

proximity_

Interim Impact Evaluation (2023–2025)

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1. Executive Summary

1.1 A Distinctive, Impactful and Biblical Network

Over the past three years, Proximity has grown beyond its origins as the annual conference of the Eden Network to become a more widely inclusive and valuable resource hub supporting Christian leaders in urban and estates ministry across the UK. Its retreats, conferences, and regional gatherings have offered trusted meeting points for practitioners serving in demanding, low-income, and often overlooked contexts.

This interim evaluation draws on participant feedback gathered between 2023 and 2025, complemented by quarterly progress reports from the Proximity management team, to understand both the lived experience of those attending and the organisation's development over time. Across these three years of reflection and testimony, a clear story emerges: Proximity is making a measurable and sustained difference in the lives of leaders serving in some of the UK's most complex and under-resourced communities. Its blend of spiritual renewal, practical equipping, and intentional community has produced change that is both personal and systemic. Proximity has strengthened individual leaders whilst building a wider movement of resilience and hope.

Multi-Dimensional Impact

- **Deep Spiritual Renewal:** Leaders consistently report encountering God afresh and regaining perspective after seasons of depletion.
- **Practical and Creative Equipping:** Teaching, workshops, and worship translate directly into sustainable ministry practices and community action.
- **Strong Relational Belonging:** Proximity effectively counters isolation, creating a sense of family among peers who “get it.”
- **Recognition and Reputation:** The movement has gained national credibility for its authenticity and excellence.
- **Growing Self-Awareness and Learning:** Proximity listens to feedback with humility, strengthening its inclusivity, diversity, and strategic reach.

Taken together, these findings show that Proximity's model works. It functions as a formational ecosystem rather than a series of events — an environment where leaders are renewed spiritually, resourced practically, and reconnected relationally.

Biblically Consistent Findings

Alongside the data and analysis, this report includes three short theological reflections (see section 7) that illuminate the spiritual dynamics evident in the feedback showing their biblical rootedness:

Elijah – The Lonely Leader Renewed and Recommissioned (1 Kings 19)

Many participants arrived at events weary and isolated, echoing Elijah's cry beneath the broom tree: “I have had enough, Lord.” Through hospitality, worship, and shared prayer, Proximity has become a place of rest, encounter, and recommissioning where leaders rediscover that they are not alone.

Barnabas – The Ministry of Encouragement (Acts 4, 11, 15)

The leadership culture of Proximity embodies the spirit of Barnabas, the “son of encouragement.” Participants repeatedly describe the team's humility, attentiveness, and servant-hearted care — leadership expressed not through performance but through affirmation and trust in what God is doing in others.

Early Church Diversity – Unity Amid Difference (Acts 10–15; Gal 3:28)

Just as the early believers wrestled with unity amid diversity, Proximity continues to learn how to widen its table. Feedback reveals a desire for greater representation across gender, ethnicity, and tradition — not as criticism but as invitation. The movement's ethos of hospitality and humility provides fertile ground for this ongoing journey toward a richer expression of the body of Christ.

1.2 Overall Evaluation Judgement

Taken together, the evidence demonstrates that Proximity’s model works. Its integration of spiritual encounter, practical formation, and relational belonging creates a holistic resource unmatched in its field. The cumulative effect is clear:

- Leaders experience renewal and resilience that enable longevity in ministry.
- Communities will benefit from revitalised leadership, creativity, and strategic action.
- The wider church gains a network of practitioners embodying hope in places of deprivation.

In evaluation terms, Proximity is best understood as a formational ecosystem rather than a series of events. It serves to replenish the faith, confidence, and capacity of missional leaders working in low-income communities. The challenge for the next phase will be to retain this depth and intimacy while expanding reach and access.

“Proximity is best understood as a formational ecosystem rather than a series of events.”

2. Introduction and Evaluation Approach

Over the last three years, Proximity has developed into one of the most distinctive environments supporting Christian leaders in urban and estates ministry across the United Kingdom. Its retreats, annual conferences, and regional gatherings have become trusted meeting points for practitioners who serve in demanding, low-income, and often overlooked contexts. The cumulative testimony gathered from these events between 2023 and 2025 paints a consistent picture: Proximity is helping leaders sustain their calling, rediscover joy, and translate conviction into practical action.

This interim evaluation brings together feedback from participants at residential retreats, day-long conferences, and evening regional gatherings, highlighting the experiences of hundreds of individuals from every part of the UK. Their words are rich with gratitude, honesty, and insight. Many describe Proximity as “a lifeline,” “one of the best experiences of my life,” or simply “what keeps me going.” Such language offers more than sentiment; it provides qualitative evidence of spiritual and professional renewal among leaders who serve in some of the most challenging ministry settings.

Since its inception in 2023, Proximity has developed strong delivery foundations while remaining rooted in its relational ethos. Quarterly progress reports chart a steady rhythm of activity: recruitment of a core team, completion of branding and web development, the launch of the Proximity Hub, and the delivery of retreats, regional gatherings, and national conferences across the UK. By mid-2025 more than 800 leaders had registered on the website and over 900 subscribed to its mailing list. These operational milestones provide the backdrop to this evaluation, which focuses not on delivery outputs but on the difference these developments have made in the lives of participants.

2.1 Purpose and Methodology

The purpose of this evaluation is twofold:

1. To assess the cumulative impact of Proximity events over time — tracing patterns of change in well-being, leadership confidence, and ministry practice.
2. To surface the learning emerging from this journey — the insights that can inform future strategy, growth, and sustainability.

The findings are organised using Proximity’s established framework of Reaching, Resourcing, and Relationship, which together describe the movement’s distinctive theory of change:

- **Reaching** explores who is being drawn into the network, how extensive and inclusive that reach has become, and what barriers remain.
- **Resourcing** examines the content, methods, and tools that enable leaders to grow in resilience, faith, and practical skill.
- **Relationship** looks at the community-building dynamics that transform isolation into belonging and collaboration.

In terms of methodology the focus of this report is largely qualitative rather than quantitative. As such, it is full of verbatim feedback which is visually placed in “quotes”. These quotations are used throughout the report to preserve authenticity and ground each insight in the lived experience of participants. Names have been removed, and where appropriate, small grammatical edits have been made for clarity without altering meaning.

Whilst we do include some statistics relating to the Reach and Relationship ambitions of the Proximity Hub these should be understood as interesting yardsticks of growth, rather than definitive measures of impact.

Producing this interim report required use of meta-analysis techniques, supported by AI tools — which in plain English means bringing together and making sense of hundreds of pieces of written feedback collected after Proximity events between 2023 and 2025. Each response was coded and compared to identify recurring patterns, tensions, and emerging trends. The approach is intentionally interpretive rather than statistical, valuing voice and story as the most accurate indicators of transformation in this context.

Two primary sources underpin the analysis: participant feedback gathered from retreats, conferences, and regional gatherings, and quarterly progress reports produced by the Proximity management team. The former provides direct evidence of participant experience; the latter offers complementary insight into delivery milestones and organisational learning. Together, they allow a rounded view of both what participants experienced and how the organisation has evolved.

The methodology was designed to reflect the spirit of Proximity itself — relational, participatory, and faith-centred.

