



DIOCESE OF **Hexham & Newcastle**

Some Thoughts about Producing a Partnership Development Plan

Background

The purpose of this document

Following the decision by Bishop Séamus and the Diocesan Board of Directors to establish 18 partnerships across the diocese, an initial document entitled '*Partnership Guidelines – First Steps*' was published at Easter 2017. This provided outline information across a range of topics designed to help partnerships get up and running. In relation to action planning it indicated that:

'Partnership Development Groups are asked to draw up a written plan for developing their partnership. This can give a really helpful focus to the initial meetings and provides a way of everyone contributing to the thinking. Given the 'lifespan' of the group the plan would have a two-year horizon and set out the key priorities that the partnership would need to address over that period. It is also a helpful tool for periodically reviewing how the PDG is progressing in achieving what it has set out to do.'

It included the commitment to offer more detailed information over time to partnerships and this document presents some further thoughts about how you might go about the process.

Start with Prayer

God of all Creation,

*You have constantly poured out your Spirit upon our Diocese
and kindled here a light which has spread throughout the world.*

*Lord Jesus, you gathered disciples to yourself to learn from you
and to model their lives on you.*

Your Holy Spirit empowered them to continue your work in the world.

*Come upon us, Holy Spirit,
deepen the faith you invite us to share
and inspire us to become faithful witnesses.*

*As we begin to develop our partnerships,
help each one of us to use the gifts you give us
to nurture one another,
to serve the world
and to live in harmony with the whole of creation.*

Partnerships know best

Our starting point for producing this guidance is that partnerships are best positioned to identify the priorities for their area. Therefore we are not being 'prescriptive' about what should be included in a plan – or requiring plans to follow a specific format. The information presented here simply offers some ideas and principles that partnerships may well find useful as they start the process of developing their local arrangements. The 'template' included in the appendix is just an example that you may wish to adopt, adapt or ignore. It is purely fictitious but hopefully contains enough realistic prompts to give a general idea of the approach.

Why bother with a plan?

The importance of a written action plan for any venture – no matter how large or small – cannot be overemphasised. The very act of producing a plan helps to focus time and energy on the 'project' and clarify the tasks necessary to get to where you want to go. It can also offer some shape to initial meetings of 'the team' and provide a way of everyone contributing to the thinking. Well written plans that include 'milestones' of some kind are a valuable tool for periodically reviewing progress and helping to put things 'back on track' if necessary.

Not set in concrete

One of the really important things to recognise about these plans is that they aren't 'set in concrete'. Seeing a plan as 'dynamic', reviewing progress periodically and revising the plan as appropriate should be seen as real strengths of the planning process rather than a reason for beating ourselves up over 'missed targets'.

Help is at hand

Episcopal Vicars will offer help and support to partnerships on a range of aspects and so it is important that they have sight of your action plan. Information and advice is also available from Diocesan Central Services – see details on Page 4.

Some Starting Points

Start with a dream...

- Any actions in a plan should be seen as contributing to a bigger 'dream' or 'Vision'. Taking time to think about this Vision and then setting it out in a written statement can be a really good way of encapsulating the essence of what your partnership is about and where it is heading. It also provides a way of ensuring that all of the detailed actions that are included in the plan do indeed contribute in a meaningful way to fulfilling the overall ambition you've set out in your partnership Vision.
- A Vision is usually a short, forward-looking statement that concisely captures the future aspiration of the venture. Everything that a partnership does should, in one way or another, contribute towards that aspiration.
- If undertaken well, the process of arriving at a Vision can be a very positive exercise in its own right – getting to the very heart of things; to the 'big issues' that really matter for the partnership. Consulting and involving people in the process can add to their feeling of 'ownership' and 'buy in'.

From dream to reality...

- Once a long term Vision has been identified, many groups develop a more detailed 'Mission'. Common features of Mission Statements are that they have a shorter timeframe and are high-level statements about the most important things the organisation will do. A good Mission Statement clarifies what you *do* as a group or organisation - why you exist - who you serve. The Vision and the Mission Statements together set a clear context within which the much more detailed Action Plan sits.
- In many respects the Action Plan itself is a tool that helps us turn our dream into a reality. It describes how an organisation or group intends to go about achieving the objectives it has set for itself. It usually consists of a number of action steps or changes to be brought about in the organisation or the wider community.

