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**Support & Development for First Five Years**  
**Review Report**  
November 2016

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## Executive Summary

The existing provision for First Five Years (FFY) presents a number of good values and principles, but does not meet the increasing pressures facing those in their first years in ministry.

**This report outlines the particular needs articulated by those in the FFY and recommendations for support and development resources for Ministries Council to develop and deploy.**

The report will outline:

- Critical areas of support.
- Current model of support.
- Strategy for support.
- Recommended model of support.
- 2017 plan.
- Budgetary demands (short to long term).

Support in FFY is critical to ensure we continue with the mission of God in our local communities where we worship and serve. Failure to actively support FFY has profound impact on individuals, congregations, communities and presbyteries.

FFY support and development should be a top priority in the current review of support and development.

This report recommends:

- Ministerial Development Review – annually.
- Transformation of retreats and conference programme.
- Mentoring opportunities.
- FFY chaplain provision.
- Business support.
- Spiritual direction.
- Transformation of communication.

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## About the Consultation

Our aim is to develop engaging and robust provision for those in their first five years (FFY).

It is essential that ministers in the early stages of their ministry have a key role in the development of the current development programme and support offered.

The consultation took place from 4 October – 1 November 2016. It was designed to:

- engage FFY ministers.
- gain a richer understanding of the FFY.
- evaluate the current conference provision experience.
- transform the Ministries Council FFY provision.

Many ministers expressed how much they valued being consulted prior to the development of the FFY provision, and appreciated the opportunity to share experiences plus express their ideas about how the provision could be shaped.

69 ministers were invited to take part in the consultation. The consultation took various forms: one-to-one discussions either in-person or on the telephone; and group sessions.

Participation rate was at 61% and engaged the full spectrum of years one to five.

24 presbyteries out of a possible 36 Presbyteries which have a minister in the FFY were represented.

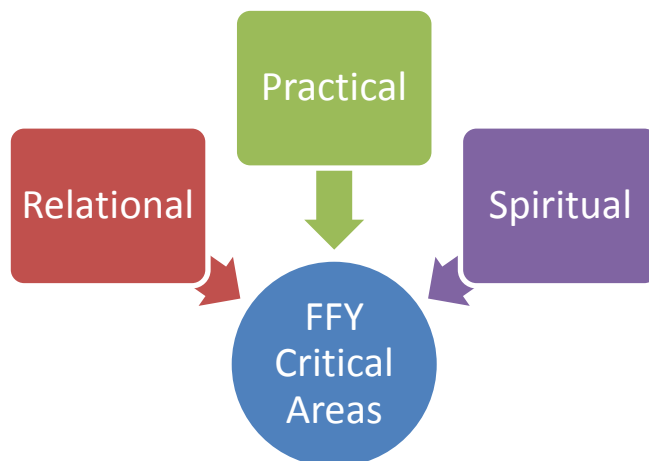
Group Session: Edinburgh	13
Group Session: Inverness	5
One-to-one Discussions	24
<b><u>TOTAL</u></b>	<b><u>42</u></b>

The critical and consistent message was: **the FFY is a crucial period of ministry when support and ministerial development are key and currently lacking.**

## Critical Areas of Support: what they said

We heard from a wide range of ministers working in a variety of different contexts across Scotland from rural linked charges to Priority Area congregations, island parishes to inner city gathered congregations and beyond. From across this diverse spectrum, key themes were identified that posed a challenge in FFY.

These fall into three principle categories:



### Relational

Relationships with elders, Kirk Sessions, within Presbyteries and the national Church were consistently identified as a source of difficulty in FFY, owing largely to changing roles and expectations on ministry. Some spoke of healthy and flourishing relationships, however, for many their experience was of highly demotivating factors including differing expectations to personal attacks, or accusations of 'laziness or youthful arrogance': **'I felt like a failure because I wasn't living up to expectations.'** This was exaggerated by the difficulty faced trying to find clear expectations of ministry.

