

youth echo

focus

the next bishop of bristol



listening to young people



where they are



to determine what's next



DIOCESE OF BRISTOL
TRANSFORMING. TOGETHER.

what is echo focus?

Youth echo exists to amplify the voices of young people across the diocese of Bristol. Young people have an important voice, as well as deep insight, wisdom and challenges to offer us. Youth Echo (or Echo for short) is inspired by the idea that young voices, when nurtured and amplified, can resonate in all corners of the Diocese.

Youth Echo begins with young people telling us what matters to them to start an important conversation.

Echo focus, however, starts with a focused conversation that speaks to existing conversations within the context of the wider Diocese. The purpose remains the same, which is to allow young people the very exciting and deeply important opportunity to speak into the current conversation that is happening around them.

The topic in echo focus may be set for them, but it still gives them the chance to be reflective, honest and share what really matters to them.

focus theme

next bishop of bristol

vacancy in see

With Bishop Viv retiring in September 2025, we're now launching the Vacancy in See consultation process, and we want young people to be front and centre in helping discern what kind of bishop we need next.

This is a chance for young people to reflect, speak, and dream about the kind of Church they want to be part of - and the kind of leader who can walk with them on that journey.

who can take part?

Any child or young person who lives within the diocese of Bristol (Bristol, South Gloucestershire, North Wiltshire, Chippenham and Swindon). We actively encourage a diversity of voices.

This facilitator's handbook is designed to be used in several settings with the flexibility to allow for those in churches, schools and other settings to be able to deliver in line with the group's needs and requirements.

how should this booklet be used?

We understand that each setting is different and those who work directly with young people know them best. Therefore we give you permission to be creative and make these sessions your own to suit your context.

safeguarding notice

We require facilitators to adhere to best practice and the safeguarding policies in place in their contexts.

There are several non-negotiables we need to emphasise:

- All responses must be anonymised during both collection and feedback processes.
- Young people need to understand they do not have to participate in any or all of the activities. They must also be informed that by participating they are agreeing to use of their insight in the report.
- Depending on the setting it may be appropriate to gain parental consent from young people's parents/ carers. This is something that needs to be considered in advance.
- It is good practice to inform parents / carers of the content and process and the right to opt out.

session plan

suggested

1

Introduction and explanation

Welcome everybody. Explain what the session is about. Explain to the young people what Vacancy in See is and what this process is about. Ensure that they understand what a Bishop is and explain that their voices in the process of choosing the next Bishop are very important.

2

Pray (if appropriate in your context)

3

Three Rounds

Take the young people through the three rounds of activities which you will find on the following pages. Encourage the young people to be honest, affirm that there is no right or wrong and ensure it is clear that their voice and opinion matters.

4

Finish Up

Thank everyone for their contributions and honesty and explain the next steps.

how do i explain the vacancy to my youth group?

what is a bishop?

A Bishop is a senior church leader who helps guide people in their faith and looks after a group of churches in a specific area of the country. This is called a Diocese or 'See'. The Bishop supports priests, leads important church services, and helps make decisions about how the Church is run. They also have a seat in the Cathedral.

what is vacancy in see?

A "Vacancy in See" happens when a diocese in the Church of England doesn't have a main bishop. This could be because the previous one has retired, moved, or passed away. In our case, Bishop Viv is retiring on 1 September 2025.

During this time, other church leaders help take care of the diocese until a new bishop is chosen. A group of people, called a committee, come together to make decisions and form the plans for selecting a new bishop.

reflection on church currently

activity one

description

Young people are given the chance to reflect honestly on what it is they see both as strengths and opportunities of the church currently.

You will need:

- Pens
- 3 pieces of A3 or larger paper per group (or print the three sheets with the questions on them)
- Post-it notes

how to

Ask the young people to consider these questions:

- What is the church good at?
- What does the church need to aim to be better at / what do they need to address head on?
- In what way does the church serve the local community well?

Once they have had some time to consider their answers to these questions, ask them to write these on post-it notes get them to come and put them on the relevant piece of paper for each question.

Spend some time in a group looking at the answers and grouping them into categories where the answers are similar. For example the church is good at teaching or social action, or inviting all people to be part of it. Or the church needs to address the challenge of homelessness or diversity. Let the young people define and decide what categories would work.

recording

Take a picture of the responses from the young people and the categories they choose.

facilitator prompts

activity one

These prompts are given to use if there are young people struggling to engage or maybe have specific learning needs and should be used to make the session more accessible.



If young people are finding it hard, you could ask them to:

- Use a practical and real-life example based on where the young person is from (for example, what is their local parish church good at).
- Give them some examples of answers to the questions that might help them ground the concepts in reality. Help them go through the process of thinking about it in a real-life example rather than simply a concept, which can be challenging.
- You could also support them through the process of going and researching some local church websites and what it is they do and offer for the community.

