



“Enabling women to prepare for ministerial training so they can engage and flourish as Ministers in Training.”

Project Violet Research Report

Part One - Initial Findings

Rev Helen Stokley

Note to the reader:

This report has been written as I have processed the data to help understand and process what I believe I have heard in the research. The format of this report would need to change and/or be shortened/focussed should it be shared outside the Project Violet group, as it is too long and would need to be tailored to the specific audience. I did not shorten it for you, as I believe it would have meant missing out on important details within the research.

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Introduction

This report is designed to document the process, results and reflections of my research report which had as its original title:

“Enabling women to prepare for ministerial training so they can engage and flourish as Ministers in Training.”

In order to understand the context of the researcher and the research, I have firstly included a short reflection (researcher personal reflection) which was written before the research began. I have then explained who the participants were, the survey findings, the initial discussion, points for action, limitations and finally acknowledge those who have helped in this piece of research.

Researcher personal reflection

As the researcher I find myself at the centre of this research. Firstly, as someone who has trained for Baptist ministry I have experienced the process. Secondly, since Jan 2014 I have worked at Spurgeon's College and have observed other students going through the process. I hope this reflection not only accurately documents my experience but raises questions for further reflection, which I partly explore in the survey I commission.

Since January 2014, I have been working at Spurgeon's College. Included in my role has been

- the oversight of the finance department and of the financial processes and procedures of the College
- interviewing all Baptist ministerial candidates
- Chairing the bursary and grants committees
- Leading pastoral groups (each minister is assigned 10 students to look after through their training).
- Chasing student debt
- Providing and organising emergency help, be it financial, pastoral or practical

Alongside this, I have been on the Senior Management Team and I was Head of Institute for 18 months (during the time when the College was without a principal). I therefore have been involved in nearly every aspect of the College. I meet fortnightly with the student representatives, as well as operating an open-door policy and therefore regularly speak to the students.

Each year Spurgeon's College trains over 50% of the new Baptist Ministers who join the accredited list of the Baptist Union of Great Britain and therefore in my 8.5 years I have seen a few hundred Baptist Ministers trained in the College.

Over this time, I believe I have noticed some repeating patterns and this reflection is designed to document them and explain my motivation for conducting the Project Violet Survey.

This reflection is concentrated on the areas where I believe further reflection on practice is needed both by myself and the wider Baptist eco system in which I operate. I acknowledge that I have actively been part of the system which leads to some of the experiences documented later. Seeing / hearing stories has led me to reflect about the nature of this system, the impact on trainee Baptist ministers and to begin to question how processes may be improved. I suggest I will be part of the problem and hope that I can be part of the solution.

This reflection is not just designed to stimulate others to think, but to challenge myself to think, reflect and change my own practices and the practices of the College.

I can only reflect on what I know and therefore, the reflection below is located at Spurgeon's College.

Spurgeon's College meets the student

A potential Baptist Minister most likely first encounters the College either in a conversation with the admissions/placement department and on an interview day. The day is essentially designed to ascertain whether the prospective student can study at the College. The discernment process (to follow the call to be a Baptist Minister) may have already happened at Ministerial Recognition Committee or Residential Selection Committee, or the student is beginning their journey of studying theology and later decides to test the call to Baptist Ministry. Either way they end the College course with a commendation, to settle in a missional context as a Baptist Minister.

The interview day is busy, amongst many other interviews a finance interview takes place, where a student has had the chance before the interview to discuss how they intend to fund their time at college. Information is exchanged about bursaries, student discounts, grants and government funding. Invariably the student's concentration is concern that they get a place at Spurgeon's College. In fact, I often have to explain why they are even talking to me for 20 minutes. I have encountered a good few people who thought it was not really my business to ask them about their personal finances.

In these interviews, I have heard everything from I have no money and no idea how I will pay the course fees, to someone who has the money in the bank account and is ready to pay the course fees today. In between there have been lots of variations on a theme interspersed with bursts of theology. Interviewees often boldly assert that God will provide, as they are called and therefore as a college, we need not worry how they will pay their fees. They may look at me a bit strangely when I suggest we might still need a conversation. Drawing on my own experience I recount how I came to the college to train for Baptist Ministry not being a hundred percent clear on how I would pay the fees, but I still needed to plan.

As I go through the reality of the situation, carefully explaining the fees, costs and asking them to reflect on their income and expenditure, there is often shock or

sudden anxiety. They had not considered this part of the journey to becoming an accredited Baptist Minister.

Frequently they tell me how someone had told them the fees would get sorted and they don't need to worry. I have to help them own the reality that they will be the ones sorting out the payment of the fees.

For some people the sentiment seems to be that because God has called them, they did not need to worry about minor matters like fees, or travel expenses or where they would stay if they were coming to the college for two days.

They are often excited and relieved that their call has been recognised and therefore with a strengthened sense of faith then feel: should not then God provide?

On occasions I have been so concerned by what I am told the person's "the financial plan" is, that we talk longer with the student, or we have even gone back to the Baptist regional association and asked whether they really understood the person's financial position when sending the student to be trained for Baptist ministry. I realise this seems all about the money, but the reality is, we are called to steward the College well and everyone can't train for free otherwise we would go bankrupt. The answer from most people is always that we should not be limiting the call of God on people's lives by asking about the finances. Again, the sentiment is that if God has called, he will provide. Surely that's reasonable?

Sometimes I have rang the Baptist Union Ministries Department and told them a story anonymously about a potential student and asked whether we really wanted the students to embark on training under such precarious conditions. The immediate answer is always one of concern and not wanting to let the students get into debt, especially as they might make themselves unable to be a trustee of a charity if they got into serious problems. It was clear the ministries department don't want students to suffer or get into debt. They are part of the team doing their best. I come off the call with a clear understanding that there is concern. However, being able to pay your fees or not is not a bar on entry to being a Baptist Minister or training for Baptist Ministry at Spurgeon's College. Indeed, the founder of Spurgeon's College, Charles Haddon Spurgeon himself said asserted that the cost of the fees should not be a barrier to training.

The College admissions department cannot refuse students on a judgement call that someone's finances are "precarious" It doesn't exactly speak of stepping out in faith. The associations have already affirmed the call, via MRC it is clear that the person is called. I sit there in the interview listening to the student knowing that I will be trying to sort this out in six months' time.

As I reflect about the process when I trained as a Baptist Minister, I remember I had to go through a credit check and fill out a finance form for MRC, which was then reviewed by a financial advisor. This was not done because of the cost of training, but a requirement of the then pension provider who wanted the check done to join the pension scheme. This naturally provided a time for financial reflection for prospective students. That check was removed in 2013/14 – I would very much like it

to be brought back, so at least reflection on the issue of finance could begin a little earlier.

At the end of an interview day I have given out the information about fees and bursaries. I think the student understands the cost. I have possibly made them think a little further. Finances will not now be discussed again until orientation week. I feel concerned for some of them. I find myself reflecting their must surely be a better way!

Myself and my husband took part in a couples seminar before College started talking about being a ministers wife, a ministers husband, being in ministry together. The day was so complicated to arrange, we had no funding, we had no funds to offer childcare. Some people couldn't even come because of the travel costs.

Orientation week

Orientation week begins and the students find themselves in the “the finance” seminar. Here we spend an hour talking more about

- how they can manage their finances,
- fundraising about student discounts,
- student loans,
- payment plans
what to do if they are struggling.

Students report this is helpful. I often reflect that I am normally only talking to half the household and the person I am talking to might not even be the one that “is responsible for looking after the money” at home.

The students then have a finance interview with my colleagues from our finance department to work out their payment plan. This is so they can spread their fees over the year. By this time, the student has often moved house into a manse and started in a placement church. Life is busy, College is exciting, and the call is being further affirmed. Finances are often the “nonspiritual bit” of the week – something to get out of the way. And so there is a short interaction between me and the student, once again about finances.

Invariably someone is not there, or only there for a part of it – live, family, plans get in the way.

College begins, students are busy, classes are taking place, – maybe away from home staying over every week, family routines interrupted and reshaped.

If there is family, we often haven't met them, and they remain there, but not seen.

Ministry training

And so the student has made it to College. Many settles in well and get used to the new routine. However, this is not always the case. Here are just a few examples of scenarios that have come to me.

A student can't afford the train fare to College so walks over 10 miles to College.

My question – why did we not know this before the student started?

A student rings and tells me they can never make an 8.30 lecture as they have to drop their children off to school. After a number of conversations, the next door neighbours are willing to help and take the child to school.

My question – why did we not help the student plan their studies in the context of their life before they started?

A student walks into my office with cash having just taken a loan from a pay day lender to pay their first instalment of fees. I spend time with them and we give the money back to the pay day lender and try and find another way around this. We find a solution.

*My question – why an earth are people having to go to these lengths to pay fees?
Why wasn't this situation anticipated by us?*

A student is referred to me by another staff member for a conversation as they literally keep falling asleep in lectures. The student is having to work nights as their church doesn't pay a full stipend. They are tired and didn't want to tell anyone.

