

Priority Areas Annual Report 2018 – Hope, Encouragement and Growth

1. Implementing the Priority Areas Plan

1.1 In our report to General Assembly 2017 we reaffirmed our commitment to working in Priority Areas, and to widening the work with our poorer communities; embedding the work of the previous ten years and enabling new programmes and initiatives to develop in the next five year strategic plan.

http://churchofscotland.org.uk/_data/assets/word_doc/0009/49581/Priority_Areas_Strategic_Plan_2017-2022.docx

We committed to working strategically to increase our:

- ability to take our work to the margins
- ability to tackle the causes of poverty in Scotland
- ability to widen the reach of our support
- ability to make our buildings work for us, fit for purpose and be community lights
- confidence and ability to place worship at the heart of what we do
- ability to make our structures more straightforward
- skills and abilities to develop more effective leaders

1.1.1 In our plan we laid out a matrix of existing, new, and reshaped programmes stating which of the strategic outcomes each initiative will work towards. We indicate who our key partners are; within the Church Councils and externally. We will of course continue to develop new partnerships throughout the life of this plan as we know that we cannot carry out this work alone. We report below on some of the highlights of this year's implementation of the plan.

1.2 Growing our relationships with all of our 64 Priority Areas

1.2.1 We have moved to take a personal contact approach with our 64 Priority Areas. We began our first steps in this in 2017. Each member of staff within the Priority Areas core team has now been assigned a number of Priority Area congregations; for which they are the named link person. This means that there is a first point of contact for each one. It may be that this person offers support directly, or it may be that they act in a more sign-posting role.

1.2.2 We are still at the beginning of this work but what this has done so far has been to encourage and grow new relationships and deepen the connections. It has built on the listening approach we have taken at our annual conference and allows us to build our programmes around the needs and strengths of our Priority Areas. We recognise that there is much good practice taking place within the network; this is good practice that we want to recognise and share across Priority Areas and wider. Taking this personal contact approach we can learn more, and utilise the skills and expertise of people working in our communities.

http://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0005/39875/Priority_Areas_List.pdf

1.3 Big Conversation 2

1.3.1 We had over 100 representatives from around 40 Priority Areas with us at our annual conference; Big Conversation 2, in November. We purposely broke with tradition and held it in a new venue in Erskine Bridge, running it over two days with a full and varied programme. Our key themes were growing our expertise in Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) and developing worship and worship leaders in our communities.

1.3.2 We were pleased to have Cormac Russell, CEO of Nurture Development <http://www.nurturedevelopment.org/> as our keynote speaker on ABCD on the first day. Cormac stayed with us for the day; leading workshops and surgeries. We will be exploring partnership working with Nurture Development in the coming year.

1.3.3 We were equally delighted to have the Moderator, the Rt. Rev. Dr Derek Browning with us on day two. In his keynote, he affirmed the Church's support for the work of Priority Areas and spoke of his personal concern for these communities. The Moderator stayed with us for the remainder of the event and participants welcomed his commitment.

1.3.4 We ran 24 workshops over the course of the two days and in line with recognising the strengths and expertise of our network, we were particularly gratified that two thirds of the workshops were delivered by Priority Area representatives. Already we can evidence how this approach is bearing fruit.

- 1.3.5 We put out a call prior to the event, to ask for Priority Area congregations to help us form the worship sessions for the event. As a result, a group came together to plan and deliver an inclusive worship programme. This helped us to reflect different worship styles and was greatly valued by the participants.
- 1.3.6 Evaluation of the event showed a really positive response to what we were trying to achieve; all participants indicated that we had met or exceeded our outcomes for the event. We used it to listen further to our Priority Areas to feed this back into our next cycle of planning.

