

Frequently Asked Questions from the Shared Deanery Events

You may not recognise your exact question here. We had many that overlapped. So, we have abbreviated or combined these questions.

Section 1: the new model of ministry – Oversight Ministry and Focal Ministry

This includes Oversight Ministers (OM) and Focal Ministers (FM) but also wider issues. Each theme appears in a different sub-section.

General questions about the new model of ministry

Will we still have parishes in mission areas?

Yes. We are not planning to change the number of parishes. Each Mission Area will comprise one or more parishes under the oversight of one or more Oversight Ministers. Where there is more than one parish in the Mission Area the Oversight Ministers will work collaboratively to look at the best way to provide mission and ministry in that geographical Mission Area

The web page below sets out the consultation process that took place in 2019. You can download the booklet, which includes maps of the proposed mission areas in each deanery. Some of these changed a little in the consultation but many stayed the same and it gives the broad picture.

<https://www.sheffield.anglican.org/consultation2019>

Are Oversight Minister & Focal Minister different names for current roles?

No, though there is continuity and overlap. The essential focus of Oversight Ministry is the mobilisation of the whole people of God for the whole mission of God (enabling, equipping and developing the vocation of every baptised Christian), while defining how that works out in each place through a contextualised role description.

You can find a fuller description of Oversight Ministry in the consultation document (see previous box). There will inevitably be a lot in common with current vicar / priest-in-charge roles but there is a conscious difference in focus.

Focal Ministry is a new form of authorised ministry (usually lay) to help to provide local focus and a regular presence to existing and new congregations. They will normally work as part of a team alongside other lay leaders like Lay Readers, Worship leaders and churchwardens.

For lots more information visit: <https://www.sheffield.anglican.org/focal-ministry>

Is there any difference between this model and 'Team Ministry'?

Yes. Team ministries are legal structures with clearly defined clergy roles (Team Rector, Team Vicar, Curate). Mission Areas are local partnerships with an intentional shared oversight. They can be more easily contextualised with regard to specific responsibilities and the gifts of each Oversight Minister. Benefices and parishes in a Mission Area remain as legal entities, although the option of pastoral reorganisation remains. Our model also aspires to developing local Focal Ministry Teams in every congregation/church, which will release the clergy to exercise strategic oversight and develop the ministries of the whole people of God. The other major difference is in terms of the intentional provision of mentoring, training and personal development for both OMs & FMs.

Could we have a leaflet or short film to share with our PCCs this new model?

We are working on a short film to communicate the diocesan vision: look out for details in the New Year. We will also be producing other resources to help church members understand the new model of ministry.

Rotherham Deanery is well under its allocation on the new model, creating pressure on current clergy. Can the Bishops' Senior Staff offer any hope on this front?

This situation is very much on the radar. A new appointment has just been announced in the Clifton / Herringthorpe / Whiston mission area (to commence early Feb 2021) and we hope to be able to make more appointments in 2021, depending on our finances as a diocese.

Could we make more strategic use of our retired clergy? Do they have experience to offer beyond where they happen to live?

Our retired clergy already play a very significant part in supporting the mission and ministry in the diocese. We are enormously grateful to them. We hope that they will continue to offer their service to the Church as Mission Areas involve them as part of the ordained resources available. Of course, we also recognise that some retired clergy do not wish to offer further public ministry.

What about support for sacramental ministry? Isn't this still an issue in the new model?

Bishop Pete: yes, it will be, no question -- at least to begin with. Long-term, the plan is to recruit additional self-supporting clergy, who will help to reduce the pressure on stipendiary oversight ministers; and I will not be surprised if a proportion of those initially called into Focal Leadership discover a vocation to ordained ministry (just as historically many Readers have done). But there is no doubt that we will be hard pressed to sustain a reliable pattern of a weekly celebration of the Eucharist in the 'golden slot' on a Sunday morning (i.e. starting between 9.30am to 11.00am) in every parish or benefice. So those who love to receive Holy Communion at a special time may have to be prepared to go to more than one place; and those who love to receive Holy Communion in a special place may have to be prepared to go at more than one time. I also note that 'sacramental ministry' has become shorthand for Eucharistic celebrations. Holy Baptism is also a Dominical sacrament. I wish I encountered as much urgency around the exercise of that sacrament (which is by definition focused on those who are not yet members of the Body of Christ) as I do about the Eucharist (which is by definition focused on those who are already members of the Body of Christ).

