

THE ARCHDEACONS' FORUM

for the Church of England and the Church in Wales

A NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN FOR ARCHDEACONS

I. THE ROLE OF THE ARCHDEACON

In the Church of England and the Church in Wales, the role of an archdeacon is a priestly ministry, exercised sometimes liturgically through presiding and preaching, but seen more often relationally through the way in which they participate in the senior leadership of a diocese and exercise an enabling, encouraging and reconciling ministry. The 2011 report on the ministerial development of archdeacons puts it this way:

“The role of the Archdeacon is a senior leadership role in the dioceses with an important contribution to mission and strategy. It is a key support to the clergy, their families, to Churchwardens, and Area/Rural Deans. The consistent image is of an intermediary, an interpreter, a channel through which the diocese’s strategy is communicated and implemented in the local church. Archdeacons are seen as needing to be spiritually secure and strategic thinkers. In all but a few cases, they have a statutory role with the jurisdiction of an Ordinary. The role is based on handling the tension between encouraging mission and creativity and ensuring that the order of the Church of England is maintained. Conflict is a regular feature of their work in their interpretive position between a range of different worlds and viewpoints. This means that developed people skills are essential. The role can be very busy and stressful. However, many Archdeacons use their statutory functions to encourage imaginative, mission based thinking amongst local clergy and churches.”
Sustaining Leaders in Mission and Change 2011:3

Among the many areas encompassed in archdeacons’ ministry, the following are usually a constituent part. Archdeacons need:

To play a full role in the leadership of the diocese

- fully engaged with their diocesan mission and strategy and taking it forward in everything that they do;
- able to establish good working relationships, have good emotional intelligence and can get alongside others especially in difficult situations;
- able to work as part of a variety of teams: in the bishop’s staff team, and

with suffragan bishops, area deans and lay chairs, and diocesan officers, among others;

- committed to the Five Guiding Principles (in the Church of England) or the Archbishop's Pastoral Provision (in the Church in Wales) and able to live them and implement them with sensitivity and confidence;
- skilled in living with dilemmas where there are no solutions, but which if held creatively may lead to good things;
- aware of and able to engage with the ecumenical and inter-faith dimensions which arise from engagement with God's mission;
- able to press for clarity, especially when plans are being developed or ideas are being formalised;
- equipped with an appropriate self-confidence to be able to challenge what are simply expedient decisions which may be illegal, damage longer term relationships, or go against good practice and impair future action.

To carry out the legal and administrative responsibilities of archdeacons

- aware of all current policies and procedures in relation to the safeguarding of children and adults at risk of harm;
- up to date with the changes in the law and procedures relating to faculties, pastoral re-organisation and Clergy Discipline Measure, and able to build effective and positive relationships with Chancellor and Registrar especially when acting as an officer of the court;
- competent in delivering appointment processes, have an awareness of the HR dimensions, and able to fulfil duties in relation to Common Tenure and Capability and Grievance procedures;
- sufficiently aware of the Charities Act, and the Equalities Act, and of what all of these mean for parishes and diocese;
- competent in reading and interpreting a set of accounts.

To work with parishes and deaneries to bring about change

- skilled in supporting people and Christian communities through change, encouraging them in their vocation and ministry;
- aware of the possible approaches which can assist with conflict resolution and mediation and know when and how to use them;
- able to see the potential in church buildings for mission and service of the wider community.

To encourage and support clergy, lay ministers and church officers

- appropriately supportive, caring, challenging and encouraging in these relationships to further both personal and organisational growth;

- able to be an interviewer in the MDR process, in particular providing MDR from an 'episcopal' viewpoint;
- effective in offering constructive feedback and skilled in intervention.

To take responsibility for themselves, and in particular

- be able to prioritise, manage their diary and work effectively with their PA;
- able to develop and maintain a healthy lifestyle, including their spiritual and prayer life;
- able to cope with the isolation that often comes with the role.
- attend to their own ministerial development.

Any provision specifically arranged for archdeacons needs to take cognisance of all these areas in the context of the strategic and collegial nature of their role.

2. THE TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT OF ARCHDEACONS

As the archdeacon's role is an exceptionally demanding one, it is crucial that there is appropriate support and opportunity for development so that archdeacons are able to inhabit and live out their role as effectively and fruitfully as possible. Such development may best be delivered through a variety of ways

- some of the areas of need may be met through accessing individually the provision offered by other organisations, e.g. Bridgebuilders, Sarum College, Ecclesiastical Law Society;
- some of the areas are best responded to through team learning: archdeacons, bishops and others attending a joint provision on areas such as conducting MDR, making good appointments, safeguarding, possibly organised as part of our national provision and working with those responsible for the continuing development of Bishops and Deans; it is also very beneficial for bishop's staff teams to learn together across a range of issues, including how they work together and how they understand their respective roles;
- some of the areas require specific provision related to the particular needs and role of archdeacons.