Some Principles

As anyone familiar with the process of action planning will know, there are various formats that can be used to set out such plans. Remember that the example in the appendix is just one approach and it is very much up to each individual partnership to decide how best to go about the task. However, there are a number of 'principles' that are worth thinking about.

Cover the Key Elements

Whatever format you adopt for the plan it is important to ensure that it covers the basics. These might include:

- Separating the plan into 'manageable chunks' – possibly using key themes or areas of activity – and identifying different people to take on responsibility for overseeing the various aspects of the plan. This approach also helps to highlight clearly the key priorities for the partnership.
- Providing an overall aim or objective for a *group of actions* can also help everyone to see how it all fits together (see the example template).
- The individual actions should be as presented as clearly as possible. It is certainly important to have an owner (Who) and timeframe (By When) for each action as this is an essential part of tracking progress. Some action plan templates actually include a column for 'Progress' to ensure that this aspect is very much 'up front'. Some groups like to go down the SMART route (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, and Time-based) for each action.

Involve People

- Developing the Vision, Mission and Action Plan offer numerous opportunities to involve people. For example, getting a disparate group together to think initially about the 'essence of the partnership' can help to focus the thinking and develop ownership of a Vision and Mission.
- It often falls to an individual or very small group to start the ball rolling by putting some thoughts on paper. This is fine – as long as other people are given the chance to contribute their own ideas – and no-one takes it personally that their carefully crafted words are being challenged.
- Consulting across the partnership on any drafts and genuinely welcoming constructive criticism not only improve the final product, they can go a long way to showing that everyone's contributions are valued and respected.

Communicating the completed plan widely through all of the usual channels is essential – as is keeping people up to date with progress and indicating how they can get involved.

Review Progress

- After all the work of thinking through, consulting and then collating a plan there can be a real sense of achievement when it is actually published. Everyone has agreed (maybe they have even offered!) to do certain tasks and a real sense of accomplishment is apparent.
- The problem? At the next meeting, it appears that little has been done. So how do you go about trying to keep the momentum going without making people feel they've failed? After all, most people will be donating freely of their time and energy.
- To help keep things on track it is a good idea to follow up on the action plan regularly. Doing so helps identify where extra support or a different approach is needed and can offer the opportunity to celebrate success. Review activity can take place both at and between meetings.
- Some questions to focus on when reviewing progress might be:
 - Are we doing what we said we would?
 - Are we doing it well?
 - Where do we need to focus additional attention?
 - Is what we are doing advancing our Vision and Mission?

Celebrate Success

- There is sometimes a temptation to rush from task to task without pausing to reflect on what has been achieved – and to celebrate that achievement.
- Celebrate a job well done. Celebrate your accomplishments - you and those you work with deserve it. Celebration helps keep everyone excited and interested in the work they are doing.

The Vision... and the Holy Spirit

- It is really important every now and then to step back from the day to day tasks and frantic activity to remind ourselves why we are doing all of this. Take time out to pray together and reflect, to revisit the Vision and refocus on the really important things – constantly allowing the Holy Spirit to inspire, enthuse and surprise.

These guidelines have been produced by the Diocese of Hexham and Newcastle to offer ideas and support to partnerships as they get up and running. The guidelines will cover a range of topics and will be made available in electronic format only, accessible through the Partnership section of the diocesan website (www.rcdhn.org.uk).

For further information please contact Tony Sacco on 0191 243 3304
or email tony.sacco@diocesehn.org.uk

NOTE: This document should be read in conjunction with 'Some Thoughts about Producing a Partnership Development Plan'. It is provided purely as an example of one approach to developing a Partnership Plan. It is for each Partnership Development Group to agree the priorities for their area and the best format for presenting these within their own plan.

