

# Paper D1

## Update on current work

### Education and Learning Committee

#### Basic information

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<b>Action required</b>	None.
<b>Draft resolution(s)</b>	<b>None.</b>

#### Summary of content

<b>Subject and aim(s)</b>	Update on the work of the Education and Learning team.
<b>Main points</b>	Focus areas of work for this Mission Council: EM2/3 redesign Church Leadership Programme Education and learning Hub Elders' training Safeguarding training Stepwise update.
<b>Previous relevant documents</b>	
<b>Consultation has taken place with...</b>	

#### Summary of impact

<b>Financial</b>	Already covered in budget.
<b>External (e.g. ecumenical)</b>	

## Education and Learning update

### 1. Areas of work for this Mission Council

- 1.1 All these areas of work are being brought to Mission Council: Locally recognised worship leaders and Assembly Accredited lay preachers proposals working with the Principals of the Resource Centres for Learning and Ministries Committee; reviewing the Discipleship Development Strategy and envisioning a permanent process for the Discipleship Development Fund; the Integration Consultation and the Committee sizing paper.

- 1.2 The Secretary for Education and Learning has spent the first three months of her new role involved meeting with groups, individuals and committees, developing relationships and making links with key contacts and groups.

## 2. **Education for Ministry phases two and three: continuing ministerial development**

- 2.1 EM2/3 continues to assist ministers in individual and collective ways to address the changing facets of ministry.

The pandemic has necessitated a re-design of many of the activities and learning events for all ministers. Many synods have been creative and supportive to ministers in awareness of the change in church culture and practice, offering excellent training and information. The Assembly programme has likewise taken a creative and innovative direction. EM2 is redesigned to have a chaplain for each cohort, accompanying each year's EM2 intake through to transition to EM3; new EM2ers forming small network sets for peer support; webinars on a range of ministry, discipleship and mission topics being arranged by Education and Learning and Ministries for all EM2ers to join with EM3 colleagues; and an annual summer retreat to be held for the whole EM2 cohort. New minister's conference continues each late autumn, physically or digitally.

- 2.2 For EM3ers and established lay leaders, **the Church Leadership Programme (CLP)** academic year 2019/20 week two was held as blended learning with extensive use of Zoom meetings and remote study. The next academic years will be a combination of blended and physical learning with far more connection between the beginning and end of the academic year than was possible when the CLP was only a physical learning event. As the **CLP** was designed as two residential weeks each academic year, the original materials were not specifically designed for blended learning. However, the advent of the new learning Hub has provided an opportunity for revising resources in order to offer a fully blended on/offline programme. Work revising and developing these materials is just beginning with a view to running the 21-22 programme through the learning Hub from the autumn.

- 2.3 Many ministers were not able to take up learning opportunities in much of 2020. In acknowledgement of this, the Education and Learning Committee raised the EM3 grant ceiling from £350 to £700 for 2021. The committee will review this at the end of 2021. Some sabbaticals needed to be postponed a year, yet in recognition of these complex times, ten year sabbatical entitlement dates were not changed from the original sabbatical planning.

- 2.4 Though not in EM2/3, it is important to report that the grant on offer to Assembly Accredited Lay Preachers was also increased, for 2021, from £200 to £300 for the same reason and understanding that they have needed to develop skills or purchase resources to help the changing times.

## 3. **EM2/3 and Safeguarding**

- 3.1 Continuing the good practice advocated from the Past Case Review, The Education and Learning Programme Officer is a member of the Safeguarding Advisory Group and works in close liaison with the URC Safeguarding Officer and Safeguarding Training Officer to ensure a cohesive approach to safe boundary

issues across the URC. Education and Learning has worked with Ministries to establish the mandatory safeguarding training for all ministers, a distinct discipline from Safer Sacred Space boundary training, rolling out in 2021. The monitoring of Safer Sacred Space training has moved from Education and Learning to ministries, with the initial training cycle complete and refresher training well underway.

