



Creating and Sustaining new diaconal appointments

The innovative nature of diaconal appointments means careful planning, preparation and on-going support are key to successful development.

Factors that can help in creating and establishing a new piece of diaconal work:

There needs to be a clarity of vision/purpose for the whole circuit, into which a vision for the diaconal appointment fits. Prior to any deacon being appointed into a circuit, research will have been carried out by the circuit wishing to develop a new appointment in order to identify the needs, opportunities, any other agencies already engaged in similar work, available resources etc. which will have been analyzed and translated into specific aims and goals for the diaconal appointment. It is hoped that by the time a deacon has been appointed to a circuit, there will be:

- a shared ownership of vision and purpose that outreach arises out of Christ's command to love and care for our neighbours rather than just increase the congregation
- a genuine openness to new ideas and ways of working with a willingness to abandon or revise ideas and methods
- a realistic assessment of ability and willingness of members of the congregation to work with the deacon in outreach work
- presbyteral colleagues (especially the superintendent) and circuit stewards who have some knowledge of diaconal ministry and a vision for how it can be used effectively. The support and ownership of the superintendent and Circuit Leadership Team is vital in giving a lead and helping congregations to understand diaconal ministry.
- a high profile of the deacon and their ministry at the Circuit Leadership Team and circuit meetings as well as publicity in the churches via magazine etc. There should also be regular opportunities for reporting to circuit and church meetings on the progress of the work
- an awareness and understanding of the long-term nature of developing work and the time it takes to see any 'results'
- an awareness that pioneering work will often take more than five years to become securely rooted, and so early planning is needed for funding and supporting longer term
- appropriate resourcing for the deacon (both in initial and continuing training) and churches/circuit
- appropriate regular supervision

Once the deacon is in circuit, an essential support mechanism for any new piece of work would be the establishment of a support group to work alongside the deacon. This support group should be able to steer, review, plan and provide hands-on assistance as appropriate but in particular, the group should act as 'critical friends' to the deacon and offer a safe space for thoughtful and honest reflection on the nature of the particular diaconal work the circuit is establishing.

In establishing a support group, the following points need to be considered:

- Terms of Reference for the group.
 - the size of the group – a group of 5 or 6 people plus the deacon would be about the right size. This would give reasonable representation yet at the same time, maintain an intimacy to the group.
 - membership of the group – it is suggested that any group should include a Circuit Steward to ensure circuit representation and ownership; the Superintendent or other presbyteral colleague from the staff team; one or two people who are directly involved with the work - for example a community centre 'users' who could give an outside perspective; an link person from another denomination to give an ecumenical perspective and the spouse of the deacon who could offer insights into the effect or pressure that the work is bringing to home life.
 - what is the group being established to do

- how long will members serve on the group
- who does the group report to
- who is responsible for convening the group and how often will it meet
- A process whereby the work can be reviewed periodically against the specific aims and goals set at the beginning of the appointment
- What the exit strategy for the work will be especially if it is a time limited piece of work or, if the work is to continue what kinds of gifts and skills are needed to continue the work beyond its development phase.

Factors that can hinder the development of diaconal work:

- Lack of accountability and review. Poor systems of review as to how the work is developing and so what changes may be needed
- A change of colleague(s) part way through the appointment, if the new colleague(s) does not share original vision or support diaconal ministry.
- A crisis (eg: A presbyter not being replaced) that leads to the deacon being drawn into maintenance rather than outreach.
- Possessiveness, jealousy or rivalry so that appropriate gifts and experience of everyone (including deacon) are not allowed and used effectively. Also restrictive practices (eg: 'We always do it this way', 'This is my ...')
- An assumption that the deacon will work 'for' rather than 'with' the circuit
- The deacon being viewed and treated as an assistant to presbyteral colleagues
- Ignorance of the work or impatience for quick results leading to work being under-resourced
- Lack of forward planning by the circuit/district for funding and otherwise maintaining work after the initial grant ends. Often this issue is not considered in the early stages of creating an appointment but such thinking ahead is important in sustaining the work

Factors that sustain distinctive diaconal work:

- Clear understanding by deacon and circuit/churches of their role and duties, together with regular reviews and monitoring of the appointment against the original outline — linked with appropriate freedom for deacon to change focus by mutual agreement
- The circuit being accountable to the district and the Methodist Diaconal Order for diaconal appointment so that changes are appropriate and agreed rather than unilaterally imposed by anyone
- Good communications with congregations/circuit and strong relationships with members so they see importance of work, support and value it
- Good support of colleagues, especially superintendent
- Atmosphere of trust and respect with opportunities for sharing ideas, information, hopes, fears, successes as well as failures
- The ability of deacon to involve others in setting up and running projects (encouragement, training etc) together with willingness and availability of lay people to get involved
- The ability of deacon to say 'no' and be appropriately assertive in maintaining the original vision, supported and encouraged by circuit leadership team
- Forward planning by the circuit/district for funding and otherwise maintaining work after the initial grant ends

The Warden of the Order is available for advice and support both to individual deacons and circuits, particularly if help is needed in establishing support groups or changes to circuits or appointments are envisaged.

Methodist Diaconal Order



Circuit Profile

Once completed, please return this profile electronically to The Chair of District with a copy to The Warden of the MDO on warden@mdo.org.uk. Please note that it is vital that the Diaconal Stationing Committee can rely on the accuracy of the information written on the profile.

Circuit name & number	
Date of commencement & length of the appointment	
Circuit Steward's contact details	
Superintendent's contact details	
Is funding in place for this appointment?	
Is a manse available for this appointment?	
Date appointment agreed by DPC (new appts. only)	

Section A: The Circuit

1. Describe briefly the mission priorities of the Circuit

- include a copy of the Circuit mission statement/policy and latest Circuit review if available

2. Describe briefly the nature of the area in which the Circuit is set.

- ie economic, geographical, sociological, demographical make up of the area, and in particular where the deacon is to work.

3. Describe briefly the nature and size of the circuit itself.

- give an indication of the number and type of churches (including style of worship and theology) number of current staff, ecumenical and community links etc.

4. Organisation of staffing within the Circuit.

- please give an indication of the current arrangements of the allocation of responsibilities, tasks and the ways in which staff work within the Circuit and, whether or not any changes are envisaged in light of the new diaconal appointment or proposed reorganisation of the Circuit.

5. Staff/Leadership Team meetings

- please describe the nature and frequency of meetings of the circuit staff team and or leadership team including retreats and quiet days.

Section B: The Appointment

6. Profile of the appointment.

- outline clearly and in order, the priorities, objectives and main tasks of the appointment.

7. Mechanisms for funding, resourcing and overseeing the appointment.

- please indicate how the appointment is to be funded, what further resources are available to the deacon (ie seed funding, ecumenical support etc.), what systems of review and support are being put in place for this appointment including support or steering groups.

8. What are the potential strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats to the work as described?

- please outline what these are as honestly and clearly as possible.

9. Profile of the deacon being sought.

- please indicate the priorities of skills and experience the circuit feel is needed to fulfil this appointment including whether or not a car driver is essential.

10. Involvement in acts of worship.

- please indicate what the expectation is in terms of the deacon's involvement in worship and whether or not this includes the occasional pastoral offices.

Section C: Manse Provision

- please insert a digital photo of the manse if possible.

Address of manse:	
Location relative to principle area of work, public transport, schools, hospitals and other local amenities	
Number and measurements of rooms:	
Study facilities	
Heating arrangements	
Size/nature of garden	
Parking/garage facilities	
Arrangements for disabled access	
Downstairs bathroom facilities	

Section D – Probationer Appointments

- this is supplementary information helpful in determining whether this would be a suitable appointment for a probationer deacon. Please bear in mind that probationers are often highly skilled and bring with them a great deal of experience from previous secular employment. If the Circuit has good reason to think that the appointment is not suitable for a probationer deacon, this must be clearly explained and agreed by the Chair of District in conjunction with the warden of the MDO.

11. How could this appointment be adjusted to accommodate a probationer deacon?

- this would include the time required for probationer studies and attendance at relevant probationer meetings

12. Please indicate the name and contact details of the person who would be supervising the probationer and the date in which they completed the appropriate supervision training.