*My question – why an earth are people having to go to these lengths to pay fees?
Why wasn't this situation anticipated by us?*

A student confides in me that they cannot buy their children Christmas presents – I discreetly tell the staff and money is found to buy the children presents.

My question – this student obviously didn't have enough money from the start, where was our opportunity to prevent this?

Food keeps going missing from the café. I can't work it out, but we start a scheme so that students can buy a meal voucher for a meal and put it on a communal noticeboard, and anyone can take one, no questions asked. The missing food problem stops.

My question – who an earth is so desperate they are stealing food? I need to find this student (to help them) – why are we in this situation?

A student applied to student finance (SLC) thinking they can get a loan and find out in year one that as they have done a little study before (but dropped out) they can't get a loan again in year one. No one knows about this as the previous qualification wasn't completed and doesn't show up on application. I now have a student standing in front of me who has moved house to a placement church, moved their family and has nothing to live on as they won't get maintenance money and can't pay their fees. I find some money, from somewhere.

My question – how did we not know this?

There are many stories, the reader may know some, these are all I can share.

All of the stories above are about women.

How can women thrive, engage and flourish with all this going on?

Is there a better way?

So I reflect, I cannot conjure up any more money, I've literally exhausted all contacts, favour and all kinds of weird and wonderful things to solve individual problems. I keep doing this though and as I write this now, a ministerial training student is just on the edge of leaving training as I literally can't find any more money. The problem has not gone away. I know I need to be solutions focused, that's what people listen to.

So in September 2020, in the pandemic, an unusual opportunity appears, I receive an email from a very good friend, he tells me that the new CEO of Kingdom Bank, Paul Houghton is about to start his new role and the board are putting together a list of leaders in the UK for him to meet, my names on the list, because of what I did in Christian business before College— so I meet Paul on zoom, I have 30 minutes, he wants to know what he should do to increase the banks reach and to help the UK church. So, unplanned I tell him— that he needs to set up a student loan scheme alternative to the student loans company, so that regardless of a student's situation they can get access to finance to go through College. I know this is not ideal, as they still have to take a loan, but it must be better than the present situation. I give him the potential business model. I tell Philip what happened. I have literally no idea what happens next. I then hear the idea has been proposed at BU council and I am then invited to join a team to consult about a new partnership between the BU and Kingdom Bank. Kingdom Bank then ask me to review a scheme for all Bible Colleges separately which I do. The scheme goes live Sept 2022

My reflection about the Kingdom Bank story is, this is not a great story to tell (and only two or three people know that story about my conversation with Paul) – it's not a great story to tell because although I am very grateful to Paul for running with the idea and setting up a new department in Kingdom Bank, this is still a bit of a sticking plaster and it may not even really work for a whole host of reasons.

How can we enable all students to thrive if we have such fundamental finance issues?

How can we enable women ministers in particular to thrive if we have so many fundamental finance issues.

I note for this report that my reflection is mostly finance based, but the time and the family issues I see, often have finance sitting somewhere behind them, maybe initially hidden, but it's there.

So, I meet Jane and Helen one day in an introductory meeting with Spurgeon's senior management team and they ask about what might be an issue or something

the College could research and I casually say – someone needs to look at the time before students come to College and work out if there is a better way to equip students so that they can thrive through their time at College. I am thinking in terms of finance, time and family. I see the problems, we can't fix them all, but there must be a better way!

The survey

And so, this research begins. I decide to try and maximise the opportunity, so why not see if my small observations and my reflections are the wider experience. Listening may open up possibilities for solutions. Some concentrated effort on this, might produce more opportunities to find solutions.

I therefore create a survey.

An online survey, using Survey Monkey, ran from 22nd July 2022 to 12th August 2022. It consisted of seven consent questions and 26 survey questions, six of which were open questions where the participants were invited to describe their experience. Demographic data, marital status, carer status and professional information relating to Baptist ministry was collected. Participants were allowed to withdraw from the survey up until 12th August when the data analysis began.

The survey was advertised on social media (facebook) by myself, Baptists Together, UK Baptist Women in Ministry, the London Baptists. It was sent directly by email to all accredited Baptist Ministers by Baptists Together, it was featured in a Faith and Society email. All Baptists Colleges (England, Wales and Scotland) were sent the survey to forward on to their Baptist ministerial students.

Participants

114 unique individual responses were captured by Survey Monkey. 38 surveys were rejected and removed from the research. Of the 38 rejected surveys, 31 had no survey responses and the participants had only completed the consent pages and without completing the survey any further. The remaining seven surveys had ad hoc partial answers and no quantitative data as the participant had stopped completing the survey before Part 3. 76 participants have therefore been used for the data analysis. These 76 participants wrote over 13,000 words in free text boxes, often not just answering the question but documenting their experience and how they felt about it.

Survey findings

Participant demographics

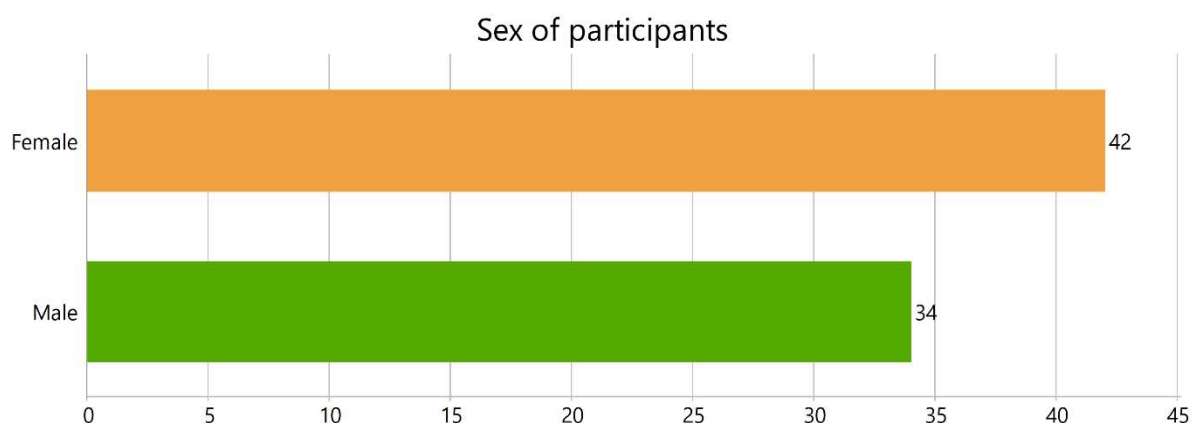
The 76 participants responded in just over three weeks. This rate of response suggests that the survey topic was at some level relevant to the survey population. Indeed, people were still asking to complete the survey after the closing date.

It took, the participants on average nine minutes to complete the survey. Fifty-five of the responses were received within the first twelve hours of the survey going live.

The survey captured the demographic data in the areas of sex, age ... etc.

Sex of the participants

The survey contained the question: **What is your gender?** This was a free text answer so that the participants could decide how to answer that question. Following the release of the survey, a participant pointed out to me that the question should have said what is your sex? I think this is a noteworthy point and therefore I have reported my results using the language of sex. Either way, everyone wrote male or female, as shown below:

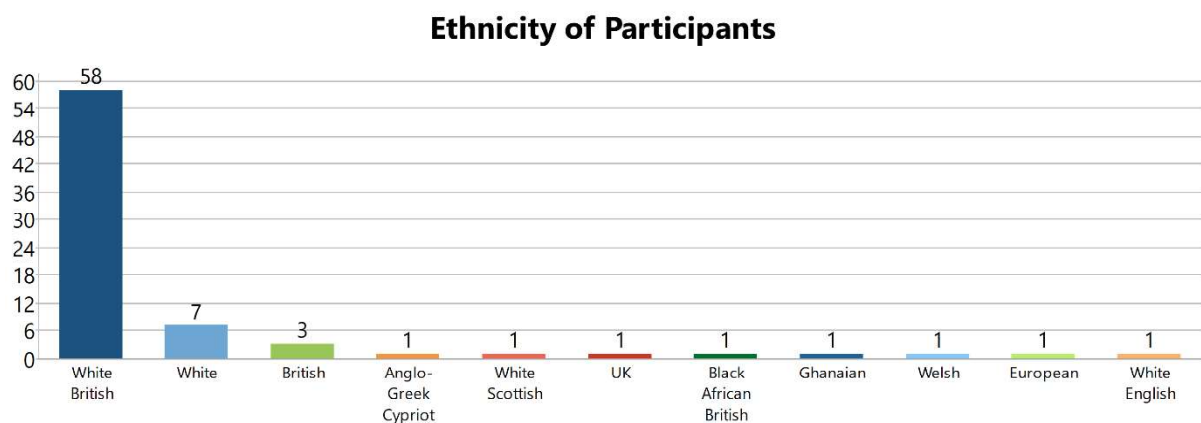


I captured this data so that the answers to the questions can be analysed to see whether the sex of the participant is affecting their answer and experience.

It is not surprising that more women than men completed the survey as the researcher is female and the umbrella project (Project Violet) is concentrating on the experience of women. It is positive however that 44% (34) participants identified as male, which has meant that there has been opportunity to compare if the sex of the participants affects the participants answers and in turn their experience.

