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| Institution: Royal Holloway, University of London | | |
| Unit of Assessment: 17 Business and Management Studies | | |
| Title of case study: Improving the quality of life and effective ministry of Sheffield Diocese clergy through introducing a new administrative support role | | |
| Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2013-2020 | | |
| Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit: | | |
| Name(s): | Role(s) (e.g. job title): | Period(s) employed by submitting HEI: |
| Neil Conway | Professor of Organisational Behaviour | 2013-date |
| Period when the claimed impact occurred: 2015-2020 | | |
| Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? N | | |
| 1. Summary of the impact <p>Research undertaken by Professor Conway at Royal Holloway addressed the increased administrative burdens faced by Church of England clergy. His research addressed these challenges in the most deprived areas of Sheffield. As a result of Conway's recommendations, the Sheffield Diocese introduced new administrative support roles, backed by GBP1,400,000 of Church funds, creating jobs for nine 'Mission Partnerships Development Workers' to support 30 clergy across 33 parishes. Conway's evaluation of the new administrative role found – along with independent evidence – that the support workers benefitted clergy by enhancing their quality of life and mission-related activities, benefitted parishes through introducing new initiatives, improved church performance in the form of fund raising and income, and increased parishioner attendance and participation.</p> | | |
| 2. Underpinning research <p>Context The Church of England has faced declining church attendance and clergy numbers each year for the last 30 years. This has led to reduced numbers of clergy, who have to manage Parishes across several sites with reduced volunteer help. The Church of England approached Conway and Dr Mike Clinton, King's College London, with concerns that clergy callings and quality of lives were being undermined by increasing administrative demands and pressures to reverse dwindling congregations. The research investigated how clergy allocated time to tasks that make up their role, and the impact of different tasks on their calling, quality of life, and effective ministry. These tasks included encouraging parishioner attendance and participation, and parish performance such as fund raising and income generation. Conway and Clinton worked in partnership and contributed equally to designing research materials and analysing the data. Conway led on the theorizing and writing of R1 and Clinton led on the theorizing and writing of R2.</p> <p>Key findings A major finding of the research was that Church of England clergy on a daily basis spend more time on administration than practising core aspects of their calling. Time spent on administration had major implications for their wellbeing and motivation, and affected the available time that they could spend on activities more central to their calling, and time they could devote to parishioners (research R1 is crucial here, which documents the effects of time spent on activities on outcomes; R2). Administration was clergy's most time consuming daily task and was ranked 1 out of the 14 surveyed tasks in terms of time spent on tasks (averaging just over 3 hours per day), ranked 12 out of 14 tasks in terms of relevance to their calling, and ranked 11 out of 14 tasks in terms of tasks they felt competent doing (see R1). In other words, administration was</p> | | |

clergy's single most time consuming daily task, and a task they felt had little relevance to their calling and that they were not very good at relative to other tasks. The underpinning research took place between 2013 and 2015 and findings were based on large scale daily diary studies of clergy perceptions, motivation and self-reported wellbeing and behaviour. The research led the Sheffield Diocese to introduce a new scheme to support clergy (Mission Partnership Development Workers Project).

Research to evaluate the new administrative support scheme

The Sheffield Diocese funded Conway and Clinton in 2016 with a GBP46,000 grant, split equally between Conway at Royal Holloway and Clinton at King's College London, to evaluate the new administrative support scheme from its onset and over a five year period (2016-2020). The scheme was evaluated along the lines of a job design intervention study and produced a series of reports for the Diocese, based on primary data collection in the form of questionnaire surveys, week-long daily diary studies at certain points of the year, and qualitative interviews to assess clergy perceptions, activities, wellbeing, motivation and behaviour. The research design often included a control group of clergy who were not receiving administrative support help from the new scheme. The evaluation also collected data before and after the administrative support workers were in post. Finally, the evaluation included secondary organizational data relating to congregational and financial growth to evaluate the effect of the scheme on church performance and parishioner participation.

3. References to the research

R1. **Conway, N.**, Clinton, M., Sturges, J., & Budjanovcanin, A. (2015). Using self-determination theory to understand the relationship between enactment of a calling and daily well-being. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 36(8), 1114-1131. DOI: [10.1002/job.2014](https://doi.org/10.1002/job.2014).

Evidence of the quality of the research: Published in a journal rated as 4 in the *Chartered Association of Business School's* academic journal guide; Google Scholar cited 67 times (as of 12/10/2020).