2.2 Tone and Perspective

The analysis is written in the voice of a critical friend: appreciative, rigorous, and honest. It celebrates what is working well while identifying the areas where Proximity can continue to grow. The intention is constructive learning partnership — offering a mirror through which the organisation can see both its fruit and its future possibilities.

The sections that follow track the movement’s cumulative story over three years. **Reaching** explores how Proximity has extended its invitation and deepened its inclusivity. **Resourcing** here examines the formation and empowerment of leaders through teaching, creativity, and worship¹. **Relationship** considers how belonging and mutual support have become central outcomes. The report concludes with Learning and Development — a synthesis of what Proximity is learning about itself as it matures — and a final reflection on the legacy emerging from this season of ministry.

¹ The scope of this report does not include analysis or discussion of content hosted at the online Proximity Hub: proximityhub.org. This content will become the focus of a future evaluation report.

3. Creating A Movement In Proximity

Proximity is a movement that exists to support, connect, and sustain Christian leaders serving in urban estates and communities experiencing multiple deprivation across the United Kingdom. Its purpose is simple but profound: to help those who live and lead in hard places to remain faithful, resilient, and fruitful for the long haul.

Founded out of The Message Trust and closely connected with Eden Network, Proximity recognises that ministry in areas of persistent poverty can be both exhilarating and exhausting. Leaders often face social unease, limited resources, and the slow pace of visible change. Many describe feeling unseen to the wider church — “We love what we do, but it can be lonely when no one else seems to understand it.” Proximity embraces these people.

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The programme’s delivery trajectory, documented through quarterly reports, shows how the network has quickly developed important structures and processes. From the early focus on branding and consultation to the 2024 website launch and the 2025 expansion of regional gatherings, each stage has reinforced the project’s capacity to reach, resource, and relate. The evidence presented in the following sections demonstrates what those milestones have meant for the people they were designed to serve — how implementation translated into personal renewal, professional resilience, and collective belonging.

3.1 A Distinctive Ethos

Proximity’s character is shaped by several defining features:

- **Intentional hospitality:** Meals are shared freely, costs are often subsidised, and care for delegates is practical and personal. A regional event participant reflected, “We felt really valued by the invitation and offer of a meal.”
- **Accessible insights:** Sessions are designed to be theologically rich yet practically grounded — “real-life stories, not slick presentations.”
- **Peer learning:** The wisdom in the room is as valued as the wisdom from the front. Attendees often say they “grew most through conversations over coffee and prayer together.”
- **Spiritual centrality:** Prayer, worship, and prophetic ministry are woven through every event, ensuring spiritual renewal remains at the core.

This combination of professional competence and spiritual authenticity has given Proximity a unique credibility within the urban mission landscape. It is not simply a training provider or conference series, but a community of practice united by faith, honesty, and shared purpose.

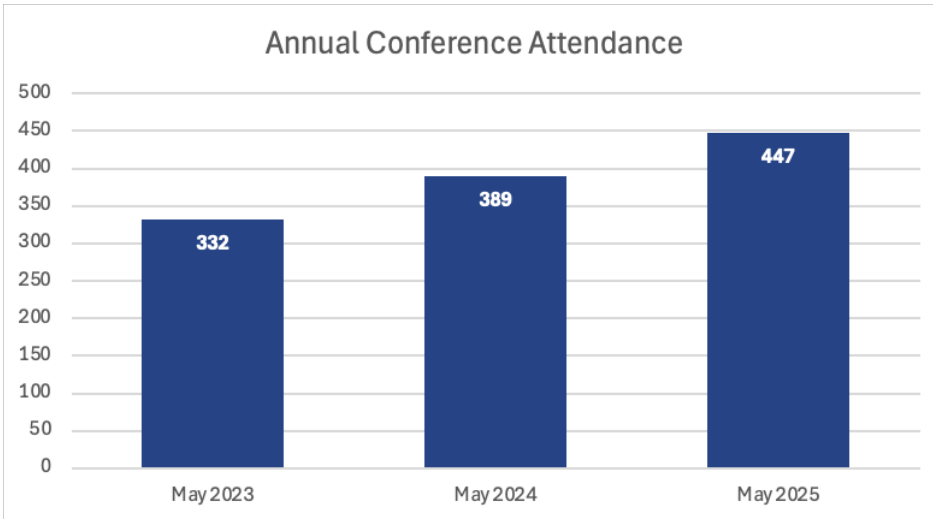
3.2 A Rhythm of Gathering and Sending

Proximity provides three primary forms of event engagement, with different settings and emphasis forming a rhythm of encounter, equipping, and encouragement:

- Residential Retreats — multi-day gatherings providing space for rest, prayer, worship, and peer reflection. These are intentionally small and relational, offering a “safe space to allow God to renew and refresh.”
- Annual Conference — a large-scale, two-day event that gathers hundreds of practitioners for teaching, worship, and practical workshops. The conference focuses on resourcing and inspiration at scale, while maintaining a distinctive authenticity and informality.
- Regional Gatherings — evening or day events hosted in local hubs, designed to nurture connection, encouragement, and shared learning among geographically proximate leaders.

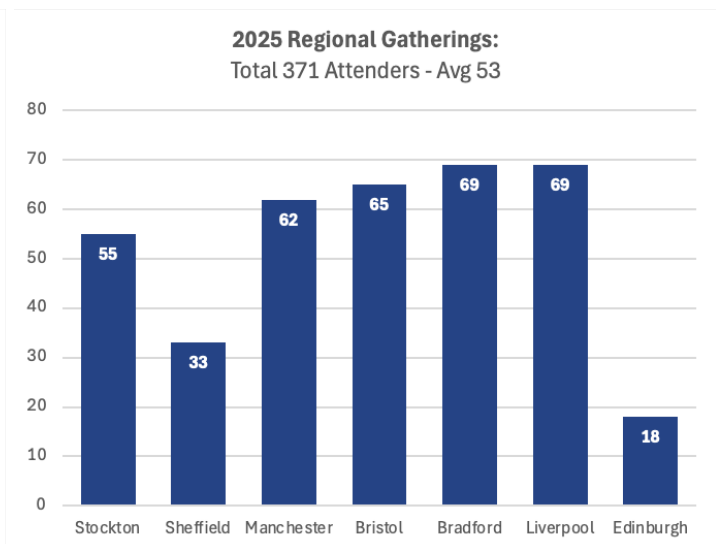
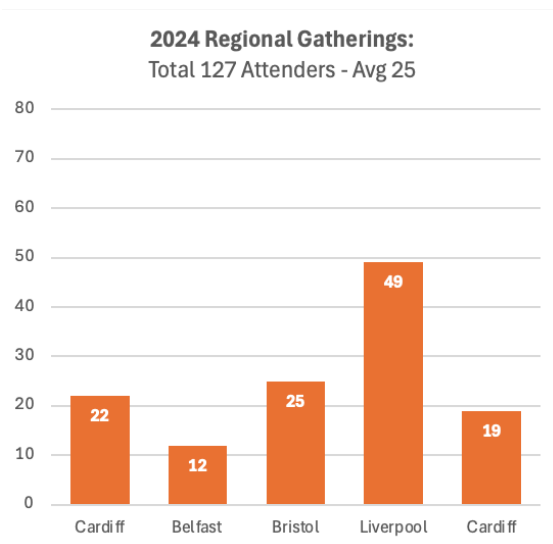
The Residential Retreats provide a setting for greater depth of engagement to take place. In order to ensure close relational dynamics numbers are capped low, with generally between 6-10 people attending. There was one retreat in 2024, three took place in 2025, and two more are planned for 2026.

