

## Shared Outcomes Framework

# Attendance Change - Further guidance

## Introduction

This document provides further guidance for the measurement of the Attendance Change outcome as part of the Shared Outcomes Framework. This builds on the Attendance Change definition guidance that covers the basics of the outcome and indicator to be used. If you have not yet read that document, please read it first (<https://churchsupporthub.org/all-resources/attendance-change-shared-outcomes-framework/>). Further details about the Shared Outcomes Framework as a whole, what it is and how it should be used can be found on the Church Support Hub pages (<https://churchsupporthub.org/all-resources/shared-outcomes-framework/>).

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## Clarification of definition FAQs

The definition of the Worshipping Community measure used in Statistics for Mission can be found on the church of England website here

<https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2017-12/WorshippingCommunity.pdf>

The below gives some further suggestions for how to interpret the measure. If you have further questions or situations you are unsure about, please get in contact with your diocesan team overseeing funded projects in the first instance. If diocesan teams have questions, please contact your Diocesan Support Team consultant (part of the national church Vision & Strategy team) and they will be happy to answer any questions you may have.

## What if someone has recently started attending, when should they be considered 'regular'?

There is no absolute definition of when someone's attendance can be considered regular after they have started attending a church. However as a guide, a reasonable rule of thumb

would be if they have attended, say around 6 times, and for a period of 3 consecutive months.

### Which church activities should be included when considering regular attendance?

The Statistics for Mission guidance identifies worshipping community as those regularly attending a church, for services and other activities that include distinct acts of worship or prayer. This could include acts of worship that are held by the church but in other locations, such as a community centre or other venue (as may be the case with a fresh expression of church or new worshipping community), and shorter activities such as morning or evening prayer. Social activities such as a coffee morning or toddler group not centred around an act of worship would not be included. However if, for example, a child focused activity was centred around an act of worship and included elements such as prayer and scripture, it should be included. Likewise some small home groups or fellowship groups are focused on an act of worship, so they should also be included.

### What if someone's attendance is sporadic, when should they be included?

It is impossible to give a definitive answer for every possible circumstance of when someone's attendance meets the definition of regular. If they are typically attending at least once a month on an ongoing basis, they should be counted within the worshipping community. There will inevitably be edge cases where it is difficult to identify if someone is attending at least once a month. Try to be objective and consistent in your approach in deciding on these cases and remember the overall aim of asking are they part of the regular worshipping of the church. Not including someone as meeting the criteria of worshipping community does not mean you are making a value judgement on them or excluding them from anything within the church, it is merely an indicator of church size and not trying to define who is 'in' or 'out'.

### Should children and young people be included?

Yes. The worshipping community reporting in Statistics for Mission separates the count into four age categories, of 0 to 10, 11 to 17, 18 to 69 and 70+. The same attendance criteria should be applied to all age groups using the same definitions of attending church.

### Should school services be counted for church attendance?

School services shouldn't be counted for attendance of the worshipping community. Statistics for Mission has a separate reporting of school services.

### If a congregation alternate between services held at multiple churches (buildings) in rotation (for example in some multi-parish benefices), how should this effect the worshipping community count?

Since the Statistics for Mission returns are carried out on a per church basis, each individual church will report a worshipping community count separately. These figures are often later used to form combined attendance figures for a parish or benefice as a whole. Therefore since the worshipping community is a count of individuals, each individual should only be included in one church's figure, rather than counted multiple times in each church within the rotation. Each person should be included in the count of their 'home' church i.e. the church that they would most naturally or normally be a part of. Having a list of named individuals can help with this, to compare across the churches within a benefice or group. It may make most sense in such circumstances, to produce one combined list of names and identify which church each individual should be reported against. A tool will be provided to help with this situation. Of course, there may be people who are part of your church who also attend

services elsewhere that you may or may not know about. Don't worry too much about whether this may result in double counting - there's no need to interrogate people.

### How often should the worshipping community count be undertaken?

For the purposes of gathering the information for the national dataset of DIP and SDF projects, an annual end of year count reported through Statistics for Mission is sufficient. However many projects may want to measure attendance change using the worshipping community count more frequently than annually to help with ongoing decision making in the project, often termly or quarterly. Updates to the count outside of the Statistics for Mission reporting at the end of each calendar year won't usually be gathered nationally as part of the shared outcomes framework.

## Guidance for practicalities of measurement

### Helping churches understand the definition of worshipping community

Some churches will not have previously paid much attention to the worshipping community figure and may have misunderstood what it should include. Therefore it is likely to be important for dioceses to support churches taking part in DIP projects to consider the value of accurate measurement and what that looks like for worshipping community in particular. Dioceses say that the best measurement tends to come from churches that have the strongest relationship with the diocesan project team, so building relationships with churches and helping them to understand and grow in measurement capability is important for getting quality measurement and learning to use it well to inform mission. The Vision and Strategy team are in the process of developing resources to support dioceses in this task which will be shared widely when available.

### Creating a list of church attenders

In order to identify accurately a count of the worshipping community, most churches will find it necessary to write a list of those who attend the church, that can then be used to count the total and for the different age brackets in Statistics for Mission. For smaller churches this may be able to be done relatively easily and quickly on paper by looking at existing lists (e.g. electoral roll) and adding in any others who are known to attend regularly in addition. Once a list has been compiled, this could be stored securely and then used the following year (or next time the count is updated), with new names added and those no longer attending regularly marked as such to help identify the number of joiners and leavers. Having such a list may also prove useful in pastoral care and church administration, to ensure no one has been forgotten in the course of church life and activity. For larger churches, writing out names on paper may not be practical, and some sort of software tool would be more convenient.

