



# Deanery Development Groups

A Handbook

Published  
October 2022

 THE CHURCH  
OF ENGLAND  

---

DIOCESE OF NEWCASTLE

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## Message from Bishop Mark

## Introduction

**01** The Diocesan Vision

**02** The Context for Change

## Area Deans & Lay Chairs

**01** Role of the Area Dean

**02** Role of the Lay Chair

**03** Areas of Support for the Deanery from the Diocese

## Deanery Development Plans

**01** The Deanery Development Toolkit

## A MESSAGE FROM BISHOP MARK

Together across the diocese we have been discerning our next steps as a growing church bringing hope in the context of a world undergoing huge challenge and change. Recovery from the global Covid 19 Pandemic has been exacerbated by economic, environmental and energy crises. It has never been more important for God's people to be open to God's transforming love God, generous with God's transforming gifts and engaged with God's transforming work in the world. In this way the local church offers hope for the world in each of our diverse communities. Enabling the local church in this mission is a task we share in together, at both diocesan and deanery level.

The purpose of this renewed and revised handbook is to enable Deanery Development Groups to engage with our vital task of mission as we review and renew our shared ministry in this generation. We need to have clear sight of the issues we face, the resources God has given us and of the God who calls us – that means we need to grapple with data, with local context and culture, and with the God of Scripture in our praying and learning together.

My hope is that Area Deans, Deanery Lay Chairs and Deanery Development Groups work together with their deanery clergy and lay leaders in developing plans that help us meet the challenge of serving and proclaiming the gospel in these days. This is not something deaneries are expected to do in isolation, but in ongoing partnership with me, the Bishop's Staff Team and our range of advisers, as well as with fellow Area Deans and Lay Chairs from other deaneries.

I am deeply conscious of the demands on all of us which feel enormous at this time, but I believe this task is not just about adding another thing to our to-do lists, but is about discerning our way forward together. My prayer is that we might share this responsibility in hope, trusting in the God who promises: 'those who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.' (Isaiah 40.31)

With every blessing,

+ Mark

**Bishop of Berwick**  
15 October, 2022



# 1 THE DIOCESAN VISION

For some years now we have recognised ourselves to be a diocese:

- Open to God's transforming love
- Generous with God's transforming gifts
- Engaged in God's transforming work in the world

We take our inspiration from the New Testament. Paul gives us the rich image of the Body to draw our attention to our mutual interdependence, to the importance of valuing the diverse parts of the body, to the imperative to treat with equal dignity and respect those parts of the body we might prefer to think less of, to recognise all as indispensable (1 Cor 12). The early churches worked together and supported one another, for instance the church in Philippi supported Paul's mission and helped sustain churches in Thessalonika (Phil 4: 18 – 19), Corinth (2 Cor 11: 8) and Jerusalem (Rom 15: 26 – 29). Mindful of these early precedents, we aspire to be God's One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church, looking beyond parish boundaries, recognising our place in the whole, and developing generous and realistic plans as we seek to grow, spiritually and numerically, serving our communities through the love of Christ.

Back in 2009 a strategic development group, working on behalf of Bishop's Council, developed a guide for deaneries to outline the role and purpose of Deanery Development Groups and to outline a process for developing deanery plans.

Working with what has gone before, refreshing it for today whilst learning from the wisdom of that time, this document lays out latest thinking on DDGs and their vital role within the Diocese of Newcastle.

Key elements of who we are as a diocese involve partnership between laity and ordained, partnership between parishes, and partnership between worshipping communities and their wider community. Resourcing parish ministry to the best of our capacity is central to our DNA as a diocese. We seek to ensure there is a vibrant, authentic and sustaining Christian presence in every community in the Diocese.

Deaneries continue to be central to the development of sustainable plans. There is a recognition that the parish cannot do everything on its own. The Deanery is a key unit of support, encouragement and collaboration. This guide has been produced to outline how Deaneries continually identify their priorities for the future mission and ministry of the Church in their particular contexts.

