



## Introduction

**As those charged with the care of God's Church today, we inherit a powerful legacy of faith regarding issues of poverty and injustice.**

We walk in the footsteps of Isaiah... the prophet through whom God spoke, telling us that seeing the chains of injustice broken, the oppressed set free, the hungry fed, the wanderer given shelter, and the naked clothed, is the true observance that he seeks.

We serve him as people of the Magnificat, Mary's Song of hope for the poor and for all those who suffer... a prayer of salvation for the oppressed, proclaiming release for those who hunger, and giving just caution to the rich, since it is they who are to be sent empty away.

In baptism, we take on a share in the ministry of Jesus Christ himself. We take on his yoke - in first-century Judaism, a yoke was a metaphor for a rabbi's interpretation of the Torah. So how can we discern what Jesus' interpretation of scripture might be regarding our low-income communities? What is the yoke we are taking on?

The Gospel is not short of examples showing Jesus' approach to those living in poverty and the marginalised.

This is the Jesus who was so angered by the malpractice of the money changers that he overturned their tables and drove them from the temple; this is he who told a story about a woman who was blessed in giving a single small coin because it was all that she had; he who looked on the rich young man with love and pity because he could not walk away from his attachment to money; Jesus who consistently gave prominence to the shunned, the shamed, the overlooked and those in need.

And more weight is added as Jesus gives insight into where and how the kingdom of Heaven grows here on earth.

Jesus tells us what the kingdom of God is like... it's like a mustard seed, the smallest of all seeds, but which grows into the largest of trees able to shelter birds of all kinds, we're told... again the kingdom of heaven is like a woman who has a small amount of yeast to a huge quantity of flour. The yeast is worked through the flour and grows to ten, twenty times its size, and is able to feed many.

From those descriptions we see that the kingdom of God is not like any earthly kingdom. There's no mention of wealth, status, or grandeur, but rather concepts of shelter, care, feeding,

embracing and so on. The kingdom of God, the economy of God, is shown to be radically different than that of the world. In the economy of God, the first are last and the last first, we're told in Matthew 20 vs 16.

Jesus says we can't point to the kingdom of God and say 'there it is', because the kingdom of God grows among us, through thousand upon thousand acts of kindness, care, generosity, concern for others, and service to God and his creation, building the sort of community seen in the early church, and as described in Acts 2 vs 44-47, where 'the believers were together and held everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need'.

And churches in low-income communities can see significant kingdom growth - the mustard seed, the yeast, growth many times that which might be expected; transformation, new life and new followers added to our number, fulfilling our calling to be a Church reoriented, with an increasingly broader reach and a firmer kingdom vision.

As poverty and inequality increase, there is ever more onus on the Church to act as a beacon of integrity in the way our low-income communities, and their churches, are cared for and supported.

If they are last in the eyes of the world, they are first in the heart of God, and that is the prominence they must have with us, as his Church, too – this is the Christ we serve, this is the yoke we take on.

*Rt Revd Lynne Cullens, Bishop of Barking, and Lead Bishop for Estates Evangelism*

*June 2025*

### **A note on language**

We seek to communicate in ways that respect the dignity of all people, recognising that while lived experiences may differ, all people are made in the image of God. Communities and neighbourhoods may be classified as deprived by various measures and the people within them may face particular challenges, but they are rich in their diverse strengths and each one a gospel priority.

## Part A: Key learnings about project design

Seeking to learn from evaluations of projects receiving national strategic funding from the Church of England, we looked for emerging themes to help us understand how projects work well. Six elements of effective projects have been drawn out below. These learnings are not new – research consistently finds that mission and ministry is more fruitful when these are present – and we expect and hope that this message will resonate, both with diocesan staff and with those who are directly involved in ministry of all kinds. Drawing wisdom from places where this work is ongoing (see Part C), highlighted in bold below are three elements that are particularly relevant considerations for mission and ministry with low-income communities and estates:

1. Servant-hearted – *Prayer* and *Support* are important for all involved.
2. Clear – a shared *Vision* and *Continuity* provide the necessary clarity of purpose.
3. Relevant – projects must be sensitive and appropriate for the *Cultural* and *Social* Contexts. **Leadership needs to be contextually and culturally appropriate, raising up community members to lead in both lay and clergy roles.**
4. Balanced – Deliberate *Evangelism* and *New Approaches* are important within the wider ‘mixed ecology’ of the local Church. **The work of the Church combines growing faith and social justice in ways that are relevant for local people.**
5. Organised – *Project Management* including *Monitoring and Evaluation* are essential.
6. Wise – Financial resources for both the *short term* and the *long term* need to be identified and appropriately allocated. **This includes flexibility and accountability that draws on a mutually supportive distribution between parishes.**

