



Managing Ministry Pressure Better Survey Results and Discussion

Introduction

The Managing Ministry Pressure Better Survey is only one source of information in the Diocese of Ely about clergy wellbeing. It is by no means definitive, but it has been an effective tool in the identification of where the greatest pressures are felt, and an aid to setting priorities in resourcing clergy wellbeing. Whilst some things can be addressed in a short timeframe, many of the issues raised are indicative of the need for longer term changes of ethos and attitude.

Process:

- June 2014: Managing Ministry Pressure Better Survey run in Ely Diocese for three weeks
- September 2014: Presentation of results given by Dr Robert Wilcox to Diocesan Secretary, Archdeacons, Director of Ministry, Adviser for clergy wellbeing
- September 2014: Initial results given at Clergy Conference
- December 2014: First meeting of Focus Group – presentation of results by Dr Robert Wilcox and initial discussion
- January 2015: second meeting of Focus Group to look at domains in which clergy reported most pressure and at statistically significant correlations. The objectives of the group were to explain the findings; to identify areas in which a difference can be made, and to begin to prioritise action.

The Survey

The survey has been developed by Interhealth, an international health charity, and is run by St Luke's Healthcare. It is adapted from a survey used for many years in secular working environments. To make it suitable for Church of England dioceses to use 12 questions relating to ministry were added. It was trialed in four dioceses before being offered wider. Ely is the sixth diocese to complete the survey, which has now been used in nine dioceses.

The survey gives participants the opportunity to register the level of pressure they experience with regard to various aspects of their life and work. The anonymised, aggregated results therefore give a picture of the areas of pressure that most affect clergy in this diocese. This is an aid to identifying and prioritising actions that will improve the wellbeing of the clergy of the diocese.

Limitations of the survey are recognized. Not least, that, because of preserving anonymity the location of respondents is not asked for, there is no geographical information. Yet the contrasts in context within the diocese are clear.

There were some negative reactions to the responses that individuals received upon completion of the survey. These were reported back to St Luke's Healthcare resulting in some amendments being made to the responses offered.



Response rate

The survey was completed by 136 clergy in the diocese, ie 58% of those invited to participate (the survey did not include Deans and Chaplains of the University of Cambridge).

Structure of survey

The survey comprised questions grouped in eight domains. These domains are:

Demands:	the volume and speed of work, meetings, correspondence
Culture:	lack of encouragement, trust, respect, poor communication
Relationships:	with 'line management', parishioners, colleagues, family
Ministry:	personal and church finance, home life, discouragement, thoughts of leaving, staleness
Control:	workload, resources, scheduling
Role:	uncertainty, extra things, compensating for others
Change:	the way change is managed, its amount and rate
Support:	lack of it, asking for help, working beyond training

Results

Aggregated data of responses in each of the domains

The following graphs show the distribution of responses, from 'very definitely is not pressured' to very 'definitely is pressured'.

The results for the domains of Culture, Relationships, Ministry and Support are skewed in a way that indicates that these domains are not significant sources of pressure for most clergy, ie most respondents reported as being 'generally not pressured' in that domain and many reported as being 'very definitely not pressured' or 'definitely not pressured'.

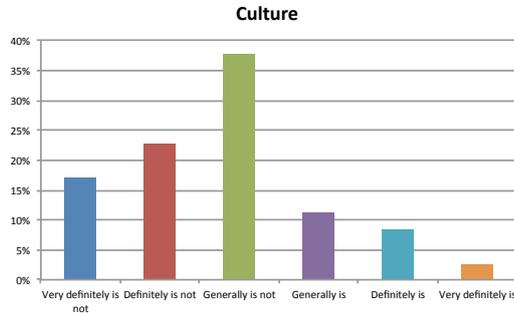


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Culture



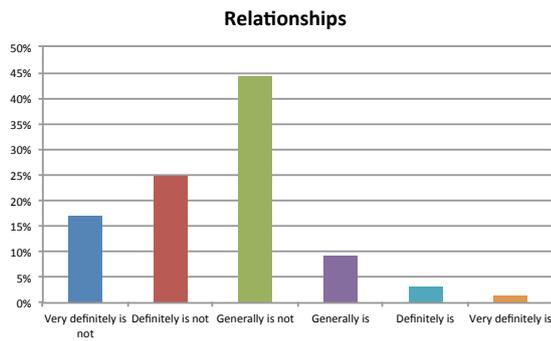
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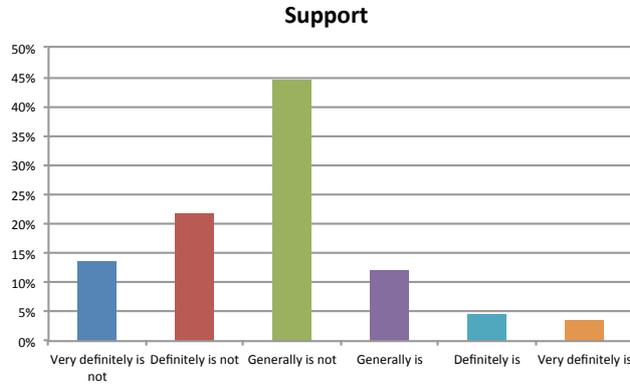
Relationships



