



A Aim and outcomes of Vacancy Leadership Development

- 1 **The aim** of Vacancy Leadership Development is to release a greater level of indigenous, voluntary and collaborative leadership in a benefice during a clerical vacancy to take responsibility for leading the church/es in fulfilling the Growth Programme in that local context into the future.
- 2 **The potential outcomes** of Vacancy Leadership Development are:
 - A ministry leadership team(s), well trained and authorised to share the “cure of souls” with the Bishop and lead the church into mission and growth;
 - Recruitment of ministers, lay and/or ordained, paid and/or unpaid, whose gifts complement or complete those of the team that has developed;
 - A church plant (graft or transplant) from another congregation;
 - Planned closure of a building.

The purpose of this development work is to empower the parishes. The development process (see below) is not something done *to* a parish, but something done *with* and *by* it.

B Process of Vacancy Leadership Development

When an incumbent, Priest-in-charge, Team Vicar or Team Rector resigns, the Diocesan Bishop will notify the Strategy Delivery Team, which will have the overview for all Vacancy Leadership Development. The Strategy Delivery Team will delegate the management and monitoring of the progress of the work in each benefice to the Deanery Leadership Teams and the developmental work in each vacancy to the Vacancy Leadership Advisers and hold both groups accountable accordingly. Therefore, for each vacancy, the Strategy Delivery Team will ask the Vacancy Leadership Advisers to deploy an appropriate person and the Deanery Leadership Team to manage the overall process. The following, two-stage Vacancy Leadership Development process will be used.

1 Stage 1 – Vacancy Preview

The first principle of the Vacancy Preview is that all benefices (parish/es, teams, partnerships, as appropriate) must start at the same point in the process, even if the first stage of Vacancy Leadership Development only lasts a very short time. This will enable each benefice to assess their current stage of development and then move on from it.

A Vacancy Preview should last between one and three months (maximum), with a strong expectation that it will be completed by the time the outgoing clergyperson leaves.

The Vacancy Preview consists of collecting a range of data and a sample of opinion about the situation in a benefice. The Deanery Leadership Team will request each PCC in the benefice to provide them with the following paperwork:

- Last three sets of PCC minutes;
- Annual accounts for last three years;
- Growth Plan;
- Share record for last three years;
- Attendance figures for last three years;
- Last available parish profile;
- Last available person and job specifications for outgoing clergyperson;
- Work agreements with SSMs, OLMs, LLMs and any employed persons;

- Latest Archdeacon's report;
- Any other written information or submission, decided by PCC.

In addition, the Deanery Leadership Team will request the Vacancy Leadership Adviser likely to be responsible for supporting the rest of the Vacancy Leadership Development process to conduct interviews with:

- The outgoing clergyperson (if possible);
- Members of the Deanery Leadership Team who can give an informed deanery view;
- Well placed lay leaders.

Confidentiality should be maintained at this stage.

The Deanery Leadership Team will then consider the paperwork and the findings of the interviews and, with the advice of the Vacancy Leadership Adviser, make a recommendation about which next step in the process the parish/es in the benefice will follow. There are three possible next steps:

- i) Leadership Initiative;
- ii) Vacancy Development Opportunity;
- iii) Moving straight to the possible outcome of a) receiving a church plant or b) closure of the building, after a viability assessment.

This recommendation will be discussed at the first meeting of the PCC/s (or a joint meeting of the PCCs) following the departure of the outgoing clergyperson with the Area Dean and/or Deanery Lay Chair and Vacancy Leadership Adviser present. The recommendation will then go via the Strategy Delivery Team to the Diocesan Bishop who will commission the work.

2 Stage Two

i) Leadership Initiative

A Leadership Initiative will be the most common next step and most benefices will move straight from the Vacancy Preview to this work. Here there is a well-ordered benefice with no particular serious, unresolved issues. Most parishes have what might be called "ordinary problems" but, like ordinary families, will not be in crisis or be so fragile that relationships, ministry or mission have broken down completely.

This work is primarily seen as **leadership development**. If a benefice is willing to set to work and be guided in order to develop, strengthen or encourage its lay leadership, some months of working with a Vacancy Leadership Adviser and their team should enable them to move forward on developing structures of responsibility sharing, ministry and service to the community. In this stage, it is not where the benefice begins on the way to sharing leadership and ministry that matters but its readiness to develop further from the point already reached.