EXAMPLE Partnership **Partnership Development Plan 2017-2019**

Background

The *EXAMPLE* Partnership was formally established at Pentecost 2017. It consists of the (*fictitious*) worshipping communities of:

- Immaculate Heart, Hevenside
- St Aidan, Easthill
- St Bede, Westport
- St Cuthbert, Townwood
- St David, Riverbank
- St Hilda, Northgate
- St Mary, Southlands
- St Michael, Oversands

Partnership Development Group

Each of the 18 Partnerships across the Diocese has been asked to put in place a Partnership Development Group (PDG). Details of the members of our PDG are shown at the end of this document. Most of the representatives are drawn from the existing Parish Pastoral Councils across the partnership area. Please feel free to approach any of us for more information about the Partnership or the work of the Partnership Development Group.

Partnership Development Plan

In order to take forward the work of the Partnership Development Group and to communicate our thoughts to the communities within the

partnership we have developed this Partnership Development Plan setting out our main ideas for the next two years.

We hope that the plan will allow us to;

- have a shared understanding about what we are attempting to do;
- communicate these intentions to everyone within the Partnership;
- check regularly how well we are progressing with the things we have identified as important to action.

It is important that the plan is not viewed in isolation; it should have a clear relationship with our Vision and Mission Statement that we consulted upon recently and which is set out again here. Indeed everything that appears in the Action Plan should be contributing in some way to taking us closer to the aspirations that we have identified in our Vision and Mission.

The plan encompasses both general themes as well as specific actions within each of the priority areas. It sets out some of the activity that we envisage will take place over the months ahead but it is not set in concrete. Comments and suggestions for improvements are welcome - as are your support and prayers.

[EXAMPLE Partnership]

Our Vision is:

**To create a community of love with God at the centre
that reaches out into the world.**

We will seek to do this by fulfilling our Mission of;

building a strong foundation of spirituality, prayer and celebration;

being welcoming and life-giving;

helping each other to fulfil our unique potential;

enthusing our young people and nurturing their relationship with God;

sharing our gifts with all faiths;

responding to the changes in society and reaching out to those in need;

sharing the peace and joy we experience and encouraging everyone's personal
relationship with Jesus.

Area: Establishing the Partnership Development Group

Overall aim	Specific Actions	By when	Who
1. Set up the necessary structures and guidelines for the efficient operation of the Partnership Development Group	1.1 Establish a Partnership Development Group (PDG) consistent with Diocesan Guidelines. 1.2 Elect a lay chair, vice chair and secretary. 1.3 Agree expectations and specific areas of responsibility for members of the PDG. 1.4 Agree a schedule of meetings and the parameters for the efficient operation of the group.		
2. Identify and review the key priorities and actions for the partnership	2.1 Organise a 'prayerful away-day' for members of the PDG to consider the overall priorities and direction for the partnership. 2.2 Draw up and publish an Action Plan for the Partnership Development Group that sets out its intention for a 2-year period. 2.3 Communicate and consult on the plan across parishes within the partnership. 2.4 Review the actions in the plan on a regular basis and amend the plan in the light of this.		
3. Ensure that the plans and decisions of the Partnership Development Group are well communicated to the whole partnership	3.1 Report on progress and seek views through open partnership-wide meetings. 3.2 Publish minutes of the Partnership Development Group meetings and other significant documents. 3.3 Use the partnership newsletter and other opportunities to communicate information about the activities arising from the work of the PDG.		