## 2 THE CONTEXT FOR DEANERY DEVELOPMENT GROUPS

### Why do we need DDGs?

·To strengthen the recognition that the Deanery is an important organisational entity in planning for the future life of the church with a mission led focus.

·To develop the extent to which parishes see Deaneries as having a valid and important role in helping to shape the future life of the whole church in the Deanery.

- To lead on transparent and collaborative engagement between Bishop's staff, Diocesan bodies and Deaneries.
- To enhance the extent to which Deaneries are able and willing to share responsibility for shaping the future and using Diocesan resources to help them.
- To develop a Deanery Plan. Every diocese is different and different models exist, but a glance at [national guidance](#) might be helpful in setting the context in which we work.

### What are DDGs all about?

DDGs are one of the important engines in enacting and making more widely known the diocesan priorities, developed as part of our 'Growing Church Bringing Hope: Next Steps' programme:

- looking outwards to God's mission in the world;
- developing flourishing leaders;
- creating new Christian communities;
- making disciples who build up the church;
- seeking to grow younger.

## What is a Deanery Development Group?

Since 2009 in the Diocese of Newcastle each Deanery has had a Deanery Development Group. The membership of this group is chosen by election from Deanery Synod and by co-options. The group is able to operate in various modes and perform the functions of:

- Deanery Standing Committee
- Deanery Pastoral Committee
- Deanery Mission Action Planning group

Parishes increasingly recognise that Deaneries have a significant role to play in shaping the future plans and are willing to engage in discussion with the Deanery Development Groups who are well placed to take time to understand Parish needs in depth.

A Deanery Plan is about far more than deployment of ministry resource, but this is an important element of it. The range of subject matter that Deanery Development Groups address in a Development Plan include mission, ministry, finance, buildings, structures and groupings, discipleship and learning, lay development, context specific priorities such as engagement with pilgrims or engagement with ecumenical partners or engagement with secular agencies. All Dioceses are encouraged to foster such deanery-based processes of development and the Church of England website includes extensive guidance on the range and scope of DDGs in different dioceses as well as a couple of example templates and processes. Taking a look at [this](#) may help place our diocese in the national context.

A key role in our current phase of planning, as is the case in many dioceses, is to make proposals regarding deployment of stipendiary ministry, working with representatives from Bishop's Staff and the Mission and Ministry Team, making use of the Toolkit provided.

Deanery Development planning will be seen as a 'living process' in which plans are owned by the Deanery and will involve discussions with Parishes, Bishop's Staff and other Diocesan boards and committees.

Deanery Synods should clearly own, understand and actively discuss Deanery Development plans when progress is reported. The Diocesan Mission and Pastoral Committee (DMPC) has a more defined role relating to the Mission and Pastoral Measure 2011 and will liaise and consult with Deanery Development Groups when appropriate to discuss issues of Pastoral Re-organisation, or when invited.

# 1 THE ROLE OF THE AREA DEAN

## The Commission

..... by Divine Permission ..... to Our beloved in Christ ..... Vicar of the Parish of ..... within our Diocese and Jurisdiction.

## GREETING

We do hereby commission and appoint you for a period of five years from the date hereof unless this Our Commission be sooner revoked to serve as Area Dean of the Deanery of ..... within the Archdeaconry of ..... And We desire that in executing the duties of this Office you do act in co-operation with the Archdeacon of the said Archdeaconry and do faithfully observe the instructions hereunto appended.

IN TESTIMONY whereof we have hereunto set Our hand and caused Our Episcopal Seal to be affixed this ..... in the year of Our Lord ..... and in the ..... year of Our translation.

## The Duties of an Area Dean

The statutory duties of the Area Dean are substantially set out in Canon C23 (see below). Essentially this is to report to the Bishop any matter of pastoral or administrative concern within the deanery, to report to the Archdeacon any matter of concern or defect in the fabric, ornaments and furniture of any church or other benefice building in the deanery, to be joint chair of the deanery synod (in accordance with church representation rules) and to ensure that the laity in every parish are represented in the councils of the church in accordance with current legislation.

