

Reaching New People in New Ways

End of Project Review

May 2023

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1 **Executive summary**

Reaching New People in New Ways (RNP) was launched in 2017 in support of the diocesan aim to develop worship in every community in the St Albans Diocese each week. It was an early Strategic Development Funding application with wide ranging aims and a particular focus on helping to enable and support new forms of church leadership and ministry beginning with Fresh Expressions of Church (FXC).

At application, its goals comprised:

- Growing 150 existing FXCs by working with them to promote their development in maturity (i.e., meeting weekly, supporting life-long faith development, with worship, formation in discipleship and the celebration of the sacraments)
- Creating 150 new FXCs over a ten-year period
- Exploring resource and city centre church developments

This was to be delivered through range of enablers:

- The deployment of 3 FXC Development Officers (one for each Archdeaconry)
- Developing and deploying training to support both lay leaders and teams and ordained staff
- Establishing a £250k Fresh Expressions Development Fund to resource the startup and ongoing development of FXCs and to provide seed funding to churches to support these FXCs
- Establishing a multi-channel FXC communications programme to educate and encourage sharing amongst current and potential FXC leaders

The vision was that by 2028 this enabling effort would mean that the diocese would see:

- 8000 new people growing in faith in Jesus Christ.
- 300 maturing FXCs or mission-focused congregations.
- Growth in the participation in FXCs from 7000 to 12000.
- Growth in the number of lay leaders from 500 to 1200.
- Growth in engagement with non and de-churched people from 4500 to 8000.
- A developed culture of entrepreneurial mission which embodies generosity, joy, imagination and courage - the 4 values of the Diocesan vision
- All FXC communities giving generously and regularly, contributing towards the Parish Share and the ongoing costs of their FXC.
- Un and de-churched people growing in faith and becoming disciples of Christ as committed members of maturing church communities.

The five-year programme was expected to cost £3.6m and was supported by £1.7m of strategic funding from the national church.

The programme has been badly impacted by Covid, which effectively derailed many FXCs as restrictions on meeting together and fear about contagion stopped gatherings over 2020/21 and as groups, lay leaders (especially older ones) and premises became unavailable. Most of the programme team were furloughed (April-August 2020).

This delayed and disrupted almost all planned activities. The programme responded to this by focusing on a smaller and more sustainable subset of new worshipping communities (NWCs) – including a shift

away from using the term FXCs to NWCs which better reflected the missional activities and communities within the diocese; ramping up online activities, training and resources; using small (£250) grants to encourage local experimentation, restarts and action; and by increasing the integration of programme and core organisation and actions earlier than planned in the application.

In 2022, RNP applied for a change request which was agreed to enable it to consolidate the new patterns of working as the shape of a post-Covid church started to become clearer and to allow an additional year to re-engage with NWCs (most of whom only began to restart in 2022), re-baseline the activity and goals and strengthen grant-making, online and training activities further as a part of 'business-as-usual' for the diocese rather than a programme activity.

Programme goals were not set for the end of the funding period in June 2022 and so it is not possible to compare progress against goals at this point but it is clear that Covid set back progress enormously as it destroyed many fragile NWCs, immobilized many volunteer leaders and shut many premises. These impacts are still only slowly being unwound in 2022-23 and it is difficult to see how the metrics, especially on new disciples, in the wider vision will be realised on current trajectories, with the diocese still struggling to stem the decline in attendance.

Nonetheless the programme has made progress in many areas both in generating and restarting NWCs since the pandemic and perhaps most especially in the impact it has had in leadership and culture across the diocese.

It therefore offers some valuable learning for other dioceses and initiatives:

1. The importance of focusing resource to achieve goals. This means being realistic about the capacity of individuals and prioritising opportunities more rigorously
2. The value of local opportunity and contextually driven mission, exploiting networks with shared contexts or challenges and local leaders with ambition
3. The value of using teams as the base unit for leading and training
4. The importance of visible senior staff buy-in to strategies
5. The importance of digital - online resources, activity and social media
6. Balancing innovation and integration when undertaking initiatives
7. The value of pulling a breadth of levers for 'cultural change'

The review also prompted a number of suggestions for consideration by other dioceses:

1. Invest in the development of teams
2. Encourage a 'testing and learning' approach
3. Increase accountability in the inherited church
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2 Background

The St Albans Diocese launched RNP in 2017 against an underlying commitment to ensuring that there was a service in every parish every week. It sought to build on the Living God's Love vision agreed in 2011 and particularly to help reverse the decline seen in the participation of families, youth and children in the life of the church.

The overall decline in congregations reflected the aging being experienced across the Church of England which in the St Albans Diocese had by 2016 left only 0.4% of 18-25 year olds engaged with the Church of England (excluding FXC) across the diocese.

RNP sought to particularly broaden the appeal and accessibility of the church to new communities by supporting and enabling new forms of church leadership and ministry. It aimed to do this by building on the work already happening across the diocese:

- 180 existing FXC with the potential to grow into maturing churches. These included 80 Messy Churches and a variety of other expressions of church
- The growth in lay leadership where over 100 had completed training as lay leaders of worship in the three years running up to the application

At application, its specific goals comprised:

- Growing 150 existing FXCs by working with them to promote their development in maturity (meeting weekly, supporting life-long faith development, with worship, formation in discipleship and the celebration of the sacraments).
- Creating 150 new FXCs over a ten-year period.
- Exploring resource and city centre church developments.

