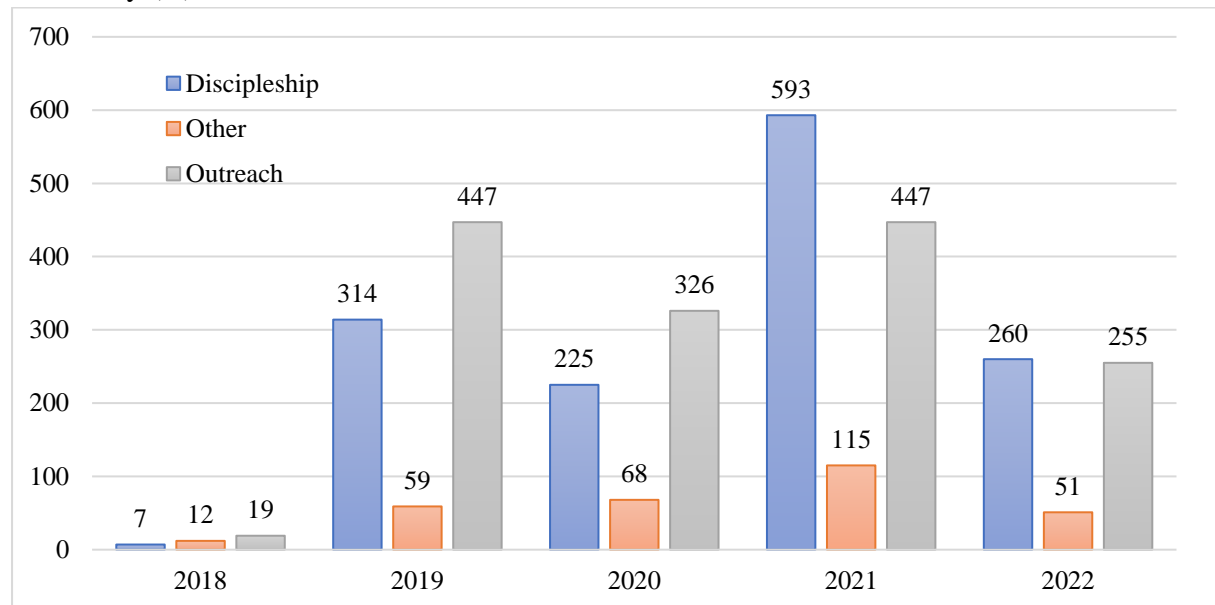
Figure 4.9 shows that most of the new contact with children and youth were made in Towcester (44.3%), Wellingborough (28.1%), and Corby (15.7%). Whilst most of the new contacts with adults were made in Towcester (61.4%) and Corby (20.7%).

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[9] The data provided tell us how many people volunteered without specifying volunteers' identities. Therefore, it is not possible to identify trends in relation to the number of volunteers.

[10] Since the last quarter of 2022 is not complete, as June is missing, the number of times someone volunteered seems to be lower than the previous year and at the same level as 2020. However, if we consider that more than two quarters of 2022 still have to come, the trajectory of the number of volunteers seems to show that they will be as high as 2021 or higher.

Figure 4.9. Distribution of the new contacts in the Parishes (%).
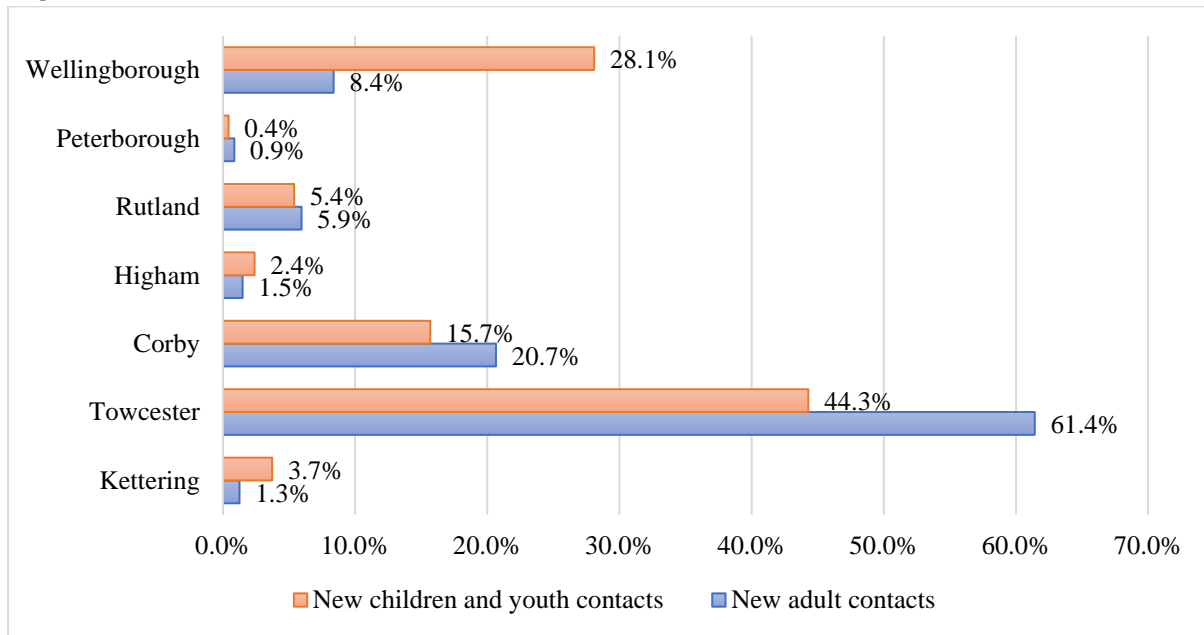
Most of the discipleship activities made 1 new adult contact or 2 (cumulatively 72.9%) in the whole period analysed. Similarly, the outreach activities made 1 new adult contact or 2 (cumulatively 69.1%), although these tend to make slightly more new contacts. The other activities made more new contacts, cumulatively 33.3% of these activities made 1 or 2 new adult contacts (Figure 4.10).

Figure 4.10. Cumulative distribution of the adults' new contacts in relation to the types of activity (%).
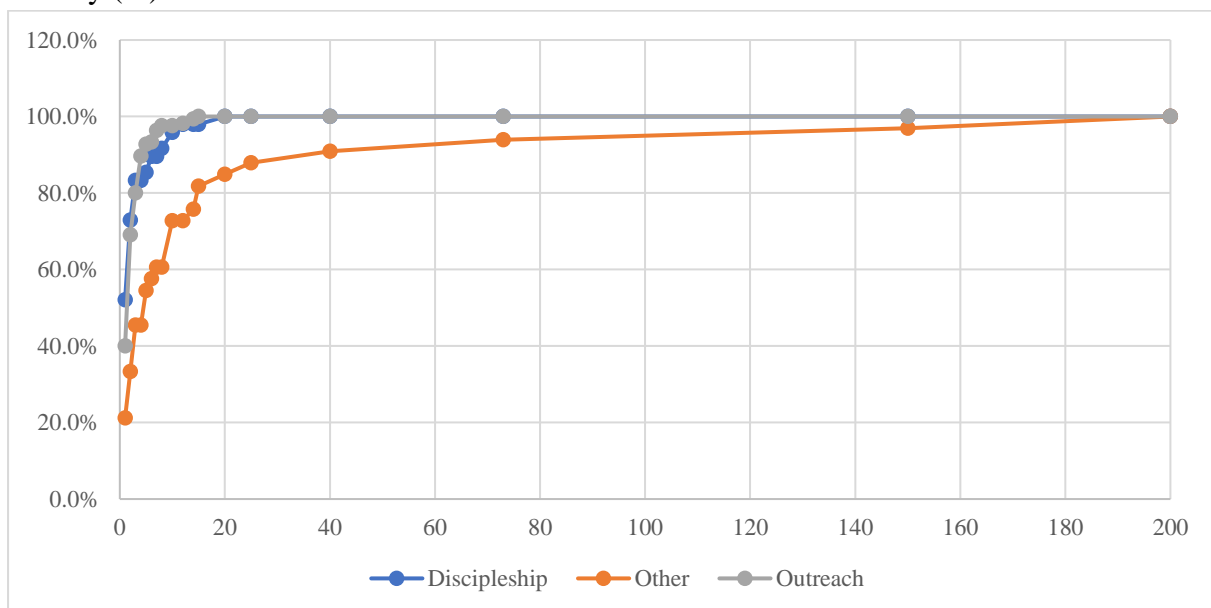
A similar pattern is followed by the new contacts made with children and young people. Most of the discipleship activities made 1 new contact or 2 with children and young people

