

MINISTERIAL DEVELOPMENT REVIEW IN THE DIOCESE OF ST EDMUNDSBURY & IPSWICH

Introductory Leaflet for Clergy

WHY REVIEW?

People in all walks of life find great value in reflecting on the way we do our work and using that reflection as the basis for further growth. Ministerial Development Review builds on this reflection to support and encourage those who minister publicly in our parishes, chaplaincies and places of work.

The clergy of this diocese work faithfully and diligently, often in challenging circumstances, to preach the gospel and celebrate the sacraments, to care for those in need, to lead others in prayer, service and mission, and to interpret the glory and the call of God within a society which is changing rapidly. MDR aims to support and encourage clergy in this vital ministry. It is an expression of a Bishop's responsibility for the pastoral and professional care of the clergy.

FOR WHOM?

All clergy licensed in the diocese (other than those completing initial ministerial education in the first four years after ordination – for whom a different system of review operates) are expected to have an annual review, with a reviewer of their choice, and with a bishop or archdeacon every third year. A similar review procedure operates for licensed Readers and lay ministers.

WHO REVIEWS?

Reviewers are appointed by the bishops for their wisdom and experience. They are chosen for their skills in listening to others, in summarising and feeding back the information they receive, and in helping clergy to set realistic working goals and to deepen their reflection on their ministry. Reviewers are all church members. Many are lay people, using their experience and insights to express the partnership between clergy and laity in the strengthening and development of the Church's mission and ministry.

Reviewers undergo training for this role to develop their confidence for using their skills in the context of the scheme. They meet together annually with senior staff to review the process. All undertake this ministry in a voluntary capacity. A full list of reviewers, with short biographies, is circulated annually. Reviewees have some choice in who they wish to go to.

THE REVIEW

The review is essentially an opportunity for clergy to sit down with a 'critical friend' who will help them reflect on their ministry. The reviewer will encourage them to talk about what has gone well over the past year and what has contributed to this; he or she will also explore with them areas that have been identified as more difficult and what possibilities there are for action in such areas.

The interview in the first year will be of about two hours. It will be aided by a preparation form, structured around the promises made at ordination. Substantial time and thought need to be given to the completion of this form, which will provide background for the discussion between priest and reviewer and which will remain confidential to them. The reviewer will respond to the agenda presented by the minister.

Clergy are also encouraged (though not at present required) to undertake a fuller review at the same time. This involves about six other people – for instance, colleagues in a ministry team, the rural dean, churchwardens and other lay people in the parish, benefice or chaplaincy – responding in confidence to a short questionnaire concerning the person's work. These responses will be shared with the priest and the reviewer, so working towards a '360-degree review' which can be of great benefit to a priest's self-understanding and confidence.

THE OUTCOME

A simple action plan is drawn up by agreement between priest and reviewer, setting a limited number of realistic goals for development over the next year. This also identifies further support, training or development needs that might help in the attainment of those goals. After the discussion, the priest draws up a brief summary statement, incorporating the action plan, and the reviewer may comment on this or suggest amendments. The summary is sent to the Bishop. The reviewee is also asked to complete a short form evaluating the experience of review: this is helpful in assessing the performance of reviewers as well as the effectiveness of the diocesan system of MDR.

The Bishop will read and acknowledge receipt of the summary, which will form part of the background to the next Episcopal Review. He will also copy the section relating to CME goals to the CME Adviser, who will contact the priest and offer to assist in any identified training needs.

About twelve months after this first meeting, the priest will meet again for a shorter time, normally with the same reviewer, to survey the response to the action plan and goals set. This will lead to a further short statement agreed by the priest and reviewer which will be sent to the Bishop, with any further CME requirements indicated to the CME Adviser.

EPISCOPAL REVIEW

In the third year of the cycle the review is conducted by a bishop or archdeacon alternately. This complements and draws on but does not duplicate the reviews conducted in other years. Episcopal oversight emphasises particularly the development of spirituality, theology and vocation. Clergy are of course always able to contact the bishops at other times.