



MULTIPLY.



Multiply 20s-40s: Project Evaluation

Dr Andy Wier, Winging It Consulting, January 2026

Contents

Executive Summary.....	3
1 Introduction	5
2 Background and Context.....	6
3 Some Snapshots of Multiply.....	8
4 Outcomes and Impact.....	10
5 Sustainability of Outcomes.....	15
6 Missional Design	17
7 Value for Money	19
8 Lessons Learned.....	21
9 Conclusion	24
Appendix 1 – Interviews Schedule.....	26
Appendix 2 – Characteristics of Multiply Parishes	27
Notes	31

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents the findings of an end of project evaluation of the Diocese of York’s Multiply 20-40s project. Multiply sought to create new worshipping communities (NWCs) among people in their 20s, 30s and 40s and was supported by around £3.06m Strategic Development Funding (SDF) from the national Church and £1.93m diocesan funding between 2019 and 2025. The three main elements of Multiply were:

1. A full-time team of Pioneering Ministers working in 13 parish locations to develop new worshipping communities
2. A ‘Growth Fund’ team of part-time lay pioneers across 20 parishes with a remit to establish new, lay-led, worshipping communities focussed on 20s-40s.
3. Establishing St Michael le Belfrey (York) as a Resource Church that plants out every two years, with a succession of younger Curates to fuel growth amongst 20s-40s.

The evaluation included a desk-based review of existing data and documents about Multiply and 23 interviews with a selection of diocesan stakeholders, Multiply ministers (lay and ordained), incumbents, and other church planters. The findings that follow are structured around the National Church Institutions’ five core criteria for SDF end-of-project evaluations.

I. Outcomes and Impact

- Multiply achieved its overall aim of establishing new worshipping communities for people in their 20s, 30s and 40s and creating new disciples. But many of the ambitious numerical targets set at the start of the project were not met.
- Across the 13 parishes where full-time (mostly ordained) Multiply ministers were appointed, there were many good examples of creative missional engagement with non-churched and de-churched people in their 20s, 30s and 40s. But appointments in some settings did not flourish as imagined.
- Many interviewees suggested outcomes were “much more visible and much clearer” in the parishes where part-time lay pioneers were appointed through the Growth Fund.
- Though not directly funded by Multiply, the aim of recognising and supporting church planting and revitalisation through St Michael Le Belfrey was achieved. There are encouraging early signs from the two Belfrey church plants / revitalisations that occurred during Multiply.
- During the Multiply project, a more coherent and joined-up approach to supporting a spectrum of church planting and pioneering approaches in the Diocese of York has begun to emerge. This has recently been articulated within a draft church planting strategy.

The key contributing factors that either helped or hindered project impact were as follows:

What helped?	What hindered?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appointing gifted pioneers • Giving freedom and opportunities • Support from the central team and peers • Good relationships with parishes and incumbents • Growth Fund tapered funding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unrealistic expectations and target culture • The disruption of a global pandemic • Personnel turnover • Difficulties with parishes and incumbents • Lack of team (or transfer growth) • Institutional barriers (local and national)

2. Sustainability of Outcomes

As the table below indicates, most of the project’s original sustainability aspirations were **partly met**. Some aspirations, however, were either **mostly met** or **mostly not met**.

Original aspiration	Full-time	Part-time
1. That the local parish would be owning the Multiply project and therefore committed to continuing NWC and other ministries established by Multiply ministers	Yellow	Green
2. That lay people would be raised up to be able to lead and continue new worshipping communities	Yellow	Yellow
3. That parishes would commit to continue pioneer positions (whether through increased giving or other means)	Red	Yellow

When asked about the enduring impact of Multiply on the Diocese of York, some interviewees were optimistic that various “ripples” would continue over years to come. Other participants, however, were more pessimistic about whether the culture of the diocese had changed.

3. Missional Design

The project proceeded broadly as outlined in the original design phase, though some elements (e.g. training hubs) were not formally developed and the relationship between Multiply and St Michael Le Belfrey was not always clear. With the benefit of hindsight, various expectations and assumptions from the original project design now seem questionable:

- Assumptions about parishes’ readiness and capacity to support Pioneer Ministers – this raises wider questions about the wisdom of attaching pioneers to existing parishes without any wider supporting team.
- How long it takes different kinds of NWC to grow, become sustainable, and multiply

4. Value for Money

Many interviewees felt that investment in part-time lay pioneers provided “fantastic value for money” but opinions about the value and effectiveness of the full-time model varied. Some felt that the costs of employing a full-time ordained pioneers far outweighed the benefits, but others suggested that investing in a full-time team had brought wider benefits and added value to the diocese. These diverging views reflect wider challenges in assessing and making value judgements about return on investment in missional contexts.

5. Lessons Learned

Key areas of learning arising from the experience of Multiply include:

- It is important to recognise different kinds of pioneer (lay and ordained) and the benefits and drawbacks of different church planting models.
- Within mixed ecology settings, pioneers need both ‘freedom from’ and ‘connection to’ the inherited Church. They also need teams and central, peer and local support.
- Projects like Multiply benefit greatly from good oversight, accountability, and relationships of trust with senior diocesan staff and national funding bodies.
- Responsible target setting requires both aspiration and realism.
- Resourcing meaningful monitoring, evaluation and learning needs to be thought about sooner rather than later.
- It is important not to let institutional approaches to strategic planning and project management stifle or unnecessarily constrain more “organic” approaches to church planting, pioneering and discipleship.

I INTRODUCTION

This report presents the findings of an end of project evaluation of the Diocese of York's Multiply 20-40s project – an initiative funded by Church of England Strategic Development Funding (SDF) and diocesan funds with the purpose of creating new worshipping communities, particularly for those in their 20s, 30s and 40s. The evaluation was led by Dr Andy Wier of Winging It Consulting, with assistance from Winging It associates Elspeth McGann, Dan Ortiz, and Nathan Wier. It took place over a four-month period between October 2025 and January 2026.

The overall aims of the evaluation, agreed at the start of the project, were to:

1. Analyse the extent to which the intended outcomes and impact have been achieved and understand the contributing factors
2. Consider whether the outcomes / changes achieved are likely to be sustained
3. Test the theory of change and the assumptions underpinning the approach, including suggesting changes to any elements not validated
4. Make a judgement on value for money, in terms of the impact / outcomes achieved
5. Record and share lessons learned, including how this learning will adapt future diocesan strategies or work

To achieve these aims, we conducted:

- A desk-based review of existing data and documents about Multiply
- 23 interviews – As Appendix 1 indicates, we interviewed 4 diocesan stakeholders, 6 full-time Multiply Ministers, 6 part-time lay pioneers, 4 incumbents of Multiply parishes, and 3 people involved in church planting / revitalisation through St Michael Le Belfrey
- An online focus group with lay pioneers
- A site visit to one of the new worshipping communities established through Multiply

Over the pages that follow, we review the achievements of Multiply with relation to the five evaluation criteria outlined above.

We would like to thank everyone we spoke to as part of this evaluation who shared their experiences, reflections, and insights with us. We hope and pray this report will help the diocese and national Church learn from both the achievements of Multiply and the challenges the project encountered and discern how to continue faithfully improvising in mission.

Dr Andy Wier

Winging It Consulting – Resourcing Faithful Improvisation in Mission

andy@wingingitconsulting.co.uk

2 BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

Multiply was a Diocese of York initiative seeking to resource new worshipping communities (NWCs) among people in their 20s, 30s and 40s. Multiply began in 2019 and was supported by Strategic Development Funding (SDF) from the national Church alongside internal diocesan funds. The project officially ended in December 2025, though some lay pioneers are remaining in post for a further year in 2026. There were three main strands to the project:

1. A full-time team of Pioneering Ministers working in 13 parish locations to develop new worshipping communities.
2. A team of lay pioneers, employed by parishes and funded by the Growth Fund, to establish new, lay-led, worshipping communities focussed on 20s-40s. Over the life of the project, 20 parishes employed part-time (1-2 days per week) pioneers.
3. Establishing St Michael le Belfrey (York) as a Resource Church that plants out every two years, with a succession of younger Curates to fuel growth amongst 20s-40s. Two church plants / revitalisations were envisaged during the Multiply project. This activity was not directly funded by SDF.

