



# A leadership team checklist

**TN18** Training Notes series: Structures

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**A growing number of churches whose governance structures are not based on the concept of an eldership are now appointing some form of leadership team.**

**A typical example would be a small team of identified leaders, chosen by the Minister and one or two others, often with suggestions first requested from a wider circle, with the aim of giving overall direction to the church's ministry.**

**But there are many variations, including the concept of a 'Ministry Leadership Team' that some Anglican dioceses promote.**

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The following checklist covers the areas that I normally deal with when guiding a church in the setting up of such a team or in a review of an existing team. As with all checklists, it will need to be adapted to fit the particular model in use in your church. It is not possible here to give the level of explanatory detail that would come out in a training event. These are just headings and notes.

But for churches moving in this direction, or for existing teams looking for some guidance for a self-appraisal exercise, here is a possible starting point.

Most sections of the checklist are in fact worded for a review of an existing team. Adapt the wording to fit if you are working towards setting up a team from scratch.

## **NOTE**

*In each grouping add a further point for any special feature or relevant issue for your own church.*

## Five key concepts

*Which of these do you do well? Which are you weak at? Does this matter?*

- 1 **Keeping solely to 'big picture' issues, not dabbling in detail**  
Examples: church purpose, vision, current priorities, overall health, major pastoral issues, mobilising members
- 2 **Taking time to listen to God, rather than focusing on a business agenda**  
Meetings have significant time for worship, meditation, prayer, without undue pressure
- 3 **Serving the church, rather than lording it over everyone**  
No inherent status for the team, clear lines of accountability (eg. to a Church Council), a servant heart, appreciated support for the Minister's work
- 4 **Modelling team dependency, rather than acting like a committee**  
Building deep levels of trust and honesty, working as one, growing into a real team
- 5 **Highlighting leadership/planning as an essential and spiritual ministry**  
By educating the church, seeking prayer support, and regular communication

## Seven possible models

*Which are you closest to? Are you happy that this continues to be the best structure for you?*

- 1 **Support group**  
A low-key group with the focus on prayer for and advice to the Minister
- 2 **Advisory group**  
Still low key, but discussing more of overall direction and strategy, vocations, etc.
- 3 **Heads of department**  
The heads of each area of ministry, with co-ordination as a key aim
- 4 **The cabinet**  
A more official leadership team, each member then given specific areas of responsibility
- 5 **Eldership**  
A clearly known and respected leadership team, with a selected membership
- 6 **Standing Committee**  
A formally appointed body based on existing structures, acting in leadership mode
- 7 **Ministry Group (or MLT)**  
A formally appointed body, commissioned by a Bishop or equivalent, involving those holding authorised ministries and perhaps other people

## Seven dangers to be aware of

*Which ones are you most prone to?*

- 1 **The Minister** finding it hard to work collaboratively
- 2 **Lay leaders** wanting to rule rather than to serve

- 3 **Clash of roles** and duplication of discussion with other formal bodies (eg. Diaconate)
- 4 **Selection process** leading to unease within the church
- 5 **Lack of people** with sufficient spiritual gifts, experience, or time to serve and train
- 6 **Lack of accountability** to Church Council or Church Meeting
- 7 **The focus reverting to structure** rather than mission

### Five essentials to hold on to

*Which are you strong on? Where are you weakest?*

- 1 A church **clear on its need for purpose and vision in relation to Jesus Christ**, each other and the world, and working these out in practice
- 2 **Clear role for the team**, and for other key decision-making bodies in the church
- 3 **Shared values** and commitment to the faith and the church
- 4 **Transparency and communication** so the congregation understand the role
- 5 **Awareness of dangers** such as those above

### Four reasons for having a team

*What order would you put these in for your church?*

- 1 **Biblical leadership** – church leadership should be team, not one-person power
- 2 **Biblical church** – modelling life and service shared and owned by all
- 3 **Structural need** – Minister bottleneck, business overwhelms Council/Diaconate
- 4 **Pragmatic reasons** – isolated Minister, cut in staffing, cultural expectation