In addition, the Area Dean may have responsibility for inspection of buildings delegated by the Archdeacon under Canons F17 and 18. The Area Dean may also under Canon C11 be mandated to induct an incumbent to a benefice. The Area Dean also has responsibilities under Canons B43, D1, E4, E5 and E7 when a benefice in the deanery is vacant.

The Bishop will therefore look to the Dean for co-operation and support in the mission and ministry of the Church in his/her deanery.

1. in pastoral care. The Dean will seek by personal contact to get to know the clergy and their families and the parishes and chaplaincies in which they serve. S/he will be aware of arrangements to care for retired clergy, spouses and their widow(er)s. S/he will report annually to the Bishop and at other times bring pastoral matters or cases of illness or urgent need to his/her attention.

2. in managing the life of the church. The Dean will meet regularly with the Archdeacon and, where requested, deputise for him/her in the deanery. S/he and the Deanery Lay Chair will also meet, together with their colleagues from the other deaneries to discuss relevant diocesan matters.

The Dean will have an enabling role within the Deanery Leadership Team and Deanery Development Group in shaping plans for the pastoral reorganisation and development of ministry.

In cases of vacant parishes, s/he will act as one of the Sequestrators and accept prime responsibility for providing the services, to visit the church and parsonage house as necessary and to support the churchwardens. With his/her knowledge of the needs of the parish and community, s/he will be available to give guidance in the production of the parish profile and be available to receive and assist prospective new incumbents. S/he will arrange and attend institutions and present the new incumbent where appropriate.

3. in leading and encouraging. S/he will act as co-chair of the Deanery Synod, and, together with the Deanery Leadership Team and Deanery Development Group, will seek to develop a strategy for mission and ministry within the deanery. The Dean will be a focus for unity and co-operation and will promote the sharing of a vision of the kingdom of God. As chair of the chapter, s/he will encourage the deepening of fellowship and study among the clergy particularly seeking to involve those who work outside the parochial system.

4. in fostering good relationships with clergy of other denominations and faith communities and encouraging contacts with civic authorities and other structures within the secular world. S/he will also have a special concern for church schools within the deanery through their relationship with their parish priest.

5. in Safeguarding. Area Deans have a number of important safeguarding roles to play across the Deanery. They are well positioned to support parishes in establishing and maintaining safe working practices and in championing a positive safeguarding culture. A helpful starting point for this would be encouraging the take up of training and the use and updating of the Parish Dashboard system. Area Deans are well placed to potentially identify where one parish may offer particular safeguarding support to another and to identify and encourage opportunities for collaborative safeguarding training events within the Deanery.

Where a safeguarding concern arises in respect of a member of clergy within the Deanery, particularly where it may be necessary for that person to have a period away from parish ministry, Area Deans take a key role in supporting the parish through a difficult and uncertain time.

If an issue arises in a parish during a vacancy the Archdeacon or Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser will speak to the Area Dean if they will have a particular role to play.

Area Deans are expected to model collaborative ministry, not only with their clergy colleagues in Chapter, but also with the Lay Chair, the Deanery Secretary, the Deanery Finance Officer and other lay people including, but not exclusively, members of the Deanery Synod. In this spirit, it is not expected that Area Deans will carry out all the tasks listed here, but rather that they will ensure that they are carried out:

1. To pray for the people, parishes and chaplaincies of the Deanery.
2. To lead and facilitate the ownership, development and implementation of the strategic direction (mission) of the Deanery in line with the Diocesan Vision.
3. To oversee the pastoral care and support for all those who hold the Bishop's license in the Deanery and ensure that concerns are reported to the Archdeacon or Bishop as appropriate. The pastoral care of Readers is currently delegated to the Warden of Readers.
4. To convene the Deanery Chapter, and to encourage the full participation of all stipendiary and non-stipendiary ministers.
5. To attend and participate in diocesan meetings of Area Deans and Archdeaconry meetings, according to local practice.