The Archdeacons' National Development Officer has the responsibility both of monitoring what is currently available and of liaising with others in the national church institutions to ensure that archdeacons are offered and receive the training and development they require. In relation to the archdeacons of the Church in Wales, the ANDO will work collaboratively with the appropriate person in the Church in Wales to ensure that the provision is complementary and appropriate for the Welsh context.

Continuing Development for Archdeacons

In particular the ANDO, on behalf of the Forum, works closely with others to identify provision which may be useful for archdeacons in their ministry, including their role as strategic leaders. Often the ANDO will recommend this provision to individual archdeacons or groups of archdeacons. In relation to the specific provision which archdeacons require, the plan is implemented by:

- producing a regular archdeacons' bulletin (The Archdeacons' News) to help keep archdeacons abreast of new information and aware of training and development opportunities, and updating the archdeacons' pages on the Church of England website;
- using regional archdeacons' meetings as appropriate to tease out needs or to provide training and appropriate development
- ensuring the availability of a coaching provision for archdeacons where there is no diocesan provision or the diocesan provision is not suitable
- offering cell groups as required, with the possibility of initial facilitation when requested
- devising training events as required,
 - recently offering training; Archdeacons and the Clergy Discipline Measure; Trauma, Congregations and Archdeacons; and working with the Ecclesiastical Law Society to provide days on supporting and equipping those who teach Church Law to clergy and church officers;
 - developmental training events such as "Why do appointments go wrong?";
- enabling the National Archdeacons' Conference every other year, which provides the main focus for archdeacons to learn and to network, and ensuring that the conference deals with both "big picture" issues and detailed matters
- providing a template for the MDR of archdeacons which will support their ministry in general and specifically assist the identification of personal development and training needs, and monitoring and improving this material
- ensuring that the email groups *The Wit and Wisdom of Archdeacons* and *General Synod Archdeacons* are providing useful forums for sharing information and seeking mutual advice
- maintaining and monitoring reflection and evaluation tools for use after all events, and learning from the feedback received
- ensuring that there is a budget annually for the Forum and that this is monitored and reviewed during the year
- reviewing the resources available to archdeacons for their role and producing suggested good practice guidelines for dioceses
- encouraging all archdeacons to access the full resources of the Forum by becoming members.

In all of this, the ANDO will monitor the changing nature of the Archdeacon's role across the Church and ensure that training is suited to the developing role.

Support for new archdeacons

The following provision is made for new archdeacons:

- offering information and support to diocesan bishops when an archdeacon's post becomes vacant.
- providing information to support new archdeacons as they prepare for and start their new role. This material is currently offered as an electronic booklet ***So you're going to be an archdeacon...*** This booklet will be constantly revised in the light of new information and feedback received.
- sending to diocesan bishops and diocesan secretaries ***Guidelines for the Diocesan Induction of a New Archdeacon***. Copies of this are also sent to colleague archdeacons, and included in the induction booklet.
- offering to each new archdeacon a one-to-one session, in which the ANEO is able to reflect with the new archdeacon on how they are finding the role and what their current needs might be in terms of skills and knowledge for the role, and for themselves personally. Among the possibilities explored will be: a mentor archdeacon, a coach, membership of a cell group, training around leadership and/or management, how to inhabit the role with integrity, how to develop personal passions and skills, and personal spirituality.
- running the ***New Archdeacons' Conference*** as a 54 hour residential to explore a number of the areas with which an archdeacon needs to be familiar. The conference includes reflection on the mission perspective and spirituality as well as practical matters offered through interactive sessions and/or case studies.

3. REVIEW

This plan will be reviewed annually by the Archdeacons' Forum Executive at their residential meeting.

Approved by the Forum 18th November 2015

Reviewed by the Forum on 28th November 2016

Reviewed by the Forum Executive 21st November 2017

Reviewed by the Forum Executive 21st November 2018

Reviewed by the Forum Executive 12th March 2020

What is The Archdeacons' Forum?

The purpose of the Forum is to co-ordinate the work of archdeacons and provide support, training and development for them. Founded in 1991, membership is open to all archdeacons in the Church in Wales and Church of England, including the military archdeacons and the Channel Island Deans.

The Forum Executive consists of archdeacons elected from each of the English archidiaconal regions and from the archdeacons of the Church in Wales, together with the co-ordinator of the archdeacons on General Synod, and a representative of the archdeacons to HM Forces. The current chair is the Ven Stephen Taylor MBE, Archdeacon of Maidstone.

We have pages on the national Church of England **website**. To access these, please go to: <https://www.churchofengland.org/more/diocesan-resources/archdeacons-forum>

All archdeacons are also part of **regional meetings**, which are useful gatherings for support and sharing, as well as suitable groups for additional training.

In 2010, a report on the continuing ministerial development of archdeacons was commissioned by the Forum and this was published in 2011. A copy of this report *Sustaining Leaders in Mission and Change* is available on our pages on the national Church of England website (see above).

Archdeacons' National Development Officer:
The Revd Cameron Watt
cameron.watt@churchofengland.org

Archdeacons' Forum Administrator:
Husna Louise
husna.louise@churchofengland.org

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