Funding and Timescales

The breakdown of funding set out in the original (2018) SDF Stage 2 application was as follows:

SDF funding	£3.06m over 6 calendar years (2019-24) years to cover 5 years of employment costs (with staggered start dates), excluding housing costs, for all but one of the front-line mission roles. - £2.5m for stipendiary ministry - £0.5m for part-time lay roles
Diocesan funding	£1.93m over 8 years (2018-2026) to include initial set-up costs, one pilot minister role, employing a central team, housing and ongoing training & networking

Though most project activity was initially planned for 2019-2024, the original timeline was subsequently extended due to COVID and other factors, with most Minister activity running until the end of 2025 and Lay Leader activity now planned to end at the end of 2026.

Intended Outcomes

The primary objective of Multiply was to establish NWCs through which significant numbers of 20s of 20s 40s and their families would be reached and become disciples. Beyond this, it was envisaged that there would be 'ripples' across the diocese resulting in further NWCs and missional engagement. The key outcomes envisaged by the 2018 SDF Bid (Second Stage Application) are summarised below.

- Over 1,600 new adult disciples and more than 900 new children
- 70-80 new worshipping communities / congregations
- 30-40 ordained ministers equipped to multiply the diocese's pioneering and planting ministry
- From the Growth Fund grants, over 20 confident and effective lay leaders modelling lay pioneering more widely
- 14 training hubs in places of missional good practice

- Over 20 younger candidates for ministry added to the vocation process
- Giving by new disciples will grow to a level expressive of mature discipleship
- Creation of a longer-term planting strategy

According to the original bid, the proposed outcomes listed above were informed by a combination of “faith-filled ambition” and “the reality and experience in our diocese and elsewhere”. This included anticipation of a significant “ripple effect” as other benefices (over and above those with paid pioneers) in the diocese were “envisioned and inspired” to find ways of reach 20s-40s and create NWCs.

Subsequent Adjustments

As with many projects started around the same time, the Covid pandemic and its associated lockdowns had a very detrimental effect on Multiply and set the project back considerably. After a post covid review in 2021, it was agreed that some unused funds could be used to extend the duration of some full-time posts and some relatively minor adjustments to the project outcomes were made as a result. In April 2024, the diocese requested a more major reset that involved removing the “ripple effect” from the project outcomes and considerably reducing the number of new disciples and NWCs envisaged as a result. As the diocese’s 2024 Reset request document explains, in 2021 the diocese had still hoped that the ripple effect would be a significant outcome of Multiply but in practice “Covid was much more impactful than we anticipated in disrupting the missional planning and energy of many parishes.” Additionally, it was noted that the appointment of Growth Fund ministers had taken much longer than originally anticipated and the diocese requested that outcomes be adjusted to reflect this delay. In view of all this, the original outcomes were adjusted as follows:

- ~~Over 1,600~~ 716 new adult disciples and more than ~~900~~ 381 new children.
- ~~70-80~~ 60-65 new worshipping communities / congregations
- ~~30-40~~ 25-35 ordained ministers equipped to multiply the diocese’s pioneering and planting ministry
- From the Growth Fund grants, over ~~20-30~~ confident and effective lay leaders modelling lay pioneering more widely
- 44 11 training hubs in places of missional good practice
- Over ~~20~~ 10 younger candidates for ministry added to the vocation process
- Giving by new disciples will ~~grow to a level expressive of mature discipleship~~ become more common
- Creation of a longer-term planting strategy

3 SOME SNAPSHOTS OF MULTIPLY

The Multiply Project supported pioneer ministry and church planting in over 30 parish locations across the Diocese of York. As Appendix 2 illustrates, these locations spanned a wide variety of social and geographical contexts, including low-income communities, urban estates, rural areas, market towns and a new housing development.

The impact of Multiply Ministers

The following quotes from stories and videos on the Multiply website provide a glimpse into the ministries of lay and ordained Multiply ministers and the different kinds of people supported by the new worshipping communities they established.

I was new to the area and I had no friends or anything... I had two little babies and so I felt really stuck in and isolated. And when I met Jane [Ordained Pioneer Minister], she was just so welcoming and friendly. And so she welcomed us along to her church on Sundays... We found that we really enjoyed it and... wanted to come more and be involved...

I were a very bitter person – took wrong paths in life... I went to Hope Hub one day with my anxiety. I just said to Emma [Lay Pioneer] “I need help”... That’s when my life changed. I [now] make better choices, I’ve got loads of peace in my life... The Lord has really changed my life for the better. I can’t thank him enough.

“I am embedded in the local running club and trail running community where the interest from people I encounter always surprises me. Whether it is on a night run with a small group or halfway around an ultra-marathon the conversations I end up having about faith never cease to amaze me.”

(Rev Nik Stevenson, Pioneer Minister)

We got involved in Messy Church after hearing about it from the school and the girls came home excited after some assemblies... As an adult, I just really value the time to spend time with my children doing activities... Its just lovely to get to know other parents, to get to know the church community a little bit more...

Kia’s original vision was to start a community choir but when the pandemic began, they responded to the immediate needs in the community and started a food bank. This developed into what is now called “the food community” and in 2024 1600 people, that’s 1 in 20 homes in their parish, have accessed the “food community” at least once! Kia also leads a weekly Thursday morning NWC called “Faith Hub” ...

Church planting / revitalisation through The Belfrey

Holy Trinity Heworth, York

At the end of January 2022, a small team from The Belfrey, led by Rev Mike Perkins and his wife Emma were sent to help revitalise Holy Trinity church in Heworth. The approach employed was seen as one of “planting out” from the Belfrey and “grafting in” to Holy Trinity, with a strong emphasis on honouring and working with the existing congregation and re-engaging with the local community after the pandemic.

During this time, estimated attendance¹ at the main Sunday service has grown from around 10-15 to around 65-70. It is thought that around two thirds of current attendees had been previously attending other churches but the remaining third are either new or returning disciples. There has also been growing community engagement, particularly with families with children with additional needs. This has included developing therapy provision in partnership with the charity Growing Hope and establishing a monthly Sunday service (HT+) for primary school aged children with additional needs and their families.

AST church, Derringham Bank, Hull

In January 2024, Rev. Vicky Earll was sent to lead a church plant revitalisation at the Church of The Ascension and St Thomas' in Hull. The intention was to come alongside the existing church family to help the church grow, engage with younger age groups and work towards becoming a resource church. Vicky spent the first six months building relationships with the existing congregation (around 25 people) and was then joined in the summer of 2024 by a team of 8 people from the Belfrey who relocated from York to Hull. Since then, various new activities and ministries have been developed, including a new Sunday evening service, a midweek café drop-in and schools' work.

It is still early days but there have been encouraging signs of growth. The number of people who attend church at least once a month has grown from around 25 to “at least 60” and there are now children and young people attending who did not before. Interestingly, quite a few of the new attenders have come through occasional offices like baptisms, banns of marriage and funerals.

Reflecting on the experience so far, Vicky comments:

I would not be able to do what I'm doing if I didn't have a team... You've got to model something different [through]... people who have an expectation of growth...

[But] they need to come.. in humility. Because it's not like, oh, we've come here to save the day! That's not gonna work either. We can learn from people as well.

4 OUTCOMES AND IMPACT

The text box below provides a summary assessment of Multiply's progress with relation to outcomes and impact. Over the pages that follow, we review the available data in more detail and consider some of the underlying factors that have contributed to and impeded progress.

1. Achievement of overall aim

Multiply achieved its overall aim of establishing new worshipping communities for people in their 20s, 30s and 40s and creating new disciples. But many of the ambitious numerical targets set at the start of the project were not met. This was partly at least because the 'ripple effect' that was initially imagined did not happen.

2. Full-time Multiply Ministers

Across the 13 parishes where full-time (mostly ordained) Multiply ministers were appointed, there were many good examples of creative missional engagement with non-churched and de-churched people in their 20s, 30s and 40s. But there were also "quite a few [pioneer appointments] that haven't flourished in the way we would have hoped"

3. Part-time lay pioneers

Among many of the people we interviewed, the consensus was that outcomes were "much more visible and much clearer" within the parishes where part-time lay pioneers were appointed through the Growth Fund. Many of these lay pioneers were people "we'd not really identified and worked with [before]".

