

# Vocational Pathways

## Perspectives from Initial Ministerial Education Phase 1

Dr Liz Graveling  
August 2016

Ministry Division, Archbishops' Council

# Executive Summary

## Aims

The purpose of this study, along with its sister study exploring perspectives from curacy, was to explore in more detail outcomes from research carried out in 2014; specifically, the finding that all IME training pathways can be used with confidence. The research aimed to provide a better understanding from a range of perspectives of how different models of IME Phase 1 training are experienced and understood, and the strengths of different kinds of training, particularly in regard to the mixed-mode pathway.

## Methods

A total of 100 people participated in the study, including ordinands currently training in two residential, two non-residential and two mixed-mode institutions, along with their respective educators and placement supervisors, and Diocesan Directors of Ordinands (DDOs). The research was conducted mainly through focus groups, with some respondents participating via telephone or face-to-face interview, or in writing.

## Findings

### 1. Language

- There is no consistent vocabulary for IME 1 pathways.
- Models of IME are generally defined in relation to residential training.
- Training pathways are internally diverse and boundaries between them are blurred.
- Despite changes in sponsorship categories, ministry continues to be referred to in relation to remuneration.

### 2. IME Phases 1 and 2

- Regarding what ordinands are being trained for there is a tension between generalisation for the sake of deployability, and specialisation to make use of particular skills and passions.
- IME has the dual function of training ministers towards a vocation and facilitating discernment of vocation.
- The difference between Phases 1 and 2 of IME consists largely in the balance of theoretical and practical learning, which is destabilised by mixed-mode training.
- Dioceses sometimes struggle to find appropriate title posts for mixed-mode deacons, and mixed-mode and non-residential ordinands may remain in the same church to serve their curacy.
- Residentially trained curates sometimes find the academic structures of IME 2 do not fit with their continuing learning requirements or preferences.
- Both IME 1 and IME 2 provision are diverse, which creates challenges to the integration of the two phases.

### 3. Training decisions

- Training decisions are ultimately made by candidates, in the context of a multi-way conversation between candidate, DDO (and/or bishop), TEI, Ministry Division and (for mixed-mode students) placement supervisor.
- In the context of a rapidly changing sector, it is difficult for DDOs to keep up to date with information about IME 1 programmes.

- Candidates have differing degrees of choice, regarding both pathway and TEI, and immense flexibility is sometimes required of (particularly non-residential) TEIs to meet the needs of individual candidates.
- Decisions about pathway are not always separated from decisions about TEI.
- Candidates and DDOs negotiate decisions about training within a tension between practicality, obedience and choice in the context of vocation. How far is vocation to ordained ministry transcendent and how far is it negotiated?

#### 4. Strengths and challenges

##### *Crosscutting issues*

- If the strengths of training pathways often lie in the challenges faced by ordinands, which aspects of identity are to be challenged and which to be accepted?
- Formative processes of location and dislocation work differently in different pathways. What kind of formation is each pathway achieving and are different kinds of formation required for different people or different roles?
- Mixed economies of training pathways contribute to the formation of individuals.
- Accreditation is understood by ordinands as attributing value to certain aspects of training and, by its absence, reducing the value of other aspects. This has an impact on mixed-mode training, the context half of which is not accredited.
- Women who are married and/or have children are likely to be more restricted in training options.

##### *Residential training*

- Challenging worshipping community to facilitate priestly formation.
- Safe environment to practise ministry.
- Supportive environment to encourage mobility and deployability of individuals and families.
- Disengagement may not provide skills to engage with the rest of the world.
- Marginalisation of those unable to participate fully in the community.
- Less accessible to married women and mothers.

##### *Non-residential training*

- Constant engagement with reality of everyday life.
- Reflective of wider church dynamics.
- Widely accessible.
- Diverse churchmanship.
- Extremely demanding in time and energy, meaning less time for reflective formation.
- Challenge to provide adequate pastoral support.

##### *Mixed-mode training*

- Constant engagement with theology and practice.
- Realistic experience of ministerial life.
- Accessible to those unable to move.
- Competing demands on time with dual student-employee identity.
- Potentially narrower focus so less deployability.
- Limited placements available.

