



Towards a generous and flourishing Diocese of Sheffield in 2025

Analysis of responses to the consultation document to
deliver the Diocesan strategy

Introduction

In May 2019 Sheffield Diocese launched its consultation document to deliver the Diocesan strategy entitled "Towards a generous and flourishing Diocese of Sheffield in 2025". The deadline for responses was 12 July 2019.

On 26th July a group met with an independent verifier to analyse the results, agree the common themes and draw up a Q&A document from the consultation responses. The group comprised; Communications Manager LJ Buxton, Parish Support Director Mark Cockayne, Programme Manager Alex Shilkoff, Revd Ian Smith and independent verifier Debbie Oliver. Each person in the analysis group read all the online survey and letter/email responses before the meeting and drew their own summary conclusions. These conclusions were then shared collectively on 26th July and this summary was produced by the independent verifier.

Statistics

Who answered the consultation?

	Online	Email/letter	Totals
PCCs	105	23	128
Individual	24	38	62
Groups	2	4	6
Total responses	131	65	196

Response to question 1 (preferred scenario 6)

	Yes to scenario 6	No to scenario 6	Not made clear either way	Totals
PCCs	91	28	9	128
Individuals	22	11	29	62
Groups	4	0	2	6
Totals	117	39	40	196

Analysis and Summary of Key Themes

The vast majority of respondents agreed with the Task and Finish Group's preferred Scenario 6 as the best way of tackling the current challenges facing Sheffield Diocese. However, this needs to be balanced against the fact many did so with resignation and without much joy. Respondents clearly struggled with feeling "excited" about the model. The small number of respondents who were enthusiastic had either been working this way for some time or who believed "new life comes after the rain". Some saw it as an opportunity to rediscover mission and purpose. It was generally acknowledged the diocese needed to take action now if it was to survive financially and the diocese' honesty was appreciated.

Analysis of the responses clearly highlighted a number of key themes that frequently recurred. These are summarised in this section and explored in more detail in the analysis of the individual questions which follows.

Key Themes:

- **Training** – the importance of it in moving to the new model, how it would be delivered and what form it would take
- **Access to Communion/Communion by Extension** – there was concern about a reduction in Communion with frequent requests for Communion by Extension to be granted in the Diocese
- **Detail about the Implementation plan** – how long it would take, what happens after 2025, how would the reductions be achieved
- **Clarity on roles** – for example questions were asked about what would be the role of the Focal Minister and stipendiary Area Deans
- **Traditions** – there was concern about how each tradition would be respected and maintained in the new model
- **Buildings** – there were suggestions for consolidation, how to use church buildings as sources of income as well as concerns about maintenance costs
- **Other ways to grow income and alternative income streams** – how to grow Common Fund and creative ways to provide additional income.
- **Clergy and lay burn out and morale** – respondents were clearly concerned for the health and well-being of both groups
- **Lay recruitment** – given the current difficulties in securing volunteers, respondents found it difficult to see where the growth of lay leaders would come from
- **Ecumenical approaches** – this was felt to be a positive idea both in terms of learning from and working more closely with
- **Lessons that have been learnt from other diocese** – either about the model proposed or other ways of tackling the same challenges
- **The option proposed was seen as very like the Methodist system** – with the comment that this had not led to growth and resulted in church closures and decline
- **Growth should be encouraged across all demographics** – not just the young
- **Re-structuring of Deaneries** – respondents would like more information on how they would impact on mission
- **The role and cost of central administration** – where savings could be made, what more could be done by the centre to relieve pressure on parishes etc

- **Changing the culture and mind-set of clergy and congregations** – seen as moving away from the traditional vocation of the clergy and clergy skill-set combined with concern about how congregations would accept the changes
- **Poverty versus potential for growth** – the social justice aspect of mission and whether clergy should cover all areas or just those with the most obvious potential for growth
- **Consultation was a done deal** – and it was a rubber-stamping exercise. Some felt not enough detail was available yet to really give feedback.
- **Did not feel excited about proposals** – resignation was more the sentiment

Analysis of Responses by Question

In this section each question is taken in turn with a more detailed analysis of the comments that have contributed to the key themes above.