4. Church planting / revitalisation through The Belfrey

Though not directly funded by Multiply, the aim of recognising and supporting church planting and revitalisation through St Michael Le Belfrey was achieved. The early signs from the two Belfrey church plants / revitalisations that occurred during Multiply (Holy Trinity Heworth, York and AST church, Derringham Bank Hull) are encouraging.

5. A longer-term church planting strategy

Interviews with senior diocesan staff suggest that a more coherent and joined-up approach to supporting a "spectrum" of different approaches is beginning to emerge, informed by the Multiply experience. This has recently been articulated within a draft church planting strategy for the diocese.

4.1 Progress Review

In this section, we briefly review the project's progress to date with relation to the outcomes originally agreed at the start of the SDF project and subsequently revised in April 2024. This draws primarily on figures reported in the diocese's *Final Multiply Dashboard* and by conversations with diocesan stakeholders. It should be noted, however, that the project experienced various challenges and difficulties in the collection of numerical outcomes data. As we explain further below, these data collection challenges have constrained our ability to provide a definitive assessment of the Multiply project's impact.

New Worshipping Communities (NWCs)

Original aspiration: 70-80 NWCs / Congregations by the end of 2024

Revised aspiration: 60-65 NWCs by the end of 2026

Number so far: 'Around 50' NWCs to date. Final figure may be higher.

Providing a definitive answer to the question of how many NWC were established is difficult because the project did not systematically track this. Though the Multiply Project website provided helpful resources to reflect on the journey to becoming a new worshipping community, recording progress in this regard was not embedded in the project's data collection systems. This is evident in the fact that the Multiply Project Dashboard records numbers of people attending NWCs but not the number of NWCs themselves. In April 2024 the diocese estimated **"there are currently around 50 new worshipping communities attributable to Multiply"** but it is unclear how precisely this figure was arrived at. A more recent list of NWCs compiled by the diocese in October 2025 records 49 NWC linked to the work of Multiply pioneers, though it is unclear what criteria were used for determining what is and is not a NWC. Of the 49 NWC listed, 36 were still active but 13 were no longer meeting. The table below breaks these figures down further:

	Full-time team	Part-team
Total NWCs	21	28
Still active	17	19
No longer meeting	4	9

The above totals do not include the two church plants / revitalisations that occurred through The Belfrey during Multiply² and other NWCs these churches have gone onto establish. And as many of the Growth Fund lay pioneers are staying in post for another year, it may be that further NWCs will be established next year. The total number of NWCs established through Multiply by the end of 2026 may therefore well be higher than the 'around 50' reported above, but quantifying this precisely is not possible.

New disciples

Original aspiration: Over 1,600 new adult disciples and more than 900 new children (total: 2,500) by the end of 2024

Revised aspiration: 716 new adult disciples and more than 381 new children (total: 1,097) by the end of 2026

Number so far: At least 675 (total) by 2024. Final figure (by end of 2026) likely to be higher.

Determining what constitutes a 'new disciple' is notoriously difficult but, for recording purposes, the Multiply project defined this as people engaged with NWCs who were "not previously attending a church" (including both the unchurched and de-churched).³ The Multiply Project Dashboard suggests that by 2024, there were 675 new disciples linked to

activities run by Multiply ministers who submitted a return. At least 148 of these were under 18, though not all contexts provided an age breakdown. 486 of the new disciples recorded were linked to the work of full-time Multiply Ministers and 89 were linked to the work of part-time (Growth Fund) lay pioneers.

Though the Multiply Project Dashboard also records responses from some Multiply locations in 2025, the response rate was much lower than in 2024 (14 responses compared to 24) and the data does not seem to have been submitted in a consistent manner.⁴ For this reason, we cannot confidently report the actual number of new disciples by 2025. By the end of 2026, the actual number of new disciples is likely to be more than 675 because this figure (from 2024) does not include:

- New disciples from the two church plants / revitalisations from St Michael Le Belfrey
- New disciples through the work of Multiply Ministers in 2024-2025 (not reported due to the methodological difficulties described above)
- People who become new disciples in 2026 as Growth Fund lay pioneers remain in post

Other anticipated outcomes

As creating NWCs and new disciples were the two central aims of Multiply, we have focused the above analysis on these. But progress to date with relation to the other outcomes envisaged by the original SDF bid is briefly summarised below:

- **Ordained ministers equipped to multiply pioneering and planting ministry** – This has not been systematically recorded but it appears that the original target of 30-40 (subsequently reduced to 25-35) has not been met. In 2024, the diocese reported that there were around 20 ordained or full-time lay ministers involved in leading or supporting NWCs and equipped to multiply further work.
- **Confident and effective lay leaders modelling lay pioneering more widely** – Again this has not been consistently recorded but it seems likely that the original target of 20 has been exceeded. In 2024, the diocese reported that the Growth Fund settings had 14 named lay leaders “who are also developing their own assistant leaders” and that 30 (not 20) was a more realistic aim.
- **Training hubs** – These were never formally launched in the way originally envisaged by the SDF bid. But in 2024, the diocese reported “at least 9 settings where ordinands, curates and a variety of lay ministers are in training relationships or could be in principle”.
- **Younger candidates for ministry** - Though there has been a smaller number of younger ordinands than originally envisaged, the diocese report “a significant number of lay ministers beginning vocational conversations”. In 2024, it was agreed that 10 younger candidates was “a more realistic goal” than the 20 originally proposed.
- **Financial giving in NWCs** – By 2024, the diocese had “not yet seen a significant growth in giving by new disciples” but hoped it would become “more common”. Later sections of this report reflect further on the project’s original assumptions around financial giving.
- **A longer-term church planting strategy** – Diocesan stakeholders reflect that church planting has become “a strong theme in Diocesan thinking” (as reflected for example in suffragan episcopal appointments) and that a more coherent and joined-up approach to supporting a “spectrum” of different church planting approaches is beginning to emerge. This has recently been articulated within a draft church planting strategy for the diocese.

Unanticipated outcomes

Alongside the outcomes reported above, the project delivered a variety of wider benefits and unanticipated outcomes. These included:

- **Engaging people of all ages** – Though Multiply aimed to reach people in their 20s, 30s and 40s, many pioneers told us that their NWCs also engaged with children, young people or older people. As one pioneer put it, “all ages attend [name of NWC], it’s very intergenerational” This is borne out by figures in the Multiply project dashboard.⁵
- **Impact on parish life** – In contexts where pioneers had good relationships with incumbents, there was often a close interaction or “symbiosis” between the new worshipping community and the inherited church. For those who had expected NWCs to be “a little bit more standalone”, this was a surprising but pleasing sign of “the mixed ecology at work”. In some parishes, there had also been an unexpected “blending together” between Multiply and the Diocese of York’s Mustard Seed initiative.
- **Diocesan culture change** – Some participants identified ways that Multiply had informed diocesan thinking and culture – e.g. helping people to realise that “we can reach younger adults” but that this may need to be “outside of the traditional Sunday morning model”.
- **A different kind of ripple effect** – Though there have not (yet) been lots more NWCs created beyond Multiply parishes, Multiply has had various other wider ripples – e.g. “the rippling out of pioneering cultures and qualities” in Multiply Ministers who are now incumbents and people inspired by “lay people leading new worshipping communities”.

4.2 Contributing Factors

When asked what had helped or hindered the project, participants identified a variety of contributing factors. Key things that have helped the project achieve all that it has include:

- **Appointing gifted pioneers** – As one diocesan stakeholder put it, “we’ve identified some really able lay and ordained pioneers who are able to think very creatively and engage with culture really appropriately.”
- **Giving pioneers freedom and opportunities** – The full-time team particularly appreciated being free to “innovate and experiment” without “the institutional ties” of many other ordained roles. Lay pioneers also valued “the opportunity to do something new.”
- **Central and peer support** – Many pioneers felt the support from the central Multiply team had been “fantastic”. As one put it, “I don’t think I’ve ever had such amazing support in a job”. They also greatly valued being part of a larger cohort of pioneers. Some said that without this “there would have been more times when maybe I’d thought about giving up”.
- **Incumbent relationships** – One pioneer reflected that across the whole project “so much has sunk or swum on the relationship between the incumbent and the pioneer”. There have been many examples within Multiply of mutually beneficial relationships between parishes / incumbents and pioneers, though unfortunately this has not been universal.
- **Growth Fund tapered funding** – The fact that the Growth Fund provided 100% funding in the first year helped parishes that would not have previously considered employing someone to do so. Tapered funding also made longer term sustainability more possible.