# Vocational Pathways: Perspectives from Initial Ministerial Education Phase 1

## Introduction

This project forms part of a wider programme of research into ministerial education, directed originally by the Resourcing Ministerial Education Task Group and now by Ministry Council. The purpose of the project is to explore in more detail outcomes from research carried out in 2014; specifically, the finding that all training pathways can be used with confidence. The research aims to provide a better understanding from a range of perspectives of how different models of Initial Ministerial Education (IME) Phase 1 training are experienced and understood, and the strengths of different kinds of training. There is a particular need for this in regard to the mixed-mode pathway which, as a recent development, has so far had little analysis. The research was carried out alongside a parallel study, *Vocational Pathways: Perspectives from Curacy*,<sup>1</sup> which explored experiences and understandings of IME Phase 1 and Phase 2 of curates, training incumbents, churchwardens and diocesan IME 2 officers. Both studies were designed with input from Theological Education Institution (TEI) and diocesan representatives.

A total of 100 people participated in the Phase 1 research, including ordinands currently training in two residential, two non-residential and two mixed-mode institutions, along with their respective educators and placement supervisors, and Diocesan Directors of Ordinands (DDOs). The research is not completely limited to the six TEIs as participants frequently referred to other institutions, particularly when drawing on their own experiences (for TEI staff, DDOs and supervisors) and within DDO groups. Despite this, because of the variety of provision within the TEI sector, findings are not generalisable across the sector but provide an indication of the strengths of different training pathways for different kinds of ordinand. They therefore act as insights contributing to the wider discussion involving institutions not participating in the research.

This report first outlines the methods used in the study, including their limitations, before turning to the research findings, which are divided into four sections. The first discusses issues related to the way language is used in talking about and categorising training pathways. The second considers IME as a whole, focusing on the aims of IME Phase 1 and the transition between Phases 1 and 2. The third explores processes by which training decisions are made, and the fourth identifies strengths and challenges of the three pathways, in terms of location and dislocation, relationships within and without the learning community and the academic and practical content of IME Phase 1.

## Methodology

The research was conducted through, in each TEI, one focus group of four to six ordinands, one focus group with educators from the TEI, and one focus group with the placement supervisors of the ordinands. Group discussions with DDOs were held within three regional meetings. In some cases placement supervisors participated via telephone or face-to-face interview, or in writing, where groups were not feasible. Ordinands (the majority in their second or third year of study) were recruited by their TEI Principal (or designated staff member) and groups included, as far as possible, a range of characteristics, including:

---

<sup>1</sup> Perrin, R. (2016), *Vocational Pathways: Perspectives from Curacy*, Ministry Division.  
[http://www.ministrydevelopment.org.uk/UserFiles/File/RME/IME\\_perspectives\\_from\\_curacy.pdf](http://www.ministrydevelopment.org.uk/UserFiles/File/RME/IME_perspectives_from_curacy.pdf)

- Men and women;
- Ordinands training for stipendiary and self-supporting ministry (no Ordained Local Ministers took part in the study);
- Different ages;
- Married and unmarried ordinands, those with children and those without;
- Different levels of previous education;
- Those in employment alongside their studies and those not.

Topics discussed in groups and interviews varied according to the role of the participant(s) and took a semi-structured format, allowing discussion to develop along lines deemed important by the participants. The following areas were covered as appropriate:

- Specific TEI training structure;
- Ordinands' experiences of training;
- Experiences of other participants (TEI staff, placement supervisors and DDOs);
- The Formation Criteria in relation to training;
- Decisions about training for individual candidates;
- Strengths and challenges of different training pathways (including for different kinds of people);
- Aim of IME Phase 1 and fit with IME Phase 2.

Group discussions lasted up to two hours and interviews one hour. Each was audio-recorded (with permission of the participants) and transcribed. Analysis was carried out using the NVivo qualitative data analysis software.

### Limitations of the study

In order to carry out this study it was necessary to work with several limitations. Firstly, theological education within the Church of England is diverse and a study with limited capacity and based on six institutions cannot capture the variety of the sector, nor all possible perspectives (e.g. families of ordinands, sending incumbents, bishops and congregations). As mentioned above, the aim is not to generalise but to provide insights of value to the continuing conversations about theological education. Similarly, the four to six participants in each group are not representative of the entire student body in a TEI (likewise for other participants). This is especially the case given that many TEIs offer a range of different pathways: of the participating institutions in this research, all those represented as 'residential' or 'mixed-mode' also offer at least one other pathway. For the purposes of this study, recruitment of participants and discussions were limited to just one pathway per TEI.

