



Longitudinal research into student numbers on higher education programmes in Christian youth work/ministry and/or Children's work/ministry programmes 2013-14 to 2018-19

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version 16Jul19

1 BACKGROUND

For the past eight years I have been researching the numbers of students who enter higher education programmes in Christian youth work/ministry and/or children's work/ministry. This has been linked to the collection of information on programmes which I have been supplying to Premier Youth & Children's Work for the February editions of the magazine and which also forms the basis of the data on the Christian Youth Work Training website¹.

The following tables and charts are drawn from the numbers which have been supplied by the individual institutions and providers, on the basis that the overall numbers will be available publically, but individual numbers per institution will remain confidential.

METHODOLOGY

Student numbers were obtained from **13** colleges/training agencies offering **22** Christian youth/children's work/ministry programmes commencing September 2018. A further **1** agency offering **1** programme did not supply figures and there are a further **4** colleges/training agencies offering **8** programmes which include an element of Christian youth/children's work/ministry, often linked to placement.

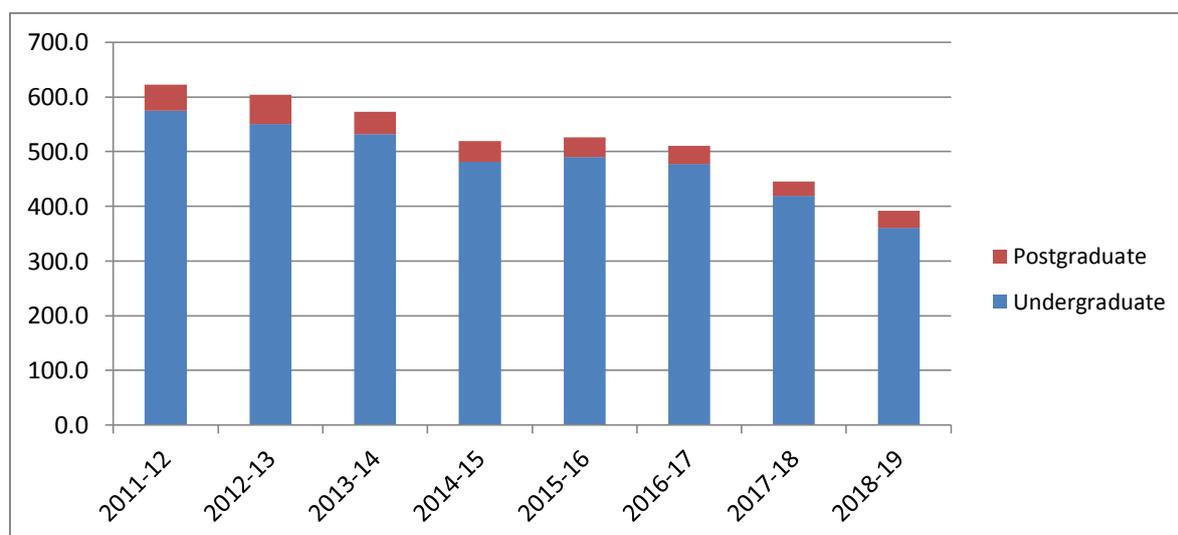
The numbers are in a table in Appendix 1 and the list of institutions and programmes are in Appendix 2.

¹ <http://www.cywt.org.uk/> originally set up with funds from Centre for Youth Ministry, Frontier Youth Trust and Churches Together in Britain and Ireland. For the Academic Year to date (01Sep18 to 12Jun19) 3260 users; 12,824 page views = 3.03 pages per session – showing that people are moving into the site to find courses. 63.41% bounce rate