What should we do next to move towards the new model of ministry?

The Archdeacons, Associate Archdeacons and PST are working with parishes to form the Mission Areas and to produce the role descriptions for the Oversight Ministers. These need to be agreed between the Oversight Minister, the PCC's in the Mission Area, and the Bishops Senior Staff. To take this next step please contact an Associate Archdeacon or the PST.

Our parish incumbents have been invited to become Oversight Ministers in the new model and quite a few have already done so. In addition, all new appointments to vacancies in the Mission Areas will be Oversight Ministers. Any Incumbents who wish to do this should contact their Archdeacon or Associate Archdeacon for an initial conversation.

Lockdown temporarily freed us from a lot of time expended on buildings. Do the Associate Archdeacon roles include any buildings remit? Is a central 'building maintenance' role an option to lessen the burden on local churches / ministers?

We recognise the importance of freeing Oversight Ministers, Focal Ministers and Mission Areas from the constraints of building and administrative burdens. This is not the role of the Associate Archdeacons. However, we will be able to fund dedicated building officer and administrative support for each twinned deanery through our funding bid to central church. These appointments, to be made in 2021, will be a great support in making the new model of ministry work. In addition, work is going on in Church House to develop ways to be able to provide more support for parishes in these areas.

When will the new Associate Archdeacons be on the ground? What will be their initial priorities? Will their roles have 'teeth'?

The first 2 of our Associate Archdeacons will be in post from January 2021. We will have an additional 4 funded through our funding bid to central church who should be in post later in 2021, enabling us to have one Associate Archdeacon for each of our 6 twinned deaneries.

Their initial priorities will be to help parishes and deaneries form their Mission Areas and agree bespoke role descriptions for the Oversight Ministers. They will provide support and coaching for the Oversight Ministers, and work with them and our Area Deans to develop Focal Ministry and to support all our churches through the transition to the new model of ministry. These posts are funded for 5 years.

Please clarify the criteria for the 5 capacity-funded mission priest posts

The capacity-funded posts are in addition to the number of Oversight Ministers allocated in the deanery maps and have been funded by the central church. The intention is to increase the number of parishes that can make a contribution above the cost of the ministry cost for that post, thereby making an additional contribution to Common Fund to support other clergy posts in poorer parts of the diocese. Currently we only have 22 out of 175 parishes that do this, and we need to increase this number if the diocese is going to be financially viable in the long term.

What is happening ecumenically regarding these changes?

Admittedly, we need to do more work in this regard, but we certainly haven't been working in a 'Church of England bubble'! The Archdeacon of Sheffield & Rotherham is a member of the Joint Oversight of LEPs group. He meets regularly with ecumenical partners to both care for our established LEPs and to think creatively about opportunities for closer working. Bishop Pete has also convened meetings of ecumenical leaders to consider how we might work together more strategically to share resources in the mission of God. As is often the case, ecumenical partnerships are best developed at grass root level and we will continue to encourage Mission Areas to creatively explore these.

Is it time to move away from the Four Headed Beast language to something more positive, e.g. Four Major Opportunities?

Bishop Pete: I have some sympathy with this suggestion: if the language of the Four Headed Beast is unhelpful and demoralising, perhaps we should move away from it. But I would not want, in the process, to create the impression that the problems have gone away and are not seriously threatening to the future of our Diocese. So as long as we don't fall into denial, hiding our heads in the sand ostrich-style in the hope that the Beast will go away, then yes, let's take the more positive line and focus on our opportunities where Attendance, Budgets, Church structures and Demographics are concerned!

When we began the new strategy, a couple of years ago, 2025 seemed a long way off: are we on track?

Bishop's Senior Staff Team monitor the progress we are making on a monthly basis using a traffic light system. We are currently rated Amber/Green which is mainly the result of delays caused by Covid-19. We currently have nearly 1000 members of our prayer community, have developed a selection and training programme for Focal Ministers, have started 20 new congregations, (although Covid has prevented many from meeting) have 4 Resourcing Churches and have launched our Lights for Christ initiative. We have also started to appoint Oversight Ministers, some Focal Ministers and started to implement our new model of ministry. The successful Transformation Bid will provide us with much needed resources to help us continue to make progress. Our major concern is the reduction in Common Fund, because of Covid; it is essential that we recover and increase this to sustain the growth of the diocese.