Ethnicity

The survey contained the question: **What is your ethnicity?** This was a free text answer so that the participants could decide how to self-identify. The results are below. Due to the results below, it provides limited opportunity to compare experiences in the data by ethnicity. I was not able to access ethnicity data from the Baptist Union, so I do not know how this compares with the result of 76% of participants self-identifying as White British.



What is your age?

The survey contained the question: **What is your age?** And offered 7 options. Four of the options received no response. They were:

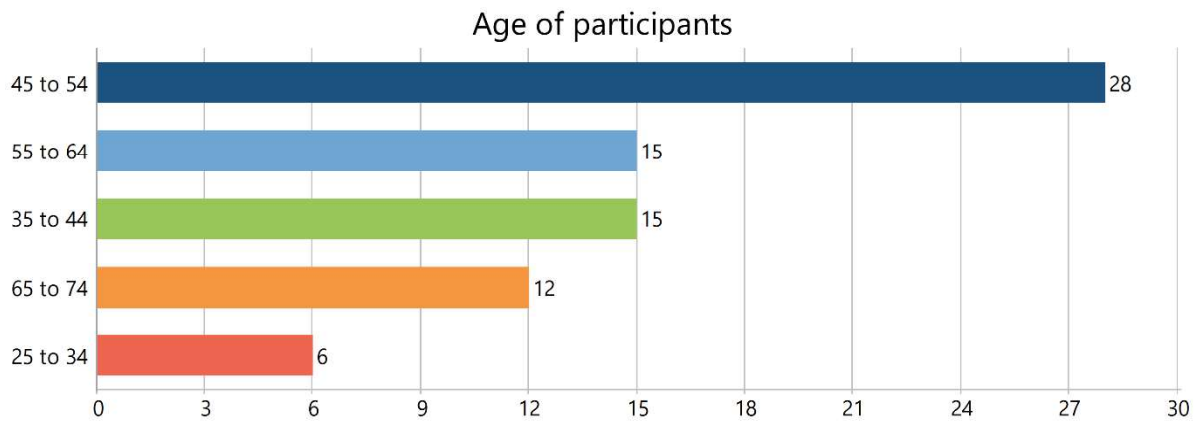
18 to 24

55 to 64

65 to 74

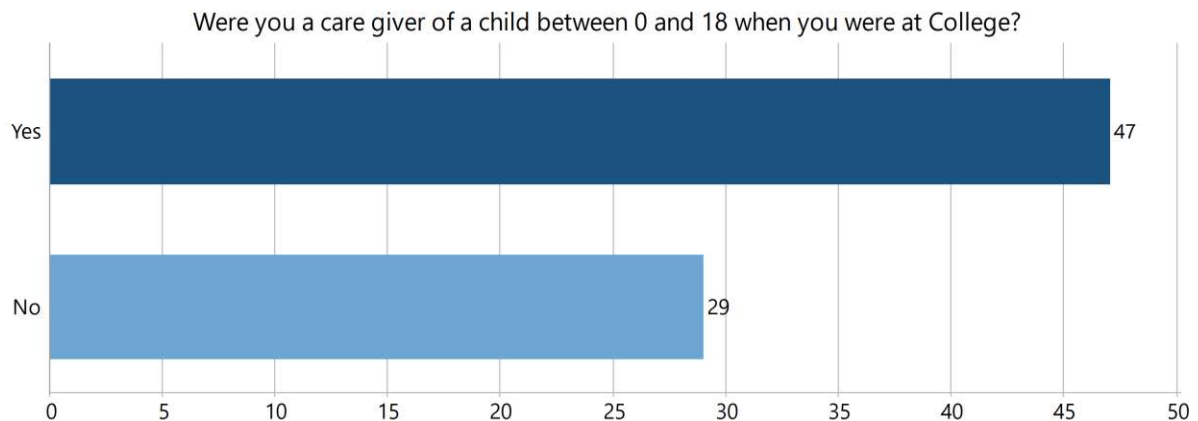
75 or older

The majority of the survey participants, 36%, identified as 45 to 54. Capturing this data potentially allows further research into how age may affect the answers given by participants.



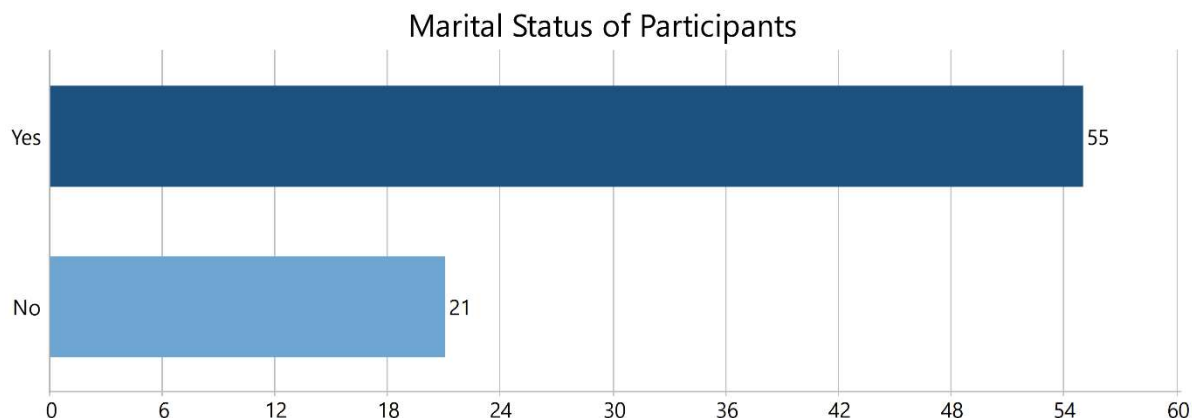
Were you a care giver for a child between 0 and 18 years when you were at College?

The survey contained the question: **Were you a care giver for a child between 0 and 18 years when you were at College?** As part of this research is targeted around the subject of the family, it was important to understand whether the participants had caring responsibilities. This provides rich data to understand how the presence of children may affect the participants answers. 62% were a caregiver when they were at College.



The survey contained the question: When you started training were you married?

This question was included to help understand the setting the participant was in when they started College. This provides opportunity to explore how marital status has affected the participants answers.



What year did you start training at a Baptist College?

The survey contained the question: **What year did you start training at a Baptist College?**

This question was included to offer opportunity to explore whether experiences has changed over time. The participants were given a free text box to put the year of study in. I have collated this into decades for ease of reporting at this stage.

67% (51) of participants who responded entered College in or since 2010, it would be interesting to explore why this is.



What year was your call recognised by a Ministerial Recognition Committee or equivalent?

The survey contained the question: **What year was your call recognised by a Ministerial Recognition Committee or equivalent?** This question was used to check the data, to ascertain whether the participant entered the College process having already had their call recognised by the Ministerial Recognition Committee, so as to check that the participants fitted the original survey criteria. Analysis of this has confirmed that all 76 did fit the criteria.

Open answer questions

The survey contained seven open answer (qualitative) questions which were accompanied by related closed answer questions to help provide further insights in the open answer questions.

The structure of this part of the survey was as follows:

Survey Section	Open Question	Closed question	Open question
Finance	1. Please describe as fully as possible any information you were given (formally or informally) before you started College about how to manage your finances whilst at College and how training at College would impact your household budget.	1a. Who gave you this information? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • College • Regional Minister/Association • Other (please specify) 	1c. Please describe how useful the information was you were given?
		1b. What form did it come in? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Written • Conversation • Other (please specify) 	
Time & Family	1. Please describe as fully as possible any information you were given about how to manage your time and family commitments before you came to College?	2a Who gave you this information? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • College • Regional Minister/Association • Other (please specify) 	2c Please describe how useful the information was you were given?
		2b. What form did it come in? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Written • Conversation • Other (please specify) 	
Open Questions			
Reflection	d. Looking back please describe any difficulties you had whilst at College and what you wished you had known before you started in relation to Finances, Time and Family		
	4. How prepared did you feel for the practicalities of being a student whilst training for Baptist Ministry?		
	5. Please explain whether your decision making prior to and during College would have been any different if you had more information about finances, family and time management before coming to College.		

I will firstly look at the three section themes separately and then secondly make some comments on the survey as whole.

In each Section Theme, I will identify some main themes from the open questions, present the closed question data and then re-analyse the themes by cross tabulating them with participant sex, in order to look at whether this has any affect on the answer they gave.

Finance

Survey Question: Please describe as fully as possible any information you were given (formally or informally) before you started College about how to manage your finances whilst at College and how training at College would impact your household budget.



The word cloud above shows the words from the answers to the questions, having removed all the small linking words, prepositions etc (for example and, like, a etc) The bigger the word the more it was used by the participants across the 76 answers.

Please describe as fully as possible any information you were given (formally or informally) before you started College about how to manage your finances whilst at College and how training at College would impact your household budget.

Below, I will highlight the themes and sub themes that are evidenced in the survey data. It is important to note that one of my initial observations on looking at the data was how much people wanted to share their personal experience rather than just talk about the information they received.

