

# SUPERVISION COMPENDIUM

Diocese  
*of* Derby



THE CHURCH  
OF ENGLAND



Diocese of Derby  
**2021**



## Table of Contents

<i>DERBY SUPERVISION COMPENDIUM .....</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>THE SUPERVISION PROCESS .....</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>CHECKLIST FOR CURATES IN SUPERVISION .....</i>	<i>9</i>
<i>AN AID TO THE COACHING DISCUSSION FOR TRAINING PRIESTS AND CURATES .....</i>	<i>10</i>
<i>A MODEL FOR SUPERVISION .....</i>	<i>11</i>
<i>IN THE TRAINING RELATIONSHIP PROCESS .....</i>	<i>11</i>
<i>SUPERVISION IN PRACTICE .....</i>	<i>13</i>
<i>THE SUPERVISORY CONVERSATION .....</i>	<i>15</i>
<i>A FIVE STAGE MODEL OF SUPERVISION .....</i>	<i>16</i>
<i>A SEVEN STAGE MODEL OF SUPERVISION .....</i>	<i>18</i>
1. Gathering information .....	18
<i>GIVING FEEDBACK .....</i>	<i>20</i>
<i>FEEDBACK GUIDELINES .....</i>	<i>23</i>
<i>SECRET WEAPON OF ENCOURAGEMENT .....</i>	<i>24</i>
<i>ATTENDING TO LEARNING STYLES .....</i>	<i>25</i>
<i>THE LEARNING CYCLE .....</i>	<i>26</i>
<i>A SUCCESSFUL SUPERVISING INCUMBENT WILL BE ABLE TO: .....</i>	<i>29</i>
<i>RESOURCES FOR THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION .....</i>	<i>30</i>

# DERBY SUPERVISION COMPENDIUM

Welcome and thank you!

We know how busy your lives are, and how exhausted most of us all feel after more than a year of coronavirus. Please know how much we appreciate your time, gifts and the passion you bring to your ministry. We are very grateful you have agreed to work with a curate to support them in their training in the formative first years of their ministry.

Supervision is a very particular discipline within a curacy. It is vitally important and forms the key place where the Curate and Training Priest reflect together on the curate's ministry. Supervision is not an optional extra – it should form the core of a curacy.

The **supervision of a curate** is a structured process which enables the work, learning and support of the curate, and which helps to create and sustain a good working and training relationship between a training incumbent and curate.

Supervision provides:

- The framework within which all aspects of work, learning and the working relationship itself are negotiated and reviewed
- The focussed time for reflection, to enable learning throughout the curacy; it should be a safe space within which praise, encouragement and feedback can be offered and received
- The main opportunity for the curate to receive the training incumbent's support for his/her work and learning, and in carrying the burdens encountered in ministry
- The boundaried, safe space within which differences, disagreements and causes of friction between the curate and incumbent can be dealt with healthily
- The space within which fair, evidence-based reports are discussed and agreed

# THE SUPERVISION PROCESS

The relationship between incumbent and curate is the most central element in a curate's training. Within this, meeting together for Supervision and Reflection is an absolutely vital building block. It is important that time is made for regular, rather than haphazard reflection. Such sessions should not be confused with staff meetings and diary planning, from which they need to be quite separate.

Sessions should be fixed in the diary on a regular basis. For stipendiary curates, or those who give a major part of the week to the parish, a weekly session will be good. For those who are part-time it may be fortnightly, or in some cases even monthly.

A session may centre on a piece of work (for example a sermon) but should also involve opportunity for wider exchange and reflection, when the curate and incumbent can share perceptions about progress being made, both in general terms and on progress towards covering areas that have been set for the current year.

The process for these meetings needs to be right. The Training Incumbent may find the following checklist helpful:

- Listen more than you speak
- Recognise your personal feelings and their possible influence on your judgements and actions
- Be sensitive to the experience and needs of your colleague
- Stay with the issues, and avoid being too anecdotal
- Ask open questions and be genuinely interested
- Build on your colleague's strengths by offering constructive feedback
- Encourage your colleague to learn from failures as well as successes
- Set realistic goals
- Be patient
- Don't let disagreements fester

Sadly, we are not all as good at this as we like to think, and even clergy who may be excellent listeners in the pastoral parochial context can forget all their skills in the complexity of a conversation with a colleague which takes place in the midst of many duties and pressures. A check list is provided on the next page as a reference and reminder. How do you rate yourself? Highlight any 'ouch' points as you read through these aspects of good practice.

It is not difficult to see how sensitive use of these skills will facilitate all aspects of the relationship, not only in the work of supervision, but in the simple day-to-day making of arrangements and giving feedback.