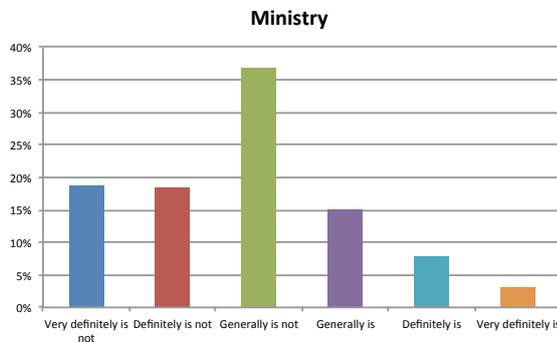
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Support



Ministry



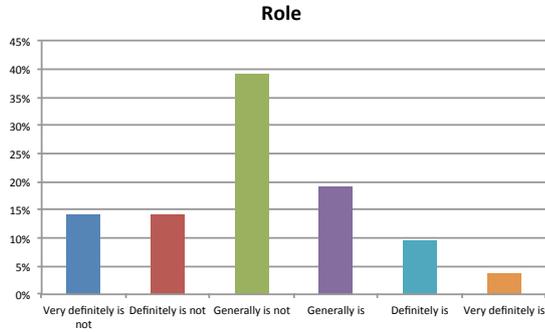
The distribution of results for the domains of Role, Control and Change is 'bell-shaped', ie most respondents reported as being 'not generally pressured' in that domain, with a relatively even spread on either side of those 'very definitely not' or 'definitely not pressured' and those 'generally', 'definitely', or 'very definitely' pressured in that domain.



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Role

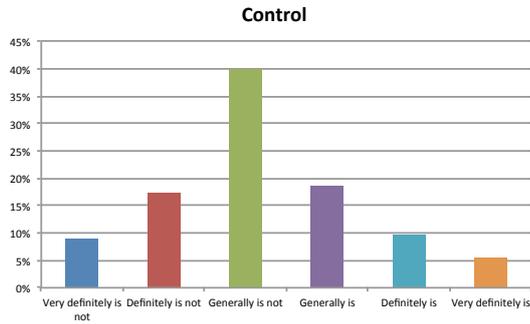


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Control

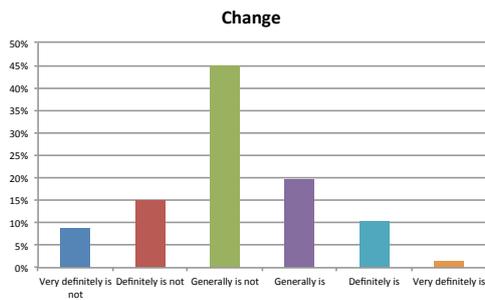


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Change



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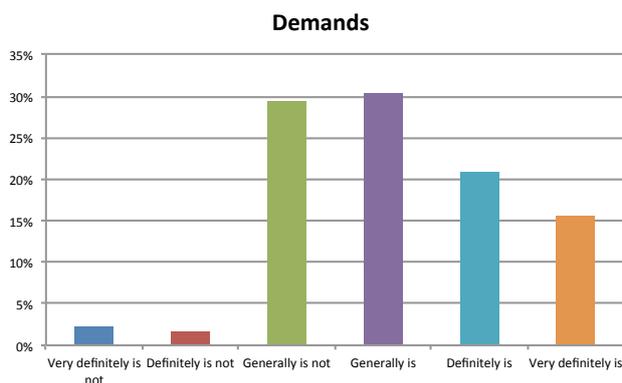


The only domain in which the results are seen to be skewed in the direction which suggests that this is a significant source of pressure for clergy is that of Demands, ie far larger percentages of clergy reported as being ‘generally’, ‘definitely’ or ‘very definitely’ pressured. Less than 5% of clergy reported that they are ‘very definitely not’ or ‘definitely not’ pressured by the demands (volume and speed of work, meetings, correspondence).