1.4 Priority Areas Academy Learning Programme

- 1.4.1 This was the first year of our newest initiative to support the development of the work in all of our Priority Areas and beyond. The programme is aimed at people in Priority Areas who are intentional about working with their local communities to tackle poverty. It is open to ministry teams: local people, ministers, MDS, locally employed staff and volunteer. Through actively listening to our PAs we crafted the first year of the programme in response to what we were learning. We learnt through conversations with ministers and teams, through an annual learning needs audit and ongoing through evaluation forms at our learning events.
- 1.4.2 There are four overarching themes within the learning programme: ABCD, Sustainability and Partnership Development, Leadership/Missional and Worship Development, and Networking/Sharing Expertise
http://churchofscotland.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0004/48883/Priority_Areas_-_Learning_Programme_2018.pdf.
 Within these themes we ran twenty workshops, surgeries, networking events and conferences, attracting over 400 number of participants.
- 1.4.3 We set quality targets of a minimum of 6 weeks run in for opening for bookings for each event and 10 weeks prior to our flagship conference. We gave priority in the first instance to Priority Area congregations and then opened up the events to the wider church; to those intentional about working alongside their communities.
- 1.4.4 Evaluations for each event were strong; showing increased understanding and indicating how the learning might be used. The evaluation of the programme overall was that it was highly valued and we learnt much to enable us to grow and develop in the second year.
"This kind of training should be encouraged for all in Ministry."- Event participant

1.5 ABCD in action – growing a learning community

- 1.5.1 In 2017 Priority Areas offered our first series of learning events around the principles of Asset Based Community Development. Around 25 Individuals came together on three occasions to deepen their understanding of this area of learning. Almost two thirds of the participants came from Priority Areas. However because we had additional capacity we were able to widen out the invite beyond Priority Areas, and attracted a number of individuals from the wider church, who were interested in reaching out to their communities in this way and adopting these values. The training was very well received and some of the participants went on to share some of their learning and enthusiasm in workshops at the Big Conversation 2 our annual conference for Priority Area Congregations.
- 1.5.2 This year we are going to continue to develop our programme in relation to meeting the appetite for opportunities to develop practise that is asset based. Alongside the workshops from last year we will be working on developing a community of practice where participants will be given a number of opportunities throughout the year to come together to learn, share stories, encourage one another and share accountability around how they are applying principles of ABCD in their context.
- 1.5.3 One of the main reasons we continue to see increased demand and enthusiasm around this area of thinking is down to the growing body of work around the theology of ABCD. As the impact of moving into the era of post Christendom becomes more evident, it is exciting to engage with a body of thought which challenges us to embrace our new posture of weakness instead of look over our shoulder to former days. "But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness. *"Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me."* (2 Corinthians 12:9) It is encouraging to choose to see our communities as places where we uncover treasure, and to affirm the belief that we can do wonderful things with what we already have in our hands.

1.6 Missional Discipleship – growing a learning community

- 1.6.1 We heard from many of our Priority Area congregations a desire to learn more about practical ways in to developing missional discipleship. We worked with Cairn <https://www.cairnmovement.com/> to develop a series of three workshops which they delivered for us. The focus for each day was different, beginning with Community, then moving on to Mission and concluding with Multiplication. Based on the success of this first step and on feedback from participants we are now moving to run a Learning Community in partnership with Cairn which will run through 2018 and into 2019.
- 1.6.2 The learning communities are focussed on a rhythm of gathering and scattering, where groups of around six members, elders, ministers and staff from participating churches come together four times over the two year period for teaching, reflection and planning, and then return to their own contexts to implement the plans they have made. Leaders in each context receive ongoing coaching throughout the journey. The material published by the team at Cairn and their practical experiences provides much of the basis for learning.
- 1.6.3 Our hope is that the Learning Community will provide a number of things for the congregations that participate; that they will encounter stories and learning from other contexts that will inspire them to try new things; that they will build strong supportive bonds with the other congregations participating and become invested in their journeys too; that there will be fruit from the 6 monthly discipline of engaging with stimulus, reflecting on their own context, and planning new actions; and most of all that all of this helps the participating congregations flourish and connect with their communities with renewed purpose and impact.
- 1.6.4 Finally we are also going to use this first Priority Area Learning Community as an opportunity to build capacity for the next generation of learning communities – we will be partnering with Cairn to invest in a number of leaders from Priority Areas who will lead these learning communities for subsequent cohorts.

