

Thinking strategically: Outreach to pre-school families

1) Take a step back!

A sustainable, effective ministry should not be started without careful thought

a) The church leadership sets the vision and priorities for the church

Unfiltered brain storm

b) What is the vision of your Church? What is the focus?

→ The pre-school ministry of the church must replicate the church's vision

c) What are the needs of your community?

d) Who has the energy, leadership, networks and time in your church?

e) Who could be in the ministry team?

Clear strategic thinking

Does any of this resonate with your church situation?

If you were asked to rethink your church's pre-school outreach strategy, where would your thinking start?

2) An opportunity for every pre-school family in the church

a) Do first time parents move congregation? From a YP's congregation to a family congregation?

b) Buddy system for first time parents

c) An evening to gather expectant parents together

- Prepare for the difficulty and the joy of this new season of life
 - Church is your greatest support structure
 - There will be changes in marriage, in routines, in emotions: expected and unexpected
- Prepare for the opportunity
 - How will you approach your NCT/pre-natal class?
 - Where will you look to build new friendships?

3) Taking the opportunity as a church family

27,000 UK churches run early years projects and 52% of children in England access some form of parent and toddler group via churches.

- 87% of team members report increased personal wellbeing through serving.
- 66% of parents feel less stressed as a result of being part of the group.
- 88% of groups reported that parents / carers get a friendship support network.
- 88% reported that children build friendships.
- 79% reported that team members build friendships with parents.

Principles for any regular church-run group

- Maintain church leadership of the initiative.
- Keep the main thing the main thing. Ministry not social group.
- Identify the team. Train the team. Encourage the team. Support the team.
- Leaders must lead the ministry, don't let the group lead the social group.
- What are the goals? What course can we run? What are the next steps? What will natural friendship look like?
- Prayer

a) Midweek toddler and carer groups & Saturday toddler and Dad's groups

- i) Ratio of 1:5 – 1:8 is preferable. Will you close the door?
- ii) Separate the ministry team from the refreshments, the craft and the set up/clear up
- iii) Bible story
- iv) Carers often come to fill time with each other
- v) Cake, toys and coffee!

b) Music: such as *Junior Jivers program* (or other single interest group)

- i) Book/Pay for the term > Commitment > Limited numbers.
- ii) Leads to clarity of leadership and the team's role
- iii) Does this lead to a more effective outreach group?