R2. Clinton, M., **Conway, N.**, & Sturges, J. (2016). "It's tough hanging-up a call": The relationships between intensity of a calling, daily work hours, psychological detachment, sleep quality and morning vigor. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology*, 22(1), 28-39. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/ocp0000025>. The full version of the article is available from HEI on Request.

Evidence of the quality of the research: Published in a journal rated as 4 in the *Chartered Association of Business School's* academic journal guide; Google Scholar cited 61 times (as of 12/10/2020).

4. Details of the impact

The research addressed the main problem that clergy's quality of life and mission-related activities was being undermined by administrative demands. The impact occurred over two phases. As a result of the underpinning research the Sheffield Diocese **introduced a new administrative support role (titled 'Mission Partnerships Development Workers')** to support clusters of neighbouring parishes (Impact Phase 1). The administrative support workers **benefitted clergy by enhancing their quality of life, allowing them to spend more time on mission-related activities**, and **benefitted parishioners and the local community**; parishes with support workers had **improved church performance indicators** including financial growth and parishioner participation (Impact Phase 2).

Impact Phase 1: Informing Church of England Employment practices: Creation of Mission Partnership Development Workers (MPDW) Scheme

The research was presented to the Church of England in the form of internal reports and meetings with senior Church of England stakeholders between 2013 and 2015 (E1, Section 5). The research included articulating the problem statement, designing research instruments, collecting quantitative and qualitative data from clergy across the UK, and generating reports and recommendations for the Church. As the testimonial from Sheffield Diocese Mission Partnership Project Manager (E2, November 2016) indicates: “Mike [Dr Clinton, King’s College London] and Neil’s [Prof Conway, Royal Holloway] research provided us with very robust, extensive and compelling evidence. The reports and findings were discussed by the Bishop and his senior colleagues”.

The Church of England accepted the findings that clergy well-being and mission-related activities were being negatively affected by their administrative workloads. The Church of England identified Sheffield as a beneficiary of the research because it is a highly socially deprived area as measured by the Government’s Index of Multiple Deprivation. Over three-quarters of Sheffield Diocese’s parishes have an Index of Multiple Deprivation lower than the national average, and many much lower; within these the most deprived parishes were targeted for administrative support. In such parishes clergy face regular issues relating to poverty, homelessness, drug abuse, migration, and human trafficking. As a result Sheffield Diocese introduced a new administrative support role, Mission Partnerships Development Workers, under a scheme titled the Mission Partnerships Development Worker Project. “Mike and Neil’s previous and ongoing research has therefore **had a major impact on our decision making and shaping of the MPDW project**” (E2, November 2016, Mission Partnership Project Manager).

The Sheffield Diocese’s Mission Partnership Development Workers project was backed by GBP1,400,000 of Church funds and ran from 2015 to 2020. The project provides administrative support to clusters of neighbouring parishes in the most socially deprived areas of Sheffield (nine partnerships, where each partnership consists of three or more parishes, three to five local clergy, each supported by an administrative support worker). In total the scheme “**has created employment for nine workers in the new role of Mission Partnership Development Workers, who provide administrative support to 30 clergy, across 33 parishes, serving around 3,000 parishioners (about one-fifth of the parishes in the Sheffield Diocese)**” (E2, February 2020, Mission Partnership Project Manager). The intention of the scheme was to relieve clergy of administrative burdens so they could devote more time to their calling, improve clergy quality of life, and connect with parishioners; the new role was also intended to indirectly enhance church performance. A video prepared by Conway promoted the scheme to prospective clergy in the Sheffield Diocese (E3). Conway further promoted the scheme through presenting at a practitioner event (E4).

Impact Phase 2: The Benefits of the Mission Partnership Development Workers Scheme to Clergy, Parishes, and Church Performance

The Mission Partnership Development Workers scheme benefitted the following parties:

1. **Enhancing clergy well-being, mission, and parish activities:** Evidence from Conway and Clinton’s reports evaluating the scheme support its efficacy, where a diary study showed clergy with an administrative support worker (N=13 clergy respondents), compared to those without (control group N=18), reported being **more satisfied** with the time they spend on mission activities, spent **more time on activities** that they feel **competent** at, and spent more time **working with children/young people** (Internal CoE report February 2018, E5).

