

# Make Youth Work

## WORK

6 things to make your church  
community a place where  
young people can thrive in  
their faith.

# 1

## Creating a Space FOR Young People

Many churches begin with the question, “Where can we PUT the young people?” But what if you began with the question, “How can we create a space that young people know is FOR them?”

Would you prioritise differently?

A few things to consider:

- **Comfort + Relaxation** - think **living room** over classroom
- **Fun + Participation** - What’s the opportunity for spontaneous fun and active participation in the space? (Are there games out, a table tennis table, are there practical activities they can participate in?)
- **Media facilities** - Can you create a good media experience? Do have decent speakers, a good size screen?
- **WiFi** - Can young people access a decent internet connection, and can the leaders access online resource in the space?

### STEP TO TAKE:

Address the four areas above in light of the following questions:

- What are we working with now?
- What are the obstacles to improving this? Financial? Spatial?
- Would the cost to doing this be greater than the cost of not having it?



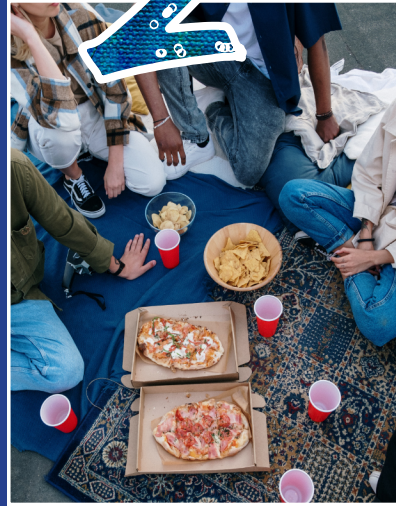


# Opening Up Your Living Room (AND YOUR LIFE)

# 2

Could you proactively open up your home or garden to host young people as a social space as well as a space for formalised youth groups?

Handing over your living room once a week or once a month is an amazing way of helping young people build relationships, feel at home with their youth group and know that they're valued and cared for. You don't need to be the one leading sessions, just offering a warm welcome in your home and handing over the space for a couple of hours is a great gift.



Opening up your living room is about much more than just that...it's a posture towards young people which says "We're available to you and we're here for you."

Where else can you make space for young people in your life? Can you make time to check in with them? Is there somewhere they can go or someone they can call when they're having a tough day or find themselves in a difficult situation? Do they know that there are adults in their church who are **available to them and invested in their wellbeing?**

## STEP TO TAKE:

Put on an 'open house' or 'open garden' evening once a month. Get in a small team, or hand it over to a small team, buy in loads of pizza, and invite as many young people as possible.

# Getting to Know a ~~Young~~ Person



Listening to young people and being genuinely curious about their lives, their habits, their interests and their opinions is critical. Often, we can easily slip into speaking to young people in a way that compounds generational differences rather than seeks to move across that gap. Young people are not an alien race, and we don't need to approach them as such!

**Be intentional about having a conversation with a young person on a level playing field.**

Resist these phrases which make specific reference to the age gap: 'That makes me feel old' / 'I remember when you were...' / 'It's all so different now I don't understand it'

Prioritise these phrases:

- **Tell me more about that?**
- **What do you think about that?**
- **How do you feel about...?**



## STEP TO TAKE:

Have a conversation with a young person where your aim is only to get to know them and understand them better. Take an interest and be curious. If they mention a movie they love or a game they've been playing, why not go away and take a look at it?





# Praying for Young People

We know that when we pray things change...and we are changed in the process.

Praying regularly for young people, both collectively and individually, places a heart for young people at the centre of our mission as churches and endears us towards them as individuals.

Start getting together with others and praying for the young people you know of in your church, the young people at the local school, and the young people in the wider community.



Intercede for them and ask God to give you increasing opportunities to help them grapple with faith.

Pray for the faith journey of your existing young people, and those who are away at university. Pray that they would walk wisely, that they would have friends who build them up in faith, and an increasing awareness of God at work in the world and in them.

Let those young people know that you pray for them regularly; it will help them to know they've got people they can turn to when the going gets tough.

## STEP TO TAKE:

"Pray without ceasing" for young people. Ensure they are always in the prayer diaries and on the agenda in prayer meetings. Pray for the young people you are getting to know by name. There are groups forming in Suffolk to pray for young people regularly...**Contact Andy Jefferson - [andy.jefferson@cofesuffolk.org](mailto:andy.jefferson@cofesuffolk.org)**



# Advocating for Young People

(ACCORDING TO THEIR NEEDS)

Being an advocate for young people means making sure they're consistently on the agenda for your church community. It means standing up and speaking up when there's an opportunity to make a difference for young people, and when opportunities are being overlooked where young people need support and investment.

Why do we say advocate according to their needs?

We all have a desire to see young people in our churches, but sometimes we can advocate according to what we would like to see, rather than according to their needs. We might ask young people to do the Bible reading, or help with the tea and coffee...

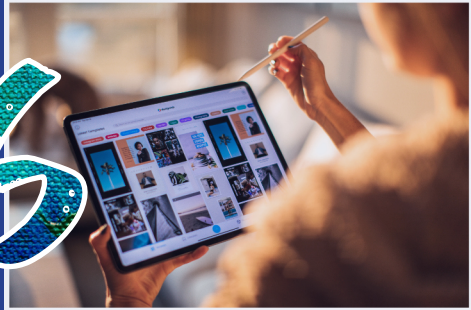
But are we building them up according to their needs or according to ours when we do that?

Advocating for young people requires us to make sacrifices to our own agenda and our own comfort. It requires us to be learners, and find out what's really blocking young people from fully engaging with the life of the church. It might require us to advocate for things that we won't see the benefits of ourselves, like better equipment in the youth room. Will you become an advocate for the needs of young people, even where it means not advocating for your own preferences?

## STEP TO TAKE:

Find one or two other 'advocate(s)' and clarify together, **"What is going to help young people in our church?"** Then throw your hat in the ring - advocacy starts with your own action. What do you need to do to move that closer to reality?

# Updating your Resources



**When was the last time you checked the date on the resources you use for young people, and for your whole church?**

**Are the videos and bible studies you're using from this decade? Are they even from this century? Are you singing hymns from the 1800s or encouraging them to stream 2021 Christian music? Are you helping them navigate the Bible on their phone as well as providing them with up-to-date paper versions? You get the idea...**

The world young people are living in today is changing all the time. There are issues which are forefront in young people's minds which may never have been on your radar when you were growing up, and haven't been on the radar for youth organisations until the last 10 years or so.

Consider issues like online bullying, mental health issues, pornography, comparison on social media, the environmental crisis, race issues and the Me Too movement...these are major players in Generation Z's landscape that only newer resources will properly address. Would you know where to look if a young person wanted some help with these issues?

## **STEP TO TAKE:**

Check the date on your resources, and have a 'refresh.' Find some good youth resources or videos from the past 5 years. Start listening to the most recent christian music (not because the old stuff isn't good, but to help young people connect with music as a relevant expression of faith). All these things will help you speak the 'language' of young people.



# Checklist for churches

We have a youth-friendly space where young people can make themselves at home

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People in our church are happy to open their home up to host young people, and people are available to and investing in teenagers beyond Sundays

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We speak about and to young people in ways that seek to come alongside them, not alienate them or emphasise generational differences

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We are regularly praying specifically for the young people in our church, those who have moved on from our church and those in our local community

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There are advocates for young people in our church who don't let us lose them off the agenda! We are listening and letting young people teach us when it comes to helping them engage and understanding their needs

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The resources we use for teaching and worship reflect the world around us in terms of the issues they address, the format they come in and the language they use

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