Question 1 (a) – Do you agree with the Task and Finish Group that scenario 6 is the best option – if so why?

- It was an opportunity for improvement
- People may discover gifts they didn't know they had
- Seen as an opportunity to rediscover mission and purpose
- Recognised the financial need for change
- Appreciated the realism and honesty of the diocese and its willingness and courage to tackle the situation
- The model reflected the strong Biblical principles used in early church with many references to New Testament church
- It was an opportunity for collaborative ministry with lay and clergy working together
- It was the best option to grow the church
- A number of parishes were already working in this way
- Seen as a way of reaching all areas and churches partnering each other with a presence in each community
- The model helps parishes be a church in the modern world
- The proposal helps to provide something that is contextually appropriate/incarnational
- It appears to be the fairest solution
- Needs must
- It was the least-worst option of the 6
- People were choosing it with sadness and resignation

Question 1 (b) – Do you agree with the Task and Finish Group that scenario 6 is the best option – if so why not?

- Respondents couldn't see the theological basis for the proposal
- It was not different enough to the previous strategy that hadn't worked i.e. Option 2 – and felt it would still lead to burnout of clergy and laity
- Churches might struggle to maintain membership without ordained leadership
- Growth in numbers would not necessarily lead to growth in financial contributions and growth of Common Fund – millennials don't have as much money, preferring to give to

leaders they respect and where they can see tangible improvements from their contributions and some of our communities are extremely poor with little money to give

- Clergy will become “flying magicians” delivering Communion and moving onto the next church
- Loss of a visible and rooted clergy presence – losing the unique characteristic of the Anglican parish model
- No hard data and evidence provided in the consultation document to help assess the options
- Similar to the Methodist model which has not led to growth but instead has led to more church closures and declining numbers
- Couldn’t see how the proposal would lead to either numerical or financial growth

Question 2 – What do you find most exciting about the proposed new model of ministry?

- It has more relevance to today’s society
- That it provides the potential for new roles and organisational structures to be explored
- That it provides an opportunity for infrastructure, mostly buildings, to be rejuvenated as community resources and opportunities for mission
- It provides the chance to worship in new settings with more relevant services
- It releases laity to be empowered in ministry
- It provides the opportunity for a variety of services and ways to connect to the community including those who do not currently attend church
- It gives more ways for people to grow as disciples
- It discourages an introverted view
- It breaks free of the expectation that Christian faith is just about Sunday observance
- It offers freedom to experiment
- It provides the chance to work creatively with a mixed economy model of church
- It places more emphasis on people and less on buildings
- It releases the vocation of all baptised Christians
- Many did not feel excited and felt that ‘excite’ was the wrong word to use

Question 3 – What do you find most challenging about the proposed new model of ministry?

- Getting the communication messages and frequency correct
- That church buildings provide a presence in local communities, which is well recognised by local inhabitants. Manifestations of church which do not have their own building, or an obvious location, might risk being less accessible to the general public and harder to identify
- Obtaining clarity over the pace of implementation
- Whether there are any guarantees this will fix the financial problems
- How success will be measured
- Winning people over and securing buy-in will be difficult
- Lay capacity – given current challenges with recruitment there was genuine concern over increasing numbers of lay leaders and where they would come from
- There was a risk that the ordained will just be seen as “flying Communion” celebrants
- Guarding against inappropriate lay leaders being appointed
- Ongoing training and support for both clergy and laity
- Ensuring there were suitable lines of accountability and decision making
- Seen by some as moving away from the traditional clerical vocation and role

- Some current clergy do not have the right skills to work in teams as “people managers”
- Challenging to provide access to weekly communion especially for more elderly congregations who find it difficult to travel
- The risk of burnout of laity and clergy
- Working with the different traditions within each Mission Area
- Delivering the changes with sensitivity
- Attracting clergy in the future if we are reducing numbers
- Ensuring inclusivity and diversity of leadership in the model.

Question 4 – What support or resources do you think you might need to help you implement the new model?