The programme was built around the deployment of 3 FXC Development Officers (one in each Archdeaconry) to add further support to FXCs through encouragement, contributing to training, coaching, skill development, networking, tools and models. 75% of their time was to focus on the key topics of growing families, youth and children and helping FXCs to promote discipleship (vs mere attendance), 25% on helping to develop a flagship mixed-economy church in each Archdeaconry.

Initially the aim was that these officers would build momentum around FXC through work with a group of 22 'foundation' churches, drawn from different environments but all with strong FXCs with children, young adults and families. These churches would serve as training and learning centres, help develop FXC resources and illustrate best practices.

These Development Officers were supported by work to:

- Develop and deploy training to support both lay leaders and teams and ordained staff
- A fund of £250k to provide seed finance
- A multi-channel FXC communications programme to educate and encourage sharing across the diocese
- The deployment of 1.5 FTE growth officers to support the established Mission Action Planning in parishes
- Programme and monitoring resource

The hope was that by 2028 the diocese would see the following outcomes from RNP:

- 6-8000 new people growing in faith in Jesus Christ.
- 300 maturing FXCs or mission-focused congregations.
- Growth in the participation in FXCs from 7000 to 12000.
- Growth in the number of lay leaders to 800-1200.
- Growth in engagement with non and de-churched people from 4500 to 8000.
- A developed culture of entrepreneurial mission which embodies generosity, joy, imagination and courage - the 4 values of the Diocesan vision
- All FXC communities giving generously and regularly, contributing towards the Parish Share and the ongoing costs of their FXC.
- Un and de-churched people to growing in faith and become disciples of Christ as committed members of maturing church communities.

The programme was expected to cost £3.6m and was supported by £1.7m of strategic funding from the national church.

3 Programme objectives

The approach to realising these aims is summarised in the table below (as the initial goals):

Project Element	Initial Goals (2017)	Revised Goals (2022)
<p>Deploy 3 FXC Development Officers</p> <p>To work with FXCs and churches to promote starting and development in maturity (evidenced by meeting weekly, celebration of sacraments, worship and discipleship formation)</p>	<p>(To 2028)</p> <p>300 maturing FXCs</p> <p>8000 growing new disciples</p> <p>Growth in lay leader numbers to 1200</p>	<p>These core goals have remained the same because of their long-term nature.</p> <p>However post-Covid more emphasis is being placed on attaining them by integrating RNP into the core ways of working in the diocese earlier than planned</p>
<p>Establishment of a £250k development fund to provide seed finance</p>		
<p>Training and learning</p> <p>For both lay and ordained leaders</p>	<p>800-1200 through Mission Shaped Ministry (MSM) course</p> <p>20-30 licensed lay pioneers</p> <p>25-40 learning communities supporting 200 FXCs</p> <p>70 coaches supporting 200 FXC leaders</p> <p>50-80 churches participating in messy discipleship workshops</p> <p>200-300 FXC using toolkits</p> <p>200-300 parish teams in FXC conferences</p>	<p>The training aspirations have remained similar but alternative means of realising them make the specific goals redundant</p> <p>The more specific measures were set on the number of different engagement points parishes had with RNP (training/consulting/coaching/learning communities/grants/indicator pack use).</p>
<p>Multichannel FXC communications programme</p>	<p>To support the above goals</p>	<p>No change</p>

There were also qualitative goals in terms of:

- A deeper church (prayerful, generous, courageous, joyful)
- A growing church (confident, engaged, diverse)
- A transforming church (community impact)
- A missional church (outward focus and vision)

All the goals were set for a ten-year period. Strategic funding was always set for only the first five years and although the aim was to breakout outputs and outcomes for the end of the funding period, this never fully happened because of the disruption caused by Covid. Some goals were set for June 2023 when the programme reset timings in mid 2022:

Outcome description	Target to 2028		Target	
	Minimum	Aspirational	December 2022	June 2023
New Worshipping Communities (NWCs)	200	300	150	200
Leaders (not all Lay leaders formally trained / licensed)	800	1200	300	450
Pioneers	20	30	17	20

Covid shutdown the majority of NWCs and forced enormous changes in ways of working. It also sparked new initiatives which have produced important and sustained changes in the church that are likely to contribute to the goals over a longer time period.

4 Achievements and good news stories

Summary outcomes

The core goals of the programme were to build the number and maturity of NWCs across the diocese so that these would enable the achievement of the aims around numbers of new disciples. At the start of 2020, two years into the programme, there were some very encouraging outputs which provide an indication that the intermediate goals set around NWCs were potentially attainable:

Outcome description	Target to 2027		Cumulative to December 2019
	Minimum	Aspirational	
New Worshipping Communities	200	300	290
Leaders	800	1200	445
Pioneers	20	30	n/a
New disciples	6000	8000	2619
Baptisms	800	1200	85
Confirmations	400	600	27

However, most new and emerging NWCs and those with large 'fringe' memberships have been completely disrupted by the inability to meet face-to-face through 2020/21. This set back achievement of these goals in the near term and led to very different routes being taken to realise the aims.

The diocese remains committed to the overall ten-year aims but the impact of Covid has led to the emphasis on new ways to achieve these goals. Some of these are elements of the original plan, especially around communications, grants and training but others such as the emphasis on online, local and contextually driven opportunities are new. The embedding of RNP within the diocesan structure was also accelerated.

Current data on the progress against the goals is much more limited than ideal. This reflects the nature of NWCs and the challenge in capturing their numbers, the desire to avoid overburdening already very challenged local churches with additional data collection and the limitations of standard data collection and definitions in the statistics for mission (SfM).

