



transforming churches

the rapid development approach

The Church of England has an amazing offer, which is especially relevant and timely. Parishes are committed organisations with a unique message, located in the heart of all of our communities. We should be successful!



This short briefing outlines the thinking behind and the implementation of the rapid development programme (**rdp**). It is clear to us that there has to be a rethink from first principles, about the presence, purpose and offer of parishes and deaneries to their communities. **rdp** is about being ambitious for all of our churches, rethinking and focussing on our opportunities to engage, make an impact and grow.

All churches are faced with the same challenges. We can all learn from Jesus, the early and innovative churches, other faiths, successful local schools, businesses and community-based groups. In all of them we can see that amazing change is possible, even in the most difficult and disadvantaged areas.

We need to operate as new churches, looking outwards, reintroducing and selling ourselves in a changed local context with transformed expectations. We cannot afford complacency, denial or defeatism. Thinking of 'business as usual' in a largely unchurched society or community is no longer a viable option.

We are ambitious for mission and impact and we want our churches to be successful in a way that is meaningful to them, their context and their community.

We now have to break out of the management of decline mode and again play an animating and leading role in our communities, as bringers of light, hope and belief.

We are living through rapid and radical economic, technological, cultural and social change evident in all communities. Our

churches are not keeping up, nor are they shaping/leading these changes and it

is likely that without substantial change many of them will close. In some places, we have lost two generations and we are now losing a third. This shouldn't be the case - we have a wonderful world and a life transforming message!

“ This has to be the future of churches... it reaches to the very heart of who we are and what it means to be church. ”

rdp >



programme

The rapid development programme (**rdp**) is a positive, opportunity-led approach to church growth and offers a unique and challenging workshop based programme for local parishes, deaneries or dioceses that are considering their future, new ways to engage with their community and/or want to undertake building projects. **rdp** uses adapted social/business development techniques to help

“ **rdp** has really helped me to get a perspective on where we should be heading and what we should be doing. ”

participants think in a focussed and creative way about their opportunities and offer, potential role and priorities for growth.

rdp was developed by the Council for Social Responsibility at the Diocese of Portsmouth and we are now working to share our approach nationally.

The programme is flexible and can work with parishes (individually or in group collaboration), deaneries or dioceses.

Participating teams will:

1. Develop a new and positive understanding of the *dynamics* and *opportunities* for growth in their community.
2. Identify what specific elements their community engagement and mission work, and/or a proposed development, will need to include in order to *reposition* themselves within their community to bring about greater and sustainable impact and *growth*.
3. Present *positively* and more widely a clear and renewed vision and a re-energised offer, and identify *new* resources for growth.

rdp generally consists of background visits and research, two full day workshops, in-house follow-up presentations (all in flexible formats), a development/engagement plan and tailored follow-up packages. We produce a prospectus covering the key findings, messages and priorities. We also provide a follow-up session.

“ I’ve been taken out of my comfort zone! ”

The programme will challenge and encourage participants to rethink, from first principles, the role of their church. Providing an (outside) facilitator, time out, direct challenge and creative ideas gives participants a unique opportunity to think deeply and differently about their role and offer in their changing community.

Our contact details and a growing selection of **rdp** resources can be found on our website.