

Authorised Local Leadership

within the Ely
Diocese



The Church of England
Diocese of Ely

In Context

“Out of 51 churches newly led by a Focal Minister, attendance grew in 42 and average growth was just under 40%”

Bob Jackson: Leading One Church at a Time.

There has been much documented over recent years about growing a Local Leadership Team, not least with the research by Bob Jackson, which concluded that if rural churches are to grow, every local congregation needs a person, or small team, to act as the focal point for the congregation and the community which it seeks to serve.

At its worst, focal ministry has been anxiety-driven and applied to parishes as a sticking-plaster. There are examples where such ministry has been used simply as a solution for maintaining service patterns in the light of declining clergy numbers or implemented in haste to solve a local issue (e.g., an incumbent due to retire). There have been times when new incumbents who have moved to a context with Focal Ministry have felt threatened and have struggled to relate to a community which, they feel, relates so strongly to the local leader.

Where it has worked well, there have been clear accountability structures, training offered and appropriately close supervision. The places in which such ministry has been most effective are places where there has been adequate planning, deep conversations and a more of a strategic approach has been deployed. This has resulted in beautiful examples of incumbent and local leadership working well together, complementing one another. It has resulted in the growth of churches where people's gifts are acknowledged, encouraged, and utilised.

There are a growing number of Dioceses who are actively pursuing a style of Authorised Local Leadership and a growing number of organisations that are well-placed to be able to offer support and training.

As a Diocese we are seeking to encourage and support the development of Local Leadership Teams.





What question or issue is Local Leadership seeking to provide an answer to?

The model of ministry outlined in this document is not to solve leadership challenges, nor will it necessarily reverse decline in some of our most fragile parishes. This model of ministry seeks to address the challenge of leadership capacity within (predominantly, though not exclusively) multi-parish benefices.

The development of Local Leadership Teams should not be seen as an easy or cheap alternative to clergy. Building an effective Local leadership Team is costly and time consuming but, we believe, the benefits of such an investment can outweigh the costs.

The Local Leader

This is a key contact person which is important so that when information from the Diocese and also from the local neighbourhood community is communicated and when action is needed, it is appropriately handled by the local coordinator or by another person they identify. The Local Leader will also have a significant role in ensuring that the Leadership Team (with the incumbent the Church Wardens, the PCC and other lay and ordained ministers) develop the gifts of the whole congregation, and help the church grow in its mission and ministry in that location.

They will be a visible presence of the gospel and act as a 'bridge' between the church and the local community. At times they will be a conduit to the local clergy. They will be authorised by the bishop for three years, supported by the diocese and rooted in the local community.

What will local leadership look like in the local context?

The Local Leadership Team

The team will share with the incumbent (or someone identified if the benefice falls into vacancy), the Church Warden, PCC, non-incumbent clergy, LLMs and ALMs in the leadership mission and ministry within a parish. Together, the Local Leadership Team discerns what mission and ministry looks like locally. The Diocese has the opportunity to provide additional support and help facilitate the conversation.

The basic model, especially the key qualities, will be true of all Local Leaders. However, this type of ministry must be contextually shaped and there cannot be a 'one size fits all' approach. It will look different in each parish. What is common is that the Local Coordinator/Leadership Team has a public-facing role within their community.

The development of Local Leadership is not at the expense of the clergy, but rather it enables them to focus their energies on resourcing, equipping and overseeing the life of the parish – thereby also potentially allowing congregations to flourish and grow. The relationship between Local Leader/Leadership Team and the incumbent is key. Each Local Leader must work well with their incumbent, keeping them informed about what is happening and seeking their advice and guidance. Local Leaders must also collaborate with others in the congregation and other ministers, including local ecumenical and interfaith relationships.

We acknowledge there are challenges, there are some areas where parishes lack confidence; there are areas where people are fearful of taking on extra responsibility (particularly post-pandemic) and there are also challenges in ensuring adequate oversight when the benefice is in vacancy. This point of vacancy is a key transition point within the benefice and Local Leadership and adequate oversight must be identified (e.g., through the rural dean).

Biblical Basis for Local Leadership

Within the Church, described in the New Testament, particular people carried out particular leadership and oversight which were focussed on the work of equipping the whole people of God to share in the whole mission of God (*ref: Ephesians 4:11-16*).

The role of the incumbent

The calling to ordained ministry is not to do all the work of ministry, but to enable, equip and empower the whole people of God to exercise mission and ministry. The role of the incumbent is key in developing and supporting Local Leadership. The role of the incumbent of the benefice (or someone identified if the parish is in vacancy) is to support and supervise Local Leadership Teams. This will involve the developing and releasing of gifts in others – lay and ordained.

