

This article has some suggestions and resources to help you prepare for a good start.

However exciting a move to a new role can be it can also be daunting and nerve wracking; often involving a house move, a change for the whole family and all that goes with it. Just a little preparation and some ruthless organisation can really make the difference.

Get organised

What are the most important things for you? Start with understanding the things that help you be the most effective you can be – get the basics sorted – chaos is no place to try to launch your new life.

There is a saying “well begun is half done” so really spend some time thinking about all that you need to do in the first few weeks; you might like lists or post it notes or computer to do lists but whatever it is get all that stuff down where you will easily see it and check it regularly. Think about the list in terms of all your different roles; partner, parent, child, worker, colleague, leader, pastor, preacher, teacher, chaplain.

You are the “**Golden goose**” everyone will want a piece of you and be watching you carefully; so how do you make sure you are on top form?

Look after your health...take immune boosting supplements (if you are so minded) then when you get the inevitable “new job cold” it will not be so bad, and you will recover quickly. Watch your diet and exercise regimes. You will be putting in a great deal of mental and emotional work (if not physical too) so you need to be fit for that. Spend time working out what is a priority – relationships and people are crucial but so is your prayer time.

Remember your **Values** and try to be true to them.

Once you have given all that some thought, **plan your time**. Don't be too ambitious to start with. Everything takes longer the first time you do it; “things” will come up and need to be slotted in and if you have no leeway in your diary then everything gets knocked out and you will become despondent. Establish boundaries and expectations with yourself and then you can do that with others. Remember to review your plans regularly and in advance.

Getting to know your new place and culture

What do you need to know at a very basic level? Think about who, where, what, when and how.

Give yourself time to learn, build relationships and think. Observing what is going on before plunging in with your sleeves rolled up is very important. People say anything between 3-6 months is good before leaping in. You need to understand the culture before you make assumptions and make mistakes – you might change the culture later, but it is a good idea to understand how it works now.

What do you already know from the Parish Profile, interview process, discussions with people from the diocese and parish? Who are your key contacts? In the Parish, in the Diocese, in the Community. Think about your **Network**. Who does what? Who knows what and who? Who could be a useful ally or advocate?

Where is everything – have you got a detailed map (or one saved in your bookmarks on line)?

Where do things happen – the school? The pub? Café? Consider developing a Mind Map or diagram to help you remember all these things.

When are meetings and services? Make sure you get your diary sorted out (see above for more on this) but be very careful about setting a pattern or expectations you cannot keep up. Make appointments with yourself for rest and reflection, household chores, guard time off jealously. Get used to saying something like – “I really do want to have this important conversation so can give you a call/catch up on x day at x time?”

How do things happen – is there a process? Does the process make sense is it making life easier?

Ask questions, be curious and nosey – you won’t get another chance to do this later when you are supposed to know everything. As you find things out reflect on them, write notes and even questions that come to mind at the time. You may not want to make changes immediately, but it may be useful to recall your first thoughts when you do start to take action.

Consider how you **invest your time** in these three areas:

- **Action** – what needs to be done?
- **Individuals** – who do I need to spend time with, on what activity and how do I connect with them?
- **Team** (there may be several teams you have to think about but do start to think about “your” team)– how does the team work and how can you develop them and their working together?

Trying to ensure you spread your time out between these areas roughly in equal measures will be helpful but do remember that sometimes focussing on action also gives you time on the team or the individual e.g. asking the admin person to show you round the office/filing system and booking processes is both action and individual.

Use your strengths – if hospitality is how you do ministry use that – if one to one pastoral visiting is your strength use that but do try to get the balance right.

Watch out for **bear traps** – people asking you what you think of the service/music/PCC etc. Try not to be caught giving a memorable quote. Try instead to ask them a question, something like – “Is that a typical service – what are your thoughts on it?”

Only make promises you can keep and always do what you say you will do. Write everything down and always put a reminder in your diary.

Vision and strategy

Spend time listening; consider doing a SWOT analysis if there is not one already.

What plans, hopes and dreams already exist? What have you been brought in to do?

You may read advice about making some quick wins – to impress people in the short term - but you should bear in mind the question “what does winning in the long term look like?”

What is going on in the area? What developments are planned? Is there a local paper that can give you some insights?

How will you involve the team/s? Would you normally plan a day away or work over a few PCC meetings? Who could help you with all of this?

Pick your battles carefully. Is it something that really needs to be an issue now, later or never? Be careful about doing someone else’s work for them or taking on their pet project.

Don’t forget about keeping your own senior team informed and up to date. A meeting with the Archdeacon or Area Dean to catch up and make sure they are on side is very important – you never know when you might need their support and help.

You will most likely encounter some setbacks and difficulties but remember this is **your** new challenge so try to smile and laugh, listen to joyous music, paint a landscape, knit a jumper, sing loudly, pray expectantly - whatever lifts your spirits.

If you would like to discuss making a move or starting a new role please contact the [Clergy Transition Service](#) or telephone 0207 898 1237.

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