Area: Prayer and Spirituality

Overall aim	Specific Actions	By when	Who
1. Develop a Partnership Spirituality Network that links with the Episcopal Area and Diocesan networks	1.1 Identify who is already involved in prayer and spirituality in parishes across the partnership and bring them together to share information on current activities and to look at future possibilities. 1.2 Invite representatives from parishes/prayer groups to form a partnership network to meet 3-4 times a year to share ideas and organise activities and events to encourage wider involvement in prayer in the partnership. 1.3 Select two representatives from the partnership network to attend Episcopal Area and Diocesan Spirituality Network meetings.		
2. Put in place a range of partnership-wide activities with prayer and spirituality as the focus	2.1 Organise a 'partnership launch celebration' in the Secondary School. 2.2 Organise a 24 Hour Prayer Event to involve all ages and as many groups as possible across the partnership. 2.3 Put in place a 'partnership prayer chain' praying for each of the communities within the partnership. 2.4 Create and use a litany of the patron saints of the partnership.		
3. Establish a network of 'Anchors' (people who will support the partnership with prayer at home)	3.1 Identify people in parishes whose key ministry is prayer at home (or Adoration in church) and invite them to become 'Anchors'. 3.2 Organise a short commissioning service followed by refreshments to honour their ministry (possibly becoming an annual event). 3.3 Offer a symbol or token (e.g. holding cross, anchor lapel badge) and/or partnership prayer card to mark their commitment. 3.4 Identify a co-ordinator to keep Anchors in touch with partnership events and needs for prayer.		

Area: Formation

Overall aim	Specific Actions	By when	Who
<p>1. Put in place arrangements to ensure formation is a key priority in planning for the future</p>	<p>1.1 Develop a Partnership Formation Network with representation from each parish in the partnership to prioritise formation and communicate current practice and future plans.</p> <p>1.2 Elect a chair from this network who will link with the PDG, the Episcopal Vicar and Diocesan Discipleship Co-ordinator.</p> <p>1.3 Ensure there is partnership representation at the Diocesan Discipleship Network once established.</p>		
<p>2. Identify current good practice and areas of need</p>	<p>2.1 Ask representatives in each parish to gather information about current opportunities for people to develop their faith and live out their ministry.</p> <p>2.2 Bring together at parish level those involved in leading areas of ministry to share a vision for formation and consider future priorities.</p> <p>2.3 Share the findings of 2.1 and 2.2 at the Partnership Formation Network, identify partnership formation priorities and feed these back to parishes.</p>		
<p>3. Identify appropriate training and development opportunities that meet the needs of the partnership</p>	<p>3.1 Liaise with the Diocesan Discipleship Co-ordinator and the Episcopal Vicar to identify appropriate training opportunities from a menu of choices.</p> <p>3.2 Communicate the training options across the partnership and arrange for delivery with support from the Diocesan Discipleship Co-ordinator.</p>		

Area: Young People

Overall aim	Specific Actions	By when	Who
<p>1. Set up a structure to enable the development and implementation of a partnership vision for youth ministry</p>	<p>1.1 Establish a Partnership Coordination Team for Youth Ministry with representation from each worshipping community. Find out if the former deanery already has such a group on which to build.</p> <p>1.2 Invite a staff representative from the partnership secondary school(s) to be part of the group.</p> <p>1.3 Consider appropriate representation of young people.</p> <p>1.4 Contact the YMT Area Development Coordinator to provide Guidelines and/or to meet the group.</p> <p>1.5 Appoint a link person from the PDG to give feedback and contribute to further decisions/actions.</p>		
<p>2. Encourage as many people as possible to reflect on how we journey with young people in our Partnership and deepen our relationship with them</p>	<p>2.1 Invite YMT to come to the Partnership and facilitate a conversation on how we can respond to the needs of young people and allow them to share their unique gifts with us.</p> <p>2.2 Communicate the details of this session widely across the churches and schools of the partnership.</p> <p>2.3 Develop a specific plan based on these reflections and encourage participation from across the Partnership communities at all levels: parishioners, parents, families, young people and schools.</p>		

Area: Outreach

Overall aim	Specific Actions	By when	Who
1. Share information about current outreach activities across the partnership	1.1 Map existing outreach activities taking place across the partnership and identify opportunities for collaboration between parishes and ecumenically. 1.2 Organise a gathering to share and celebrate what is already being done and promote further involvement. 1.3 Raise awareness more widely of what is happening and ‘what might be possible’ to highlight the importance of this area of our mission.		
2. Establish a Partnership-wide Outreach Project	2.1 Establish a small team to co-ordinate the development. 2.2 Give parishioners in the partnership the opportunity to express community needs – if possible involving Secondary School students to carry out some of the research. 2.3 Develop a partnership project to address an identified need - with young people taking a lead role.		