Participants used words, like struggle and difficult. They spoke of the main characters they had interacted with such as the College bursar/manager, the Regional Minister, Church Minister and/or members, present or former students and the college Principal. This is interesting to reflect as it is these individuals who are interacted with when financial information is given.

Main themes	Sub themes
A. Lack of clear information	Vague / unclear information
	Absence of any information
b. Lack of positivity about receiving the information	Negative sentiment
	Negative statements
c. Frustrated with the level of help	
d. Emotional Stress	Proposed financial solutions that caused pain
	Being processed, rather than related to

Lack of clear information

Vague /unclear information

Eight Participants explicitly state that the information was unclear or vague.

“I wasn’t given any clear costs prior to training, just a vague amount which changed upwards during my training”

“I didn’t know how much the bursary was likely to be”

“Finding out the costs of training was difficult and required some real digging”

“I was given conflicting advice from regional ministers - one advising I’d be able to get a half stipend, another saying I could be without any income. The cost of college was advised to be ‘around £3000 per year’ but I was not given a specific amount”

Throughout the answers, the following was clear that people struggled for clarity, misunderstood, or weren’t sure. These factors reduce the person’s ability to pre-empt the situation, does not empower the participant and leads to a general feeling of being processed rather than related to as highlighted in the theme of emotional pain below.

Absence of any information on the financial implications of training

27% (21) participants reported that they are received no information on the financial costs of training. Although I believe they would have been given some information about the college fees, their recollection is that there was no information about how to manage your finances whilst at College and how training at College would impact your household budget. Immediately this means that the participant has to make additional effort if they wish to prepare for their time at College. Furthermore, it means that if they have family, supporters of church support they will not receive information either and again cannot plan or adjust accordingly.

Lack of positivity about receiving the information

The question the participants answered was asking for a description of the information they had been given. Bearing in mind this was the first question the participants were asked, and they were not able to see the later questions, the sentiment analysis is particularly interesting.

Having categorised the answers into six categories of

- Positive
- Slightly positive
- Neutral
- Slightly Negative
- Negative
- No sentiment

The data and analysis showed that only 5 (7%) out of the 76 responses were positive and another 13 (17%) categorised lightly positive. 27 responses had no

sentiment indicated (neutral 25, No sentiment, 5), but 21 (27%) were slightly negative or negative. Example responses are:

“...To come out of our financial difficulties I relied on bank overdrafts and one fellow student told me how to apply for a student loan.....I think the College should be more open and honest with students about the financial potholes ahead. Also be as more information how one can be helped financially.”

“I didn’t receive any guidance at all. My financial situation was precarious for my entire studies....”

Frustrated with the level of help

“...When I did raise concerns about being able to afford training the responses from various people were offhand and casual – ‘Lady Hewley will help’, ‘the church will help’. Training has cost me £20,000+ and the most I received from Lady Hewley was £800 in my final year....”

Emotional Stress

This theme means that the information they received caused them emotional stress. The emotional stress statements are given later in the participant answers, but the source is contained in this section of the answer and is quoted as below:

“...The wife of the minister did talk about knowing when the local supermarket reduced the food,...”

“...I was once told by an RM to use a food bank when I couldn’t pay my rent”

“We were asked to sell our house to finance our training”

The source of information

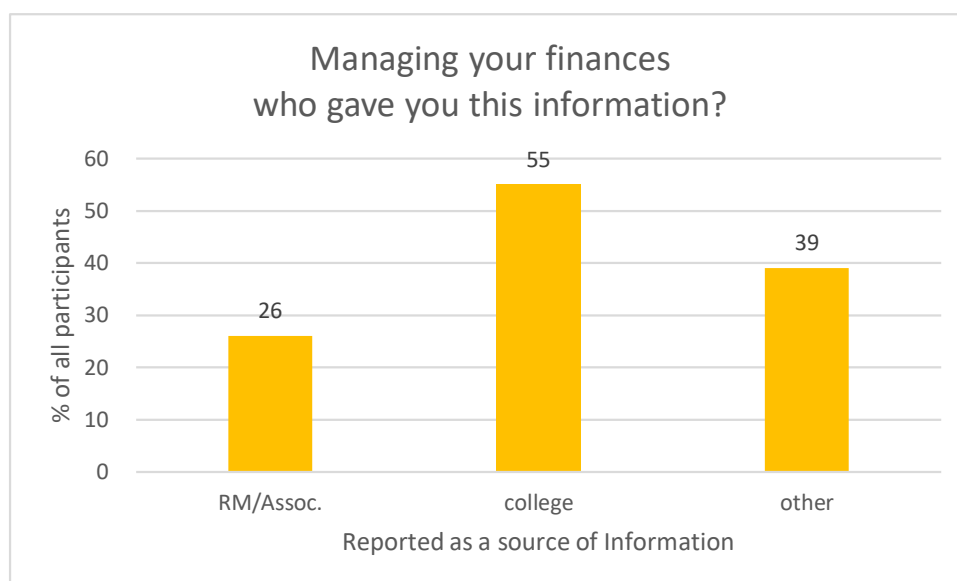
To understand where action and reflection on processes might need to be targeted it is important to understand the source of information, consequently, question 1a was included as follows:

1a. Who gave you this information?

- College
- Regional Minister/Association

Other (please specify)

The results are shown in the table below.



Clearly the main source of information is from the College 55 (72%) of participants named the College as a source of information.

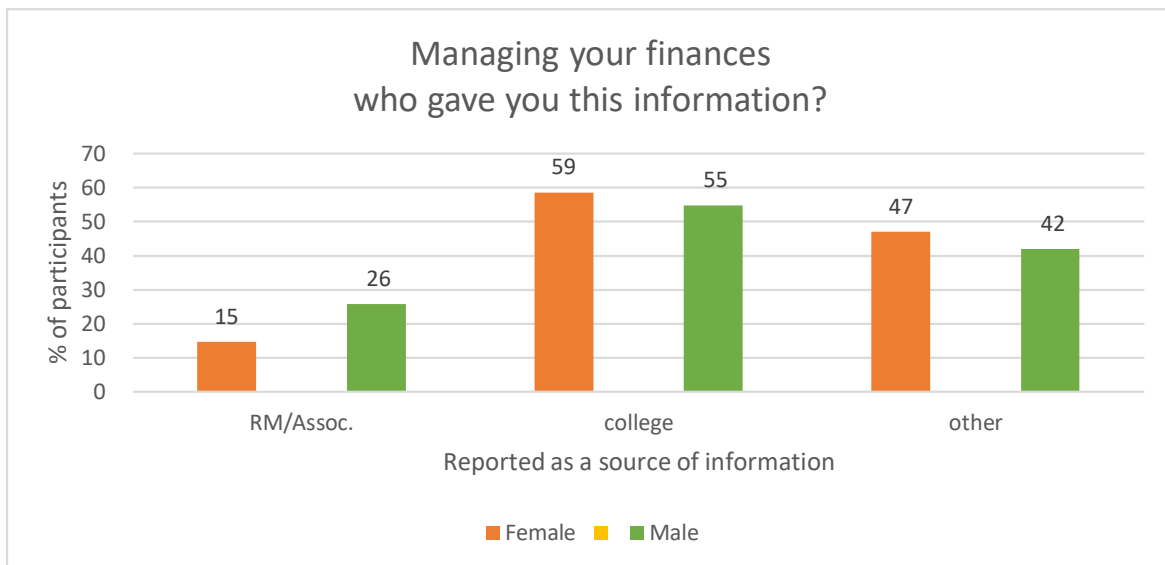
In the category of other, where free text was allowed, the following were identified.

Frequency	Source
2	Church member
4	Minister
1	Ministers' wife
1	Sending church
1	Former College student
1	Current students at college

This raises the question, how all these sources of information outside of the College and regional associations get up to date information. Comments above have already recorded that in one case information sources contradict each other as mentioned above.

"I was given conflicting advice from regional ministers - one advising I'd be able to get a half stipend, another saying I could be without any income. The cost of college was advised to be 'around £3000 per year' but I was not given a specific amount"

Looking further at these answers, in terms of sex, we can see that the source of information is on the whole consistent across the sexes and therefore sex is not a big influencer on the results. Although males do have slight tendency to be given more information from their regional minister / association. As evidenced in the table below:



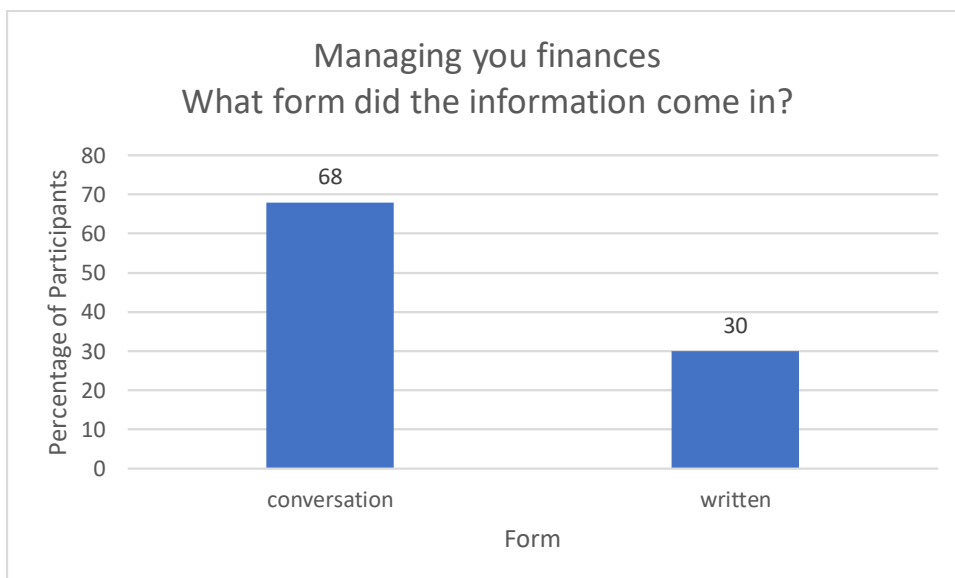
The form of the information

1b. What form did it come in?