If writing is a barrier:

- Encourage participants to share their response with a friend or facilitator to scribe.

**what is the
church good at?**

**how does the
church serve its
local community?**

**what could the
church do better
and what
challenges do they
need to address
and tackle?**

what qualities would you like in the next bishop?

activity two

description

Encourage young people to identify what qualities, characteristics and passions are important to them in a new bishop.

You will need:

- Pens.
- Printed hand-outs of the outline of a person.

how to

- Tell the young people that we want to understand what it is that makes a leader good to them and therefore what it is that they feel would make a good new Bishop.
- Encourage them to consider what it is that they would want the new Bishop to be like. What are they like in their personality? What are their gifts? What do they care about? How do they speak to others? What makes them spiritually able to lead the Diocese?
- After young people have done this it could be good to come together and identify 10 qualities that as a group they believe are most important.

recording

Either picture of the words around the outline of the person need to be taken and sent over or simply a collated list of the things young people say and write needs to be created.

facilitator prompts

activity two

These prompts are given to use if there are young people struggling to engage or maybe have specific learning needs and should be used to make the session more accessible.



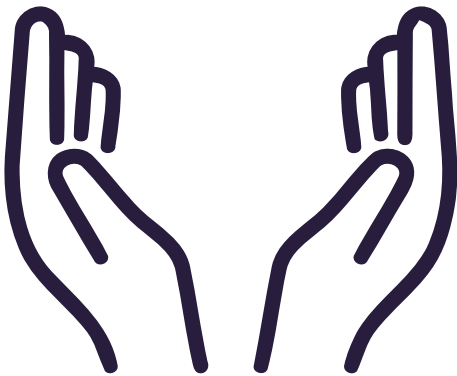
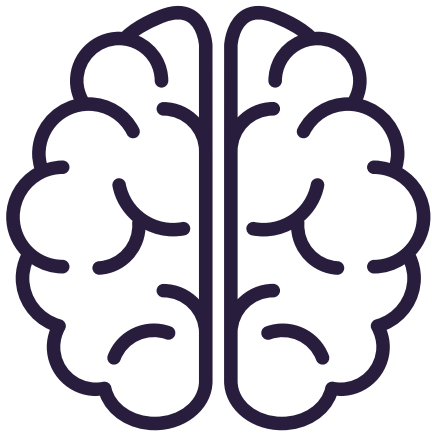
Young people may need some support to identify different qualities of a leader. You could use the head, hands and heart template as a visual guide that helps young people consider qualities that are grouped.

- **Head:** This refers to how they think and what they think about. Are they strategic, a dreamer, do they have good ideas?
- **Heart:** This refers to what their character is like. Are they kind, calm, fair?
- **Hands:** This refers to the way in which they act practically. Do they help others, what do they spend their time doing?

Students may not be able to identify the qualities of good leadership without having an anchor/ grounding point for them to draw and reference on. To aid with this you could:

- Encourage students to consider a leader in their life (a teacher, a church leader, or a politician), and ask them to consider what it is about that person that makes them a good leader.
- You could potentially identify and print pictures of famous leaders and ask them to identify what it was about these people that made them effective leaders.





who would you choose...

activity three

description

This task encourages young people to consider the future of the church in the Diocese of Bristol and help them identify what it is that you seek in a leader and what they would achieve as Bishop.

You will need:

- Pens
- Printed guided sheet for young people to fill out.
- Printed list of different people to get them thinking if they are struggling to identify anyone.

how to

For this activity ask young people to fill out the sheet. The most important part of this is encouraging them to identify who it is that if they could choose they would have as the next bishop of Bristol Diocese and why. This person can be **anyone** as long as they can explain what it is about this person that would make them a great bishop.

The three questions on the hand outs lead the young people through a process of considering why and what it is this they would see this person achieving that makes them think they would be a good leader.

recording

Collect the sheets that people have filled out and either take pictures of the answers or make note of the young peoples responses.

facilitator prompts

activity three

These prompts are given to use if there are young people struggling to engage or maybe have specific learning needs and should be used to make the session more accessible.