Some said the ministry they had been trained for did not match the reality of ministry, while others noted surprise/shock when the reality of the charge differed considerably from their parish profile. Issues of legacy were common, with FFY ministers feeling under pressure to 'live up to' the reputation of their predecessor, and negotiate how to build upon or break away from what came before. Change support was seen to be lacking as new ministers and congregations sought to negotiate these transitional periods.

*Differing expectations* and *change reluctance* were identified as root causes of conflict, with conflict resolution and change management recognised by many as significant challenges.

While a minority spoke positively about their relationships with others in their congregations and Presbyteries, the overall trend revealed that in the midst of all these relationships there was an overwhelming sense of loneliness and at times isolation. This was particularly true of those in rural or island parishes, although not exclusively: **'I am in a small town and don't have any friends.'** After university and training a stark difference was perceived following ordination: **'the strangest thing was that after years of corporate learning I was on my own – I was 'the minister'.'**

The first year in particular was identified as a crucial period when support was vital, but lacking: **'The first year is critical – that is when the support is really needed – and I was on my own.'**

## The Practical

One participant said that they felt, **'Blessed by God, but burdened by the Church'**, a phrase which captured much of what those consulted told us about the practical issues faced in ministry.

Building management, manses, finance, charity regulations, and parishes stretched across vast geographical areas were frequently identified as challenges in the FFY. Those with a financial background or relevant experience expressed concern for those who did not, aware that depending on the skills in the congregation these issues could take up a lot of time.

Certainly, for most these practical issues were seen as getting in the way of the ministry the participants were called to: **'When you try and start bible studies or something similar, people say to me, 'you have enough to do', but I say that is what I've been called to do, not finance and fabric!'**

Similarly, it is increasingly the case that ministers in the FFY are given additional roles by Presbytery and the national Church including Presbytery Clerk and Interim Moderator; while these were seen as great opportunities and ministers in the FFY do not want to be patronised, they recognised that they may need additional support to fulfil these roles to the best of their ability while everything is still new: **'I need to honour my calling as a ministry of Word and Sacrament and serve locally and nationally, but I am so stretched.'**

## The Spiritual

Individuals consulted revealed a genuine conviction that they are called by God to be ministers of the Church of Scotland: **'I am absolutely convinced that I am called'; 'I am in the right place'**; however, concern was expressed that the relational and practical challenges of ministry can get in the way of continuing spiritual formation and it is a **'real struggle to find balance between work and life'**.

Spiritual formation was identified as a critical issue: **'We need time spent with God to be shaped and become more Christ-like. It is our faith in God that will sustain us, and God who will give us the strength and resilience for ministry.'**

One minister emphasised the importance of remembering: **'The person you are is the person God called into ministry and you need to have confidence in that.'**