- *Written*
- *Conversation*

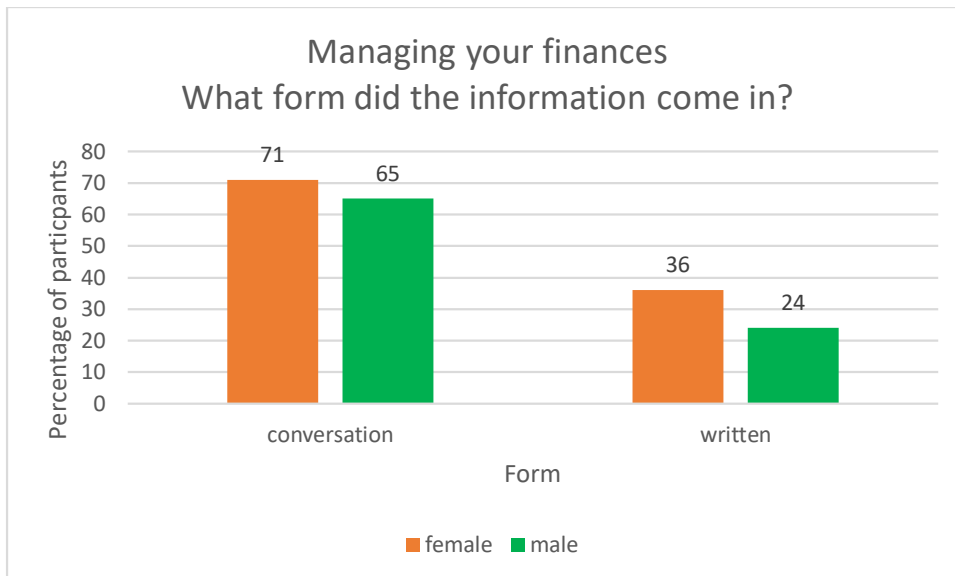
Other (please specify)

The results are as follows with 68 % reporting they received information in a conversation and 30% reporting they received information in a written form. No one reported “other” as a source, although 13% reported none.



Looking further at these answers, in terms of sex, we can see that the form of information is again on the whole consistent across the sexes and therefore the sex

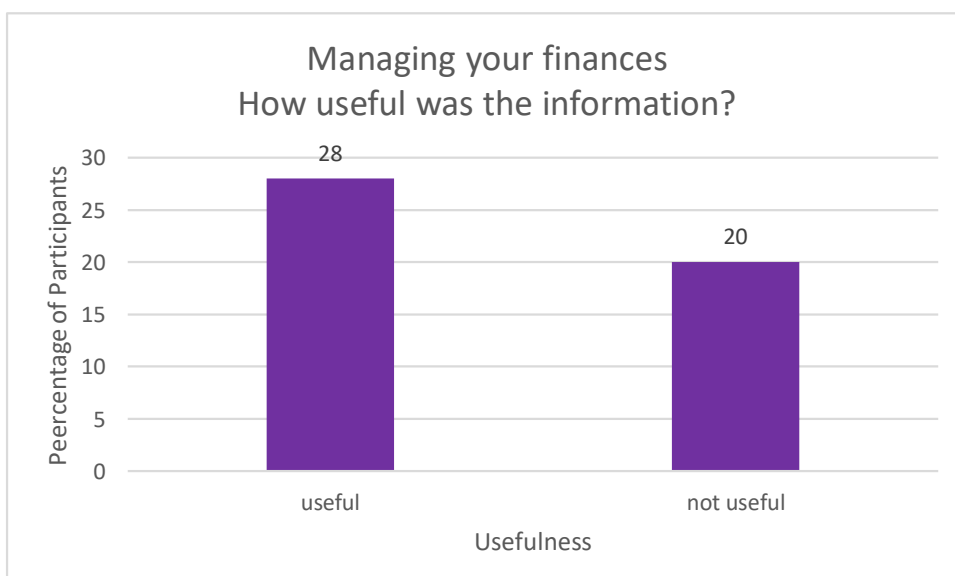
of the participant is not having a big influence on the form people receive the information in.



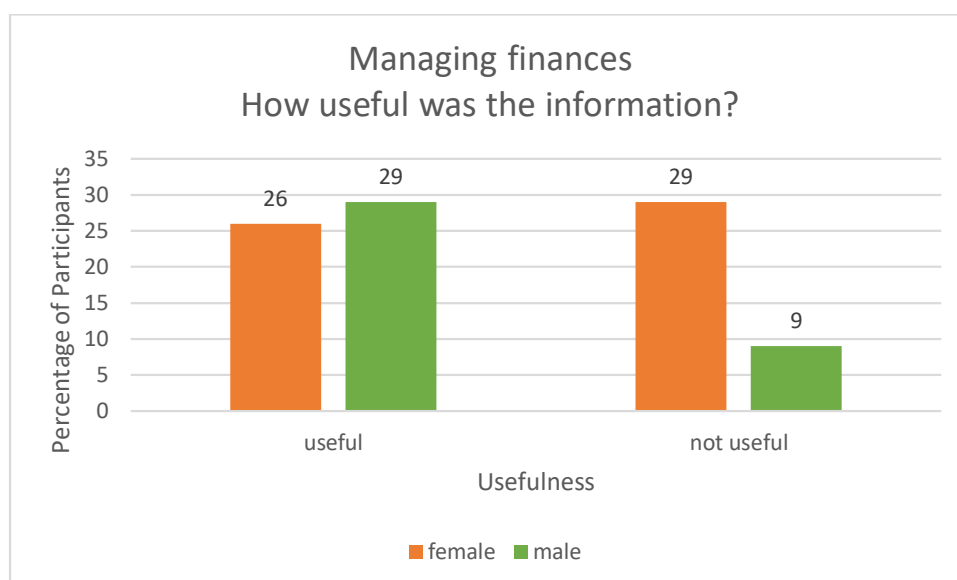
The usefulness or not of the information

Q: Please describe how useful the information was you were given?

This question was asked with a free text box for the answer. This resulted in a lower percentage of participants actually answering the direct question of whether it was useful or not. 28% said it was useful and 20% said it wasn't. 17% wrote n/a, which reflects the fact that in an earlier answer they had said they didn't receive any information.



Of those who did answer the question directly, we can see that 26% of females found it useful in comparison to 29% of males which is a similar response. However, 29% of the women who answered found it not useful opposed to only 9% of men who found it not useful.



As discussed above the participants used the free text opportunity to explain further how they felt, and a sample is included below:

"I knew that I was basically on my own when it came to funding my ministry."

"I felt unsupported."

"Chocolate teapot comes to mind, but not as relevant for me as perhaps someone much younger or without the level of business experience I have"

"Not very. I wasn't being supported by my church, but I knew I was eligible for a student loan. The meeting was more about how the college would receive fees, than helping me to finance that"

"Impression was it was to protect college than inform and assist me"

"very useful overall, with plenty of opportunity for questions and a real sense that the region and college (Bristol Baptist) were aware of the impact that training would have on us."

"Quite useful, although I was shocked at the expense of training."

“Useful insofar as it put off my training for two years as we could not see how we could afford to train. With hindsight I think this delay was a good thing.”
“The information was very practical and helped me understand the financial pressures of studying at College.”

“I remember it being very useful at the time.”

Please describe as fully as possible any information you were given about how to manage your time and family commitments before you came to College.

Below, I will highlight the themes and sub themes that are evidenced in the survey data. It is important to note that one of my initial observations on looking at the data here, as above was how much people wanted to share their personal experience rather than just talk about the information they received.

Main themes	Sub themes
a. Lack of information	
b. Helpful information	Managing time
	Self-care
c. Given information that it would be very busy and I needed to be careful about work / life balance, but no instruction on how to do it.	

Lack of information

33% of all participants said they received no information

40% of women participants said they received no information and 47% of men said they received no information.

Helpful information

Managing time

4% of participants mentioned being told to split the day into three sessions and to only work 2 out of the three sessions

“Various casual conversations were had about how to make sure I didn’t work all 3 chunks of each day, and to make sure that I take time to rest and for home life, but nothing more than that.”