- Training – for clergy and lay leaders
- Financial support, professional guidance and ongoing mentoring/supervision to assist existing congregations to develop their churches to meet the changing model.
- Additional support for lay leaders and SSMs, so that they understand and engage with the new model.
- A practical plan, backed up by people experienced in change management, to promote and implement the new Diocesan Strategy, engaging with congregations, SSMs and stipendiary clergy.
- A supported network to allow the sharing of anxieties and problems, as well as enabling the sharing of experiences and developing of practices within the new model.
- Guidance and professional input for churches on how to achieve changes to church buildings which would result in extra income generating activities.
- Allowing lay ministers to administer Communion by Extension and / or reserved sacrament
- Provision of emotional support and mentoring for clergy to help them through the changes
- Dissemination of lessons that have been learnt from other diocese going through the same problem
- Help with the identification of leaders – where are they and what support will they have access to?
- Support with administration and buildings compliance
- Communication of a clear and exciting vision of the future to win hearts and minds
- Ordinand selection and formation to be based on the new strategy
- Sharing best practice and celebrating success
- Central services must take on much more in order to release parishes for mission
- Sharing skills and expertise across the diocese e.g. financial expertise
- Exploring other options and models fully
- Opening up the training of deployable SSMs to more people
- Identification and release of more evangelists
- Checking that we are making the best use of our assets
- Exploring ways of making Common Fund contributions more attractive

Questions 5 – Do you have any questions of clarification which you would like answering?

These have been grouped under the following themes and are available in a separate Question and Answer document at Appendix A:-

- Roles
- Implementation

- Resourcing
- Training
- Funding
- Miscellaneous

Any other comments you would like the Task and Finish Group to consider?

- Would like to take opportunities to work ecumenically and look to share buildings and ministries
- There is concern that the small size of the Task and Finish Group may lead to the impression being given that changes are being "imposed" upon churches. A larger group to design and oversee the implementation of the Diocesan Strategy will be needed, including regular review and adjustment where appropriate
- Would like to revisit Deanery pairings
- Consider deploying the 75 clergy in areas of most potential for growth then plant to grow from a position of strength, closing churches to end up with a smaller network of thriving ones
- Allocate clergy on the basis of a parish's ability to pay, partnering parishes who are unable to pay with those that can
- Archdeaconry and deanery level engagement and solutions are key to successful implementation – need to develop solutions locally and not just centrally
- Increase the number of Archdeacons rather than having stipendiary Area Deans
- Have a wider Stakeholder Group as a reference group to monitor implementation of the changes
- Operate a "time bank" type system, brokered centrally, to "buy" specific support from other partnerships/parishes
- Join up or merge with other dioceses to save money
- Have "circles of safety" with Bishops and Senior Staff spending more time at parish level building relationships.
- Deploy clergy linked to Church House and Archdeacons and Bishops to local parishes as Focal Leaders
- Use digital solutions to communicate and share documents and ideas
- Provide resource per Deanery for administration and compliance
- One size does not fit all –flexibility is needed in the application of proposals e.g. rural vs city churches, deprived parishes vs affluent areas
- Bring in expertise in organisational change from outside the church
- Need to look at the reasons why there is declining membership in C of E
- A plea for Prisons to be included in the new mission areas
- Inter-diocesan equality between the North and the South should be investigated with resources shared more equally – Diocese of Sheffield should be lobbying for that
- Ongoing involvement and buy-in is key
- Found the consultation document too difficult to read and understand – "too Churchy"
- Pilot the new model in one or two Deaneries first
- Need to identify pioneer starters and pioneer sustainers
- Good, vibrant communications are vital
- Felt the consultation was a rubber-stamping exercise and a fait accompli
- Pay stipendiary lay leadership where appropriate

- Consider SSMs and lay leaders as Oversight Ministers
- Only put the new model in place once there is enough support staff in place
- Review deanery and chapter governance structures to reflect the new model of ministry
- Challenge whether the diocese is being missional enough
- The consultation was a model of ministry and not a strategy but a vehicle to implement the strategy
- More discussion is required about the new Deanery boundaries and formation of Mission Areas
- Expecting unpaid laity to do the role currently undertaken by paid stipendiary clergy undervalues the current role of clergy
- Need to look at re-configuring Common Fund so that it takes account of factors such as deprivation, building costs, percentage of income and banding levels.
- Pastoral supervision plus mentoring support to be provided to clergy
- Allow opt outs to the model if churches are growing and generating income
- Consider a membership scheme similar to the National Trust with a rewards structure to encourage more members.