Examples of Poor Skills	Examples of Better Skills
not listening to various cues, signals	listening carefully, taking up cues
butting in, interrupting	allowing space, and some pauses
making assumptions, 'knowing' or assuming answers	seeking the individual's answers; extending the scope of the interview by offering possible links
trying to influence, or providing own solution, manipulative	shaping the interview, but encouraging the person to come to their own solution
asking leading or closed questions, and asking two questions at one time	asking open questions, questions which draw out more information, avoiding questions with yes/no answers
being threatening, heavy handed, devaluing and defensive; officious, pressurising, sarcastic and sexist	being friendly, gentle, sincere, encouraging, genuinely interested
showing lack of empathy, unable to acknowledge true feelings	showing strong empathy and compassion
offering unrealistic promises/choices	offering realistic and rational assessment of genuine choices
speaking too much, too hurriedly, not allowing time for answers	slowing the pace down, especially when there are signs of panic; making space for each person to think
wandering away from painful material; changing the subject	helping painful material to be expressed and picking up difficult issues
being critical and shocked	being positive even if surprised
being patronising, talking down	not pretending to know when in fact don't know

being eager to get the information or outcome which the interviewer wants	clarifying issues, and alternative action but ensuring choice is with the other
putting words into the others mouth	using person's own words to reflect back, repeat, recap, and sum up
making the person out to be peculiar	showing how others might feel the same way
incongruous sharing of experience ('I get fed up too..')	using own experience without revealing it, to reach other's experience
inviting disloyalty to other people; running down (or defending too quickly, a third party)	allowing different feelings to be expressed even if not agreeing; assuring confidentiality and discretion (where appropriate)
not offering time to consider issues	offering further time to follow up, as well as time for reflection in the interview
getting angry when don't get own way	offering ongoing support, defusing a crisis and leaving door open

Good practice in supervision is essential in the incumbent/curate relationship. Difficulties in this area can lead to expectations not being met, frustration and resentment setting in and a gradual deterioration of both the working and the learning relationship.

Common areas of difficulty are:

- the erosion of time allocated because of other pressures
- a sense that after a year or so supervision is less important
- changing of time and place so often that good practice is undermined
- finding time for supervision when curate has a part time role in the parish
- not really knowing how to use the time effectively
- a tendency to mix supervision with other agendas

If the incumbent or curate feel that these or other difficulties are affecting the quality of supervision, it can be difficult to raise the issues openly because of feelings that time is precious, or concern about possibly creating conflict by pointing out that expectations are not being met.

To avoid such tensions, it is important to have and to maintain a clear agreed understanding about what is involved in supervision and when it will take place. The way in which the meeting is to be prepared for and the process it will follow also needs to be clear.

**Two models for supervision are provided below.**

The models need not be followed slavishly but demonstrates the essential components of a supervision session. Please note that this outline can be used for:

- An outline for the incumbent to follow as a reminder to raise particular issues and cover the essential questions
- A guide for both to ensure that there is appropriate open conversation, agreed action and satisfactory closure
- A place in which to note particular things which are agreed at the end of the conversation and can be referred back to.
- The curate to prepare for a supervision time in advance (which is in itself good practice). The curate may also use the 'Checklist for Curates in Supervision' found on the next page.

# CHECKLIST FOR CURATES IN SUPERVISION

We suggest that curates work through this list from time to time with their Training Priest. A hierarchy of needs operates here – if you are not comfortable with the elements in Section A, then it will be hard to feel positive about the other sections, for example.

## **A. Basic Needs**

1. Do I know what is expected?
2. Do I have the resources I need to do the task right?
3. When do I have the opportunity to do what I do best?

## **B. Support**

4. Have I received recognition and praise for my ministry recently?
5. Does my vicar, or my other colleagues, seem to care about me as a person?
6. Is there someone who cares about my development as a minister?

## **C. Teamwork (belonging)**

7. Do my opinions count in our church?
8. Does the mission/purpose of the church make me feel my contribution is important?
9. Are the other members of the team committed to the same quality of work as me?
10. Do I have a best friend at church?

## **D. Individual Growth**

11. In the last six months, has someone talked about my development in ministry with me?
12. In the last year, what opportunities have I had to learn and grow for myself?<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> These questions are adapted from the 'Gallup 12' questions developed to assess employee engagement

# AN AID TO THE COACHING DISCUSSION FOR TRAINING PRIESTS AND CURATES

This is a simple tool for the coaching discussion.<sup>2</sup> It helps to pinpoint areas for exploration. As a communication tool, it helps us keep focused and gives us time for adequate preparation.

