

## 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
- 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

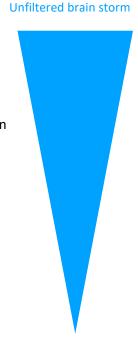
- c) What are the needs of your community?
- d) Who has the energy, leadership, networks and time in your church?
- e) Who could be in the ministry team?

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
    - o 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?



Clear strategic thinking



## 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?