(cumulatively 76.5%) in the whole period analysed. The outreach activities tend to make slightly` more new contact, with cumulat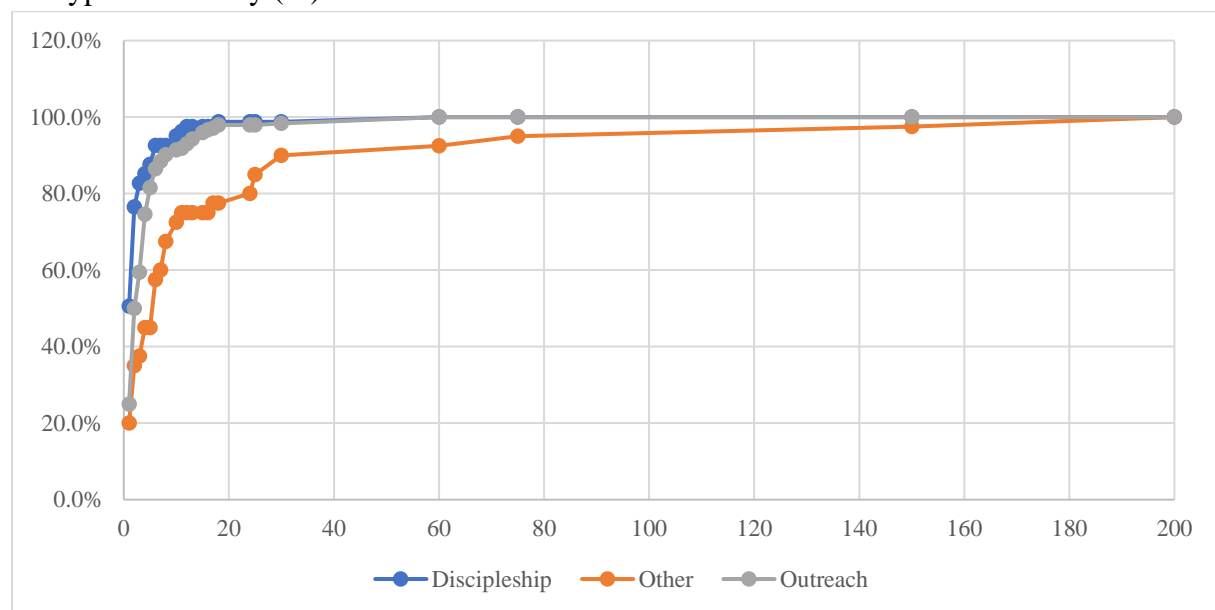ively 50.0 % of the activities making 1 new contact or 2 with children and young people. The other activities made slightly more contact, cumulatively 35.0% of the activities make 1 or 2 new adult contacts (Figure 4.11).

Figure 4.11. Cumulative distribution of the children and youth's new contacts in relation to the types of activity (%).

This section presented the results of the quantitative data analysis. From October 2018 to May 2022, 1629 activities were organised through the Gen2 project, with the majority in Wellingborough parish, Kettering parish, and Towcester parish. The total attendance varied significantly over time due to the COVID-19 pandemic, in fact all activities ceased during the second quarter of 2020. Although the pandemic has been unforeseen and the social distancing measures created considerable difficulties for all projects, the significant drop in the activities shows that Gen2 project, as most churches (Bryson, Andres, and Davies, 2020), is lacking in the use of remote tools in the everyday activities. Nonetheless, the activities started to increase again in the late 2020 and they have been increasing since then, with Peterborough, Towcester, and Rutland experiencing an increase in the total attendance especially during the beginning of 2022 and with Wellingborough continuing on high level of attendances. Most of the activities were outreach, followed by discipleship, and then other. This is an innovative aspect of Gen2 with respect to the UK scenario as the latest Youthscape (2022) research shows that only 8% of the youth workers surveyed are from churches that focuses exclusively or mainly on outreach. While the discipleship and the other activities are almost equally distributed in

between face-to-face and virtual (with a propensity towards face-to-face), the outreach activities are mainly face-to-face.

The Gen2 project includes two main paths, youth ministry, and children and family ministry and, because of this, the mission enablers developed activities tailored towards one group or another. Kettering Wellingborough, Peterborough, and Higham developed activities that are tailored towards youth. Towcester and Rutland parishes implemented more activities for children and families, while Towcester more intergenerational activities. By looking at the data in another perspective, we can see that most discipleship and outreach activities were primarily aimed at the youth. Considering that discipleship activities are more related to explore the faith, it is understandable that the participants are more likely to be youth than children. Most of the new contact with children and youth were made in Towcester, Wellingborough, and Corby. Whilst most of the new contacts with adults were made in Towcester and Corby. Overall, discipleship and outreach activities tend to make 1 or two contacts, while the other activities tend to make slightly more contacts.

5. Qualitative data analysis

The qualitative analysis was based on 36 semi-structured interviews collected by the ISII team in two waves. Overall, nine interviews were collected in Towcester in February 2022 (T1), nine in June 2022 (T2), nine were collected in Wellingborough in T1 and eight in T2, and one with the Gen2 director in T2. The semi-structured interviews were subject to thematic analysis, a process of coding interviews to develop patterns of meaning and identifying themes. A six-phase approach was taken, with researchers familiarising themselves with the data, generating initial codes, developing themes, before reviewing them, then defining and naming them for the report (Clarke, Braun, and Hayfield, 2015). The breakdown of the interviewees for each area and for each wave of data collection was as follows: one Gen2 mission enabler, two volunteers, and one clergy (all identified in the interviews as ST) and five participants either young people or representatives of families[11] (identified in the interviews as PT). Four themes were identified: the development of communities, communication of needs, collaboration, and innovation. Interviewees participated in semi-structured interviews with anonymity and confidentiality assured, therefore, the results presented in this report are anonymous and any names that appear in quotations are pseudonyms.

5.1. Building Communities

The research focused on two groups, youth, and children and families. In both cases, the predominate attraction to involvement in the group was socialisation, with individuals experiencing feelings of isolation which is a common occurrence in young families (Hanna *et al.,* 2002; Strange *et al.,* 2014):

> *Because I lived in the village, I was a new mum. I only have one daughter and it was a way of getting to know other mums* (PT:1)

> *Mainly to socialise more so I'm not always cooped up at home. And learning something new and being part of something* (PT:8)

> *I think it's a place for not just mums but grandparents to bring children and to meet other people, particularly with all the new building that's going on in* [local area]. *I don't know if you've seen it all but there's quite a lot and I think it just provides a focus for people - especially if they are feeling a bit cut off with a young baby - it's is actually a good place to start and then hopefully they'll get more involved in things* (PT:8)

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[11] Only four young people were able to participate to the interviews in T2.

I think there's lots of people in the town now that are here on their own, they are perhaps moving into the town, husbands at work, they've got a little baby and it's difficult to make friends unless you are part of a group. But I think it's difficult to walk into a group isn't it? (ST:1)

But as with most villages and towns nowadays there's been a lot of development. There's a lot of development happening here; there has been new developments happening in [local area] *as well and what we find is that you have people moving into the area who don't have those family connections, don't have the inter-generational support* (ST:2)

A stakeholder in one location made note that other local groups that may help individuals that feel isolated have closed since the pandemic, limiting accessible support networks with a report suggesting 60% of community groups have been forced to close over the pandemic period (Groundwork, 2020). Instead, as demonstrated in the quantitative section, Gen2 has been able to regain promptly and to increase the activities since the third quarter of 2020. For one participant, the changes in the local support environment made the churches outreach to isolated parents' part of its community duties:

I think since the pandemic we've seen a lot of families who are struggling with loneliness and also lots of local groups, toddler groups in particular, have been closing down so people have been looking at a variety of things to do with their very small children (ST:1)

But I think our main role, as well encouraging people just to come along if they want to do something with their children, I think it's that bit about welcoming people into the town and making them feel that there's a support network in place if they are on their own during the day (ST:2)

For parental participants in the Children's and Families sessions, the group had developed a unique identity that separated them from other local groups. They saw themselves as less of a 'clique', more welcoming, and with genuine personal connections, important prosocial behaviours which encourage compassion towards new members (Yue and Yang, 2021)

People empathise with you here whereas you go to other groups and everyone, [it's] *Instagram. There's no Instagram here because it's not needed because people care for you. People ask how you are and they ask as a person, not just as a mother or a parent.*

Its, how are you? And that's something that I really value. So, they are still preserving my identity as [an individual]- *Exactly. And you don't get that at other baby groups* (PT:5)

A lot of baby groups and things you do are a bit cliquey and they can be a bit like, 'yummy mummy' and little - I don't always feel like I fit in. You have to - I don't know (PT:6)

I knew quite a few people in here today and people say it feels very welcoming and it's not cliquey. That's what you find, we've got lots of new houses in the town and you want people to come into an environment that doesn't feel cliquey (ST:1)

Yes, I think the changes in my life then came about from thinking about - I think there's this massive thing when you've got young children to think about your own self and what you are involved in and it's quite all-consuming isn't it? (PT:4)

The participants' perspective of the mission enabler aids the development of this group identity, with them not perceived as being a 'formal' member of the church, but rather as a group member, who had opted for additional responsibilities. When leaders are seen as self-sacrificial, group members are more likely to devote time to prosocial behaviours, such as those seen in the group with both compassion to new members, and the development of knowledge sharing networks (Cremer *et al.,* 2009):

And then also from the participation point of view, again it's slightly less formal because [mission enabler] *isn't a priest or a vicar. So, I think it makes it a bit more approachable. Not everyone that comes in is necessarily a church goer so sometimes if you've got someone who's a formal representative of the church it could be quite intimidating* (PT:9)

[Mission enabler] *is a mum and comes and joins us because of her artistic contributions and having a Christian ethic, wanting to support the church in that way* (PT:7)

Group identity is important, simultaneously social and individual, it can improve an individual's wellbeing and encourage pro-group behaviour (Verkuyten, 2021). A significant characteristic that had developed within the group and its members was how it operated as a support network, with participants noting that it was something they actively contributed too, further separating them from other local groups:

Yes, the amount of times when [child] *was a baby and getting out of the house would be a challenge. Maybe she's teething, she's not sleeping well, you are really tired. I would always try and get to the group and the amount of times I'd push her in and someone would take her, give me a hug, I could cry and then have a cup of tea in my hand and you don't get that anywhere else. (*PT:1)

Yes. If someone came to me and they looked a bit upset, I'd happily go and sit with them and talk (PT:8)