Area: Communication

Overall aim	Specific Actions	By when	Who
1. Develop a partnership-wide communications plan	<p>1.1 Identify someone within the Partnership Development Group (PDG) to take a lead on communications issues.</p> <p>1.2 Develop a specific plan for effective communications within the partnership, with other partnerships and with Diocesan Central Services.</p>		
2. Put in place communications to support the initial development of the partnership	<p>2.1 Set up a 'partnership page' on parish websites including details of the communities in the partnership and links to each other's websites.</p> <p>2.2 Share existing parish bulletins across the whole of the partnership.</p> <p>2.3 Produce a partnership-wide newsletter to highlight initial plans and invite contributions.</p> <p>2.4 Communicate the membership and photographs of the Partnership Development Group.</p>		
3. Communicate the activities of the Partnership Development Group	<p>3.1 Make the minutes and key documents of the PDG easily accessible to everyone in the communities within the partnership.</p> <p>3.2 Ensure that members of the PDG have a clear understanding about their role in relation to two-way communication with parishioners and schools across the partnership.</p> <p>3.3 Produce 'standard information' that can be presented at weekend Masses across the partnership to keep people up to date with what is happening.</p>		

Area: Team Building

Overall aim	Specific Actions	By when	Who
<p>1. Develop the membership of the Partnership Development Group into a strong and cohesive team</p>	<p>1.1 Use the 'prayerful away-day' to help to develop a 'team spirit' within the PDG.</p> <p>1.2 Provide regular opportunities for members of the PDG to get to know one another better.</p>		
<p>2. Provide a variety of opportunities for parishioners from across the partnership to meet and get to know one another</p>	<p>2.1 Arrange a major partnership event to help build a sense of community.</p> <p>2.2 Share details of social activities/events between parishes in the partnership and open invitations to all parishes within the partnership.</p> <p>2.3 Encourage children and young families to participate and really feel they have a part to play in our partnership community.</p> <p>2.4 Consider organising a specific group for 30-40 year olds across the partnership area.</p>		

Area: Human Resources

Overall aim	Specific Actions	By when	Who
1. Any employment needs are considered from a partnership-wide perspective.	<p>1.1 Identify someone within the Partnership Development Group to take a lead on HR issues.</p> <p>1.2 Encourage each community to take account of the implications for the whole partnership when considering employment of staff.</p> <p>1.3 Put in place arrangements that ensure significant HR decisions are made at partnership level.</p>		
2. Ensure that diocesan employees are used to best effect to support the work of the partnership	<p>2.1 Map the existing situation in relation to employed posts across the partnership area.</p> <p>2.2 Identify any gaps /overlaps and address these with support from the Diocesan HR Department.</p>		
3. Ensure that the skills and talents of volunteers across the partnership are harnessed and supported	<p>3.1 Map the existing situation in relation to volunteers across the partnership area.</p> <p>3.2 Consider ways in which existing volunteers can share their gifts across the partnership.</p> <p>3.3 Put in place strong arrangements for the recruitment and support of volunteers consistent with Diocesan Guidelines when available.</p>		

Area: Finances

Overall aim	Specific Actions	By when	Who
1. 1 Set up the necessary structures for the efficient operation of the Partnership Finance Committee	1.1 Establish a Partnership Finance Committee consistent with Diocesan Guidelines. 1.2 Elect a lay chair, vice chair and secretary. 1.3 Agree a schedule of meetings and the parameters for the efficient operation of the Committee.		
2. Provide the Diocesan Finance Office with information to enable them to open a Partnership Bank Account	2.1 Notify Diocesan Finance Office of 3 Clergy who are to be signatories. 2.2 Notify Diocesan Finance Office of 3 Lay People, from 3 different parishes, who are to be signatories.		
3. Agree the basis of use of the Partnership Bank Account	3.1 Calculate annual funding requirement and agree apportionment method across the partnership. 3.2 Agree types and limits of expenditure to be paid from Partnership Bank Account.		
4. Ensure that the decisions of the Partnership Finance Committee are well communicated to the whole partnership	4.1 Publish minutes of the Partnership Finance Committee meetings.		