Date

1. I need help or a decision from you about the following:
2. I'm having a problem with the following:
3. I'm planning to:
4. I've made progress in the following areas:
5. Happiness (personally speaking).  
If 1 is "suicidal" and 10 is "the happiest I have ever been,  
this is the number I would want to put down now:
6. Please pray for me in the following:

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<sup>2</sup> *acknowledgement Eddie Gibbs, Marc Europe 1989*  
Diocese of Derby Supervision Compendium 2021 (Version 1)

# A MODEL FOR SUPERVISION IN THE TRAINING RELATIONSHIP PROCESS

## **Focus**

What is the specific incident or issue in view?

## **Facts**

What happened? When was this? Who was there? What was said? What was the context? What details may be important or significant?

## **Facts include Feelings**

What feelings were you are aware of at the time? In others? In yourself?

What evidence was there for feelings present? Were they stated? Physical reactions or bodily sensations?

What feelings are you aware of now as you tell the story?

## **Thinking**

What were you thinking?

Were you aware of taking particular decisions to speak in a particular way or follow a course of action? (Do not pursue or evaluate possible reasons or outcomes at this stage, simply note what thought processes were involved)

## **Assessing**

What was positive in the experience? What was not?

## **Understanding**

What sense do you make of the situation?

How do you understand or interpret what was happening?

## **Reviewing**

What might you have done or said differently? What were your reasons?

What implications or outcomes might or might not have resulted?

## **Connections**

What images, similar experiences, memories, encounters or ideas are evoked for you?

What reminders emerge?

In what ways might these have influenced you? (they will have done- consciously or otherwise!)

**Learning review**

What would you do differently in a similar situation?

Have you learnt things which could be applied to other situations?

What have you learnt about yourself?

**Responsibilities**

Is any follow up action in the situation appropriate?

What will this be, who will do it and when?

**Future Learning**

What learning needs have been highlighted?

How could they be addressed?

Is there someone it would be worth talking with?

**And Finally (take care not to gloss over this stage by assuming all is well)**

How do you feel now?

Is there anything else you want to say?

Do we need to talk about this again?

# SUPERVISION IN PRACTICE

## A. Time

- Supervision should be regular, particularly in the first years of a curacy. Although weekly is preferred, fortnightly supervision should be a minimum in the first two years of a curacy. After that, the pattern may change by consent.
- Supervision should have strong boundaries. An hour and a half is probably the best length of time for a supervision meeting, but curates and Training Priests/Supervising Ministers will between them work out what is best. Do not go over the agreed time without agreeing together to do so.
- Supervision should be planned and diarised, preferably well in advance, so that it can be prepared for and regarded as a priority over other matters.
- Supervision should not take place at times when either or both parties are tired, hungry, concerned about their next appointment, or worried by family commitments.

## B. Venue

- Supervision should happen in a place which is secure, and where it will not be overheard or interrupted.
- It should happen in a place which is normally used for work conversations.
- Seating should be comfortable and feel roughly 'equal'.
- Curates and Training Priests may want to agree whether supervision should take place across a table or not.
- Supervision should not take place in the pub or coffee shop, nor in the curate's house.

## C. Content

- An agenda for supervision should be agreed at the start of the meeting.
- The focus of the supervision should be on the curate and their needs.
- The Training Priest/Supervising Minister should feel free to add an item (which may be significant) to the agenda if they consider it important.

Confidentiality around supervision is very important. This includes confidentiality of the supervision meeting itself and of any pastoral issues discussed. It is also important to consider how confidentiality relates to the spouses of curate and training priest. A proper conversation about this at the first supervision meeting is very important.

A regular pattern of content and style may well emerge. However, occasional supervision meetings to concentrate on one particular area of work may prove helpful.

Feedback is also an important element of supervision. How Curates and Training Priests give and receive feedback is very important to the success of supervision. Again, agreeing how best to do this in advance can be very helpful. Advice on giving feedback can be found below.

It may prove helpful to take notes of the Supervision meeting. Training Priests can find that this helps with writing reports, and Curates that it can provide evidence towards their Portfolio. The note taker and the note produced should be agreed.

**D. Things not appropriate for Supervision include:**

- Staff meeting issues
- Matters involving other people
- Too much personal stuff – Supervision is not counselling

**E. Supervising the Supervisor**

- It is good practice for those who are Supervisors to receive supervision themselves.
- Training Priests are asked to contact the Ordained Ministries Development Officer if they would like help to find a suitable supervisor.