Questions about oversight ministry

When does a parish priest become an Oversight Minister?

Clergy will continue to be licensed as parish clergy, though may be licensed to more than one parish (preferably all) in the Mission Area. All newly appointed stipendiary incumbent status posts will be as Oversight Ministers and we are inviting currently serving parish clergy to adopt the OM role description. In some cases, this has already happened; in some, existing clergy will be moving to an OM role description when a colleague OM is appointed in the Mission Area; and in others, there is further conversation to be had. Remember that adopting the OM role is intended to release the clergy to exercise a different form of ministry in the Mission Area. So, conversations with affected PCCs are important too. This will be a principal responsibility of our Associate Archdeacon Transition Enablers.

Will OMs remain burdened with responsibility but no real control if FMs take on key areas (buildings, safeguarding, etc.)?

The role of the Oversight Minister is not to do all the ministry but to ensure that all the ministry is done. Releasing the gifts and vocations of all baptised Christians may mean that some will take on responsibility for things like safeguarding and buildings as in fact many do already. However, these things will remain legally the responsibility of the PCC and Oversight Minister. In reality, this is no different from the way many parishes currently work.

Will clergy training change to help them deal better with these changing collaborative models and new power dynamics?

Yes. We are blessed to have many excellent and well-trained clergy in our diocese. We will provide them with the support that they need to work as Oversight Ministers, primarily through one to one support and coaching from our newly appointed Associate Archdeacons, but also through our clergy training programme called Leading Well. This has already been reshaped around the knowledge and skills that Oversight Ministers need. Oversight Ministers will work collaboratively with others, not least with Focal Ministers in their Mission Area.

How can we prevent Oversight Ministers and Focal Ministers getting bogged down with building issues?

Buildings often come up in the conversations about our new model of ministry. Some people see them as their greatest asset for their mission and ministry, and others as their greatest burden. A multi-disciplinary team (lead by the Archdeacon of Doncaster and including members from DAC, PST and people with specialist knowledge of church buildings) have developed an audit tool to help Mission Areas and deaneries make better planning decisions about the use of their buildings. This includes looking at the condition and financial challenges, mission opportunities and potential for community usage. The audit tool is currently being trialled in Tankersley Deanery and should be available for wider use in 2021.

How do you become a vicar? And are there many vacancies?

To find out more, first visit our vocations page (see below). This is the sort of journey that best progresses by conversation – with your local minister and then the vocations team.

<https://www.sheffield.anglican.org/vocations>

Questions about focal ministry

Where do parishes find potential Focal Ministers? In some areas, people are tired / getting older / have laid down roles during 2020.

In some parishes, these people are already there. They may be existing leaders, licensed or lay, or people whose sense of calling and vocation has yet to be nurtured. In some places where numbers are small and people are getting older and tired it will be important to continue to reach out in mission to grow the body of Christ and then to nurture the calling and gifts of these new Christians. Looking at the wider Mission Area and even across the twinned deaneries it might also be possible to look at releasing leaders from churches that are well resourced to help less resourced churches. Associate Archdeacons meeting regularly with their Oversight Ministers in their deaneries will be a good place to explore mutual help and sharing of resources. It is important to be honest however and say that in some places this will take time.

Could small groups be a ‘bottom up’ approach to develop lay leaders?

Yes. One of the important findings on church growth research is that small groups are really significant in churches that grow. They help people grow in knowledge, confidence and discipleship and are a safe space for people to practise their gifts, not least growing in leadership skills. For a number of years the PST have been promoting small groups through the MAP tools and through providing leadership development training. There are also some excellent resources on developing small groups on the St Peter’s website: <https://www.sheffield.anglican.org/stpeters>.

How will we shape Focal Ministry to make it equally accessible to as wide a range of people as possible?

Each FM has their own role description that they put together with their local context. This can play to their strengths rather than making unrealistic demands upon them.

Teams are the key – so that responsibilities are shared and delegated! Teams of FMs and other teams in churches of folks doing prayers, coffee, foodbank, etc.