Nevertheless, the impact of Covid has been enormous, as it has elsewhere, and this can be seen easily in the headline reduction in the numbers of NWCs between 2022 and 2019 (-43%) reflecting the almost complete stop to NWCs in the pandemic and the slow recovery since then.

Project Element	Ten year goals (2017)	Estimated outcomes or outputs (2023)
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<p>Deploy 3 FXC Development Officers</p> <p>To work with FXCs and churches to promote starting and development in maturity (evidenced by meeting weekly, celebration of sacraments, worship and discipleship formation)</p>	<p>(Over ten years)</p> <p>300 maturing FXCs</p> <p>8000 growing new disciples</p> <p>1200 lay leaders</p>	<p>165 NWCs (11/22) with some 6000 attendees</p> <p>No measurement since termly surveys were halted in pandemic</p> <p>No clear tracking</p>
<p>Establishment of a £250k development fund to provide seed finance</p>		<p>300 small grants awarded to 183 parishes (<i>as at 30th April</i>)</p>
<p>Training and learning</p> <p>For both lay and ordained leaders in support of the above goals</p>	<p>800-1200 through appropriate training</p> <p>20-30 licensed lay pioneers</p> <p>Engagement with RNP:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Training - consulting - coaching - learning communities - grants - indicator pack use <p>Transforming Conversations coaching</p>	<p>Training has completely changed</p> <p>20 have been through the training and this is now an integrated part of diocesan core training.</p> <p>End 2019 figures indicate #churches engaged with;</p> <p>1 - 62 2 - 40 3 - 36 4 - 7 5 - 16 6 - 3</p> <p>modes 164 out of 400 in diocese</p> <p>187 completed training and 12 working on extended coaching</p>
<p>Multichannel FXC communications programme</p>	<p>To support the above goals</p>	

Perhaps the most immediate impacts of RNP can be seen in churches, in diocesan ways of working and the significant shift in the diocese to emphasise the focus on adding new, especially younger, people.

There is also some strong anecdotal evidence in support of progress on the qualitative goals articulated in the application (deeper, growing, transforming, missional church). For example, in support for food banks and refugees or in the 79 small grants taken to provide warm spaces over the winter.

This is commented on in section 7 on learnings from the programme and represents an impact which offers the potential to be impactful over the next five years if the changes are sustained and extended across all the core activities of the diocese.

Great examples of the impact of RNP

Despite the disruption, there are some exciting examples of impact across the diocese both in specific NWC's and in the effect of key parts of the revised programme.

Small grants have helped many NWCs to restart and have been awarded to almost half of churches in the diocese. In addition, 34 large grants (over £1000) have been awarded to churches and a deanery. All of these have gone towards specific needs in developing the diversity and reach of local churches and clearly created a sense of 'can do' in otherwise cash strapped local churches.

Holy Trinity, Leverstock Green, Hemel Hempstead

Holy Trinity held its first 'Woodland Worship' on a Tuesday in January this year in the grounds of Leverstock Green CE Primary School. Around 45 people attended including 29 children, for a time of singing, bible stories and star creation from sticks all helped along by a fire pit and drinks and snacks. It now meets on a monthly basis in term time and is establishing itself in the community.

It was supported by two £250 grants which were used to assist with the purchase of tarpaulins, a fire bucket, lanterns and food to secure the first few gatherings of this NWC.

Sharnbrook Deanery

A grant supported an 80-year-old lay leader to start work with teenagers in this deanery. He was at a loss to move forward without additional financial support that was accessed through conversations with the diocesan team. The first gathering ended up bringing together 80 teenagers from across the deanery. The deanery's work with young people has continued to go from strength to strength with a grant of £20,000 over two years being awarded to them by the Growing Faith Foundation Partnerships in May 2023 for their Deanery Children, Young People and Families programme.

Holy Trinity, Hertford Heath

Lockdown grew relationships in the local community through providing monthly craft goodie bags for the families, which they collected from church. This was a way of maintaining contact

as 'Trinity Kids' had had to stop meeting and it helped build online and face to face conversations.

A restart small grant helped to welcome everyone back into the building at the beginning of October 2021. There was some concern that toddlers would have moved on over the two years and people would not return but on that first day 8 new small people and their parents/carers – plus 4 previous members turned up to enjoy the toaster bought with the grant!

It also played a role at Trinity Kids, the after-school club, where three loaves of bread and a whole jar of Biscoff spread were devoured in 90 mins on the first day back! 30+ kids and their parents/carers attended that afternoon.

Cultural change in the diocese

There is evidence of the start of a shift in the 'culture' of the diocese mentioned by all respondents. This includes:

- understanding and appreciation of a broader definition of church embracing a 'mixed ecology' in all its diversity and richness
- greater respect and appreciation of lay leadership, pioneering
- a shift towards a coaching style of communication
- innovation in training, offering support and communication
- use of social media for engagement
- priority of work with youth and children
- openness to trying new approaches and borrowing learning leading to a more fluid way of working

This is also evidenced by the scale of adoption of key parts of the RNP programme into normal operations:

Working initially with CMS, a one-year Pioneer Enabler course was developed and launched in 2020. In the first year, 13 Enablers were commissioned in their local parishes, including 2 studying to become licensed Lay Readers. Last year despite further Covid disruption there were 7 who completed the course. This has now been brought into a 6-week module in the one-year foundational training provided in the diocese.