2 RESULTS

2.1 Numbers

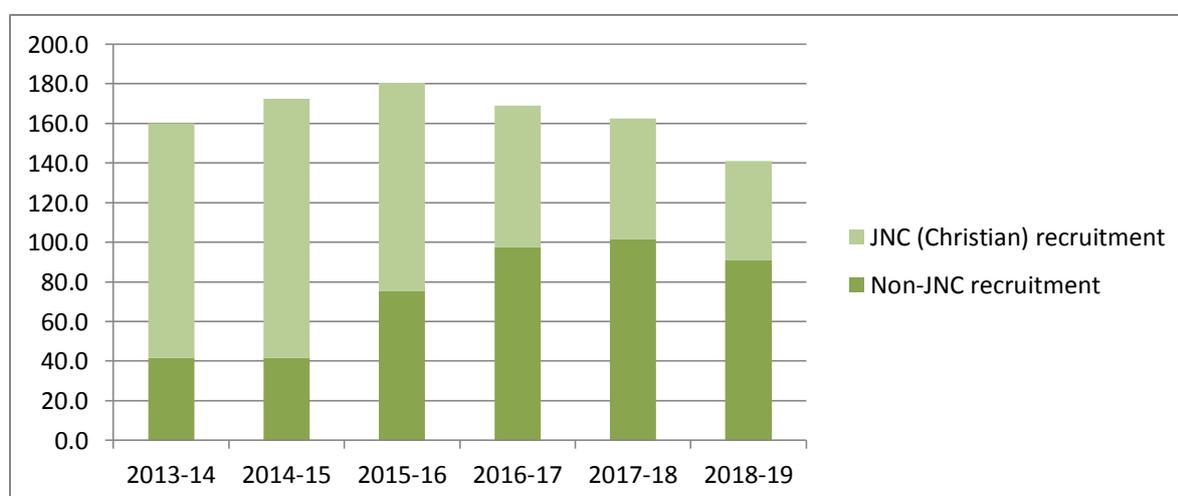
Figure 1 – total numbers of undergraduate and postgraduate students on Christian youth/children’s work/ministry programmes across the UK



The numbers of students on programmes at undergraduate and postgraduate level have declined across the last eight years from a total of **623** in 2011-12 to **391.5** in 2018-19, a decline of **37.2%**. Undergraduate and postgraduate numbers have declined at roughly the same rate over the period. There was a serious decline across the first three years, a static three year period 2014-17 and then a further decline.

2.2 Recruitment

Figure 2 – Recruitment to Christian higher education programmes, professionally qualifying (JNC) and non-professionally qualifying



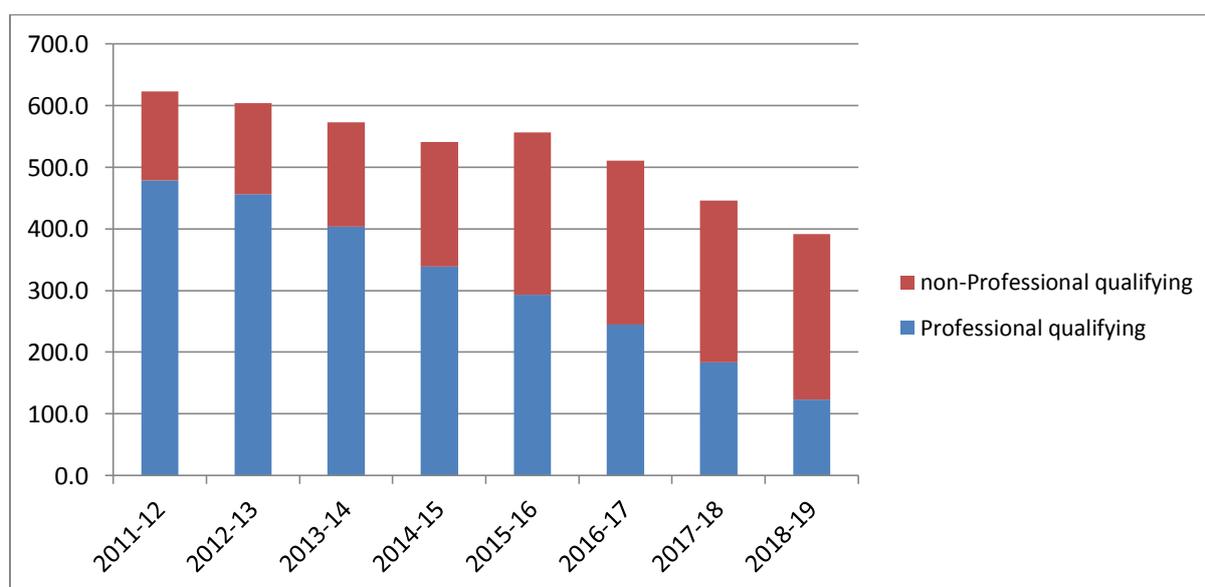
Numbers of new students recruited to commence at the beginning of the academic year have been counted from 2013 forward. There has been a general increase across the first three years, from **160** in 2013-14 to **180.5** in 2015-16, those gains have been lost across the

