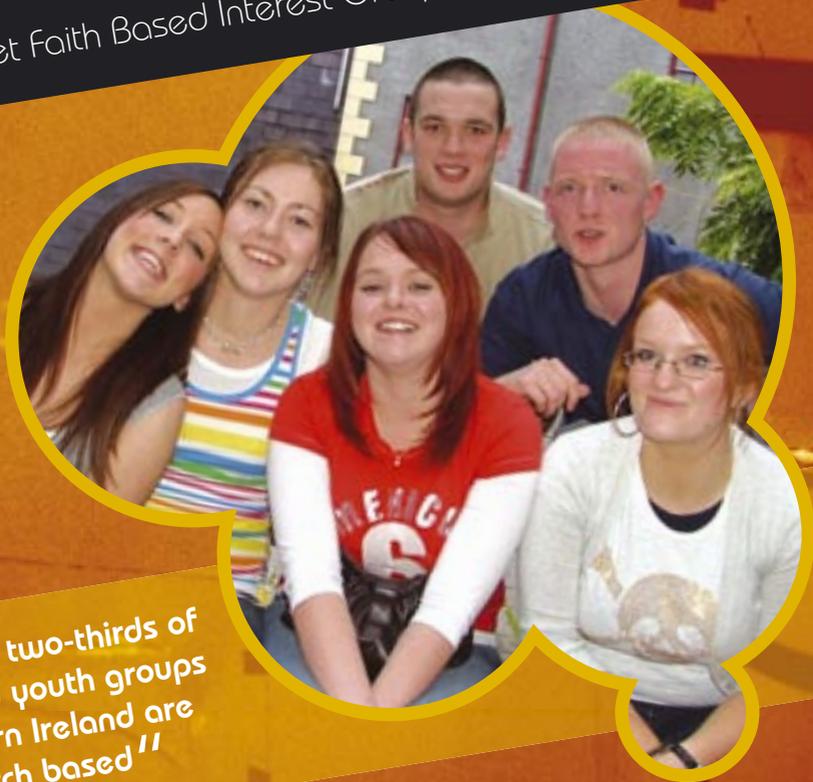




Research Report:

Faith Based Youth Work in Northern Ireland

YouthNet Faith Based Interest Group



**"More than two-thirds of
registered youth groups
in Northern Ireland are
faith/church based"**

Introduction...

This is an extract from the research report on the scoping of faith based youth work within the YouthNet Faith Based Interest Group. The research was carried out by independent external consultant Tony Macaulay (Macaulay Associates) between April and May 2006.

The full report, which includes the research methodology and detailed findings, is available on the YouthNet website.

Contents

Response from the Faith Based Group	2
1 Executive Summary	3
2 Background	7
3 Terms of Reference	11
Faith Based Youth Work	13
Appendix	14

Response from the Faith Based Group

We as a group are delighted to see the publication of this piece of research and appreciate the voice that has been given to faith based organisations by YouthNet.

This research has evidenced that more than two-thirds of groups and almost three-quarters of youth work leaders registered* in Northern Ireland are faith / church based.

The findings have affirmed the holistic approach that faith based groups have towards young people's personal, social, spiritual and physical development.

We believe that this research will provide a catalyst for further discussion and research into faith based youth work in Northern Ireland and with the support of YouthNet, we are already taking forward several of the recommendations outlined in the research.



* registered - groups and leaders registered with local education and library boards

1. Executive Summary

Main Findings:

The leading objective of the research was to identify and establish the scale, scope and location of current delivery of faith based youth work within the Membership of the YouthNet Faith Based Interest Group.