The 'Transforming Conversations' coaching offered to NWC leaders has seen 132 people attend the courses, now including all senior staff and it has been made an essential for all training incumbents and curates. The diocese is also developing a cadre of 12-14 advanced practitioners to support the wider growth through their ability to oversee coaching development as well as build greater inhouse skills.

The Alban Way is an innovative approach to the development of young leaders and disciples. It is a formation-based ministry pathway enabling young people (children from aged 10 through to young adults (up to 35 years old)). It has been developed in consultation with Youthscape following research by them in the diocese.

The first cohort of 12 young adults aged 18-32 from across the diocese started last December and Year 6 children in two schools have also been invited to join from September this year. It will resource, equip and form young people to grow as disciples and undertake meaningful leadership (through 4 key characteristics seen in the life of Saint Alban - evangelism, social action and worship), in their churches, schools, educational settings and local communities.

The adoption and development of Launchpad a service from Youthscape which helps churches start new youthwork initiatives by working with local church leaders to help them find solutions that match their context and assets. St Albans Diocese has run an encouraging pilot in this through RNP.

The programme has also directly impacted other NWCs across the diocese:

St John's Hatfield



St John's, Hatfield is located next to the main campuses of the University of Hertfordshire with its 25000 students and staff. 5PM was planted three years ago as an NWC for students and young adults.

Despite the interruption of the global pandemic, it regularly gets between 30-40 students who worship, engage with scripture, and build community together. It is particularly focussed on how to share the gospel and disciple the Gen Z demographic within the context of community. Through

community and Alpha several people have become Christians and others who had left church have become active again. It is already encouraging some young adults stay around once they finish their studies and others who are on their vocation journey.

St Andrews Hertford

St Andrews have sought to reach out to the estate at the other end of their parish. Having listened to the needs of the community there, pre-Covid they started a toddler group, meeting in the local primary school which was engaging 20 children by the time it was forced to stop in 2020. Subsequently, they have been unable to restart because of the loss of the premises. However, instead they have recently started up mindfulness sessions (based on what they already offer in the church building) in one of the vacant shop units, hosted by the housing association.

All Saints Clifton

All Saints is developing its Messy Church. Families are inviting new families and friends to come along. One family uses a school What's App group to advertise events and offer invitations. Families are encouraged to help and lead activities and there is now crossover with other church events.

Disappointments

The pandemic struck as the programme had completed its second annual review and was producing some encouraging outputs. The team was largely in position and much work had been done to generate

interest and engage local churches both in support of developing their existing NWCs and to plant new ones.

The tracking of the outputs from the programme through Church Army research, special termly church surveys and numbers of people engaged in training all pointed to a programme that was functioning effectively against its aims two years in.

2020 was to be its third full year, the middle of the funding period and effectively almost all NWCs were stopped from meeting. Few were robust enough, given their maturity and composition, to withstand the then eighteen-month stoppage or to move online and retain engagement. This led to the decision to furlough the core team for two quarters. Its disruption to work patterns in the programme led team members to begin to leave as it became clear that new approaches had to be adopted.

It is impossible to know if the original approach would have borne fruit had it been able to continue as the tracking was very much still gathering lead indicators.

5 Missional theory/project design

The key focus of RNP was on building up a mixed ecology of church by growing diverse and maturing NWCs in a wide variety of contexts across the diocese. The elements in the design and the intervention all worked together to support the goals and as a result isolating the individual impacts is difficult, especially after Covid. However, the tracking of intermediate outputs and the experience of the programme team help to inform the judgment of the validity of the missional theory.

Element	Original theory	Theory changed or validated?
Development Officers	<p>People experienced in developing and nurturing NWCs.</p> <p>They would be focused on encouraging interest and nurturing local churches and leaders to both start but primarily nurture the discipleship in NWCs.</p> <p>They would also provide counsel, tools and frameworks for local lay leaders.</p> <p>They would work in partnership with the Church Growth Officers who are supporting local MAP.</p>	<p>Not tested properly but unlikely to be economic as originally proposed.</p> <p>Early experience was positive that it was a good support measure when:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - it acts as ‘coach’ to support a locally championed idea - brings context sensitive expertise - enables leveraging of a network across similar contexts and interests - operates opportunistically in the near-term and against broad qualification criteria for parish selection <p>However, it faces challenge in terms of scaling up because of time commitment each NWC takes which potentially limits to ~30 the number of NWCs that can be covered by each officer Individually and in any depth</p> <p>The model therefore moved towards one in which diocesan resource advises and connects - connecting local leaders in common contexts which helps as above and provides for a wider range of needs (resources, tools, training, communities of interest). This is not sufficiently developed to confirm impact.</p>
Development fund	<p>This is not explicitly addressed in the application but envisaged funding to support a few NWCs where cost might be an initial barrier to meeting (monthly or weekly). Substantial grants of up to £3.5k or £14.5k were made available to support parishes over the first three years.</p>	<p>Not economic as originally designed.</p> <p>Original sums were too high (per grant) to sustain.</p> <p>However, since Covid, small £250 grants made to help restarts and requiring minimal applications have been seen to have provided a strong encouragement to trying out new ideas, and supporting initiative locally. It has enabled 300 grants to be made and 54% of diocesan parishes to be covered.</p>