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Demands



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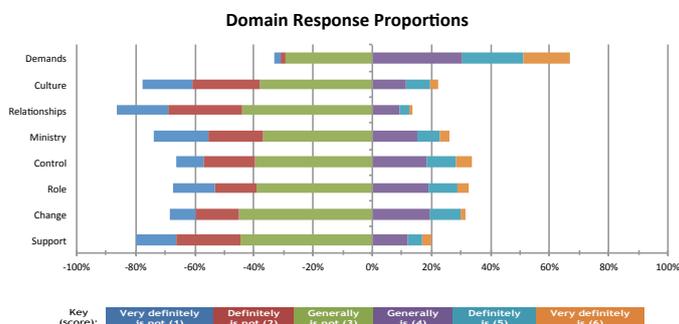
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The aggregated results of the domains suggest that, whilst there can always be improvements made in all areas and individual experiences differ, there are a number of areas where, as a diocese, we report as doing well – particularly Support and Relationships.

The summary graph below clearly demonstrates the difference in responses to the questions concerning the demands of ordained life, i.e. that a very large percentage of the respondents are generally, definitely or very definitely under pressure in this domain. This result clearly requires attention.



Net response proportions



The total number of domains in which individual clergy report as feeling pressured varied. 19 reported that they didn't feel pressurised in any of the domains; 10 reported as pressured in 7 or 8 domains.

The results indicate that our clergy do not feel under any more pressure than clergy in other dioceses nor do we report as more stressed than secular workers.

Correlations

A number of statistically significant correlations between the responses to the questions in the domains and the classificatory data were revealed in the survey. Several of these were identified by the focus group to need further consideration. It was acknowledged within the group that a correlation does not necessarily reflect causality.

These correlations are:

- Role: Men are less pressurized than women who are more likely to be concerned at doing extra work to compensate for other people and by doing things that are not part of the job
- Years in ministry: Those in ministry 10-19 years feel more pressurized from lack of support
- Hours: Those working 50+ hours are the most pressurised from demands, particularly from the required speed of work and correspondence.
- Theology: Evangelicals are significantly more pressurized by demands.



Discussion:

In discussion the Focus Group identified the following emphases:

- The results clearly highlight that particular attention needs to be paid to the demands of ordained ministry – as identified in terms of the volume and speed of work, meetings and correspondence.
- The changing nature of the work:
 - increasing pressure to spend time on administration resulting in less time eg for pastoral work. This can stand in contrast to what clergy feel themselves gifted to do and can leave clergy feeling that they are not doing adequately either the administrative work, or the pastoral work, preaching, finding and nurturing of disciples, etc.
 - increasing emphasis on the clergy role as one of oversight of teams of clergy and laity. This may be very different to the role clergy envisioned when ordained and is happening at a time when many laity are also feeling pressured and are unable to or choose to give less time to the church
 - it was recognized that this source of pressure would also be found in many other areas of working life.
- A need for training in the management of the changing volume and nature of correspondence.
- The gender specific correlation concerning women being more likely to be concerned at doing extra work to compensate for other people and by doing extra things that are not part of the job was something that men in the focus group were particularly keen to see followed up and addressed. The dangers of talking in gender specific terms were recognized but there was a general agreement that, on the whole, women may find it more difficult to be comfortable with leaving things undone.
- Administrative support; the need for good parish administrative support and administrative support for Rural Deans was acknowledged, as was the difficulty in finding competent administrators to fill such roles.
- Hours worked; the survey revealed that 59% of respondents work over 50 hours a week. 33% of respondents work part-time in their clergy role (acknowledging that they may well have other work commitments) which would suggest that a very high percentage of full time clergy (ca 78%) work more than 50 hours a week. Some clergy, in discussion with members of their churches, have established ways of limiting their hours to 50 or less per week, others are known regularly to be working well in excess of 50 hours.
- Days per week worked; the expectation of a six-day working week was felt to be a greater source of pressure than the overall number of hours. Some honest discussion is needed about this.
- The impact of additional roles; this was noted as an example of a time when, for some, help may be needed in making decisions about what to stop when asked to take on something additional to the existing role.



- The development of role descriptions is helping clergy be clearer about expectations and priorities.
- The new form of Ministerial Development Review will not only help clergy to determine the sources of pressure with regard to the demands of the work but also to discern and be guided to sources of help.
- The growth in the availability of supervision, coaching and mentoring in the diocese was acknowledged and welcomed, as was the work of the Bishop's Adviser for Conflict Resolution.
- Problems of timing of communications from diocese; December is not a good time to receive multiple mailings that need good attention.
- Congregations can only know where the greatest pressures on clergy are found (and therefore be able to play a part in reducing this pressure) if clergy are prepared to talk honestly with PCC's etc.
- Further exploration is needed with regard to the correlation that evangelicals are significantly more pressurized than those of other traditions. This could be inaugurated through discussion with the Diocesan Evangelical Fellowship.