Secondly, recruitment of ordinands, staff and placement supervisors was carried out by TEI Principals or another designated member of staff, each of whom was given instructions regarding the process by which to select participants. This gives rise to the possibility of 'gatekeeper bias', although in most cases the instructions were followed as far as possible. Some groups of ordinands may not have captured the diversity of the student body: the members of one (mixed-mode) group were all under the age of 30 and of a similar churchmanship, while one (non-residential) group was self-selecting and therefore may have a slight bias towards students who felt they had time to attend. Moreover, one (residential) TEI did not provide access to any placement supervisors, so the perspective of residential training supervisors within this research is limited.

Finally, as in all research of this nature, ethical responsibilities towards participants restricts the level of detail that can be revealed. To ensure anonymity, names of people, places, dioceses and

institutions have been removed. It has also not been possible to discuss specific cases where the circumstances would identify an individual.

## Findings

### 1. Language

While carrying out this study we have constantly met with dilemmas and confusion over the use of language, much of which relates to historical developments in initial ministerial education. Besides varying usage of 'IME 1-3/ 4-7' and 'IME Phase 1/ 2', and words such as 'training', 'formation' and 'education' (which is a fundamental discussion beyond the scope of this report), contested language related mainly to training pathways and sponsorship categories. This is an important discussion because language often shapes practice as much as the other way around: how people talk about ministerial training will affect how it is understood and therefore practised.

#### 1.1 Training pathways

Options for training are categorised into three pathways for funding purposes, usually referred to as (a) residential, (b) non-residential or part-residential or course or part-time and, (c) mixed-mode or context-based or contextual. For the latter two pathways there is no consensus over terms, which are used interchangeably. For the purposes of this study we will use the terms 'residential', 'non-residential' and 'mixed-mode', while recognising their limitations.

The multiplicity of terms for the three pathways is indicative of several things. Firstly, the sector has developed from a single mode of residential training that has operated since the nineteenth century, meaning that subsequent models have been defined in relation to the contemporary norm. Hence, part-time training (introduced in the 1970s) that did not require ordinands to move to theological colleges (although still requiring a minimum number of residential nights per year) was termed 'non-residential'. This is evident throughout the research and it is striking how mixed-mode and non-residential training models are routinely compared with residential training and rarely with each other. For example,

*There need to be things worked out so that we are being taught and supported as much as those that are in residential college. That is the big thing, we need to be supported as much as they are. (Non-residential, ordinand)*

This default comparison is recognised and often resisted by those involved in non-residential and mixed-mode training. In the words of a mixed-mode ordinand discussing the requirement for a minimum number of residential nights,

*what they've done is say, 'we have a way of training people which is residential. We want to create a new way of training which will be a kind of hybrid version of residential training.' You've got the hybrid form and I think it would be interesting if you said, 'forget the fact that we already have a form of training called residential and we are going to create from scratch a contextual training.'*

The sense of needing to prove the value of the model in relation to residential training is reflected by his placement supervisor:

*there has been a pressure to be able to say, 'the outcome is exactly the same as the residential courses,' so that is against you going, 'actually you get unique training coming out of here,' because you are so fighting to get the ordinands, as it were, that the danger is that you are constantly saying, 'you get exactly the same experience, you get exactly the same training,' because you want them to feel that.*

While one mixed-mode staff group commented that this pressure has been positive in leading them to work hard at ensuring high academic standards, others point to a kind of stigma attached to any training that is not residential: ‘when you finish it, it’s like, “you’ve done contextual training, you are not up there with the elite”’. There are those undertones that I sometimes feel’ (mixed-mode ordinand). A member of staff of a non-residential college suggested that there are financial reasons for this:

*Unfortunately, because of the way in which even RME seems to be going where the criteria still seem to be overwhelmingly financial, it is all too easy for us to get thought of as the cheap seats, and we’re not. It may in fact be cheaper, but this kind of training offers benefits and advantages that are distinctive to it.*

