

Shared Outcomes Framework

Numbers New to Faith - Further guidance

Introduction

This document provides further guidance for the measurement of the Numbers New to Faith outcome area as part of the Shared Outcomes Framework. This builds on the definition guidance that covers the basics of the Numbers new to faith outcome area and indicators to be used. If you have not yet read that document, please read it first (<https://churchsupporthub.org/all-resources/numbers-new-to-faith-shared-outcomes-framework/>). Further details about the Shared Outcome 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 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.

When should the 'first time public confessions of faith' indicator be used?

The outcome area anticipates baptism and confirmation as the primary indicators, given they are the established practice in the Church of England. However during the development process for the outcome area it was identified that there are circumstances where individuals may come new to faith and neither baptism nor confirmation are appropriate for them. One such circumstance could be if someone had already been baptised and confirmed for cultural reasons a long time previously and can attest that they did not have faith at that time. Another could include when an individual who was new to faith had been baptised as an infant and is not able to take part in any confirmation service, perhaps for example, if serious anxiety or neurodivergence prevents them from taking part in a formal confirmation

service in a church unknown to them, which may be the only provision available for confirmation, and no other tailored arrangement for confirmation could be made. Perhaps in a new worshipping community with a very informal structure and small setting, confirmation would feel so alien as to be inappropriate. Although in such circumstances finding a suitable framing and method of undertaking confirmation would be the preferred solution, where it isn't reasonably practicable, this alternative indicator is provided so that those individuals are not missed.

Local leaders may count other first-time public confessions of faith therefore, where baptism and confirmation aren't appropriate. This could be a locally-developed form of practice for someone to speak of their commitment to Christ. This should be something where the aim is that it happens once in someone's lifetime, to avoid double counting of individuals. Projects can verify this locally and include in their reporting of data for this indicator. This may involve giving a testimony, making declarations akin to those in the baptism service, individual re-affirmation of baptismal vows or some other unambiguous way of demonstrating commitment to Jesus.

What if someone is baptised and confirmed during the same service or in short succession?

The outcome is intended to be an indicator of the number of individuals who have made a first time formal and public confession of faith personally. In some circumstances individuals may be baptised and confirmed in the same service or in short succession. It would be helpful in these circumstances to identify in project reporting the numbers of individuals within the confirmation numbers in any year who had also already been baptised (at an age of 11+) during the project, so that this can be taken account of in the overall count for this indicator.

Why aren't returners to church/fait h included?

Returners to church and faith are an important sign of fruitfulness and should be celebrated. However in the definition for this outcome area we have chosen to count those who can be specifically shown as new to the Church of God, primarily for simplicity. Projects are free to separately include in their measurement framework a locally defined additional indicator to measure those who are de-churched and report it separately.

Guidance for practicalities of measurement

Helping churches understand the definition of Numbers new to faith

Although the counting of baptisms and confirmations are clear and already established practice for churches, the indicator of 'other first-time public confessions of faith' is new. Therefore it is likely to be important for dioceses to support churches taking part in DIP projects to understand this indicator. 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 developing resources to support dioceses to support churches in their capability in measurement.

Recording baptisms and confirmations

Churches routinely make records of baptisms and confirmations given that this is a legal requirement for all churches. Therefore existing churches are very likely to have suitable methods of recording these already that can merely continue unchanged for reporting this outcome through Statistics for Mission. Where a new church is started (say, as a BMO), or

where practice has lapsed for some reason, there may be a need to establish a new practice of recording baptisms and confirmations. Further guidance can be found on the Church of England website <https://www.churchofengland.org/about/libraries-and-archives/records-and-information-management>

Confirmation records are collated by the diocese (through bishop's office in most cases). Each diocese will need to develop a method of identifying from confirmation records which are related to churches within a project for reporting as part of the project annual review.

Recording other first time public confessions of faith

There are various ways of how this indicator could be recorded and projects can use any method most appropriate for the individual situation. This could be a paper register in a church (similar to a typical register of baptisms book) or an electronic record. A record that can be reliably kept for future reference at the end of the project and subsequently would be useful for future learning. The record should list the date of the event, name of individual, reasons why baptism or confirmation were not suitable and name of the minister presiding (to aid learning).

A basic template for recording this information has been developed and is available on the Church Support Hub page for this outcome area (<https://churchsupporthub.org/all-resources/numbers-new-to-faith-shared-outcomes-framework/>).

Baselining at project kick-off or reset

Although it is a legal requirement to record baptisms and confirmations, it is possible that records are incomplete or have seen errors in reporting. In addition, as the 'other first-time public confessions of faith' is a new indicator, it is unlikely to have been recorded previously.

Therefore it is a good idea to carry out a baselining exercise, where figures for baptism and confirmation for the most recent normal year to the project starting are reviewed to ensure they were accurately reported in Statistics for Mission and the reporting of confirmations. Likewise a discussion with church leaders may be necessary to identify if any individuals during the baseline year that would have met the 'other first-time public confessions of faith' indicator definition, and count this to create a baseline for this measure also.

These 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 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 measures will be used and a reliable and efficient process for the record keeping.

GDPR Compliance

GDPR legislation puts requirements on all organisations about how they handle individuals' personal data. This applies to producing a list of those baptised, confirmed or other first time public confessions of faith. As keeping records of baptisms and confirmations are a legal requirement, there are legal grounds for recording this information. 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'*. These grounds could be used for keeping a record of those

making other first time public confession of faith, or alternatively explicit consent could be sought from the individuals given this is likely to be a small number. Standard GDPR requirements should be followed in particular this includes (amongst others) ensuring the record 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.