

Some learning about a mixed ecology of mission from SDF

Overall learning points:

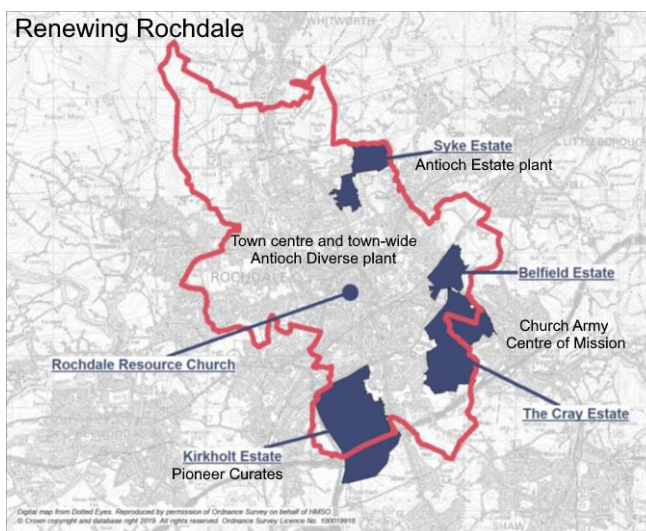
- A commitment to the mixed ecology means a commitment to using any and every means to reach the communities of England.
- Most dioceses are choosing to use multiple different approaches to reach their populations – over half now have more than one SDF with different intervention types being used. No diocese is pursuing a one-size-fits all strategy for mission.
- Together, SDF programmes have objectives to create over 2,100 new communities of different kinds, and to raise up 2,500 lay leaders and 700 new vocations to ordained ministry.

Mixed ecology approaches

Some dioceses are producing a multi-stranded approach to reaching a town, city, or demographic. What is common about these projects is that the objective of reaching people comes first, and a leader with responsibility for that place (e.g. a bishop, archdeacon, dean or designated local leader) is using any and every means to fulfil that objective, working with local partners and bringing in external partners to fill gaps. The mixed ecology isn't a deliberate choice but is a result of this vision.

Rochdale

The Renewing Rochdale element of the Revitalising Manchester project includes a new resource church in a former high street restaurant, a Church Army Centre of Mission, Pioneer Curates, and plants out of the diocese's existing Antioch network to reach estates and multi-ethnic areas. These projects are part of a coherent plan to reach all parts of Rochdale.



Newham

The Diocese of Chelmsford's Renewing Newham vision has four elements funded by SDF – pioneer ministry in the Olympic park, growing community-focused parish ministry in a diverse and deprived area, a church plant from an East London resource church, and multiplying Anglo-Catholic services for Spanish and Portuguese speakers. [Link to interview with project leaders.](#)

Portsmouth

In Portsmouth, different approaches to mission in the city have led to overall growth – Harbour Church Portsmouth has three different sites reaching the city centre, students, and inner city families respectively. There is a 'home grown' resource church at St Jude Southsea which has planted as well. Alongside these, the diocese has funded pioneer ministry and has grown dozens of lay pioneer leaders. The diocese is now restructuring benefices with a mixture of renewed parish ministry, church plants, and pioneer work (e.g. among youth and young adults).

Ely Market Towns

Ely's Market towns project has taken their deprived market towns and created collaborative leadership in the form of operations ministers and oversight ministers for the town. They have started Fresh Expressions of Church, church plants, and parish initiatives, whichever fit the context.

Children Changing Places – Manchester

In Bolton, work to reach children and youth across ages 0-18 is a collaboration between Fresh Expressions of Church (e.g. for toddlers), schools chaplains, and churches. [Link to an interview](#)

Transformation approaches

Some dioceses are developing plans for transformation across their dioceses, enabled by Strategic Transformation Funding. Dioceses who have gotten furthest in development (e.g. Sheffield, Manchester, Birmingham) are creating a vision for growth which includes both renewed parish churches and new communities, lay and ordained leadership, specialist and generalist ministry, and local and oversight responsibilities working together as teams in every place across the diocese.

Approaches to growth in other SDF projects

In other SDF projects, dioceses have pursued a range of different approaches which have had impact.

Overall learning points

- The most impactful projects have come from a range of models, and no one model has a monopoly on impact. Every model must be contextualised and focused on mission, but conversely a wide range of models can work in a given context if this work is done.
- The form of intervention is just one aspect of whether a programme will work– impact is seen where the opportunity is identified, there is clear intent to change, and there is commitment to achieve the outcomes. There tends to be most impact where the form of intervention is chosen to meet the missional opportunity, rather than the form being pre-decided.
- When thinking about the differences between models, there isn't a clear ranking of most to least missional (though undoubtedly some examples have more missional impact) – each model is a tool that can fulfil a particular purpose in implementing a strategic growth plan. The key differences are around scale, dispersion, investment needed, risk, and generative potential.
- Generative potential is the extent to which a model is able to reproduce, replicate and multiply, both in congregations and leadership, and therefore the extent to which they are life-giving to the wider Church or dependent on it. Some initiatives have this generative quality built into their culture and form and these are more impactful as they multiply over time. Even in these models, continual replication needs intentionality and investment to keep happening.
- Some SDF projects have sought to replicate communities which have a culture of mission or have created a model serving an unreached community. Changing culture and replication needs significant thought to be successful. Some methodologies which have worked well have been to give practitioners from the successful models responsibility for replication and for the diocese to have oversight of delivery (e.g. Ignite in Canterbury, Antioch in Manchester).

Examples of approaches taken in different dioceses

Developing parish churches – Rural – Winchester, Exeter. Equipping churches to become resource churches – e.g. Durham, Bradford. Church development courses - Coventry, London

Adding new ministries or projects to parish churches – Children and youth – e.g. Hereford, Sheffield, Birmingham, Worcester; BAME – Leicester; Young adults – Coventry, York

Changing the culture so that churches organically start new congregations – Leicester, London, Carlisle, Portsmouth, Southwark, St Albans

Starting a reproducing network of new communities – Liverpool Joshua Centre, Manchester Antioch networks, Canterbury Ignite, St Eds & Ips Lightwave

Church plants designed and delivered by the diocese – Chelmsford, Chichester, Guildford

Paid pioneer approaches to starting new churches – Chatham, Bath & Wells, Guildford

Starting new resource churches to create capacity for church planting – e.g. Preston, Grimsby, Swindon, Bradford, Exeter, Liverpool, Goole

Digital impact has been seen more in central investment than in dioceses, apart from high quality social media for advertising and engagement. Through lockdown all churches have adapted and some projects in the pipeline are emphasising digital means of outreach (e.g. a student church in Leeds)