The incumbent will:

1. Help parishes to build Local Leadership Teams. This will include preparing the parish in understanding the ministry, discerning the right time for implementation and the shape the ministry may take.
2. Help identify potential Local Leaders. In conversation with others, the incumbent will seek to nurture vocations to Local Leadership, guiding them through a discernment process.
3. To support Local Leadership Teams as they exercise the ministries God has called them to. The incumbent will be the first port-of-call for local leadership Teams. They will meet regularly with them for support, learning and equipping in their ministry. Together and with other church ministers, they will help discern the vision and set the direction for the mission and ministry of the church.



The role of the Dicoese

The role of the Diocese is to work with the incumbent and local PCC to authorise and support the training of local leaders.

This also involves discerning possible vocations to lay or ordained ministry among team members.

Vocational Discernment

We recognise that Local Leadership may open up the opportunity for further vocational discernment for individuals to Licenced Lay, Authorised Lay or Ordained ministry.



Stages in forming Local Leadership

1. Exploration

The PCC and leadership within the parish decide when (and if) the time is right to explore Local Leadership and what it might mean and look like in each context. Structured conversations can be held with members of the Mission and Ministry Department to support this exploration process. This exploration process can also form part of the Mission Action Planning taking place within the parish or the wider Deanery Development Planning process. Through this exploration process, there will be a clearer sense of the shape of mission and ministry that is emerging, the different callings and roles people will play in living out that vision and the discernment of the type of person who would be able to locally oversee and enable that.

2. Local Discernment

Local Leaders are identified and encouraged to explore their call with others and decide whether they are willing to be nominated. There are certain qualities and characteristics that should be evident in the life of a potential member of a Local Leader Team. With the incumbent an outline role description and working agreement will be developed.

3. Nomination

PCCs formally nominate their Local Ministers, and submit nomination forms to the Director of Mission and Ministry. A date is arranged for the Discernment Conversation.



Stages in forming Local Leadership

4. Discernment Conversation

Potential Local Leaders and their incumbents will meet with the **Authorised Local Leadership Coordinator (ALL Coordinator)**, currently the Director of Mission and Ministry. The conversation will provide a space for continued discernment. Local leaders will be asked what experiences, knowledge, and skills they bring as well as being asked what they will need to fulfil the role. The potential roles and responsibilities will be discussed. Incumbents will be asked how the ALL fits within the wider planning and development of the parish/benefice. Both will be asked to consider what further training may be needed and what support will need to be provided for the parish.

5. Preparing

Local Leaders, Incumbents and PCC representatives (with the Mission and Ministry Department acting as a support and resource) will prepare for this new way of working. Conversations will be held with the congregation as well as the PCC to ensure the ground is well prepared. Working and Learning Agreements to be completed and detailed individual learning plans shall be put in place. A learning profile will be completed which will enable individuals to record training already completed and suggest support that may be helpful in their new role. The Learning Plans will be varied but may involve accessing existing training opportunities or developing new learning pathways. The Mission and ministry Department will ensure that appropriate learning opportunities are made available. DBS checks will be carried out and appropriate safeguarding training completed. Training will be made available to PCCs and incumbents that will focus on exploring the implications of this ministry.



6. Authorisation and Commissioning

Once DBS checks and safeguarding training has been completed, Local Leaders will receive a certificate of Authorisation from the Bishop (three years) and will be commissioned in their local church. This will be administered through the Mission and Ministry Office.

7. Ongoing renewal

All those in ministry are expected to be life-long learners and are expected to reflect on their ministry. There should be regular (monthly) supervision with the incumbent and an annual review is also expected take place. Access to a trained diocesan reviewer will be made available. Every three years, a formal renewal process will be put in place. This can only proceed with the support of the PCC and incumbent.

Practical Considerations

Local Leaders are able to access a modest CMD allowance as well as the counselling and wellbeing services available to clergy.

The Diocese will develop an annual review process that can be followed which is in line with the MDRs for Clergy and LLMs.

There is always a possibility that relationships can become strained. We welcome an ongoing dialogue with the Mission and Ministry Team so that appropriate and targeted support can be deployed quickly.

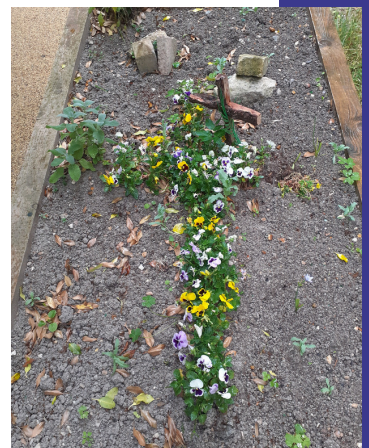
Practical Illustrations

There is a danger, with any new initiative, that once illustrations are provided, they themselves become the models that people seek to choose from and implement within their context. If this is done, it narrows the scope of the initiative and diminishes the creativity.