1.8 PCUSA YAV Programme Partnership

- 1.8.1 Our partnership with the PCUSA Young Adult Volunteer (YAV) programme continues to flourish and we are now in our third year of hosting 4 young people who are working in 4 different Priority Area communities in Glasgow Presbytery (Cranhill, Queen's Park Govanhill, St James' Pollok in Glasgow Presbytery and in Hamilton Presbytery (Larkhall Chalmers). The YAVs live in intentional Christian community together for 11 months from September to July.
- 1.8.2 The volunteers have brought added capacity, energy and curiosity to their placements as well as enabling local communities to see their world through a different lens. One placement has commented: *'Our community got the experience of meeting a young person from a different country and culture which for many would have been their first opportunity to do so. This was a fascinating experience to watch as people questioned and challenged in order to learn how she was like us and how she was different. The impact of this on many has been an encouragement to go beyond their comfort zones and to undertake new experiences for themselves.'*
- 1.8.3 The programme is also an opportunity for the young people to develop their own leadership skills and there is retreat spaces during the year for them to self-reflect and consider who God is calling them to be as they discern their next steps. For some, this transformational experience has called them into a variety of ministries within the Church. One volunteer has written: *'This year has turned my world upside down and provided direction forward as I pursue formal ministry.... the lessons from this year will only keep coming'*. It is hoped to expand the programme beyond the Glasgow area in 2018-19.

1.9 Chance to Thrive

- 1.9.1 The Chance to Thrive programme is a successful partnership initiative between Ministries' Council and the General Trustees, and it is great to work together in this way. Chance to Thrive encourages those in the programme to consider how to further mission, by using church buildings and in doing so lead to a thriving congregation and community. It is a holistic approach to mission with an asset-based focus on the 'whole person', the 'whole church' and the 'whole community'; and, it supports churches in the maintenance, development and sustainability of their properties so that this task can be better resourced by their availability and accessibility.
- 1.9.2 Key to Chance to Thrive's effectiveness is the distinctive level of personalised and localised support provided by highly committed mentors; through long-term accompaniment to

congregations. In addition, this support has been further supplemented by connection to a peer network of the other Chance to Thrive congregations which meets twice a year. Currently there are fourteen churches in a supportive network with a geographic spread from the presbytery of Aberdeen to the presbytery of Ayr.

- 1.9.3 Church buildings in local communities are becoming ever more important. One reason for this is local authority budgetary cut-backs which has led to the closure of community facilities, while those that are still in place are becoming more expensive to use. The overall impact of these measures has led to an increase in the search for, and use of, other community facilities. In many places the most significant of these is church properties and the contribution they can make to thriving. Thriving communities are communities which believe and have confidence in their potential and capacity to succeed; and, where people develop their own long-term, creative and sustainable vision for their neighbourhood, and the heartbeat of the community is evident.
- 1.9.4 As was noted formally by an external research evaluation, Chance to Thrive makes a difference. This was summed up one day by a Session Clerk of one of the Chance to Thrive congregations who simply exclaimed with a huge smile on her face that her church is 'unrecognisable' to the one that started out on the process.
- 1.9.5 Those congregations on the programme meet twice a year for a network Gathering. The latest Gathering provided further evidence of the impact Chance to Thrive congregations continue to have. Nine of the current congregations met and shared learning on a specific development they have been working on. Hence, stories shared included ones about: connecting heating systems to community grids which has led to an 80% decrease in heating bills with a 24/7 warm church; the development of a local Green Network focused on using under-utilised land and growing; the benefit of a new kitchen; holding health fairs in halls that have never been used in that way before; a new lunch stop on the first Wednesday of the month which it is hoped will further develop into a community information hub, and a 'farewell' from one of the first Chance to Thrive congregations which included an important reflection on the importance of the mentor for congregations and their leadership.
- 1.9.6 Currently we are beginning the process of considering what the next phase of Chance to Thrive might look like and are confident that it will continue to enjoy journeying with congregations in their mission of thriving in community. Much is being achieved by each of the fourteen members of the Chance to Thrive network; and much is yet to be achieved by the fifty congregations who also form the Priority Areas' community; not to mention the rest of the Church of Scotland!