The annual Proximity conference attendance has been growing year on year as shown in data below. The numbers show that there is clearly an appetite for what the conference is offering. Whether growth continues remains to be seen as organisers often find that constraints around venue, personnel and budget eventually lead to a plateau in numbers. The Proximity leadership team will need to take account of such factors in the years ahead.



The annual Proximity conference is held in Manchester over two days in May

Regional Gatherings have become an important way for Proximity to extend its reach into regions of the UK where its footprint has not previously extended. Significant efforts have been made to engage with audiences in all regions north, south, east and west, as well as travelling to Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. The data shows that the number of regional events and the overall number of people reached through the events has grown significantly over the last 2 years.



In addition to the events mentioned above it is noted that the Proximity team are also reaching hundreds more people through being present and delivering training at a range of events hosted by other organisations.

3.3 Multi-Dimensional Impact Found

Across three years of participant feedback, a consistent picture emerges of Proximity's distinctive impact on those serving in urban and estates ministry. Broadly speaking, participants' experiences can be summarised under five themes, each reflecting a different dimension of how Proximity positively impacts on leaders and their ministries. These themes appear and re-appear throughout this report and inform the overall conclusions drawn in Section 9. The following summary presents each of the five themes in turn.

3.3a. Deep Spiritual Renewal

At every level of feedback, leaders describe Proximity as a space where they encounter God afresh and regain perspective after seasons of depletion. Many came tired or disheartened and left "refreshed and revitalised," having rediscovered joy in their calling. Worship, prayer, and hospitality consistently appear as catalysts for renewal — "I felt God speak clearly and renew my purpose," wrote one participant. For many, these moments of rest and encounter function as a lifeline, equipping them to continue serving in hard places.

3.3b. Practical and Creative Equipping

Beyond inspiration, Proximity equips leaders with tangible tools and strategies for ministry. Workshops such as *Strike the Rock: Planting the Gospel Where It's Flippin' Hard* and *Sustaining Ministry for the Long Haul* have generated actionable plans and sustainable habits. Participants report leaving with "clarity about what God is asking me to do next" and "confidence to be myself in ministry." Creative sessions have translated directly into community action — murals, songwriting, and new outreach projects — demonstrating that equipping here leads to visible change on the ground.

3.3c. Strong Relational Belonging

Isolation remains one of the greatest challenges for those in urban and estates ministry. Proximity effectively counters that loneliness by creating a sense of family among peers who "get it." The combination of shared meals, prayer, and vulnerability builds deep mutual support. Delegates highlight the transformative effect of "time out in great company" and the experience of being "understood as an estates practitioner in a way that isn't always true elsewhere." This relational dynamic has become one of Proximity's defining strengths with encouraging signs that it is being replicated regionally.

3.3d. Recognition and Reputation

In just a few years, Proximity's events offering has begun to occupy a distinctive and important position within the wider Christian landscape. Events are consistently rated 9 or 10 out of 10, and participants express loyalty and anticipation for future gatherings. Many asked for seminars to be recorded so others could "benefit from all of them later," a sign of both satisfaction and demand. The organisation's hospitality and ethos of service — "You always seem to nail it" — have cemented its standing as a valued national network.

3.3e. Growing Self-Awareness and Learning

What distinguishes Proximity's development during this period is not only its success but its willingness to learn. Smart use of data systems could further strengthen learning around impact. Feedback shows a reflective organisation responsive to participants' insights: improving communication, exploring regional accessibility, diversifying speakers, and considering how language and representation shape inclusivity. This humility and adaptability reflect a movement maturing in both size and spirit.

4. Reaching: Expanding Connection and Visibility

One of the most striking outcomes emerging from this three-year evaluation is the way Proximity has broadened and deepened its reach. What began as a small network of like-minded practitioners has become a national movement connecting leaders across social, cultural, and denominational boundaries.

4.1 Reaching the Right People

Proximity's primary audience is those working in urban estates, low-income neighbourhoods, and marginalised communities. The evaluation confirms that this focus has not diluted with growth. Indeed, many participants identify this as the very reason they attend: "This is the only conference where people really understand my world," one wrote. Another put it more bluntly: "Every other event I go to, I have to explain what I do — here, I don't."

"Every other event I go to, I have to explain what I do — here, I don't."

Leaders repeatedly affirm that Proximity is reaching those who are under-represented and under-resourced elsewhere in the church. The combination of affordability, accessible teaching, and authentic tone ensures that leaders who might avoid mainstream conferences feel at home. "It's for people like us," a participant said. "Real people in real communities."

This accessibility extends to church leaders and community practitioners alike — pastors, youth workers, missional entrepreneurs, and volunteers — people who may not hold titles but are shaping change on the ground.

4.2 Inclusive Hospitality

Inclusion is not only about who is invited, but how people are made to feel welcome and involved. Across the feedback, participants describe moments of hospitality that communicated value and dignity. The decision to cover meal costs for those in ministry on low incomes was particularly appreciated. One inner-city church worker reflected, "I often eat and drink within my means while others order freely, so being treated this time made me feel genuinely valued." Such gestures do more than meet practical needs; they model the gospel of generous grace that Proximity seeks to embody.

Participants frequently commented on the welcoming culture — the sense of being seen and cared for. "It's hard to explain," one delegate said, "but it felt like coming home." Another wrote, "I'm not networked in with Eden or The Message, but I still felt included — everyone was friendly and genuine."

Also notable is the way that Proximity reaches leaders who feel marginalised within the institutional church. These are practitioners who love their neighbourhoods but often feel misunderstood by traditional structures. One leader wrote, "We don't fit the mould — but here, that's celebrated."

"We don't fit the mould — but here, that's celebrated."

This sense of being known and validated has a profound pastoral impact. Participants describe relief, joy, and renewed purpose. As one delegate summed it up, "For once, I didn't have to prove that my work mattered. You already knew."

These small but consistent acts of recognition and care are central to why Proximity's reach is so effective. They transform attendance into belonging.

4.3 Growing Reach and Reputation

Between 2023 and 2025, Proximity's reach has expanded substantially — both geographically and relationally. Leaders from the North of England, Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland have all participated in retreats or conferences, while the introduction of regional gatherings has made attendance more viable for those unable to travel far. These local anchors are becoming increasingly significant, offering continuity between national events and the everyday realities of ministry.

Regional feedback repeatedly emphasises the importance of this local connection. “It was uplifting — we felt encouraged and like we belong,” one attendee said after a regional evening. Others appreciated meeting “people in our own area doing amazing stuff,” describing it as both inspiring and normalising: “I realised we're not the only ones.”

