

Paper B2

Children's and Youth Work Committee
Pilots Advocate





Paper B2

Children's and Youth Work Committee

Pilots Advocate

Basic Information

Contact name and email address	The Revd Tim Meachin (committee convener) revd.tim.meachin@gmail.com The Revd Jenny Mills (committee convener elect) revdjmill@btinternet.com
Action required	Decision.
Draft resolution(s)	Mission Council supports the children's and youth work committee's decision to appoint a Pilots Advocate, which will be funded from the C&YW budget, and resolves that this post be filled through the nominations committee in the usual way.

Summary of Content

Subject and aim(s)	Pilots Advocate
Main points	The Pilots Management Committee in consultation with the Children's and Youth Work Committee has introduced the voluntary role of Pilots Advocate.
Previous relevant documents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children's and Youth Work Committee minutes from September 2016 and February 2017. • Pilots Advocate Role descriptor
Consultation has taken place with...	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pilots Management Committee • Children's and Youth Work Committee • General Assembly Clerk (regarding due process)

Summary of Impact

Financial	Expenses – responsibility of the Children's and Youth Work Committee budget
External (e.g. ecumenical)	Pilots is made available to other denominations e.g. the Congregational Federation.

Pilots Advocate

Background

- 1.1 Pilots was set up in 1936 by the London Missionary Society in conjunction with the Congregational Union of England and Wales, as a way of saying “thank you” to children across the country who had raised money for missionary ships in the South Seas. It was founded on the great stories of courageous and dynamic people, in particular John Williams whose missionary work was undertaken in the South Seas.
- 1.2 This commitment to recognise and nurture the gifts and talents which children and young people bring to the service of God and His Church continues to sit at the very heart of the Pilots organisation today. The children of the past made their mark through their enthusiastic support of the ‘Missionary Ships’. The contribution children make today is just as important to the ‘world-wide church of Jesus Christ’.
- 1.3 The organisation is financed by the United Reformed Church and is the denomination’s principal formal organisation offered for children and young people. It should also be noted that Pilots companies exist in a variety of denominations.
- 1.4 Pilots operates through the Pilots Management Committee (PMC) as a sub-committee of the Children’s and Youth Work Committee.

The impact of the Children’s and Youth Work Re-structuring

- 2.1 In 2013 the Children’s & Youth Work (CYW) department of the United Reformed Church (URC) underwent radical restructuring following cuts to the CYW budget.
- 2.2 This restructuring affected Pilots more than was realised it would at the time. Whilst there have been some positive elements of being more integrated, the overall effect has not been beneficial to the organisation.
- 2.3 One of the most obvious downsides of the restructuring was the disappearance of the full-time dedicated post of Pilots Development Officer (PDO).
- 2.4 Previously there had been a part-time Master Pilot, a role assigned to a stipendiary minister. The URC’s decision to create the PDO post in 1998 was bold and visionary. The part-time Master Pilot role came to an end as the PDO became the “face of Pilots” in the Church. As a consequence the number of Pilots companies increased.

Changes in recent years

- 3.1 The specific activities of the PDO were:
 - contributing to Synod meetings;
 - visiting ministerial training colleges;
 - encouraging Synods to appoint Regional Pilots Officers (RPOs);
 - developing a network of RPOs,
 - who would work closely with Children & Youth Development Officers (CYDOs) and hold annual strategy meetings;
 - visiting and encouraging Pilots Companies.

- 3.2 The restructuring mentioned above, together with the restructuring of Synods and consequent demise of Districts, resulted in many local churches as well as Pilots Companies, feeling isolated - and numbers dropped.
- 3.3 Not every Synod has been able to identify and appoint a dedicated Regional Pilots Officer. The role of RPO, in some synods, has been passed to already over loaded CYDOs. In these synods, Pilots will, inevitably, not be a priority.
- 3.4 All 3 areas of C&Y work, Pilots, Children's and Youth are now centred on the Head of Children's and Youth Work Development post. (HCYWD). It became clear that the programme, pre-restructuring, which was being delivered by 3 equal Assembly C&YW posts, supported by 3 administrative posts, could not be sustainable now, given the current staffing levels of 1 Assembly appointed post plus a Programme Officer and 2 administrative posts. There is little time for the HCYWD to give to development as time is necessarily consumed by day to day operational work.
- 3.5 In all of this, the identity of Pilots has been affected – although it has become part of the bigger picture it is now a smaller part of it, it has become the wallpaper, unnoticed and under-promoted. Pilots ceased to be 'offered' to churches in the same way as there was no PDO to promote the work, there was no national overview and no longer did the opportunities exist to visit and encourage synods and local churches to consider Pilots as a way to enhance their missional discipleship.
- 3.6 Company numbers have declined since 2012 with the ending of the PDO post.

2012	81
2013	75
2014	65
2015	61
2016	59

Why have a Pilots Advocate?

- 4.1 In its efforts to identify and arrest the decline in numbers and encourage growth, the PMC believes:
- that it is necessary to establish the place and role of Pilots in the C&Y programmes of the church;
 - that the Children's and Youth Work Committee (CYWC) needs a clear understanding about the overall programme being offered to the churches;
 - that Pilots is an integral part of that programme.
- 4.2 The PMC believes that appointing someone, in a voluntary capacity with a knowledge and passion for Pilots, who could take a lead in the advocacy of Pilots across the URC will provide a strong input to the future of the organisation and so play a major part in addressing the decline and encouraging growth.
- 4.3 Hence the members of the PMC meeting requested:
- that the C&YW Committee identify the programme of C&YW to be delivered;
 - that Pilots is promoted as the programme offered and supported by the URC for work with children;
 - that consideration be given to the creation of an honorary, fixed period (2 – 3 years), position for a Pilots Advocate whose job would be that of a URC-wide advocate for Pilots, fulfilling the encouraging, enabling and supporting role carried out previously by the PDO.

- 4.4 In Feb 2016. The CYWC passed the following resolutions:

“Pilots is the Children’s and Youth Work programme, for those aged 5 to 18, offered and supported by the United Reformed Church and will be promoted as such, where it is appropriate.”

“In response to a suggestion from the Pilots Management Committee, the CYWC advocates the creation of the role of ‘Master Pilot’/ Pilots Advocate. This would be a fixed term appointment to advocate, encourage, enable and support Pilots (similar to the previous PDO). The CYWC asks the PMC to draw up details of this initiative, including a role description, resource requirements and costings to be considered at a future meeting.”

Funding

- 5.1 Funding for the Pilots Advocate will come from the CYW budget as specified in the Role Description. Since this is a voluntary role the only costs will be the associated expenses such as travel and some overnight accommodation.

Conclusion

- 6.1 For the Pilots Advocate to be recognised and accepted by the denomination, the PMC now shares with Mission Council its plans for this appointment and requests that it be added to the Nominations Committee list in order that names can be identified and an appropriate appointment be made.
- 6.2 The PMC firmly believes that a Pilots Company in a local church can greatly enhance their outreach to children and young people and promote the inclusive ethos of the URC’s ministry to children and young people.