## Part B: What are the challenges the Church needs to address?

The Church of England has made clear that supporting mission and ministry in low-income communities and estates is a priority across all dioceses. In February 2019, General Synod backed a motion that commits the Church of England to having a loving, serving, worshipping Christian community on every significant social housing estate in England. In February 2024, five years later, General Synod dedicated itself afresh to this goal, calling on the Church to tackle “the structural and financial injustices that prevent flourishing and sustainable worshipping communities on every estate”. In February 2025, General Synod considered a private member’s motion on a “Strategy for encouraging the ministry of people from working class backgrounds”.

While the Church's commitment to these communities is clear, there are ongoing challenges. Our working analysis stems from consultation with frontline lay and ordained leaders, practitioners and experts-by-experience. In 2023, we worked with the Estates Evangelism Task Group (see Part D) to develop the following three-part problem statement.

## **Challenge 1: A lack of contextually appropriate leadership**

Our learnings (see Part A) are clear that contextually appropriate leadership is a key factor in growing strong mission and ministry in all settings. But the Church's traditional and historic approaches have served to create barriers that discourage potential leaders from low-income communities.

The Church's report "[Let Justice Roll Down Like Waters](#)"<sup>1</sup> highlights a complex set of themes which together demonstrate the challenges faced by clergy (and potential clergy) who identify as working-class. These include practical and material issues, theological training approaches, as well as cultural differences and power in the Church hierarchy – all of which impact vocations to lay leadership as well as ordained ministers.

Growing lay leaders from the community is key, but they may need support to overcome barriers that undermine their confidence to see themselves as leaders in a church context. Practical challenges also exist, for example in terms of the ability to pay for travel or capacity to attend events or meetings, whether online or in person.

## **Challenge 2: A lack of culturally appropriate models that can release local missional energy and capacity**

Evaluations of strategic investment in mission and ministry (see Part A) draw out how important it is that the missional approach is relevant for the context and the people it serves. This means being open to different approaches that reach out to people. Local people often have a powerful desire to serve their community but may lack confidence and encouragement to step into leadership.

Some traditional approaches can limit the growth of the Church in low-income communities. Existing buildings may no longer be suitably situated or may burden the local church with costly repairs. Traditional models of church may rely on asking volunteers to fill demanding roles in parish governance, financial management and safeguarding which people may not feel able or wish to take on. Organisations, including churches, need to work hard to build trust with those whose lived experience has included marginalisation or discrimination. Churches may find

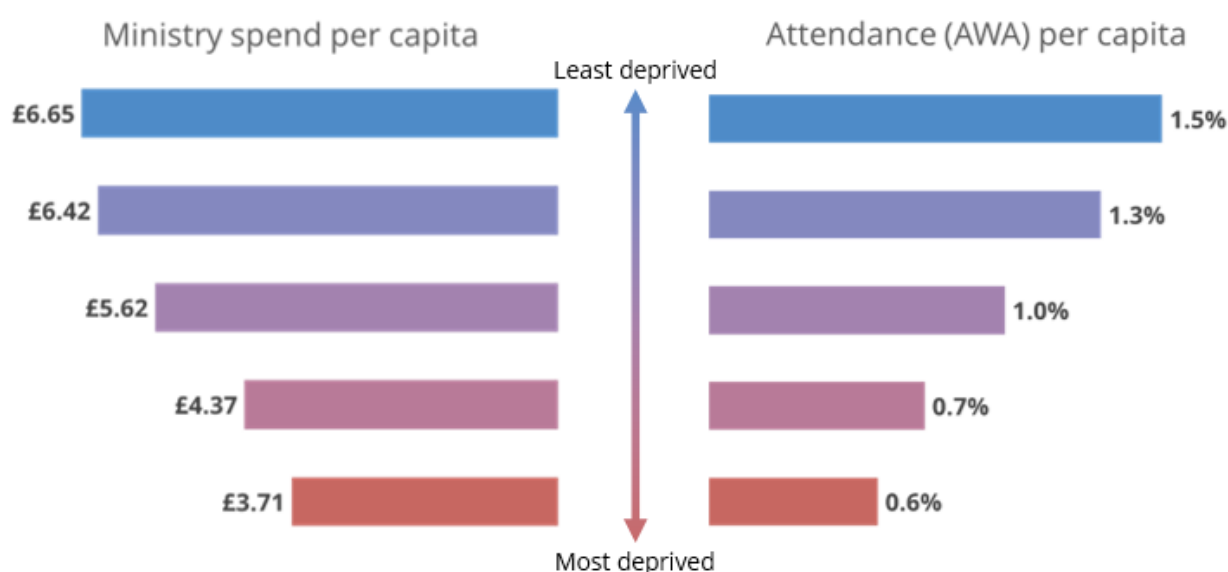
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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2023-10/focussed-study-4-working-class-clergy-wellbeing.pdf>

their limited resources are pulled in many directions, making it difficult to deliver practical ministry and service, missional outreach and ongoing discipleship all at the same time. There is a risk that simply maintaining a church presence saps energy and resources, leaving limited capacity for mission.