Secondly, the multiplicity of language reflects a diverse and constantly changing IME 1 sector. While these three pathways may be helpful for administrative purposes, they do not necessarily reflect understandings of training from other perspectives. In reality the three pathways are not always clear-cut and none of the terms mentioned above fully captures the differences (or similarities) between them. We have already mentioned that many TEIs offer more than one pathway; however, even within TEI-specific pathways there can be enormous diversity. This either reflects structured programme design or accommodation of the requirements of individual ordinands, sometimes when their circumstances change part-way through training but more often before they begin. Hence, non-residential training can be full-time as well as part-time, and it is possible to attend ‘residential’ training on a daily or weekly basis, returning home each night or weekend instead of living in community. As we have seen above, it was also pointed out that ‘non-residential’ training has a residential requirement, meaning that, if it is to be defined in terms of residency, ‘part-residential’ may be more accurate. A number of ordinands commented on the flexibility of TEIs in making decisions about training, which will be discussed further below.

As well as diversity within TEIs, training pathways are shaped and experienced very differently between institutions. All three pathways vary enormously from one TEI to another, according to factors such as history, geography, finance, churchmanship, ethos, preferences of Principals, and relationships with dioceses, local churches, universities and other TEIs. Given the wide spectrum of training available within each pathway, the boundaries between pathways can become blurred. For example, church placements for residential ordinands are structured very differently in different TEIs, with some ordinands experiencing a range of short-term placements while others are assigned almost exclusively to one church or chapel throughout their Phase 1 training, as is the case in mixed-mode training. Indeed, the terms ‘contextual’ and ‘context-based’ are contested by staff of some residential and non-residential TEIs, who assert that their training is also set in context, for example:

*actually we think of ourselves as a context-based pathway, which is the fruit of what we are talking about. In a sense, that idea of saying we now have institutions that say, ‘oh, we’re going to have a different pathway where people will be located in a ministry context all the time’, we looked at that and thought, ‘that’s what all our students are all the time’. (Non-residential, staff)*

On the other hand, the term ‘mixed-mode’ is also disliked by some, who associate it with a particular training model that no longer exists.

## 1.2 Sponsorship categories

The second notable confusion in use of language relates to the kinds of ministry for which candidates are sponsored. Since 1997, to move away from ministers being defined primarily in terms

of remuneration, the official sponsorship categories have changed from Stipendiary and Non-Stipendiary Minister (via an intermediate period of Stipendiary/Non-stipendiary and Permanent Non-stipendiary) to Incumbent and Assistant Minister, along with Pioneer Minister, Potential Theological Educator and Minister in Secular Employment. However, expected remuneration is still noted on forms for budgetary and administrative reasons and, with a few exceptions, participants of all roles tended to refer to being sponsored or trained for stipendiary or non-stipendiary ministry, despite the fact that the two sets of terms are not synonymous.<sup>2</sup> It is unclear how far this is simply habit and how far it reflects general practicalities of decision-making or individual diocesan policies. Confusion was evident in the discourse of some ordinands:

*I'm over the age limit where [the diocese] would allow me to study to be an incumbent, which doesn't bother me because I didn't want to be one. I want to be self-supporting. (Non-residential, ordinand)*

A tutor at a TEI offering both mixed-mode and non-residential training expressed some of the complexity:

*Within the part-time ordinands there will be a mix of some training for stipendiary ministry and incumbent status, but many will also be training for non-stipendiary ministry. So ... within that group you are preparing people for different kinds of ministry. ... It's not all going to be incumbents, in fact we've even got two people who are training as permanent deacons, for example. You are not even training only for the priesthood.*

### 1.3 Language: key points

- There is no consistent vocabulary for IME 1 pathways.
- Models of IME are generally defined in relation to residential training.
- Training pathways are internally diverse and boundaries between them are blurred.
- Despite changes in sponsorship categories, ministry continues to be referred to in relation to remuneration.

## 2. Initial ministerial education Phases 1 and 2

### 2.1 Aims of IME Phase 1

Participants were asked about the aims of IME Phase 1 and how well Phases 1 and 2 work together as a programme of initial ministerial education. Regarding the formation of ministers, the following areas were mentioned as important to Phase 1:

- Priestly formation, including discipling and character formation;
- Theoretical knowledge and understanding;
- An introduction to practical skills;
- Provision of resources to sustain ordinands in future ministry, including theological skills, learning skills, knowledge bases, networks, tools and habits;
- Vocational discernment;
- Experience of different contexts for ministry;
- Preparation for curacy and future ministry, including good working and spiritual practices, time management, resilience etc.;
- Self-awareness regarding areas needing further development.