The following factors, however, appear to have hindered or impeded the project's impact:

- **Unrealistic expectations and target culture** – Many interviewees felt many felt that the expectations and targets were “wildly ambitious” and unrealistic. Though the original bid indicates the original targets were informed by a combination of “faith-filled ambition” and the “the reality and experience in our own diocese and elsewhere”, some of the assumptions on which they were based now seem questionable (see Section 6 for more details). Various pioneers also indicated that these targets made them “quite anxious and stressed”, with one saying they felt like a “noose around our neck”. Some diocesan stakeholders also indicated that “the SDF culture of targets and emphasis on numbers was quite intimidating for some of our folk” and had “demotivated people”.⁶ Many pioneers also reflected that five years “didn’t feel long enough” to achieve what was expected. Though some contracts were subsequently extended, the “piecemeal” nature of contract extensions made forward planning difficult.
- **The disruption of a global pandemic** – At the time of the first lockdown in March 2020, Multiply was still a very young project and the pandemic significantly hampered its work, disrupting the work of recently appointed Multiply ministers and causing further recruitment to be put on hold. As one interviewee put it, Covid “significantly blew so much out of the water”. This was then followed by a cost-of-living crisis and austerity which further impacted the project in numerous ways.
- **Personnel turnover** – There was also significant personnel turnover or “churn” within the Multiply team and wider diocese – for example the departure of the project’s founding director, associate leader, programme manager and some of the initial pioneers, alongside considerable changes to the diocese’s senior leadership team.
- **Difficulties with parishes and incumbents**- As noted already, much has “sunk or swum” on the relationship between pioneers and incumbents, and in this regard, there have been “disasters” as well as “successes”. Incumbent relationships appear to have been particularly difficult for the (mostly) ordained full-time Multiply Ministers, with various stakeholders identifying different “missed opportunities or miscommunication[s]” and (in some cases) breakdowns of relationship. There have also been various instances where the Multiply work has not always sufficiently “well-owned” by the parish or where there has been a lack of clarity about relationships between NWCs and existing congregations.
- **Lack of team (or transfer growth)** - Locations for the full-time team were originally identified on the assumption that the parishes in question would be able to supply a team of people who might join and support the Multiply Minister in developing a new worshipping community. But in many cases, the promised team did not materialise.⁷ There was also often relatively little transfer growth from other churches which (though positive in some respects) meant there were few mature Christians from which to build a team.
- **Institutional barriers (locally and nationally)** – Some interviewees also reflected on broader institutional barriers in the diocese and wider Church. One pioneer, for example, said they had felt “hampered” by a feeling of continually “running uphill” in “trying to persuade [Church] people that what we’re doing is good stuff”. Others reflected on a perceived “over-emphasis on clergy” within Multiply. Some interviewees also felt various SDF processes had made things harder for the project. Examples mentioned include SDF’s insistence that locations should be agreed a long time ahead of pioneer appointments and the “culture of numbers” that “infected” the project in its early days.

5 SUSTAINABILITY OF OUTCOMES

In this section, we consider two dimensions of sustainability – the sustainability of the new worshipping communities and other ministries established by Multiply pioneers and the enduring impact of the whole Multiply project.

5.1 Sustainability in different Multiply locations

The table below provides a simple ‘traffic light’ assessment of the full-time (FT) and part-time (PT) models with relation to some of the Multiply project’s original sustainability aspirations. Green means **mostly met**, amber means **partly met** and red means **mostly not met**. We then reflect further on sustainability within each model in the commentary that follows.

Original aspiration	FT	PT
1. That the local parish would be owning the Multiply project and therefore committed to continuing NWC and other ministries established by Multiply ministers	Amber	Green
2. That lay people would be raised up to be able to lead and continue new worshipping communities	Amber	Amber
3. That parishes would commit to continue pioneer positions (whether through increased giving or other means) ⁸	Red	Amber

The full-time model

Interviewees’ perceptions of the sustainability of the full-time model varied, with some saying sustainability was “patchy but possible” and others suggesting “it hasn’t created the sustainable model that I think it hoped to”. What is clear is that no parishes have been willing or able to continue funding Multiply Minister positions beyond SDF funding (hence the ‘red’ assessment under aspiration 3 in the above table). But in some parishes, the NWCs and other ministries established by Multiply ministers will continue in other ways under the leadership of the parish incumbent. For parishes currently in interregnum, however, it is not yet clear what will happen next because “some of that’s a bit in... the hands of a new incumbent”. Here, it would seem, much depends on the extent to which parishes feel a sense of “ownership” of the ministry (aspiration 1) and teams of lay people have been built up (aspiration 2). As the above table suggests, progress in this regard has been mixed. While some Multiply Ministers have been able to “build a brilliant team around [them]”, in others the work has remained “more dependent on the Multiply Minister than we imagined”.

Growth Fund model

Many of the people we interviewed felt that the Growth Fund model of appointing part-time lay pioneers with tapered funder was “easier to sustain” than the full-time model. With relation to aspiration 1 from the table above, there seems to be a higher degree of parish ownership in Growth Fund settings and therefore a higher commitment to continuing the ministry. As one interviewee put it: “Something has emerged that’s substantial, that the churches value, and therefore they will endeavour to find further investment to sustain it beyond 3 and 5 years”. Progress has also been made in developing teams of other lay leaders (aspiration 2) but, within many Growth Fund contexts, ongoing sustainability is still dependent on having a paid role. Sustaining a part-time post is obviously easier than sustaining a full-time stipend but in many Growth Fund parishes this is still not “an easy thing to ask”. Though some

parishes were able to commit to continue funding lay pioneers themselves (after Multiply funding), for many the idea that a NWC could be self-funding within five years was a “daft idea” that was never going to happen. As the incumbent of one low-income community parish explained:

“it's not always [as] simple that the church will grow enough people who can then pay the money that takes the cost of that one day a week. Especially when [among] virtually everyone involved, those 60 or so people [in the NWC], there probably isn't one full-time income and the majority of them will be on Universal Credit”.

Though “it seems likely that [most Growth Fund] parishes are going to try and source funding to sustain the parishes” (aspiration 3), in many this will need to come through means other than member giving alone (e.g grant funding). Various interviewees also suggested that without dedicated support from the central Multiply team (now that SDF funding has ended), sustainability of the NWCs led by part-time lay pioneers looks more “risky”.