### Challenge 3: Not enough resources are available to enable fruitful ministry

Despite the Church's sincerity in its desire to grow the faith of people living in low-income areas and to better serve these communities, there is a disparity in the level of financial investment in churches in less deprived areas relative to those in low-income areas. Data analysis shows a correlation between spend and attendance. The graph below shows that the proportion of the population attending church in the most deprived areas is around half that in the least deprived areas. These areas also have about half the level of ministry resource.



We have not undertaken a detailed analysis of the Church economy, but the following may be relevant contributory factors:

- Dioceses vary hugely in their own level of assets from under £10 per capita to nearly £100 per capita. Dioceses with both low asset levels and low population income levels face a dual financial challenge.

- Population distribution varies greatly across dioceses and parishes. In more deprived places, each parish tends to have more people: the most deprived 25% of the population of England is concentrated in 12% of all parishes (1,470 parishes; 14 million people).
- Declining church attendance in recent decades has led to reduced income from giving (despite increasingly generous amounts per giver). As churches struggle to meet their parish share, dioceses have begun to provide more support not just to their parishes in the most deprived areas but in their wealthier areas too.
- Clergy and lay ministers and others working with low-income communities and estates can feel multiple pressures on their (scarce) resources. There can be a tension between investing in mission and responding to social justice issues.

## Part C: How is the Church responding?

### Response 1: Contextually appropriate leadership

The Church is seeking to provide better support for aspiring leaders who reflect the diversity of the communities they serve. At the diocesan level, projects are raising up and mentoring local people to lay leadership roles with pathways for current and future ministry (whether lay or ordained). Those who are stepping up are celebrated and recognised. Alongside this, dioceses develop their own local approaches to appropriate authorisation depending on episcopal priorities, while seeking to avoid it being perceived as a barrier at the outset. At the national level, detailed research is informing strategies to tackle classism. Strategic Mission and Ministry Investment (SMMI) funding is supporting the development of new training programmes which include elements of confidence building, mentoring and pastoral care to support aspiring leaders from low-income communities and estates.

### Partners offering training

Across the Church, a variety of organisations support mission to low-income communities and estates. Below we highlight two organisations that have received SMMI funding to develop and expand their training offer. In different ways, they each seek to break down the barriers people face in becoming local leaders.

The **Centre for Theology and Community (CTC)** supports churches with community organising, engaging local people around the issues that matter to them in partnership with Citizens UK (the national community organising movement), listening to and discerning the skills of congregation members, and nurturing emergent new leaders. CTC uses its 'Olive Wagstaff programme' for lay leadership training, and churches participate in learning communities which together help to bring about culture change.



Learn more on the Church Support Hub here: <https://churchsupporthub.org/all-resources/how-to-begin-to-harness-the-practices-of-community-organising-for-church-growth/>

See also: <https://www.ctcuk.org/what-we-do/congregational-development/working-across-the-christian-tradition/anglican-organising-for-growth/>

The **Centre for Church Multiplication (CCX)** has developed a package of support for estates mission alongside its other training opportunities for planting and church growth: a six-part online course (Introduction to Estates Mission), a ten-session leadership course ('Become') and a two-year training programme (Estates Apprenticeship Scheme). 'Become', in particular, has been designed specifically for people who "may not fit traditional training pathways."

See also: <https://ccx.org.uk/estates/>

### Support from the Ministry Development Team for clergy and lay leaders

The Ministry Development Team of the Church of England is working to support the development of clergy and lay leaders within low-income areas. Their "Living Ministry" research work is informing decision-making.

Learn more here: <https://www.churchofengland.org/resources/diocesan-resources/ministry-development/formation/living-ministry>

A new community is being formed which aims to bring together those who have developed programmes to develop lay leaders in low-income communities and estates contexts. The community will highlight good practice from existing work, support replication and seek ways to scale up at diocesan and/or national level.