Whereas then coming here and seeing what other people might be experiencing, it then makes you think people are similar and be aware of other people's feelings. So, it's definitely made me change, maybe be a bit more caring and listening to people and making sure everybody's okay (PT:4)

It's a relaxed group where you don't have to put on a show. You can say, 'I've had a really rough week' and people will go, 'I'm so sorry to hear that' (PT:5)

When I had [child] *I struggled a bit with him when he was little. I'd come in sometimes ten minutes before the end a bit upset but I'd still be welcomed and asked if I was alright* (PT:6)

People are very aware of what's going on and they're not only looking after one child, they are always on the lookout and they can tell when you need a bit of a hug (PT:10)

But these groups are more than that because at the other end spectrum our older members provide the teas and the coffees, many of whom have the other thing happening where their families live a long way away and they don't get to see their grandchildren grow up as they would perhaps like (ST:2)

Importantly, this outreach is proactively encouraged by the mission enabler who leads by example:

She's very good at talking to people, even from when they come in the door. She's there to greet them and say, 'Hi, welcome, come in'. If they come the next week, 'Lovely to see you'. It's such a nice touch that people feel welcome. We have to keep the door shut so that the children don't escape so from my own experience the first time you walk in and you are opening church doors, to have someone really friendly on the other side, smiling, 'How are you?', And then if there's a small baby - or even a larger baby -

we'll quite often cuddle the baby so the mum can have a cup of tea in peace. I take some of the older ones to do craft, so the mum can have a bit of peace. She's very personable from that point of view, she's lovely (PT:9)

The importance of the support network and knowledge-sharing aspects of the parent and toddlers' group has seen some members adopt 'guidance roles' within the group, offering advice and support to those struggling. The move into positions of leadership is generally encouraged by past-positive behaviours and relational knowledge, both of which are evidenced in the participating groups (Zi *et al.,* 2016; Rees *et al.,* 2022):

I think the mums get to chat to other mums or to us. Someone will always hold your baby if you want a cup of tea without holding your baby, all that kind of thing. That's such an important network because if you are a new mum or this might even be a second baby, but they are doing something different to the first, you've got that, 'Oh my goodness, my child won't sleep; my child's doing this' (PT:1)

We talk to them about what's going on and their children and what they are up to. Some people just keep it very official, but others want to talk about various things because we have children and they want to ask us things (ST:8)

Whereas then coming here and seeing what other people might be experiencing, it then makes you think people are similar and be aware of other people's feelings. So it's definitely made me change, maybe be a bit more caring and listening to people and making sure everybody's okay (PT:4)

And I think actually we've had over the time we've had a few people that have had issues and have had concerns and have struggle and I think with our volunteers, a lot of which are older ladies who actually have got loads of experience - we've got ex-teachers, ex-Head teachers - who are really good at supporting those people and actually recognising that all they need is somebody to take their baby and put a cup of coffee in their hand that's hot (ST:1)

The church and the mission enabler, however, are not passive influences on the groups and serve a central part in its development. The role of the mission enablers created a community space for the families, whilst allowing the children freedom in their play, and helping create safe and engaging spaces for young people:

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[Mission enablers] got that - we are all here in the safe place. There are lots of church groups going on all over the place run by lovely people (PT:2)

Primarily I think it's that connection, just a place they with people they can trust. And they know I'll be there for them without an ulterior motive, if that makes sense. We're not here to get an award, we're not here to get funding until who are actually seeing the families, people we know, we are there for them primarily (ST:6)

So yes, I think it's the variety of things to keep them entertained as well. Neither of my children have ever got bored of it or feel like they've grown out of it whereas some other groups they really have (ST:4)

Young people need emotional support, that's a huge thing, especially during adolescence, which is a time of turmoil. They need emotional support and sometimes practical support and spiritual support (PT:7)

[Mission enabler] She's doing an amazing job and I think as a church we may have lost a lot of contact with the youth and the families if we didn't have [Mission Enabler] and what [Mission enabler] does. I think she's a vital part of our church family. It is like a safe haven for the young people and I think they really enjoy it. If that was to be taken away now it would be a real chunk of church that would be missing. She is a vital part, she does amazing, definitely. (PT:6)

Primarily I think it's that connection, just a place they with people they can trust. And they know I'll be there for them without an ulterior motive, if that makes sense. We're not here to get an award, we're not here to get funding until who are actually seeing the families, people we know, we are there for them primarily (ST:6)

The use of the church building is an important facet of faith outreach. Although mission enablers often believe that their mission implicitly welcomes families, these parties do not always believe this is the case, and active engagement is required (Holmes, 2021). Within the participating groups this is accomplished, with the building being seen as a positive space for the group, welcoming, and active in the encouragement of the faith journey:

The fact that it's got [participant] parents actually coming to church with us for things, which they never did when [participants husband] and I first met, and he come to church but [participant's] mum and dad wouldn't come with us. And now they come with us

and they come to the Family Services with us and that would never have happened if they hadn't been bringing [child] *to this group and been given that space and that welcome* (PT:6)

So, our overall aim is to try to introduce young people to the love of God and to the gospel but underneath that umbrella we want to support young people, we want to emotionally support them and give them a safe place to listen and talk (ST:6)

I wouldn't say that the group is heavily evangelistic but it informs everything we say and do. So, they come to church, there is a Bible story. The door is open, and we do have not an enormous number of people from the group come to church but they do come to the Family Service that we run (PT:2)

My husband hates family services because he likes structure and he likes very traditional services, but you've got to meet people where they are, haven't you? It's no good having a Book of Common Prayer service when you've got little ones because they just don't respond (PT:10)

And it was a church environment. I was brought up to go to church and I'm familiar with church and I wanted my daughter to be familiar with the church without necessarily taking her to Mass (PT:1)

Both the youth and children's groups, led by the mission enablers and church stakeholders, have seen the community groups evolve from a place to socialise for isolated parents and youth, into places of support and knowledge-sharing networks (Hanna *et al.,* 2002; Strange *et al.,* 2014). Changes in the local environment, with a reduction of available support networks has driven engagement as accessible sources for support close (Groundwork, 2020). As the group identity within the parent's group has developed, members have evolved into positions of guidance, helping new parents navigate parental challenges and listen to those with problems (Rees *et al.,* 2022). Importantly, although not all participants considered themselves to have formal responsibilities, each saw themselves as a contributor to the supportive environment. The consideration of the mission enabler as being a group member, rather than a formal representative of the church, has further enabled this, allowing them to lead by example and set the standard for positive behaviour (Cremer, 2009). The faith journey has been encouraged using the church building and benefited from the relationship the members have with the

mission enabler, and there are indications that 'fringe members' (such as irregular attendees) have been encouraged to participate in church services.

5.2. Communicating Needs

The Gen2 project seeks to provide formal training to children and families, and youth workers in the Church of England to help enable supportive environments (APPG, 2019). The insights of the community groups, however, identified a range of differing needs, from both members, stakeholders, and the mission enablers, including financial concerns, the role of the faith journey in outreach, and particular aspects of the training, however, there are barriers to how these are communicated between the participants. There are many reasons why communication may be inhibited. The stakeholders of the church hosting the group recognised local youth needs as part of its wider remit, and saw the Gen2 project as a means of offering targeted support and bridging an identified gap:

> *When we decided as a Parish that we felt we needed a Children and Families worker the stance we took was we wanted to include the whole Benefice. So, we have a committee that I chair that* [mission enabler 1] *is part of and* [another mission enabler] *part of but we have a representative on that committee from each church. Plus, we have somebody who happens to be from* [a certain area] *plus we have* [a volunteer] *who manages all the financial side of it. So, he deals with all the pledges that come in, he deals with donations, he deals with grants. He does all the money stuff as well* (ST:1)

> *At that time, we were looking to employ somebody locally to do it part time. Then the Diocesan scheme came along, and the Diocesan scheme means that the person will have the training, the course behind them, which is specific for children and families or youth Ministry and therefore it has a much more broad spectrum and understanding of Ministry within the context of Children's and Families Ministry* (ST:2)

These concerns were not necessarily shared by the other churches in the deanery, and the logics used to design the Gen2 Children's Ministry provision were not applicable to those concerned with managing their resources, or maintaining their programmes once the mission enabler role was ended (Herold *et al.,* 2019):

> *We've sent a survey out to all of the vicars in our deanery and they've said that they don't particularly want any support with Children's Ministry because they are already doing the things that they want to do. So, they are already doing the schools Ministry*

and I think that maybe they feel that me coming and setting something new up will then when I leave become more work for them and they don't have capacity for that (ST:1)

These concerns have likely resulted in requests for help for the support of groups or offers that were already within the churches ability to deliver. The role of the mission enabler in these cases was to bridge leadership gaps, or help support the development of new ideas, rather than construct something entirely new:

One church has said, 'Can you come and help me run the Sunday school?' So, I'm doing that one Sunday every month. They are also going through a bit of a transition with their toddler groups as the leader is leaving. So, I might be re-vamping that toddler group and moving that forward. Another clergy member has asked me to give him some information on running a messy church and I said that depending on when it was in the year I would be able to come along and help him to run the messy church. And then other clergy haven't come back to me yet (ST:1)

Yes, and it's hard to say to other churches, 'We want you to invest your money into me', when I can't physically be there all the time. That's a really tricky balance to do that, it's hard (ST:1)