Congregation	Joined	Complete
St Mark's, Stirling	2011	--
St Mark's, Drumchapel	2011	--
Ardeer	2016	--
Greenock East End	2016	--
Possilpark	2016	--
Patna Waterside	2016	--
St George's, Tillydrone	2016	--
St Paul's, Provanmill	2016	--
Lochee	2011	2015
Chalmers	2011	2016
Cranhill	2011	2016
Castlemilk	2011	2017
Maryhill	2011	2017
Tron St Mary	2011	2018

1.10 Delivering the Plan with Faith in Community Scotland

- 1.10.1 Faith in Community Scotland (FiCS) is a charity registered in Scotland (SC036787) which works closely with the Church of Scotland and other faith communities who share a common commitment that our greatest concern must be to work alongside people struggling against poverty. (www.faithincommunityscotland.org or [Facebook/Twitter](#) pages @FiCScotland).
- 1.10.2 We support the Priority Areas Committee to meet four particular objectives from its Strategic Plan for 2017 – 2022:

- 1.10.3 **Increase our ability to tackle the causes of poverty in Scotland:** Our teams in Glasgow and Dundee work closely with priority area congregations, encouraging them to build new friendships and work together in common cause on issues such as food justice, funeral poverty, job-centre closures and welfare cuts while we provide support for project development, volunteering, funding and sustainability. Recent conversations in the *Poverty Truth Commission* and *Fighting for Fairness Commission* in Dundee have addressed issues around extreme inequality. We are reminded that it is people experiencing poverty on a daily basis who are the experts in bringing about real change.
- 1.10.4 **Increase our ability to take our work to the margins**
We know that many congregations are concerned about people who have ended up in prison. We work closely with local churches to build communities of hospitality, love and welcome for people leaving prison. We build links between faith groups, community groups and prison chaplains and other staff, so that when someone is preparing to leave prison, they can be supported by a network of people and groups when they return to live in the community.
- 1.10.5 **Increase our ability to widen the reach of our support**
Because we multiplied funds from the Church we've been able to award over £200,000 of grants to faith groups tackling poverty in different ways. We also piloted a personalised funding scheme with particular faith groups supporting the aspirations of young people in priority areas.
- 1.10.6 **Increase our skills and abilities to develop more effective leaders**
Through our community leaders coaching programme and our ongoing community development work we build the resilience of local residents, volunteers, paid staff and faith leaders working in priority areas.
- 1.11 Delivering the Plan with WEvolution**
- 1.11.1 WEvolution is a charity registered in Scotland SC043994 <http://www.wevolution.org.uk> Bringing people together in its Self-Reliant Groups (SRGs), WEvolution promotes a way of working alongside communities that is based on trust, self-governance and collective endeavour towards entrepreneurship.
- 1.11.2 This past year, for WEvolution, has been one of endurance, continuing optimism and incremental achievements. Long-term illnesses within a small staff team was a challenge, and while that meant that we couldn't grow as many Self-Reliant Groups (SRGs) as hoped, it helped us consolidate and mature our work. Existing groups have continued to maintain their energies and aspirations with a total of 40 income generating activities and over £50K in group savings. There are 45 SRGs operating out of Glasgow, Inverclyde, Dundee and Renfrewshire and 200 people involved in them.
- 1.11.3 The movement is gradually spreading its wings to other places in the UK. Existing partners have started up over 15 SRGs in Gloucestershire and Bristol in England in addition to the ones in Wales and Manchester. Through WEvolution's influence, the movement is also making its presence felt in Rotterdam and Breda in the Netherlands where the first SRGs have started up amongst refugees and homeless young people.
- 1.11.4 Support from the *International Centre for Social Franchise* (now called 'Spring Impact') has enabled WEvolution embark on a *Strategic Partnerships* programme that will enable it to grow towards its stated aim of becoming a 'Centre for Excellence' and provide high-quality training, experience and resources to partners.
- 1.11.5 Securing funding from *Big Lottery Scotland* has helped WEvolution strengthen its team capacity and continue its strong focus on the economic wellbeing of people in our poorest neighbourhoods. Over the last year, WEvolution has achieved yet another aim: two 24/7 hubs in Inverclyde and Paisley that will operate as creating stations for SRGs. It's been a good year thanks to the support from a number of partners including the *Ministries Council*. Trishy Gannon who has successfully gone on to establish *No. 26*, high-end crafts shop on the Gourrock High Street in Inverclyde, writes: "*WEvolution and the SRGs initially was a way to gain friends, maybe get out a bit more, be more social and happy but it has ended up being so much more than that. We have all grown in confidence, gained friends for life and new support networks for the future. Our families have benefited from having mums/wives who are happier, more fulfilled. Our children are learning how important it is to make your own way in life through seeing their mums producing and selling their own items.*"