5.2 An enduring impact on the diocese?

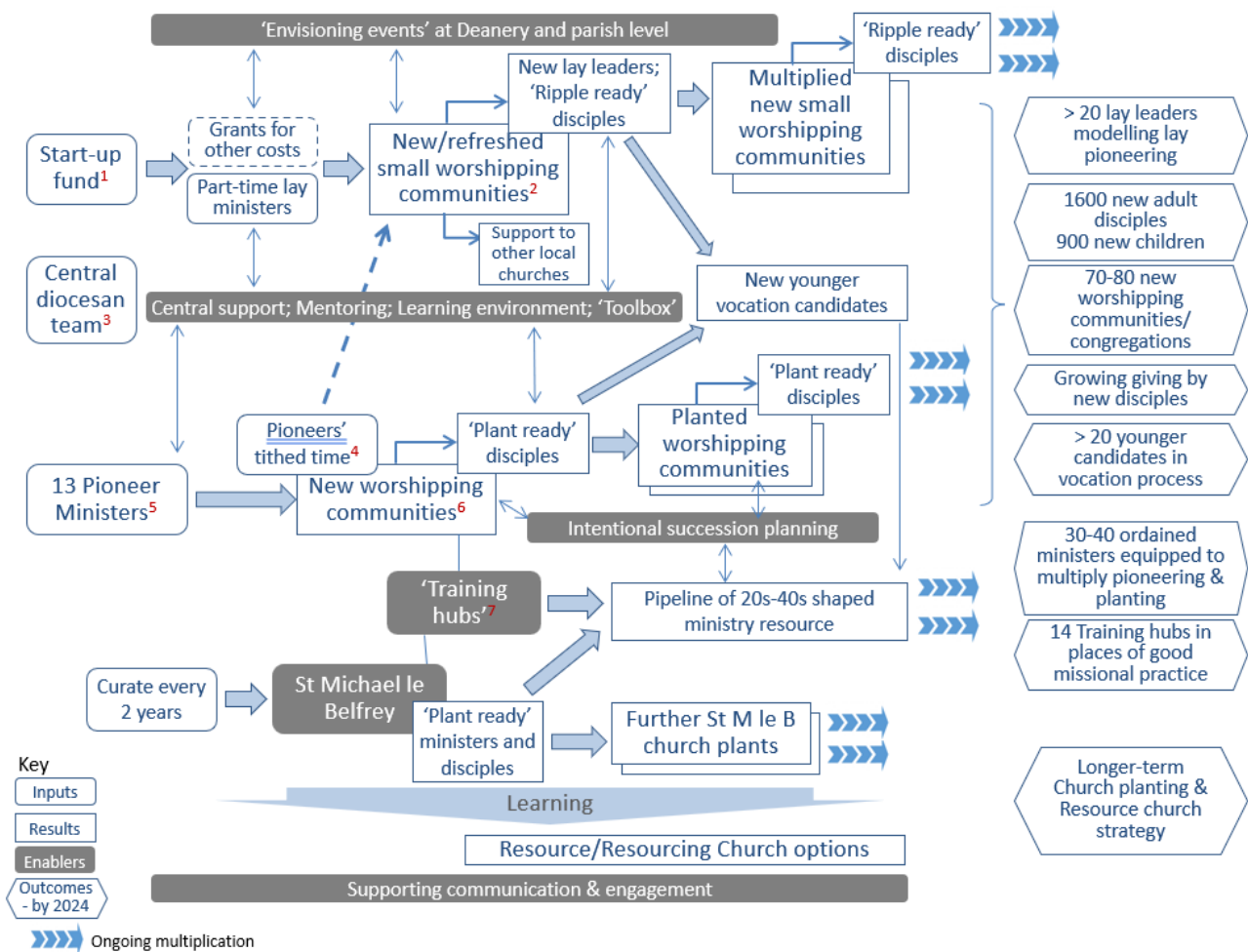
The interview question ‘What (if anything) will be the enduring impact of Multiply on the Diocese of York?’ generated a spectrum of responses ranging from ‘optimistic’ to ‘pessimistic’. The most optimistic responses indicate that various ripples from Multiply may continue to enrich the life of the diocese over years to come. It was suggested, for example, that former Multiply Ministers will be “a different [and more pioneering] sort of incumbent” because of their experiences of Multiply, the things that lay pioneers have learned will stay with them, and that the churches involved will find “ways forward to keep pioneering”. More pessimistic responses, on the other hand, highlighted that “Multiply was the first thing to go” when the diocese got stretched financially. Reflecting on this, one Multiply Minister commented “it does make me feel a bit pessimistic in terms of how much has the culture changed.” Another said they felt that from a diocesan perspective, Multiply was just a “we did that for a bit, but we're not doing that anymore” one-off project.

Other responses to the question about Multiply’s enduring impact were more mixed. One pioneer, for example, said they would like to think that the diocese will continue to “push for pioneering” despite there being no central Multiply team; but they didn’t “know the personnel well enough to be able to say definitely that will happen”. Other responses from diocesan stakeholders combined frank acknowledgement of Multiply’s sustainability struggles with evidence of the project’s enduring impact on the Diocese of York’s missional thinking.

6 MISSIONAL DESIGN

6.1 Initial Theory of Change

When compiling documentation for the desk-based review at the start of the evaluation, none of the diocesan staff we spoke to were aware of any Theory of Change documentation for the Multiply project. From these initial conversations, there emerged the impression that any theory of change was implicit, not explicit. Later in the evaluation process, however, one of the diocesan stakeholders we interviewed (one of the few people involved in the project's inception who was still in post) recalled the following Theory of Change diagram that was developed at some point in the early stages of project design.



Notes accompanying the above diagram

1. Clear criteria will ensure awards made to places with a good chance of flourishing
2. New worshipping communities as part of, or developing alongside, existing parish ministry – started with the intention of replication Allocated to places where there is a large 20s-40s population; enthusiastic incumbent & PCC; capacity to grow a team
3. Director responsible for the 'Reach' goal; 20s-40s Team Leader; 20s-40s Associate Team Leader (lay focus)
4. Support to other parishes' start-up activities, where requested; encouraging intentional multiplication
5. Attached to existing parishes/benefices. Focussed entirely on 20s-40s. Tasked with establishing a new community and aiming to plant out after 5 - 7 years.
6. Developing alongside existing parish ministry. Drawing in unchurched & de-churched people, with a 20s-40s focus
7. Focal points for training of 20s-40s shaped Ordinands, Curates, Readers, Authorised Lay Ministers

6.2 Questionable assumptions

With relation to project 'Inputs', the above diagram is a reasonably accurate representation of what happened through Multiply, though some elements (e.g. Training Hubs and Pioneers' tithed time) were not formally developed. And in practice, the relationship between SDF-funded activity and church planting / revitalisation through St Michael Le Belfrey (not funded by SDF) was not as clear and explicit as the diagram suggests. But as noted already in previous sections, progress with relation to the outcomes listed on the right of the diagram has been mixed, with not as many NWCs and considerably fewer new disciples than originally envisaged. With the benefit of hindsight, the following expectations and assumptions from the original project design now seem questionable:

- **Parishes' capacity and readiness for Pioneer Ministers** – According to the original SDF bid and conversations with diocesan stakeholders, the selection of locations for the full-time was informed by criteria that included “an envisioned and enabling incumbent”, a PCC “excited about the opportunities”, “potential team members” and “existing momentum” with the 20s-40s. In some of the Multiply locations at least, this assessment seems to have been over-optimistic with promised teams not materialising and strained relationships with incumbents in various locations. This may be partly due to the momentum that was lost in the frustratingly lengthy gap between the original recruitment of parishes and the recruitment of Multiply ministers, as well as the subsequent disruption of the pandemic. But this also raises wider questions about the advantages and disadvantages of pioneers being “attached to existing parishes / benefices” without any supporting team from beyond the parish.⁹
- **How long it takes different kinds of NWC to grow, become sustainable and multiply** - The Theory of Change diagram above appears to suggest that, within a period of five years, the NWC established by full-time and part-time pioneers would grow “plant ready” or “ripple ready” disciples, who would in turn help start further new worshipping communities. As the original SDF bid explains, the numerical projections were derived from a “comprehensive spreadsheet model” informed by various sources including the 2016 Church Army Research Unit report *The Day of Small Things*. This included key assumptions about:
 - i. The number of full-time Ministers growing NWC that flourish (11 out of 13 for the FT team, 23 out of 26 for the Growth Fund)
 - ii. The size to which these NWC would grow within the project lifetime (80-100 for the FT team, 50 for the PT team)
 - iii. Financial giving within NWC – by the 5th year of a NWC, most attendees would be “regular givers” at the diocesan target rate of £12 per week.
 - iv. The number of NWC that would plant out within the project lifetime (8 for the FT team, 12 for the Growth Fund)

There is not space here to fully interrogate these assumptions but, in view of the comments about parishes' capacity and readiness noted above, many now seems wildly optimistic. As noted already, some interviewees also reflected that many of the NWC set up by Multiply Ministers seemed to have lower levels of “transfer growth” than the original bid assumed. Though positively, this suggests that Multiply has grown NWC through more “unchurched and de-churched people”, it also undermined capacity for sustainability and multiplication as “we haven't inherited people that have been used to being lay leaders [and financial givers] elsewhere”.

7 VALUE FOR MONEY

Assessing ‘value for money’ and ‘return on investment’ within any organisational context is not easy, and there are additional practical and theological challenges doing this in a church context. But for the sake of simplicity, the table below provides a simple at-a-glance summary of the estimated costs of different elements of Multiply and the estimated outcomes to date linked to each element.

Programme element	Estimated Cost	Known outcomes to date ¹⁰	
		NWC	New disciples
FT Pioneer Ministers in 13 locations	£2.5M SDF + diocesan funding	21	At least 675
PT lay pioneers in 20 locations	£0.5M SDF + diocesan funding	28	At least 486
The Belfrey (not directly funded by the project)	Not known	(2 revitalisations)	(not known)

The information in the table above should be interpreted with care because the short-medium outcomes reported do not necessarily adequately capture the full impact of each programme element. And previous research on the differences between “high cost” and “cheaper” models has highlighted that more expensive full-time models often bring considerable “value-added or spin-off benefits” which, while difficult to quantify make an important contribution to the wider life of a diocese.¹¹ As such, the question of which model offers the best return on investment is more complex than one might initially imagine.