This aligned with the beliefs of one mission enabler who felt it was not the responsibility of them to dictate how the local churches supported their community, but to simple aid it. This can weaken the accomplishments of the youth Ministry if communication and feedback loops are not established between organisational levels in a manner that allows for outreach to be developed that is more responsive to need (Herold, *et al.,* 2019)

We shouldn't be going into a church and trying to lead their youth work for them, we should be trying to enable other people and equip them and support them (ST:7)

This role is valued by the deanery, with acknowledgement of the importance of the mission enablers through invitations to the diocesan conference:

I think that the mission enablers being acknowledged and valued as lay ministers within the diocese is very, very key. […] although their title is mission enablers, they are being invited to the diocesan conference whereas if they were employed by the parish they wouldn't be invited. It's just that acknowledgement of the Ministry that they have being

no less important than any other lay or ordained minister. It's that valuing of that Ministry as part of the diocese rather than just within the parish (PT:8)

The project has also been able to bridge the financial gap of the church in developing the role internally:

I think it's that opportunity to have a try at something that you haven't got to worry about finding the money for. It's nice to be able to do something and see if it works. At the end of the day, in four years' time if we can't finance it, we can't finance it but we've had that opportunity to try and we will try our hardest to (ST:1)

I also have a committee who look after [mission enabler], *provide her with pastoral support, who keep an eye on where financially we are going to be. I'm not going to say it's going to be easy and that we've got £100,000 sitting in a bank account that's going to pay her for the next four or five years because we haven't. But we have realised that this is an important area of Ministry, and we are trying to do something about it in order to mean that there is funding* (ST:2)

The idea of it in theory is that you do the Ministry and you do the training and then at the end of it you get employed. The problem with that is that the Diocese pays for the time that you are doing the scheme but at the end of it it's the church that has to take up that responsibility of paying. So, my church is aware that they have to keep some money aside for me in 18 months' time when I've finished, and they are going to have to start paying my salary (ST:5)

A solution for the hosting Churches was the pooling of money from the Deanery and other churches, however, this has been a difficult process with finances being tight for local parishes:

For town churches and for more working churches it would be a much easier sell. Village churches it will be a difficult sell. I'm not sure there should be some - I don't know, looking at a church's average income, well that's going to be looked at in terms of […] not the most in touch about finances. But it's been a lifeline in some ways for those churches who can't afford it to have it at that lesser rate to be able to then say, 'Actually, we can achieve by having that person there' (ST:7)

I know there are different models. A lot of the churches in our Deanery don't even pay parish share, which is what is required of them, so then to ask, 'Can we have some money to pay for a Deanery youth worker?' is quite a hard ask really (ST:3)

There may be the odd exception that they might make, I don't know, but funding is already tight just to pay for the clergy Ministry that we have and therefore whilst it is an important area of ministry, I don't think the Diocese has the money themselves. There's enough parishes that aren't able to pay their parish share (ST:2)

I think that it also faces challenges in how that becomes funded, which is an area that we are talking to [stakeholder] *about and that we are trying to grapple with now rather than leaving it to the end of the project* (ST:2)

For town churches and for more working churches it would be a much easier sell. Village churches it will be a difficult sell. I'm not sure there should be some - I don't know, looking at a church's average income, well that's going to be looked at in terms of […] *not the most in touch about finances. But it's been a lifeline in some ways for those churches who can't afford it to have it at that lesser rate to be able to then say, 'Actually, we can achieve by having that person there'* (ST:7)

There are also suggestions that the project may be too compartmentalised with each level having differing understandings of what the project is seeking to achieve. Partially, this may be due to the perceived top-down nature of the project with stakeholders believing that the ministry should be more adaptive to the local contexts, instead the project is seen as subservient to the dominant stakeholder's perception of required change (Weber, 1978):

But I think perhaps being that [the mission enabler professors] *are based in Oxford, nobody has actually visited to see the context in which* [mission enabler] *works. And therefore, I think there's an element of that that perhaps could be improved. So, understanding where your student is coming from, what is the context in which they are ministering, come and see the place. You always get a better feel if you see it* (ST:2)

The other thing that I've noticed is that defining 'youth' is very different now to what it was when I was a young person. Youth in my age was 14+ but that seems to have moved considerably much further down to a younger age group where we are starting to talk about Key Stage 2 children as being youth (ST:2)

I think that it's fair to say in Ministry, people only see the part that they are involved with. So, my colleagues only see the study side of things and the people who go to my toddler groups only see that all I do is toddler groups or Sunday worship, that's all I do. What am I doing Monday-Friday kind of thing (ST:9)

A lot of these programmes are dependent on the person who's doing it. No, I think in a sense we've been a bit fortunate because [mission enabler] *has been part of our worshiping community for many years, so she's already built up a relationship with people in our community, our church community and our wider community. I would imagine if you are just parachuting someone in as part of the project, that's going to take a little bit longer to do but we haven't really got that as a disadvantage I guess* (ST:6)

The course [the mission enabler is] *doing is a pioneering course therefore context in which you are working is really important. Nobody from the college has come to see the context. And whilst one could say, 'But* [mission enabler is] *writing about the context', there is something about the quantitative versus qualitative isn't there? There's that sort of get to feel, get to know. You can only do that if you visit somewhere and you see how things are set up and you meet the people that are being engaged with, just like you've been doing with this particular bit of the survey* (ST:3)

Despite these issues, the project has been responsive to the questions and queries of those working with the beneficiaries, suggesting the communication issues are ones of influence rather than information:

Yes. And I think they've got the knowledge and the understanding, And I don't think we've ever come up against anything where nobody was able to answer what we need to know or - we haven't got to the point where we wanted to do something and 'No you can't' do that'. So, I think it's been quite good working relationship up to now, definitely (ST:10)

There is divergence between one of the mission enablers and the stakeholders they worked with, with the perception that the project was primarily focused on the faith journey of the participants. As detailed, the Youth Ministry is an important aspect of the Gen2 project, however, other stakeholders saw the creation of safe environments for the participants as the primary objective, although the faith journey remained an integral part (Holmes, 2021):

My primary objective I suppose would be to encourage their faith journey. So, I'm there to support them when it comes to decisions that they want to make about faith. And answering the questions that they may have and just being an example of what having a faith-based family is like and the realities of having children and having a faith as well is my main goal. So that's my main aim for my work. Other than that, it would be pastoral support that I give to the families, so a wide range of needs and problems, so just listening really and being a friend to them. (ST:3)

So our overall aim is to try to introduce young people to the love of God and to the gospel but underneath that umbrella we want to support young people(ST:6

The differing perceptions of the goals of the project have led to mission enablers not feeling that the training was fully aligned with their parish needs:

I don't think that my course is as tailored towards [specific need] *as I would like it to be* (ST:3)

Despite the differing perceptions of training needs between the mission enablers and the programme, beneficiaries felt their spiritual needs were being met:

It just feels like a safe place to come and I really like the way that [mission enabler] *interacts with the grownups and the children.* [Child] *asking quite big questions now and knows how to pray and things like that* (PT:6)

Yes, and it keeps the church I suppose with them and it is a church school. The Head says she doesn't mind if parents don't go to Mass but she doesn't see that there's any harm in the children learning God loves them and [mission enabler] *is a big part of that, in the school as well as in the church* (PT:1)

I think it's really important. There's a song. My son would do the actions with the clapping and the arms from 1-ish because it was something that we did each week. And even now at 5, when they do Amen, he goes Aaaa-men and it's because it's something that he's taken happier (PT:5)

And then because I now don't participate in the group with my daughter in terms of the group, I don't stay for the Bible story or that side of things. so I don't think I can really answer that question (PT:1)

I think it's a mixture, I think some of our families are wanting some of their young people to be disciples in the church, so the Christian families who want their young people to be part of Christian youth work. So, there's a significant number of those (ST:8)

For the youth group, the creation of a safe place and the support of the participants faith journey was highlighted, the repeated engagements with the church allowed communities to be built, an important aspect in the exploration of their faith (Keeley and Keeley, 2018). The outreach activities highlighted in the quantitative section and in the participants' voices are very valuable for the young people especially considering that support of other young people is fundamental for those that have a raising interest in faith (Youthscape, 2022):

So, it was somewhere safe for youngsters to go all throughout the year, term time only, it wasn't through the holidays. But it was somewhere that they could go and not just socialise but ask questions about church and faith and God and all that kind of stuff, just somewhere safe for the young people to be and to hang around with each other so they weren't on the street or at the park in the dark (ST:6)

When they start to participate, generally they are looking for that social element; they are looking for somewhere to go, to be safe and to hang out (ST:4)

Well I just want to learn about God but in a way, that's not too adult based but still not for children, so in the middle somewhere (PT:7)

Young people want to be discussing their faith, having their questions answered and sharing it inside and outside the church wall (Youthscape, 2022). Even if Gen2 is delivering outreach activities and a safe space for young people to express their faith, it was noted that some spiritual outreach should be re-examined in its appropriateness for the youth audience. The continuing evolution from uni-directional adult-to-child teaching to the assumption of inherent spiritual maturity of children suggests that methods of outreach and youth teaching continually need to be re-examined to ensure they appropriately react to group needs (Willmer and White, 2013; Berryman, 2017; Keeley and Keeley, 2018):

If they are teaching you about something, they normally show videos and stuff which is good for kids and teenagers and then maybe talk about it in a more serious way as well (PT:7)

As a whole I think it's absolutely fantastic. I touch on what one of them did say with regard to I think sometimes the age range, it's quite a big age range that we deal with and maybe sometimes the older teenagers, maybe we only scratch the surface a little bit and maybe they do want to dig a little bit deeper (ST:4)