6. To enable good communication between members of the Deanery and Diocesan offices and officers.
7. To support Parish Share offers by example, by encouragement and by sharing information and good news stories.
8. To participate in the recruitment process for clergy and other staff to the deanery as appropriate, for example in the drawing up of parish profiles.
9. To share in the planning and execution of licensing/collation/induction services according to local custom.
10. To share in parish inspections, on behalf of the Archdeacon.
11. Alongside the Lay Chair, to maintain good communication with the Deanery.
12. To stay in regular contact with their deanery steward for retired clergy.
13. To act as returning officer for the election of lay members to Diocesan Synod.

### **When there is a Vacancy**

When a vacancy for the incumbent/incumbent status post in a parish is announced, the Archdeacon will arrange with the Area Dean to meet with the Churchwardens to discuss how the mission and ministry of the parish can reasonably be sustained in the vacancy.

If the vacancy is to be filled the process set out below is followed. If other arrangements for ministry are to be made, the Archdeacon will liaise with the Area Dean and Lay Chair about how these will develop. Whichever route is followed, a period of vacancy is almost certain to follow.

## Responsibilities During a Vacancy

During a vacancy the Area Dean and Churchwardens become 'sequestrators', i.e. the Bishop's officers in the parish. During the vacancy, the Area Dean should be the first point of contact for Churchwardens and others seeking advice and support in the day-to-day running of the parish. (This may often be to direct them as to where they may find the answer rather than providing it!). In some cases, a regular meeting with them may be helpful.

The Area Dean should liaise with the Archdeacon about the supervision of other clergy in the parish and other licensed and authorised ministers. The one exception to this is that in the rare case of there being a title curate in the parish their supervision will be arranged between the Bishop and the Director of IME (and the Area Dean will be informed). In the event of a vacancy in either of these posts, the Archdeacon will work with the remaining one and inform the Area Dean.

The Churchwardens and the Area Dean are responsible for the maintenance of appropriate church services for the parish including provision for baptisms, weddings and funerals. Churchwardens may need help in finding cover, and this may require the active involvement of the Area Dean in establishing rotas and dealing with gaps.

## The Appointment Process

Area Deans and Lay Chairs will be provided with the most up-to-date version of diocesan information booklets which explain the vacancy and appointment process in detail.

Either before or shortly after the incumbent has left, the Archdeacon (and Patron if applicable) and Area Dean will visit the PCC to explain the vacancy process. The PCC will subsequently arrange its own 'Section 11 Meeting'.

The Area Dean will work with the PCC in producing the draft of its profile to send to the Bishop's Office, especially helping them with forming the sections that include a statement of their strength, needs and challenges and a person specification. The Archdeacon will work with the Bishop to draft the statement which may be requested from the Bishop under Section 11 of the Patronage (Benefices) Measure 1986. A statement will in any case be included when the Bishop is appointing a priest-in-charge or is Patron.

The Area Dean and Lay Chair will be asked to provide a paragraph either for the Parish Profile or the Bishop's Statement about the life and nature of the Deanery.

The appointment process is usually overseen by the Archdeacon and the Bishop's Office and involves the Area Dean and Lay Chair in the following ways:

1. The Archdeacon will ensure the Area Dean and Lay Chair are aware of the vacancy timeline.
2. The Area Dean's contact details will be made available to shortlisted candidates, inviting them to make contact to learn more about the life of the local churches and deanery.
3. The Area Dean (and where practicable) the Lay Chair will be invited to meet the candidates at some point on the Parish Visit Day. The Area Dean will be asked to be part of the interview panel.
4. The Archdeacon will inform the Area Dean and Lay Chair when an appointment is made and the likely timescale for induction/licensing.
5. The Area Dean will be involved in the announcement of an appointment and communicate this to the deanery.

## **Welcome the New Priest**

Before the new priest moves in the Area Dean should be in touch with information of interest and concern, for example dates of Chapter and Synod meetings or anything key to the life of the deanery. A note of greeting from the Lay Chair also sets a good tone! The Archdeacon and Area Dean should ensure that at least one of them visits a new priest on the day they move in. It is good practice for the Area Dean to visit again 6-8 weeks after the service to check that all is well.

