



The

NEW BRIDGES





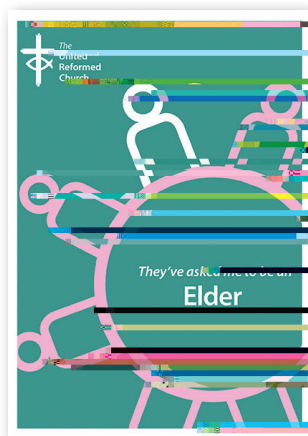
# T 'a , & ! b

## I

All churches are encouraged to have an Elder with particular responsibility for children's and youth work. This booklet has been primarily written for those who have been asked to consider a call to being such an Elder for their church – although it will also be useful for those who have recently taken up the role. Throughout this booklet we have used the term 'C&YW Elder' as shorthand for any Elder with particular responsibility for children's and youth work. Please see the paragraph on the inside front cover for more information on this.

This booklet focuses on the particular tasks and required skills of the C&YW Elder and has been written to be read in conjunction with the

booklet. C&YW elders are full members of the Elders Meeting – they fulfil the duties of an Elder but the additional and particular responsibility for children's and youth work. *T 'a , & ! b a E* explains what Eldership is, as well as detailing the core roles, responsibilities and expected characteristic of all Elders. Taken together these two resources should help you decide if you are being called to be an Elder.



And, it's worth remembering these golden nuggets of wisdom from an experienced C&YW Elder: 'As a C&YW Elder you are an Elder first, C&YW Elder second ... a passion for children and young people is crucial – and your age is completely irrelevant!'

## T

Over and above the attributes listed in the *T* booklet there is just one additional, essential, attribute: to have a passion for, and commitment to, the welfare and spiritual growth of all children and young people connected to your local church. If this sums up you, then read on!

## C& E

## S

## C& E

In essence the role of C&YW

Elders is to help the local church

take its C&Y work (more) seriously and help ensure the work is meaningful, viable and effective – making sure that children and young people have a voice and that their views are represented. At their most effective C&YW Elders act as a bridge between the children and young people, the C&YW workers and the Elders/Minister.

'I nclude news about children and young people everywhere'

There are some key things you can do to help ensure this happens:

*E* . . . *q* ' *a* . . . *a* *q* *a* *a* *a*  
*a* *q* . Although some churches will have designated and regular C&YW information slots in all meetings, many will not. As a C&YW Elder it's your responsibility to ensure that every Elders Meeting and every Church Meeting is fully updated on C&YW activities. Encourage engagement with children and youth work and, where appropriate, share C&YW issues/events/successes in weekly church notices too.

*l* . . . *ab* . . . *a* . . . – in services and on notice boards, newsletters, websites, social media – and include them in the prayers.

*C* . . . *q* . . . *a* *q* *a* C&YW . . . and develop the church vision with them. The most effective C&YW Elders are both

communication channels and conduits for change – so you could start by asking the volunteers what they want to achieve in the work, what changes they would like to see, and how they think the church can best support them in their work.



Children and young people may have strong views on key church policies including the marriage of same-sex couples and disinvestment from fossil fuels. Let children and young people know their opinions matter; let them know they've been heard. Views can be gathered via an anonymous suggestion box and/or an annual questionnaire – the latter could be used to gather opinions on many aspects of church life including the content of church services, all children's and youth work groups C&Y, as well as specific issues.

Develop a C&YW strategy. Help your church to consider its strategy for work with children and young people

'One tactic ... producing a regular newsletter for all involved/interested in C&YW'

and then work to develop a viable, effective plan! Obviously, all churches will have a different starting point – but what's important is a clear vision of where the children's and youth work is going. One C&YW Elder said he started with the simple vision of 'growing the C&Y work in the church' and this developed into a plan to increase the number of volunteer leaders and workers as an essential precursor to increasing the number of children and young people reached. One tactic they used was producing a regular newsletter for all involved/interested in C&YW. Your synod and Church House staff will be available to help further, see the 'Further information and support' section on page 11 for their contact details.