Next Steps

The Task and Finish group will meet between August and October to consider the feedback and make any adaptations to the model as a result of the consultation exercise.

In addition, the Task and Finish group will produce a question and answer document to address the questions posed by the respondents. This will be sent to all those who responded and will be posted online.

Bishop's Council will meet to consider the recommendations of the Task and Finish group and a final proposal will be presented to the Diocesan Synod in November.

Appendix A

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ARISING FROM CONSULTATION DOCUMENT

	Question	Answer
	ROLES	
R1	How will lines of accountability work and who will be responsible for the actions and directions each parish may take?	
R2	Who will make decisions regarding disagreements and disputes in a Missional Area?	
R3	If clergy are covering a wider area, is that practical given the geographical areas involved?	
R4	What does good leadership look like in this model?	
R5	If some churches have large numbers of lay leaders, will they be re-deployed between churches?	
R6	Where, if at all, might interim or part-time stipends fit in, especially during transition or growth?	
R7	What would be the role of the Focal Minister?	
R8	How will Focal Leaders be appointed, trained and reviewed?	
R9	How long will a term of office for a Focal Leader be?	
R10	How will the Focal Minister relate to existing church offices?	
R11	How will appointments of Focal Ministers be managed if the patron is not the Bishop.	
R12	What is the difference between the role of Church Wardens and Focal Leaders?	
R13	How is the new model meant to avoid burn out of laity and clergy?	
R14	What would be the role of the stipendiary Area Dean and the existing Area Deans?	
R15	What will be the role of the Buildings Support Officer be?	
R16	Is there a role for pioneer ministers or are they being phased out?	
R17	Will the selection and training of curates be changed to equip them for the new model?	
R18	Will this divert lay people from their baptismal calling in work and family to run the church?	

R19	Can SSMs also be Oversight Ministers or will they be stipendiary clergy	
R20	Will we end up with too many evangelists and not enough pastors?	
R21	What will happen to clergy who see their vocation differently to that of Oversight Minister?	
	IMPLEMENTATION	
I1	What thought is being given to resource planning beyond 2025?	
I2	What succession planning has been considered?	
I3	If this proposal does not work out, what is Plan B?	
I4	What is the implementation timetable?	
I5	Can our church opt out if we don't accept the model?	
I6	Will Mission Partnerships and Benefices that are working well still be required to change?	
I7	Why are we focussed on the younger generation when middle aged and older people could be encouraged?	
I8	What thought has been given to working ecumenically?	
I9	How can we start new growth whilst honouring the existing services in parishes?	
I10	Are we prepared to consider the use of Communion by Extension as regular provision?	
I11	Can Communion be administered by a lay person?	
I12	How will Communion be made possible for parishes with very different traditions about style and frequency of services?	
I13	How do the new arrangements meet the legal requirements for the constitution of churches?	
I14	How will you measure success and monitor progress?	
I15	How will the strategy ensure all local congregations have a regular diet of bible teachings?	
I16	How quickly do we have to move to 75 clergy?	
I17	What will the process be for reducing to 75 clergy?	
I18	Are locally funded ministers in addition to the 75?	