## **Other Appointments**

The Area Dean should encourage there to be a deanery dimension to the licensing services for Team Vicars and other assistant clergy and at ordination services for colleagues in the Chapter .

## Chaplaincies

Appointments at chaplaincy level (hospitals, prisons, schools), which may be lay or ordained, operate under different procedures and it is expected that the Area Dean will make contact with chaplains who work in the Deanery and seek to support and include them through the Chapter and Synod. Chaplains bring perspectives that could add substantially to the lives of deaneries but some can feel isolated. It may be helpful to entrust someone with ensuring that details of chaplains serving in institutions in the deanery are kept up to date and that chaplains are invited to Chapter meetings. The Archdeacon of Northumberland has a particular responsibility for chaplains across the diocese and can be contact for information or with any concerns.

## Appointment

Area Deans are appointed by the Bishop usually after consultation with the clergy serving a deanery. Their licence is for a five year period which can, after consultation, be renewed. It is generally expected that the Area Dean role will take one day per week.

## Meetings with Bishop and Lay Chairs

There are opportunities for all Area Deans and Lay Chairs to meet with the Bishop and the Archdeacons.

## Meeting with the Archdeacon

Area Deans will be in regular contact with the Archdeacon but there are some more formally arranged meeting of Archdeacon, Area Deans and Lay Chairs in each Archdeaconry throughout the year.

## Finance

1. Travelling expenses are met in full by the Diocese. Claims should be made, in accordance with the usual supporting evidence, to the Diocesan Accounts Office. (See leaflet and form)

2. An annual allowance of £500 is available to each deanery for developmental support, including the purchase of equipment.

3. Claims need to be made within 3 months of expenditure and submitted before the end of the financial year (usually first week of January) There is a diocesan expenses policy that prohibits claims for alcohol.

### Training

No formal training or induction is normally undertaken but as well as using the support networks of Archdeacon, Diocesan Officers and colleagues there are numerous opportunities for development that Area Deans can undertake.

### Canon C23 Of rural deans\*

1. Every rural dean shall report to the bishop any matter in any parish within the deanery which it may necessary or useful for the bishop to know, particularly any case of serious illness or other forms of distress amongst the clergy, the vacancy of any cure of souls and the measures taken by the sequestrators to secure the ministration of the word and sacraments and other rites of the Church during the said vacancy, and any case of a minister from another diocese officiating in any place otherwise than as provided in Canon C8.

2. In the case of any omission in any parish to prepare and maintain a church electoral roll or to form or maintain a parochial church council or to hold the annual parochial church meeting, the rural dean on such omission being brought to their notice shall ascertain and report to the bishop the cause thereof.

3. If at any time the rural dean has reason to believe that there is any serious defect in the fabric, ornaments, and furniture of any church or chapel, or that the buildings of any benefice are in a state of disrepair, s/he shall report the matter to the archdeacon.

4. The rural dean shall be a joint chair (with a member of the House of Laity) of the deanery synod.

\* The Canons still refer to 'Rural Deans' but this term is interchangeable with the term 'Area Dean'.

## 2 THE ROLE OF THE LAY CHAIR

### The Purpose of the Role of the Lay Chair

- To share with the Bishops, Archdeacon and the Area Dean in their ministry of oversight across the deanery;
- To lead the deanery, working collaboratively with the Area Dean and Deanery Development Group to fulfil the vision of the deanery as a local network of churches and communities, inspiring, influencing and leading mission and ministry;
- To fully share with the Area Dean, the responsibility for modelling the good collaborative practice of lay and ordained in the deanery.

NB This role is being fulfilled voluntarily and that there may be occasions when circumstances restrict how much time and energy can be devoted to it.