### Putting it into practice:

#### Diocese of Blackburn

Blackburn Diocese, through its Outer Estates Leadership Programme, has developed a nine-month formation programme called "M:Power" for aspiring lay leaders from urban contexts. Participants value the way the programme gives them confidence to lead, the power that comes from sharing that experience with others and the opportunities that it opens up within the Church. Keys to its success have been: building relationships of trust with tutors and between participants, adapting the model to suit attendees by reducing travel times, making the programme flexible enough so that people did not have to complete the course first time, and getting the language right (all aspects of being).



Learn more on the Church Support Hub: <https://churchsupporthub.org/all-resources/outer-estates-mission-boosted-in-blackburn-through-leadership-development/>

See also: <https://blackburn.anglican.org/m-power-lay-leadership-training-in-urban>

### **Diocese of York**

York Diocese's Mustard Seed Programme works with people in areas "where life is tough". The central element is 'Stepping Up', a year-long programme of development to raise up lay leaders for mission. Participants gather in small learning communities, and learning is experiential, with activities to complete in their church and community each week. The programme builds confidence at the same time as providing practical training in the work. Keys to its success have been: being person-centred, adapting the support to their own personal journeys, the support of a personal mentor, the small local learning communities, a clear discipleship pathway with sending parishes, and their incumbents involved in preparing for the future ministry of each participant.

See also: <https://www.mseed.org/>

## **Response 2: Growing mission that is culturally appropriate**

Projects in low-income communities and estates supported via national strategic funding have focused on building missional energy, and on finding ways to overcome the triple challenge of delivering Sunday services, missional outreach and ongoing discipleship at the same time. Mission and ministry that is seeking to reach groups which have been underrepresented in the Church (including low-income communities) benefits from approaches which are particularly sensitive to and respectful of context, tailored to local people's priorities.

Our evaluations and the experience of SMMI-funded work found that outreach work tackling social issues had created opportunities to partner with other organisations. Building relationships with other local churches, bodies and institutions (e.g. local council, charities or housing bodies) can open doors to new ways of working together. Working collaboratively with other well-known organisations can also help foster a sense of trust in the local church.

### **Putting it into practice:**

#### **Diocese of Southwell and Nottingham**

The Woven Network is a group of eight churches 'woven together' under the leadership of their resource church (St Margaret's Apsley). Each church has its own identity and leadership (clergy and lay) within the Woven network, governed by a Joint Council.





As a group they are able to support each other better by sharing resources and being woven with a common vision for revival. They have still needed diocesan support for their vision, through challenging times such as the Covid pandemic as well as financial backing to overcome challenges, such as the need for repairs to buildings.

See also: <https://wearewoven.church/>

### **Diocese of Manchester**

The Antioch Network within Manchester Diocese focuses on small churches, started and energised by missional leaders and their teams, with a heart for growth and onward planting. Key to the project is the REAP (recruit, equip, animate, plant) training course for leaders which is designed to empower and raise up local people from within the churches to leadership roles.

The focus on working with deprived and/or migrant communities has borne fruit. Governance structures, safeguarding systems, retention of key leaders and relationships with existing parish churches have all been important. An Operations Manager employed by the network supports the project.

Learn more on the Church Support Hub here: <https://churchsupporthub.org/all-resources/small-is-beautiful-for-manchesters-plants/>

See also: <https://www.manchester.anglican.org/antioch-network.php>

### **Diocese of Canterbury**

Ignite started in Canterbury Diocese in 2008. It is a café-style church for “people living in our marginalised and social deprived communities.” Where Ignites are most successful, a key feature is the commitment of local parish churches to welcome these new worshipping communities with prayer and other support.

Originally financially supported with a grant from the Church of England’s Strategic Development Fund, and now supported by Benefact Trust, there are Ignites in six locations across the diocese.

Learn more on the Church Support Hub here: <https://churchsupporthub.org/all-resources/ignite-church-fires-up-growth-in-most-disadvantaged-areas-across-diocese-of-canterbury/>

See also: <https://www.canterburydiocese.org/ignite/> and <https://www.brfonline.org.uk/collections/ignite-collection>

## **Missional Youth Church Network (MYCN)**

Missional Youth Church Network (MYCN), in partnership with the Church of England and led by Church Army, works in some of the most disadvantaged communities in England to support the creation of new worshipping communities with unchurched young people. Rooted in partnerships with dioceses, churches and community schools, MYCN focuses on low-income areas and estates, where young people are often disconnected from traditional models of church. These new worshipping communities are typically hosted in accessible 'third spaces' such as community venues, shaped in collaboration with the young people themselves. Since 2019, MYCN has helped establish 54 new worshipping communities, 29 of which are in low-income contexts, with a vision to reach 125 by 2030. Lay leaders from within local communities are equipped and supported through a structured pathway of training, mentoring and peer learning. MYCN's approach offers a practical and contextually sensitive model for growing younger, more diverse congregations, aligned with the wider Church of England Vision and Strategy.