1.12 Delivering the Plan with GKexperience

- 1.12.1 theGKexperience is a Youth Work Charity registered in Scotland (SC043023) founded on the belief that young people are brilliant and that they all deserve the same opportunities in order to enable them to reach their potential. Youth workers and young leaders work together to support amazing young people facing challenges in their everyday lives. Launched in 2012 and developed with close support and partnership from the Church of Scotland Priority Areas Committee, we have worked alongside young people and their families from Priority Areas Congregations and Communities, supporting them in their everyday lives.
- 1.12.2 In terms of the strategic plan for 2017- 2022, we will be supporting the Priority areas Committee's work in the following ways.
- 1.12.3 ***Increase our ability to take our work to the margins***
 With recommendations from youth workers, ministers, volunteers, parish and community workers, we work alongside some of the most disadvantaged young people in Scotland through a long term, relational programme of residential experiences, weekly activities and intensive mentoring and support. Particularly young people are identified as being individuals or within families who would benefit from bespoke support, often via relationships with families through congregations, chaplaincy and pastoral visiting. Building on previous findings we aim to further reach young people who, the Church and other organisations struggle to engage and who are often isolated and excluded.
- 1.12.4 ***Increase our ability to widen the reach of our support***
 We partner with local Parishes and youth work organisations to help them deliver youth work in their individual settings- often where local resources are scarce and situations fragile. Our team of volunteers and staff help run weekly clubs alongside local leaders in a number of settings, increasingly involving new communities and Parishes.
- 1.12.5 ***Increase our skills and abilities to develop more effective leaders***
 We continue to build on our highly successful Young Leaders Programme "The Young Team" which brings young people of different backgrounds together to develop their leadership skills, as well as grow in confidence, self-belief, and resilience. In particular, we will focus on identifying with local leaders brilliant young people who would benefit from this intensive training and personal development programme. We have seen huge successes in the lives of these young people and hope to see more growth in this area in the next period, with the young people reemploying their skills in local settings. www.thegkexperience.org.uk
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2 Priority Areas Committee Working Group Report: New models in presbytery planning processes

- 2.1 A short life working group was convened from in 2017 to offer insights from the Priority Areas Committee on presbytery planning and how it related to the resourcing of Priority Areas. This reported into the Ministries Council, via the Presbytery Planning Review Group (PPRG), and in December following discussion with Presbytery Planning Task Group (PPTG).
- 2.2. **Priority Means Priority**
- 2.2.1 We affirm that Priority Areas remain a priority and that presbytery planning should continue to hold to the present system of additional weighting for Priority Area congregations. We emphasise that this is a General Assembly instruction; it is not a Ministries Council directive. It is a response we agreed as a whole Church. We can point to many areas where by having this additional resource within a congregation it has allowed the development of great work to take place. This work is allowing congregations and communities to be fully engaged in work that fulfils that Gospel imperative to be with the poorest communities.
- 2.3 **The reality of double weighting**
- 2.3.1 The Church commits resources to congregations when they are designated as a Priority Area. There is often a perception that additional resources only benefit urban areas. The reality can be different from this. In some rural areas, triple weighting of posts is the norm. In the majority of the Priority Areas which were added to the list in 2014, double weighting in reality has not been applied. The system is not quite standing up. Part of this has been in relation to the drawing up of the Priority Areas list and the timing of the Presbytery Planning round.

Presbyteries have argued that their plans were already in operation and were unable to find the additional resources necessary. We see a clear need for the future drawing up of the Priority Areas list to happen simultaneously with any future drawing up of new presbytery plans. PPTG will be identifying 2018 as a key stage in Presbytery Planning with the declaration of advisory figures running through to 2023. It is important that we work closely with PPTG to share thinking on these figures and on the methodology and timing of future lists.

2.4 Enabling and Encouraging

- 2.4.1 Our role as a Committee, through the operation of strategic plan, is about enabling and encouraging all Priority Area congregations, in whichever presbytery, to engage fully in work with marginalised communities. This is in order to ensure that congregations are intentional about anti-poverty work. We will develop guidelines which would enable and encourage congregations to engage in this work. This will be a “tool” for intentionality, akin to a “how to” guide. It will explore “what work to address poverty might look like”; underpinned by asset based community development (ABCD) ways of working.