### Primary Responsibilities

In partnership with the Area Deans:

- Co-chair the Deanery Synod and Deanery Development Group;
- Create and maintain a Deanery Plan for Mission and Ministry;

Understand the canonical responsibilities of an Area Dean and work collaboratively with them in this role.

NB The Deanery Development Group membership includes the Area Dean, the Lay Chair, the Deanery Secretary, the Deanery Finance Officer and lay and clergy representatives. The Deanery Development Group replaces what may have previously been known as the Deanery Standing Committee or the Deanery Leadership Team.

## Key Tasks

Working collaboratively with the Area Dean and the Deanery Development Group, within the restrictions of time and skills, help to ensure:

- a. The Deanery Development Group meets regularly and has a membership which is appropriate for the deanery;
- b. A Deanery Plan for Mission & Ministry is created with the full involvement of the Deanery Synod and following consultation with PCCs; the Plan will have engaged with the diocesan vision of growing church bringing hope;
- c. The Deanery Synod has an engaging agenda and develops a pattern of meetings which encourages involvement, creativity and meaningful outcomes; ordinarily sharing in the chairing of these meetings with the Area Dean;
- d. The administrative needs and those of the Deanery Synod and Area Dean are identified and appropriate support is put in place;
- e. Participation in the mission and life of the deanery is encouraged and developed amongst the laity and the clergy, and that training is made available where appropriate;
- f. Be aware, with the Area Dean, of the general well-being of the clergy and lay leaders;
- g. Liaise with, and attend meetings of, Archdeacons and Bishops;
- h. As 'laity link' attend the Deanery Chapter as and when appropriate;
- i. Support parishes, jointly with the Area Dean, through times of vacancy;
- j. Work with the Area Dean to oversee arrangements for Services of Licensing, Institution or Collation and act as a focus for the deanery's initial support of new Incumbents and their families;
- k. Support the Archdeacon in his/her Parish Visitations;
- l. Support work to prepare proposals for the Diocesan Mission and Pastoral Committee (DMPC);

- m. Be aware of, through attendance, or membership if possible, the discussions and decisions of Diocesan Synod;
- n. Be aware of Generous Giving within the deanery and actively seek to encourage financial generosity and commitment.

## Key Relationships

- The Area Dean;
- The Bishops and Archdeacons;
- The Deanery Development Group and Deanery Synod;
- Churchwardens, especially of parishes in vacancy;
- The Deanery Chapter, particularly 'Greater Chapter' meetings;
- The Lay Chair of the Diocesan Synod and other Deanery Lay Chairs;
- Lay members of General Synod.

## OTHER

- Lay Chairs will be provided with support and development opportunities where appropriate;
- Lay Chairs are reimbursed by the diocese for expenses incurred in the performance of their duties:
- Travelling expenses are met in full by the Diocese. Claims should be made, in accordance with the usual supporting evidence, to the Diocesan Accounts Office. A leaflet and form are available from [Gillian Green](#) in the Accounts Department:
- Claims need to be made within 3 months of expenditure and submitted before the end of the financial year (usually first week of January).
- An annual allowance of £500 is available to each deanery for developmental support, including the purchase of equipment;

This document will be due for review in 2024 before the next triennium begins

## 3 AREAS OF SUPPORT FOR THE DEANERY FROM THE DIOCESE

- The Area Dean's Expenses of Office are provided by the diocese, and may be claimed from the Accounts Department of Church House.
- A Deanery Development Allocation of £500 per annum is available from the diocese to support and stimulate the work of the deanery. The allocation may be used to assist the Area Dean in managing the leadership role, as in administrative support, or in the provision of clergy 'cover' to enable the AD to attend Sunday worship in neighbouring parishes, or in support of mentoring for the AD, or for the gaining of any skills deemed helpful for the tasks. The allocation may be used for specific projects within the deanery, such as training, conferences, provision of useful equipment, and mission projects etc. Please check with the finance department in Church House before making a purchase to ensure it can be accommodated.
- In larger Deaneries there may be a case for the Deanery to appoint an Assistant Area Dean, with specific areas of responsibility.