### Using the Worshipping Community Count Tool

The Worshipping Community Count Tool is a simple tool that has been developed to support churches to effectively and efficiently identify their size of worshipping community for reporting in Statistics for Mission (as well as being useful for pastoral oversight). It is based on producing a list of church attenders that then counts those attending in different age brackets (and having started or stopped attending regularly) to output numbers that churches can then use for the worshipping community indicator reporting. The tool is designed to be downloaded and used locally by individual churches and does not store or share any data centrally, which avoids any concerns of data sharing. It is particularly designed for churches with up to around 200 or so worshipping community, although can be used for larger churches too. The tool is currently in a 'prototype' format using Google Sheets before more comprehensive online tools for the Shared Outcomes Framework are

developed. The tool itself includes full guidance for its use and can be found on the Church Support Hub, at <https://churchsupporthub.org/all-resources/attendance-change-shared-outcomes-framework>.

### Using church management software for worshipping community

Many churches will already use a church management system (CMS) software to help manage and co-ordinate church activities and communication. In most cases this will include a database of church members that can be used as a starting point for identifying the size of worshipping community. Not all of those recorded within the system are likely to meet the criteria so a process of identifying which do is needed.

For many churches, even with up to say 200 or more people registered, a suitable method is likely to be going through a list of those on the CMS and identifying those that are known to be attending at least monthly or otherwise matching the criteria. It's likely that several people involved in the church leadership and/or administration (e.g. vicar, church warden, administrator etc.) would be helpful to do this task together to share knowledge on who has been attending regularly.

In some cases this can be done in the system itself by applying a set of custom 'tags' or fields that allows manually identifying an individual as being a regular attender or matching the worshipping community criteria in another way (guidance of how to do this in ChurchSuite are being developed and will be made available on the Church Support Hub when complete). If a system doesn't include the ability to add custom tags or fields against individuals, it may be better to export or copy the names out of the system and into a separate list, for example using the Worshipping Community Count Tool.

### Identifying worshipping community for larger churches

Very large churches who may have many hundreds of people in their worshipping community are very likely to have some sort of church management software (CMS), such as ChurchSuite. It may not be practical to go through the complete CMS of named individuals manually picking out who is a regular attender if there are many hundreds of names. In this case, it may be possible initially to create a subset list of the full CMS by identifying the number of individuals who are registered on the system actively participating in the life of the church on a regular basis. This will vary from church to church but may include the following;

- Regular recent volunteers on serving rotas associated with church attendance (e.g. performing a role in or around a church service such as welcome, music, hospitality, sides persons, children's groups, etc.)
- Regular recent attenders of small groups or discipleship course
- Children & youth regularly attending age groups at worship services
- The parents/guardians/or other adults who come with the children and youth who regularly attend age groups services
- Regular givers

If the numbers of people who feature on one or more of these lists can be automatically identified (this can be done in ChurchSuite using Smart Tags functionality, and once setup will automatically update itself monthly), that would form a good starting point. Then the names that are in the CMS but that do not appear on this list, could be manually looked through to identify further individuals known to the church leaders and staff who attend regularly, and these could be added to a tag to identify them as regular attenders, which should then also be included in the total count.

Although it is impossible to create a completely accurate count in such circumstances, if the same method is used each time the worshipping community size is identified, this is likely to be a reasonable proxy that is proportional to the size of worshipping community, so could be used as a reliable measure of attendance change over time.

It is good practice to refresh the contacts in the CMS database regularly (say, annually), to ask individuals to update any contact details and remove people who have left the church. Such an annual process could potentially be used if desired to further improve understanding of who is part of the worshipping community by asking people about their involvement in the church if they are listed in the CMS but not participating in any of the areas of church life captured in the list above, and responses used to refresh tags indicating regularity of attendance.

Specific guidance for this process in ChurchSuite is being developed and will be made available on the Church Support Hub when complete.

### Baselining at project kick-off or reset

Although the significant majority of churches complete the Statistics for Mission return each year, many churches feel it adds little value to their work and so they may not do so with attention to detail of definitions or may only estimate roughly rather than attempting more accurate measurement. For some churches, there may be perceived to be an incentive also to estimate higher or lower figures for worshipping community, depending on how it is used in the diocese (e.g. a factor for parish share calculation or resource allocation).

Therefore it is a good idea to carry out a baselining exercise, where extra effort is taken to identify accurately the worshipping community figures for each church in a project before the project has fully started or when a significant change in the project is introduced (such as with a reset). The baseline figures then give an agreed and accurate comparison point as the project goes on. Many projects have found that without this process, the accuracy of initial figures are then disputed or questioned later on, leading to uncertainty of the impact of the project or dissatisfaction in general. In this initial baselining process it is helpful to discuss with churches, and particularly those individuals who will be caring out the measurement, their understanding of the measurement definition, what incentives exist for them in measuring (in order to be open about it), how the data will be used and a reliable and efficient process for the measurement.

### GDPR Compliance

GDPR legislation puts requirements on all organisations about how they handle individuals' personal data. This applies to producing a list of church attenders, which would also be considered 'special category data', given that church attendance could be indicative of religious belief. Article 9d of the GDPR allows churches to process special category data *'in the course of its legitimate activities with appropriate safeguards...on the condition that the processing relates solely to the members or former members of the body or to persons who have regular contact with it in connection with its purposes'*. Therefore there are grounds of having a list of attenders without having to get explicit consent from every named person, provided that it is done in a way that complies with the standard GDPR principles. In particular this includes (amongst others) ensuring the list of church attenders is securely stored, only accessible by those who need to compile or use it and therefore not shared more widely. It is likely that most churches' existing privacy notice will include mention of use of personal data in this way as anticipated by article 9d, but if not, mention of this kind of use should be added.