Proposed actions

Whilst some things can be addressed in a short time frame, many of the issues raised are indicative of the need for longer term changes of ethos and attitude.

Immediate

- The introduction of telephone conference facilities at Diocesan Office was welcomed. For access and usage details, click here: http://www.ely.anglican.org/information/document_downloads.html or ring reception at the diocesan office, 01353 652701.
- Training for dealing with correspondence/time management and the sharing of good practice will be set up through the Ministry Department. This could possibly involve Stephen Cherry author of 'Time Wisdom' and Nick Cuthbert author of 'How to survive and Thrive as a Church Minister'. Contact ministry@ely.anglican.org for more details.
- Time management training needs to take into consideration the gender specific correlation that relates to the pressure women feel from doing what they perceive to be work which is not part of their 'job' and compensating for others.
- The Adviser for Women's Ministry (the Revd Dr Jessica Martin) is aware of this need and will use it to inform her work with individuals and groups and to inform specific training for women.
- The development of realistic role descriptions for those in either full or part-time ordained ministry helps clergy to be clearer about expectations and assists with the constant prioritizing which comes with the role. This will be achieved for those who do not have role descriptions as part of the new Ministerial Development Review process.



- Funding for support with issues of conflict by Bishop's Adviser for Conflict Resilience (the Revd Ruth Adams) has been increased.
- Mailings from the diocesan office to be coordinated whenever possible.

Medium term

- More intentional recognition and development of the skills and wisdom of those who have been ordained 10-19 years, most immediately in the skill of mentoring. The aim is to affirm and energize by encouraging the use of skills in ways that are life-enhancing for the individual and for the diocese. Such recognition of skills will happen through the MDR process.
- The development of facilitated discussions with PCCs about clergy wellbeing so that congregations are better informed about the main sources of pressure on clergy.
- Clergy in parishes with populations of over 15,000 to be interviewed to see if there are common threads with regard to areas of pressure in order to determine what actions can be taken.
- Further to the result that 'evangelicals are significantly more pressurised by demands than other groups', conversations to be held with the Diocesan Evangelical Fellowship in order to understand where the pressures may be coming from and address them.

Long term

- Further work needs to be done both individually and collectively to understand the sources of the demands (the congregation, the diocese, parish and wider involvement) and how clergy find manageable ways to respond to these demands.
- Ethos change that challenges underlying myths (e.g. that a full diary is a sign of an effective ministry and that regularly working 60-70 hours a week is acceptable) and that supports and affirms healthy ways of working and healthy attitudes to ordained life is to be encouraged.

Communication

- All that is available with regard to clergy support and wellbeing needs to be communicated clearly and consistently to clergy. Work is underway in reviewing communication methods and this will be helped by the development of a new diocesan website and database.
- The Focus Group emphasized the importance of the role of the Rural Dean in communicating with the clergy and raised the possibility of utilizing Deanery Chapters as a forum for delivery of some training.
- The wellbeing of the clergy is of importance to the whole church. PCC's and congregations can do much to enhance clergy wellbeing if they are informed



about major sources of pressure on clergy. Presentations in Deanery Synods could be a starting point for such information and discussion. Licensed colleagues, often as members of small leadership teams in parishes, play a key role in mutual support of and by clergy. Discussion with LLM's in their area meetings has already begun and wellbeing in the church is on the agenda for the ALM conference in April 2015.

Conclusion

The naming of the demands of ordained ministry as the key source of pressure, at this time, for clergy in Ely Diocese gives us an opportunity to make improvements to clergy wellbeing. Specific correlations from the responses given will also help in the sensitive delivery of wellbeing measures.

The effectiveness of our response to this lies in a 'whole-church' response as:

- appropriate, specific training is offered by the Department of Ministry and taken up by clergy
- all, both clergy and laity, are informed about this being a particular area of pressure for clergy
- we all show sensitivity and kindness in our own generation of correspondence, meetings, etc.
- larger issues of expectations and the changing clergy role are addressed.

The Clergy Wellbeing Forum will continue to address issues raised both by this survey and in other ways and will report developments regularly through the clergy mailing and via the Rural Deans.

Comments are welcome on this and other matters relating to Clergy Wellbeing. Please contact the Rev'd Canon Sue Wyatt sue.e.wyatt@btinternet.com or the Rev'd Canon Linda Church ministry@ely.anglican.org