This pattern of growth has been largely organic, fuelled by trust and word of mouth, supported by smart marketing. Delegates describe Proximity as “the only external input I make time for each year” and “the best resource I've found in twenty years of ministry.” The combination of professional delivery and spiritual authenticity has created a distinctive reputation — a place where excellence and humility coexist. As one participant summarised, “You always seem to nail it — it's real, but it's also done with such care.”

This trust translates into loyalty. Repeat attendance is high, and many participants invite colleagues or team members to join them, extending the network's reach through personal recommendation. In this way, Proximity's growth is not just numerical but relational — spreading through stories, shared experience, and the credibility of lives changed.

This growing network of trust and belonging is now prompting participants to ask how Proximity's impact can extend beyond those already involved.

4.4 Reaching Beyond

Proximity's reach is also expanding conceptually — shaping the wider conversation about mission and leadership in hard places. The demand for recorded seminars, resource sharing, and online accessibility indicates that the impact of these gatherings extends well beyond those physically present.

Participants often express a desire to “share what we received with others” or “pass it on to our team.” One delegate even suggested a “pay it forward” model so that future retreats could be offered to more leaders: “It's too good to keep to ourselves.”

This feedback points toward a shift in mindset: Proximity is not just a gathering of individuals, but a movement with multiplying potential. Each event equips ambassadors who carry its ethos back into their communities, churches, and networks.

Summary

Through intentional hospitality, authentic content, and relational connection, Proximity has extended its reach without losing focus. It now connects a broad, interwoven community of urban and estates leaders across the UK, many of whom had previously worked in isolation. Its growth has been not merely numerical, but relational and reputational — grounded in trust, testimony, and shared experience.

Recommendation: Make changes to data collection protocol

Whilst the feedback data provides rich insight into participants' experiences, it does not currently reveal with any certainty the context in which those leaders serve. To date, Proximity's booking and feedback systems have not been asking participants to indicate whether they are working in inner-city, suburban, town, or rural environments, etc. As a result, the project cannot yet quantify how effectively its reach corresponds to the environments it most aims to serve.

The Church Statistics dataset (Attendance by Denomination and Environment, England) shows that church participation varies sharply by setting, with the largest proportional decline in city-centre and inner-city contexts. See table below. Understanding the distribution of Proximity participants across these same environments will be essential for assessing whether the movement is successfully engaging leaders from the communities of greatest need.

Table 13.20.2 Church attendance by denomination and context, England, 2020

2020				Town/Suburban/Built Up			Rural		TOTAL
	City Centre	Inner City	Council Estate	Suburban	Separate Town	Other built-up	Commuter Rural	Remoter Rural	
Anglican	51,200	42,900	37,300	254,800	87,100	24,500	97,900	86,300	682,000
Baptist	7,000	13,700	8,100	103,900	47,700	4,300	37,100	16,400	238,200
R Catholic	28,100	95,500	61,100	294,500	124,500	29,700	44,100	34,100	711,600
Indep + New	11,100	20,500	14,600	120,100	78,300	7,300	48,000	28,800	328,700
Methodist	4,700	8,200	9,700	69,000	40,800	8,100	14,400	16,600	171,500
Orthodox	5,600	12,400	200	10,700	4,500	900	1,400	400	36,100
Pentecostal	36,600	171,000	38,800	89,800	57,700	21,300	27,200	4,200	446,600
URC	2,400	1,800	2,000	23,600	11,400	1,000	3,500	3,300	49,000
Smaller Den's	6,100	9,300	6,500	52,800	29,700	4,200	11,400	7,600	127,600
TOTAL	152,800	375,300	178,300	1,019,200	481,700	101,300	285,000	197,700	2,791,300

Finding: Proximity does not currently capture data about participants' ministry contexts (e.g. urban, suburban, rural), limiting its ability to evidence progress against its Reach and Relationship objectives.

Action Point: With immediate effect, Proximity will update its booking forms to collect contextual information at registration. Two new questions will be added:

- A dropdown list of ministry-context options (City Centre, Inner City, Council Estate, Town/Suburban/Built-up, Rural — a simplified version of the categories used in national church-attendance statistics).
- A church postcode field, enabling future geo-mapping against the national Index of Multiple Deprivation.

These small changes will provide a reliable basis for analysing who Proximity is reaching and for demonstrating its contribution to strengthening ministry in the areas of greatest deprivation.

5. Resourcing: Equipping Leaders for Depth and Sustainability

From the very beginning, Proximity's purpose has not been simply to inspire leaders, but to resource them for the long haul. Three years into its work, this aim has been consistently fulfilled and refined. Participants describe leaving events not only refreshed, but practically equipped to sustain ministry in places where personal perseverance is often the greatest evidence of faith-in-action.

5.1 Spiritual and Emotional Renewal

Many leaders who attend Proximity events arrive weary. They carry the weight of complex communities, limited resources, and spiritual fatigue. The feedback repeatedly testifies that these gatherings provide more than a break — they offer encounter and restoration. "I came exhausted and questioning my calling," one participant shared, "but I'm leaving with a renewed sense of God's presence and purpose." Another wrote, "I've been in a dry season for a long time, and this retreat helped me drink deeply again."

Proximity's distinctive integration of worship, reflection, and honest conversation enables spiritual healing. Corporate worship is often cited as a highlight, particularly by leaders whose own church contexts lack this resource: "I don't have worship like this where I serve, and I badly needed it." Through prayer, stillness, and personal ministry, attendees find space to process discouragement and rediscover hope. One delegate reflected, "It's been a hard season of not seeing fruit. I leave reminded that God is at work even when I can't see it."

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For many, worship functions as a form of re-formation — moments when "God spoke clearly," "I felt peace for the first time in months," and "It was holy ground." In settings where local ministry often requires continual pouring out, this opportunity to receive becomes transformative. Worship reorients weary hearts, reminding leaders that they are loved before they are useful. "I remembered who I am, not just what I do," wrote one attendee.

This rhythm of sung worship, teaching, and reflection creates an ecosystem of renewal that participants describe as "restorative and empowering." It is no surprise that Proximity conferences are often remembered less for a particular speaker and more for its atmosphere of presence and peace — a lifeline that replenishes those serving in hard places.

5.2 Practical and Creative Equipping

Alongside spiritual renewal, Proximity has become a training ground for resilient practice. Its content balances theological depth with pragmatic tools. Leaders frequently praise the way teaching is "clear, relatable, and full of real-life examples," describing it as "accessible but not simplistic."

Feedback from seminars attendees shows that they resonated deeply with the content shared. One wrote that: "It gave me language for what I'm experiencing," another: "Now I can see a way forward in what God has put on my heart." Those who attended retreats spoke of concrete action emerging from reflection: "The retreat helped bring my floating ideas together into an actionable plan." It is clear therefore that leaders leave with renewed priorities, clearer rhythms, and practical commitments to rest, mentoring, and sabbath — habits often neglected under pressure.

At the conferences, the range of workshops allows for contextual equipping. Seminars and workshops have demonstrated a rich mix of content: theology, leadership, community development, and creativity. Attendees highlighted the depth and relevance of each theme — "nothing felt theoretical or detached." One group's testimony captures the practical nature of this equipping: "We left the art workshop inspired, and we're now painting a mural with our community." Another participant shared, "After the songwriting session, I'm writing songs for our local estate."