Learn more here: [www.mycn.org.uk](http://www.mycn.org.uk)

## **Response 3: Resources to enable fruitful ministry**

### **The intention behind Strategic Mission and Ministry Investment (SMMI)**

SMMI aims to "help the Church to realise the Vision & Strategy in our parishes and worshipping communities; to become a Church for the whole nation, which is Jesus Christ centred, and shaped by the five marks of mission." Introduced in 2023 as a nine-year programme, it invests in the Vision & Strategy's priorities to become a church of missionary disciples, a church which is younger and more diverse, and where mixed ecology is the norm.

More details about the Vision and Strategy are here:

<https://www.churchofengland.org/about/vision-and-strategy>

There are currently three funding streams that together form SMMI:

- Lowest Income Communities (LInC) funding (£99m in 2023-25)
- Diocesan Investment Programme (DIP) (£248m in 2023-25)
- People and Partnerships grant Funding (PPF) (£13m in 2023-25)

LInC funding is explicitly intended for lowest-income communities, and DIP funding that favours deprived low-income communities and estates is particularly welcomed as part of a broader strategy.

DIP funding aims to ensure that those dioceses with large populations, low levels of residents' income, and limited resources available to invest in new work are not inhibited in their strategic ambitions to realise the Vision & Strategy. **We recommend that each diocese makes their own strategic commitment to support low-income communities and estates in a similar way, to guide their resource allocations and decision-making.**

PPF is a separate stream of funding awarded to national partners which are working to address a gap or barrier that currently inhibits delivery of the Church's Vision & Strategy. This may be through partnerships, innovation and/or research for partners working to support churches across the country, including in low-income communities and estates.

### **How do DIP, LInC, diocesan and other funds best work together?**

Dioceses supporting fruitful mission and ministry in low-income communities and estates take a long-term view. It takes time to build trust and key relationships with communities, and numerical attendance growth may be slow and/or dispersed. Missional models may work best on a small scale with strong local ties. Missionally healthy and vibrant worshipping communities may take a long time to reach self-financing sustainability, and for some contexts dioceses recognise that this may never be a realistic goal.

DIP and LInC funding seek to supplement diocesan resources, to work together to address these challenges: LInC funding to sustain ministry in churches (in deprived areas that could not otherwise afford it), DIP funding to allow dioceses to intentionally grow mission or try new things (in all areas, in line with local diocesan strategies, in consultation with local communities, parishes and churches).

More details about SMMI funding are here: <https://www.churchofengland.org/about/vision-strategy/funding-strategic-mission-and-ministry>

### **LInC funding: principles, requirements and distribution**

LInC funding is provided to eligible dioceses (see Part D) as a block grant which they can use at their discretion, within the bounds of three principles:

- LInC funding is for the lowest income communities within the dioceses
- LInC funding is for mission (in some form) within those communities
- There is transparency about the amount of funds and the way that they are distributed

A formula determines the size of each diocese's share of the total, based on each diocese's relative level of each of three elements (derived from national statistics):

- Residents' income, which is used to give a measure across the whole diocese

- Income deprivation levels, which are used to recognise where there may be pockets of deprivation
- Population size, which is used to give a sense of scale

National level analysis in recent years has used a proxy measure for 'lowest income communities' which focuses on the 25% of the population living in the most deprived parishes in England (based on IMD rankings). Selecting the 25% most deprived *parishes* would encompass 40% of the population so by focusing on population rather than parishes, this approach aims to take into account the reality that more deprived parishes tend to have larger populations (see Part B).

There is considerable flexibility available to dioceses, including the scope to decide: the method of allocation, the activity funded, the level of local monitoring of expenditure, and the definition of 'lowest income communities' within the diocese (which in turn would determine local parishes' eligibility). Dioceses may therefore have a more nuanced approach than the national level analysis – for example, by taking into account pockets of deprivation or particular local circumstances.

