

What can we learn from the experience of having paid staff?

Community Development Coordinators

4 dioceses have had CDCs, and there are three currently in post. Usually employed for a 3 or 4 year term. Different remits according to the needs of the diocese.

Some CDC appointments have been in partnership with other organisations: in Chester with Anglican diocese and in Cork with the Youth Council

CDCs don't do all Mothers' Union work in a diocese, but act as a catalyst to help things happen.

They can identify and develop areas for Mothers' Union work, but Mothers' Union members carry out that work.

Not all paid diocesan staff are CDCs

Some dioceses employ secretaries, administrators or treasurers

Advantages of paid staff

The person is contracted to work for you and therefore easier to ask an employee (rather than a volunteer) to do something.

Does a paid employee 'grow' Mothers' Union?

- Frees up volunteer time
- Sets up new work that can be attractive to non-members (who then may become members.)
- Can raise the profile of Mothers' Union.

Issues of having paid staff

- The trustee board becomes an employer – probably need a management committee/group
- Funding. Not just salary, but also office space, equipment, etc.
- Goodwill of members (especially relevant for CDCs). If members aren't willing to take up opportunities created by a CDC, then it's a waste of time and energy.

What can all of us (including those for whom paid staff is nothing more than a dream) learn from the experiences of those who have paid staff?

- Learn how to treat our volunteers better! Employment legislation determines the way we behave towards employees. Contracts of employment, etc create parameters (no. of hours to be worked, time off, etc. Do we ask too much of volunteers? Having a Volunteer Agreement - what we expect of our members who volunteer - encourages people to get involved, with clear boundaries. Volunteer Management information sheet available from Mary Sumner House.
- Looking wider. We can be a closed shop, inward looking, not looking outside our current membership for people to engage with and promote our mission. That's a lesson we can learn from the experience of dioceses who have (or have had) CDCs. It can be easier for staff to create relationships and links, but it's not that difficult if we put our minds to it.
- Belief in ourselves. The experience of dioceses with CDCs is that there is a great deal of goodwill towards Mothers' Union. We are generally well regarded. People outside Mothers' Union – even outside church structures – do take Mothers' Union seriously. Not just paid staff but every one of our members in Britain and Ireland.

Marian Pope

October 2012