2.5 Directory of Priority Areas Work

- 2.5.1 Work to enable and encourage will be supported by the development of our Directory of Priority Area Congregations. This would be a resource that would sit alongside the guidelines to encourage people starting out on this work to find ideas, contacts and inspiration. As well as contact details and a description of the work taking place in a particular Priority Area, the Directory will allow each congregation to articulate, perhaps by short films, “What does it mean to you to be a PA?”

2.6 Support for widening the reach

- 2.6.1 The longer term strategy of the Committee is also to enable others outwith designated Priority Areas who are intentional about challenging poverty to do this work, and both the above resources would support this to happen in presbyteries and in congregations which do not currently have PA status. It fits closely with our widening of the reach of the work within our strategy. Closely aligned to this is the development of mentoring, already embedded within our Chance to Thrive project. As we develop this, we envisage that communities that are outwith Priority Areas could also benefit from the resource of experienced mentors, perhaps retired ministers coming alongside and sharing their experience of Priority Areas work.

2.7 Overview of Priority Area Posts

- 2.7.1 The Priority Areas Committee should have a role in the approval of posts in Priority Areas. We want to consider the mechanism for allocation of MDS staff in particular. This is one of the key resources in Priority Areas. The allocation of posts happens at presbytery level and PPTG can provide advice. We note the number of vacancies of MDS currently and would like to work in partnership with PPTG and presbyteries to give further consideration as to how these can be filled. Can we consider flexible approaches such as temporary appointments?
- 2.7.2 We intend to build on our current work with Glasgow Presbytery in this area as a model for going forward. We have developed strong working relations with the Presbytery and are evolving a system for a three way approach to shaping and recruiting for MDS vacancies. We will use the learning from this model to continue to develop good practice in this area and to build relationships with the other presbyteries involved in supporting the development of Priority Area congregations. We will continue to work with the HR Manager in Ministries Council to explore ways of ensuring vacancies are recruited for. Our colleagues in PPTG also suggest that a list of filled as well as vacant MDS posts should be available on the website. This would give presbyteries ideas on the kinds of MDS posts that could be developed.

2.8 Resourcing through additional posts

- 2.8.1 The Priority Areas Committee is in no doubt that Priority Areas double weighting has enabled innovative work to take place that not only impacts in the local area but which has also offered this creativity to the wider church. In particular it is the longevity of resources that this “buys”,

often in the form of MDS posts that is the absolute real bed-rock of developing the work; giving it the length and space to develop. This is in contrast to the short-termism of many grant funding sources.

- 2.8.2 The corollary to this is how do we “test” the Priority Areas weighting; in the sense of how intentional a particular congregation is about working with its community to address issues of poverty. A Priority Area should be able to show how the additional resources are enabling them to work with the strengths and needs of their community. This is most likely achieved through the encouragement “tools” outlined above and our role in the approval of posts.

2.9 Exploratory work on methodology of next list for Priority Areas

- 2.9.1 Compiling the list of Priority Areas has taken place three times since the inception of this work. It has been a useful and necessary exercise each time. Different methodologies have been used; latterly the list has used the top ranking of 5% in terms of deprivation across all of the seven indicators of multiple deprivation used by the Scottish Index. The list was last adjusted in 2014. Between iterations of the list; following Local Church Reviews and subsequent Adjustments, occasionally parishes have expanded and as a result lost Priority Areas status.
- 2.9.2 We are now in a period of beginning to explore how and what methodology we will use to assess and draw up the next list of Priority Area congregations. We are working with the Church of Scotland statistician, to consider the advances in methodology that have taken place and to look at new ways of identifying and defining Priority Areas. Part of this work will be to produce guidance on what happens when adjustment takes place within a presbytery. We are just at the beginning of this exploration and will deliberate carefully; conscious of the need to bend resources to wherever the poor are. Whilst this happens, we are holding to the list as it stands and will not remove Priority Area status.

