

# Support for benefices involved in proposed pastoral reorganisations<sup>1</sup>

## Context:

Pastoral reorganisation, triggered by the reduction in the numbers of stipendiary clergy, provokes several transitions

- Splitting of some existing benefices
- Newly formed benefices, with a greater number of parishes
- Clergy having to adjust to larger benefices, including new parishes
- Parishes sometimes finding themselves allocated a new incumbent without the usual vacancy selection process

Even before Proposed Pastoral Reorganisation has reached the legal stage of the process, parishes are likely to want to begin to explore working together in the proposed configuration. The support outlined below is designed to help the incumbent and the parishes involved with that exploration.

## Outline of support:

Recognising the range of challenges linked to pastoral reorganisations, diocesan support services will provide two interconnected strands of support:

- All incumbents with proposed changing benefice boundaries will have a one to one conversation arranged by the Ministry Training team to consider their personal development needs.
- Key leaders, including the incumbent, in benefices with changing boundaries will receive support from the Deanery and Parish Development Advisers

This support is for all benefices in this situation, under the oversight of the Archdeacon who will initiate the support when an appropriate moment in pastoral reorganisation thinking has been reached.

## What the support involves:

### *For incumbent with oversight ministry:*

- Incumbent Development Conversation:
  - To give incumbents a safe space in which to reflect on the impact on their ministry
  - To explore oversight ministry and how to enable shared local ministry in the new context.
  - To identify any training or support needs that will enable them to adapt as necessary
- Review conversations will be arranged through the Ministry Training Team who will then signpost to further support, including from Deanery and Parish Development Advisers who can offer support in navigating the change alongside the parishes, including developing shared sense of mission and ways of working together

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<sup>1</sup> This document relates to the point in proposed pastoral reorganisation schemes where there is sufficient local agreement for the proposal to be likely to be formally agreed. For links to other guidance on the wider process please see the Pastoral Reorganisation section found at [Deaneries Hub - Bath and Wells Diocese](#)

*For parishes, clergy and wider ministry teams:*

Support for conversations between parishes and newly appointed incumbents. What is helpful will vary according to context but, based on work already done with some deaneries, might include:

Stage 1

- A conversation with Churchwardens to help them consider what issues might be at play and how to make the connection with their new incumbent.
- A conversation with the incumbent to help them prepare for connecting with new parishes and think about how they might begin working with a newly formed benefice.
- Facilitation for key meetings, as necessary, such as initial meetings between incumbent and churchwardens, PCCs etc to explore mutual hopes and expectations for shared ministry across the benefice going forwards.
- Signposting to relevant other diocesan support services staff

Stage 2

- The Deanery and Parish Development Adviser will agree with the local incumbent and parishes whether they would value some ongoing facilitation as they develop their vision for future work and mission or whether they feel confident in organising themselves.
- An agreed review point is useful, to celebrate progress and to take the pressure off resolving everything immediately.

Key support roles in this process:

**Archdeacons**

- Responsible for triggering the support package
- Receive updates on progress

**Assistant Diocesan Secretary**

- Responsible for advising on and drafting pastoral schemes
- Keeps Archdeacon informed

**Area and Lay Dean**

- Keep in touch with Archdeacon to anticipate right moment for support, in the light of progress on the proposed reorganisation

**Ministry Training Team**

- Arrange incumbent development conversations.
- Signpost to Deanery and Parish Development Advisers

**Deanery & Parish Development Advisers**

- Engage with parishes in response to Archdeacon's support request
- Keep Archdeacon and Deanery Leaders updated as appropriate
- Signpost to other support services colleagues