



**MISSION COUNCIL**

**13 – 15 MAY 2013**

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# **Children & Youth Work Development Officers Employment status**

In order that Mission Council might be able to make a decision about the future employment status of the CYDO programme employees this paper has been prepared by the Youth and Children's Work Committee, in consultation with CYDO Managers, and the General Secretariat.

## **Introduction**

The United Reformed Church has developed an Assembly run programme of youth and children's development officers over the past forty years. This was introduced in the 1970's and was focussed initially on 'youth leadership training'. Over the years it was recognised that the programme needed to include children and to include a focus on development, not just training. Both ministry amongst children and ministry amongst young people have developed as specialist areas over the past thirty years. The current team of Children and Youth Development Officers (CYDOs) consists of people who have developed specialist knowledge to support local churches in the areas of youth and children's work, including youth and children's ministry.

The first General Assembly resolutions concerning Youth Leadership Training Officers (YLTO) can be found in the book of reports for 1974, 1979, 1982, 1987. It was first agreed that we would aim for one in each synod (Province in those days) in 1988. As the number of officers grew in the 1980's it was decided that the co-ordination of the team was too onerous a job for the National Youth Secretary. One of the YLTOs was appointed as a half time manager with the remainder of time working for a synod. On the retirement of this post-holder, a full time manager was appointed and this role continued until 1997.

The focus and terminology changed in 1990 and details of the Youth and Children's Work Trainers programme can be found in the book of reports for 1990, 1997, 2002.

## **The story so far**

In 2008 a major review of the Assembly YCWTD programme took place, this included a recommendation to change the post title to Children & Youth Development Officer (CYDO). The CYDO programme, as it is currently run, was adopted at General Assembly 2008 and a 51 page handbook for the programme was updated and distributed to the relevant people in each synod, including CYDOs and CYDO managers.

Currently, the Assembly Youth & Children's Work Committee (YCWC) has oversight of the CYDO programme, on behalf of General Assembly. It is involved in appointments of new CYDO staff and includes the work of the CYDO programme in its reports to General Assembly.

The YCWC is responsible for the delivery of Youth and Children's work, as directed by General Assembly, at local, synod and Assembly level. The CYDO team members operate at all of these levels delivering programmes, events, training and activities. Their employed time is split in two portions: 25% for Assembly agreed work and 75% Synod agreed work. Each CYDO is managed by a synod appointed manager. Work completed as part of the 25% is managed by the HCYWD in

conjunction with the synod manager. The process for utilising the 25% time of each CYDO has become more effective in the past year.

From January 1<sup>st</sup> 2013, the HYCWD chairs the CYDO team meetings and with the CYDO team being represented by one of their number at the YCWC, together, they can ensure that policy decisions made at the YCWC are understood and can be acted upon in the spirit of their intention through the CYDO team to the local churches. The HYCWD attends the CYDO managers' meetings and works with the managers regularly. A new programme of induction and support for managers will be implemented in the near future.

The employment contracts and Terms and Conditions agreement of the CYDO team members have traditionally been issued and held by Church House. In 2010, on the advice of the then Head of Human Resources, all new CYDOs employed from that point were appointed on Synod contracts rather than Assembly contracts, which has led to confusion, and for some, feelings of inequality or abandonment.

### **Implications of the employment status:**

If the CYDOs are employed by the General Assembly,

- they are all employed under the same terms and conditions. Thus they all receive the same salary and benefits across their team but may find themselves on different scales than other staff in the synods
- the level of salary carries both an expectation of professional standards and the ability to appoint people with appropriate nationally recognised qualifications; with continued professional development, this ensures transition and opportunities for career progression
- they are all recruited on the basis of an agreed set of qualifications, skills and experience, with consistency across the appointment panels
- there is a national standard of delivery enhanced by team discussions and training
- they are supported by regular training, organized at Assembly level and benefit from peer learning at regular meetings
- the programme is clearly an Assembly programme operating across the denomination and includes the instigation of new initiatives from General Assembly or the Assembly YCWC. Different local priorities can be built into their individual job descriptions but the variety operates within agreed limits
- they work as part of an Assembly recognised programme within the URC which enables them to speak with equal weight, responsibility and consistency when working ecumenically and with statutory bodies
- children and young people are part of a bigger church community and encounter other young Christians as part of the opportunities on offer, CYDOs facilitate this opportunity
- they have local managers but are ultimately accountable to General Assembly
- there has been a high dependency on CYDOs in the area of safeguarding and not unreasonably so. Particularly because of their independence from any local church situation they have been able to give objective advice, deal with specific issues and support synods, local churches and individuals before, during and after cases often conducted in the heat of publicity. They have been able to do this work because we can be assured that their training as part of the whole CYDO Team has been thorough and kept up to date with rapidly changing legislation. When you need advice in this area you want it speedily and to be able to rely on it unquestionably.