These stories illustrate that equipping at Proximity doesn't end at learning — it releases creativity into local action.

5.3 Authenticity and Shared Contribution

A defining characteristic of Proximity's teaching is honesty. Delegates respond not to polished performance but to the vulnerability and lived experience of the speakers. "The stories were real," said one, "not slick or overproduced." Speakers such as Sam Ward and Rachel Gardner are frequently praised for bringing "truth with tenderness" and for speaking from personal encounter rather than abstract principle. One participant observed, "It's the first time I've heard people talk about failure and fatigue as part of faithfulness."

This authenticity builds credibility, especially among practitioners who distrust language that feels detached from reality. Theological reflection at Proximity is both deep and earthy — “this is theology with its sleeves rolled up,” as one delegate expressed it. The tone is professional yet profoundly humble: leaders on the platform speak as fellow travellers rather than experts, closing the gap between stage and floor. This humility allows learning to flow both ways, dismantling the sense of hierarchy that often separates the “pro” from the practitioner.

**“This is theology
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That same spirit has begun to reshape how participants themselves engage. Increasingly, they are not only recipients of resources but contributors to them. Informal peer learning, prayer ministry, and story-sharing have become vital components of the experience. Attendees write of being “ministered to by each other,” “growing through shared experience,” and “encouraged by what others are doing.”

In this sense, Proximity functions less like a provider and more like a platform for mutual resourcing. Every story shared becomes someone else’s encouragement; every testimony a potential spark for innovation. As one attendee put it: “I came looking for answers, but I’m leaving with companions.”

5.4 Diversity and Representation: A Growing Awareness

Whilst overwhelmingly positive, feedback from the last two years shows that participants are thinking more critically about who they hear from and how their experiences are represented. One leader commented that a seminar team “maybe could have used a woman in the mix,” while another appreciated “the African point of view” brought by a guest speaker.

These insights reveal an expanding awareness among both organisers and attendees: Proximity’s strength lies in being a home for all who serve in hard places, and its voice becomes richer when that diversity is reflected on stage as well as in the seats. Likewise, sensitivity to language continues to evolve. A delegate noted that the phrase “by urban missionaries for urban missionaries,” though well-intentioned, “might have colonial connotations where I live.”

The willingness to name and learn from such feedback is a sign of maturity rather than fault — an example of Proximity modelling humility and responsiveness in leadership.

Summary

Proximity’s approach to resourcing is holistic. It integrates spiritual renewal, practical tools, creative expression, and authentic community. The result is not only revitalised leaders but downstream impact in their communities should be expected too. The data demonstrates that those who attend Proximity events return home with renewed faith, sustainable habits, and creative imagination for ministry. This fusion of the spiritual and the strategic remains Proximity’s hallmark: an environment where leaders are not just taught how to do more, but are reminded who they are and why it matters.

Recommendation: Track Stages of Ministry

The evaluation identified a gap in how Proximity tracks the stage of ministry of those it seeks to equip. The organisation’s Theory of Change and strategy both emphasise supporting and developing new leaders in urban and estates contexts, yet current booking systems do not capture data on whether participants are early, mid, or long-term in ministry. Without this information, it is not possible to assess whether Proximity is effectively reaching and resourcing the newer leaders it particularly hopes to serve.

Finding: Proximity does not systematically record the stage of ministry of its participants, limiting its ability to evidence progress against its goal of training and equipping new leaders.

Action Point: Proximity will update its booking forms to include the following question:

“What stage of ministry are you at?”

- Brand new to ministry (<1 year)
- Early in ministry (1–4 years)
- Established in ministry (5–10 years)
- Long-term ministry (>10 years)

Tracking this data will enable Proximity to monitor its reach over time, ensure its resourcing remains aligned with its strategic purpose, and adapt content to better serve leaders at different stages of experience.

6. Relationship: Building Belonging and Countering Isolation

Deepening relationship is at the heart of what Proximity is all about. Across every data set from 2023 to 2025, participants describe community, connection, and shared understanding as the most memorable and transformative aspects of their experience.

The evaluation makes it clear that Proximity is doing far more than hosting events — it is cultivating a relational movement where weary leaders rediscover not only God’s presence but also the strength of being part of a family.

6.1 From Isolation to Shared Identity

Urban and estates ministry can be profoundly isolating. Many leaders serve as the only minister, evangelist, or Christian witness in their neighbourhood, often “feeling invisible to the wider church” or “having no one who really gets the pressures of this work.” Within this reality, Proximity has become a lifeline of connection. Leaders consistently name the solidarity they find here as one of the network’s greatest gifts.

“Being with people who get it!!!” wrote one delegate, capturing a feeling echoed across hundreds of comments. Another said, “I left knowing I’m not the only one — and that changes everything.” These relationships often continue beyond the event, with participants keeping in touch, praying for one another, and sharing resources long afterwards. For some, Proximity is now their primary source of peer support.

“I left knowing I’m not the only one — and that changes everything.”

One of Proximity’s greatest strengths lies in fostering a shared identity among people whose contexts differ but whose challenges resonate. Leaders from Manchester, Glasgow, Belfast, and Bristol find instant understanding in one another’s stories. “I didn’t have to explain what it’s like to serve in a community that’s always in crisis,” one participant said. “Everyone in the room just knew.”

This shared identity affirms a vocation often misunderstood elsewhere. Many delegates describe relief at not having to justify their calling or defend the value of ministry in hard places. “Here,” one wrote, “no one asks if it’s working — they just ask how you are.” Such mutual empathy restores dignity and purpose, reminding leaders that their struggles are not personal failures but common realities of incarnational mission.

6.2 Depth of Connection

Proximity's approach to events intentionally creates time and space for meaningful relationships to form. Prayer in small groups, shared meals, unhurried conversations, and open evenings around worship all contribute to what one attendee called "the soaking effect of time out in great company." Moments of vulnerability are often cited as the most significant. "The time of sharing and praying for one another was what I'll remember most," wrote one delegate. "It was raw, safe, and deeply holy." Another described being "reaffirmed in my leadership and calling" through short words of prayer from peers.

These accounts highlight the spiritual reciprocity that defines the Proximity environment. Participants are both givers and receivers of grace, creating an atmosphere that one attendee described as "gentle, faithful, and faith-filled."

6.3 Hospitality and Servant Leadership

Hospitality has become one of the most visible expressions of relationship at Proximity. Whether through shared meals, thoughtful details, or the care shown by the team, participants consistently report feeling valued. "The hospitality was exceptional — everything was done with love and attention," wrote one delegate. Another reflected, "It wasn't just the teaching, it was the way we were looked after that made me feel seen."

Such intentionality carries theological weight. In a world that measures success by scale and efficiency, Proximity's model of hospitality communicates that people matter more than programmes. Even small gestures — covering the cost of a meal, preparing personalised notes of encouragement, or remembering a delegate's name — take on symbolic importance. They signal that this is a community of grace — both preached and practiced.

