

Diocesan Deployment Plan for Stipendiary Clergy: Draft Proposal for Bishop's Council, September 2024

1. Introduction

- a) The work of deployment of Stipendiary Clergy is, at its heart, a work of discernment shared by candidates, parishes, deaneries and the diocese. This shared responsibility is articulated in some of the practical dimensions of recruitment and appointment but is also a shared responsibility to discern where we notice God at work in our context, as well as discerning how to amplify and witness to the joy and thanksgiving that is integral to Christian faith.
- b) Discernment and deployment is not a matter of placing people within contexts but inviting people to explore the promises of our shared baptismal faith together.
- c) Since 2022 part of the work of Deanery Development Groups (DDGs) has been to engage in discernment about where they notice God's work in their shared deanery contexts and further discernment about how to collaborate in faithful participation in response. These diverse faithful responses are the foundations for a year of shared discernment across the diocese, that Bishop Helen-Ann articulated as a "Season of Seeking" in her address of April 2024. At Diocesan Synod in September 2024, we will begin this Season of Seeking offering ourselves afresh to attend to God at work in our contexts: discerning, naming and amplifying together what we notice, as well as enabling and encouraging those whom God places us alongside.
- d) We commend the diocese deployment plan to you as integral to this discernment: seeking where God's work might be calling us, and others, to serve.

2. Background

- a) In 2018 the Diocesan Synod agreed that the diocesan budget, largely funded from parish share, can only sustain an average of 80 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) stipendiary posts each year (N.B. the stipendiary clergy cohort is more than 80 people because this figure does not include Assistant Curates or chaplains or some missionaries, and some roles are part-time).
- b) The process of reducing the number of available FTE stipendiary posts, from over 100 FTE to an intentional and agreed 80 FTE, had been gradual and organic and we had yet to finalise where the permanent 80 FTE posts should be or the mechanisms for achieving it.
- c) In July 2022, a Deanery Planning Process began with each Deanery Development Group (DDG) working with Archdeacons and other senior staff to develop holistic plans for mission and ministry. These plans aim to set stipendiary FTE posts within the ministry context of the whole people of God, valuing and including lay authorised and licensed ministry and Self Supporting (SSM) and retired ordained ministry. These deanery plans also aim to include proposals about the deployment of stipendiary FTE posts supported

by parish share, whilst recognising that the mission and ministry of the church is not limited to stipendiary clergy.

- d) The Deanery Planning Process is an ongoing, iterative and collaborative process. It was initially timetabled to take 3 years from Oct 22 – June 25.
- e) We currently hold 91.45 FTE (actual posts holders plus vacancies) with 71.521 FTE currently in post as of 30 April 2024. This has been due to both extended vacancy processes and intentional pastoral organisation, involving the loss of some posts and the merging together of other posts.
- f) The current round of Deanery Planning has offered 83.45 FTE across all 12 deaneries but has yet to determine the precise location of every post, or how to achieve 80 FTE out of the current possible 91.45 FTE posts as currently defined.
- g) While achieving 83.45 FTE is significant progress, there remain questions about some of the deanery proposals where further thinking is required – there are also two deaneries (Central and Tynemouth) with brand new Area Deans and where further work has been identified and where new deanery leadership is timely and offers potential for this.

3. Deployment of the 80 by Deanery

- a) Although the Deanery Planning Process has served to broaden awareness in DDGs of the wider diocese in terms of the challenges and joys of different ministerial contexts, it has also strengthened the focus on the deanery by giving DDGs agency to drive a plan for deanery mission and deployment of resource. In establishing the deployment of 80 FTE posts across the deaneries we are settling on a deployment plan for the diocese as a whole and an aspiration is to foster a greater diocesan-wide sense of identity and mutual accountability.
- b) Members of the Bishop's Staff Team (BST) have recently formed a Deployment Planning Working Group (DPWG) to form a diocesan overview of all the deanery plans in order to devise a process to identify the final location of posts to form an overall Diocesan Deployment Plan for stipendiary clergy. The DPWG comprises of the Bishop of Berwick, Archdeacon of Lindisfarne, Archdeacon of Northumberland, Director of Mission & Ministry and the Diocesan Secretary.
- c) The DPWG offers this paper to prepare for a proposal to agree the 80 FTE posts at the Diocesan Synod on 9 November 2024, in summary, how we move from 91.45 FTE to the more sustainable cohort of 80 FTE.
- d) The DPWG proposal currently:

Deanery	Current stipendiary allocation	DDG Plan stipendiary allocation at June 2023	Allocation proposal to Diocesan Synod by DPWG
Norham	4.5	5	4.5
Bamburgh & Glendale	4.0	4.0	3.5
Alnwick	6.5	6.0	6.0
Morpeth	7.65	7.15	7.15
Bellingham	2.0	2.0	2.0
Hexham	7.0	6.5	6.0
Corbridge	5.8	5.3	5.3
Bedlington	10.0	10.0	8
Newcastle Central	11.5	9.5	10.5
Newcastle East	8.0	6.0	6.0
Newcastle West	10.5	10.0	10.0
Tynemouth	14.0	12.0	11
Total	91.45	83.45	79.95

- e) The above proposed allocation of stipendiary posts to deaneries comes primarily from the current deanery plans. The DPWG offer some suggestions that are contrary to some deanery plans in order to get to the 80 total. This is part of the iterative process of Deanery Planning, but will clearly be disappointing, even frustrating, for some.
- f) If the 80 posts are agreed at November's Diocesan Synod, this plan will nonetheless take time to implement as DDGs take time to plan exactly where clergy will be deployed in their deanery and to take account of natural clergy movement (retirement, relocation). Some new configurations are 'on hold' until the current post-holder moves on or retires. It is worth re-stating at this point that no current post-holder is at risk of dispossession. Some DDGs have also experienced major changes in parish clergy posts and/or a change in Area Dean and are not able, as yet, to finalise the location of their stipendiary posts.

4. Next Steps

- a) There remains the question of affordability even after agreeing this reduction to 80 FTE stipendiary clergy posts. No deanery is currently able to meet their ministry costs through the amount of parish share collected. There are other streams of funding available, such as Lower Income Community Funding which alleviates this and a high vacancy rate also provides 'savings', but we are drawing on our contingency funds at an unsustainable rate.
- b) It is also worth restating here that if even modest increases could be found through Parish Share then this could increase our number of stipendiary parish clergy, and a

major focus of the DDG plans remains Generous Giving and sharing of good practice among and between deaneries on income generation.

- c) There also remains further opportunities for wider Deanery Planning and Deployment:
 - i. Growing New Christian Communities – this has been a strand of work we have developed centrally and agreed in December 2023 but have yet to roll out diocesan-wide. This needs to be a key strand of the next round of deanery plans 2025-2028
 - ii. National Church funding – we remain in communication with the SMMIB. Many of our DDGs are developing imaginative ideas for additional posts to progress mission. Previous experience of working with SMMIB, suggests that before they consider funding new additional mission roles, they will interrogate how the roles we already have and are (re)deploying are generating energy for new mission rather than just sustaining current ministry. How do we encourage and demonstrate that the Deanery Planning Process is enabling new local mission and not just sustaining parish ministry?

DPWG September 2024