Element	Original theory	Theory changed or validated?
		No larger scale outcome data has been able to be calculated on the impact of this.
Training - Courses	<p>Both more lay leaders and leaders who are able to take NWCs deeper into discipleship could be developed through appropriate training.</p> <p>Training offerings would be particularly developed to make them relevant and easy to access and participate in.</p>	<p>Not tested but ...</p> <p>Anecdotally positive</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - training helps to support clear intentionality in an NWC from the start which is recognised to be vital for building discipleship. - emphasis on pioneering has permeated diocese and helped validation of the type of church leadership and its demands.
Training - Coaching	The development of leaders who develop NWCs that are intentional about making disciples of Christ will be accelerated and strengthened by providing coaches and learning communities for them	<p>Anecdotally sustained as a culture change tool in not just enhancing leadership in NWCs but also in building communication and enhancing agility in relationships in the church more widely.</p> <p>Needs further assessment and measure definition over the next time period.</p>
Multichannel comms	<p>To build momentum around establishing NWCs needed effective multi-channel communications providing tools, stories, information and easy contact.</p> <p>This was seen as especially important to engage the 'lay-lay' leaders and potential leaders who often lead FXC.</p>	<p>Not yet proven.</p> <p>There has been much more use of social media for sharing stories and newsletter click through rates are up.</p> <p>The new resource centre came live March 2023 and has already reached over half of churches in diocese.</p> <p>Needs further assessment and measure definition over next time period.</p>

6 Implementation

Programme implementation has been very different from the original plan. In part, this reflects the early date of the application, the limited experience that it could draw on in design at that point and some of the governance challenges experienced in integrating RNP into the life of the diocese. However, most profoundly it reflects the onset of the pandemic early in the third year of the programme.

This has however brought benefits in surprising areas which provide great encouragement for the pursuit of the goals over the longer term - through integration of programme learnings and ways of working into the wider mission and ministry approach, communications and church practice.

Programme approach

The original programme envisaged a focus on FXC Development Officers working with prospective churches and leaders, from foundation churches across an Archidiaconal region. They were to be supported by diocese wide training and communications to engage and amplify their impact.

In practice, the geographic spread did not work well neither with the foundation churches nor the Development Officers. Even before the pandemic, it was clear that there was a need for greater focus; more contextual support and networking; an even greater emphasis on training and communications (both key themes of the original programme) and better integration with the wider church.

It was also recognised that there was a capacity challenge to officers providing the scale of support envisaged in the application and in ensuring the most productive engagement with the local leaders who had the ambition to progress.

Covid strongly reinforced these factors and led to significantly more emphasis on other aspects of the programme in support of the overall aims – reinforcing the importance of communications, grants and training and deepening these with an emphasis on online, local and contextual and the overall integration of RNP within the diocesan structure.

Foundational churches

The original programme was built around placing each of the three FXC Development Officers at a Flagship church (one in each Archdeaconry). The principle was to use this base to build enthusiasm and a centre of training and best practice across the Archdeaconry. The Development Officers were encouraged to spend 25% of their time focused here and build from there across a set of foundational churches (19 strong) that would help to create a broad base of experiences to draw on across the diocese.

Whilst the Development Officer role worked well when it was able to engage with churches in the right position/context and leadership, the foundation church platform failed to work well and was struggling even before Covid. This was due to a combination of factors:

- turnover in the leadership of the churches which broke the personal connection and vision alignment
- the lack of networks with common context that the Development Officers could leverage and which attracts NWCs
- in some cases, overfocus on the needs in the flagship church. The allocation of 25% of time for the Development Officer undermined the wider goals

This reflected a lot of what the Development Officers role proved to be – a coach, consultant and trainer to help the local leaders move forward. This builds from a position of trust and perceived understanding and expertise in the context that the church sits.

FXC Development Officers

The Development Officers were a key focus in the original programme comprising around a third of the budget when administrative support is included. Only two of these posts were in position (because of staffing issues) when Covid hit in early 2020.

The roles were an enabler for local churches - part consultant and coach, part trainer. They were there to encourage and spark the progression and starting of FXCs This role was seen to be working (there were many churches engaging with the officers and seeking to draw on their help) when Covid hit but the model itself faced challenges which is why it has not been reintroduced.

The challenges were:

- Too many and too broad a spectrum of churches seeking their support to make the role as impactful as it might be. They could not support 200 existing FXCs let alone new ones
- The link to the geography of an Archdeaconry rather than a network of contextual links made leveraging effective support more difficult
- Relations with the foundation churches approach (see above)
- Terminology and perceived separateness – FXC vs NWC, separate communications, IT systems and articulation of goals between the programme and the wider diocese

The whole emphasis on coaching in the diocese and the desire to integrate NWCs into the ‘normal life’ of the church has altered the practical delivery of this ‘walking alongside’ local churches to embody use of the wider Mission and Ministry team and others in using their experience, diocesan resource and networks to fulfil the same goals.

There is value in a skilled person ‘walking with’ local leaders and it makes sense that this nests with the MAP process and therefore with the wider Mission and Ministry support and Church Growth Officers.

However, this needs to be more opportunistically driven - where there is good local ambition against broad sustainability criteria (e.g. deanery level in rural areas, otherwise younger focused urban situations).

Governance

The original governance structure was a quarterly steering group of four¹ that delegated the day-to-day implementation to the Bishop of Hertford and the Director of Mission. The role played by the diocesan oversight structures was designed to be a supportive one without any direct involvement. This perhaps reflected the emphasis in the original application on FXC and the peripheral focus in diocesan oversight on this prior to RNP. However, as the project launched, the working governance group membership was broadened to include a further four diocesan members from different functions and SDF representation.