Behind this atmosphere of belonging is a team culture marked by humility and service. Feedback across all events describes staff and volunteers as "servant-hearted," "wholehearted," and "genuinely caring." Delegates notice not only the formal programme but the posture of those running it. "You can feel the team's love for what they do," one wrote. "They don't perform, they serve."

This humility closes the distance between organisers and participants, inviting imitation. Attendees mirror the same openness and care with each other, creating a ripple effect of generosity across the network. Proximity's leaders have, intentionally or not, modelled a quiet, relational authority that invites trust and reflects the servant-hearted character of the movement itself.

6.4 Sustaining Belonging as the Movement Grows

As the network grows, some of the challenges of scale are beginning to show. A few participants admitted feeling "a bit lost" or "on the edge" when attending large conferences for the first time, especially if they came alone. "It can feel like everyone already knows each other," one attendee noted, "and that's hard when you're new."

Far from undermining the relational culture, such comments highlight its value. Participants expect warmth and connection, so when it's not immediately experienced, they feel the absence keenly. Many offered constructive suggestions — from clearer welcome points to designated "happy to chat" tables — to help preserve the relational ethos as numbers increase.

Regional gatherings have become an important part of that solution, providing continuity of relationship and a more intimate setting where friendships can deepen. "It was just good to see people in my area doing the same kind of work — it keeps me going," said one participant. These smaller, localised connections help translate the encouragement of national events into everyday sustainability.

The relational network now functions as a distributed system of care — small communities of practitioners who understand each other’s world and hold one another in prayer. In this way, Proximity continues to grow without losing its character: remaining large enough to inspire, yet small enough to belong.

Summary

Through deliberate hospitality, spiritual vulnerability, and shared purpose, Proximity has cultivated a culture of belonging that directly addresses one of the most pressing needs in urban ministry — isolation. The evidence shows that leaders leave not just better equipped, but less alone. They gain peers, friends, and prayer partners who sustain them between events.

As one delegate beautifully expressed, “It’s not just what we learned, it’s who we met — that’s what will last.”

“It’s not just what we learned, it’s who we met — that’s what will last.”

Recommendation: Understanding and responding to Diversity

Participant feedback shows that Proximity’s events are valued by a diverse community of leaders, yet the organisation does not currently collect any demographic data to evidence this diversity or to identify potential gaps in reach. Booking and feedback forms do not ask participants to indicate their gender or ethnic background, which means Proximity cannot yet analyse whether certain groups are under-represented, experience its environments differently, or benefit in distinct ways.

Comments in the feedback reflect a growing awareness among participants themselves of these dynamics — including appreciation for hearing from women and leaders of colour, alongside encouragement for continued progress in representation. Collecting demographic data will enable the organisation to assess its inclusivity more systematically and ensure that the movement continues to reflect the breadth of the communities it serves.

Finding: Proximity does not currently collect data on gender or ethnicity, limiting its ability to monitor representation or assess whether its activities are equitably reaching and supporting diverse groups of leaders.

Action Point: Proximity should begin collecting demographic information on gender and ethnicity/nationality background through event booking and feedback forms. This data will:

- Identify whether men and women are being reached in comparable proportions and experiencing similar benefits;
- Reveal the extent of ethnic and cultural diversity among participants; and
- Support ongoing reflection on representation in speakers, content, and leadership.
- Embedding this practice will create a more robust foundation for tracking inclusivity, equity, and representation across all aspects of Proximity’s work.

7. Theological Reflections

7.1 Elijah and the Renewal of the Lonely Leader

(1 Kings 19)

The story of Elijah in 1 Kings 19 is one of the most vivid biblical portraits of vocational exhaustion. Having confronted the prophets of Baal and seen a dramatic display of divine power, Elijah immediately spirals into despair. He flees into the wilderness, sits under a broom tree, and says, “I have had enough, Lord.” This is not simply fatigue; it is the desolation of one who has given everything and can see no fruit for his labour.

In this story, God’s response is pastoral rather than corrective. The angel does not rebuke Elijah but attends to his physical and emotional needs: “Get up and eat, for the journey is too much for you.” Nourishment and rest precede any new instruction. Only later, on Mount Horeb, does Elijah encounter the “still small voice” — not in earthquake, wind, or fire, but in quiet presence. In that silence, Elijah learns that divine reassurance often comes not through spectacle but through intimacy. Finally, he is reminded that he is not alone: “I reserve seven thousand in Israel whose knees have not bowed to Baal.” The revelation of many faithful companions restores his perspective and precedes a renewed commission.

This narrative maps closely onto the experiences voiced by many Proximity participants. Leaders described coming to retreats and conferences “weary,” “questioning my calling,” or “feeling invisible to the wider church.” The evaluation notes that isolation remains one of the greatest challenges of ministry in deprived areas, and that Proximity “effectively counters that loneliness by creating a sense of family among peers who get it.”

Like Elijah, these leaders found space to stop, receive nourishment, and hear again the clear voice of God. The shared worship, hospitality, and prayer mirrored the angel’s ministry — simple acts of grace that renew strength for the road ahead. The recognition that “I am not the only one” echoed Elijah’s discovery of the seven thousand: a rediscovery of solidarity that transforms despair into courage.

In this light, Proximity can be seen as a modern Mount Horeb — a place where weary prophets and practitioners encounter God’s quiet affirmation, rediscover community, and are sent out again with fresh purpose. Theologically, the movement embodies a ministry of restoration: not triumphalist renewal, but the patient reweaving of hope among those who labour in hard places.

7.2 Barnabas and the Ministry of Encouragement

(Acts 4:36; 11:19–26; 15:36–39)

If Elijah’s story speaks to the *receiving* of encouragement, then Barnabas’s story shows the *giving* of it. Described as “a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith,” Barnabas becomes known not for dramatic miracles but for the quiet, steady work of building others up. When the early church in Jerusalem hears rumours of faith breaking out in Antioch, they send Barnabas to see what is happening. His response is telling: “*When he saw the grace of God, he was glad, and he encouraged them all to remain true to the Lord with steadfast purpose*” (Acts 11:23).

Barnabas notices grace. He affirms it, celebrates it, and strengthens it. This ministry of encouragement creates space for others to flourish — most famously in his advocacy for Saul of Tarsus, whom he brings to the Apostles when others are afraid, and later in his determination to give John Mark another chance after failure. His instinct is always restorative rather than judgmental.

This same spirit is evident in the leadership culture of Proximity. Participants consistently describe a team that leads with humility and encouragement. One delegate observed, “*You can feel the team’s love for what they do — they don’t perform, they serve.*” Another said, “*It wasn’t just the teaching; it was the way we were looked after that made me feel seen.*”

Such feedback captures the essence of Barnabas’s ministry — leadership expressed not through control but through affirmation, hospitality, and faith in what God is doing in others.

In theological terms, Proximity models the spiritual gift modelled by Barnabas: a ministry that calls forth courage in others. By recognising grace in weary leaders and reminding them of their value, the Proximity team mirrors the New Testament pattern of encouragement that strengthens the Church’s witness. This is not mere morale-boosting; it is *pneumatological* — a work of the Spirit who builds up the Body.