However to provide a broader indication of the context, scale and scope of faith based youth work in Northern Ireland the research also includes:

- An analysis of 2005 data from the YCNI Geomapping System of all youth groups registered with the five Education and Library Boards in Northern Ireland. This includes church based youth work and faith based, community group youth work delivered by groups that are not members of the YouthNet Faith Based Interest Group
- An indication of the scale and scope of other faith based youth work that is neither represented within the YouthNet Faith Based Interest Group nor registered with the five Education and Library Boards

- 1) In 2005, there were 1,405 registered faith/church based groups in Northern Ireland with a total of 98,902 members, 16,457 volunteer leaders and 160 full time youth workers*
- 2) 68% of registered youth groups in Northern Ireland were faith/church based in 2005*
- 3) 57.8% of all members of registered youth groups in Northern Ireland were participants in faith/church based youth groups in 2005*
- 4) 74.4% of all volunteer leaders in registered youth groups in Northern Ireland were volunteering in faith/church based groups in 2005*
- 5) 43.2% of all full time youth workers in registered youth groups in Northern Ireland were working in faith/church based groups in 2005*
- 6) Faith/church based groups are located in significant numbers in both urban and rural areas and in both TSN and non TSN areas
- 7) The majority of faith/church based youth groups are single identity or predominantly Protestant or Catholic

* see appendix

- 8) The majority of uniformed and non uniformed church based registered groups are connected to Protestant churches and mainly Presbyterian churches
- 9) There is a significant level of full time provision by Catholic Youth Centres in the greater Belfast area, particularly in areas of social disadvantage
- 10) There is currently no single accurate measure available to provide a comprehensive picture of the scale of all faith based youth work in Northern Ireland as many groups are not registered and some of the major providers do not currently have a system for collecting this type of data
- 11) Faith based youth work represented in the YouthNet Faith Based Interest Group is engaged in all aspects of a young person's development, with a particular emphasis on personal, social, spiritual and physical development
- 12) There is equality of access for all young people to participate in groups represented in the Faith Based Interest Group
- 13) Negative perceptions and low profile are the major barriers to young people accessing faith based youth work

“74.4% of all volunteer leaders in registered youth groups in Northern Ireland were volunteering in faith/church based groups in 2005”



- 14) The main outcomes of faith based youth work for individual participants are personal and social development
- 15) Most faith based youth work shares the values and priorities of the NI Youth Work Strategy core theme of personal and social development
- 16) There are good models of faith based youth work targeting social need and church based youth work has the potential to target social need in a more strategic way
- 17) There is clear evidence of faith based youth groups contributing to social capital within local communities including citizenship, leadership development, community participation, networks, volunteering, trust and social cohesion in local communities
- 18) There is evidence of faith based youth work in Northern Ireland "bridging" social capital across the sectarian divide and there is good practice in cross community integration and co-operation However building cross community social cohesion is a major challenge for religious groups rooted in a divided society
- 19) With a significant growth in recent years in the number of full time church based youth workers, there is an expressed need for a Youth Work with Applied Theology Degree in Northern Ireland



"43.2% of all full time youth workers in registered youth groups in Northern Ireland were working in faith/church based groups in 2005"

Recommendations:

- 1) The Faith Based Interest Group should attempt to raise awareness of the scope and scale of their youth work and its outcomes of personal and social development of young people and its positive contribution to social capital in local communities
- 2) The Faith Based Interest Group should engage with policy makers on the issue of faith communities and faith based youth work as social capital
- 3) The Faith Based Interest Group should attempt to raise awareness of the actual nature of their youth work to address negative perceptions of faith based youth work by young people
- 4) The Faith Based Interest Group should attempt to increase understanding, awareness and acceptance of their youth work by other YouthNet members, agencies, funders and government bodies
- 5) The Faith Based Interest Group should consult with the Equality Commission around perceived unfair treatment of faith based groups in relation to Section 75
- 6) The Faith Based Interest Group should support all faith based groups to gather statistics on the scale of their youth work in an attempt to develop a comprehensive picture of the scale of all faith based youth work in Northern Ireland
- 7) The Faith Based Interest Group should work with other YouthNet members and statutory youth work agencies to address the common issue of segregated provision in the context of developing a Shared Future in Northern Ireland
- 8) The Faith Based Interest Group should contribute to discussions to address the perceived gap in training for full time faith based youth workers at diploma/degree level and should attempt to avoid further segregated provision
- 9) The Faith Based Interest Group should encourage faith based youth work to develop more strategic focus on TSN to fulfil its potential for development in areas of urban decline
- 10) The Faith Based Interest Group should stimulate a debate within the wider Youth Service on approaches to the spiritual development element of NI Youth Work Strategy

2. Background

2.1 YouthNet

YouthNet is the Voluntary Youth Network for Northern Ireland, an independent agency which represents the interests and aspirations of more than 70 youth organisations in Northern Ireland.