### Eight possible roles for the team

*Which order of priority would you place these in?*

- 1 **Modelling team** / building each other up / listening
- 2 **Prayer** / seeking guidance and discernment / discipleship
- 3 Prayer, support and **advice for Minister**
- 4 **Direction of church** towards vision / forward planning / overall priorities
- 5 **Major pastoral issues**
- 6 **Vocations** / gifting / mobilisation of the congregation / appointing leaders
- 7 **Co-ordination** of church body-life
- 8 (Individually) **Oversight** of a particular area of church life

Note: in an actual review, consider also the roles of any church staff and the staff as a body together, and roles within the more traditional governance structure of the church.

## Six possible ways of selecting team members

*Which of these (and in what combination) do you operate, and should you make any changes?*

- 1 **Office held** (eg. Church Secretary or Stewards automatically members)
- 2 **Selection by Minister and the team itself**
- 3 **Selection by a specially selected group of assessors**
- 4 **Suggestions from Church Council or equivalent**, then Minister's (with others) choice
- 5 **Suggestions from whole church**, then Minister's (with others) choice
- 6 **An election process of some kind**

## Seven issues considered in the choice

*What order of priority would you put these in? See also 1 Timothy 3, Titus 1, 1 Peter 5, and other passages.*

- 1 **Balance** (eg. of gender, age, gifting, personality, team role)
- 2 **Commitment to Christ** and to this church
- 3 **Track record** in practical service not just holding church office
- 4 **Respected by congregation**, with clear people-gifts
- 5 **Recognised as having leadership**, pastoral and/or teaching gifts
- 6 **Team player**, able to work with others
- 7 **Stable home life**

## Six practical issues to encourage effectiveness

*Which of these might be new ideas for you? Which need revisiting?*

- 1 Keeping the team **small** enough to function effectively
- 2 **Meeting regularly** enough to develop real team-working
- 3 Choosing an **appropriate name** so its role is clear – see below
- 4 Restricting **length of service** so that people do not become stale
- 5 **Commissioning** the team in public, to earth it in the worshipping life of the church
- 6 **Appointing someone** with time, responsible for the smooth working of the whole governance structure

## Six possible names for such a team

*Ensure you communicate the right message by the name you choose.*

- 1 **Leadership Team** – but I advise caution because if it is not the executive group

- 2     **Vision Team** – my suggestion to communicate the big picture nature of the team
- 3     **Support Team** or **Advisory Team** – if that is what it is
- 4     **Ministry Team** – if that is what it is
- 5     **Eldership** – only if that is what your denomination uses for this team
- 6     No name at all – perhaps, if it is working quietly in the background

### **Eleven points to consider when setting up as new**

*But, in any review of an existing team, is there anything here you ought to be taking action on?*

- 1     **Pray** throughout the process
- 2     Know exactly **why** a team is being formed
- 3     Check the **essentials** are in place
- 4     Take **advice** from other churches that have already gone this way
- 5     **Educate** the congregation and keep them in the picture
- 6     **Decide** the model, dangers, role, selection, etc. with the normal decision-making body
- 7     Check Council members (or whoever) are united on the **vision**; then back to the church
- 8     Decide on the **timetable**
- 9     **Selection** process
- 10    **Launch**
- 11    **Review** and adjust if necessary

These notes are available at <https://www.john-truscott.co.uk/Resources/Training-Notes-index> and then TN18. They cover one aspect of a possible training event for churches on establishing or reviewing any kind of leadership team. For a fuller discussion on Christian leadership, see Articles A12/13, *The leader as a shepherd*, and also A45, *How to lead a team at church*. Also Training Notes TN87, *What to look for in your leaders*, and TN112, *Set my leaders free!* For related issues see, for example, TN41, *What makes a group a team*, TN79, *'One another' teams*, and TN120, *Lessons for leaders*.

John's resources are marked for filing categories of Leadership, Management, Structures, Planning, Communication, Administration. File TN18 under Structures (with a link to Leadership).

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