Instead, the specific needs mentioned by the families and youth participants were wellbeing, parental support, and community, which were recognised by local stakeholders (See section 5.1 'Building Communities'):

I think it's through that that they probably then learn to trust us as adults to have conversations. If they've had a bad day, it's someone to talk to amongst themselves. But then sometimes there might be a conversation where perhaps one of us leaders and volunteers are involved (ST:4)

The research has indicated that there are a range of divergent conceptions on how the mission enablers best serve their community. Whereas Gen2 has the stated aim to create supportive environments for children, young people, and families, stakeholders (individuals holding professional and faith roles within the church) believe the project may need to be more responsive to local contexts, as well as sustainable should mission enablers no longer be available. Although mission enablers have perceptions of how the project should operate, there is a disconnect between stated group needs (aligned with family support) and the focus on Children's Ministry in one location, and the means and methods of supporting the faith journey in the other (Herold *et al.,* 2019; Keeley and Keeley, 2018). A solution to this may be the development of stronger communication between the project's beneficiaries and stakeholders who can then work with Gen2 to ensure local and stakeholder needs are being properly communicated and met as the findings suggest that although information is shared, influence on outreach design is not (Herold *et al.,* 2019). Despite these challenges and communication barriers, the beneficiaries of the programme felt that their needs were being met and that the programme was responsive to their needs, with each participant expressing positive experiences since they engaged. The financial pressures of the churches themselves, also suggest that the project may not be sustainable once the Ministry training period comes to an end, which may need to be evaluated by the project leads.

5.3. Collaboration

A key aspect of the Ministry is not only to enable engagement with volunteers and families, but the encouragement of collaboration (APPG, 2019). Collaboration enables the beneficiaries

of the project to shape the teaching discourse, and for those charged with leading the project to respond to needs (de Kock, 2013). Prior to the appointing of the mission enabler, participants noted that multiple people had various responsibilities to ensure the groups could operate, often reliant on volunteers. Older members of the parent's group had adopted 'guidance roles', organising events, setting up activities, and readying snacks:

> *I design, so I helped with craft while my girl was a bit older there and then stayed to do craft and help out with the display and things since my little girl's gone to school* (PT:1)

> *Mostly doing refreshments and greeting people and chatting to people. We've now started to make toast for the children. We used to do different snacks but we found it got a bit too involved and it was a little bit wasteful so we decided to do the toast and it seems to be popular, especially in the winter because it's hot* (PT:3)

> *Yes, before I was appointed there was already a team of people who were prepared to work on the project long term to make sure of its sustainability. So it became about the project and obviously having the right mission enabler is important but equally important is the team around that person. Does that make sense?* (ST:2)

Since the placement of the mission enabler, however, volunteers have passed certain responsibilities 'upwards'. The guides had given the planning responsibilities over to the mission enabler. This may be due to the 'psychological contract', with volunteers adjusting their perceptions of the role following the introduction of a paid worker (Liao-Troth, 2001; Walker *et al.,* 2016):

> *It depends what you mean by other programmes. As a church of course we have lots of things going on in terms of trying to support people, reach out to people in different age groups. But Gen 2 is unique in that we've got a paid person to lead that area* (PT:8)

> *But we don't actually get - if we feel there is a specific need there we then give it to* [the mission enablers] *so that they can carry that forward. It's our job to flag up anything that we're concerned about, that we feel that maybe there's some kind of a problem or a need there that needs addressing but we don't actually do that ourselves. We refer it to* [mission enabler] *normally* (ST:8)

A reason given for the passing off was the fact the mission enabler is employed, and therefore considered responsible for duties, such as signposting to family support which requires specialist training:

> *They were all lovely, but I think if you have a dedicated member of your team who just really reflects and really invests everything, you know she is considering things and not just reacting to something like that. She has a bigger understanding of what is being done in that group and how it is working at all levels, rather than going for a nice chat* (PT:2)

> *But it's quite nice to know that that pressure was off, and we can actually do all this stuff but somebody else is paying that person to do it. I think that's how I thought of it to start with, as much as you want that support for your parishes it was quite nice to have that opportunity and it just came at the right time, purely by chance* (ST:1)

> *I think you are right yes. It's a bit of a catch 22, you need volunteers to get something going but you need mission enablers ideally to encourage volunteers to get something going. But sometimes mission enablers can end up being the volunteer, which is not really what we should be doing but that can happen quite easily* (ST:5)

A facet that may be considered by the Gen2 project is offering specific training to volunteers or ensuring mission enabler training is effectively disseminated, which can be perceived as a reward for their efforts (Walker *et al.,* 2016). In addition to the absorbed responsibility from the volunteer group, the mission enabler had taken the lead on local outreach with schools and other community outreach points, led by the mission enablers due to their personal networks:

> *But I do know she's done some work where she's connected with* [local stakeholder] *who is a worker from the* [religious group] *and worked together with her to do some resilience training through the* [local wellbeing café]*, which I volunteer at. So that's how I know about it* (PT:2)

The workload is increased by the additional duties of the mission enabler as their responsibilities to both the Gen2 project and the Church grow:

> *I think when you see her now leading bits of services or leading service I think you can see her confidence improve, definitely. Whereas before she was always quite nervous, I think she's more natural and more relaxed and definitely more confident. So those*

skills that are coming out of that are obviously coming out of her, that's a very different side to sitting on the floor with a group of children and singing. It's very different when you are standing in front of adults isn't it? You could be a teacher but again you are still used to talking to children, you are not used to talking to a church full of adults and getting that feedback from them (ST:1)

[Mission Enabler]*'s been exploring outdoor worship groups as well. And how do we use the inside of the building but also how do we use the outside space? So, you are constantly thinking about the people that you've got and where they are and what needs to adapt and change along the way (ST:2)*

Managing people's expectations can be different. There's a situation at the minute where I work with a vicar and she's very keen on [specific topics], *which is great, but she has very high expectations of what she want to happen in her church and it's quite hard to meet her where her expectations are (ST:5)*

A concern held by a significant majority of the participants was whether the mission enabler had taken on more responsibility than they could potentially handle:

I know one of the mothers said, 'It's a good job there aren't many of us here today'. This was just at the beginning of us opening up, so the numbers were quite low. And I was like, 'Hmm' (PT:2)

I think our aim would be for it to be full time. I think that would be our idea but obviously we don't know what's going to happen in the next three, four years. I think that's the aim because I think actually we've proved the point that she could work fulltime and half [laughs]. *There's so much going on and so much call for her time really (ST:1)*

Probably more hours in the week! Obviously, it's changed, the dynamics with the study hours going up and we're very aware that she needs that time and we need to make sure that we are taking some of that pressure off (ST:2)

This suggests a growing gap between the mission enabler and the volunteer base, however, this could be resolved by proactive engagement, training, and inclusion of volunteers in local outreach (Walker *et al.,* 2016). These pressures were felt by the mission enabler and those close to them, with suggestions that the quality of the outreach is diminished by the heavy workload:

But I've found that particularly at points it's been busy at work and at college and I've struggled to maintain a balance between them both and my family situation as well (ME:1)

I suppose the only way it would affect young people is that sometimes we can feel a bit stretched and so when you feel a bit stretched you are not necessarily at your best. If you are carrying a problem from one area and then you are going to your youth group in your church, you are still thinking about what happened in the last youth group. So, it's just that, it's more the emotional thing of being a little bit stretched (ST:5)

Absolutely. Yes, I would agree with that to a certain extent. We're a Benefice of five churches and I work in four of them which obviously takes up quite a lot of time, especially when you come to the festival times. So, for example, at Easter I'm going to be running a trail event over the Easter weekend and if I run one I have to run four. So that obviously has an impact on my time and the other things that I'm able to do I can only do so much (ST:3)

One of the mission enablers noted the importance of encouraging volunteerism in the community to relieve these pressures, however, although progress was being made, COVID-19 disrupted this:

I feel that we were getting there, we had a couple of new volunteers coming through to our toddler groups and increasingly we were able to take a step back, we had different people taking responsibility for different roles (ST:3)

I don't know really. I suppose the only thing is we probably need to give [mission enabler] *more hours in the day because she's so passionate and there's so much she wants to do, and I know she can be quite stretched. She does everything the best she can do. And I know it's difficult for them getting volunteers and I guess over the pandemic that's probably harder as well. Lots of volunteers seem to be older people and they would be - people want to feel safe, don't they? (PT:6)*

Although volunteerism may return to previous levels, there is a need for training to ensure that the quality of service does not diminish if the mission enablers responsibilities continue to increase. An example of this is a volunteer who found it difficult to communicate the story of the ascension and plan sessions for the beneficiaries when in charge of the session:

I took the story and the activities yesterday because [mission enabler] *was on a course and I realised after, I forgot to pray; 'Oh, I didn't-', that sort of* thing (PT:7)

I was saying it's the Ascension, so I was, 'I wonder how many of these mums actually are quite clear about what I mean about that and it is the right time and place to go into it a bit?' Probably not. So, I just made a bit, 'Oh never mind, let's carry on, I'll try and tell you the story'. Also, I think the more you do something the better you get at it. I occasionally do the story and I sort of muddle my way through (PT:7)

In one location, the support for the mission enabler was through a panel which sought to ensure their well-being was being protected and encouraging them to take time off where possible. However, the panel does not meet regularly, suggesting it may be slow to react to emerging challenges:

So, we then make up a committee and we meet every third month, so we support [mission enabler] *if she's got issues or problems or doesn't know how to do something. We talk about what her plans are to do and how practical that is and how that will fit into her time. As well as the wellbeing side of* [mission enabler], *this bit about, 'Actually, step back from that now because maybe we shouldn't do it now; we'll leave it six months and we'll do it then because you are doing too much' (ST:1)*

And I just think that for future mission enablers or people who want to see if the project's a success or not, that relationship is key for it to work and you need a good relationship with your Rector or your incumbent and you need to feel supported in what you are doing. (ME:1)

I also have a committee who look after [mission enabler]*, provide her with pastoral support (ST:2)*

In part, the mission enabler felt their taking of responsibility in the early stages of their role was due to their keenness to make the most impact:

With one particular church that I'm working with, it hasn't worked so well but that's a mixed situation of there being not quite enough people volunteering but also it was my first church and I think I was very keen to help and so I almost took over a little bit. So that was a bit of a mixed situation (ST:1)

This would suggest there is likely to be a need for support in the early stages of the mission enabler taking on a post, where they are likely to become overburdened, particularly if a church is low its own resources for support. A mission enabler did, however, feel supported by the network of others involved in Ministry training:

> *I think the network of mission enablers across the Diocese and the Diocesan support is working very well. Because it can be quite a lonely place to be youth or a children's minister but having a network of people to share ideas with and work with is a real support for us. So, we can share resources, share ideas, share problems together and a lot of that comes from the central team that keep us all together. (ST:3)*

Evidence from the research suggests that seeing the mission enabler as an employed member of staff has allowed volunteers to step back from certain duties as they readjust their 'psychological contract' (Laio-Troth, 2001). For safeguarding and wellbeing concerns this may be positive in the short term, with those in need receiving appropriate support from a trained member of staff when required, ensuring the correct advice is given and effective signposting to sources additional support. Volunteers, however, should not necessarily be considered unable or unwilling to be trained in this aspect, with previous literature suggesting that additional training is seen as a reward for previous efforts (Liao-Troth, 2001; Walker *et al.*, 2016). This would relieve strain on the mission enabler, a consideration of the stakeholders who believed they were over worked. This is due to other duties being passed to the mission enabler, such as activity organisation, which has led to a wide expansion of their role and an increased workload. Pastoral support has been offered to the mission enablers; however, this is unlikely to be sufficient without wider 'on-ground' volunteer support.

5.4. Innovation

The goal of the Gen2 project is to introduce new methods in offering support for the involved churches, through the implementation of mission enablers who can lead outreach and introduce new ways of working:

> *That's something we want the mission enables to be thinking about, how do they innovate, how do they think outside the box and think traditional ways we've done in church that aren't connecting with young people so how do we think differently? (ST:10)*

The perception of the involved stakeholders is that, traditionally, the Church of England has struggled to train, support, and employ youth workers, creating a need for the Gen2 project:

> *And then the training of youth workers strand, the mission enablers strand, was very much around recognising that churches needed specialist support in order to do that […]- the Church of England particularly has been very bad at training and supporting and employing youth workers* (ST:9)

This can be challenging in environments where the previous ways of working are embedded and there are hierarchical organisational structures (Powell, 2002). A reason given for the problems in developing a sustainable system for the development and maintenance of youth workers were the resources available. Unable to offer a competitive compensation pack, trained youth workers are hired on short term contracts. This leads to youth outreach being conducted by untrained or unskilled individuals:

> *The churches that can afford a youth worker might appoint one and often it's on a short-term contract and they don't pay them very much. So, they get either untrained or unskilled workers or if they get somebody who's trained they only can afford to keep them on for two or three years and they're just about settling into their role and then the money runs out. So, they don't really see the fruit of that Ministry* (ST:9)

> *The idea of it in theory is that you do the Ministry and you do the training and then at the end of it you get employed. The problem with that is that the Diocese pays for the time that you are doing the scheme but at the end of it it's the church that has to take up that responsibility of paying. So, my church is aware that they have to keep some money aside for me in 18 months' time when I've finished, and they are going to have to start paying my salary* (ST:5)

Stakeholders involved in the training noted that those new to youth work had additional barriers to overcome, with their confidence, position within the church community, and preconceptions of what the role may be:

> *And that's quite hard when they are new in the job and they are learning, and they are growing into a role which is very much about doing stuff in the parish, and then going to a completely different context and suddenly being seen as the expert. So, there's an issue around their confidence in that and also whether they've had enough experience in order to be able to do that. As well as the fact that some of them enjoy what they are*

doing, the direct work with children and young people, they'd rather be doing that than working with a whole load of volunteers (ST:9)

Higher levels of turnover can create less effective knowledge networks and a continuing reliance on top-down delivery, with those on the ground not engaged with the work long enough to develop an appropriate level competency to feedback to the programme any required changes (Herold *et al.,* 2019). This can lock training programmes into the dominant contexts in which they already exist, for example, it can mean programmes are based on a cultural context which may not align to the lived experiences of the mission enablers (Powell, 2002):

A personal thing for me is that one of the Bible Colleges that I was offered, when I went to visit it I thought that they were really lovely people and it would be a great college to go to but they seemed quite middle class and I thought I really wanted to go to a university or college that's very down to earth; that's going to help me to be more culturally relevant to the young people that I'm working with. Not a college that is so middle class that they play croquet on the lawn in their spare time and makes me ... Lovely people but I just thought it seems very middle class and not very culturally in touch with youth workers who want to relate to young people (ST:10)

We were quite in touch with the colleges before, but I think since Covid we've lost some of that connection and I think that's something we need to pick up on - keeping in touch with the colleges and talking to them about what they are training, what they are teaching and how it connects with what we want. And that's not always easy because the college curriculum, in their mission organisation, their accreditation and assessment is though St John's College in Durham which is one of the theological colleges. The way they teach it is fairly flexible I think but there's a core curriculum that they have to abide by in order to get the accreditation and stuff. (ST:9)

This may mean that mission enablers who go through the programme must not only put into practice the training they receive, but also adapt it to suit their context to ensure it is effective. This was a problem identified by a stakeholder who noted the difficultly mission enablers had in adjusting their outreach in areas outside of the church in which they are based:

I think the issue we're facing at the moment is how we encourage the mission enablers to let go of what they're doing in one place in order to go and work elsewhere. The model is that they have the base parish but ultimately the goal is that they are going to

be working in other churches and they have a wider spread, a wider reach. And that's quite hard when they are new in the job and they are learning, and they are growing into a role which is very much about doing stuff in the parish, and then going to a completely different context and suddenly being seen as the expert (ST:9)

When effective mission enablers have integrated themselves with the communities they serve efficiently, utilising their personal networks and relationships with other organisations, for example, creating a network for local leaders, or conducting school outreach:

I'd be in touch with lots of other youth workers and children's workers in our area and we form these hubs, which is like a support group of local leaders. In that there would be some amount of training, it's not formal training, it's just informal training. That's the main thing that we're involved with in that way (ST:1)

Yes, there are two main primary schools that I visit each week. I go in and do groups, lunchtime groups or I'll go in and do some work in class. I'm just about to start doing a prayer space which will be an hour with each class in the school, that kind of thing. And I'm a Governor at one of the schools so I'm heavily involved with both of those schools. (ST:1)

These networks are important in the development of appropriate support for children, youth, and families, and their creation has allowed mission enablers to develop longer term strategies:

For me I'm quite a strategic person, so we have a vision for our Youth Ministry that is looking at all our groups as one and working out what our bigger picture is. So, I've got something on a spreadsheet and it's how our groups fit together (ST:5)

There is a need, however, for these patterns to be repeated in each area, rather than the one the mission enabler may be most comfortable in, with hierarchical and embedded environment negating new means of working, even if there is an internal desire for change (Maher and Karlidag-Dennis, 2022). When they are able to work effectively, mission enablers have a positive impact on the outreach work conducted by the church:

And I think the design of the project and it's partly because of the funding that the funding is very much about creating as much change across as wide an area as possible in as short a time as possible I suppose, in the time frame of the project. That's right that it should be that but it's a lot easier for these guys just to stay where they are and

work in one parish with the people they know and building that relationship rather than trying to develop volunteers (ST:9)

[The mission enabler] does a great job. Looking back, it was, I guess you could say, quite a traditional church Ministry before lockdown and then that happened. And where most churches did just shut down, what [mission enabler] did is she decided to - as close to rules and within rules - to basically do work and meeting those young people out in the community. (ST:7)

Churches tied to the traditional methods of outreach, or unable to commit to long term plans can make it difficult for mission enablers to enact change. These issues may further be compounded it there is a continuing reliance on untrained, or unskilled, enablers:

Maybe there is a disconnect with the more traditional parishes that our mission enablers are working in. I think constantly we are pushing them to think beyond what's in front of them and to think differently and that's hard when you've got to do the bread and butter, day to day stuff of dealing with what's in front of you (ST:10)

They're still in this old mode of thinking that children and young people will come back to church at some point when they grow up. If they've left now they'll come back when they have families and children and that's just not happening. And now churches are getting older and they're dying and but there still just seems to be a blockage to people and a blindness to seeing that, I suppose, or they just don't see the need to have that sort of support (ST:5)

We shouldn't be going into a church and trying to lead their youth work for them, we should be trying to enable other people and equip them and support them (ST:7)

So I think if it works well it's fantastic because it's there in the future. But I think if you haven't got everything that you need here and now then it's not going to work (ST:10)