Notwithstanding these considerations, many of the people we interviewed felt that the Growth Fund model provided “fantastic value for money”. In the words of one interviewee, “we just get a great load of people for not a huge amount of money doing a fantastic job”. Indeed, various participants questioned whether the part-time lay pioneers were being paid enough. As one participant put it, “I would suggest that when the project started, it was a good salary, it was a decent salary. Six years on, we’ve just put them on to a real living wage. I think they’re worth more than that.”

Opinions about the value and effectiveness of the full-time model varied considerably. Some participants felt that some Multiply Minister appointments were more valuable than others, with one interviewee commenting “I suspect about half of them have been value for money”. But others said things like “on the sheer numbers, it’s hard to say [the full-time model] is value for money” or “the outlay on the ordained was far beyond the benefit”. Others, however, argued that investing in full-time pioneers had been important in enabling some things to happen that could not be achieved by part-time appointments alone. One interviewee, for example, reflected “you couldn’t do what [Name] has done in [a more disadvantaged part of the diocese] without paying someone full-time who’s a genuine expert to do it”, and another reflected that some of the Multiply Ministers have also “ended up really helping the established churches” as well.

These diverging views reflect some of the “difficulties of causality” in assessing and making value judgements about some of the more subtle ways in which different kinds of pioneer have contributed to the life of a diocese. Various interviewees also acknowledged that any assessment of value for money within Multiply “depends on what you’re measuring it against”.

Some, for example, reflected that “when traditional church...took two or three years to recover from Covid”, it’s unfair to make value judgements about Multiply’s new worshipping communities “as if Covid didn’t happen”. And others suggested that “if you were measuring nearly almost all the full-time team against their ordained colleagues in various settings”, the ordained Multiply Ministers were reaching new people and growing new communities in a way that many other clergy were not. Citing a paper about Multiply presented to Diocesan Synod in July 2024, one interviewee also reflected that Multiply had “bought’... the equivalent of an entire deanery in terms of additional worshippers”.

Finally, various interviewees expressed the view that though, according to some measures, elements of Multiply did not seem to provide good value for money, the investment in Multiply was still necessary or “worthwhile” because without it the diocese would not be where it is now. As one diocesan stakeholder put it:

“Yes, it's not necessarily been [great] value for money. And yes, it's been absolutely essential [for the diocese] because we're on a journey and we're now finding ourselves learning from and experimenting with pioneering. I think culturally as a diocese, we're now in a much better place and I think that's partly to do with Multiply...”

8 LESSONS LEARNED

Prior to this evaluation, the Multiply team and project Board had already reflected extensively on lessons arising from the project's experience. The table below summarises key lessons identified by the diocese within the Multiply project's 2024 Annual Project Progress Report.

What situation did you learn from?	What did you learn?	Advice for others
Misunderstandings between incumbents, PCCs and congregations, and pioneers about roles and expectations	Pioneering raises ongoing tensions between inherited and innovative models of mission and ministry.	Never assume that the initial exploration of a pioneer initiative resolves the underlying culture questions in the longer term.
Fruitful growth fund ministers found that they needed more time in the week	Lay leaders who began with 8 hours per week have often need 16 to accommodate their growing ministries	Design your financial model around the likelihood that growth in paid lay ministry may need an increase in funding.
The opportunity for a Multiply minister to become an Area Dean	Ripples involve positive engagement with institutional structures	Grasp these opportunities to help reshape the institution but be explicit about expectations.
Lay pioneers who are recruited into roles such as churchwarden.	Lay pioneer ministers are under pressure to fulfil traditional parish roles too.	Try not to add to the troubles of the incumbent but do facilitate open conversations about future change.
Bringing full time and part time leaders – lay and ordained - into the same space for support and development.	There is much common ground between Multiply ministers whether lay or ordained, full or part time.	Formal licenced status is of little interest to people with a common calling.
Surprising moments when a lack of knowledge about Multiply was encountered.	Communication is never finished.	Build in ways to refresh knowledge of the goals you are aiming at. Stories are key ways to convey values, learning & hope.

In late 2023, the full-time team also reflected extensively on their experiences of the project and identified important various areas of leaning around:

- The 'gains' and 'costs' of pioneer style posts – having freedom to experiment but with challenges around isolation, relating to inherited church, and the fragility of the new
- The pros and cons of starting without a team (contrast with Resource Church model)
- Cultural challenges when pioneering in parish settings
- The benefits of being part of a cohort of pioneers

Additionally, a July 2024 Diocesan Synod paper noted further learning from Multiply around:

- Programme adaptability – responding to unforeseen events like the pandemic
- A long-term perspective – pioneering should not be seen as “an easy fix” but part of a long-term set of experiments to be the church in new and different ways
- Integration and alignment of projects like Multiply with wider diocesan strategy
- Regular reporting into the wider structures of the diocese

Building on these valuable lessons already identified by the diocese, over the page we identify seven areas of further learning arising from our research interviews about Multiply.

1. Recognising different kinds of pioneer and planting models

The Multiply experience shows that there is no ‘one size fits all’ model of pioneer because each person and context is different. Though all pioneers have much in common, it is also important to recognise the distinctive gifts and vocations of different kinds of pioneer – both those already embedded in a local context (like many Growth Fund lay pioneers) and those brought in from further afield (as with many ordained pioneers). The table below summarises the benefits and drawbacks of the three planting / pioneering models used by Multiply.

	Benefits	Limitations
Full-time ordained Pioneer Ministers	Enabling mission in more ‘hard to reach’ contexts that require breaking new ground through experimentation, innovation and a priestly vocation	Financially very resource intensive. Impact sometimes constrained by lack of team and / or wider parish support
Part-time lay pioneers	Drawing on previously untapped potential of local people who already understand the context	Part-time lay pioneers constrained by limited time and a Church culture of clericalism
Resource churches revitalising existing churches	Bringing a whole team (not just an individual) creates a sense of impetus and momentum to rejuvenate existing churches	Revitalising an existing church (not pioneering something new) is more appropriate in some contexts than others.

2. Pioneers / planters need freedom, connection and teams

In some Multiply locations, a close connection between NWCs and the traditional parish model was greatly beneficial. But pioneers also needed space and freedom to do things differently. Finding the right balance between ‘freedom’ and ‘connection’ is not straightforward because different forms of church planting and pioneering require different levels of “cultural distance”¹² from the inherited Church. Whatever the setting, it is important to clarify expectations about how pioneers / planters will relate to parishes and carefully discern whether these expectations are compatible. Careful consideration also needs to be given to how pioneers can be equipped to bring or build teams. As the above table shows, this seems to be easier in some church planting models than others.

3. Central, peer and local support

As noted already, “fantastic” support for pioneers from the central Multiply team was one of the key factors that contributed to the project’s achievements. Multiply was effective in giving pioneers both central support from experienced practitioners who understood the joys and challenges of pioneering and the chance to learn together with other pioneers. Other pioneering and church planting projects should seek to provide a similar combination of centrally provided and peer-to-peer support. As noted already, pioneers also need a combination of ‘freedom from’ and ‘connection to’ the inherited Church. Having supportive and understanding incumbents is essential in this regard.

4. Oversight and trust – relating to the Diocese and National Church

The need for wider project oversight and support should also not be underestimated. Diocesan senior leaders and representatives of the National Church Institutions both have vital roles in communicating and managing expectations, celebrating achievements, and creating a supportive environment for projects. Though this happened at times with Multiply, the project’s impact was sometimes constrained by wider institutional barriers. For example, various interviewees suggested that though the diocesan leadership team “bought the vision

originally”, they took their eyes off it later (amidst COVID and numerous personnel changes) and Multiply subsequently “lost its profile in the diocese”. Some interviewees also reflected on “frustrating elements” of applying for and accessing SDF funding. These relate partly to a “culture of targets” but also to a perceived absence of trust. As one participant put it, “there wasn’t a sense in which they [SDF] trusted us”. These experiences highlight the need for an appropriate balance between accountability and trust in funding relationships.