“I was encouraged to think of a week as 21 sessions (7 AM sessions, 7 PM sessions, 7 evening sessions). The recommendation was for 8 sessions to be

for church-based placement, 8 sessions for college work and 5 sessions for family time.”

“Principal described concept of dividing week into 21 sessions allocating 8 to college work, 8 to church placement and 5 to family/friends/ self”

Self-care

A small percentage of participants mentioned that they were encouraged to practice self-care.

“Again, this was not overtly covered although the requirement/recommendation for a support group with a remit that included self-care was part of initial [sic] discussions and in the written information, 'Models and Patterns of Training for Christian Ministry at Spurgeon's College, 2016-2017.'”

“I was strongly encouraged to take my rest day”

Given information that it would be very busy and I needed to be careful about work / life balance, but no instruction on how to do it.

An interesting theme that came through in just over 20% of the data was that the participants were told it was an issue but not provided with any advice or direction on how to manage it.

“Some informal conversations around the need to carefully manage time. College made it clear that the distribution of time spent should be three days on college work, three days at church and one day off. Little practical information about how to manage this - and indeed manage people's expectations of how much time i had”

“This was discussed during the college interview though I remember it being more about how I expected to balance a part time job and studying. I would say the thrust of the conversation was very much in favour of balance. I don't remember any particular 'how to' advice.”

“I was asked how I would manage my time and family commitments I don't remember being given any advice.”

In addition to answering the question at hand the participants used the free text to communicate a lot of information about their time at College. In total the answers from 76 participants total 1674 words.

Source of Information

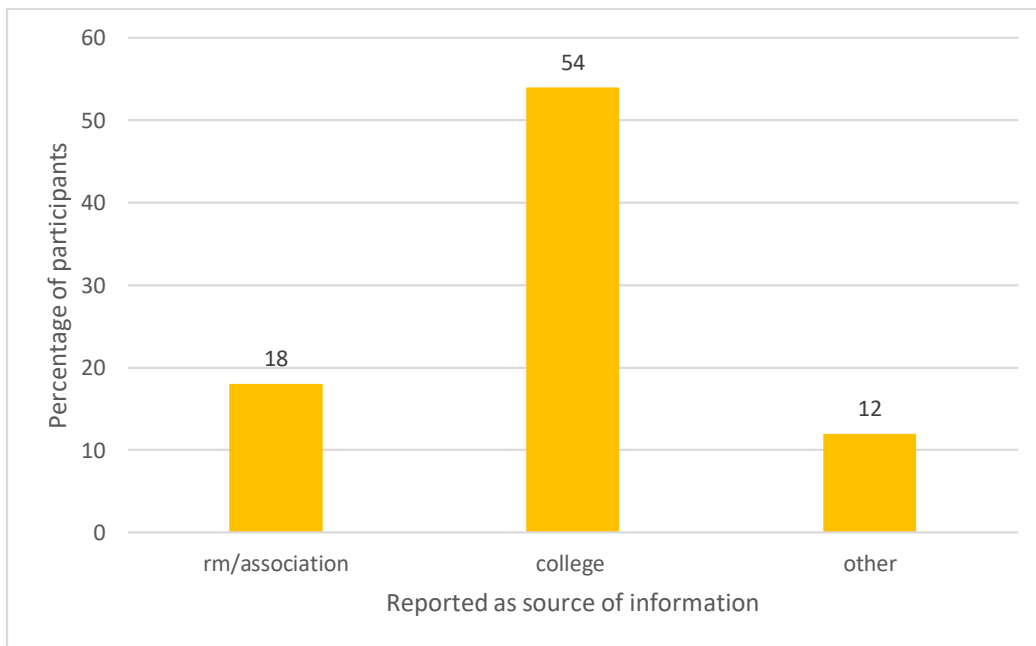
To understand where action and reflection might need to be targeted it is important to understand the source of information, consequently, question 2a was included as follows:

2a. Who gave you this information?

- College
- Regional Minister/Association

Other (please specify)

18% reported the information came from the regional minister/ association and 54% reported it came from the College.

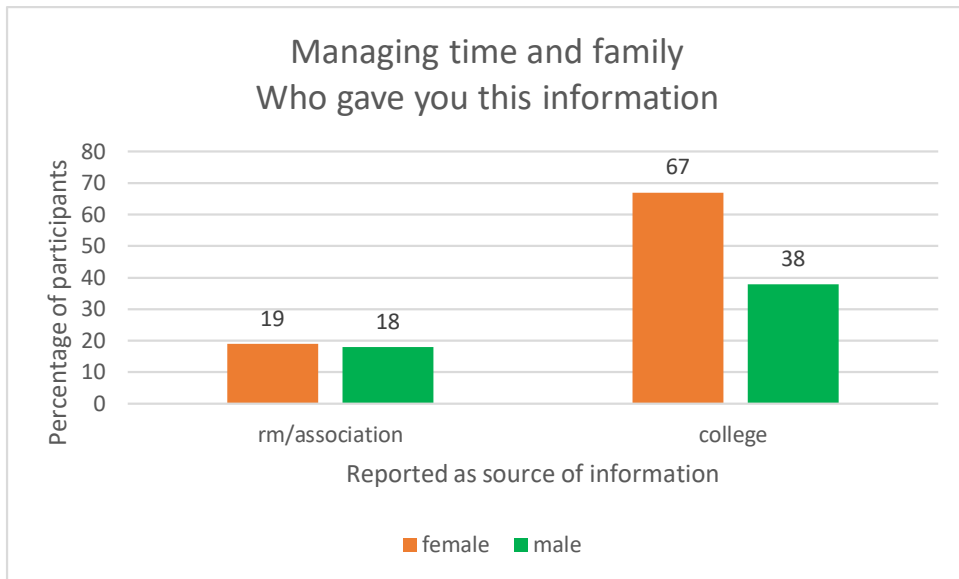


In the category of other, where free text was allowed, the following were identified.

Frequency	Source
3	Church member
5	Minister
1	Former College student

This again raises the question, how to all these sources get up to date information.

If we look how the sex of the participants affects the answer, we see that College is a source of information for women, much more than men.

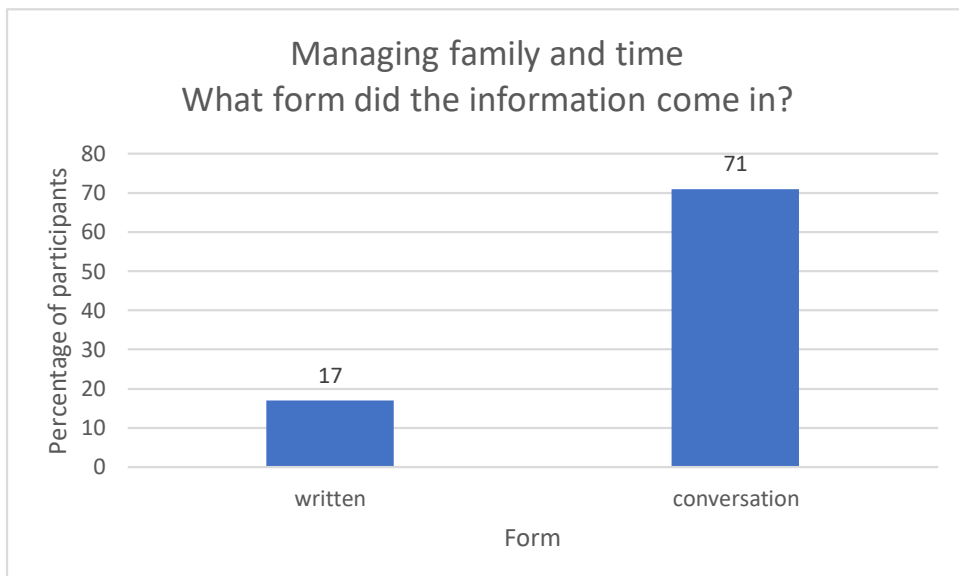


2b. What form did it come in?

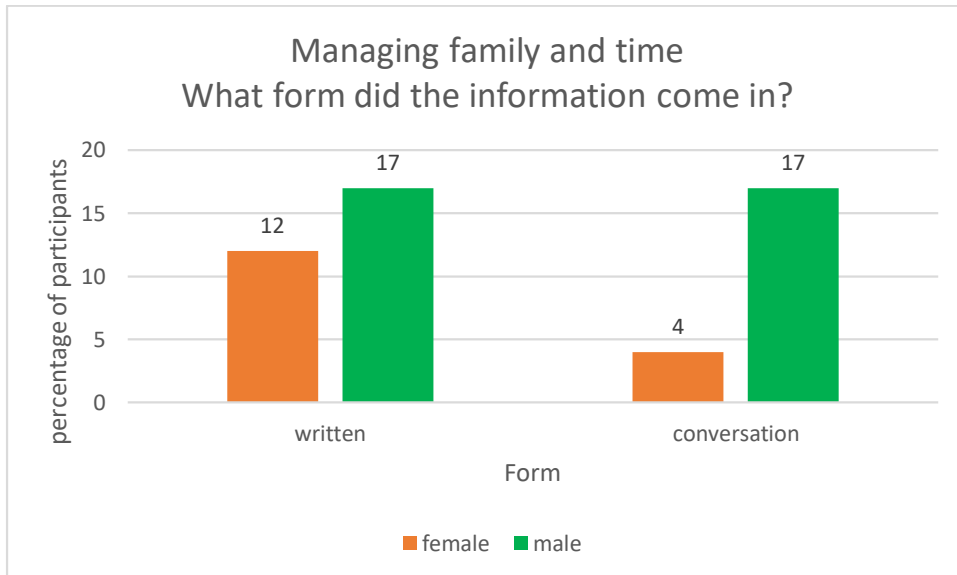
- Written
- Conversation

Other (please specify)

The table below shows that many more conversations provided information rather than written sources. This is interesting as conversations only contain certain participants and it is possibly harder to remember all the detail in conversations.