Another set of voices alienated from the programme are those that have received formal training elsewhere, such as a volunteer who had a degree in Youth Work. The benefit of including these individuals into the programme is bidirectional. It allows for them to influence and inform programme leaders with their novel experiences, and their inclusion within the informal networks created by mission enablers (through platforms such as WhatsApp) allows

for an additional source of knowledge and support. As stated previously, this would require the development of effective feedback cycles (Herold *et al.,* 2019):

> *Gen 2 is doing training. I've got a Degree in Youth Work so I'm not doing that training.* (ST:8)

For the trainee themselves, it allows for the contextualisation of previous training within a Christian context. An example of this change is in the mission enablers changes over the course of the programme and their impact on the church community:

> *I think you can definitely see not changes in her as such, but you can see that everything she does she's thinking of the young people that we are with* […] *And I think that has done nothing but grow since the whole Gen 2 programme started. I think she really has grown into a really great part of the church family. She relates really well to the young people and they relate really well with her* (ST:4)

The goal of the Gen2 programme is to develop its participants into effective and innovative mission enablers who can lead youth, children, and family outreach over a wide geographical area. The first tension in the model is the reliance on unskilled or untrained individuals who are required to re-contextualise the training they receive to the church environment they work and may be unable or unwilling to challenge churches who have adopted traditionally patterns of outreach (Powell, 2002; Levi and Zehavi, 2015). To resolve this, it may be appropriate for the Gen2 project to engage with groupings of churches who will share a mission enabler to communicate the value of the programme directly (Herold *et al.,* 2019). Currently, it is indicated that this predominately falls within the role of the mission enabler, however, they make lack to confidence or the knowledge to effectively communicate the project methods and goals, particularly in the early stages of training where they are expected to work and carry out the duties of the role simultaneously. To resolve this, it may be appropriate for the Gen2 team to work directly with the churches who do not host a mission enabler directly (Ferlie, Musselin, and Andresani, 2008; Stoker, 2006). A second consideration is for the programme to include those who have a formal training background, such as the volunteer with a degree in Youth Work. This would have two benefits; it would allow them to effectively feedback information into the programme and allow them to contextualise their previous education into a Christian-centric environment. It would also allow them access to the informal networking that exists between mission enablers, offering another source of knowledge (Herold *et al.,* 2019).

5.5. Wider Church Engagement

With evidence of widening disengagement and reduced church attendance in England and increasing calls for parents to increase the nurturing of faith at home, there are questions about how best for church institutions to engage with children, youth, and families (Francis and Robbins, 2011). Studies have shown that engagement with the church remains beneficial, though the institution needs to be overtly inclusive and engage with the contemporary family environment, with families often harbouring feelings of dissatisfaction and non-acceptance (Francis and Richter, 2007; Holmes, 2021). It is equally important that churches actively nurture the profile they wish to exhibit to potential attendees across all their community outreach (Francis and Robbins, 2012). Currently, the churches involved in the programme have developed youth and family friendly outreach provisions that are reactive to the community's needs:

> *There used to be - and I think it's starting up again - BIBS, Baby Interrupted Bible Study and a lot of mums went to that because they'd come to Little Sprouts, to Tots, to things like that* (PT:5)

> *But actually, it makes people see that church isn't just for a church service, it's actually an environment where children can play. They can run up and down the aisle, they can run in and out of the pews.* (ST:1)

> *And it was a church environment. I was brought up to go to church and I'm familiar with church and I wanted my daughter to be familiar with the church without necessarily taking her to Mass.* (PT:1)

These family focused activities have encouraged the participants to attend other events, overcoming feelings of 'not fitting-in' within the church community that can led to family disengagement (Holmes, 2021; Francis and Robbins, 2021). Additionally, these events have led to peripheral family members having deeper engagement with the church:

> *The fact that it's got* [husband's] *parents actually coming to church with us for things, which they never did when* [husband] *and I first met, and he came to church but* [husband] *mum and dad wouldn't come with us. And now they come with us and the come to the Family Services with us and that would never have happened if they hadn't been bringing N* [child] *to this group and been given that space and that welcome* (PT:6)

The increased familiarisation with the church environment, which was noted by participants as potentially being a difficult threshold for new members to step across, has also been buffered against:

> *The fact that we're in the church building, so the barrier that can become just getting people to step over the threshold into church. They are quite cavernous buildings. They are gorgeous, but they can also evoke senses of fear and past experience of being in buildings like this.* (ST:2)

> *Yes, I think it familiarises people with it and it takes away some concerns people naturally might have. If you are not raised already to go to church you might find it concerning and that would be taken away because you know the building, you know that it's okay for your children to play, where the loos are, which you might not want to do if you go for a Sunday service to suddenly think, 'My child needs the toilet'* (PT:9)

> *I don't know. I've always been connected with the church, not this one but I've always been connected with the church. This one is very welcoming; it's very welcoming for children as well and I think you do notice that. I sometimes come over for the family service and it's lovely; it's a lovely service.* (PT:20)

> *I take part because I love the community feel. I think sometimes there's this massive thing with the church that people find it almost unapproachable and maybe that's a historical thing, I don't know* (PT:4)

> *I wouldn't say that the group is heavily evangelistic, but it informs everything we say and do. So, they come to church, there is a Bible story. The door is open, and we do have not an enormous number of people from the group come to church but they do come to the Family Service that we run* (PT:2)

Once engaged, families included in this style of outreach are more likely to attend other services and continue progressing down the faith journey, with attendees requesting baptisms:

> *And then they've been encouraged in faith and we've seen more families come forward for baptism because they feel part of the church.* (ST:1)

> *And it links in nicely with the Family Services and family worship and Baptism. So, if you look at the Baptism families, a lot of those people have become Baptism families because they've come to* [group 1] *and that's an important thing. It links, it gets people*

into church and gets them thinking about their faith and I think that's - There used to be - and I think it's starting up again - [group 1] and a lot of mums went to that because they'd come to [group 2], to [group 3] things like that (PT:5)

I think we get some who will come to our family services, that's the first service of the month. We've had a number of children who've been baptised who've come from Little Sprouts; they've gone to Little Sprouts and then they've asked to be baptised (PT:13)

These successes have led to higher attendance at family services. An interesting note made by a participant was that engagement with the church did not impact their identity as a Christian, but did encourage them to involve themselves more into the community:

So, because of that we're seeing more people coming to our family worship services through being baptised or knowing about the services through the toddler group or coming along to help the services through the schools. So, we're seeing growth in our family services. (ST:1)

If I didn't come to Church Tots, if I didn't go to church I'd still be a Christian, call myself a Christian but I wouldn't be putting myself into the situations where things organically happen that make me think about my faith (PT:7)

The evidence suggests that the Gen2 supported outreach is a positive influence on encouraging further engagement with the church. The two aspects commonly linked to family disengagement, dissatisfaction with services and non-acceptance into the community are activity confronted (Francis and Robbins, 2012; Holmes, 2021). Family-orientated services allow attendees to participate with their children and explore their faith, as well as introduce them to other, situationally similar, members of the community (see: Section 3.1: Building Communities). The research participants noted increased attendance at family services, and requests for baptisms, once they had been engaged in a manner that was compatible with their life situation, suggesting Gen2 inspires impactful community engagement

6. Mapping the Community

This report presented the results from the research evaluating the Gen2 project that seeks to increasing engagement with churches by providing activities and groups that respond positively to the participants' needs. To do so the Gen2 project is based on a new model for training Youth and Children and Families Ministries composed of three stages. The research investigated the Gen2 activities' attendance and the experiences of young people and families using both quantitative and qualitative data. The quantitative data were collected by the Peterborough diocese during the activities. Interview data were collected by the ISII through 36 semi-structured interviews (18 from Towcester, 17 from Wellingborough, and one with the Gen2 director), half in February 2022 (T1) and half in June 2022 (T2). This report provides an evaluation framework capable of assessing the outcome of the Ministry training by evaluating if the Ministry increases engagement and improves the well-being of young people and families.

Overall, the data showed that Gen2 increases the engagement with the church and that mission enablers are able to respond positively to the participants' needs. The quantitative data showed that the activities have been increasing over time and that Gen2 is able to achieve some of the innovative goals, among which creating more outreaching programme, especially for youth. The qualitative data show that the beneficiaries of the programme felt that their needs were being met and that the programme was responsive to their needs, with each participant expressing positive experiences since they engaged.