# THE SUPERVISORY CONVERSATION

Supervision is a conversation, meaning that the interaction involved all the persons present. It is not a time for a supervisor to interrogate a supervisee as a judge questions a prisoner. It is a dialogue. The supervisor (and other supervisees if there is a group) helps by listening, making observations, and raising questions as a way of enabling the supervisee to see the problem or event more clearly. Supervision provides a mirror for the supervisee to reflect on the situation and see it in all of its dimensions from a new perspective.

The conversation begins with the supervisee describing the act or situation of ministry brought for supervision, using whatever instrument that has been selected as most appropriate. It then moves to drawing out from that description the central issue(s) needing attention. There follows a discussion of alternative ways of viewing and dealing with issue(s), drawing upon the supervisor's or group's experience, but especially upon the resources of the supervisee (experience, insights, imagination etc). Theologising is the fourth step, which is an attempt to understand what all this means for Christian ministry. Finally, the conversation should result in the supervisee making a responsible decision in terms of a faith (action) response. The task of the supervisor is to help the supervisee tell his or her story, and to reflect upon it. It is the supervisee's hour, and this includes working at the issues, not being given packaged answers.

Although questioning as interrogation should be avoided, the conversation can be facilitated if certain key questions guide it. They are not to be considered an "agenda" but are rather suggestive of the flow and progression appropriate to the process. However, the progression is not precise; it is frequently changed or the "parts" intermixed. The goal is to enable the supervisee to think in these terms so that conversation will unfold without the necessity of the questions being raised. They can be stated in terms of stages. Below are two models. One set out in FIVE STAGES and the other in SEVEN STAGES. Try them both and see what works best for you.

# A FIVE STAGE MODEL OF SUPERVISION

## 1. Information Stage

The focus is on getting an accurate picture of the event or situation:

- a. What took place and what is the situation?
- b. What was your role — as a person and as a minister?
- c. How did you respond?
- d. Who were the other participants?
- e. How did you interact with them?
- f. How is this related to other events or situations?
- g. How does the situation stand now? Is there unfinished business?

## 2. Evaluation Stage

The focus is on the core issue(s) so as to sort out what the real problem is and/or what needs attention first:

- a. What emotions did you experience?
- b. What are your feelings about it now?
- c. What do you feel about the other people involved?
- d. How do you feel about your place of ministry? About what you are doing?
- e. In what ways are —or are not— your expectations being fulfilled?
- f. How does this event or situation correspond with others in your life?
- g. What would you do differently if you could?
- h. How does all this affect your ability to minister?
- i. What are the key issues for you? What is most important?

## 3. Problem Resolution Stage

The focus is on removing the obstacles and finding among alternative possibilities the one that seems most viable for continued ministry in the situation:

- a. What do you want to have happen?
  - i. In supervision?
  - ii. In the situation?
- b. What is your interpretation of the situation now?
- c. What would you change? What would that require?
- d. What do you see as alternatives?
- e. What would happen if?
- f. What is your role as a result of the experience?
- g. How can the continuing situation best be confronted or handled?

#### **4. Theologising Stage**

The focus is on meanings so as to draw from this experience and prior or new knowledge those elements that now become “truth” in light of the Gospel.

- a. What have you learned from this experience?
- b. What new insights do you have about self, human nature, church, world, God?
- c. At what points does your experience intersect with the Christian Gospel? In what ways?
- d. What does this have to say to you about your ministry?
- e. What are the implications for yourself as a minister? Weaknesses? Strengths?
- f. How do you feel about ministry? About yourself in ministry?
- g. What emerges as ultimate concern for you?

#### **5. Commitment Stage**

The focus is on decision in terms of choosing a ministering response -

- a. How is this situation like those you anticipate in the future?
- b. How do you anticipate responding to them?
- c. What are you going to do about the situation brought for supervision?
- d. What is your next step?
- e. What resources do you need?
- f. What faith response (action) must and will you make as a Christian?

# A SEVEN STAGE MODEL OF SUPERVISION

## 1. Gathering information

- What is the present situation? Who is involved? What are their plans?
- What resources are currently available? What limitations?
- Skills required: Accurate listening / observing non-verbal signals
- *Clarifying* ... understanding / checking-out / encouraging

## 2. Diagnosis

- What are the important elements? What part is the curate playing? How are they affected?
- Skills required: Analysis - possible causes / consequences / what can or cannot be changed?
- *Confronting* ... facing curate with what they are doing, giving the hard option, not colluding
- *Evaluating* ... weighing up factors, helping curate make necessary judgement

## 3. Options

- What are all the possible ways forward? Need to see as many angles as possible.
- (Have you got enough information at this stage?)
- Skills required: Initiate Brainstorm technique
- *Listening* ... be non-judgmental, Hold boundaries