If we look at the table below, we very interestingly see that the percentage of men who are having conversations is higher than the percentage of men. It would be interesting to work out why this is.

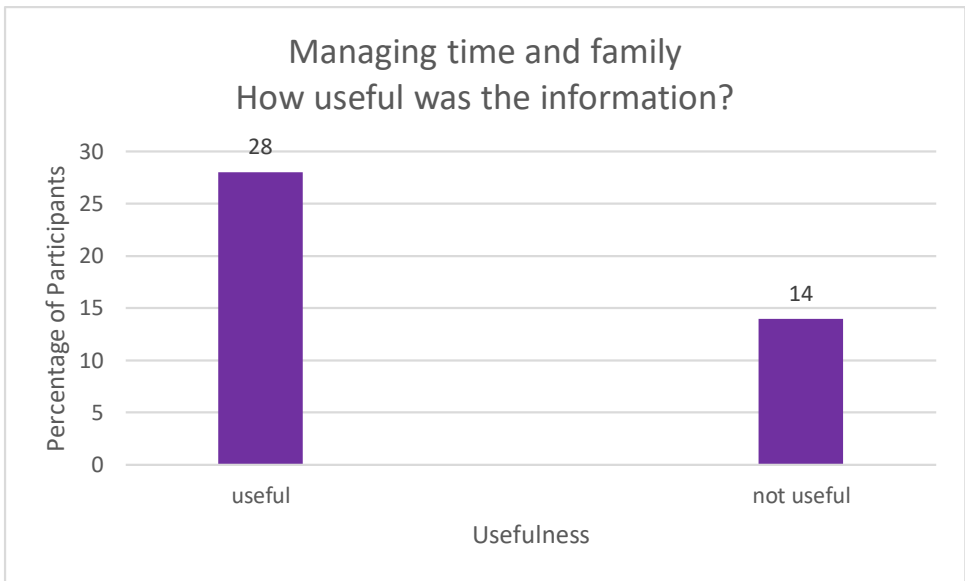


26% say they have no information – which is over a quarter of those answering the survey.

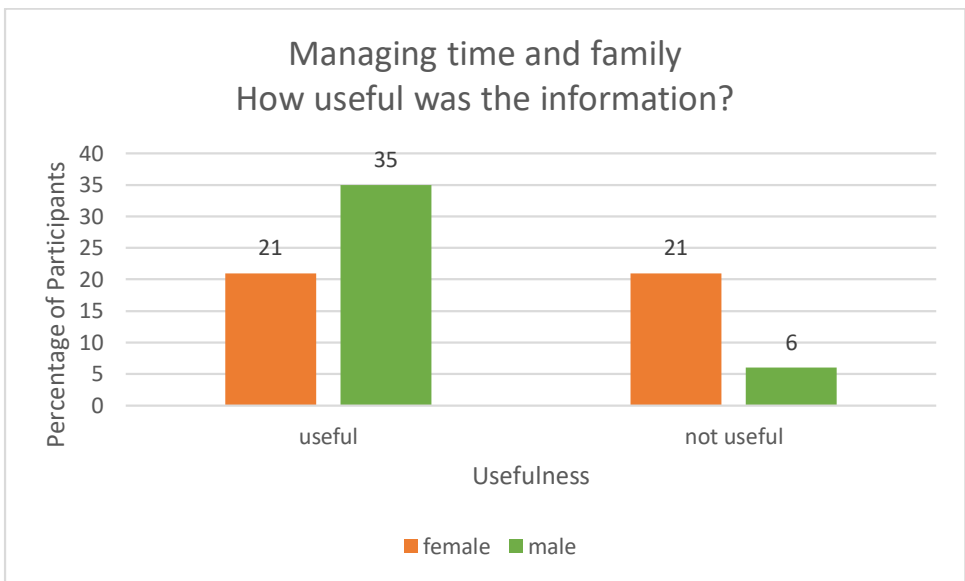
The usefulness of the information

Q: 2c Please describe how useful the information was you were given?

This question was asked with a free text box for the answer. This resulted in a lower percentage of participants actually answering the direct question of whether it was useful or not. 28% said it was useful and 14% said it wasn't. 17% wrote n/a, which reflects the fact that in an earlier answer they had said they didn't receive any information. These statistics are also very similar to the previous question about information being useful in regard to finance and are shown in the table below.



Of those who did answer the question directly, we can see that 21% of females who answered found it useful in comparison to 35% of males. 21% of the women who answered found it not useful opposed to only 6% of men who found it not useful. This is consistent with the other usefulness question asked in the context of finance.



As discussed above the participants used the free text opportunity to explain further how they felt, and a sample is included below:

“The information was very useful in making clear the commitment, potential pressure but also the community life and support to be expected through college.”

"It was helpful to be given this support and the 'okay' to ensure that I made a priority of family time."

"Very useful as this enabled me to set the expectations with my placement church around when I would be available for church related activity."

"Very good, have helped me in my thinking / pressures on me."

"Useful. I know myself well but was pleased it was raised - that felt supportive."

"Too late! A Methodist student overheard me moaning and told me of an after-school club near the school."

"Useful in as far as it went, although didn't seem to reflect the reality of what it was like once started and also didn't appear to be much interest in family life or commitments - deadlines stayed the same, without any real support"

"Didn't support realistic decision making"

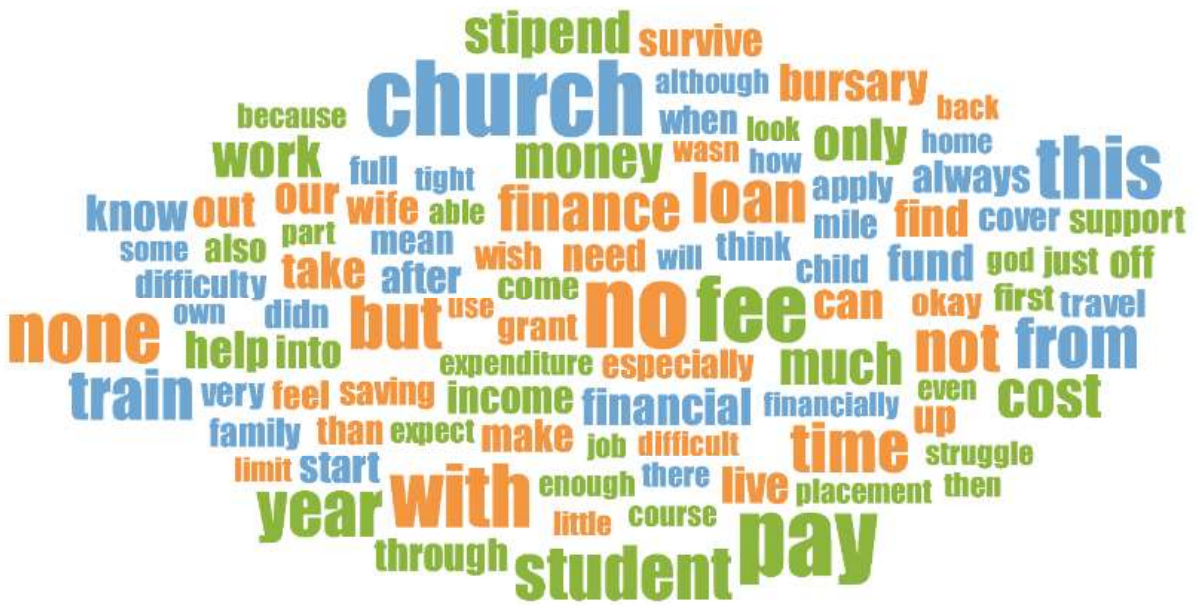
"To know that I could study part-time was very useful and enabled me to start. But the placement aspect of training quickly became full-time, because it hadn't been thought through well enough, and this was to the detriment of my family and health"

"Not at all. I was utterly overwhelmed when I started college."

Participant Reflection

Looking back please describe any difficulties you had whilst at College and what you wished you had known before you started in relation to

Finances, Time and Family



The word cloud above shows the words from the answers to the questions, having removed all the small linking words, prepositions etc (for example and, like, a etc) The bigger the word the more it was used by the participants across the 76 answers.

Finance

Looking back please describe any difficulties you had whilst at College and what you wished you had known before you started in relation to **Finances**, Time and Family

Question 3 of the survey wanted to understand the difficulties that been experienced by the participants. This section will look at this specifically in relation to what the participants said about finances.