If the CYDOs are employed by the synods,

- the coherence of the Assembly programme is difficult to sustain. The balance naturally shifts towards local vision, energy and commitment, with Assembly work increasingly dependent on the good will of the synods in choosing to work together
- it would be up to the synods to decide about the qualifications, skills and experience needed, which not only impacts on the viability of the Assembly programme but also exposes the

synod to increased synod expenditure to ensure recruitment practices are within current employment legislation

- the terms and conditions of employment could be very different in each of the thirteen synods
- the support given to synod line managers would be lost by the synod if the employees are not part of Assembly CYDO programme

In addition, we note that the CYDO programme currently offers:

- local church support; most CYDOs and local church employed youth workers are not members of the URC and need cultural attachment and induction which nationally is provided through having a CYDO team and locally by CYDOs who know what they found helpful. The CYDO team have produced 'Induction resources for workers in the URC', an example of how perceived needs can be addressed in a consistent way
- colleague support
- the ability to advise or caution local churches especially with regards safeguarding; when CYDOs operate in advisory or cautionary roles within a Synod they can do so with a degree of independent authority knowing they are part of an Assembly team which is directly linked to the YCWC. An independent synod appointment may not feel they have the necessary freedom to fully advise or caution. CYDOs have the ability to target Assembly policy across disparate areas within Synods with differing needs. (It is the Assembly policy implementation which is important here as many others could and should recognise the differing needs)
- the production of resources for local churches; CYDOs either self motivated as a group recognising needs or directed via YCWC have been responsible for developing and publishing many helpful advisory, theologically reflective booklets and resources which are valued by many local churches and synods. Some examples are:
  - Core Skills for children's work
  - Spirituality among Children
  - Following God DVD resource
  - Children and Communion
  - Children and Film

## **Where we would like to be:**

The Youth and Children's Work Committee is convinced that the programme would become much more difficult to sustain if there is no Assembly level agreement. In order to maintain a consistent approach, the use of the Assembly level Youth and Children's Work Officers and Assembly level Human Resources officer in the appointment process seems the most appropriate way forward. Additionally, for all contracts to be issued and held in the Assembly Human Resources office seems the most effective way forward.

However, we do believe that there is still scope for the CYDO programme to continue to develop, as it has over the past 40 years. One area that we have already identified for improvement is the training and induction process for Synod CYDO managers. These people freely volunteer their management skills and experience, we recognise the need to ensure that they are adequately resourced and supported.

## **Resolution:**

**Mission Council resolves that the employment status of Children and Youth Development Officers be situated at General Assembly level, and asks the Human Resources office to take advice and bring this into being.**

Robert Weston  
Convener Youth and Children's Work Committee  
11<sup>th</sup> February 2013

*Groups for circulation: YCWC/CYDO Managers/Synod Moderators/Synod Clerks (for forwarding to CYDO strategy group or similar)/Synod Treasurers/CYDOs*

## Appendix A

The Youth and Children's Work Committee would have preferred this matter not to be dominated by financial considerations – the remit of the paper was not to consider the future funding of the CYDO programme but to consider where contracts were held. However, it is clear from the feedback we have received that financial arrangements need to be considered.

In the General Assembly book of reports 2008 the Finance Committee brought Resolution 41 which is introduced with these words:

'It was noted that the current funding arrangements introduce an administrative complexity. It was felt sensible to phase out over the next three years the split funding arrangement for those synods which choose to have YCWTDOS... This change would mean the elimination of the relevant YCWTDOS cost line in the United Reformed Church's central budget so that the M&M request to synods with YCWTDOS would be proportionately lower than it would otherwise have been.'

It is now clear that this was not simply about administrative complexity – the shift transferred the costs from each Synod's M&M contribution and it now comes from each Synod's funds. We are aware of the wide variance in the way each Synod funds its operations and with the economic slump this has made the situation much worse for many (if not all) synods.

The Finance Committee feel that it would be sensible that if employment contracts are issued at General Assembly level, then the employees should be on the central payroll. This would imply that the funding would move back to M&M – but with the current M&M situation it would be difficult to provide every synod with a CYDO. A possible way forward might be to aim at fewer than 13 CYDOS and move the funding responsibility gradually over a period of years so the reductions in other areas of the central budget are also less abrupt. A more radical alternative would be to set up a designated CYDO Fund, invite Synods and churches to contribute to it, and employ whatever number of CYDOS the donations to the fund can support.

The Finance Committee feel that if employment contracts are issued at Synod level, then each CYDO would be on the synod payroll and funding would be direct from the Synod. Clearly this approach would not address the challenging financial situation that many synods find themselves facing.