## 4. Priorities

- What are you going to focus on?
- Are there things which must be done or issues to be addressed before other things can happen?
- Skills required: Challenge to focus, including summarizing and listing
- *Encouraging* .... decision making

## 5. Realistic objectives

- Short term? Medium? Long term?
- Strategies for reaching objectives need to be agreed.
- What are the main obstacles likely to be?
- How might objectives be sabotaged?
- Who might be affected?
- Skills required: Challenge to close in on the objective.
  - Is it specific and time limited?
  - Can it be monitored?
  - Is it within your value system?
- *Summarise* ... Teach and model the framework

**6. Action Plan**

- What is the next step? Or steps? Who will do what? Timetable?
- Skills required: Energise  
(1st step should be within 24 hrs and require some immediate action, however small).
- *Encouragement. Summarise.*

**7. (Stage 1): Review the plan at the next session**

**Structured supervision sessions need to be recorded and included in your portfolio. Please use the forms provided.**

# GIVING FEEDBACK

The effective giving of feedback and offering constructive criticism is important in any working relationship, but essential in a training relationship. If feedback is given badly, or not given at all, then the relationship will not be an effective context for learning. Not only that, but in addition, the resentment and misunderstanding which may develop will prevent good communication and erode trust.

A good method that I was taught as a teacher is to always attempt to find something authentic that is positive first, then offer constructive criticism, then offer another positive.

It is very common for curates to feel that their incumbent gives them insufficient feedback, or that the feedback is mostly negative and unhelpfully critical. It is difficult for a curate to point this out, because they may not wish to seem defensive; they may fear that further criticism will result; or they may think that their incumbent just can't be bothered.

But often the incumbent may have no idea that the curate feels like this. Perhaps this is because it is a long time since the incumbent was a curate anxious for some feedback, perhaps it is because they are focussed on numerous other things, or perhaps it may simply be true that the curate is over-sensitive. But whatever the reasons, it is important that both curate and incumbent engage in good practice in this area.

An incumbent should be able to give clear and positive affirmation when things have been done well, and although this may seem blindingly obvious, there is an element of discipline in remembering to offer specific comment here. A general sense of 'well done' is not enough, specific examples of what was good and why should be offered.

Constructive critical comment is a more difficult area but not one to shrink from. Because it can be a sensitive area, comments which were meant to be constructive can sound more abrupt than was intended. But again, comment should be specific and whilst pointing out areas of weakness, it is helpful to concentrate on how it might have been done differently, how it could be approached in future and what has been learned. This approach will feel less bruising than a simple demolition of a piece of work, because it offers a way forward and expresses the faith of the incumbent in the curate to develop their skills with more experience. The curate is pointed forward and left with a focus on a positive 'next time' rather than with feelings of failure and disappointment in the present.

When the curate and training incumbent evaluate a piece of work, it is helpful to allow the curate to give their own perspective first. This enables the learner to feel in control of the situation and not immediately exposed to the opinions of the other. If the self-assessment is negative, the incumbent can respond with something positive and then say something like 'yes, I think you are right about some of the things that went wrong, let's talk about them'. If the curate's assessment is unrealistically positive, some tact will be needed, but at least the incumbent will be aware that the critical comment may be unexpected and therefore needs to be handled with care.

In the training relationship, there is an emphasis on the roles of incumbent and curate as trainer and learner respectively. Nonetheless, in all healthy learning contexts there is flexibility about these roles, and it is appropriate for the teacher to learn and the learner to teach. Incumbents who feel that they have nothing to learn from their colleagues are missing an opportunity, especially today when the newly ordained may bring with them rich experience of professional working life, lay ministry and personal relationships.

Feedback can be positive and encouraging, even when it points out serious flaws and weaknesses. Without self-awareness, comment on a colleague's performance can sound negative and destructive, leaving a colleague feeling personally diminished. You may find the check list on the next page helpful, providing examples of the difference between positive feedback and negative criticism.

Examples of Constructive feedback are...	Examples of Negative criticism are...
designed to enable improved performance	sometimes a way of unloading anger, disappointment, frustration
calm, reasoned, self-aware	angry, dismissive, emotional, unreasonable
specific, relates to particular facts	general, vague, uses expressions such as 'you always, you never'
deals with the work as distinct from the person, 'it had a weak ending'	harsh on the person, addresses them more than the work 'you ended weakly'
focuses on what might have made a difference, what can be learnt, what can be done in future	concentrates solely on the past and leaves the person in dread of 'next time'
two way – asks the learner for their assessment and perceptions	one way, gives no opportunity for self-evaluation or the person's own perspective
builds the training relationship, deepens trust	undermines, even destroys the relationship