Evidence from interviews with 12 clergy in receipt of a support worker found that the majority reported a notable **increase in time devoted to ministry** and **more calling fulfilment**, which they attributed to being assigned a support worker. Clergy reported that the scheme had plentiful positive impacts including **benefitting the wider community** via novel events and services, and **releasing clergy time to train lay leaders, volunteers, and church wardens**. The support workers were identified as central to acquiring **new income streams**

and instigating **cost savings**, by half of the ministers interviewed (Internal CoE report May 2018, E6).

Increased parish activities was found in 2019, where interviews with 13 clergy in receipt of a support worker found ten clergy who reported an increase in **new activities in the community** (e.g., new leadership positions, new workshops in the community), and nine of the ten clergy attributed that these activities were made possible by the support worker (Internal CoE report October 2019, E7). A testimonial from a parish nurse at [text removed for publication], one of the most deprived parishes in the country, details a prominent example of a new initiative where the support worker “[text removed for publication]” (Parish Nurse, [text removed for publication], E8).

2. **Improving church performance:** The 33 **parishes** with support workers achieved **increases in parishioner attendance, fund raising and income**. An independent evaluation by external consultants in May 2018 (E9) concluded from an analysis of objective data drawn from parish accounting records that parishes with a support worker had **21% higher average weekly attendance** compared with a control group. Parishes with support workers also benefited from project management and fundraising skills that translated into **increased fund raising** (up in 51% versus 32% in the control group), and **increased income** (65% versus 31% in the control group). A testimonial from a church warden details how support workers have a major impact in terms of fund raising and resultant project and event management: “[text removed for publication]” (Church Warden, [text removed for publication], E10).
3. **Enhancing Sheffield Diocese’s organizational knowledge and decision making:** Conway and Clinton’s evaluation of the MPDW scheme generated internal reports (2016-2020, E5, E6, E7) that **“provided important evidence to support the value of the MPDW project, ...how the Mission Partnership Development Workers have benefitted clergy in receipt of such workers, parishioner attendance and the financial position of their churches [and] identified areas where the scheme was not having its intended effects. ...The reports have included numerous detailed and practical recommendations for improving the scheme. This commentary has been immensely helpful in informing management thinking and decision making. ... Their expertise and recommendations have shaped the delivery of the scheme and in doing so benefitted clergy and parishioners”** (Mission Partnership Development Worker Project Manager, February 2020, E2).
4. **Creating jobs:** The scheme benefitted the **nine Mission Partnership Development Workers** (the support workers to clergy; headcount: 9; FTEs: 7.2) whose jobs were created as a result of the scheme.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

- E1.** Internal CoE report by Conway and Clinton: September 2013, file ‘3P_Report_September_Final’; title ‘Patterns of Priestly Practice Project’; 59 pages.
- E2.** Two testimonial letters from Mission Partnership Development Worker Project Manager, Sheffield Diocese. First dated November 2016; second dated February 2020.
- E3.** A 3 minute video by Conway outlining the project, used by Sheffield Diocese to publicise the MPDW scheme. <http://www.sheffield.anglican.org/development-worker-project>, July 2016.
- E4.** Outputs from a CoE practitioner event for policy makers and stakeholder on the topic of managing clergy wellbeing. September 2017.
- E5.** Internal CoE report by Conway and Clinton: February 2018, file ‘MPDW Evaluation Report Feb 2018’; title ‘Mission Partnership Development Worker Project: Second Report: Overview from the November 2017 Diary’; 6 pages.
- E6.** Internal CoE report by Conway and Clinton: May 2018, file ‘MPDW 2018 Interview Report_final’; title ‘2018 Qualitative Study into Clergy Experiences of the Mission Partnership Development Worker (MPDW) Scheme: Interview Findings’; 18 pages.

E7. Internal CoE report by Conway and Clinton: October 2019, file 'MPDW October 2019 Report final'; title 'Report of the June 2019 MPDW Sheffield Survey'; 4 pages.

E8: Testimonial letter from parish nurse, [text removed for publication] Sheffield, March 2020.

E9. Independent evaluation by external consultants of Mission Partnership Development Worker scheme, May 2018: 'Diocese of Sheffield: mid-Term Evaluation of the Mission Partnership Development Worker Project'; 24 pages.

E10: Testimonial letter from church warden, [text removed for publication], Hoyland, March 2020.