2.10 Priority Areas Representatives

- 2.10.1 Presbytery planning locally at its very best should be strategic planning picking up on areas of greatest need. We ask that presbyteries designate someone within their presbytery as a Priority Areas representative. This is akin to each presbytery having a Church and Society representative or a disability representative. In some cases it could be the same person. The Priority Areas representative can have a watching brief; looking at the plans to ensure that they address the needs in relation to poverty. As a local person, they would have a greater understanding of the local context – whether that be in relation to urban or rural poverty. They would be the champion in the local presbytery; someone with interest and experience.

2.11 Resourcing through M&M Contributions

- 2.11.1 We have considered the fact that poverty exists in more places than simply Priority Area parishes. We are mindful of seeking ways in which our work to support and be with poorer communities can be widened out within the Church. We suggest that a percentage of M&M contributions are ring fenced for each presbytery for anti-poverty work. This decentralises resources and gives back ownership to the local. Giving each presbytery local responsibility to address the needs of poverty in their area. We recognise that poverty exists, sometimes in small pockets, but nonetheless real, all over Scotland. This would allow an opportunity for presbyteries to resource this work in rural and urban areas. We recommend that using this, each presbytery explores how to establish a “fund” for congregations who are outwith the Priority Areas designation, to make application to for additional staffing resources, in order to address needs in relation to poverty. There would be a similar set of guidelines (see 2.4.1) or criteria which would show how a congregation was intentional about this work. This initiative would offer provision where presbytery can support this work with fragile congregations; often where people will be doing this with few resources.

3. Widening the reach of support for the poorest communities

3.1 Why we support the 64 poorest communities

- 3.1.1 We currently have 64 designated Priority Areas across Scotland. Around half of these are in the Presbytery of Glasgow, with the remaining spread across a further 13 Presbyteries. They were determined primarily by using Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD), supported by Statistics for Mission. All of the 64 congregations fall within the 5%; the top ranking for

deprivation. That is, **all** of them scored in the top 5% across **all seven** of the SIMD indicators: employment, income, health, housing, education, crime, access to amenities.

3.2 New models of resourcing through presbytery planning

3.2.1 We have undertaken work in the last year in partnership with PPTG to look at the ways in which presbyteries resource this work; develop new models for work with the poorest communities which can be shared outwith Priority Areas. (See Section 2 above).

3.3 Current initiatives to widen the reach of our support

3.3.1 We have made a decision to work with the **most** deprived communities; that has to be our focus or priority means nothing. However we know that poverty exists all over Scotland. Currently we are widening our support for congregations that are intentional about anti-poverty work by:

3.3.2 Communicating and promoting the work of Priority Area congregations. These are our experts in this work. By strengthening our ability to disseminate and connect people together, for example through our [#365PA](#) initiative and the development of a Directory of Priority Areas, others can make contact and learn from this work.

3.3.3 We have upgraded and overhauled the website and continue to develop this as a source of support for all congregations intentional about anti-poverty work.

3.3.4 Congregations outside of Priority Areas can be added to our mailings so that they can learn more about anti-poverty work and resources available. We regularly deal with enquiries about anti-poverty work and are always happy to discuss, telephone, meet, email, sign post, input at events.

3.3.5 We have launched our new Priority Areas Academy Learning Programme, open in the first round of bookings to Priority Area congregations and then opened up to the wider church.

3.3.6 We are developing as a centre of excellence in Asset Based Community Development; this offers more opportunities for congregations outwith Priority Areas to share in the learning and develop their own work.

3.3.7 The Priority Areas Secretary is a member of the Rural Working Group convened by Mission & Discipleship Council

3.4.1 The Work of the Go For It Fund

3.4.1 We remember that this is a Gospel imperative for the whole Church; it isn't only the remit of the Priority Areas Committee. One of the key initiatives that the Ministries Council and the national Church does have in place to support this work is the **Go For It** Fund. Two of their criteria have direct relevance: Tackling poverty and social injustice and Meeting Identified needs in the community. Congregations who are intentional about anti-poverty work can make application to the fund for grants of up to £90,000 over three year.

3.4.2 The Go For It fund has given grants widely across Scotland in both rural and urban areas. Whilst those applicants to the fund who are applying under the tackling poverty criterion are asked to evidence their work using the 5% ranking in the SIMD, the fund makes it clear to applicants that if this isn't appropriate, they may use other evidence to show how they are working with the poorest communities.

