

Red Box Strategy, June 2022

Information Paper

Introduction

The Pandemic has had, and will continue to have, an impact on parish communities. It has also had, and continues to have, a negative impact on fundraising. It has accelerated the move to a more 'cashless' society, with people of all ages having less cash to put into a traditional 'collection box'. As we know, the Red Box, which has been the main focus of the fundraising for the Mill Hill Missionaries and Missio for the last 80 years, still relies on people putting cash into their physical Red Box.

We need to plan for the future. We do not want to lose the iconic Red Box, but to see how we can develop ways of fundraising so that the Catholic community of England and Wales can continue to support, both financially and spiritually, communities around the world, continuing God's mission.

The role of the Local Secretary is more than collecting money from the Red Box. They help to build community within the supporters of the Red Box and promote a missionary spirit.

Some statistics

There are **1,852 named Local Secretaries in England and Wales**, with a further 309 Parish Priests currently assigned as Local Secretary. One Local Secretary covers 4 churches, 6 cover 3 churches, 114 cover 2 churches, and the rest cover 1 church.

459 Local Secretaries took up the role since 2020 (including 98 in 2022). 323 have been doing the role for more than 20 years.

We have reduced the number of printed copies of *Mission Today* from 180,000 in 2019 to 135,000 in 2022. **We send *Mission Today* directly to over 32,000 individual addresses**, plus all Local Secretaries and Parish Priests. **Local Secretaries distribute over 82,000 copies of *Mission Today*.**

Each month, **over 14,000 people receive the *Mission Possible* eNews.**

On average, **300 Appeals in parishes** are made each year. The **average number of new Red Box holders/annual members per Appeal is 20**. 44% of these sign up to Gift Aid.

Until the pandemic, just over 60% of **Red Box income came via Local Secretaries** in the parish into the diocesan bank account (or to Mill Hill). Since the pandemic, this **has levelled out at just over 40%** via this route.

Regular giving to the Red Box (e.g. Direct Debits – see p.2) has remained pretty stable since before the pandemic, at **around 19% of the total Red Box income**. The decrease in income has come from non-regular donations.

Following the trend in the years before the pandemic, the divide between giving in the 'Northern dioceses' and the 'Southern dioceses' has become more marked. **In 2021, only 33% of Red Box income was from the North (traditionally it has been 40%).**



Note on personnel and systems

Over the last five years we have brought together some of the administration processes for the Red Box, including developing a **shared database between the Mill Hill Missionaries and Missio**.

We have **two different banking systems** (one for those in the Northern dioceses, who bank via Barclays for the Mill Hill Missionaries, and one for the Southern 15 dioceses who each have their own Missio diocesan bank accounts overseen by the Diocesan Director/their assistant through the Royal Bank of Scotland). The Mill Hill Red Box finances are overseen by the Assistant Regional Bursar, based in Durham. The Missio finances are overseen by Missio's Finance Director and team in London. All **online/digital giving is directed through the Missio website**.

Appealers are, in the main, Mill Hill Missionaries from Britain and increasingly overseas. Appeals are co-ordinated from offices in Freshfield and Maidenhead by a mix of five full and part-time staff (financed by the Mill Hill Missionaries). We have a shared 'Red Box Director', jointly appointed by Missio and the Mill Hill Missionaries.

Just before the pandemic, we increased our outward facing roles, with an additional '**Regional Community Fundraiser**' with oversight of our work in the Northern dioceses, particularly with respect to Local Secretaries, to complement the corresponding role based in the South (both financed by Missio).

New ways of donating

What follows is a summary of some new (and not so new) methods of fundraising. We will look at them together on 21 June. However, you may wish to do some of your own research into them (and other methods) to see what they involve and what potential there may be.

We are not looking at only one option. It is likely that a range of options will need to be developed. However, we do need to decide the direction of travel, and commit to investing (financially and personally) in that area.

Direct giving: cheques and card donations

This is people sending money directly, usually to Eccleston Square/Missio (Southern dioceses) and via Freshfield/Mill Hill Missionaries (Northern dioceses). This can be via cheques (although there is a decline in use across UK, they are still a popular method for our audiences), or giving via credit/debit card over the phone or via a form). Both methods are usually in response to a letter/magazine in the post.

Direct debits

These can be annual/any frequency in the year. Currently, people can choose whether to give to the Red Box or a specific area of Missio's work. They can be set up by filling in a form, over the phone, or online. People can still set up Standing Orders, although this is on a downward trend.

Bank transfers

People can give directly by transferring money from their bank account into a MHM/Missio bank account. Increasing numbers of parishes and schools use this method to transfer money donated by their communities.