Build relationships with other groups. Whatever the groups are – bumps and babies, toddler groups, dance classes, sports clubs, art and craft, singing and music, youth groups – make sure you introduce yourself to them and swap contact details so you can stay connected (email, phone, WhatsApp – whatever works best for you all). Consider whether you could build links through shared fundraising or social events?

Such events can be included in church notices and prayers. Some churches might have a vision to integrate all the C&YW in the church so C&YW Elders might be looking for common ground as a basis for developing closer ties – holiday clubs during the Easter and Summer school holidays are worth considering.

If there are Boys' Brigade or Girls' Brigade groups associated with church someone should be their chaplain, and they should give a report each year to the church meeting. Consider how the church might support these groups in their discipleship of children and young people. If there are Guide and Scout groups associated with the church ensure someone is in regular contact with the leaders, and ask for a report each year for the church meeting. It may be helpful to connect with the **URCG**

**S F** . Find ways to make these groups more visible to the rest of the church, for example through parade services and display boards. Identify ways the church could offer them opportunities to help with badge work, for example helping serve refreshments or tidy the garden, and ways church members could offer to share their expertise to the groups.

**S a** . If your church is involved in running **M C** , **P** or toddler group, or other faith-based children's or youth group, then we recommend building links with the leaders to offer support and help them feel connected to the church. Include them on the church website, in notices and prayers. h mem-1.304.h to thfiteh

Please don't feel completely overwhelmed by that list, we've tried to make it as comprehensive and detailed as possible. You're not expected to write a strategy that includes all of the above, and then action it in six months, and neither are you expected to do this work alone. You are part of at least two teams – the Elders and the C&YW leaders' teams – so work with them, read through that list, prioritise and build those priorities into your strategic action plan. And don't forget that support is available at both synod and Church House level – see the 'Further information and support section' on page 11.

## D

## C& E

You will already be interested in children's and youth work but below are some quick and easy steps you can take to develop your interest/deepen your knowledge of this field.

1. One of the most important things you can do to develop your effectiveness is make contact with your synod's C&Y lead worker.



4. Regularly check out the [C](#) [' &](#)  of the URC website.
5. Attend any local (synod) or national training events and encourage others to come too.
6. Promote training for the volunteers – suggest the church pays for this. Talk to your synod's CYDO about running a training session for

# T C F C A

Your church may already be a recipient of this award which recognises the steps taken to ensure children and young people are welcomed in all areas of church life. If your church is not yet involved in this why not consider applying? It's a reflective process which encourages the church to recognise all that already happens, and to identify some areas to strengthen in the future. The award lasts for five years and then needs to be reviewed for re-awarding. Your church will receive a certificate

## F

## S

As mentioned above the C&YW synod staff are excellent sources of support and help – a full list is [here](#). In synods where the position is currently vacant there will be another member of synod staff who is temporarily covering the role.

If you are not already in contact with your CYDO we do recommend you contact them. Tell them you're considering becoming/are the C&YW Elder and ask to be added to their mailing list and enquire what support/preparation/training opportunities there are. And then take advantage of all available help!

## T

,

## C

## H

Sam Richards – Head of Children's and Youth Work and Lorraine Webb – Children's and Youth Work Programme Officer are both based at Church House in London and may be able to answer your questions – call them on 020 7916 8683 or email at [s.richards@urc.org.uk](mailto:s.richards@urc.org.uk) or [l.webb@urc.org.uk](mailto:l.webb@urc.org.uk).



This is one in a series of booklets designed to give information to those who have been asked to consider taking on a role in the United Reformed Church.

The booklets can be read and downloaded at [www.urc.org.uk/ask](http://www.urc.org.uk/ask)



© United Reformed Church 2020. Updated 2024  
Produced by the Communications Team of the  
United Reformed Church  
The United Reformed Church, Church House,  
86 Tavistock Place, London WC1H 9RT  
020 7916 2020

[www.urc.org.uk](http://www.urc.org.uk)