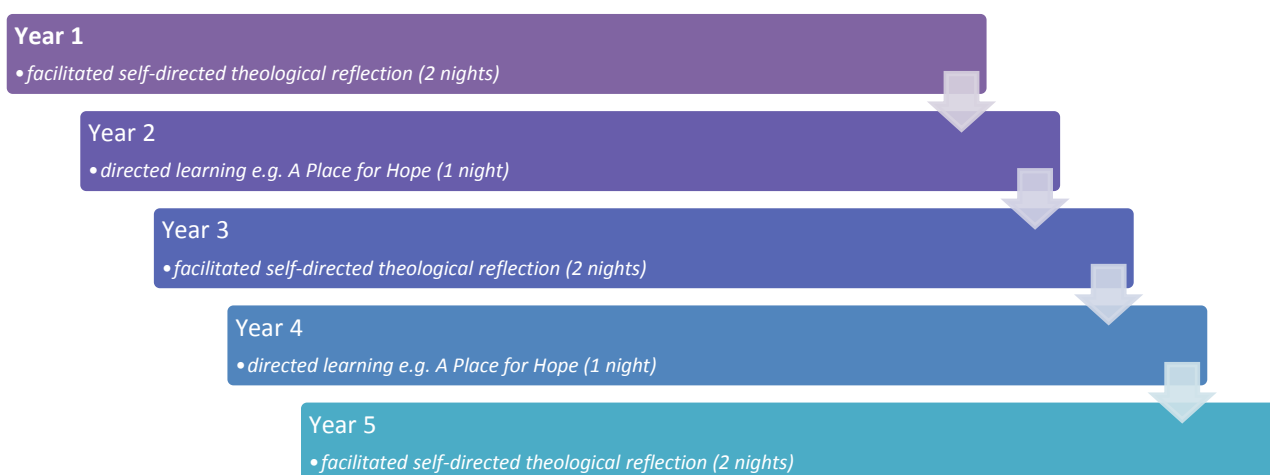
## Current Model of Support

The consultation allowed for a positive critique of the current Ministries Council FFY conference provision and the support for those in this period of ministry.

A number of people affirmed the good quality of the conferences in terms of organisation and facilitators.

The current objective of the FFY conference provision is to further embed the process of theological reflection. **While many affirmed this opportunity, this current operation model and strategy is failing to actively respond to the needs of those in FFY.**

Current provision involves a linear model of conference provision that requires an individual to interact with content restricted to their year groups.



### Fellowship

Many people emphasised that the real value of the FFY conferences was the opportunity to *come together* with other ministers to support each other, worship and learn together: **'You feel like you aren't alone – because it can feel very isolated, particularly on islands or in rural parishes.'**

There were differing opinions as to whether or not the current system of separating the year groups is the best approach. While some felt maintaining this was extremely important as bonds of trust have been formed throughout training, others felt there was enormous benefit in learning from the wisdom and experiences of others at different stages of ministry.

More often than not people agreed that it depended on what was being expected of them at the conferences and if they were being asked to open up to one another and be vulnerable it was important that they felt safe and secure within a group.

### Support

For the majority of those who attended conference in years 1, 3 and 5 the theological reflection sessions were seen as supportive at the time of the conference, but there was a sense that there was no resolution or action afterwards; something that was also raised by the current team of facilitators.

Others felt more strongly that this had little impact on their ministry as there was no concrete support offered in response to the issues brought to the conference by individuals. Only one participant reflected on the benefit of learning reflective skill, whereas others who spoke about this focussed predominantly on the support aspect

of the sessions.

A number of participants found these sessions to be extremely negative and draining; this was particularly true of those who are happy in their ministry who expressed having feelings of 'guilt' for enjoying their ministry as a result of the conference. They also found themselves in a position of wanting and needing to pastor to their colleagues, which resulted in them not having a restful experience away from the parish. As a direct result of this these ministers withdrew from the FFY conference programme and undertook self-directed study instead. One said: '**At some point you have to stop holding our hands and let us get on with it. We need to be more resilient.**'

### **Relevance**

The diversity of contexts and satisfaction in ministry lead to participants expressing concern that the Ministries Council feels 'one size fits all' rather than seeing the differing needs of individuals.

There was a frustration among some that the current system of separating the year groups meant that they could not access a course that was relevant to their situation, but required them to wait until years 2 or 4 for these opportunities or seek them elsewhere: this lack of flexibility was identified as problematic.

There was dissatisfaction that ministers in the FFY are not eligible for Study Leave, particularly among those who found the current FFY provision irrelevant, but an appreciation that there were increasingly able to attend CMD conferences that they felt were relevant to them.

### **Timing**

The first year of ministry was identified as one of the most crucial periods in ministry, but the first conference for those recently ordained took place up to 18 months after ordination when it was 'too late'. In certain cases this resulting in feelings of frustration with individuals saying that they felt 'devalued' and unsupported by the Ministries Council.

### **Confidentiality**

There was expressed concern that 'confidential does not always mean confidential' with regard to the Ministries Council and colleagues.



## Current Financial Support

In 2015 the Council committed £1.5m to the IME programme. The FFY budget for that same year was £12k.



An analysis of the allocation of this FFY budget from 2010-2016 reveals inconsistency of spending, largely due to cost of residential conferences in years 1, 2 and 3 (Fig. 1).