next three years with the total September 2018 cohort standing at **141**. Recruitment has dropped by 12% across the six years.

2.2 Professional Qualifying Programmes

There has been a continuing decline in the numbers of students on programmes with a Christian value-base which are validated for professional recognition in youth work². This year the number of agencies/providers has changed, although there has not been a decline in the number of (Christian JNC) programmes available.

Figure 3 – total number of Christian youth work/ministry students on professional qualifying and non-professional qualifying programmes



In 2011-12 the number of students on professionally qualifying programmes was **479**, with **144** on non-professional qualifying courses. In 2018-19 the situation has continued to change with **123.5** on professional qualifying routes and **268** on other programmes. The year-on-year change from September 2017 to September 2018 has seen an increase of **2.5%** on non-qualifying programmes, but a decline of **32.9%** on professional qualifying programmes. From 2016-17 there has been a greater number of students on non-qualifying programmes than on the professionally validated routes in Christian youth work/ministry.

Recruitment numbers (September cohort) have been collected from 2013-14 when **119** students commenced professionally qualifying courses with Christian youth/children's work/ministry agencies and training institutions. In 2018-19 the intake was **57**, a drop of **52.1%** across six years.

² The professional qualifying recognition in youth work is sometimes referred to by the acronym JNC (Joint Negotiating Committee for Youth and Community Work) which agrees standards and programmes from Level 2 to Level 7 in England, with similar bodies in the other three nations.

At the same time recruitment to the general youth work professional qualifying courses run by institutions in England has declined from **951** in 2011-12 to **432** in 2017-18 (the most recent year for which numbers are currently available)³; a fall of **54.6%**.⁴ across six years. The decline across the same four years as the Christian recruitment referred to is **38.4%**

Effectively we have seen a higher percentage decline in student numbers for Christian-based youth work programmes with the professional qualification (JNC) than the decline for general (non-Christian faith-based) professional qualifying courses. Much of this has come through the arrival of new providers within the faith-based sector who have eschewed the professional qualification.⁵

2.3 Institutions and Training Agencies

In September 2011 there were **16** colleges/training agencies offering a total of **33** Christian youth work/ministry programmes. A further five Colleges/training agencies offered eight courses which included an element of Christian youth work/ministry, such as a placement with a Christian faith-based organisation. Six of the colleges/training agencies offered a total of 10 (JNC) professionally recognised courses.

In September 2018 there were **14** Colleges/training agencies offering **23** Christian youth work/ministry programmes. A further four Colleges/training agencies offered eight courses which included an element of Christian youth work/ministry or Children's work/ministry, often within the placement. Three of the colleges/training agencies offered a total of four (JNC) professionally validated programmes.

Some of the changes across the years have been due to internal re-arrangements, for example Bristol Baptist College and Ridley Hall Cambridge were part of CYM in 2011-12 and now deliver higher education programmes independently, both validated through Durham.

