

Paper B1

Children and Youth Friendly Church Scheme

Children's and youth work committee

Basic information

Contact name and email address	The Revd Jenny Mills (committee convenor) revdjmill@btinternet.com
Action required	Decision.
Draft resolution(s)	Mission Council welcomes the review of the United Reformed Church's Child Friendly Church Award and commends the new Children and Youth Friendly Church scheme to replace this from 2020 as an award to be made by children's and youth work committee on behalf of the denomination to churches completing the approval process.

Summary of content

Subject and aim(s)	A review of the Child Friendly Church Award and recommendation for a new process to replace this in the United Reformed Church.
Main points	
Previous relevant documents	General Assembly 2006: Youth and Children's Work Committee report, and Resolution 42.
Consultation has taken place with...	CYDO+ team, a number of local churches Oxford, Southwark and Liverpool Dioceses of the Church of England.

Summary of impact

Financial	To be met from children's and youth work committee budget.
External (e.g. ecumenical)	Other churches may be interested to adopt a similar scheme, and some Church of England Dioceses are currently reviewing their schemes along similar lines.

1. The United Reformed Church Child Friendly Church Award (CFCA)

- 1.1 The Child Friendly Church Award scheme was created after the Anglican Diocese of Liverpool carried out a review of its life and work. The resulting report made a keynote recommendation that parishes 'welcome and integrate children and their families into the worshipping life of their church'. It concluded that it is desirable that churches advertise to the community that they take provision for the young seriously. Churches inviting children in this way should provide a quality service which should be accountable to the church leadership and meet with certain set criteria. A new scheme was introduced to encourage churches to put children and families on their agendas, to work towards certain targets and obtain a certificate and an award to be displayed as appropriate.
- 1.2 Having seen the scheme, the URC Assembly Youth and Children's Work Committee felt it was a good idea and adapted it for use within the United Reformed Church. 'Towards a Charter for Children in the Church', introduced at General Assembly 1990, challenged churches to become fully inclusive in their work with children. This scheme offered a way to measure progress towards that goal.
- 1.3 In 2006 General Assembly resolved, 'General Assembly commends the Child Friendly Church Award scheme to local churches and recognises the award as a sign of good practice.
- 1.4 The accompanying report said 'This is a voluntary programme with a light touch, but it is not just an exercise in ticking boxes. It is more about recognising the importance of children and young people in the local church and continually improving how we welcome them and minister with them.'
- 1.5 The URC version of the Child Friendly Church Award scheme began in 2006 and was reviewed and updated in 2012. It was further reviewed and updated in 2017 and the renewal period extended to every five years (from every three years). Churches were presented with a plaque to display, a letter confirming approval, and a register of all Child Friendly Churches was kept by Church House.

2. CFCA impact

The CFCA has proved of interest and value to local churches in the URC. In total 117 churches have successfully completed the application process and been awarded plaques. There is a notable disinclination by over half of the churches involved to date to renew. Feedback suggests that this is in part due to the onerous process and the lack of perceived benefit in repeating it for the local church. Although the intention was to avoid a 'tick box' mentality, in practice the form requires a large number of boxes to be ticked, is rather 'one size fits all', and focusses on the current situation rather than aiding future development. There is a desire shared by the CYWC and the CYDO+ team to increase the accessibility of this scheme.

SYNOD	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	11	12	13	TOTAL
2006	1				2									3
2007	1				2	1	2		1	1	2		1	11
2008	2	2	1		2		3	1	4	1	4		2	22
2009 (renewed)	1		1		4	1	2	1	3	2	3		1	19
2010 (renewed)		1			5									6
2011 (renewed)	1	1					1	2	4		1			10
2012 (renewed)		1	1	3	1 3			1	1		2 1		1	11 5
2013 (renewed)		2		2				1 1	3 1		1 8			9 10
2014 (renewed)	1		1		2			1	1	1				3 5
2015 (renewed)		2			4				1	1	1			3 7
2016 (renewed)					1 6			1 2	3		1	1		7 8
2017 (renewed)	1		1		4 3					1		1		7 5
2018 (renewed)				2	2		1		1		1			4 3
2019 (renewed)		1		1	1				1			2		4 2
TOTAL no churches	6	10	5	6	24	2	9	7	22	7	14	2	5	117
TOTAL current	1	3	1	2	21	0	1	3	6	3	4	2	0	46

3. CYDO+ team review of CFCA process

3.1 In February 2019 the team of children and youth development officers and other synod lead workers for children's and youth work (CYDO+ team) set up a working group to revise the existing CFCA process following feedback from new team members. There was general agreement that the existing approach was too similar to an inspection with a tick-box approach. The paperwork and process were too complicated, and did not actively encourage engagement with children and young people beyond Sunday provision and running programmes. The working group discovered that the originator of the scheme, Liverpool Diocese, and another key participant, Oxford Diocese, had each separately overhauled their processes, changed their logos and in the latter case changed the name and introduced two levels. Both had moved to a more reflective process, inviting open-ended responses from the churches.

3.2 The working group agreed underlying principles:

- An accompanied process – by a synod appointed person (CYDO+ or their representative)

- An appreciative and affirming process – appropriate for every church, regardless of their starting position in relation to children and young people
- A reflective process – inviting churches to grow and develop in an on-going way
- Promoting children's and young people's spirituality
- Promoting an intergenerational ethos.

3.3 The working group developed a new pack for churches and a process to use with churches. This was taken to the CYDO+ team meeting and children's and youth work committee for discussion and subsequent further amendment, and then approval by both. The children's and youth work committee proposed a new name to reflect the new emphasis.

The children's and youth work team have produced a draft plaque, leaflet and booklet to support this proposal, and some sample material will be circulated at Mission Council.

4. Proposal for replacement: Children and Youth Friendly Church

A new scheme is proposed with a new name, to replace the Child Friendly Church Award: Children and Youth Friendly Church Scheme:

A church can apply to join the scheme through their CYDO+ or **directly to Church House.**

- The CYDO+ or their representative will then take the role of accompanier and meet with the church and provide a booklet outlining a reflective process to be worked through.

They would then meet with the church again to reflect **together on their engagement with children and young people, and agree an action plan and whether the church is to be recommended for approval.**

Their **completed booklet would be submitted for approval by the children's and youth work team** along with the action plan and an outline 'pen portrait' of the church's engagement with children and young people completed by the accompanier.

A plaque stating **'this is a Children and Youth Friendly Church' showing the year it was approved and the year it expires (five years later) will be presented by the synod on behalf of children's and youth work committee to the church. A record shall be kept of all churches approved by the scheme.**

- The CYDO+ or representative would keep in contact with the church to review progress in relation to the action plan, and to prepare them for re-approval is appropriate after five years.

5. Currently being tested

The new scheme is being trialled by a couple of churches to ensure it is as easy to engage with as intended, and that it promotes excellence in children's and youth work. Minor amendments may then be made by the CYDO+ team to the supporting paperwork.