



PEOPLE
&
PLACES

Merging Deaneries

 THE CHURCH
OF ENGLAND
BIRMINGHAM

You will also find FAQs and other resources
on our website at www.cofe.io/PandP
For further advice and support, please contact
PeopleAndPlaces@cofebirmingham.com

Deanery Structure

Background

People & Places (P&P) is a new framework for ministry and mission for a 21st century Church in a super-diverse diocese. As part of this new framework, our current 13 deaneries will be merged to form 6, each led by a full time Area Dean.

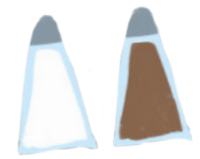
Like all aspects of P&P, the purpose of merging 13 deaneries into 6 is to help our ministry and mission become more fairly shared, more sustainable and more relevant to the diverse local communities we serve.

More fairly shared...

The populations of our current deaneries vary from under 40,000 to over 200,000. Church attendance in our current deaneries varies from under 600 each week to over 2,000. Some deaneries have twice the number of stipendiary clergy than others, while the number of members of each deanery synod varies from 31 to 72. Five of our deaneries fall below 50 members, which is fewer than the Church Representation Rules suggest.

The new P&P framework would distribute ministry more fairly across populations: typically, a group of 12 oversight ministers (along with local, context and self-supporting ministers) in a deanery would be supported by a full time Area Dean in their local ministry to around 2,500 church members in a wider population of around 250,000.

Sharing resources, a key element of P&P, is far more practicable across 6 deaneries than 13.



Shaping

- Full time Area Deans would offer vision and leadership to deaneries; encouraging worshipping communities to remain mission-focussed and outward-looking as we seek to grow churches at the heart of every community in our Transforming Church vision.
- Area Deans will work with Oversight Ministers and other forms of local ministry to assist and enable parish churches' Transforming Church Action Plans to become missional realities.
- New, full time Area Deans can be agents of change, especially during vacancies. Revitalising deaneries as strategic mission units could stimulate new thinking around ministry, rather than simply maintaining the status quo.
- Extra capacity for mission will be released by the Area Deans and the supporting resources they bring with them (deanery support officer, parish book-keeping, parish buildings surveyors, parish HR expertise etc.)
- Area Deans will work strategically in the formation and development of new vocations, especially lay vocations.
- Mission-focused deaneries of such size are reported to be working well in Manchester, Chelmsford and elsewhere.



Sharing

- Area Deans will play a key role in sharing resources across a mix of contexts and traditions in their deaneries, in order to encourage mutual growth and learning.
- Area Deans will be agents of collaboration: seeing opportunities for new Christian communities and traditional congregations to work together for mutual support and growth, or opportunities for parishes to share resources with one another, or where a worshipping community could partner with a school, for example.
- Communication and consultation will be more workable with 6 deaneries, with Area Deans taking an active role. Diocese-wide programmes (such as Growing Younger, Prayer Spaces in Schools, Eco Church etc.) would also be simpler to implement with fewer deaneries; enabling everyone to have access to the same information and opportunities.



More sustainable...

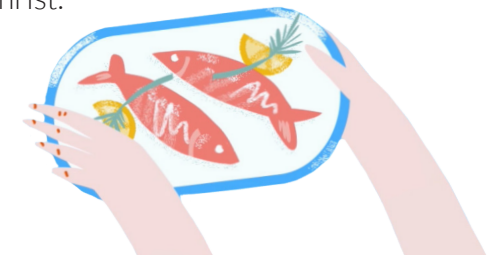
The cost of employing 6 full time Area Deans and merging the deaneries from 13 to 6 does not fall to our parishes but is covered by funding from the Church Commissioners. This new framework will also provide parish churches with access to new resources for book-keeping, church buildings and HR, as well as additional deanery support.