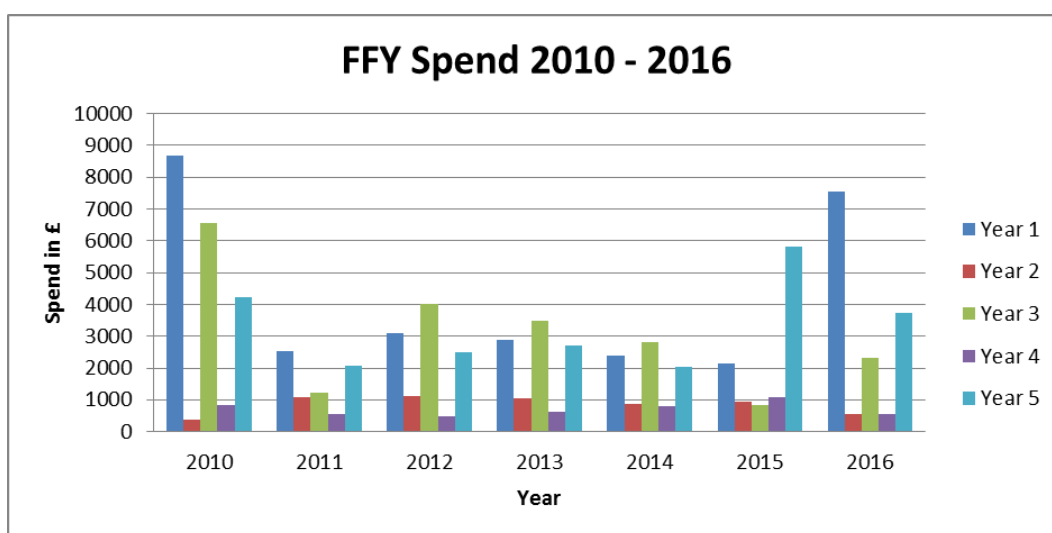


Figure 1: Spend breakdown of FFY peer groups from 2010 to 2016

Figure 2 shows the trend of combined spend per year from 2010-2016, which clearly shows that the investment in those in years 2 and 4 is significantly less than those in years 1, 3 and 5.

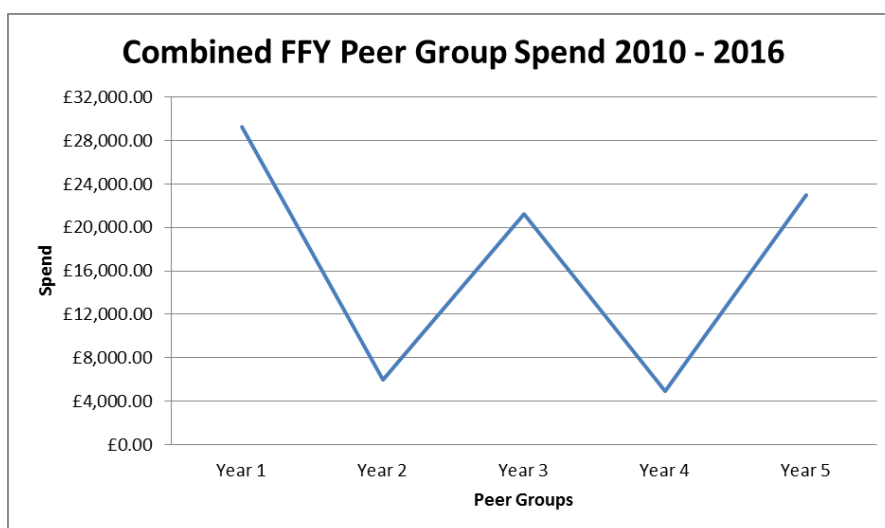


Figure 2: Combined FFY peer group spend from 2010 – 2016.

We propose to change this trend by ensuring consistency of spend across the five years thereby deploying funds more effectively to guarantee the best support and ministerial development for every individual in each year of their FFY in ministry.