Currently, LInC funding requires minimal reporting to the SMMI Board, with the expectation that this will continue. Greater transparency has been recommended by both the [Independent Review of LInC and SDF](#)<sup>2</sup> and the [Diocesan Finances Review](#)<sup>3</sup>. Recommended good practice is to agree and communicate how LInC funds are used with parishes and Diocesan Synods, and will become required as part of LInC funding from 2026 onwards in line with the Diocesan Finance Review recommendations:

- Ensure all parishes supported by LInC know they are beneficiaries and the extent of that support
- Report to Diocesan Synods on the intended use of LInC, including a detailed budget
- Confirm the diocese LInC strategy at the start of each triennium, and explain how the use of LInC aligns with local mission plans as part of wider strategic development and DIP proposals

There is an expectation that LInC funding will be used to support ministry costs (typically clergy stipends), but this is not a constraint.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2022-03/irls-final-report-2.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2025-01/gs-2380-diocesan-finances-review-update.pdf>

## LInC funding: finding the right balance

Developed from the three LInC principles above and drawing on our national level analysis of the use of LInC funding, we highlight three elements which dioceses are balancing in their LInC allocation decisions: **strategic intent, accountability and flexible use**. These elements can either be in tension or can work well together within an overall coherent approach.

**Strategic intent** works well when dioceses choose to direct funding based on deprivation levels (rather than parish share levels), within the context of their overall diocesan strategies, built upon prayerful discernment of mission and ministry priorities. LInC funding is then *part* of an overall approach, not seen in isolation. This in turn helps gain more widespread support as people are inspired by the vision and how they can play their part. Allocation decisions become less of an 'accounting exercise' and more about choosing which priorities matter most.

**Accountability** means reporting to the Archbishops' Council, and through them to the Church Commissioners, that funding has been spent in line with the LInC principles, but more importantly it also means enabling parishes and communities to hold dioceses to account for where LInC funding is allocated. A first step is simply to inform parishes of the allocation they are receiving. A more mature approach will develop mechanisms not only for reporting transparently where and how funds have been spent, but also for receiving and responding to feedback and scrutiny (perhaps through deanery and diocesan synods).

With this transparency and openness to scrutiny from parishes and communities, comes the opportunity to make use of the **flexibility** of LInC funding to adapt allocations to local contexts, listen to what churches are asking for and support missional models that are more locally relevant.

Some dioceses have responded by: reducing the number of parishes supported by LInC funding in order to target more effectively the most deprived areas, reserving a portion of LInC funding for missional projects alongside support for existing ministry, directing funding in response to missional energy and passion for the Gospel. None of these is the 'right answer' – decisions must be locally determined and Spirit-led.

## Deploying diocesan resources in mutually supportive ways

Some dioceses are working on new ways to pool or share resources to create efficiencies and make savings. Some of the approaches currently being explored include:

- Diocesan level teams to support local (parish/church) level staff and volunteers (for example, in Blackburn Diocese some LInC funding is used to help provide support for Treasurers in their roles)

- Setting up hubs for admin and other services that support a particular a group of parishes or churches (for example Bristol (see below) or the Woven network (see Part C))
- Partnering more closely with other organisations (such as local government and/or charities) that are seeking to serve deprived areas, particularly if local churches are able to act together as one
- Connecting parishes directly with each other (for example, two parishes in Blackburn have 'twinning' – see <https://churchsupporthub.org/all-resources/how-is-a-church-twinning-food-club-transforming-lives/>)

Some parishes are pursuing income-generating opportunities, while others have successfully applied for grant funding from outside the Church of England. This can be an important addition to resources provided by their diocese and through local giving. Grants may have various types of restrictions.

### Working with other organisations

Some project evaluations observed that projects which had included work on social issues as part of their outreach were able to build trust and relationships through this work, but investing in growing faith and social justice together can be a challenge. Partnerships are key, working alongside and building relationships with other organisations, to ensure professional delivery and ongoing support for tackling social injustice.

In some cases, grant support may be available or an opportunity to share resources. Fresh resources (from project funding) can act as a catalyst to start a virtuous circle of resourcing mission through social action which connects with people alongside creating discipleship pathways which strengthen missionary disciples. But it takes time.

### Putting it into practice:

#### Diocese of Bristol

Bristol Diocese's strategy "Transforming Church. Together" includes three areas of culture change including "transforming communities" which includes "supporting priority communities" that "have been subject to decades of underinvestment from national and local government leading to significant socio-economic disadvantage and marginalisation." The diocese is creating a Priority Communities Network, and providing "financial investment for 14 PC contexts, which sit in the top 12.5% IMD". This includes intentional clergy support and accountability, alongside a new lay ministry discipleship/leadership programme (based on the Blackburn M:Power programme).