4. Productive Partnerships Enabling us to Deliver our Plan

4.1 Together For a Change – World Mission

4.1.1 Our successful partnership with World Mission Council continued this year with our Together for a Change programme. This programme has helped congregations make real connections with overseas communities; engaging in exchange visits and learning more about the context for each. We held a meeting with 30 attendees who had a connection with TFAC, earlier in the year. This proved to be a productive way of re-imagining the programme; feedback was excellent. As a result of this event and working with our partners in World Mission, we reworked aims and developed new methodology for how we undertake this work. We have developed an application process for churches present proposals and access funding for TFAC work. We will open up this fund, early in 2018.

4.2 Chance to Thrive – General Trustees

4.2.1 We report at Section 1.9 on our well established partnership with the General Trustees. We continue to work with them in different ways to support our mutual work; most recently on the

updating of the Making It Happen guide, and as contributors to the programme of the Big Conversation 2.

4.3 New Beginnings – Mission and Discipleship Council

- 4.3.1 We were pleased to recruit our remaining core team member – Worship Development Officer in the middle of last year and this has been our catalyst for developing closer partnerships with our good colleagues in Mission and Discipleship. This work will continue to grow and bear fruit in 2018.
- 4.3.2 As outlined in section 3.3.7, the Priority Areas Secretary joined the Rural Working Group earlier in the year; enabling a sharing of understanding and possibilities for development between Priority Areas and this Mission and Discipleship working group.

4.4 Connecting us to political and social issues - Church and Society

- 4.4.1 We continued to develop a close partnership with Church and Society Council over the year; working with our colleagues on a number of key areas: Jobcentre closures, the roll out of Universal Credit, the work of the Scottish Parliament Community Outreach team.
- 4.4.2 We will be working closely with Church and Society, Crossreach and Go For It in 2018 to plan the first of what is hoped to become an annual event; a parliamentary reception to disseminate on the work of our respective agencies.

4.5 Funding Change in Church and Community – Go For It

- 4.5.1 Our natural partners in the support for our congregations and communities, we have worked closely with Go For It to develop our presence at Heart and Soul, to run a fringe event for General Assembly commissioners, and to contribute to Big Conversation 2. This partnership will develop in 2018.

5. Developing Surgeries

- 5.1 We developed a surgery with Stewardship and Finance in May last year. Eight congregations signed up and booked appointments with the Stewardship and Finance team to look at ways in which better sustainability could be achieved for their congregations. It was a very successful approach, breaking down barriers. It meant that individuals and teams could come along and find out more about the work of the S&F team and how it could support them in their congregation. This approach allowed people to ask questions face to face with a team member. It was a very successful model and the evaluations have shown us that people increased their understanding and knowledge of the work, gained new ideas and were intentional about putting ideas into practice in their future work. It was the first surgery we ran and proved the model could work.
- 5.2 We extended this approach within our annual conference – The Big Conversation 2 which took place in November. We invited small groups of conference participants to get into a “bite sized blether” – a short surgery with a number of key agencies within the Church – General Trustees took part in this, as did Place for Hope, Go For It and Mission and Discipleship.
- 5.3 We will continue to develop this strand of our work in 2018; linking up with Church and Society to run a surgery for congregations.

Priority Areas core team:

Shirley Grieve, Priority Areas Secretary – sgrieve@churchofscotland.org.uk	Lynn MacLellan, Office Manager/YAVS Co-ordinator lmaclellan@churchofscotland.org.uk
Fred Vincent, Chance to Thrive Co-ordinator – fvincent@churchofscotland.org.uk	Iain McLarty Worship Development Officer imclarty@churchofscotland.org.uk
Naomi Dornan, Administrator – ndornan@churchofscotland.org.uk	John Finch, Ministries Support Officer jfinch@churchofscotland.org.uk

Priority Areas Office, Church of Scotland, Ministries Council, 759a Argyle Street, Glasgow, G3 8DS

T: 0141 248 2905 W:http://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/serve/ministries_council/priority_areas

Facebook: [@PriorityAreas](https://www.facebook.com/PriorityAreas)

Twitter: [@PriorityAreas](https://twitter.com/PriorityAreas)

Instagram: [@PriorityAreas](https://www.instagram.com/PriorityAreas)