67 participants (88%) gave an answer relating to finances

Main themes	Sub themes
a. Not having enough money	Receiving less than 45p per mile for work trips
	Lack of support from sending church
	Reduced or no stipend
	Difficulty paying travel costs to get to College
	Difficulty paying fees
	Financial Difficulty
b. Emotional Pain	

Not having enough money

Receiving less than 45p per mile for work trips

“Also, would appreciate having the same amount per mile for travelling to college as I do for general business miles.”

"I was being reimbursed at 10p a mile for fuel - with the increase in fuel costs I renegotiated this to 15p a mile after 2.5 years but this only just covered what I spent."

Lack of support from sending church

"I wouldn't describe this as a difficulty - more a pressure. I received no financial support from my sending church - so that meant that I needed to continue to work to fund my training in my secular role. I had no choice but to train part-time...."

"...My home church did not see my training as their responsibility. The church I was subsequently part of did see training of ministers as their responsibility and fully covered all costs for MITs."

Reduced or no stipend

"My first year placement was non stipend so our family had no regular income."

"My stipend was so low my parents had to help"

"I negotiated my placement-church terms of appointment just prior to starting at college, and did not get my full entitlement as a MIT according to the BU recommendations!"

Difficulty paying travel costs to get to College

"Money was always tight and the need/desire to purchase materials (especially useful books/DVDs etc. that would carry over into ministry) meant that finding funding was a struggle at times. Travel costs and the unexpected costs of events etc. also contributed to this."

"I am always having to find the money, alongside fees its the travel and added expenses."

Difficulty paying fees

"Paying course fees, which was eventually sorted through bursaries"

"Wished I knew that Student loans do not cover the ministerial formation cost, only the academic side. I was fortunate enough that my placement church were able to financially top up that part. I would not have been able to afford it otherwise...."

Financial Difficulty

“We didn’t budget for things. We paid college fees but have had financial difficulties later as a result of having overextended ourselves (failure to curb expenditure/make lifestyle changes) which only caught up with us as our children started to go off to Uni when we hadn’t finished paying off our debts from my college/MA studies. We just kept on taking out additional loans.”

Finances were difficult - we moved to a new area so I could be a MiT, this meant my husband had to give up his job. We had three teenage children and I was travelling a long way to college and back every week. I was also at college for 2 nights and 2 full days which mean there was one evening I was expected to source my own dinner - either taking something pre-packaged which wasn't always the easiest in warmer weather - or being expected to buy a dinner out one evening a week. This wasn't always easy when the budget was particularly tight.

Participant Reflection

Looking back please describe any difficulties you had whilst at College and what you wished you had known before you started in relation to
Finances, Time and **Family**



The word cloud above shows the words from the answers to the questions, having removed all the small linking words, prepositions etc (for example and, like, a etc) The bigger the word the more it was used by the participants across the 76 answers.

The answers to this question will be analysed in part two of my report

Participant Reflection

How prepared did you feel for the practicalities of being a student whilst training for Baptist Ministry?



The word cloud above shows the words from the answers to the questions, having removed all the small linking words, prepositions etc (for example and, like, a etc) The bigger the word the more it was used by the participants across the 76 answers.

The answers to this question will be analysed in part two of my report

Discussion Implications for action

Observations

In this section I will briefly discuss the research data I have collected and make some initial observations.

The presence of emotional pain

Having read over 13,000 words from 76 participants, my main take away from the answers was that there is a considerable amount of pain and distress connected to the subjects of finances time and family amongst ministers in training, newly accredited ministers and fully accredited ministers

Although my original idea was to concentrate on enabling women to thrive in ministry, it is clear that the pain is shared across the sexes and therefore I suggest it is an indication of wider issues. I think both men and women need help in this area.

The absence of a theological framework

In looking at themes in the data, I kept noticing what wasn't there.

I realise that the survey questions set the tone for a survey, but when I asked if people had been given information, no one out of the 76 participants said they had been given a leaflet, book or resource about what they were doing. By this I mean, no one said that they went to a College interview and were given a leaflet on the "theology of provision" or "the theological perspectives on ministry and money".

The majority of the information people were receiving and therefore interacting with was from the College

This is really interesting as its quite late in the process of ministerial training. A student is kind of in the system before they may have a chance to fully understand the system. For those who received information from the associations, I wondered how the associations knew what the right information was and some of the nuances of the Colleges and vice versa.

Interactions with students would benefit from a review

Rarely do people like to hear that they might be part of the problem, nor are people motivated by criticism, but having reflected on the themes and read the responses it seems clear that there are further improvements to be made in the areas I am responsible for, in my small part of the ministerial training system. At Spurgeon's

College the finance interviews, the finance sessions and the information out to students could be improved to at least mitigate some of the issues raised in the survey.

The relevancy of information

Standing back from the data, I could see that there was a thread running through all the answers that the information given, or the interactions experienced were not always as relevant as the participant needed them to be. Therefore, listening to potential ministers in training is an important point to be pursued.

There is no singular narrative

Although comparisons can be made in generality, using cross tabulation of demographic data, which indicates trends and produces valuable insights, there is a danger that conclusions starting with singular narratives like “women feel.....” or “men experienced....” forget that all 76 participants experience is absolutely unique, experienced first-hand and their truth. Therefore, what one does with these observations and even with this report has to be thought through very carefully so not to “win a small battle, but loose the war” and so as not to alienate the individual or those who have the power to change systems. Bearing this in mind, I have considered some implications for action.

Implications for action (subject to approval from project Violet)

I have broken the implication for action down into three categories

Short term (within 12 months) - achievable within existing resources

1. I can review the whole admissions, finance, placement and interview day systems at Spurgeon’s College, as the staff in those posts report directly to me with a view to providing more timely, relevant information. This can begin in the last quarter of 2022 and continue across the academic year.
2. Once I have done point 1, I can seek out the bursars from the other Baptist College’s and ask to share practices, so I can learn from them and share what I have discovered as part of this project.
3. If approved and carefully managed, I could share some key data with
 - Tricordant (as I am on the working group on behalf of all the Baptist Colleges) – they have already asked if I would.

- Baptist Training Partnership (as I am a member of the committee) – I can ask the chair (a project violet co-researcher, if I can have an agenda item)
- Spurgeon’s College trustees and senior management team (I draft the agendas, so I could easily add this in.

I would propose to do this with a view to offering a solution to an issue that has been found. I do not believe that criticism is a motivating factor, however inviting people to be a solution partner, not only affirms the other person, but paves the way to solutions. I believe in speaking truth to power, but I also believe it needs to be planned very carefully otherwise it often undermines the goal that is trying to be achieved. If we are not willing to do the hard work of working out a possible solution, why should we expect the other person to spend time on a solution when they are not necessarily even passionate about the issue in the first place.

Medium term (12 months to 24 months) achievable with some effort, but no budget required

4. I would like to co-author or get someone else to co-author a relevant accessible resource on the theology of provision, to assist students in their training.
5. I would like to co-ordinate a little series of videos, recorded by multiple people along the theme of “Planning to train as a Baptist Minister” – to enable anyone anywhere to hear some of the things they might want to think about when training, that are just free and easily accessible on YouTube for any church minister, regional minister, college bursar to point people to. Nothing to complicated, just simple, but clear short videos to get people thinking.

Long term aspirations (someday maybe!)

6. I would like to see Baptist ministerial training funded. Specifically, so that ministers in training can thrive, can stop worrying about paying for childcare, not having enough time and trying to work and training. So that no one who is training for ministry ever has to visit a food bank again or steal food to get by.

Limitations and opportunities to improve the research and this report

1. Time. It was always going to be a challenge to do this piece of research. I did not expect 114 people to respond and to have over 13000 words written in free text. I have not had enough time to do this report properly and have not

analysed the last four questions. I intend to carry on after this report to finish it, hence the report was entitled “Initial Report - Part One”

I have also not reported the other work I have which compares answers by age, marital status, ethnicity, year of study – these will also appear in Part Two.

2. Resources. I think that what is being achieved by Project Violet is amazing. I have reflected that more could be achieved if more resources (money) were available to expand the project and invest further in professional researcher time.
3. The survey did not capture a wider number of ethnically diverse participants; therefore, it is limited in his observations.
4. The survey only asks about when you started training and if you were married, but doesn't account for those who weren't at the end of it or who married during their training
5. I did not include disability in the demographic data and therefore restricted the research parameters. This was communicated to me by a participant, and I acknowledge that this was a limitation of the survey, from which I can learn.
6. I used the language of gender rather than the language of sex. A participant contacted me about this, and I acknowledge that this is a limitation of the survey, from which I can learn.
7. I started with the idea of concentrating on women and have gotten a bit side tracked along the way due to the volume of data. This report would benefit from a more targeted response to the actual research question.
8. I have presented this report with an academic bias which is unlikely to fit all audiences and therefore bespoke short reports need to be produced to communicate with audiences.
9. I have shown my own bias as I have written more about finance than time or family, which I am very aware of and would need to readdress in later versions of reports.