This approach resonates with the learnings from project evaluations (see Part A) with the following two aspects drawn out amongst others:

- “deployment of resources is shaped by the local churches involved, in a contextually relevant way”
- Alongside ministry support, “funding towards admin support and expenses are available ... in the form of several operational and admin hubs”

Learn more on the Church Support Hub here: <https://churchsupporthub.org/all-resources/major-transformation-programme-underway-across-bristol-diocese/>

See also: <https://www.bristol.anglican.org/visionandpriorities/transforming-church/>

## Part D: How can we build further on the work already being done?

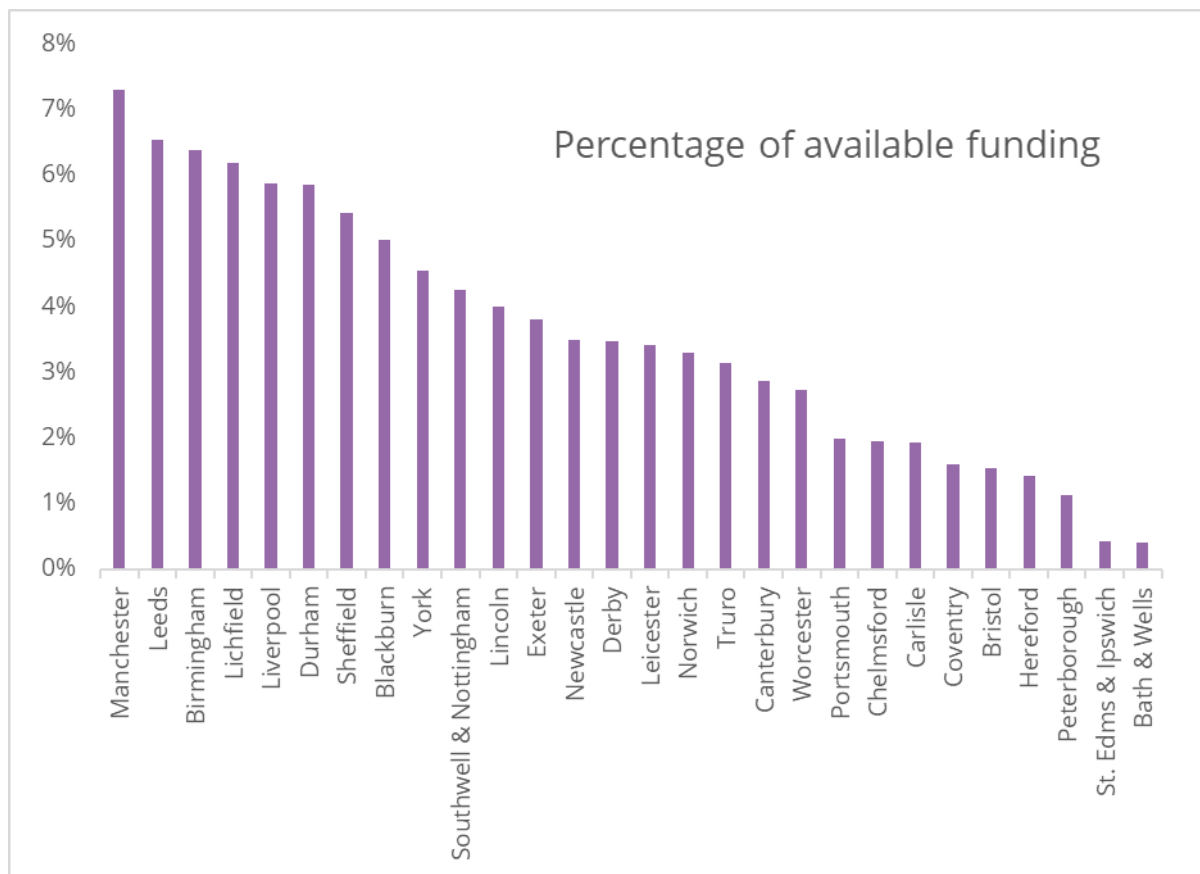
### What factors are important when deciding about resource allocations?

Low-income communities and estates are found in every diocese in England, including those which are not in receipt of LInC funding. Within each diocese, whether in receipt of LInC funding or not, local knowledge is a vital source of information about priority areas. In some dioceses, rural deprivation may be significant even where parishes' IMD rankings are not amongst the 'most deprived'. In urban areas, important mission and ministry work may be needed with 'hidden' populations and demographics. The local church may be called to support communities living in social housing estates, or those struggling with difficult circumstances within the private rented sector. Some dioceses may have significant 'pockets of deprivation' masked by higher average incomes. Vulnerable low-income groups facing similar challenges may be dispersed rather than geographically near to each other. Transient populations may be a significant characteristic of some deprived areas.