## 4. URC Learning Hub

- 4.1 Work has begun on creating this learning Hub which, based on the successful Stepwise Hub format, will house all new and revised Education and Learning programmes going forward. The new Hub will be launched in spring 2021 and will initially house all of the Stepwise streams as well as some programmes and material transferred from URCLC. URCLC is being decommissioned as it is no longer able to meet current and anticipated Education and Learning needs; technology availability and requirements have moved on beyond its limits. Peer networks involved in Learning, such as the Training and Development Officers' network, will also move to the Hub.

The Church Leadership Programme is one of the programmes previously housed in URCLC which is being updated and will find a new home in the URC Learning Hub. The other programme currently being updated and also to be housed in the new Hub is the 'Exploring Eldership' programme. One further programme, a foundation course for Safeguarding, is also destined to join the new Hub. Launch dates for these programmes will be in the late spring and summer 2021.

When fully commissioned the Hub will not only allow access to individual programmes but will also enable participants on all programmes to view what is available in the way of other courses and programmes. It is anticipated that this will encourage participants to venture to continue their personal discipleship journeys beyond the programmes for which they enrol initially. Thus the new Learning Hub will encourage a joined-up approach to all of the programmes offered by Education and Learning and provide a one stop shop for those looking for education opportunities in the URC.

- 4.2 **Exploring Eldership** will be the first full programme to join Stepwise in the new Hub. Currently resource materials for serving and future elders are provided in printed form via downloads from the URC website. The revised materials are interactive and fully updated to allow for recent developments for Elders in terms of practice and of governance. A particular feature of these new materials will be especially commissioned video content from currently serving Elders. Situating this material in interactive form in the new Hub will allow Elders from churches right across the URC to access valuable and practical support from their home location and will supplement that provided in synods – of particular significance and importance in these pandemic times.
- 4.3 **Foundation level Safeguarding training** is presently provided face-to-face, but limited because of travel restrictions. It could be provided interactively and the already endorsed material is now being developed for delivery through the new Hub. This format will permit individuals to undertake essential foundation level training at any time regardless of whether there are others available to form a face-to-face group. This will speed efforts to ensure that all those requiring safeguarding training are able to receive it when needed.

## 5. Stepwise update

- 5.1 With all five Stepwise streams now available, the focus in the early part of 2021 is to advocate the programme and encourage greater participation. The Stepwise team have been hosting a series of 'Taste and See' webinars, with an open invitation to anyone to come and learn more about the programme and see how it can help them to develop their journey of Christian discipleship and faith. The five webinars have focussed on each of the five Stepwise streams and have enabled potential Stepwise participants to find out more about each stream.
- 5.2 The Stepwise pages of the URC Website have also been updated with further details about the five streams and downloadable stream outlines for those who are looking for more information. <https://urc.org.uk/introducing-stepwise.html>
- 5.3 Despite the Coronavirus pandemic and a number of lockdowns affecting people's ability to meet in person, last year saw a steady number of Stepwise groups working through Faith-filled Life using Zoom. This trend has continued and even increased in the early part of 2021 with a number of new groups starting the year by registering for Faith-filled Life. It is testimony to the flexibility of the Stepwise material and the creativity of group facilitators that they have been able to adapt the group session material to suit online delivery. Some of the groups who have completed Faith-filled Life are beginning to enquire about progressing to other streams – again using Zoom to meet together online.
- 5.4 Looking ahead, work is being done on creating a robust evaluation framework for Stepwise, the aim of which is both to assist the further development of the programme and to provide feedback to the denomination through Education and Learning that Stepwise is working as intended. The Stepwise Development Group and Learning Standards Board have also been part of the conversations relating to Locally Recognised Worship Leaders and Assembly Accredited Lay Preachers. Stepwise, through Faith-filled Worship in particular, forms a major part of the recommended training of Locally Recognised Worship Leaders so it is important that the programme is able to deliver this and meet the expectations of participants and the wider church.