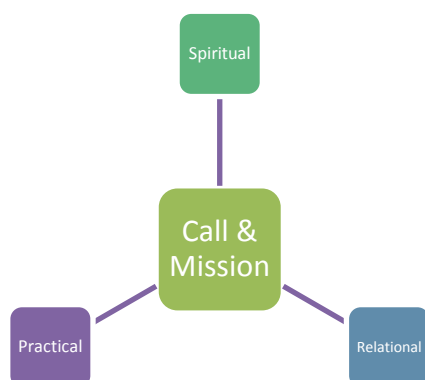
Due to the underspend in previous years the budget for FFY in 2017 has been compressed, which we propose reversing in light of the new developments and financial planning (see pg. 15). This would bring the current conference budget for those in this period of ministry closer in line with that allocated for Candidates and Probationers.

## Responding: strategy for FFY

The results of the FFY consultation were consistent with the Tenure Commission, which are outlined in Ascend ([www.churchofscotland.org.uk/ascend](http://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/ascend)). As such the FFY provision represents a whole-person approach: spiritual, intellectual, emotional and physical. Our current provision represents a one-dimensional provision that restricts content to year groups.

This relates well to the critical areas of support: relational, practical, and spiritual.

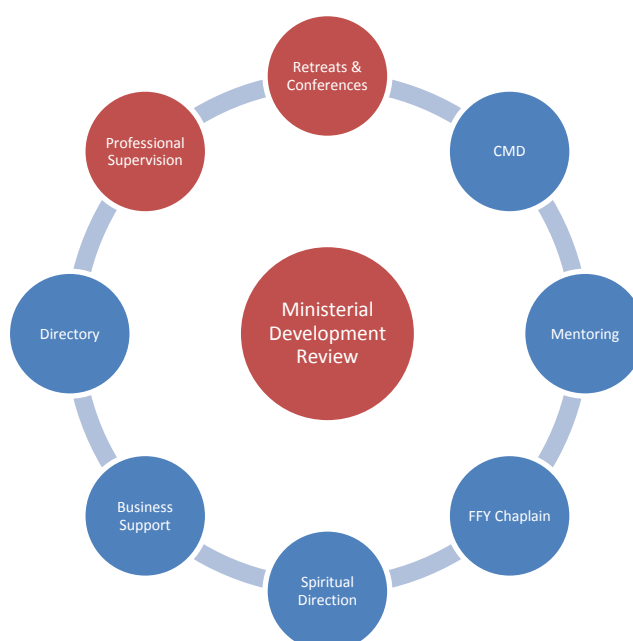
Most notably the critical areas of support do not present themselves within a linear order in the reality of ministry; therefore, we do not believe that access to support should be restricted in such a manner.



The calling and mission of the minister is supported by these three critical areas, as identified by FFY ministers. This becomes the strategic foundation on which we build the response.

## Recommended Model of Support

The diagram below outlines how we plan to deliver the strategy for FFY outlined on pg. 11.



The items marked in **red** would be services we would recommend for everyone.

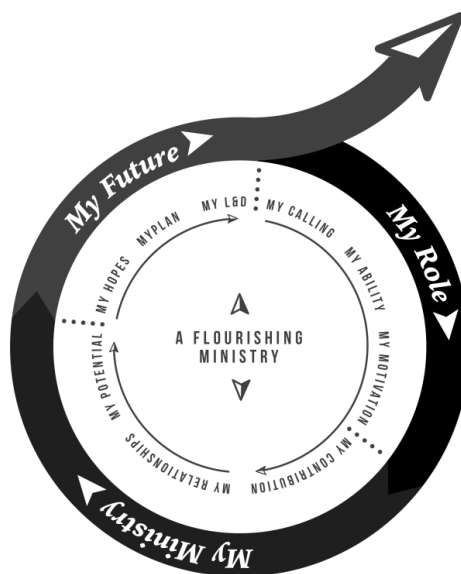
Ministerial Development Review is the first port of call. This minister-led review allows for the individual to identify development needs and then form a tailored plan to respond to those needs.

Each component will be developed to outline how it will actively support the FFY strategy: e.g. conferences and retreats will be developed so that they support the relational, practical and spiritual.