Most of the time, Supervision and Reflection sessions will be immensely useful and creative. Finally, however, do be alert to the dangers of **Dumpers, Blockers and Destroyer/Criticisers**:<sup>3</sup>

**Dumpers** are those who are not available or accessible, and are likely to:

- throw people into new roles
- use strategies which leave people to 'sink or swim'

**Blockers** avoid meeting others needs by:

- refusing requests ('the Refuser')
- controlling through withholding information ('the Withholder')
- arresting development by over supervising ('the Hoverer')

**Destroyer / Criticisers** set out to destroy others by:

- subtle attacks to undermine confidence ('the Underminer')
- open approaches of verbal attack and argument
- deliberate destroying confidence ('the Belittler')
- constant put-downs and questions of abilities ('the Nagger')

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<sup>3</sup> *With thanks to the dioceses of London and Chelmsford*

# FEEDBACK GUIDELINES

The effective giving of feedback is communication which gives back to the initiator of an earlier communication (by word or action) information about how it has affected the receiver. In a situation where mutual trust and confidence are absent, the provision of feedback which is useful to both the sender and receiver can be very difficult. As trust and confidence develop, mutually valuable feedback becomes easier. When trust is lacking, even favourable statements may be treated with suspicion and dislike. Mutual confidence is necessary before the statement “I do not like what you are doing” can be accepted as a statement about recent actions which is NOT a comment on the worthiness of the person concerned.

## **Some more guidelines for useful feedback:**

1. It describes specific behaviour; it does not make general statements or value judgements about a person. This should reduce the need for the receiver to be defensive.
2. It is clearly presented as the sender’s own thoughts, perceptions and feelings. This reduces the extent to which the statements themselves can be challenged but leaves the recipient some freedom in the way it is used or declined.
3. It is directed towards behaviour that the receiver is able to change. Comment on behaviour that the recipient is not able to change is frustrating; comment on attributes that cannot be changed is pointless and may be cruel.
4. It is offered in a way that allows both people to be sure that they are properly understood. The receiver should be given time to summarise the comments and express a reaction to them. This should lead to helpful discussions.
5. It is requested by the recipient, and the sender makes sure that real feedback which might reveal a need for changed actions is wanted rather than bland reassurances.
6. It is well-timed. This will usually mean that the receiver is ready for it, that support which may be necessary is available, that the discussion will not have to be rushed or cut short, and that it will follow without undue delay after the behaviour which is being discussed.
7. It serves the needs of the receiver, or of both sender and receiver, but never of the sender alone.
8. It is treated by the receiver as genuine comment by the sender. The sender must therefore offer genuine comment.
9. Feedback is a way of giving help to people who need to know how well their actions match their intentions.

# SECRET WEAPON OF ENCOURAGEMENT

There are many ways of rewarding people (and clearly financial rewards come some way down the list in the Church). Very close to the top of the list is encouragement. There are two benefits to encouraging the people around you. One is they feel happier and give of their best more easily. The other is that you also feel good — not just about them and their work — but also about yourself. Encouragement can be faked but tell-tale signs will give it away. Genuine authentic encouragement rewards recipient and giver. Ensure people flourish around you:

## **1. THE BEST COMPLIMENT**

The best encouragement that you can give is your absolutely undivided attention. Your interest. Your concentration. Your recollection of the last conversation. Your intelligent questions about the past. Your suggestions and support for the future. Give of yourself for a while. The time available may not be long - but make it quality time.

## **2. TALK AND TOUCH**

You can encourage in many ways. Verbally — a greeting, congratulations, a recommendation to someone else, thanks. Mentally — discussion, listening, sharing, agreement. Emotionally — a look, respect, a knowing nod, a shared moment. Physically — a pat, a backslap, a touch, a hug, a handshake (if appropriate post-COVID).

## **3. EXPECTED ATTENTION**

There are times when people expect attention from you - at the end of a long job, on a birthday, on return from a trip away, passing an exam, solving a difficult problem, doing extra work. Use a system to make sure that you do not fail to give the encouragement expected at these times.

## **4. UNEXPECTED ATTENTION**

Unexpected undivided attention is the ultimate encouragement. A surprise (something good with no strings attached) gives the best feeling of all. Just a small surprise will do — a bunch of flowers, a card, a smile, thanks, a cake for tea, a personal letter.

## **5. RESPOND WHEN ASKED**

Try to never refuse attention when someone asks for it. Children and dogs are so uninhibited that they ask whenever they feel the need for attention. Adults, generally, have learnt the bitter lesson that they can be rejected. So, if someone seeks your attention — they really need it.

