



Diocese of Birmingham

We want to encourage the church to release the gifts of ministry among all its members, especially those who serve and lead in different contexts.

Lay and ordained ministers have an equally valued role in the Body of Christ, serving together to build up the church and participate in mission.

We want to see lay ministries thriving in a church that has confidence in lay ministries and celebrates the abundance of those in lay ministries.

You can read more about the Church of England's [vision for lay ministries here](#).

Ministry is a response to the needs of the Church and the world and is part of every Christian's calling to love and to serve. Lay ministries are diverse, with a wide variety of contexts and roles, ranging from short-term tasks to life-long vocations.

The Church at all levels has a role to play in encouraging and training people in the skills needed for service.

Types of lay ministry

There are a range of lay ministry roles available in different dioceses, with most selection, training and authorisation taking place in dioceses or parishes. When that service takes on the character of public ministry then particular forms of training and authorisation may be required.

Lay ministry falls broadly into three categories: Recognised, Authorised and Licensed. These categories naturally overlap, and not every form of ministry will fit into just one. These descriptions are intended as a guide to help dioceses release the gifts of all God's people in the way they plan their lay ministry work. They are intentionally broad and may not always reflect the way you choose to do things.

Recognised ministries

Recognised ministries happen in the local parish, benefice, chaplaincy or fresh expression. Examples of recognised ministry include leading a home group, pastoral care, assisting with children and youth ministry, offering prayer and listening, acting as a chaplaincy assistant or exploring growing church locally.

Selection, recognition and training is usually local, led by the minister in the parish or deanery. Some local ministry roles will have diocesan training too, for example safeguarding courses.

Recognised ministers would usually be supervised by the incumbent or a delegated responsible person authorised or licensed to lead an area of work. There should be regular local review for renewal of recognition.

Responsibility for safeguarding training and checks lies with the PCC or other local responsible body.

Authorised ministries

Authorised ministries represent the church in the wider community.

Authorisation (which might be called Commissioning) is by the bishop on the advice of local officers, it may be time limited or reviewed regularly on behalf of the bishop.

Examples of authorised ministry includes pastoral assistants, worship leaders, preachers, or assistant youth and children's ministers.

Selection may be local or diocesan, while training is usually through a diocesan programme.

Authorised ministers are supervised by the local incumbent with final accountability to the bishop.

Responsibility for safeguarding training and checks is with the diocese.

Licensed ministries

Licensed lay ministries represent the church in a public, representative or leadership role. Examples of licensed lay ministers include Readers, (also known as Licensed Lay Ministers), Church Army evangelists, lay workers and some lay pioneers.

Licensed ministers may be involved in evangelism, mission-enabling, teaching, preaching, leading of worship, taking funerals, leading a Fresh Expression and community outreach.

Licenses are issued by the diocesan bishop as required by Canon and are nationally recognised.

Selection is carried out by dioceses, following national guidelines. Training is carried out by the diocese or on behalf of the diocese and there is provision for ongoing ministerial development.

Licensed lay ministers are supervised by the local incumbent, with final accountability to the bishop. There should be a regular, ideally annual, review.

Responsibility for safeguarding training and checks is with the diocese.

There are national frameworks for the discernment and formation of Readers / LLM (Readers). Introduced in 2021, these grids have replaced the previous 'Selection and formation guidelines for readers'. Please contact the national ministry team (ministry@churchofengland.org.uk) for more information about these frameworks or for the detailed discernment framework:

- [Reader / LLM \(Reader\) discernment framework](#) (top level grid)
- [Reader / LLM \(Reader\) IME formation framework](#)

The team

- **Head of Lay Ministries:** Carrie Myers (carrie.myers@churchofengland.org) supports lay ministries across the Church of England.
- **Ministry with Children and Young People Officer:** Carolyn Edwards (carolyn.edwards@churchofengland.org) supports ministry with children and young people including developing training and formation.
- **Lay Ministries Network Enabler:** Cathy Myers (cathy.myers@churchofengland.org) works to support lay ministries networks and learning communities that support thriving lay ministries across the Church of England.

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