5. Aspiration and realism in target setting

Many of those interviewed felt the Multiply project’s original expectations were wildly ambitious. Some also suggested that dioceses applying for national Church funding feel under pressure to include unrealistic targets in their funding bids “to get the money” but this caused pioneers stress and anxiety further down the line. As the following quote illustrates, participants were keen for both the Diocese and national Church to learn from this.

“There must be some better ways of describing expected outcomes... Dioceses shouldn't feel like they've got to kind of make up this thing in order to satisfy the Church Commissioners....It feels like we've kind of created this kind of... machine.”

As noted already, the original targets were informed by a combination of “faith-filled ambition” and figures derived from previous research but some of the assumptions on which they were based now seem questionable. This highlights some of the risks associated with applying and ‘translating’ statistical research findings from one context to another and the need for wider reflection and learning about healthy target setting. As one interviewee put it, “I hope there’s some national learning about the culture that target setting creates”.

6. Resourcing meaningful monitoring, evaluation and learning

Within a 2024 SDF self-assessment, the diocese noted there was strong qualitative story telling within Multiply but there were concerns about lack of clarity in the use of numerical measurement tools. In our view, this is a fair and balanced assessment. During the lifetime of Multiply, the team assembled an impressive collection of stories, videos and case studies that illustrated the project’s impact. But as noted already, the project experienced various challenges and difficulties in the collection of numerical outcomes data. This is particularly evident in the fact that the number and type of new worshipping communities established were not systematically tracked. The diocese’s 2024 self-assessment also reflected that the project may have “benefited from some external review work” with an external evaluator sooner rather than later. Again, we concur with this assessment as early input from an evaluation specialist could have informed the design of more helpful data collection systems. Andy Wier’s experience of journeying alongside York Diocese’s Mustard Seed Programme over a five-year period also highlights the benefits of an evaluator accompanying an initiative like Multiply over the whole life of a project, rather than simply conducting an end-of-project evaluation.

7. Negotiating tensions between ‘the institutional’ and ‘the organic’

Finally, various people we interviewed also reflected on perceived tensions between “organic” approaches to church planting that seek to be flexible and responsive to “a sense of God’s call” and more “institutional” approaches to strategic planning and project management. Though both are important, some suggested that within large, funded projects like Multiply it is important to be particularly mindful of the risk of the institutional stifling the organic and “the centre kneecapping the edge”. Learning how to allow space for the organic within multi-million-pound projects is an ongoing missional challenge.

9 CONCLUSION

The achievements of Multiply

This report has reviewed the achievements of the Diocese of York's Multiply 20-40s project and reflected on the lessons to be learned from it. Among the project's many achievements, the following three are particularly noteworthy: Firstly, many people in their 20s, 30s and 40s (and beyond) with little previous engagement with Church were positively impacted by the project and explored or found faith through Multiply. **At least 675 new disciples** can be linked to the 50+ new worshipping communities established by Multiply pioneers. The quotations in Section 3 (Snapshots of Multiply) provide a brief glimpse into some of their stories. Secondly, Multiply pioneers received high quality, skilled and sensitive support from the central Multiply team, alongside valuable opportunities for peer learning and networking. This combination of **central and peer-to-peer support** appears to have been foundational to many of the project's achievements and should be commended as an example of good practice. And thirdly, the **Growth Fund** model was very effective in identifying and resourcing previously overlooked local lay pioneers and enabling churches that may not have otherwise been able to employ a worker to do so on a tapered part-time basis. Without negating the need for other kinds of pioneer post, this creative example illustrates the potential for what some commentators have called the "reimagining of paid pioneer roles".¹³

Overall Findings

Our main findings with relation to the National Church Institutions' five core criteria for SDF end-of-project evaluations are as follows:

- 1. Outcomes and Impact** - Multiply achieved its overall aim of establishing new worshipping communities for people in their 20s, 30s and 40s and creating new disciples. But many of the ambitious numerical targets set at the start of the project were not met.
- 2. Sustainability of Outcomes** - Most of the project's original sustainability aspirations were partly met. Financially, the Growth Fund model of appointing part-time lay pioneers with tapered funder appears easiest to sustain. Though some interviewees were optimistic that "ripples" from Multiply would continue over years to come, others were more pessimistic.
- 3. Missional Design** - The project proceeded broadly as planned, though at times the Belfrey's role and relationship to the Multiply project was not clear. Various assumptions about parishes' readiness and capacity, giving and sustainability and how long it takes different kinds of NWC to grow, become sustainable and multiply also now seem questionable.
- 4. Value for Money** - Many interviewees felt that investment in part-time lay pioneers provided fantastic value for money but opinions about the value and effectiveness of the full-time model varied.
- 5. Lessons learned** – Key lessons arising from the experience of Multiply include:
 - It is important to recognise different kinds of pioneer (lay and ordained) and the benefits and drawbacks of different church planting models.
 - Within mixed ecology settings, pioneers need both 'freedom from' and 'connection to' the inherited Church. They also need teams and central, peer and local support.

- Projects like Multiply benefit greatly from good oversight, accountability, and relationships of trust with senior diocesan staff and national funding bodies.
- Responsible target setting requires both aspiration and realism.
- Resourcing meaningful monitoring, evaluation and learning needs to be thought about sooner rather than later.
- It is important not to let institutional approaches to strategic planning and project management stifle or unnecessarily constrain more “organic” approaches to church planting, pioneering and discipleship.

Recommendations

In response to the above findings, our main recommendations are as follows.

<p>For the Diocese of York</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Consideration should be given to how best to share the achievements and learning arising from Multiply outlined in this report more widely within the diocese. 2. The rich collection of stories and videos about Multiply on the (soon-to-be-closed) project website and in other assorted documents should be retained and used within future church planting work. 3. Now that the posts of the central Multiply team have ended, alternative arrangements should be made for ensuring that part-time lay pioneers remaining in post are adequately supported. 4. The following learning points from Section 8 (Lessons Learned) need to be incorporated into future diocesan projects accessing national Church funds: <i>a) oversight and trust; b) aspiration and realism in target setting; c) resourcing meaningful monitoring, evaluation and learning; d) negotiating tensions between the ‘institutional and the organic’.</i> 5. The following learning points from Section 8 need to be incorporated into the Diocese’s emerging church planting strategy: <i>a) recognising different kinds of pioneer and the benefits / drawbacks of different planting models; b) pioneers need freedom, connection and teams; c) central, peer and local support.</i>
<p>For the national Church</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6. In view of the sometimes “frustrating” aspects of the SDF experience reported in Section 8 (point 4), the National Church Institutions should consider how to ensure an appropriate balance between accountability and trust in funding relationships with dioceses. 7. In view of concerns about the impact of target culture on project development and ministerial wellbeing, the National Church Institutions should facilitate further national learning about healthy, theologically informed, target-setting and measurement. 8. Key lessons arising from the Multiply experience (as outlined in Section 8) should be shared with other dioceses planning similar initiatives.

APPENDIX I – INTERVIEWS SCHEDULE

23 interviews with different people involved in Multiply were conducted as part of this evaluation. Before agreeing to participate, interviewees were told that the findings would generally be reported anonymously (unless there was explicit further consent to attribute specific quotations to them). In keeping with this commitment, we have not revealed participants' names here. But the following list provides a breakdown of the different types of interviews conducted:

- **4 diocesan stakeholder interviews** with senior diocesan staff and members of the project team

(Of 5 diocesan stakeholders invited to participate, all 5 agreed to be interviewed.
One of these interviews was with two people at the same time)
- **6 interviews with full-time Multiply ministers** past and present ministering across a range of contexts

(Of 6 full-time Multiply ministers invited to participate, all 6 agreed to be interviewed)
- **6 interviews with part-time lay pioneers** past and present

(Of 6 part-time lay pioneers invited to participate, all 6 agreed to be interviewed)
- **4 interviews with incumbents** of Multiply parishes across the Diocese of York

(Of 6 incumbents invited to participate, 4 agreed to be interviewed)
- **3 interviews with St Michael Le Belfrey leaders and church planters**

(Of 3 people invited to participate, all 3 agreed to be interviewed)

APPENDIX 2 – CHARACTERISTICS OF MULTIPLY PARISHES

To illustrate the kinds of parishes that participated in Multiply, the pages that follow provide a brief overview of Multiply parishes with relational to the following:

- 1) Age
- 2) Urban/Rural classification
- 3) Deprivation

The profiles for each Multiply Project are based on the parish they are located in. In most cases this is straightforward based on the name. The exceptions are:

- Christchurch Bridlington (Westhill and Bessingby) is located in the parish of Bessingby with Ulrome [which is the same benefice as CC Bridlington]
- Middlesbrough, Brambles Farm, Thorntree and Netherfields BMO is located across several parishes but the majority sits within the parish of St Thomas Middlesbrough, so this parish's data has been used.
- G2 York holds its Sunday meeting in the parish of Heworth Christ Church and so this parish's data has been used.