Text giving

People can text REDBOX to 70085 to give £5 (or other amounts up to £20 per text). We currently use **Donr** for this service. They charge 5% per donation (so 25p on a £5 donation). There is the option to GiftAid the donation. We also have MISSIO and MTOG (Mission Together) campaigns, where people can text their donations to those specific areas of work. We (gently) advertise this, but do not get a lot of take up. However, it does not cost us anything to have it as a giving method.

See donr.com. This is a different company to Dona (donadonations.com) who provide cashless giving for places of worship.

Contactless giving

We now have 12 contactless devices which can receive donations using credit/debit cards or electronic pay (i.e. Apple / Google Pay). We trialed them in parishes for World Mission Sunday in October 2021 (receiving £7,500, including one donation of £1,000), and have had them available at some Appeals since (receiving £3,500 in 6 months).

Some parishes have their own contactless giving set up, which we should try to dovetail with. For parishes who do not have this capability, one idea is for a cluster of parishes/Local Secretaries to share a contactless device. Several times a year, a Local Secretary can ask people to make a contactless payment instead of / on top of their Red Box donations. They could have the device available after all Masses over a weekend or two consecutive weekends. We cannot directly Gift Aid, but could manually record information and then process it.

We use **SumUp** for our contactless giving: sumup.co.uk SumUp is the company/mechanism behind most other contactless giving, even if it is branded differently.

A Red Box app

An 'app' has been spoken about before, and we did have a basic version several years ago. The main barrier is the cost of developing an app, especially one which will keep people accessing it once they have downloaded/subscribed to it. We would also want people to opt into continuing to receive push notifications from the app. However, statistically most people will turn off these notifications, making the app all-but redundant.

It may well be better for us to access other technology and apps which already exist (see Round up technology below), and continue to ensure our web presence is mobile-friendly (i.e. the website scales down and is accessible when looking at it on a mobile phone or tablet device).

Round up technology

People choose to download a third-party app, give access to very limited data from their bank account, and can 'round up' their purchases up to an amount they decide. This is then given to charity. So, if they buy a coffee for £2.85, rounded up to the nearest pound means that 15p goes into a 'pot'. This happens on all purchases (round up amount decided by the individual), up to a pre-defined amount (e.g. £5 a week). Whatever is in that pot at the end of the week is donated to the chosen charity (i.e. the Red Box).

It uses Open Banking, where limited information from your bank is shared, and is increasingly common. Within the functionality of the app, we have the option to add content. For example,



stories from communities we are supporting, prayer resources, etc.. We are reliant on people going into the app to view these, but the incentive to visit the app is to see how much they have donated / update the amounts they are happy to give.

Key investment is not in the functionality (between 5% and 10% per transaction is the only real cost), but resourcing how we market it, update information (e.g. the stories and resources), and where possible syncing with our database so that money is attributed to donors/parishes etc..

For example, Ripples: joinripples.org

QR codes

We can print bespoke QR codes which, when accessed using an individual's phone camera, will take someone to a webpage to make a donation (or to find prayer resources or stories from communities around the world). These could be tailored, so a particular QR code could send someone to a fundraising page directly linked to their parish.

The biggest investment here would, again, be to the online donation process, so that it is technically as easy as possible to donate (i.e. payment details filled in automatically where possible / use of Apple Pay / PayPal where details are already stored in a person's computer or phone). Where possible, we would also want this to sync to our database.

NFC technology - Near Field Communication

You can programme a small chip with whichever website you choose, so that when someone holds their mobile phone close to it, it automatically gives you the option to go to that website. Usually these chips are embedded in a sticker. They could, for example, be on a Red Box, or a poster in a church. The sticker could also have a QR code printed on it (see above).

As with previous examples, the biggest investment here would be to the online donation process, so that it is technically as easy as possible to donate (i.e. payment details filled in automatically where possible / use of Apple Pay / PayPal where details are already stored in a person's computer or phone), and where possible syncs to our database.

Crowdfunding

We could invest in developing our JustGiving pages and encouraging parishes/groups to donate together towards a virtual Red Box. Alternatively, we can develop bespoke fundraising webpage(s) with the infrastructure to do this. These could be bespoke per parish and/or diocese, encouraging communal fundraising.

There is a cost, but the biggest investment would be in helping to develop and maintain the webpages once they are built, and supporting Local Secretaries to develop their own parish Red Box fundraising pages.

Our JustGiving page: [justgiving.com/missio](https://www.justgiving.com/missio)

Example bespoke pages:

<https://www.stockcrowd.com/standard-d0bb102c-3de6-4a37-b3c8-bff69bd8e5da#K18>

<https://www.atlasdigibus.com/>

