



Develop a vision for youth and children's ministry

This guide is designed to help you shape your vision for youth and children's ministry. It has been adapted from *The Key* (2014) written by: Tony Cook and Dan Jones, Diocesan Youth and Children's Advisers.

"Where there is no vision, the people perish" - Proverbs 29: 18

"Vision without action is merely a dream. Action without vision just passes the time. Vision with action can change the world" - Joel A Baker

"Where there is no vision, there is no hope" - George Washington Carver

When it comes to developing youth and children's ministry a clear vision is paramount. This vision must be easy to understand, achievable and link with the overall vision of the church. When seeking a vision for youth and children's ministry here are some key things to consider:

- **Core Aims**
- **Central Focus**
- **Priority Activities**

To help with your thinking here is a session outline consisting of three useful activities. The session can be done with a group of interested people and will last about 1.5 hours.

Session outline

Activity 1: Core Aims (20mins)

Using a large sheet of paper with the phrase **Youth / Children's ministry** written in the centre, invite the group to freely interpret it by writing words or phrases on the sheet. After several minutes, invite feedback. Some common themes may emerge which could inform your vision.

Next think about how some of the words / phrases from Activity 1 relate to some of the '**Core Aims**' of youth / children's ministry:

- **Development:** Provide opportunities for children and young people to grow socially, morally, ethically, physically, emotionally and spiritually.
- **Discipleship:** Enable children and young people to accept and own their Christian faith, to grow as followers of Jesus, to live out their faith in everyday life and to share their faith with others.

- **Empowerment:** Help children and young people to develop their own wisdom, understanding and knowledge so that they can begin to shape their own lives and faith.
- **Equality:** Ensure all children and young people know and feel that they are accepted, loved and valued for who they are.
- **Informal Education:** Provide a variety of opportunities where children and young people can grow, develop and achieve outside of their formal education setting.
- **Justice:** Enable children and young people to experience fairness for themselves and how a lack of fairness affects others in the world.
- **Participation:** Enable children and young people to share their suggestions and ideas to help shape the things that they are involved in.
- **Wellbeing:** Enable children and young people to have a sense of belonging, where they are happy, have fun and grow in their self-worth and God-worth.

This activity should help to identify some of the **Core Aims** of your vision.

Activity 2: Central Focus (20mins)

Write the following three questions on a large sheet of paper and invite the group to freely write their thoughts relating to each one. After several minutes, invite feedback. Some obvious statements may emerge.

Questions:

1. Why are children and young people important and what is special/unique about them?
2. Why are children and young people important to the life of your local community?
3. Why are children and young people important to the life of your church?

This activity will help to keep children and young people as the **Central focus** of your vision.

Activity 3: 'Priority Activities' (30mins)

Below are ten suggested statements to help identify '**Priority Activities**'. Write the statements on a sheet and cut them into strips so that each statement can be discussed separately. You could also come up with your own statements. The important thing is to start by thinking broadly and to then focus it down to just three or four things that really matter to your church and the youth / children's ministry. It is important that your **Priority Activities** help you to achieve your **Core Aims**, whilst keeping children and young people as the **Central Focus**.

Ten statements (CH = Children / YP = young people)

- Provide a variety of activities where CH/YP can have fun and interact socially in a safe and caring environment.
- Reach out to CH/YP and their families so that they feel loved, valued and welcomed into the church family.
- Provide a welcoming environment in which CH/YP feel that someone will listen to them and not judge them.
- Reach out into the local community so that CH/YP will know God and the church are there for them and will journey with them in times of hardship or crisis.

- Provide a worship environment that is welcoming and inclusive to all CH/YP and their families.
- Enable CH/YP to encounter Jesus, develop faith, grow as disciples and tell others about Jesus.
- Provide an environment where CH/YP feel inspired with hope to change their communities and the world.
- Encourage CH/YP to take an active part in the life of the church and grow in their gifting.
- Nurture the gifts of CH/YP so that they can begin to explore their calling or vocation.
- Partner with other churches, organisations or schools to provide a range of events and activities that work with CH/YP and families.
- Other / your own statements.

This final activity should help you to agree your **Priority Activities**. There are endless things you can do, but focusing on just a few can be more effective.

Putting it together (20mins)

These three activities should help to shape your vision for work with children / young people as you will have a better understanding of:

- The **Core Aims** underpinning your vision
- Why children / young people are the **Central Focus** of your vision
- What **Priority Activities** you will implement to help achieve your vision

For any further advice or help, contact your Archdeaconry based Go Team Adviser:

<https://www.bathandwells.org.uk/ministry/children-young-people/>

Compiled by the Go Team. Revised December 2021