A model of learning and equipping is that it is accessible to all (in terms of content and process) – practical preparation for the role, accompanied by flexible ongoing learning to suit the learning needs of the person and their context – negotiated with their local OM and supported by a Learning Mentor. No requirement to submit any assignments for those who take part (though there will be some learning tasks to do in their teams or with OM in the early days of ministry).

In particular, how can we make this sort of ministry accessible to younger people, but also support them in it?

If the question refers to younger people (18-25s), we should definitely have young focal ministers and they should be supported as everyone else. It is important to include young people in the decision-making processes and leadership of our churches so that we can hear and value their perspectives. We need to be careful about loading unrealistic expectations on them in terms of responsibility though because their education is rightly their priority.

How do we avoid placing heavy burdens on Focal Ministers in areas where it is hard to recruit ordained clergy?

Our new model of ministry is not about asking lay people to take on the responsibilities previously done by the clergy. It is a recognition that all baptised Christians together share the mission and ministry of the church and each person needs to be released into their gifts and calling. For some this will be in church leadership and ministry, for many it will be in their places of employment, homes and places where they live and socialise.

One of the 4 key strands of formation and development for Focal Ministers is relationship with God and self-care. This involves being clear on expectations and agreeing a clear role with the Oversight Minister who then has a responsibility to support the Focal Minister within the clearly agreed boundaries to ensure that they flourish and do not become over burdened.

Once again, visit <https://www.sheffield.anglican.org/focal-ministry> to read more details about how Focal Ministry will work.

Chapter is a model to support clergy. What model will there be for Focal Ministers? And will have a missional dimension?

The plan is for each Mission Area to have a Mission Area Leadership team that will involve Focal Ministers. These teams will be a place of sharing, mutual support, planning and training, much the way a good clergy chapter should function.

Eventually, we hope that most congregations will have their own Focal Ministry Leadership Team with a mix of Focal Ministers and other lay leaders and officers like Churchwardens. These could operate in a similar way.

What is the relationship between FMs and churchwardens / PCCs? Where does responsibility & authority lie at parish level?

In many ways, lines of responsibility remain very similar to the inherited structure. All parishes will continue to have churchwardens, with the same canonical responsibilities as at present. Similarly, all parishes will have a designated Priest in Charge (in some cases Vicar/Rector) from the Oversight Ministers in the Mission Area, who will hold ultimate responsibility for that parish along with the PCC. However, the model of shared oversight enables a more collaborative approach to mission and ministry, and it is likely that all parishes in a Mission Area will benefit from the ministries of all their Oversight Ministers. If the question is about legalities, then the situation closely mirrors the present; but if the question is about mission and ministry, the new model affords a greater degree of flexibility and sharing of ministries.

Section 2: the impact of Covid-19

Some Self-Supporting Ministers (SSMs) have felt completely disconnected / isolated from the diocese & strategy during the pandemic. How can this be overcome?

Historically it has often been difficult for SSM's to feel fully in the loop as training events usually take place when they are at work. This year we are experimenting with repeating training events in the evenings especially aimed at SSM's. We have also ensured that all the Bishop's Ad Clerum communications about Covid 19 and the strategy are sent to SSM's. There is also an information evening for SSM's booked to take place in the New year. We would welcome any other ideas from SSM's which could help with this.

The CofE Daily Hope phone line has been very helpful to those who cannot access online material. Are there any plans for a locally created equivalent?

In a word – no. This has been a very good national resource and several local churches have provided similar telephone-based services for those who find online resources inaccessible. But there are no plans to do something like this at diocesan level and we hope that 2021 will begin to open up more opportunities to meet face-to-face again.

Section 3: the environmental agenda

Shouldn't we get behind the CofE target to reduce carbon emissions to net zero by 2030? How can we encourage action at deanery level?

Please read this article, which reports on how the November Diocesan Synod declared a climate emergency and committed to the net zero carbon aim:

<https://www.sheffield.anglican.org/news/diocesan-synod-votes-to-declare-a-climate-and-ecological-emergency>

For further practical help on how to move this agenda forward at deanery level please contact Cathy Rhodes, our Diocesan Environment Officer: environment@sheffield.anglican.org

Will the new centrally employed but locally deployed buildings people help us with this agenda?