YouthNet membership covers a wide range of organisations working with children and young people, from long established organisations through to newly emerged organisations. Member organisations work with a diverse range of young people and vary in size, structure and capacity.

YouthNet's key aims are:

Aim 1

Provide an effective voice for the voluntary youth sector

We seek to represent the interests and aspirations of the voluntary youth sector through influencing policy, campaigning and acting as an advocate on behalf of the sector.

Aim 2

Support our members to develop best practice and quality standards

We aim to support our members to develop their role and capacity to deliver quality services to young people.

Aim 3

Ensure organisational effectiveness

YouthNet seeks to be effective as an organisation and act as a catalyst for the development of good practice within the voluntary youth sector. We recognise the contribution of staff and volunteers and are committed to being open, transparent and accountable in achieving results.

2.2 YouthNet Interest Groups

In 2002 YouthNet established a range of interest groups as a means of representing the diversity of membership and the principles of equity, diversity and interdependence in policy development.

Members have self-designated into interest groups and a number of these are facilitated to meet regularly to explore and debate issues pertinent to them.



“Youth work may engage in all aspects of a young person’s development - personal, social, educational, political, cultural, spiritual, physical, and vocational”

NI Youth Work Strategy



2.3 Faith Based Interest Group

The Faith Based Interest Group is made up of a number of agencies who have identified themselves as delivering faith based youth work. Members of the group are:

- Baptist Youth
- Boys Brigade
- Catholic Guides of Ireland
- Church of Ireland Youth Department
- Frontier Youth Trust
- Girls Brigade
- Methodist Department of Youth and Children's Work
- Presbyterian Church Youth Department
- Youthcom (Catholic Diocese of Down & Connor Youth Commission)
- Youth Initiatives
- Youthlink
- YMCA

The group has been meeting together for two years and has discussed issues including:

- Outcomes of faith based youth work to participants and the wider community
- Achievements of faith based youth work in Northern Ireland and areas needing attention
- Quality of faith based youth work
- Misunderstandings and misperceptions of faith based youth work in Northern Ireland
- Faith based organisations and government policy
- Networking and partnership between faith based youth work organisations

The Group also considered the findings and recommendations of the publication "Acting in Good Faith: Churches, Changes and Regeneration" (Derek Bacon, Eddie McDowell and Jim Robertson, Churches Community Work Alliance, 2004).

2.4 Research

As a result of these discussions, the members identified the need for some initial research to quantify the scale and scope of faith based youth work within the membership of this interest group in Northern Ireland and its contribution to social capital.

'YouthNet' secured resources to carry out this initial research and then invited suitably qualified consultants to tender to carry out the research in March 2006. Macaulay Associates was appointed on 30th March 2006.

The strategy is that this research will ultimately form part of a wider paper being developed by the group.



3. Terms of Reference

3.1 Research Aim

The aim of the research was:

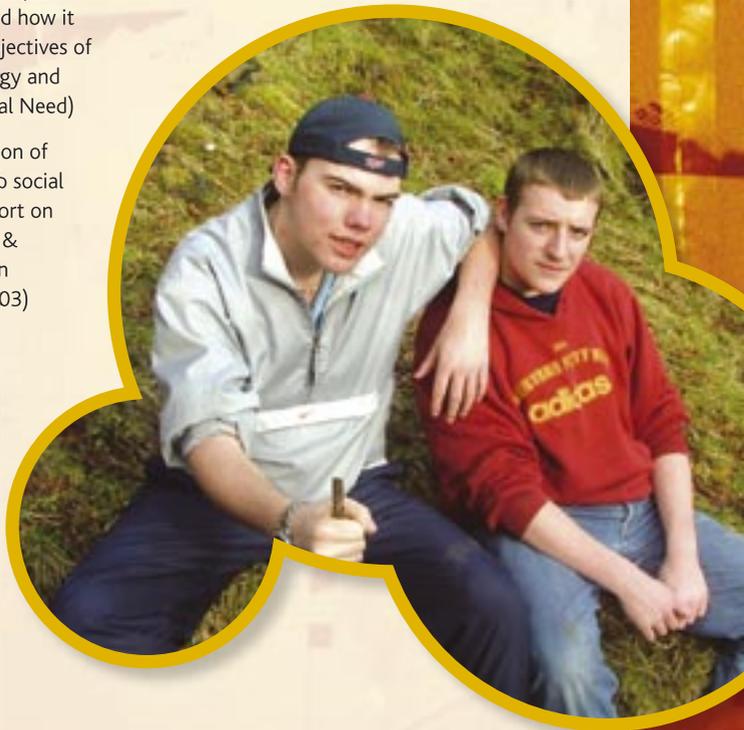
To scope the range of faith based youth work provision within the membership of YouthNet Faith Based Interest Group and its contribution to social capital in Northern Ireland.



3.2 Research Objectives

The objectives of the research were as follows:

- To identify and establish the scale, scope and location of current delivery of faith based youth work within the Membership of the YouthNet Faith Based Interest Group
- To identify the outcomes of faith based youth work to participants, the wider community, and how it fits within the current objectives of the NI Youth Work Strategy and New TSN (Targeting Social Need)
- To identify the contribution of faith based youth work to social capital related to the report on "Communities, Churches & Social Capital in Northern Ireland" Derek Bacon (2003)
- To identify the training opportunities accessed by those engaged in the delivery of faith based youth work and also gaps in training
- To identify any barriers that may prevent equality of access for all young people in Northern Ireland to faith based youth work
- To identify other key issues facing Faith Based Organisations



Faith Based Youth Work

For the purpose of the research the definition of youth work is that described in the NI Youth Work Strategy 2005-2008 and the NI Youth Service "Youth Work: A Model of Effective Practice".

Drawing on these principles, frameworks and values the youth work being scoped in this research is characterised by:

- personal and social development of young people
- non formal education processes
- voluntary participation
- preparing young people for participation
- testing values and beliefs
- promoting acceptance and understanding of others

For the purpose of this research, faith based youth work is youth work (as defined above) that is motivated by any religious faith and underpinned by the values of a religious faith.

This definition has been applied in scoping the scale of faith based groups. As a result, youth and children's work involving large



numbers of participants that is solely focussed on faith instruction such as Sunday Schools has not been included. Similarly, it does not include youth oriented groups whose single purpose is evangelism, faith development, prayer or worship without a core theme of personal and social development using non formal education processes.

The term "church based" youth work is used in this report to refer to youth work that is physically based in a church. This may be the direct faith based youth work of a local church or may be a youth group meeting in or connected to a local church that does not define itself as faith based.

Appendix

Registered Faith/Church Based Youth Groups in NI 2005

From YCNI Geomapping 2005 Data Cycle

Total No of Registered Units	2,067
Total No of Registered Faith Based and Church Based Units	1,405
% of Registered Units that are faith/church based	68%

Total No Young People registered	171,192
Total No Young People registered in faith/church based groups	98,902
% of registered Young People in faith/church based groups	57.8%

Total No of Volunteer Leaders registered	22,109
Total No of Volunteer Leaders registered in faith/church based groups	16,457
% of registered Volunteer Leaders faith/church based	74.4%

Total No of Registered Full Time Youth Workers	370
Total no of Full Time Youth Workers registered in faith/church based groups	160
% of Registered Full Time Youth Workers working in faith/church based groups	43.2%

These statistics may include the same young people participating in more than one group

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The full research can be
accessed by clicking onto:

www.youthnetni.org.uk