Area: Property

Overall aim	Specific Actions	By when	Who
1. Any immediate property developments are considered from a partnership-wide perspective	<p>1.1 Encourage each community to take account of the wider implications for the whole partnership when considering property repairs and developments.</p> <p>1.2 Put in place arrangements that ensure significant parish property decisions are made at partnership level.</p>		
2. Undertake a full property review across the partnership using the Diocesan Property Review Toolkit	<p>2.1 Identify a small team with the appropriate skills to lead the review process.</p> <p>2.2 Become familiar with the Diocesan toolkit when available and attend relevant briefing sessions.</p> <p>2.3 Undertake the review in an open and transparent manner, communicating progress widely across the partnership at each stage.</p>		
3. Carry out reviews of local community needs across the partnership to inform decisions about possible use of property	<p>3.1 Map existing community uses of property within the partnership.</p> <p>3.2 Review the needs of local communities and, with support from the Parish Property Outreach Advisor, identify how our buildings can support appropriate community/outreach activity.</p> <p>3.3 Identify possible funding sources to contribute towards delivering agreed projects.</p>		
4. Develop and consult upon proposals for the future use of building within the partnership area	<p>4.1 Using the outcomes from the Property Review and the Community Needs Review, draw up proposals for the future use of all premises within the partnership.</p> <p>4.2 Consult widely on the proposals prior to submission to the Diocese.</p>		

Area: Liturgy

Overall aim	Specific Actions	By when	Who
<p>1. Explore how we worship together by undertaking a Liturgical Review across the partnership using the Diocesan Liturgy Review Toolkit</p>	<p>1.1 Identify a small team with the appropriate skills to lead the review process.</p> <p>1.2 Become familiar with the Diocesan toolkit when available and attend relevant briefing sessions.</p> <p>1.3 Consult with the laity over their involvement in preparing and shaping of Sunday Mass.</p> <p>1.4 Explore other ways of worshipping together.</p> <p>1.5 Explore how ministers are obtained, trained and sustained in each parish and how in our new partnership this might be given further impetus.</p>		
<p>2. Identify appropriate liturgical training and development opportunities that meet the needs of the partnership</p>	<p>2.1 Discover who is trained across the partnership and what good practice already takes place.</p> <p>2.2 Identify a lead partnership liturgist who will become a member of a Diocesan network co-ordinated by the Diocesan Department for Liturgy.</p> <p>2.3 Liaise with the Diocesan Department for Liturgy and the Episcopal Vicar to identify and access appropriate training opportunities.</p> <p>2.4 Communicate the training opportunities across the partnership and arrange for delivery with support from the Diocesan Department for Liturgy.</p>		

Fictitious Partnership Development Group - Who's who

If you have comments or questions about any of this information, suggestions about how the Partnership Development Group should work, or if you want to get more involved please feel free to speak to any of the members of the PDG.

Name	Representation	Name	Representation
Sue Barrett	Immaculate Heart, Heavenside	Rev John McAlister	Permanent Deacon
Rev Peter Cummings	Permanent Deacon	Lynne McMillan	Primary Schools' Representative
Carol Davies (Secretary)	St Aidan, Easthill	Bill Noble	St Hilda, Northgate
Gemma Davidson (Chair)	St Bede, Westport	Helen Peterson (Vice Chair)	St Michael, Oversands
Ellen Drummond	St Cuthbert, Townwood	Fr Adrian Smith	Parish Priest – St David and St Michael
James Farmer	St David, Riverbank	Paul Smith	St Mary, Southlands
Fr Gerry Gardner	St Hilda, St Mary, Immaculate Heart	Jill Williams	Secondary Schools' Representative
Fr Michael Hopper	Partnership Dean and Parish Priest - St Aidan, St Bede, St Cuthbert		

DIOCESE OF **Hexham & Newcastle**

Department for Development and Renewal

Tel: (0191) 243 3304 E-mail: hope@diocesehn.org.uk Web: www.rcdhn.org.uk

©Diocese of Hexham and Newcastle – July 2017