There are important populations within deprived parishes which are *not* living in social housing estates. In parishes which fall within the most deprived quartile of all parishes in England, over 60% of households are not social rented. Contextual awareness at the diocesan level and sensitivity at the parish level is vital to interpreting this type of information meaningfully and to understanding its implications for local mission and ministry.



At the national level, the formula which is used to allocate LInC funding between dioceses is based on the circumstances within each diocese. The graph below shows the allocation of LInC funding to each diocese for the period 2023-25.



The formula used at national level for the allocation of LInC funding is one potential proxy for thinking about where mission and ministry with low-income communities and estates is most significant, and dioceses may wish to use a similar approach at diocesan level. Alongside this there will be other relevant factors to consider.

Analysis of the current diocesan distribution of resources is an important first step, alongside prayerful discernment of where there are missional opportunities or potentially a need to revitalise a parish, in order to prioritise resources.

## What support is available?

### The Estates Evangelism Task Group

The Estates Evangelism Task Group (EETG) brings together practitioners and representatives of key partners from dioceses across the Church of England. EETG works with the ecumenical National Estates Church Network, offering support to dioceses and to the wider church.

**Regional representatives within EETG are a good first point of contact for those in dioceses and parishes who are seeking a wider network.**

Learn more here: <https://www.churchofengland.org/about/vision-strategy/estates-evangelism#na>

EETG has produced a set of “learning principles” as follows. They resonate with the elements highlighted above (see Part A) and provide additional focus:

1. Appoint a diocesan focal person
2. Use LInC funding in the most deprived areas
3. Explore innovative use of LInC funding
4. Consider planting new worshipping communities
5. Discern the right leaders for the context
6. Listen to the local community about their needs
7. Provide additional administrative and other support as relevant
8. Use contextually relevant discipleship materials
9. Empower local people into leadership

### Online resources

The Church Support Hub (launched 2024) provides a wealth of resources for dioceses and parishes. Filter for “Estates churches ministry” or browse the full directory. Create a free account to access the links within this document, and much more on a range of topics, by signing up at: <https://churchsupporthub.org/>

The Church’s 2014 report on church growth, “From Anecdote to Evidence” drew out similar learnings to those found in SMMI project evaluations. The website “From Evidence to Action”, provides some ideas and resources in response to those learnings.

Learn more here: <https://www.churchofengland.org/about/vision-strategy/funding-strategic-mission-and-ministry/strategic-development-funding/anecdote>

The Cathedral and Church Buildings Department provides guidance on looking after church buildings. Some churches may be eligible for grants (e.g. moving to Net Zero or repairing historic property).

Learn more here: <https://www.churchofengland.org/resources/churchcare>

## Networks, partnerships and research

EETG has created an 'Estates Collective' of organisations with a particular specialism for working in estates:

- The ecumenical National Estates Church Network including their guide "Living in Estate Ministry" <https://estatechurches.org/>
- Proximity Hub (The Message) <https://proximityhub.org/>
- Church Urban Fund <https://cuf.org.uk/>
- CCX Estates <https://ccx.org.uk/estates/>

In addition, the national Church and EETG have worked with the following organisations and resources:

- Jesus Shaped People including their discipleship tool <https://jesusshapedpeople.net/>
- Christians Against Poverty (CAP) <https://capuk.org/>
- Church Urban Fund, course "Growing Good" <https://growing-good.org.uk/>
- St Mellitus College, a range of training routes <https://stmellitus.ac.uk/study/routes/>
- St Hild College, "Mission on the Margins Track" of training <https://www.sthild.org/mission-on-the-margins2>
- Church Army [research reports](https://churcharmy.org/our-work/research/publications/)<sup>4</sup> including "Growing Leaders on Urban Estates" and their Missional Youth Church Network (MYCN) <https://www.mycn.org.uk/>

## Putting it into practice:

Stewarding the resources of the Church well in mission and ministry projects calls for decision-making that is: servant-hearted, clear, relevant, balanced, organised and wise (see Part A).

Above we have drawn out three core challenges (see Part B) at the root of this work, and we have seen that these are already being tackled successfully in parishes and communities across the country (see Part C). A common ingredient in many of these approaches is the value placed on empowering local lay people into their calling as missionary disciples within their communities and beyond.

Gathering information, listening to local voices and data analysis all combine to bring greater understanding of what is happening (Part D). Choosing where and how to invest calls for prayerful discernment, listening to God's leading, and working together.

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<sup>4</sup> <https://churcharmy.org/our-work/research/publications/>