However, it is also acknowledged that, without additional illustration some may struggle to grasp the concept.

Local Leadership is a contextualised response and the model adapted needs to work within the local context.

The key concept behind the initiative is to identify and enable a Local Leadership Team to form which will become the point of contact within a particular group of parishes.



Practical Illustrations

Scenario 1:

The LLM licensed to a benefice becomes the Local Leader for the parish in which they live. Within this scenario, they may lead services in that parish more often as well as become the ‘point of contact’ for the parish: pastoral, missional and ministerial.

Scenario 2:

The ALM within the benefice lives in parish A. There are other ALMs and LLMs operating within the benefice as well as a willing local congregation. The ALM in parish A becomes the Local Coordinator.

Scenario 3:

The Church Warden of Parish B takes on the role of Local Leader. They become the point of contact for members of the community, they are able to ‘bridge the gap’ between the church and the community and are able to coordinate and motivate local support. They liaise closely with the Benefice leadership team to ensure pastoral and spiritual support is deployed as appropriate.

Scenario 4:

A wide-ranging team of people (LLMs, ALMs, PCC members and other volunteers) in Parish C are deployed to oversee the pastoral, missional and worship life of the parish under the oversight of the incumbent. Parish C is part of a benefice with 5 other parishes. A PCC member has taken on the role of Local Coordinator to ensure good communication and coordination across the Benefice is maintained. This PCC member is part of the Benefice Council.



Local Leadership Arrangements

Bob Jackson in his book 'Leading One Church at a time' (2018), outlines a number of different options for this type of ministry:

Option 1:

Assume a five-church benefice. One church is taken out of the direct leadership of the incumbent and is led by a Local Leader. There is hopefully a church growth benefit to that church and also some limited benefit to the others as the incumbent has only four to focus on.

Option 2:

Assume a five-church benefice. Two, three or four churches are each given their own Local Leader. So the incumbent can seriously focus on the one or two remaining churches, or plant something new. There is hopefully a church-growth benefit to every church.

Option 3:

Assume a five-church benefice. Local leaders assume the full leadership role within one or more of the five churches. Perhaps they are grouped in Ministry Area or a Mission area, with an Area Leader offering mini-episcopal oversight. There is hopefully an enhanced church-growth benefit to each church, including those still led by the stipendiary, who can now fully focus on those that remain.

Option 5:

Assume a five-church benefice. A Local Leader is found for every one of the five churches in the benefice. This reduces the immediate impact felt when an incumbent moves away.



Why are we encouraging Authorised Local Leadership?

Local Leadership is a contextual ministry that is being called for from the grass roots. A role that is being described at the local level connects the local church or benefice with the community or communities in which the church or churches are located. This has been particularly requested in context where there are multiple parishes under the leadership of an incumbent, or where there are part-time incumbents. It is recognised that a leadership team which connects church and community, ensures good communication, signposts inquirers and facilitates the local vision of mission and ministry vision which is being shaped by the incumbent, ministry team and the PCC. It is important that the Local Leaders are part of this local ministry team, working under the supervision of the incumbent.

Local Leaders are endorsed by the PCC, as having particular gifting, and a calling to exercise a ministry in a specific area of the life of the local Church or Benefice.

After Safeguarding checks and training have been completed, and with the agreement of the PCC, ALLs are commissioned by the local incumbent to work in the area of their specialism and they are authorised for this ministry by the Bishop.

It is expected that Local Leaders work collaboratively alongside their incumbent and wider ministry team and remain under the supervision of their incumbent. They should be people who seek to grow and nurture faith and service in the wider parish community.

Local Leaders will work with the incumbent and ministry team to develop the mission and ministry in that context.

They will have a significant role in the interface between the Church and the local communities. Therefore, their role will be contextually shaped. It is likely to include the following:

Hospitality. Local Leaders will have a role in welcoming conversations and activities from people who are not already part of the Church. They will need to be able to recognise the needs of enquirers with pastoral sensitivity and able to respond appropriately to their requests for attention. These could range from questions about church services, weddings, baptisms, funerals, to questions about churchyard or building matters and much more. Local Leaders will make them welcome.

Signposting (and minding the gaps). They will be able to direct the enquirer to people or places where they can find the information that they need to answer their questions or support their pastoral need. Local Leaders will also recognise and understand the threshold between church and the world beyond which makes it hard for people who are not familiar with church to know how to connect.

Nurturing Vision. They will know and support the worship and spiritual vision set out by the incumbent, local leadership team and the PCC. This means that they could have a role in communicating ideas and connecting people or organising and overseeing the arrangements for meetings.