Age profiles of Multiply parishes (based on 2021 Census figures)

Average for the Diocese = 30%

Average for England = 33%

Multiply Contexts	Population 2021: % aged 20-44 years
Beverley Minister	24%
Christchurch Bridlington (Westhill and Bessingby)	24%
St Nicholas, Hull	32%
Ingelby Barwick	32%
Malton	30%
Marton, Coulby Newham	29%
Middlesbrough, Brambles Farm, Thorntree and Netherfields BMO	33%
Northallerton	26%
Thirsk	29%
St Mary, Scarborough	31%
St Paul & St Barnabas, York	40%
St Wilfrid Brayton (Selby)	27%
Drypool, Hull	36%
Holy Trinity, North Ormesby	40%
Huntington, York	26%
Marfleet Benefice, Hull	33%
Tadcaster/Rural Ainsty & Bridge Project	25%
St Mary's, Bramham Benefice	24%
Derwent Ings, St Helens Wheldrake	23%
St James Selby	32%
St John's Newland, Hull	46%
ABC Churches (Askham Bryan, Bolton Percy with Colton & Copmanthorpe)	22%
Bishopthorpe Road Churches	35%
St James the Deacon, Acomb, York	31%
G2, York	25%
St Aidan's, Hull	33%
The Belfrey, York	44%
St Nicholas, Hornsea	20%
Filey Parish Church	18%
Rural Ainsty Parish	21%
St Martin's Hull	36%
Holy Redeemer, York	31%
AST church, Derringham Bank, Hull	33%
Holy Trinity Heworth, York	40%

Colour code:

4 percentage points either side of the diocesan average (30%) have been classed as 'typical'.

BLUE = 0-25% (low)

ORANGE = 26-34% (typical)

YELLOW = 35-100% (high)

Urban/Rural classifications of Multiply parishes

The table below employs classifications used by Church of England Data Services, based on the % of the parish that is Urban.

In York Diocese:

- 24% of parishes are Urban and 76% of parishes are Rural
- Of the diocese population, 61% live in an Urban parish and 39% live in a Rural parish

46% of Multiply parishes were Rural and 54% were Urban.

Multiply Contexts	Rural/Urban classification
Beverley Minister	Rural
Christchurch Bridlington (Westhill and Bessingby)	Rural
St Nicholas, Hull	Urban
Ingelby Barwick	Urban
Malton	Urban
Marion, Coulby Newham	Urban
Middlesbrough, Brambles Farm, Thorntree and Netherfields BMO	Urban
Northallerton	Urban
Thirsk	Rural
St Mary, Scarborough	Urban
St Paul & St Barnabas, York	Urban
St Wilfrid Brayton (Selby)	Rural
Drypool, Hull	Urban
Holy Trinity, North Ormesby	Urban
Huntington, York	Urban
Marfleet Benefice, Hull	Urban
Tadcaster/Rural Ainsty & Bridge Project	Rural
St Mary's, Bramham Benefice	Rural
Derwent Ings, St Helens Wheldrake	Rural
St James Selby	Rural
St John's Newland, Hull	Urban
ABC Churches (Askham Bryan, Bolton Percy with Colton & Copmanthorpe)	Rural
Bishopthorpe Road Churches	Urban
St James the Deacon, Acomb, York	Urban
G2, York	Urban
St Aidan's, Hull	Urban
The Belfrey, York	Urban
St Nicholas, Hornsea	Rural
Filey Parish Church	Rural
Rural Ainsty Parish	Rural
St Martin's Hull	Urban
Holy Redeemer, York	Urban
AST church, Derringham Bank, Hull	Urban
Holy Trinity Heworth, York	Urban

Deprivation within Multiply parishes (Indices of Multiple Deprivation)

The following table uses IMD2019 data as Multiply began in 2019 and so this data reflects the reality of the parishes at that time.

Deciles for both the national and diocesan landscape show the level of deprivation on average in each parish. 1 = within the 10% most deprived parishes, 10 = within the 10% least deprived parishes. 1 (5%) indicates that this is within the 5% most deprived parishes. In this table there is very little difference between the national and diocesan deciles.

41% of Multiply Projects were located in parishes within the 20% most deprived in the diocese.

Multiply Contexts	National Decile	Diocese Decile
Beverley Minister	10	9
Christchurch Bridlington (Westhill and Bessingby)	1 (5%)	1 (5%)
St Nicholas, Hull	1 (5%)	1 (5%)
Ingelby Barwick	10	10
Malton	6	6
Marton, Coulby Newham	3	2
Middlesbrough, Brambles Farm, Thorntree and Netherfields BMO	1 (5%)	1 (5%)
Northallerton	7	7
Thirsk	5 and 9	4 and 9
St Mary, Scarborough	1 (5%)	1 (5%)
St Paul & St Barnabas, York	5 and 8	5 and 8
St Wilfrid Brayton (Selby)	9	9
Drypool, Hull	1	1
Holy Trinity, North Ormesby	1 (5%)	1 (5%)
Huntington, York	8	7
Marfleet Benefice, Hull	1 (5%)	1 (5%)
Tadcaster/Rural Ainsty & Bridge Project	8	8
St Mary's, Bramham Benefice	9	9
Derwent Ings, St Helens Wheldrake	10	9 and 10
St James Selby	2	2
St John's Newland, Hull	3	2
ABC Churches (Askham Bryan, Bolton Percy with Colton & Copmanthorpe)	9 and 10	9 and 10
Bishopthorpe Road Churches	8, 9 and 10	8, 9 and 10
St James the Deacon, Acomb, York	4	3
G2, York	10	10
St Aidan's, Hull	1 (5%)	1
The Belfrey, York	3	3
St Nicholas, Hornsea	3	3
Filey Parish Church	2	2
Rural Ainsty Parish	8	8
St Martin's Hull	1	1
Holy Redeemer, York	8	8
AST church, Derringham Bank, Hull	2	2
Holy Trinity Heworth, York	5	5

NOTES

¹ Leaders' estimate. Statistics for Mission data not available

² Holy Trinity Heworth, York and AST church, Derringham Bank Hull

³ Multiply Statistics Form 2024-2025

⁴ While the Multiply statistics form asked Multiply Ministers to record the total number of new disciples since their Multiply work began, some recorded a lower figure for 2025 than 2024. It therefore seems that some reported figures for the year only, while others reported cumulatively.

⁵ Though not all contexts submitted an age-breakdown, various pioneers reported on new disciples who were under 18 or over the age of 50, as well as those within the 19-49 target demographic.

⁶ In this regard, some distinguished between "the principle" of measurement (which they acknowledged as a good thing) and an unhelpful "culture of numbers".

⁷ Some interviewees suggested this may be due to the significant time gap between the original recruitment of parishes and the recruitment of Multiply ministers because SDF wanted "so much agreed in advance".

⁸ One reason why sustaining NWCs through financial giving has been more challenging than anticipated is that original financial projections were made on the assumption (informed by previous research) that there would be a significant degree of 'transfer growth' from other churches. But as noted already, there seems to have been less transfer growth than originally imagined.

⁹ As one interviewee commented, the Multiply full-time model is "very different from the Belfrey model of sending an identified team out into a place with a leader".

¹⁰ Given the data collection challenges noted previously in this report, these figures are mostly likely an underestimate.

¹¹ See page 47 of Andy Wier (2016) *Sustaining young Churches: A qualitative pilot study of fresh expressions of Church in the Church of England*. Church Army's Research Unit. www.churcharmy.org/research

¹² See Bradbury and Hodgett's original 'Pioneer Spectrum' diagram - <https://churchmissionsociety.org/pioneer-blog/another-way-of-seeing-developments-of-the-pioneer-spectrum/>

¹³ See page 26 of Church Army's Research Unit (2022), *Paid Pioneers: From The Margins to the Mainstream?* www.churcharmy.org/research