

# Anglican Association of Social Responsibility

## Guidelines for Social Responsibility Staff

May 2002

This material is intended to help those newly appointed as Social Responsibility Officers/Advisors to understand the complexity of the task, to identify ways of working, and to help new officers find their way in the diverse structures within Diocese.

A separate section is intended for Diocesan Boards and Councils and those who make appointments in Social Responsibility to understand the resources and support needed by officers/advisors, and to engage in good practice in managing the appointment. Please note that to avoid repetition, the word 'Board' is used as a generic term.

This advice is intended for use in Anglican Church of England. It is hoped that staff from other denominations will also find it useful.

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## **PART ONE: For New Social Responsibility Officers/Advisors**

- 1 What is Social Responsibility?** It is both an activity, meeting human need, and an attitude, central to Christian discipleship. It involves practical caring and the struggle for justice. Work in this area is therefore pastoral, prophetic and practical. It is work that contains great joys and great challenges that are both professional and personal hence continued stress on the need for support.

The Anglican Association of Social Responsibility (AASR) exists to give professional and personal support. Other SROs can help you to learn the scope of practice of social responsibility work.

- 2 Structure: Every** Diocese organises its work differently. Most SROs are accountable to a Board or Council and through that to the Diocesan Synod.

- ❖ find out what your structure is
- ❖ ask for a copy of your Board/Council's constitution
- ❖ ascertain who is your line manager (if this is woolly, insist that it is clarified)
- ❖ if there are other staff, clarify who is responsible to whom and for what
- ❖ if there is a steering/standing committee to the BSR, clarify their role. Is it managerial, support, policy making? How often do you meet with them and under what circumstances?
- ❖ if there are voluntary groups working on SR issues, how are they organised, reviewed; who are they accountable to - you, the steering group, the Board the Bishop?
- ❖ some SROs work in teams, include social work in their brief, have part-time officers, e.g. FLAME, World Development. Most SROs work in isolation, which must be taken into account in planning the work.

- 3 How to start**

- ❖ assess the size of the Diocese and its bearing on the work, e.g. physical boundaries, how many deaneries/parishes, etc.
- ❖ set aside the first six months to learn the structures, previous practice, previous emphasis of work, meeting people within the Board, the Diocese and the community, including statutory and voluntary agencies and organisations.
- ❖ Identify communication networks already in the Diocese, and become acquainted with any difficulties due to the size of the Diocese.

- ❖ set up your own network - do not rely on historical links
- ❖ attend the annual day training at Church House, Westminster, to get a broader picture.
- ❖ decide which issues seem most pressing, are a local concern, have been debated in General Synod and Diocesan Synod.
- ❖ make yourself aware of pressing issues of local concern which might become priorities
- ❖ adopt a high profile, getting out and about introducing yourself to people and organisations, within the church, the voluntary and statutory sectors, so that your face is known and personal contacts made.
- ❖ decide how best to tackle these **in your situation** - through a working group, talking to parishes and deaneries, producing literature.
- ❖ present this as a work programme to your Board or Council. Make them aware that you need sufficient budget for this work.
- ❖ prioritise the issues and get going. Always remember that issues can arise for which you had not planned, and that sometimes a rapid response is needed, e.g. withdrawing all benefits from asylum seekers.
- ❖ visit your 'neighbours' in social responsibility to see the different ways in which the job is done. They can give you the benefit of experience, and may learn something from you.

**4 Models of working:** There are lots of ways of working and these may change over time. Try to identify which model would be closest to yours and how this would be affected by other action. Models which are effective include:-

- ❖ SRO plus assistant, with part-time (paid or unpaid) officers to cover work on specific issues. There may be social work element to this with social workers or community workers as staff members and projects run by those workers on behalf of the Diocese.
- ❖ SRO may work closely with the industrial mission team in the Diocese, and in some these areas of work are combined in one Council.
- ❖ Some SROs are advisers to their Bishop and relate to Bishop's Council. They may well take their agenda from the Bishop's concerns or those raised in Diocesan Synod.
- ❖ Some Social Responsibility jobs are set within a wider Board of Mission and ways of working may be affected by that wider agenda.
- ❖ Lone SROs may have secretarial support. They can work by identifying allies within the Diocese and sharing resources, e.g. with adult education, communication. They often work through working groups of volunteers on specific issues. These groups, with an enthusiast as convenor, can do

the ground work, while the SRO keeps a co-ordinating role and a wider perspective.

- ❖ Lone SROs may find little secretarial support and have to do their own administration. This will obviously limit the amount of time available for meetings, research and networking. It may be that the working model will be one of a resource for information, with active work on just one or two specific issues, and a determination to say 'No'.

## **5 Resources and Support**

- ❖ General Synod BSR at Westminster can offer information on work done on issues and on 'Church of England policy' on an issue, if there is one.
- ❖ Use the support network of the AASR. Go to regional meetings and the annual conference. Make full use of the AASR website.
- ❖ Other Diocesan officers may have useful information, be willing to discuss where interests merge and to work together, be able to give help and support on domestic Diocesan matters.
- ❖ if you find that you are the Faith in the City Link Officer, you can find resources and support from the Community and Urban Affairs Secretary of General Synod Board for Social Responsibility, as well as the Chief Executive of the Church Urban Fund.
- ❖ identify your allies, both within church membership and outside.
- ❖ set up a personal support group or find a work consultant.
- ❖ Work with and affiliate to major church bodies like Church Action on Disability (CHAD), Church Action on Poverty (CAP) and the Council on Ageing

## **6 Ecumenical Dimension**

- ❖ where possible work should be done ecumenically. Find out who are the local contacts for SR among the other denominations. Share information, minutes, etc.
- ❖ make contact with local ecumenical councils about SR matters.
- ❖ if setting up working groups, try to have ecumenical membership (not always chaired by an Anglican!)
- ❖ some Dioceses employ people from other denominations in SR posts.. This enhances the work of SR, but these practitioners can feel marginalised in a predominantly Anglican network. There are representatives of many denominations as part of the SR network.