The main activity will be **the discernment and development of gifts** for mission and ministry. The Vacancy Leadership Adviser responsible will concern her/himself with empowering the benefice to develop its lay ministry, identifying potential leaders and consulting with the Adviser for Licensed Ministry so that where appropriate individuals might follow a vocational discernment process for licensed ordained or lay ministry.

The Diocesan Bishop commissions the Leadership Initiative work to be done for an initial period of six months. At the end of the six months, each parish produces a self-assessment of their progress and outlines which of the outcomes they are aiming towards and by when. They present this self-assessment to the Deanery Leadership Team. On the basis of the self-assessment, and the advice of the Vacancy Leadership Adviser responsible, the Deanery Leadership Team decides whether a further period of Leadership Initiative is needed.

Depending on the outcomes agreed by the parish/es and the Deanery Leadership Team, if the work is judged to be a success, the Deanery Leadership Team can recommend to the Diocesan Bishop, via the Strategy Delivery Team, one of the possible outcomes (see A 2 above) and move the process

towards either authorising existing leaders, recruiting further ministers to complement or complete the team or embarking on a process of negotiating a church plant or closure of the building.

ii) Vacancy Development Opportunity

Vacancy Development Opportunity is the term chosen for the work to be undertaken in a **benefice with special difficulties** of any kind. A team will be brought together under a lead Vacancy Leadership Adviser to work in the benefice. The work is seen primarily as **pastoral development** and the aim of it is to help the benefice resolve their special difficulties.

The Diocesan Bishop commissions the work to be done for an initial period of six months. At the end of the six months, the parish/es produces a self-assessment of their progress and presents to the Deanery Leadership Team. On the basis of the self-assessment, and the advice of the Vacancy Leadership Adviser responsible, the Deanery Leadership Team decides whether a further six month period of Vacancy Development Opportunity is needed.

If at an assessment stage, progress is not being made and the work is judged not to be a success, then the possibility of closure or a church plant will arise (see iii) below). If the work is judged to be a success, then a new (or partly new) team would be introduced in order to pursue a Leadership Initiative.

Although the Vacancy Development Opportunity and the Leadership Initiative are presented as distinct options above, it is recognised that in reality every benefice will lie somewhere on a continuum between the two options. Careful agreement on working together will be needed by all concerned.

In both a Vacancy Development Opportunity and a Leadership Initiative, one of the Bishops will, if possible, preach in the benefice in order to encourage and further the work. The Bishops and Archdeacons will not be involved either in the decision-making around the assessments or the developmental work itself, unless invited to do so. It is the Deanery Leadership Team's responsibility to make the decisions and the Vacancy Leadership Adviser's responsibility to oversee the developmental work and the Bishop's Staff will support them in that.

The Deanery Leadership Team will report regularly to the Strategy Delivery Team on vacancies in their deanery and the Vacancy Leadership Advisers will report monthly to their team leader who will in turn report to the Strategy Delivery Team.

Throughout a vacancy, the Area Dean and the Churchwardens will continue to have the primary and legal responsibility for the maintenance of the parish and its worship.

iii) Receive a church plant or close a building

a) Receive a church plant

It may be that a benefice, or parish within it, does not have the resources within the church to sustain its own life but is a fertile context for mission. In that case, it may be possible to invite another church to plant into that benefice in order to renew the ministry there. If this was to happen, it would need to be brokered in the deanery and done in line with the Diocesan Church Planting Policy.

b) Closure

This is not expected to be a frequent choice as a result of the Vacancy Preview, Vacancy Development Opportunity or Leadership Initiative, but its possibility should be noted.

The parish lay leaders, with the Deanery Leadership Team and Vacancy Leadership Adviser responsible, may decide at any point to recommend to the Bishop that a church be closed. At the

Vacancy Preview Stage, there would have been considerable pre-knowledge of the parish, and careful weighing of the paperwork, before any such decision could be made. It should be noted that any such decision is a decision to **recommend closure of a building**; it is not necessarily a decision to bring to an end the worshipping life of a community.

Vacancy Leadership Development process flow chart

