



TOGETHER WE ARE



THE CHURCH
OF ENGLAND
SUFFOLK

Planning for Growth An Overview

Planning for Growth in our Diocese

As a Diocese, we ask each benefice and deanery to produce a Plan for Growth. Planning for Growth helps us, prayerfully and with the guidance of the Holy Spirit, to set local priorities for mission based on the needs and opportunities communities.

Through developing Plans for Growth, churches can develop a shared sense of purpose, and benefices and deaneries can work better together. With clear priorities, churches are able to make best use of the resources God has given them to share the gospel and bless their communities. Plans for Growth help connect diocesan strategy with what is happening in our villages and towns across Suffolk, so that it makes sense on the ground. They help shape the support that the diocesan office teams provide, and help us all adapt to the changing environment in which we live and minister.

For more information or help with Plans for Growth, please contact the Mission Support Team in the diocesan office at mission@cofesuffolk.org and we will be pleased to help.

Planning helps us work together well

Planning helps us with two important things:

-  being attentive
We are attentive to what is going on in our churches and our communities, to each other and what different people are saying, and to what God is doing amongst us
-  being intentional
We become intentional in responding to each other, our communities, and God, choosing priorities and working towards them together.

What do we mean by growth?

As a diocese, our vision is:

Growing in God

We long to see flourishing congregations, making a difference in their communities and the wider world, now and in the future.

Growing in depth

to deepen our awareness of God with us through prayer and vibrant worship, centring our lives on Jesus Christ through the proclamation of the Word and the celebration of the Eucharist.

Growing in influence

to participate in God's loving movement towards the world in partnership with other congregations, denominations and people of good will.

Growing in number

to witness to the person and way of Jesus Christ, in word and worship, in service and daily life, inviting others into the fullness of life found in him.

Growing younger

to engage all generations, allowing them to shape how we do church and investing in them as present and future ministers of the gospel; to develop our congregations to reflect the age profile of the context in which they are set.



What goes into a Plan for Growth?

Planning for Growth is rooted in the local context, with benefices and deaneries deciding what goes in their plans.

As you start Planning for Growth, we invite you to think about these questions:

Where are you now?

- What has been achieved since your last Plan for Growth?
- What are you doing now that helps churches to grow (in depth, influence, number, younger)?
- What pathways for faith exploration and discipleship are there in the Benefice?
- Are there any obvious gaps or areas which are challenging?
- What particular gifts, skills or resources are available in your Benefice?

Where is God calling you next?

- What priorities for mission have you discerned? (Name up to three)
- What things do you plan to start, stop, or adjust in line with those priorities?
- Who will do these things, and what resources do they need?

(You might choose to describe priorities and actions for the Benefice as a whole, or separate out priorities and actions for each parish — whichever makes most sense in your context.)

How will you review your plan and adapt it when needed? And what support do you need?

The Planning for Growth Templates are structured around these questions. You can find them by clicking the link below:



[Insight: Plan for Growth Templates](#)

Ways to approach developing a Plan for Growth

As you develop your Plan for Growth, you will want to spend time praying together, finding out what a variety of people think, and reflecting on what you've already done. You might also find some of our diocesan training helpful.



Listening:

Discerning what God is doing and saying, and listening to the voices of our church and community, can be done in a variety of ways: surveys, listening events, awaydays, involving different groups in different ways, taking time or moving swiftly. Think about what would work best in your parishes. The Mission and Ministry team can discuss options and facilitate events for you if that would be helpful.



Previous plans:

Where a previous Plan for Growth is in place, take time to review the existing plan, and discuss what has been actioned, what hasn't moved forward, and what else has happened that wasn't in the plan. See how people feel about what has or hasn't happened; see what can be learnt from the experience.

Will your new plan build on the previous plan, or is God leading you into a different direction now? There may be continuity from one plan to the next, or perhaps circumstances have changed significantly and the new plan will look very different.



Training:

Planning can be aided by one of our diocesan training resources, such as Leading your Church into Growth, which gives a framework for prayerful planning and action. As a diocese, we run Leading your Church into Growth (LyCiG) conferences regularly, inviting benefices to come with a team of people and spend time learning about the principles of church growth, and how to apply them locally.

What's in a name?

We use the term Plan for Growth to give a common terminology across the diocese. But if a different term works better in your context – vision or strategy or church development plan, for instance – then feel free to use that. Plans need to be relevant locally, and be communicated and kept alive in ways that will work in each different context. Similarly, you might develop different types of document locally to share your plans; all we ask is that you include a summary on the standard template and send that with your plan when you send it to us.

What about multi-parish benefices?

We ask for multi-parish benefices to submit one benefice plan rather than separate parish plans because we want to encourage parishes in a benefice to work well together. A benefice plan will identify shared benefice priorities, but it can also include priorities for individual parishes where that is helpful. We are part of God's bigger Church, as well as our own parish church.

Help!

Advice, support and practical help is available from the Mission and Ministry Team, at mission@cofesuffolk.org.

Completed plans should be sent to your Archdeacon and to the Mission and Ministry Team at mission@cofesuffolk.org.