## **7 Multi-agency working**

- ❖ You are very likely to find yourself working in a multi-agency environment on certain issues.
- ❖ This often necessitates a careful balancing act between the protocols of other organisations, particularly those in the state sector.
- ❖ Be realistic about what you can achieve
- ❖ You may often find yourself in a position of being the 'glue' in the middle of a network of complex relationships and networks. This is a difficult place to be.
- ❖ Be aware of accepting work that should be state responsibility
- ❖ Make sure the Board or Council to which you report is aware of these relationships and fully understand the commitment expected particularly where the scenario is one of joint-funding or service agreements.
- ❖ You will be working with organisations for whom equal opportunities are second nature. This is not part of usual procedures for most Dioceses.

## **8 Funding**

- ❖ The Lord does provide but his work does need funding!
- ❖ Be clear with your Board or Council just how much fund raising you are expected to do within the course of what you plan to achieve.
- ❖ Make yourself fully aware of any constraints in funding relationships and be realistic about the amount of time reporting back to various funders entails.

## **9 Archbishop's Council for Social Responsibility**

- ❖ is an Advisory Committee for the General Synod
- ❖ it aims to 'promote and co-ordinate the thought and action of the Church in matters affecting the lives of men and women in society'.
  
- ❖ relates to General Synod and national and general social issues in much the same way as SROs do to their Diocesan Synod and local communities.
  
- ❖ can be a resource to SROs for information and advice. Each Diocese and its Bishop has an authority of its own as far as Diocesan work is concerned. SROs are therefore not 'accountable' to General Synod BSR as far as line management goes, nor can General Synod BSR dictate policy and action within Dioceses.
  
- ❖ links with the AASR by the attendance of Vice-Chairman of AASR at Board meetings and active participation in AASR by officers of National BSR.
  
- ❖ Chairmen of Diocesan Boards and Councils meet once a year. Encourage your Diocese to be well represented.

### **To Sum Up at the Earliest Opportunity:**

- You need to know where you fit into the structure, how it related to you and how you relate to it.
- Talk to your Bishop or Bishop's Assistant, the Diocesan Secretary, the Chair of your Board or Council and the Chair of the Board of Finance. Find out what they do and how they expect you to relate to them.
- Make notes in your diary for an annual Ministry Review with the Bishop to whom you report or appraisal with your line manager. (Your job description, letter of appointment or contract should record who that is).

## **A A S R**

- Make sure the AASR Secretary knows who you are and that you are newly appointed.
- A regional member of AASR will be assigned as a contact. This person will act as a mentor for you, if desired.
- Your AASR representative will be happy to meet with you and should give you advice along the following lines:
  - How to engage with other sector ministries
  - How to engage with other agencies and at what level
  - Time management
  - Issue management
  - How to use the AASR Website
  - Social Responsibility structures

## **PART TWO**

### **For those responsible for setting up Social Responsibility posts**

## **Recruitment**

- ❖ posts should be open to both ordained and lay people. In employing lay people, care should be taken to provide employment conditions which provide adequate remuneration and job security.
- ❖ the appropriate person should have experience of working with social issues and have a theological, social science or social/community work background.
- ❖ Good communication skills are essential.
- ❖ the Social Responsibility post is often a quite isolated one. Post-holders need to have a strong motivation and to be initiators of ideas and action.
- ❖ posts should be open to Christians from any denominations. The criteria should be 'the best person for the job' and good employment equal opportunities practice should be observed. Most Diocese now have an Equal Opportunities policy and this should be put into practice.

## **Accountability**

- ❖ there should be clear lines of accountability, so that the post holder is clear as to who is his/her line manager (who should appraise the work).
- ❖ the post holder should be responsible to a Board, Council or Advisory Committee, which will not only debate the work, but also provide support for the post holder.
- ❖ pastoral care is necessary for all post-holders - not only those who are ordained, and some opportunity should be made for a 'ministerial' review from time to time for lay people.
- ❖ post-holders should be afforded an easy line of access to policy making committees such as Bishop's Council, Diocesan Synod and liaison with senior staff.

## **Resources**

- ❖ post holders should be given the tools for the job - secretarial assistance, a budget for existing and new work, space to be able to meet with visitors without being overheard.

- ❖ there should be a realistic expectation of what the post holder can achieve within the resources provided.
- ❖ expenses should be allocated to cover training, work consultancy and conferences as well as travel, etc.
- ❖ advice on various systems of remuneration can be obtained from the Director of Personnel at Church House, Westminster, or other officers.
- ❖ If you are asking your SR Officer or Adviser to raise the funds necessary to complete their work, you need to be aware of the details of any service agreement or contract and to be realistic about the commitment required to funding partnerships.