## **6. ALWAYS BE GENUINE & AUTHENTIC**

Encouragement works when the giver and the receiver feel good. If you flatter without honesty you will not feel good about it. Nor will the other person because your body language will give you away for the fake you are. Find a genuine reason to encourage and you will both benefit.

# ATTENDING TO LEARNING STYLES

We all accept that children learn in a variety of ways and that their preferred ways of learning may change as they grow and develop. An important part of teacher training for children is how to blend different styles of learning. Although this has been long recognised as applying to children, it is only recently that theories relating to the way adults learn have been developed.

Each of us has a preferred way of learning. This will inevitably influence our preferred way of teaching. Therefore, we need to be aware of models of learning as well as models of teaching. One positive thing that arises from thinking in this way is that it allows the emphasis to be placed, more properly, **on learning rather than on teaching**. We may 'teach' until we are blue in the face, but if nothing has been 'learned' as a result, it has been a fruitless exercise.

It also allows us to recognise the important distinction between what is called *surface learning* and *deep learning*.

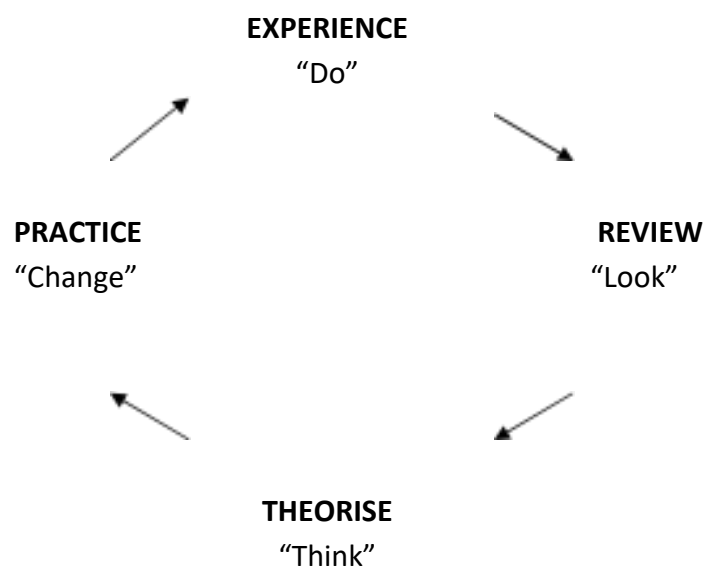
- *Surface learning* is characterised by 'cramming for an exam'. The information is only retained on the surface for a short period time. Although the information has been 'received', it is unlikely to fully 'understood' and the learner will not be able to make any connections between it and any other learning that has taken place.
- *Deep learning* occurs when a learner understands not only the material they have learned but can 'get inside it' and relate it to a number of contexts. They can talk about parts of it in isolation and develop new ways of relating it to other areas of learning and experience.

If we are to engage in teaching and learning that is meaningful and produces effective results, we should strive to engage people in deep learning. Deep learning will not only bring about a change in the learner, but it will also enable them to help facilitate change in others. When those who learn from us, in turn help others to learn, then we know that our teaching has been effective.

# THE LEARNING CYCLE

## A. Learning from Experience

The Learning Cycle offers a way of understanding the process of “learning”. “Learners” can start at any point in the endless cycle – which rather than being circular should be understood as a three-dimensional spiral coming towards you from the page. New experiences and reflections on those experiences change us and we start again with new insights. The cycle may be broken, and someone may get stuck at a particular point. This is not just a cycle for formal learning, it is about how we deal with experience in everyday life. In that sense it can be seen as a Pastoral Cycle and has much to do with coping with experience and with well-being.



### Consider the following pastoral example:

A mother who values marriage and has enjoyed a happy married life has a daughter who appears herself to be happily married. The mother believes strongly that marriage is a solemn, life-long commitment.

The news of the daughter’s impending divorce comes as new and unwelcome experience. This leads the mother to reflect upon the nature of relationships and what marriage means when relationships founder. This reflection leads to a new understanding of human interaction and a revised model of “partnership”.

On the basis of this experience, reflection and a new way of seeing things, the mother decides to become involved in a programme of marriage preparation run by her local church.

## B. Learning Styles

### Think about...

When you want to find out how to do something would you rather:

1. Have a **go** and see what happens
2. Get someone to **explain** to you how it's done and the reasons for doing it that way
3. **Read** a book or manual first
4. Get someone to **show** you how it's done

There are many different schemes for identifying and describing learning styles. One common theory suggests there are four basic learning styles. It should also be flagged up that there is inevitably a close working relationship between learning styles and the areas which explore personality type.

Each one of us has a preferred style but is also able to learn through other styles to a greater or lesser degree. Some people have a strong preference for one particular style, other may find that there is little difference between their preference for two or more.