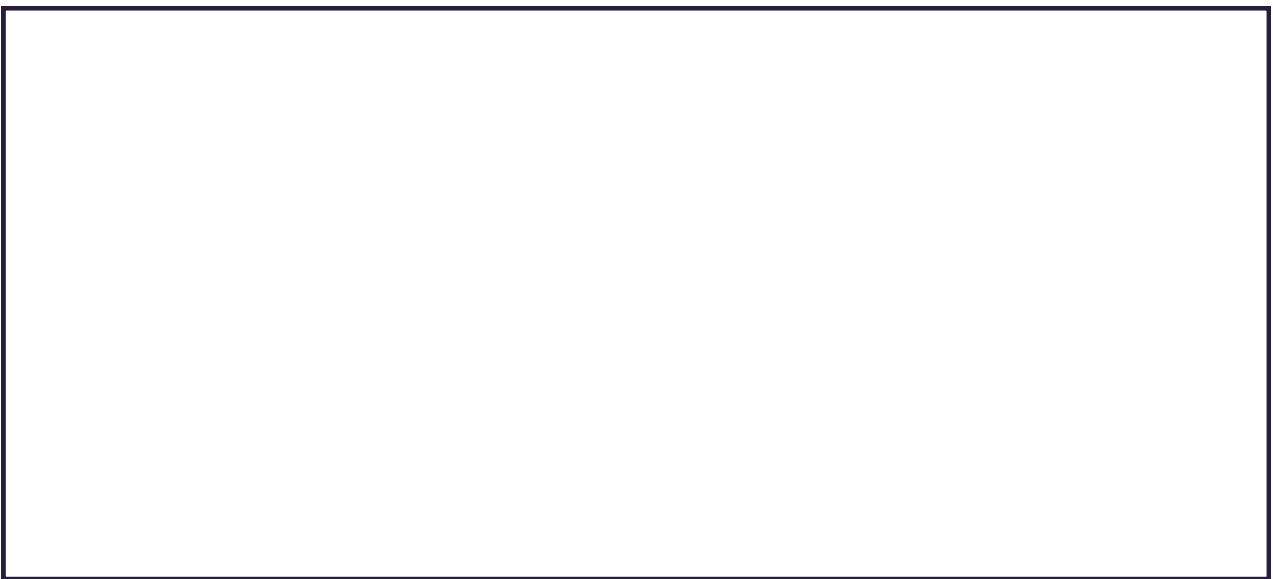
To overcome some of the challenges some young people might have in regards to being able to identify anyone you could print the support hand out which has lots of names of different people who they might consider. You may like to put photos or images of leaders on a screen to aid discussion.

If young people are struggling to identify their answers to what would they have achieved you could encourage them to think back to the answer they gave for the challenges the church faces in activity one and ask them what it is that they could see being a good response to that to see if that helps them think about the answer to that question.

**who would you make the next bishop in the
diocese of bristol?**



why would you choose them?



**in five years what would they have achieved
through being the bishop of bristol?**



A parent or carer

A religious leader/ figure

Greta Thunberg

David Attenborough

Nelson Mandela

Mother Teresa

Pope Leo XIV

Dumbledore

**A political leader
(either current or previous)**

A teacher

Aslan

Ted Lasso

Florence Nightingale

One of your friends

Marie Curie

Malala Yousafzai

Albert Einstein

Brené Brown

Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Marcus Rashford

Pope Francis

Moana

**A famous sporting individual (Gareth
Southgate, Jessica Ennis-Hill)**

Ellie Simmonds

Someone you know who you look up.

Ada Lovelace

King Arthur

what's next?

step-by-step

1

Responses

We now need your help in collecting the notes and recording sheets back so we can look at what young people are saying. The easiest way to do this will be to email photos / scans of the sheets and results to **under18s@bristoldiocese.org**

Please subject the email **'Echo Focus results'**

If this is not possible in your setting, get in contact with Rachel to find another way.

2

Answer the overarching questions

In addition to the notes from your listening group, please copy and paste the three questions below into an email and provide brief answers. The results will remain confidential, with only demographic percentages potentially being shared. If needed, these percentages will be coded to protect any identifiable characteristics.

Questions:

- Where did you meet? (Name of church / school / group)
- How many children / young people in your group?
- Age range and makeup of group? (Gender, ethnicity, Special Educational Needs & Disability).

3

Optional Feedback

We would love to hear your reflections on the listening group. What worked well? What didn't? What would you change? Ideas for moving forward?
All (honest) feedback is very helpful.

youth echo guidebook



the purpose

Young people are part of the church and yet their voices are often lost within its structures. As we seek to support the flourishing of young people we want to create pathways for agency, to hear young people's voices and move those with power to action.

We believe young people have a very important voice and have deep insight, wisdom and challenges to offer us. We want to hear their voices to ensure that young people have a seat at the table.

To combat the easy option of assuming we know what young people need and want we have created an opportunity to collect the voice of young people. This will feed into existing structures, giving young people a voice in these places.

To best do this we think that youth workers, teachers and leaders directly working with young people regularly are best placed to facilitate and collect their voice.