Other changes have been the result of closures of programmes or agencies. Oasis College of Higher Education took the decision to cease recruiting students to its higher education programmes in September 2017. The Scottish School of Christian Ministry (formerly International Christian College) closed and is now the Glasgow campus of Nazarene Theological College⁶.

New providers have included Newman University Birmingham and St Padarn's (Cardiff). The Light Project (Chester) had initially offered youth ministry but now offers a more general mission and evangelism qualification and so has dropped out of these figures with effect from September 2018.

One of the biggest changes across the period is the move to smaller delivery locations. In September 2011 CYM was the only provider which had multiple sites (Bristol, Cambridge,

³ ETS Minutes 14.1 30Apr19

⁴ Details of Annual Monitoring of these courses can be obtained through the National Youth Agency who provide, through the Education and Standards Committee of the JNC, the secretariat services https://nya.org.uk/resource_category/annual-monitoring/ The Report for 2017-18 from which this number comes is due to be made public in August 2019

⁵ See details in Appendix 2 Table of Providers, Validating Universities and Programmes

⁶ With effect from 30Jun18

Ireland, Midlands and Oxford). In September 2018 three institutions between them (CYM, Moorlands and Nazarene) are delivering on a total of seven satellite sites. ForMission (formerly Springdale College) has always delivered at multiple sites, but only one of their programmes is specifically youth ministry and it is delivered at one location. St Melitus College now has five delivery locations around the country, however the Theology and Youth Ministry degree is only delivered in London.

In many of the satellite locations cohort numbers are small, raising concern about the strength of the learning available.

Full details of the institutions and the programmes from whom the numbers have been gained are in Appendix 2 below.

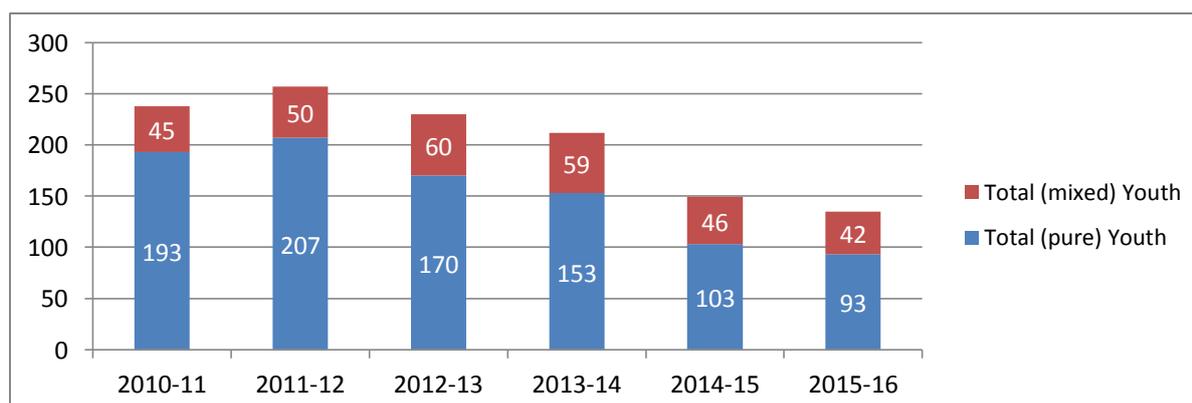
2.4 Advertisements for posts

An additional piece of quantitative research was undertaken last year to see whether there was any co-relation between the number of advertisements which appear publically for youth work and/or children’s work/ministry posts and the numbers of students on higher education programmes. This has been through counting the advertisements in *Youthwork Magazine* (now *Premier Youth & Children’s Work*) and recording which posts are pure youth work/ministry and which are mixed with another discipline, such as children’s work/ministry. Numbers of posts for just children, or children and families has shown a drop from **57** in 2011-12 to **37** in 2015-16.

Across the period from 2011-11 to 2015-16 there has been a decline in the total number of posts which have included youth work, either as the main work or as part of another post, from **238** in 2010-11 to **135** in 2015-16. Across this time there has been a rise in posts which include youth work as part of the commitment, although this has tailed off from a peak in 2012-13.