The progress of the programme was closely managed from the start in terms of project management, reporting, tracking, measurement and research, however the programme operated separately from the

¹ Comprising Bishop of Hertford, Diocesan Secretary and the Directors of Mission and Ministry

rest of diocesan governance with overall reporting into regular Bishop's Staff meetings together with bi-annual reports to Bishop's Council and annual presentations to Diocesan Synod instead.

This reduced wider senior staff ownership of the activities in the early stages as the project established itself, but in the last three years there has been increasing integration with changes in senior staff on the Board and a more local and contextually driven approach and recognition of the need to engage more effectively. This reflects the emerging change in culture and is more fully reflected in the structures to be adopted for 'Growing younger and more diverse'(GY).

Transforming conversations coaching

A small part of the original application was the use of coaching training from 3D Coaching to equip members of the RNP team, church and NWC leaders. The training was seen as so helpful not just for the context but in improving communications generally that it quickly spread across all senior staff and then across the diocese.

As a result, it has become much more important in the operation of the programme, especially with the integration of RNP into the rest of the diocesan organisation.

It is credited with helping to shift the culture across diocesan staff, increasing teamwork and the clarity of communication both in the churches and across the staff. As a result, it had been adopted as a mandatory part of clergy training in the diocese, with all curates and training incumbents being a priority within this.

Development grant funding

The application created a £250k fund to provide seed finance for start-up NWCs. This was envisaged at the level of £3-14k finance per grant. However, it quickly became clear that the individual funding was too generous and as a result unsustainable.

After ten awards of these substantial sums the process was tightened to typically fund well under £5k per grant and a maximum of £10k. This was stopped as Covid hit but has continued at lower levels of grant since, as the proposition is still seen to have merit and may well be reused with GY.

A more significant departure in the implementation was the introduction of small (£250) grants that offered in the pandemic and since. These required only a short justification, were reviewed and approved quickly and not subject to follow-up reviews (although many churches have both feedback on outcomes and posted the value of them).

To date 300 of these grants have been awarded, 67% to start, restart and/or expand activities after Covid providing short term funding to missional activities in cafes, for camping weekends with youth and myriad other local priorities. In addition, 33% have supported one off missional and outreach events and activities, including seasonal and the Warm Spaces focus over this last winter period. The strengths of this have been to enable and reward local missional initiative, build a sense of commonality between local and diocesan resource, and touch a lot of the diocese (54%).

Communications

The use of communications to engage and amplify the activities in the programme was always a key part of the application. It originally created a separate communications programme supported by a dedicated

part-time officer and included investment in digital media to help to drive engagement and involvement which was seen as critical for it to fulfil its role effectively.

The implementation largely followed this outline although as events were closed down by Covid and the need to increase online activity, training and overall capability became apparent the move towards digital accelerated.

Staff movements and this shift to digital through the time of the pandemic have led to the reintegration of the RNP and digital comms activity into core diocesan comms (now led by the previous RNP officer who joined in early 2021) and a shift towards a digital first approach to communications which is likely to continue to gather pace.

This has resulted in a new Diocesan website and resource centre which was only made possible by the foundational learning and work done in the RNP team. This launched at the beginning of March 2023 and already had over 50% of parishes signed up to it.

Budget

The immense disruption with the replanning of activity in Covid meant that the diocese needed to pursue alternative approaches to progress the aims of the programme.

£000	Budget			Actual			Difference
	Total	SDF	DBF	Total	SDF	DBF	
Development officers	971	773	199	542	543	0	-429
Church Growth Officers/admin	608	0	608	528	0	528	-80
Children & youth	0	0	0	212	0	212	212
Lay ministry	0	0	0	39	0	39	39
Support and admin	458	389	70	553	487	70	95
Staff costs	2037	1162	877	1874	1030	849	-163
Expenses							
RNP	159	134	25	31	31	0	-128
Ch growth	94	0	94	116	0	116	22
Support cost							
C&Y	0	0	0	56	0	56	56
RNP	47	47	0	77	77	0	30
External res/SDU	45	45	0	57	57	0	12
RNP training	365	152	212	358	178	180	-7
Website/elearning	19	15	5	131	88	43	112
The Alban Way	0	0	0	34	34	0	34
RNP communications	178	107	71	100	93	8	-78
Grants	250	0	250	364	114	250	114
Central support - IT/Comms	416	86	330	350	39	311	-66
Non staff costs	1573	586	987	1674	711	964	101
TOTAL	3610	1748	1864	3548	1741	1813	-62

Notes

1. Actual refers to projected spend to end of funding period (Sept 22)
2. Line item budget slightly differs to stage 2 application because of accounting treatment (eg redundancy or relocation costs) revised

This led to significant modifications to the spend, increasing the amounts particularly spent on:

- Children and youth (+£212k)
- Training and education (+£139k)
- Grants (+£114k)

This reflects the way that the programme pivoted to more locally driven and online work, which has continued since the pandemic, especially as the focus has strengthened on growing younger and more diverse.

The work also required more support resource than the application primarily because of the need to provide project management capability throughout the programme not only for the first two years allowed in the application (+£104k).

Conversely the sums originally allocated to the Development Officers, the core of the original application, fell significantly (-£429k) as their work became untenable.

Tracking and measurement

For a programme launched in 2017, it is unusual in having had proper project management support from the start with a strong emphasis on tracking and measuring both lead and lag indicators.