I19	Would the number of Mission Areas be determined by the number of potential Oversight Ministers?	
I20	Will parishes have a say on who their Oversight Minister is?	
I21	Will there be only one Oversight Minister in each Mission Area?	
I22	Will individual parishes have a Focal Minister if they lose their current vicar?	
I23	How are we seeking God's guidance in the implementation going forward?	
I24	What about Church Schools? How will governing bodies and Head Teachers be supported?	
I25	How will this model work in LEPs where the incumbent might not always be Anglican?	
I26	Will we get an opportunity to provide feedback on the final model prior to approval?	
I27	Will a church's tradition be honoured in this model?	
I28	Does Canon Law allow us to implement the model?	
I29	Can we reduce the number of PCCs in the new model?	
I30	Can we do a bottom up consultation starting with the local community?	
I31	How will the new Missional Areas be decided?	
I32	Can Prisons be included in Mission Areas?	
I33	How will parishes in vacancy be helped to transition?	
I34	How can we ensure diversity and inclusivity?	
I35	Will clergy be asked to move parishes?	
	TRAINING	
T1	What training will be available for clergy to help them transition?	
T2	Why are we stopping training for lay readers, pastoral workers and parish evangelists at this time?	
T3	Can we train people quickly enough?	
T4	Can training be available locally?	
T5	Can people access online training and webinars?	
T6	Can we make St Peter's College more accessible particularly in deprived areas that are digitally excluded?	

T7	How can you ensure that people are trained to ensure there are no safeguarding issues and they are theologically competent?	
	RESOURCES	
Res1	What provision will there be for Occasional Offices, especially where there are high numbers of these?	
Res2	If we do grow, will there be more stipendiary posts?	
Res3	Why can't those in Church House who are ordained be moved into parishes, even if on a part-time basis?	
Res4	Will you reduce Church House staff by 25% if you reduce clergy by that number?	
Res5	How specifically will the diocese help to simplify and provide support with administration and compliance issues?	
Res6	How will we increase the number of SSMs and how far will they be deployable?	
Res7	Is there a property, HR and Finance strategy to support the mission?	
Res8	Would it make more sense to close some church buildings and merge parishes?	
Res9	If a church needs to close, how will the decision be taken?	
Res10	What will happen to the empty vicarages that are released by having less clergy?	
Res11	Will the Cathedral be included in the cuts?	
Res12	Can we invest in festival churches to reduce buildings without putting extra strain on clergy?	
Res13	How could we deploy retired clergy to support the new model?	
Res14	With a smaller number of clergy, why do we need 2 Bishops and 2 Archdeacons?	
Res15	What opportunities are there to share resources and reduce bespoke costs?	
Res16	Can we have more detail on what SDF funded central support would look like?	
Res17	Would it make more sense to maximize our income from vacant vicarages rather than selling off our assets?	
	FUNDING	
F1	Who funds the additional travel costs of lay and ordained ministers?	
F2	Will parishes who are not able to have their own clergy have to pay expenses for visiting clergy?	
F3	Are we lobbying NCI about the financial inequalities between diocese?	

F4	What evidence is there that the strategy will result in growth of Common Fund?	
F5	Will churches that go from a full-time priest to sharing a priest still be expected to maintain current Common Fund contributions?	
F6	What will happen when the SDF funded posts run out?	
F7	When will the moratorium on clergy appointments be lifted?	
F8	Will there be investment and resources for church planting?	
F9	Can we consider paying some lay leaders to ensure the most suited and gifted people will take on the role?	
	MISC	
M1	Who is on the Task and Finish Group?	
M2	How did we get to this stage of the consultation?	
M3	How long has the scale of challenge and financial problems been known?	
M4	Are we addressing the right question e.g. is the key problem how missional we are currently expected to be in our churches?	
M5	What lessons have we learnt from other churches and dioceses?	
M6	What lessons have been learnt from the 2012 strategy and has it worked?	
M7	What plans are in place to protect the needs of those who are covered by the Equality Act?	
M8	Can the 2019 Review of Church House report be shared?	
M9	Have we considered merging with another diocese or sharing administrative functions?	
M10	Many visitors to church for whatever reason, want to talk to a parish priest face to face. How will this be affected?	
M11	Do the parish patrons need to be consulted?	
M12	What is "natter" and how are people in these groups encouraged to grow in their faiths?	
M13	Which are the 25 most deprived parishes?	
M14	How does the proposal fit with the diocesan synod commitment to focus on the poor?	
M15	What are Resourcing Churches?	
M16	Can service times only be changed by the PCC?	

M17	What is a learning community and how will it work?	
M18	Will lots of new separate congregations mean we lose the sense of church family?	
M19	Is Scenario 6 just Scenario 2 – is the proposed model radical enough?	