Where Elijah’s narrative reminds us that God meets the isolated leader, Barnabas reminds us that God sends encouragers to sustain the community. Together, they suggest that Proximity’s impact lies not only in *what it teaches* but in the *way it relates* — as a fellowship of restoration and encouragement in which those involved in challenging forms of ministry can be renewed.

7.3 Early Church Diversity: Unity Amid Difference

(Acts 10–15; Gal 3:28)

The earliest Christian communities were born into the tension of difference. What began as a movement within Judaism soon found itself confronting questions of identity, culture, and inclusion: Who belongs at the table of Christ?

In Acts 10, Peter’s vision and his encounter with Cornelius reveal that the gospel is not bounded by ethnicity or tradition. The Spirit falls on Gentiles as on Jews, overturning assumptions about purity and belonging. By Acts 15, the Jerusalem Council must face the implications of this new reality: can people who eat differently, pray differently, and come from different worlds still be one body in Christ? Paul’s later words to the Galatians crystallise this revolutionary truth — “There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”

This is not a statement of uniformity but of unity through difference. The gospel does not erase our particularities; it sanctifies them within a shared identity in Christ. Yet, as the New Testament letters attest, learning to live this out has always been difficult. The early church continually wrestled with whose voices were heard, whose needs were met, and how to make room for the Other without losing its distinctiveness.

In the feedback gathered from Proximity events, we hear an echo of that same tension. Participants deeply appreciated the authenticity, worship, and sense of family — but a few also noticed who was not in the room, or who was less represented on the platform. Some asked for “a woman in the mix,” others valued “hearing from an African perspective.” These are not complaints; they are invitations. They reveal a longing for the table of fellowship to widen — for the diversity already present in urban and estates ministry to be more visible within Proximity’s gatherings and leadership.

Theologically, this can be seen as the Spirit’s prompting toward completeness. The same Spirit who pushed the early church beyond its cultural comfort zones continues to call the modern church to fuller representation of Christ’s body. To hear and respond to these voices is not to dilute the evangelical core of Proximity but to deepen it — to embody more fully the gospel of reconciliation it proclaims.

Proximity’s ethos of hospitality, humility, and relational learning already provides fertile ground for this growth. The challenge and opportunity ahead is to ensure that its welcome reflects the breadth of the world it serves: male and female, white and non-white, evangelical and also potentially from other streams of the church too — all discovering together that they are one in Christ.

8. Learning and Development: Insights to Consider

The evaluation evidence portrays an organisation that is maturing through reflection. Proximity is learning to listen to its participants, and learning how to grow whilst remaining faithful to its founding ethos. The feedback gathered between 2023 and 2025 demonstrates a community sharpening itself in pursuit of greater inclusion, clarity, and sustainability.

The learning emerging from this period can be grouped into three distinct themes.

- 8.1 Events culture
- 8.2 Supportive technology
- 8.3 Strategic scaling

8.1 Events Culture

8.1a Intentional Inclusion and Belonging

As attendance grows, Proximity is navigating the tension between intimacy and reach. The very qualities that make it special — familiarity, warmth, vulnerability — can be hard to replicate in a crowd. Of course, this is more evident at large conferences than at smaller retreats. A few delegates, especially those attending alone, admitted feeling “a bit on the outside at first” or “as though everyone already knew each other.”

Rather than being critical, such reflections show how much belonging matters to participants; they expect it. Constructive suggestions appeared on feedback forms, including “happy-to-chat” tables, visible welcome hosts, and intentional introductions for newcomers. What is emerging is a call to make hospitality more intentional — to turn what began as spontaneous warmth into planned practice.

Together, this feedback highlights a movement learning how to grow without losing its hallmark relational depth — ensuring that belonging remains both the entry point and the outcome of every encounter.

8.1b Representation and Language

That a conversation around representation and language is starting to emerge should not be seen as a negative. Some participants have articulated the need for the platform to mirror the people it serves. Comments such as “maybe a woman in the mix would have been good” or appreciation for “hearing from an African perspective” reveal an appetite for broader representation across gender, ethnicity, and class.

Language awareness is also evolving. The reflection that a strapline like “by urban missionaries for urban missionaries” might carry colonial connotations in some contexts was offered respectfully, signalling a shared desire to embody the gospel with cultural sensitivity.

These exchanges reveal a movement growing in self-awareness, unafraid to examine its practices in light of the communities it serves. Diversity and inclusion are therefore not separate goals but expressions of the same relational hospitality that defines Proximity’s ethos — a reminder that voice and belonging are inseparable.

8.1c Consistency and Context in National Delivery

As Proximity’s reach extends, the question of how to reproduce its distinctive atmosphere outside Manchester has become increasingly important. The ‘vibe’ of a Proximity gathering — its warmth, attentiveness, and mix of humility and excellence — is one of the qualities participants most frequently celebrate. Maintaining that ethos in venues and regions far from home presents both a challenge and an opportunity.

Feedback from recent regional events suggests that participants notice and value the same hallmarks of hospitality wherever they are encountered. “It felt just like being at the main conference,” said one

attendee, “only closer to home.” Others commented that smaller local events helped them feel part of the movement even when travel or cost might have excluded them from national gatherings. Leaders in southern England expressed longing for retreats “closer to home — Bristol, Southampton, Bournemouth.” Regional evenings show that smaller, localised events can successfully translate Proximity’s ethos without losing intimacy. Scaling this model could reduce travel costs, foster ongoing peer support, and embed Proximity’s values within local networks across the UK. As one delegate summarised, “We don’t need bigger events — we need more of this, everywhere.”

Ensuring this consistency will require attention to content and to environment. Yet whilst layout, lighting, sound etc. all contribute, particularly in unfamiliar or borrowed venues, it is the team hosting that plays the crucial part in translating the Proximity ethos for each local context. In this sense, expansion is less about duplication and more about incarnation — carrying the same relational DNA into different places so that the movement’s hospitality feels authentic everywhere it goes.

8.2 Supportive Technologies

8.2a Enhancing Event Communication

High expectations are themselves a form of praise. When participants ask for “clearer advance information,” “PA support in crowded rooms,” or “more notice of schedules,” it is because they trust the organisers and value the experience. The events are already delivered to a high standard; these details represent opportunities to remove friction so that the focus remains on spiritual and relational encounter. One delegate put it well: “Everything was brilliant — I just wanted to relax into it sooner.”

To make information clearer and more consistent across different locations, Proximity could explore adopting a simple event-management app such as Whova, EventMobi, or Grip. These platforms allow delegates to access schedules, speaker details, maps, and updates in one place, while offering interactive tools like notes, messaging, and polls. Introducing an accessible, branded version of such a tool would reduce confusion, ease administrative load, and help participants feel informed and at ease before they even arrive — particularly at regional venues where the surroundings are less familiar.

8.2b Integrating Digital and Live Resources

During this evaluation period, Proximity’s digital presence has grown rapidly, particularly over the past year. Although participant feedback has focused mainly on in-person experiences, it is clear that the digital platform is becoming an increasingly significant part of the movement’s ecosystem. The challenge ahead is not to produce simply more digital content but to ensure that the live and online resources operate in harmony rather than as separate silos.

