

A Brief Commentary on Oversight Ministry

This document should be read alongside the Oversight Minister Role Description.

Context

Our new model of ministry has emerged from a period of extensive consultation about how to deploy a reduced number of stipendiary incumbents most fruitfully to realise our Diocesan Vision “to grow a sustainable network of Christ-like, lively and diverse Christian communities in every place which are effective in making disciples and in seeking to transform our society and God’s world”.

We have now agreed maps with each set of paired deaneries which outline the shape of the Mission Areas and the number of Oversight Ministers allocated to them.

Oversight Ministers will oversee mission and ministry across the Mission Areas, providing vision, direction and leadership for a cluster of existing and new congregations. Some Mission Areas will be served by two or more Oversight

Ministers working collegially, while others will be served by one, according to size and context. With a commitment to collaborative teamwork at every level, they will identify, build and enable Focal Ministry teams for each congregation. They will work particularly closely with Focal Ministers, providing supervision, support and mentoring.

We are not starting from a blank canvas, but building on a firm foundation of good ministry which is already happening across the diocese. The outstanding response to the ongoing Coronavirus crises has in many places brought our “Lights for Christ” initiative to life. The people of God have been involved in the mission of God, serving and witnessing to God’s love in action, prayer and worship. We have seen our clergy fulfilling on Oversight role, resourcing enabling, and supporting this mission and ministry.

Role of the Oversight Minister

For the foreseeable future, many (but not all) ‘oversight ministry’ posts will not be to single-parish benefices, but to Mission Areas incorporating more than one parish. By the term ‘oversight ministry’ we are simply seeking to emphasise what is central to the ordinal: that those who are called to the ordained ministry are called above all to mobilise the whole people of God.

The primary purpose of the Oversight Minister in this model is to enable all the baptised to live out the fullness of their vocation, having received the light of Christ, ‘to shine as a light in the world to the glory of God the Father’. ‘Guided by the Spirit, priests are to discern and foster the gifts of all God’s people’. This nurturing, empowering, enabling ministry is not ‘one size fits all’: it will take a different shape in each local context. But the consistent emphasis will be, for

stipendiary oversight ministers to release the people of God to be signs, first-fruits and agents of God's kingdom in the world. We recognise that many of our clergy are already working in this way.

The Role Descriptions of Oversight Ministers are comprehensive and generic in nature in order explain the range and scope of this ministry and how the role can work in practise in the Mission Areas. However, as they are implemented they

will need to be adapted to local circumstances as we are acutely aware of the many different contexts and challenges in each Mission Area, and one size does not fit all. Once appointed, the Associate Archdeacon-Transition Enablers will manage this process of local consultation, and all Oversight Ministers Role Descriptions will be signed off by the Archdeacon on behalf of the Bishops. Above all the roles must be fulfilling, realistic and achievable.

The role has been shaped around 4 key areas

1. *To oversee mission and ministry in the Mission Area, managing change and providing vision, direction and leadership.*

Every parish/benefice will have an Oversight Minister who will be Priest in Charge. They will nurture and support Focal Ministers and ministry teams for the congregations under their care. Where there is more than one Oversight Minister in a Mission Area we recommend that they are licensed as Assistant Curates in the parishes where their colleague is the Oversight Minister to emphasise the collegiate nature of this relationship.

2. *To grow a healthy church, watching over the well-being of the whole people of God and equipping them for the whole mission of God.*

The Priestly gifts of shepherd, teacher, pastor, evangelist and enabler come into play in seeking, nurturing and releasing disciples of Jesus who themselves make disciples.

3. *To ensure mission and ministry in the Mission Area reflects the Christian faith as understood in the Church of England and the diocesan strategy.*

This involves advancing the priorities in our diocesan vision of Renewed, Released and Rejuvenated.

4. *To keep watch over the leaders in the Mission Area*

A dependency upon God and prioritizing prayer is foundational in the role description. Oversight Ministers will be instrumental in identifying and then supporting leaders in their personal development and self-care.

Focal Ministry

With our emphasis on releasing the whole people of God for the whole mission of God, some people will find their calling to be leadership within the local church. We are aware that the existence and availability of lay leaders varies enormously across the diocese. In some place people will already be exercising this responsibility. In others it

will take time to identify and nurture new leadership.

Building on our learning from the Focal Ministry pilot projects, by the autumn we will have in place a comprehensive scheme to help parishes identify, train and support Focal Ministers.

Self Supporting Ministers

In many places SSM's will play an important part in the leadership teams of Mission Areas. In many cases they may be Focal Ministers, leading an existing church or new congregation. Some may

be Oversight Ministers. SSM's will be a vital component in ensuring the sacramental provision of Baptism and Eucharist in deaneries and Mission Areas.

Transitioning to the new model & role descriptions

Bishop Pete has been very clear that this new model will not happen or be imposed overnight. We will transition as vacancies occur and we have the right number of stipendiary clergy in each Mission Area.

All new appointments will have an Oversight Minister Role Description which will be context specific.

We have a number of Mission Areas where we already have the right number of clergy in posts. Discussions will take

place with these clergy and parishes about transitioning to the new model.

Where we have Mission Areas which have more than their allocation of Oversight Ministers it will take longer for the new model to develop but the intention is for all Mission Areas to transition to this new model with Oversight Ministers.

The clergy and PCC's in the Mission Area will be involved in contextualising and agreeing the priorities reflected in the Oversight Ministers role descriptions.

Support & Accountability

We recognise that the clergy and parishes will need considerable support to help them navigate the changes. Financial support has been made available by the Church Commissioners through the Diocesan Transformation Fund for this purpose.

The intention is to have an experienced transition enabler for each paired deanery. We are calling these Associate Archdeacon- Transition Enablers and they will work closely with the Archdeacons, Parish Support Team and Area Deans. Their role will be to support all churches and clergy through the transition to the new model of ministry. They will provide regular support and coaching to the Oversight Ministers and will enable and source training and development for the Oversight Ministers in their roles. They will work with clergy

and parishes to agree role descriptions for Oversight Ministers and ensure clarity of expectations.

The Area Deans will continue to pay particular attention to the pastoral care of the clergy and lay leaders and the management and governance of the deanery, including convening chapter meetings and being co-chair of Deanery Synod.

The Associate Archdeacon-Transition Enablers and the Area Deans are accountable to the relevant Archdeacon.

The Area Deans for the paired deaneries and the Associate Archdeacon will work collaboratively together

The existing structures of accountability for Incumbent level clergy will remain unchanged when they transition to

Oversight Ministers. They will continue to hold a license from the Bishop of Sheffield and be in direct pastoral relationship with the Bishops.

In advance of our full bid to the Transformation Fund in late autumn we have been granted funding in advance to appoint 2 Transition Enablers (one in each Archdeaconry). We anticipate that

funding for the other 4 posts will follow in 2021. These posts will be funded for a period of 5 years by which time the changes should be fully embedded.

The full bid to the Transformation Fund will also include a number of posts to support Oversight Ministers and Mission Areas with buildings and operational management issues.