The programme was actively tracked in the run up to Covid (as illustrated on p9 by the 2019 data) but this was severely disrupted by the pandemic and the reworking of the programme approach which effectively made the field and survey work needed impractical.

It also faced the usual challenges of definitions and participation (e.g. on measuring disciples and for survey response rates from parishes) which meant that it was highly dependent on surveys but these could not be continued as a priority for parishes after Covid.

Even so the project management approach and structures have continued throughout (aside of during furlough in 2020/21).

Resources available

There have been several different training resources created through the RNP programme. Many of these are now built into the training modules used for foundation training in the diocese.

However, a standalone module for helping leaders and prospective leaders move through the development cycle for an NWC was developed. This is RNP branded but provides an outline and support for three sessions to cover the topics of Explore, Engage and Integrate for NWCs.

For further details please contact Tricia Humber, in the Ministry and Mission team.

7 Learning

There have already been useful reflections on the learnings to be made from the project, by the Project Board and in the annual evaluations. This report does not seek to repeat the lessons already gathered in these but rather to highlight the following lessons identified by respondents:

1. The importance of focusing resource to achieve goals. This means being realistic about the capacity of individuals and prioritising opportunities

The need to focus investment and attention on the areas where God will bring and sustain the fruit in mission was called out several times. Focus reflects the need to balance available capacity and prospective impact. Often less is more.

This demanded realism towards:

- How much time effective support demands vs the capacity of roles. This was evident in the FX Development Officers. The tendency is to stretch too thinly across responsibilities
- The productivity and sustainability of each local 'opportunity'.

This was learned through the inability of the team to support directly the emerging demands for support and the realisation of the need to prioritise those local situations of greater impact and sustainability (situationally: urban, with younger and more diverse concentrations of people and corporately: where local leaders had real ambition and good enough skills).

1. The importance of building from local opportunity and context and then exploiting networks with shared challenges and locally ambitious leaders

The complimentary observation to the above is that respondents also spoke of the value of opportunism. A priority to where good personal relationships, similar context or experience and local ambition existed makes investment much more productive.

Leveraging networks of leaders and communities with contextual needs or ambitions was the most effective way of engaging people and boosting learning. The learning communities, peer-to-peer support and resources were all more effective when people were connected by context. This could be the nature of ministry (e.g. Messy Church) or the demography (e.g. local estates, new housing, rural settings) but knowledge passed more easily when it was contextually served up. This was seen as far more effective than geography or position as an organising principle.

Similarly, there was a clear sense of the need to focus resource where there was genuine ambition locally (held by enough local resource to make it happen) rather than any need to persuade or cajole.

2. The value of using teams as the basis for leading and training

Serving up training especially in teams was done for LyCIG and the RNP training modules and was seen to be very useful in engaging people who might not otherwise attend (because they are too busy leading) and in embedding the learning in the leadership group so that it is not lost when individuals move on.

This seemed to help counter the tendency otherwise for capturing people who like training more than applying it and missing those who might really be able to use the learning in practice (lay-lay leaders in NWCs).

3. The importance of visible senior staff buy-in

Respondents expressed a sense of growing momentum and value around RNP and now GY as the organisation begins to commit more widely to elements of RNP – the coaching, the value of a mixed ecology, the importance of lay leadership. As these things begin to relate to ‘business as usual’ in the diocese they become more important. There is a sense in which this represents a key aspect of the culture change that respondents talk about as it reflects ‘the way that things are done around here’.

These directly flow from the perceived breadth and depth of the senior team commitment to the work. They are seen to shape expectations across the leadership of the church and the potential impact of any action. It illustrates the importance of working to build real unity across the senior team for impactful mission.

Respondents commented on some weaknesses in this initially in RNP and but the increasing strength of it since Covid.

4. The importance of digital - online resources, activity and social media

It is too early yet to see the full value and impact of digital approaches but several respondents reflected on the key role that it already plays and the potential for generating much more engagement in and outside of the church.

This was commented on in its value in telling stories (locally and across the diocese) and engaging with and sustaining local communities but it seen most obviously in resourcing:

- The new online resource centre and early take up
- Enabling communities with a common context but too far apart for regular face-to-face learning and sharing
- Increasing convenience for education (time and place shifting)
- Increasing efficiency and productivity in communications

Webinars and Zoom cafes have replaced face-to-face training on subjects such as outdoor church and tots and toddlers. An online programme of Liminal Live events and Masterclasses has been developed covering topics like mental health and disability and the church.

Additionally, two significant elements for reflection and learning can be seen in:

5. Innovation versus integration

The RNP team and programme started out as separate within the diocesan organisation. It operated to its own ways of working, had its own training and systems, specific goals and parallel governance.

This approach is quite common in many organisations seeking to press ahead with discrete innovations and also in projects in the Church of England. It benefits from clarity of focus and goals, minimal distraction from business-as-usual priorities and more dedicated resources. The aim being to make faster progress and overcome the natural resistance to change in organisations.

RNP maintained this operating model up to lockdown but was clearly aware of the challenges it brings when seeking to support change in the wider church. However, because of Covid, changes in people and some of the change levers it used (e.g. coaching, communications) it then began to integrate into the organisation much more closely.

This has clearly helped to build greater sustainability at the end of strategic funding, helped the diocese to embrace new skills, ideas and ways of working and potentially create a runway for further change.

As such it is worth considering as an explicit and appropriate step in transition on other programmes as they complete in order to maintain learning or momentum.