Across all events, participants repeatedly asked whether sessions could be recorded or resources shared online so that “we could benefit from all of them later.” This desire points to the potential for stronger links between what happens in the room and what is shared online — enabling learning to continue and multiply beyond the event itself.

In practical terms, this means developing clearer pathways between the live and online dimensions of Proximity’s work: cross-referencing themes, sharing testimonies across both spaces, and ensuring that digital storytelling reflects the same tone of authenticity and hospitality that defines the in-person experience. Over time, this integration could strengthen both sides of the movement — making the digital platform an extension of community rather than a parallel track.

8.2c Better Data Handling for Growth and Reporting

To sustain growth and ensure robust evidence of impact, Proximity should consider investing in a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system. Such a system could bring together participant, church or organisation, and event data; support longitudinal tracking of engagement; and provide a secure foundation for future communication and evaluation.

One of the most significant benefits of a CRM would be its ability to enhance quarterly reporting and strategic reflection. Instead of data being drawn manually from multiple booking systems and spreadsheets, accurate and up-to-date information on attendance, geography, and engagement would be available at the fingertips of the leadership team. This would enable faster insight, stronger evidence for funders and partners, and a clearer picture of how the movement is developing over time.

By improving data flow and transparency, a CRM would effectively strengthen Proximity's learning culture — making reflection easier, evaluation more robust, and decision-making better informed. In this way, technology becomes a generator of insight, helping the organisation listen not only to its participants but also to itself.

8.3 Strategic Scaling

8.3a Listening, Trust and Growth

Another significant learning is meta-level: Proximity grows because people trust it — and that trust is sustained by listening. Feedback is honest precisely because participants believe they will be heard. The organisation has created a culture where critique is contribution — an expression of belonging, not distance.

This trust is not incidental; it is formative. By consistently acting on what it hears, Proximity reinforces the message that every participant's voice matters. Over time, this mutual respect has become one of the movement's strongest assets: people are drawn to a community that listens, learns, and evolves with integrity. As trust deepens, participation expands, creating a virtuous circle in which feedback, responsiveness, and growth continually reinforce one another.

In practical terms, this means Proximity must maintain a feedback loop robust enough to function as part of its development process. Listening well has to become one a formative discipline — not simply a management technique — a cultural commitment to humility and learning. This ability to adapt while staying anchored is a hallmark of mature movements.

8.3b Sustaining Growth with Structure and Spirit

As the movement continues to grow, the challenge is not only to listen well but to organise well. Proximity's success now depends on embedding structures that protect its relational depth while enabling wider reach and coordination. The task is to create systems that serve people — not the other way around.

This next stage of development will require clarity around leadership roles, strengthened collaboration through the Advisory Group and Associates model, and intentional mechanisms for accountability and shared decision-making. These frameworks need not formalise what has been organic; rather, they can provide scaffolding for the values that already define the movement — hospitality, humility, and responsiveness.

In this sense, structure becomes a servant of spirit. By combining relational trust with organisational coherence, Proximity can remain agile enough to respond to local contexts yet stable enough to sustain national growth. The goal is not growth for its own sake, but to reach further whilst growing deeper — a movement expanding in size without losing its soul.

9. Conclusion: Overall Impact

Across three years of consistent evidence, one truth has become clear: Proximity is making a transformative and enduring impact on leaders serving in some of the UK's most demanding ministry contexts. Its contribution cannot be reduced to a single output or event. Rather, it lies in the cumulative, layered effect of creating spaces where renewal, equipping, and belonging converge — spaces where tired leaders become hopeful again.

9.1 A Movement of Restoration and Resilience

At its heart, Proximity has functioned as a movement of restoration. The feedback reveals lives rekindled, vocations reaffirmed, and ministries sustained. “I came weary and I’m leaving full,” one participant wrote; another said, “This has restored my joy in ministry.”

“This has restored my joy in ministry.”

These are not isolated sentiments — they represent a consistent pattern across hundreds of responses. By placing spiritual encounter at the centre of leadership development, Proximity has helped to reframe what effective resourcing looks like. It has demonstrated that formation in hard places cannot be merely strategic; it must be deeply spiritual.

The result is a growing network of resilient leaders who stay faithful to their callings with renewed energy and hope — men and women who return to their communities confident once again that God is at work, even in the hardest places.

9.2 Shared Identity and Collective Vocation

Through its conferences, retreats, and regional gatherings, Proximity has created a community of recognition — a network where leaders know they are seen, understood, and valued. The relational ecosystem that has developed is one of its most significant legacies. Many delegates described Proximity as “the only place I feel understood” or “the only external input I prioritise each year.”

This shared identity — among practitioners who often feel peripheral to mainstream church life — has given rise to a renewed sense of collective vocation. In knowing one another, participants rediscover who they are in God and what they are called to do together. Belonging has become both the context and the fruit of this movement: a family of practitioners embodying hope in places of struggle.

9.3 Moving From Inspiration to Legacy

Proximity's strategy is clearly being translated into concrete action. From art murals to songwriting, from renewed ministry rhythms to community initiatives, the evidence shows that inspiration leads to tangible change. “We’re painting a mural with our neighbours now,” one leader wrote, “because of what we experienced here.”

This creativity is matched by sustainability. Leaders report leaving with better boundaries, practical strategies, and renewed discipline in rest and sabbath. The ripple effects extend beyond individuals to congregations and communities that benefit from healthier, more resilient leadership.

At the same time, Proximity's enduring legacy is likely to lie in its capacity to learn, not just teach. Over this evaluation period, it has begun to make progress from pioneering enthusiasm toward reflective maturity. Participants' voices have helped shape improvements in communication, diversity, accessibility, and structure. This responsiveness — listening without defensiveness, adapting without losing authenticity — is a vital but rare quality in any movement.

By embodying humility and curiosity, Proximity models the very kind of leadership it seeks to nurture: grounded, reflective, and open to the Spirit's correction and creativity.

9.4 Looking Ahead

The findings suggest that Proximity stands at an important point in its story. Its reach is expanding, its influence deepening, and its reputation growing. The opportunity ahead is not simply to do more, but to embed its distinctives as it scales — intimacy, authenticity, and encounter.

The recommended and priorities highlighted in this evaluation, such as expanding regionally, widening representation, and developing digital access, align closely with the organisation's forward plan as set out in its most recent progress reports. They support a clear direction of travel: consolidating depth while extending reach and improving impact-measurement processes.

In evaluative terms, Proximity's cumulative impact is profound:

- Spiritually, it renews faith, restores joy, and reaffirms calling.
- Practically, it equips leaders with tools and habits for longevity.
- Relationally, it dismantles isolation and builds belonging.
- Strategically, it strengthens the church's witness in the places of greatest need.

The result is a movement that is faithfully strengthening the spiritual architecture of the nation's urban mission landscape. Proximity's true legacy will not be measured in attendance figures or programme outputs, but in the endurance of the leaders it sustains — men and women who return to their communities renewed, confident, and convinced once again that light still shines in hard places.

As one conference participant wrote, "Every year, I see more people find hope again. Please keep doing this — we need it."

**"Every year,
I see more people
find hope again.
Please keep doing
this - we need it."**