## Ministerial Development Review (Conversations)

The implications of the Tenure Commission are outlined in the Ascend project plan, which asserts the importance of **'creating opportunities for the development of skills and gifts appropriate to the challenges of ministry today . . . [and] sensitivity to the pastoral needs of the minister goes hand in hand with a review of work and potential development'** (Ascend, pg. 13). This is consistent with the results of the FFY consultation and therefore MDR provides a starting point for development in the FFY.

Professional and ministerial development was spoken highly of by many who participated in the consultation. A real passion for ongoing learning and improvement was expressed by all and the development of MDC was greatly anticipated. This will respond to the particular needs of individuals and to enable ongoing learning and development.



This project is currently in Pilot Phase and should be ready for roll-out in Q3 2017.

### **Our recommendation:**

FFY participate in an annual MDC in order to identify and pursue required support and development. Ministries Council to commit increased funding to FFY CMD in order to cover costs. We would recommend matching the £275 of Study Leave with the exception of not accruing year-on-year.

## Professional Supervision

When discussing continuing professional development some participants saw great value in professional supervision, as a way in which to develop their ministry and receive support. Having the

time to reflect professionally and theologically on an individual's ministerial practice confidentially with an experienced supervisor was seen as an enabling and positive opportunity.

## **Retreats and Conferences**

None of the participants wanted to see an end to the FFY conference provision, although gratitude was expressed that it is not compulsory. Greater flexibility in terms of content was asked for as well as consultation on what might be relevant or of interest prior to the planning of events.

Retreats were spoken about positively as an alternative, as it was recognised that: 'we need space to reconnect and let ourselves be energised by our vows and our Call.' We were cautioned not to overload conference programmes as this is draining rather than rejuvenating when taking ministers out of a busy parish setting. Similarly it was suggested that pulpit supply be offered for those attending conferences so that they could fully engage without worrying about the upcoming Sunday.

## **Mentoring**

Participants who have or have had mentors spoke about the great value this relationship has had on their support and ministerial development. There is currently some provision for mentoring within the Presbytery structure, but the consultation revealed that this is not consistent across Scotland and in some instances people felt reluctant to speak to people within their own Presbytery for a variety of factors.

## **Spiritual Direction**

Some felt passionately that all Church of Scotland ministers should receive spiritual direction or accompaniment; however, it was recognised that this is not something that all people benefit from.

## **FFY Chaplain**

It was suggested that there could be a neutral person out with Presbytery or the Ministries Council who could be a contact to offer practical and spiritual support and advice. This would overcome concerns regarding confidentiality and mistrust.

## **Business Support**

Business matters and practical issues were seen to 'get in the way' of ministry and greater support is needed either through training or signposting to the correct contact in the Church Offices.

## **Directory**

There is certain confusion about who to contact in the Church Offices for different issues and it was suggested that a directory of centralised support would be useful.

## 2017 Plan of Action - Short-term

### Ministerial Development Review (Conversations)

From Q3 of 2017, FFY begin to schedule MDC appointments.

### Professional Supervision

To be developed in collaboration with the Pastoral Support Manager.

### Conference Provision

#### Spring FFY Conference

Run for all ministers in the FFY this will offer an opportunity to come together in fellowship to support one another, learn and worship together. In response to the request for flexibility and relevance there will be optional seminars led by experts on topics that arose from the consultation. There will be inspirational plenaries and opportunities to meet in year groups and as a larger cohort.

#### Autumn Recently Ordained Retreat

The first year of ministry was identified as a critical time and in response to that we propose a retreat, which will happen annually, for those within the first year of their ministry. The primary focus of this retreat will be wellbeing and theological reflection, to address concerns of balance and spiritual formation.

### Directory

In response to concerns about signposting, particularly in the Church Offices, we propose that the Ministers Handbook is kept up to date with a directory.

## Long-term Development

### FFY Chaplain

We will explore the feasibility of a team of Chaplains for ministers in the FFY across the country with geographical remits who could offer support, guidance and a confidential ear to ministers in the FFY.

### CMD (inc. business support)

2018 budget required for FFY CMD based on £275 per minister.

### Spiritual Direction

Strategy to be developed by the Support Team.