6. The value of pulling a breadth of levers for 'cultural change'

All respondents spoke of a sense of experiencing a shift in the culture of the diocese as RNP has moved towards its latter stages (see section 4). This reflects the different sort of levers that RNP has ended up using and the emphasis on the integrative application of the elements across all parts of the church (see 5 above).

It has used a number of 'soft' levers:

- **Coaching** which impacts leadership approach (in some ways a mirror of culture)
- **Staff transfers** incorporating previously RNP focused staff into the core structure (with sponsorship from leaders)
- **Training and networking** (pioneer, coaching, online learning communities and networks) that build new shadow structures, diversify the cadre of leaders and broaden skillsets
- **Empowerment mechanisms** (small grants, peer-to-peer communications, contextual networks, training, permission to try, increasing emphasis on centre 'walking with' competent local initiative) that helps to mobilise the wider church

It has strongly supported in this by the severe challenge that the diocese is seeking to address in the decline in the attendance of younger demographics at twice the rate of the overall decline and the enforced changes in ways of working generated by the pandemic. However, it suggests that where there is sufficient clarity about the external pressures on the diocese and valuable enabling actions that support the organisation in responding to these that broader change can gain traction.

8 Next steps

Even as the programme reaches the end of six years of funding it has already substantially integrated into the structure of diocesan working. Almost all RNP roles finished before the end of 2022 and those aspects carrying forward into GY are already clear.

This reflects a shift in thinking that has been growing in the diocese since Covid and a wider appreciation of the core approach and activities that RNP originally brought into diocesan life.

Many of the most impactful activities are planned to continue – more locally and contextually driven initiatives (Launchpad, Greenhouse based learning communities), a coaching approach to communications, diocesan enabling of the local through appropriate training (foundation use of ‘pioneer’ modules and programmes like The Alban Way), online resources and communications.

The 2028 aims remain the same as articulated for the RNP programme in terms of NWCs, disciples and leadership development but the theme is ‘Growing younger and more diverse’, reflecting the pressing need to better engage these demographics and focus on this.

Lessons have also been taken on making sure that the governance is better integrated into the senior staff. It is going to be integrated into the diocesan structures with each member of the senior staff sponsoring one of the nine targeted projects within the overall initiative and an overall Governing Board comprising senior staff and others which will oversee individual local project boards for each project.

The sponsoring senior staff will each champion and speak to progress on their projects in existing management forums. This offers the potential for continuing to develop the cultural change and build impact.

9 Advice to dioceses

In addition to absorbing the learnings identified in section 7, there are three specific topics prompted by discussion with respondents which are worth consideration by other dioceses and are common with other recent reviews:

1. Invest in the development of teams

RNP exhibits the significant value to be unlocked by creating and supporting teams to help implement missional initiatives, encourage innovation and support stability. The coaching approach, more integrated ways of working (across functions) and encouragement of local teams of leaders on training and working together all speak into this.

There is much greater value to be unlocked in this area than has been realised so far in the church which retains what is often a very individualistic culture. Practically, this would mean:

- Greater emphasis on effective teaming behaviour
- Use of management training to develop teamworking skills
- The identification of teams (most people do not know what teams they are in, nor agree on the composition of the team)
- The encouragement and monitoring of the health of key teams
- Specific support to develop and strengthen selected teams

2. Encourage a 'testing and learning' approach

RNP sought to encourage breaking new ground with ways of starting and sustaining church. This sort of innovation inevitably increases the likelihood that elements of planned activity will not work as expected - that issues will arise, things go wrong and situations will change. This will in turn require changes in approaches and ideas and the admission that things didn't quite work.

The small grants activity and encouragement made by RNP to local leaders to simply try stuff and see what comes from it helps to build:

- More acceptance of risk-taking and things not working (for good reasons)
- Agility to pivot as some areas bear fruit and others don't
- A more diverse and sustainable church that reaches a wider range of communities

It would involve:

- Encouraging a 'try it and see' approach in churches and activity, recognizing that some will be blessed, others not
- Placing greater emphasis on testing and measuring activities not merely sticking to an agenda set upfront
- Greater scaling of that which is bearing fruit and stopping that which is not (the latter often being more difficult)
- Greater clarity in thinking over strategic goals versus the tactical approaches to realising them

3. Increase accountability in the inherited church

There has, despite the evident challenges, been an enormous amount of effort put into seeking to measure and track progress in the activity of RNP in order to understand what is working well. This is healthy and helpful. However, it contrasts quite sharply with the understanding and tracking of growth and progress in the inherited church, where the sense of accountability for resources and development is much less.

This creates an artificial and unhelpful divide between 'new' and 'old' worshipping communities which promotes a lack of understanding and unity, friction, and tensions over risk and security.

This would be helpfully alleviated and the church more widely mobilised if there was a greater level of measured attention and reflection on the inherited church, in the context of a stronger culture of experimentation and learning.

Interviewees

Person	Role with respect to Reaching New People
Dan Drew	Growing Younger and More Diverse Leader
Tricia Humber	M&M Operations Officer, Project Manager, RNP
Tim Lomax	Director of Mission and Ministry
Kath Oates	Lay Leader, St Andrews Hertford
Dave Picket	Creative and Digital Communications Partner

Glossary

FXC	Fresh Expressions of Church
LyCiG	Leading your Church into Growth
Mixed economy	Both traditional and new worshipping communities
MSM	Mission Shaped Ministry
NWC	New worshipping communities
SfM	Statistics for Mission