Yes. These posts should increase our ability to support parishes with the environmental agenda. One of the ways that they will be working is to set up systems that can be used widely by parishes so that we are not duplicating effort. Some aspects of meeting our carbon emission targets should lend itself well to this approach.

Section 4: communications and finance

Many communities value the church building but from a distance. How could we build stronger partnership, including financial support?

As previously mentioned, our new buildings audit tool assesses the potential for community usage and local partnership. This is to be encouraged. However, we also need to recognise that developing these sorts of initiatives can be very time consuming and are difficult to start from scratch. They seem to develop best where there is an existing community group or building users who want to develop this relationship further for the benefit of the wider community.

How could we make an online giving platform available through our websites?

This is something we would like to encourage all parishes and Mission Areas to consider. Help with digital giving and links to online giving training is available here:

<https://www.sheffield.anglican.org/covid19-digital-giving>

Central Church has also funded 2 Generous Giving officers to support parishes in developing their stewardship and giving who will be available to give support and advice on this. These will be in post early in 2021.

How do we encourage churches to continue to support Common Fund if they don't have 'their own minister'? Won't people be more reluctant if the new model seems to offer fewer stipendiary ministers?

If we are to become financially sustainable in the long term, we need to start viewing our Common Fund contribution more widely than just paying for the cost of our stipendiary clergy. The mission of God is delivered through all baptised Christians and our new model of ministry seeks to reflect and build on this. We are seeking to flourish and grow not simply trying to maintain what we have now.

The only way to fund the number of stipendiary priests in our plan is if we maintain and grow our Common Fund contributions. The allocation of priests to each deanery has taken into account a number of factors including population size, deprivation, current church attendance and Common Fund contributions to ensure fairness. If some churches decide to reduce their Common Fund contributions, we will have to reduce the number of available priests further. It will also inhibit our ability to provide the wider training and support needed to grow our new model of ministry. We continue to uphold and cherish the Anglican principle of the strong supporting the weak, the richer supporting the poorer.

Hebrews 13:6 "And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased."

Communications: still a sense that the average congregation member knows a lot less than we might hope about strategy / vision. How can this be overcome? And how can we reach young(er) people?

A great deal of information has been shared through the consultation process, Bishop's Ad Clerums, Area Deans meetings, clergy training events and through the e-bulletin. All of us have a role to play in the chain of communication. People will not receive this information if it is not passed on to them. If vision and strategy information is going to be more widely known amongst congregations, we need all those who receive it to pass it on – particularly clergy, deanery synod reps, church secretaries, etc.

In relation to young people, again we need to make the links at local level. But it is also true that we need to make sure that significant events are held at times when young people can access them (e.g. when they are not at work or in college).

We will shortly be producing an animated film to help us communicate the diocesan vision with parishes and congregations. In addition, we are working on resources to share information about how our successful Transformation Bid will help us to implement our strategy. However once produced these will need to be widely shared.

Now that no Year Book is published, how do we check who is who?

This information is still available online: details can be found here:

<https://www.sheffield.anglican.org/staff-contact-details>

Section 5: Lights for Christ

What is Lights for Christ?

Lights for Christ is the Diocese of Sheffield's approach to the national church's *Setting God's People Free* programme of change to equip and encourage all baptised people in living for Jesus in their daily lives. As followers of Jesus we are all called to live and grow as disciples, living as lights for Christ in our everyday lives:

- Receiving Christ's light as his friends;
- Walking in Christ's light as his followers;
- Reflecting Christ's light to those around us.

Lights for Christ is an important strand of our diocesan strategy to liberate the whole people of God for the whole mission of God. It was launched at the Diocesan Development Day in 2019. In 2020, resources were sent to all parishes about the Lights for Christ Personal Rule of Life initiative and a new liturgy for reaffirming our Baptism vows. Some of this got lost in the early lockdown of the Covid Pandemic and so we plan to re-issue these when the time is right in 2021. We have also been awarded a part time post for three years in our funding bid to the Strategic Investment Board to help parishes make the most of this initiative.

There are now lots of resources that you can find on the Lights for Christ website, including a short booklet, information about developing a Personal Rule of Life, and a plethora of other resources to help you grow as a disciple, shining as a Light for Christ in your everyday life. There are ideas for whole churches, courses for small groups, and resources for individual Christians.

Check it out at <https://www.lightsforchrist.uk>