

A scheme offering young people experience of ministry in Church of England parishes is attracting an increasing number of participants, according to new figures released today.

The Ministry Experience Scheme, which offers year-long placements in churches across the country for young adults aged between 18 and 30 years old, is on course to have attracted 150 participants this year, compared to 47 in 2015. More than two thirds of dioceses in the Church of England are now taking part in the scheme.

Young adults on the scheme are encouraged to explore their vocation – not just to ordained ministry – living and working in communities in both urban and rural areas.

The placements offer theological teaching and skills training whilst immersing the participants within a local parish. Each scheme is unique to its community, giving the participants the opportunity to support their local communities through charitable, pastoral and community-based activities.

Participants can be involved in a range of work from visiting those in need and the sick at home and in hospital to work helping with baptisms, marriages and funerals. In Blackpool, participants are a key part of outreach work by the Church of England in deprived outer urban estates.

The Scheme is supported by Allchurches Trust, and to date has an equal number of women and men taking part. Nearly one in 10 participants last year were from black or ethnic minority backgrounds. The scheme is hoping to increase the proportion of black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) candidates to 15% over the next two years.

Research has shown that, to date, 46% of those taking part in 2017 have attended a Bishops' Advisory Panel (BAP), a residential selection conference for people in the final stages of the process of applying to train for the priesthood in the Church of England. A further 21%, or one in five, went on to work or train for lay ministry (church leadership roles).

The scheme is becoming a key component of the Church of England's drive, through the Renewal and Reform programme, to attract more young people and more women and people from ethnic minorities into both lay and ordained roles.

Allchurches Trust Director of Grants and Relationships, James Laing, said: "It is a privilege for Allchurches Trust to support the Ministry Experience Scheme. It perfectly reflects our desire to use our grants to meet needs and build relationships with people where they most need it.

"Another priority for Allchurches is helping young people to flourish and play a fuller, richer role in community life. We're delighted to see the Ministry Experience Scheme clearly succeeding here too."

The Bishop of Burnley, Philip North, Chair of the Ministry Experience Scheme steering committee, said: "I thank God for the success of the Ministry Experience Scheme and for the young adults across the country who are devoting a year of their lives to the service of others, including the work of parishes in both urban and rural areas, helping to witness to the Good News of the Gospel.

“The scheme provides a wonderful formation and a chance to take time to reflect on the future course of their lives. In Blackpool, we hope that work on urban deprived estates will be a transformative moment for both those taking part and for the parishes and communities they serve.”

Lauren Simpson, 24, a Nottingham University graduate, from Hertfordshire, is taking part in scheme in Southwell and Nottingham Diocese, working with Bestwood Park Church based on an estate in the north of Nottingham.

Her work has included helping run ‘Messy churches,’ a fortnightly youth group, a youth worship band and other projects including a weekly event bringing together people for a lunch in the church hall.

“I am just over half-way through my placement, and I am being stretched and challenged more than ever before,” she said.

“I have really been welcomed by the community, and I have had a chance to do a lot both inside and outside the church.

“This experience has given me an insight into the church in a way that otherwise would have not been possible.”

[Find out more information on the Ministry Experience Scheme.](#)

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