In Detail

Discerning God's Activity in the Neighbourhood as well as the Church. Local Leaders will understand the local context and seek to promote social qualities as would befit the Kingdom of God in that place and connect Church and Community in engagement and partnership.

A Conduit for Local Information. Local Leaders will both disseminate information to the local community about church activities and keep the incumbent and ministry team informed about local matters and activity arising in the community.

Responsive to local emerging needs or challenges. Local Leaders will ensure that the ministry team are aware of emerging needs or challenges in the local area.

A Visible Presence of the Gospel. By being there within the community, Local Leaders will draw a focus on the Good News of Christ.



The qualities of an Authorised Local Leader

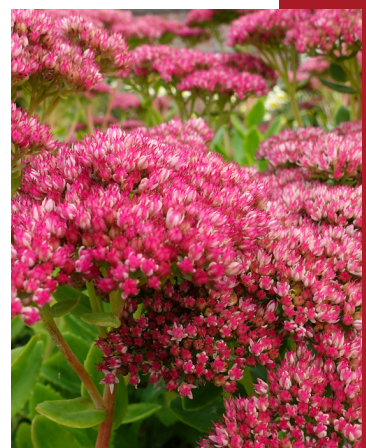
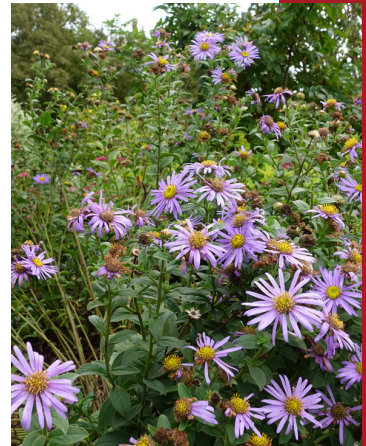
A love for God. This needs to appreciate the local church and community and which motivates a love of neighbour.

An Ability to work in a Team. It is essential that Local Leaders can work with the local ministry team and be a team builder.

Be Empathetic and Hospitable. We are looking for someone who can listen attentively and show warmth and hospitality to those who contact them.

Show Pastoral Sensitivity. This person needs to be able to communicate with people in times of life crisis and so they need to be warmly empathetic whilst upholding appropriate and healthy boundaries.

Be A Great Communicator. This role requires someone who is able to receive and disseminate information. They will need to be able to use communication technology.





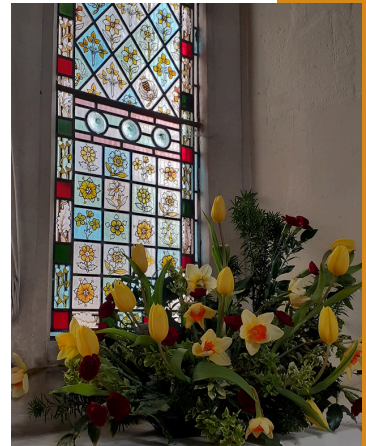
The qualities of an Authorised Local Leader

Resourceful and able to Problem Solve. This person needs to be able to see what is being asked and be able to find the information needed to respond. They also need to know who else should be included in order for enquiries to be met.

Flexible and patient with the Public. Local Leaders should have a calm presence, able to tease out what is being asked for and how to respond to it. The Local Leaders should also be prepared to try new approaches and think of ways to present the church and Gospel better.

Have Knowledge of the Local Community. It will be necessary for Local Leaders to have (or can show that they can acquire) a good knowledge of local community leaders, potential community partners, local groups and activities and other contacts.

Good Judgment. This person needs to be able to make good judgments about how to tackle problems that are presented and who to ask to help with this.





Training

Authorised Local Leaders will be expected to have up to date Safeguarding checks and training.

We recognise that the context in which this ministry is exercised will vary and so it might be necessary to create a bespoke training programme in order to equip people well for the particular role they are to undertake where they are situated.

The training available will include such areas as:

1. Theology and Practice of Hospitality (how to welcome others as Christ)
2. Contextual Reflection. This involves knowing and understanding the local context and what mission and ministry looks like here. What is needed and what is already being achieved.
3. Knowing the Local Church. Appreciating the Church of England ethos and who does what and why?
4. Working in Teams. How teams are formed, what makes a good team, how challenges are overcome for a team.
5. Signposting and working with community partners
6. Growing and connecting people
7. Pastoral sensitivity (Occasional Offices)
8. Spirituality of meeting God on the threshold
9. Administration
10. A bridge between the Community and Church Connecting

We recognise that in some cases there will be other training needs (for example worship leading or preaching) and we will enable access, wherever possible, to existing training modules.