# 1 THE DEANERY PLANNING TOOLKIT & HOW TO USE IT

The toolkit will consist of:

- Prayer and study resources;
- Pre-populated data sources for parishes in your deanery and summary data for other deaneries;
- A template Deanery Plan;
- A briefing from Bishop's Staff specific to your deanery;
- A power-point presentation;
- A video of the launch event on October 15th 2022 talking through the toolkit and its use.

We suggest DDG members take time to read through the materials individually as well as in meetings, thinking about which aspects of the toolkit they might be most at home focussing on: some are gifted at reading and interpreting data, others will refer to help lead with the prayer and study resources. DDGs will want to reflect on how this process relates to Deanery Plans already in existence.

Some DDGs have a well-developed plan. Where this is the case, it will be possible to build on work already done and use this process as a tool to refine it and assist in developing a wider perspective, taking into account your situation in relation to other deaneries in the diocese and noting whether you have considered all the criteria highlighted in the toolkit.

Where DDG members feel daunted by the task of developing a plan, it might be helpful to begin by focussing initially for a couple of meetings on ensuring the group has the right people in the right roles. Spending time using the prayer and study resources may also be fruitful rather than engaging straight away with the data sources and template. Please also talk with your Archdeacon who will help you to discern a good starting point.

There cannot be a precise formula for calculating ministry provision throughout the diocese of Newcastle as there are so many diverse contexts. The process of developing a plan will involve a prayerful dialogue, within DDG, between DDG and Deanery Synod, between DDG and Bishop's Staff and between deaneries.

The Toolkit outlines the criteria we feel need to be taken into account when developing a plan. Considering these criteria will assist DDGs in taking a big perspective, recognising that factors inter-relate. We cannot simply focus for instance on population, wealth, deprivation or numbers of buildings. It is important to reflect on softer factors such as where you discern the mission energy to be, what you discern to be your priorities for community engagement, any specific recent events or dynamics which might affect the needs of a parish (eg pastoral breakdown, unexpected death of an incumbent in post, events in the wider community). This will be a conversational process. The Archdeacons are available to attend DDG meetings and expect to be part of the conversations.

It is worth paying some attention to group process and culture as you begin the Planning Process to ensure as open, creative and collaborative process as possible.

It is recommended to:

- Meet at least once a month
- Meet for up to 2 hours
- Make time for prayer and Bible study, Lectio Divina etc.
- Establish ground rules of speaking and listening, mutual respect and confidentiality
- Have an away day or morning with a meal together if possible
- Maintain regular contact with Deanery Chapter, Deanery Synod and your Archdeacon
- Keep asking, what kind of support do we need?

Here are some issues to think about, when you are establishing your team culture:

- How do we ensure that we include pray, study and reflection together at each meeting?
- How can we make sure we have the right people in the room?
- Do we need a standard agenda?
- Do we need the same chair at every meeting?
- How will we record decisions and check that they have been acted upon?
- How do we make sure we don't neglect outcomes?
- How can we ensure that the voices of quieter people are heard?
- There is some evidence that people have different learning and spiritual styles. This may have an impact on how a conversation develops, so how can we make sure differences are respected and learned from?
- How important is consensus? How do we receive unpopular suggestions?
- How will we evaluate the meeting?
- It is good at the end of each meeting to offer an opportunity for each member to add to or comment on the meeting.

The DDG will be responsible for producing a draft plan, but as in all things Anglican, the Bishop and Bishop's staff are ultimately accountable for the deployment of stipendiary clergy, so some discussion will be an integral part of this process. Our aim is to provide sufficient data and information at the outset that DDGs and Bishop's staff can work together in a transparent way to produce a mutually agreeable plan.

Following the launch event on October 15th 2022, the next large meeting proposed will be on Saturday 4th February 2023, when there will be the opportunities to discuss initial thinking with members of other DDGs. Draft plans are invited to be sent to Archdeacons in June 2023.



 THE CHURCH  
OF ENGLAND  

---

DIOCESE OF NEWCASTLE