Learning styles are important in thinking about the kinds of activities and events which help you and others to learn.

In church life some people will not get involved in certain activities because it does not fit with their preferred way of learning. For example, Activists might find Bible Study and a sedate discussion difficult but respond well to requests to do something.

### Activists

Activists say, "Let's do it!"

- Activists enjoy a challenge, like to get stuck in, thrive on a variety of activities to ward off boredom and enjoy being up front.
- They feel frustrated if they are not being involved and feel cramped if too much guidance or instruction is given.
- They are team players.

### Reflectors

Reflectors say, "Did it work this time?"

- Reflectors need time and space to stand back from something and prefer to think before they act.
- They prepare carefully and are willing to stand upfront if they have had time to prepare for this and the instructions are clear.
- They do not like doing things without warning.
- They feel uneasy about quick reactions and are unhappy if things are not dealt with in depth or are rushed.

## Theorists

Theorists say, "How does it work?"

- Theorists like ideas to be thought out and logical and look for a pattern of ideas to guide their exploration and their questions.
- They enjoy making connections and being stretched by having their own idea and models challenged.
- They do not like it when policies or principles are not well explained.
- They prefer to have evidence and do not give great weight to statements based on feelings.
- In a group they may find it difficult to work with others, especially Activists.

## Pragmatists

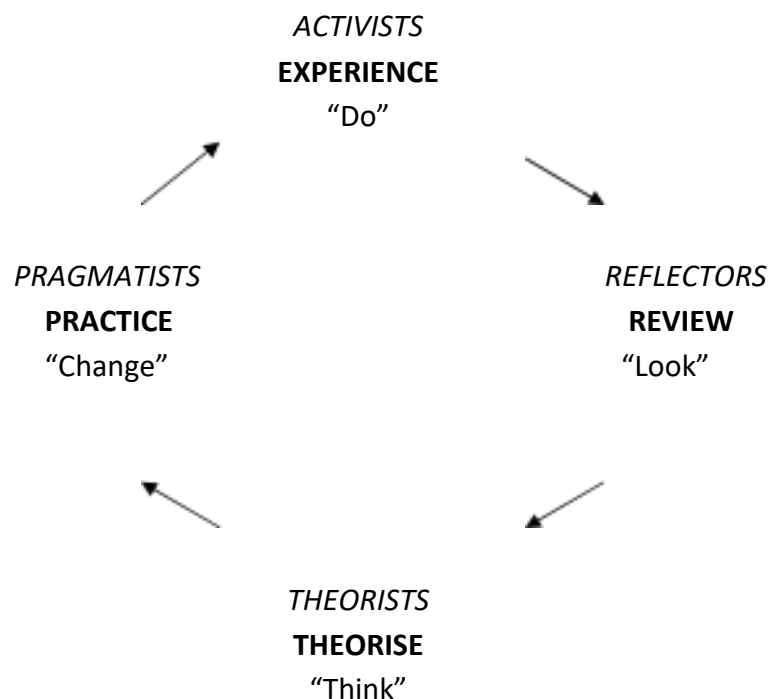
Pragmatists say, "What use is it?"

- Pragmatists value something which will help them with the task or problem that confronts them.
- They enjoy acquiring new techniques and are happy for this to happen by someone showing them how something is done.
- They find long and detailed discussion frustrating.  
They will be impatient with ideas or theories which do not seem to fit the situation.
- They look for an opportunity to try things out as soon as possible.

Which of those four jumps out at you?

Which seems the most true to describe you?

What might this imply about your preferred ways of learning and leading others in learning?



# A SUCCESSFUL SUPERVISING INCUMBENT WILL BE ABLE TO:

- Model lifelong learning and effective, reflective ministry which is mission- shaped
- Give an account of a variety of pedagogical methods for skills-based learning and apply them to the context of curacy, suggesting incremental activities to meet the range of published learning outcomes
- Identify and build relationships with others who share responsibility for the curate's learning, including laypeople within the Church, ecumenical and secular partners
- Give a theological and experiential account of the importance of supervision in the life of the Church
- Give a theological and experiential critique of a variety of models of oversight, accountability and supervision from within and beyond the Christian tradition
- Structure an appropriate supervision relationship
- Help the training minister to handle the supervision/oversight relationship (establish boundaries) within multi-layered community of relationships (the local ministry setting and other shared tasks)
- Work within the competence level of the training minister
- Support and challenge the training minister
- Work with the obvious issues of ministry and development and the hidden dynamics of projection and power relationships
- Make effective use of the supervision for their supervisory role
- Write evidence-based reports and discuss these with their training minister.

# RESOURCES FOR THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION

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