Currently there is a significant difference between the number of advertised posts on the Premier web site and in the printed magazine. As a result the collection of these numbers has not continued as more employers are only advertising online, meaning that the numbers in the printed media no longer reflect the true picture.

Figure 3 Numbers of advertisements in Youthwork/Premier Youth & Children’s Work magazine (printed edition) annually



3 ANALYSIS & REFLECTIONS

A paper for the English Education & Training Standards Committee in July 2018 noted the following as reasons for the reduced take up of professionally validated programmes:

- *Rumour – worrying about the future of JNC (the professional qualification)*
- *Lack of awareness of degree level qualifications in youth work*
- *No clear understanding of what youth work is*
- *Academic thresholds can put off people best placed to practice in youth and community work*
- *University is more expensive now*
- *Youth work is an under-funded profession*
- *Personal circumstances*⁷

In addition to the above, my own article for *Premier Youth & Children's Work* (February 2018)⁸ argued that the reasons could be summarised as:

- ❖ a decline in finances available and the hesitancy of mature students to take out loans
- ❖ a decline in the perceived 'value' of a youth work/ministry qualification
- ❖ a decline in the number of children and young people in our churches
- ❖ a decline in workers in the churches and agencies, who role model this work to young people and thus attract them to this calling

Colleges and training agencies have responded in a variety of ways to the decline, one of which has been to put training nearer to the placements where the students are based, thus enabling a full-time programme to be managed whilst working for and learning the trade through a church, a group of churches or a Christian agency.

Further research needs to be undertaken as to why the decline is taking place and what can be done to stem the exodus of children and young people from the churches.

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16Jul19

Postscript

A recently published paper indicates that there is likely to be a quantifiable increase in attendance of children and young people in Anglican Churches in England who employ a Children, Families and/or Youth Worker⁹ *Assessing the Impact of a Paid Children, Youth, or Family Worker on Anglican Congregations in England* by Leslie J. Francis, David Howell, Phoebe Hill & Ursula McKenna used data collected by Youthscape in 2015-16¹⁰ to show that there is an average increase of 7 children/young people over churches who do not employ such workers.

⁷ Proposal for additional qualification pathways in youth & community work. July 2018

⁸ Youth Work Training p24 *PREMIER YOUTH & CHILDREN'S WORK* February 2018 (Issue 14)

⁹ *Assessing the Impact of a Paid Children, Youth, or Family Worker on Anglican Congregations in England* Leslie J. Francis, David Howell, Phoebe Hill & Ursula McKenna

Journal of Research on Christian Education; Volume 28, 2019 – Issue 1

¹⁰ *Losing Heart* Youthscape Centre for Research December 2016

Appendices

1 Table of student numbers

	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19
Undergraduates	575.0	551.0	532.0	481.0	490.5	477.5	419.0	361.0
Postgraduates	48.0	53.0	40.5	38.5	36.0	33.5	26.5	30.5
Total HE	623.0	604.0	573.0	541.0	556.5	511.0	445.5	391.5
JNC qualifying courses	479.0	456.0	404.0	338.5	293.5	244.5	184.0	123.5
Ordinary courses	144.0	148.0	169.0	202.5	263.0	266.5	261.5	268.0
	623.0	604.0	573.0	541.0	556.5	511.0	445.5	391.5
%age on non-JNC courses	23.11%	24.50%	29.49%	37.43%	47.26%	52.15%	58.70%	68.45%
Non-JNC recruitment			41.5	41.5	75.5	97.5	101.5	91.0
JNC (Christian) recruitment			118.5	131.0	105.0	71.5	61.0	50.0
JNC recruitment (England)	951.0	825.0	701.0	793.0	673.0	456.0	432.0	

Appendix 2 Table of providers, validating universities and programmes

(next two pages)