The research has allowed for the development of a community map to help support a deeper understanding of the relationships of the various groups, stakeholders and beneficiaries identified in the research. Red lines/arrows highlight where barriers have been identified, and green where the project is proving to be successful (black connections are neutral and highlight a relationship between two nodes):

Figure 6.1. Mapping the communities involved in Gen2.
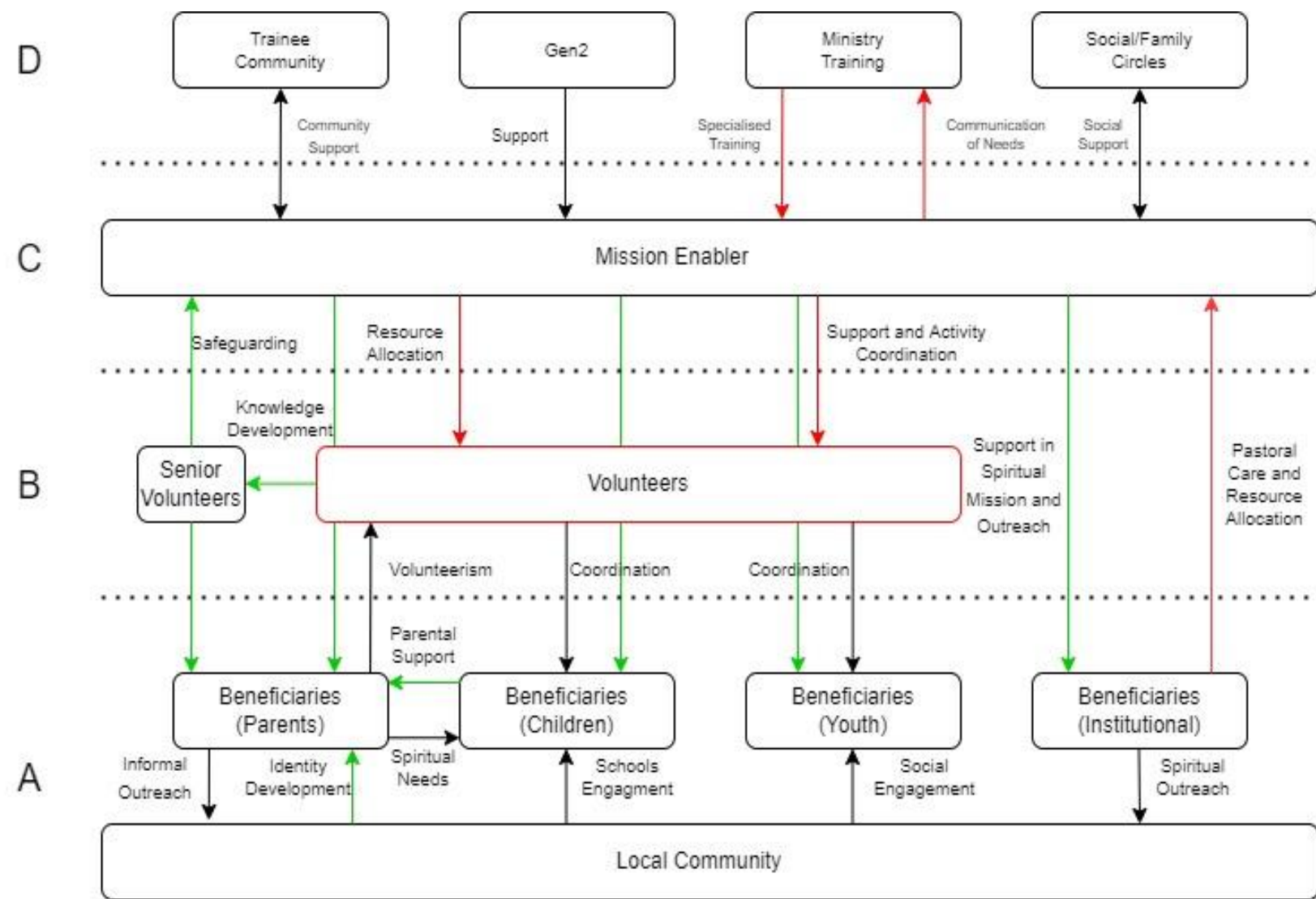
Tier A maps how beneficiary groups emerge or engage with the local community. Parental beneficiaries are drawn to the group due to the perception of honest personal connections, and its welcoming environment. This feeds into informal outreach, with parents discussing the relationships they have with other parents who they feel are suited to the group. Children are introduced, primarily, through their parents who wish to ensure their spiritual needs are met, and interactions with the mission enablers at their schools is beneficial. This said, the children do not simply have a passive involvement in the community, with them allowing parents to join the groups not only for family and community support but to resolve feelings of isolation. Youth beneficiaries primarily joined for social reasons, wanting to connect with people of the same age in the local area. Finally, institutional beneficiaries, representing the Churches, involved in Gen2 engage with the local community, offering spiritual outreach as part of the church's wider mission.

Tier B details the role of the volunteers and their relationship with the local community. Volunteers engage with both the child and youth beneficiaries primarily through activity coordination. Although not formally split, a section of the volunteers had moved into 'guide' roles, offering support to parents, and sharing knowledge. The guides that have emerged from the volunteer base tend to be older and more proactive at sharing their parental and family experiences. It was noted by a mission enabler that prior to COVID-19, there was a more robust community of volunteers, however, this has degraded leading to the mission enablers absorbing these responsibilities.

Tier C looks at the role of the mission enabler and their role in the community. Resource allocation refers to the tangible resources the mission enabler can provide, such as the engagement activity, food, drink, and space, although these are provided to volunteers, it is the mission enabler who is primarily involved in the design and implementation of the outreach activities. With the institutional beneficiaries, the mission enabler is directly involved in the traditional spiritual outreach of the church, both in services and local school engagement. However, this relationship is stronger within the church they are based, when engaging with others this relationship is weaker, and they may have less influence on the outreach conducted. For their part, the institutions offer pastoral care and resources that can support the Ministry.

Tier D examines the relationship between the mission enabler and their support networks. The involved mission enablers noted the importance of their social networks for both social and academic support, and the training given by the Gen2 project. They can communicate their

needs upward to Gen2 stakeholders, though one suggests that this does not sway the course development.

7. Conclusions and recommendations

The evaluation has found that the Gen2 project successfully supports children, youth, and family, enabled the development of support networks, encouraged of the faith journeys, helped buffer against individual feelings of isolation in the local area, and increased church attendance in general. Additionally, the prompt return to outreach activities after the pandemic period positively impacted the local communities, with other organisations halting outreach long term, or shutting down completely.
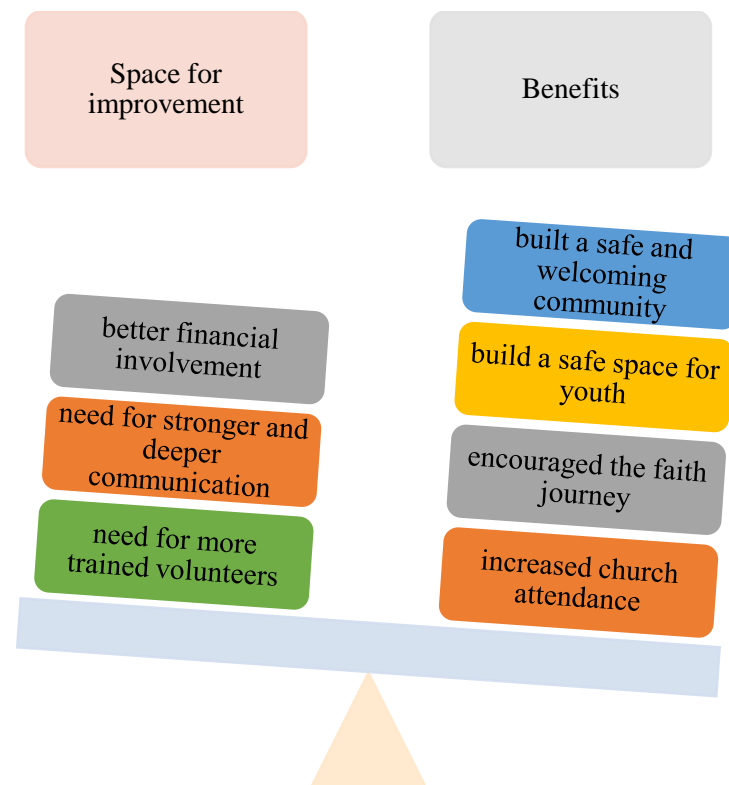
All levels of the project, the mission enablers, the Ministry training programme, volunteers, and the local stakeholders have positively contributed to this. There are three key areas for consideration:

1. Although the project has successfully built a safe and welcoming community, stakeholder perceptions of needs can differ. The prioritisation of the faith journey, stakeholder needs, financial concerns, outreach, and wellbeing of participants were all noted, and impact on the delivery of the Gen2 project.
2. The central role of the mission enabler has potentially led to an overreliance on them, with volunteers reducing their responsibilities and stakeholders expanding their duties. The causes of this may be limitations on the host churches resources, the mission enablers keenness to create change, or volunteers unsure of how to effectively support

the Ministry. Interviewed stakeholders are aware of the pressure placed on mission enablers and indicated there are problems with creating a supportive culture of volunteers. The evidence also suggests that the Ministry is significantly weakened when the mission enabler is unavailable, with volunteers unable to maintain the same level of quality in their sessions as may be expected.

3. The sustainable impact of the programme may be at risk with the institutions highlighting financial insecurity, and potentially being unable to fund the role once the Gen2 project ends. As suggested by the interviewed stakeholders, the goal of the Gen2 project is to encourage new methods of youth, children, and family engagement, and innovative mission enablers, something the Church has historically struggled with. However, due to the low available resources, there are indications that some churches encourage mission enablers to help support the groups or outreach provisions they already have in place and are likely to be sustainable if the role comes to an end. This may limit the effectiveness of outreach in churches who have adopted traditional attitudes toward youth engagement, the assumption that they will naturally return when older, limiting their willingness to engage with new methods.

To amplify the positive outcomes produced by the Gen2 project discussed above, the research team proposes the following key recommendations:

1. Develop a stronger and deeper communication between the various groups, such as Gen2 stakeholders, mission enablers, volunteers, and beneficiaries, allowing them to communicate their needs more effectively.

2. More support on helping mission enablers and the churches they work with in increasing the competencies, potentially through training, of the volunteers or be more proactive in placing limitations on mission enabler duties.

3. Building of a relationship between Gen2 and the wider community of churches to encourage buy-in into the project's goals and the adoption of innovative practices in outreach, especially to ensure financial sustainability.

4. The blended approach of utilising Discipleship, Outreach (Relationship building), and other activities is beneficial in creating innovative approaches to outreach and should be continued.

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