P&P is a better framework to support our Transforming Church vision to grow churches at the heart of each community. Ultimately, as that local ministry grows, the whole Church becomes more sustainable. We hope that full time Area Deans could be sustained long term within our annual diocesan budget.

Mission and ministry resources being shared more fairly across deaneries also gives each deanery an equal chance of becoming more sustainable, rather than leaving some struggling for a future while others remain robust.

More relevant to local contexts...

Ultimately, the deanery restructure is about better supporting, developing and releasing local, parish ministry – as are all aspects of P&P. Merged deaneries will provide a better structure to access support in e.g. book-keeping, buildings maintenance, parish HR support etc. so that lay and ordained Christians can be released in their mission and ministry; engaging with their local communities, and welcoming them into the Body of Christ.

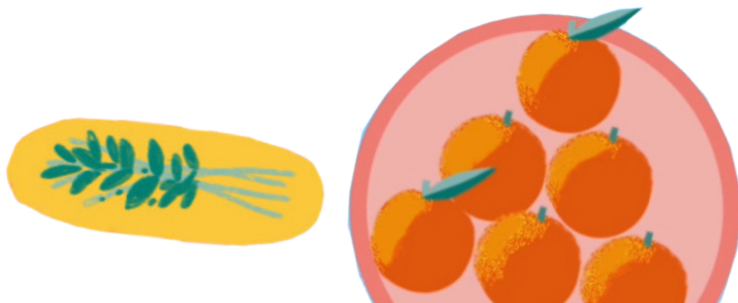


Full Time Area Dean

Full time Area Deans will have a remit to walk alongside and support oversight ministers in encouraging their local parish communities in their mission. We are grateful for the faithful service of our current Area Deans, but we recognise that they are all parish priests and therefore already serving in a full time capacity in a local area. Our 6 full time Area Deans will be more available to the parishes they serve, to help all of us become the church that we believe God is calling us to be in this day and for this culture.

Full time Area Deans, with the deanery resources they bring with them, will give substantial additional support to our local ministry. If you've seen the P&P animation 'Sharing the Feast' (www.cofe.io/PandP) you'll know that the "...*bigger, better-resourced deaneries*" are the extended tables on which a fuller feast of local ministry can sit "*well-supported and ready for growth*". There is space for everyone at the table of God's generosity, but we need to make sure that the table is substantial enough to support the feast!

The centre of the Church is the parish: lay and ordained Christians worshipping and serving together in their local communities. All elements of P&P aim to serve and support this coalface ministry better across the diocese. **We believe that full time Area Deans will play a key strategic leadership role in this. We are proposing a better supported and enhanced role for Area Deans, not a new layer of management or authority.** As now, Area Deans will work as an extension of the Bishop's ministry of oversight to support the mission and ministry of the church.



Supporting

- Clergy and lay leaders can often feel isolated. Full time Area Deans will be more available for pastoral care of clergy and support for ministerial development.
- The full time Area Deans will bring with them extra support for parishes in the proposed deanery structure, in the form of parish book-keeping, parish buildings surveyors and parish HR expertise - on top of existing payroll bureau and stewardship support.
- For some, larger clergy chapters will feel more positive and dynamic, provide a better training ground for curates, more cover in vacancies, and opportunities to mix with like-minded folk. Meanwhile, smaller groups where more vulnerable things are shared can continue. Area Deans and local clergy can work out which patterns best support different localities.
- Deanery Lay Chairs and Area Deans can bring together larger, broader deanery synods with a focus on supporting one another in mission. Fewer deanery synods should also mean access to the most relevant speakers, in their context, more often.
- Shared initiatives are more manageable and affordable with 6 units rather than 13, so in the future we could envisage Area Deans and Deanery Lay Chairs working alongside 6 deanery children's and families' champions, 6 youth champions, 2 Mission Apprentices per deanery, 6 deanery "Leading your Church into Growth" (LyCiG) champions, 6 deanery safeguarding champions, 6 training hubs, etc.