---

<sup>2</sup> A further pair of categories used alongside these terms is 'full time' and 'part time'.

What is not part of this list is the kinds of ministry for which ordinands are being formed, which is a key debate underlying this paper. DDOs were keen to stress the importance of deployability: regarding whether ordinands should be trained as generalists, deployable anywhere, one (with agreement from others in the group) commented,

*That's the idea, the Anglican vision, what it means to be an Anglican - yes. Certainly at the discernment level, with me as a DDO, that's a really big thing for me. Even with a very conservative evangelical ... I do say to them, 'Look you really do need to be trained and prepared to work in a number of different social contexts and church tradition contexts.'*

As we will see below, this is not the view taken by ordinands from some training programmes with roots in particular churchmanships, who feel they have been trained for specific kinds of ministry. This conflict can cause friction during the discernment process and at the point of placement as deacon, and the question of how early, if at all, ministers should develop specialisms, is one that requires reflection. It is further complicated by the assertion by most participants in this study that one of the aims of IME Phase 1 is to provide space for vocational discernment. Some describe this ontologically, as learning about whom one is called to be as a priest, and some in functional terms, discerning the type of ministry one is called to. If understood as the latter, it would seem that IME is attempting at the same time both to train ministers for specific ministry (whether to be a generalist or a specialist) and to help them discern the ministry to which they are called.

In the main, and particularly for the residential and non-residential pathways, the key difference between the two phases of IME relates to the balance of theoretical and practical learning, as articulated by a non-residential tutor:

*We have a well-established model of training which is Phase 1, which it is now called, when you focus on theological learning, albeit with some practical components to make sure you are able to apply that; then you have Phase 2 training which is going on further and working out the practical components, whilst still doing some ongoing learning. There's a clear flow and a difference in emphasis between the two. (Non-residential, staff)*

While, from a staff perspective, none of the TEIs made a complete division between theoretical learning in Phase 1 and practical learning in Phase 2, the place of practice varied both between and within pathways. Two dimensions of 'practice' are identifiable, described by a group of staff at a TEI with an emphasis on a long-term placement as part of their residential pathway. Firstly, as intrinsic to theological formation:

*the integration of academic and practice is important, because that is enabling people to make connections and links and to reflect on practice and hopefully establish a lifelong habit of doing that.*

Secondly, as the practical skills and knowledge necessary for Anglican ministry, such as understanding clergy discipline issues and presiding at weddings and funerals: 'The practical skills, what we do is leave them as little hooks for IME 2 to hook onto and develop.'

The emphasis on the integration of academic study and practice was echoed by staff of both non-residential pathways. One tutor used the phrase 'relentlessly relevant' to describe how

*One of the key things about this way of doing things and part of our DNA, has been that in the 'academic work' we are continually seeking to say, 'how does that work in your ministerial context?'*

This is also clearly the case for mixed-mode training where, in the words of one tutor,

*one of the strengths of this is that theology informs practice and practice informs theology. So you are in this constant dialogue.*

However, precisely because of this heavy emphasis on practice, mixed-mode pathways pose a challenge to the two phase model of IME described above. Ordinands normally spend three days a week working in their context church which, subject to annual leave, continues through college vacations throughout the two or three years of their training. Their two study days are also often spent in the parish, at home. Whether they are formally employed or not, they are usually given leadership responsibilities and are very aware that the church contributes financially to their training. Moreover, they are likely to be the only ordinand in their context rather than part of a group of students as is common with residential placements. Combined, these factors can contribute to a blurring of the traditional distinction between ordinand and curate, and to different expectations of training beyond ordination.

One group of mixed-mode staff stressed,

*There's a really clear sense that we are aware, and we watch this as tutors, that they are not in curacy. Therefore, a placement should only make appropriate demands, so we are always mindful therefore, that we are preparing them for curacy.*

This was largely reflected by their students, describing IME Phase 1 in familiar terms as a time 'particularly for theological learning' and 'resource gathering', and Phase 2 as for learning 'the practicalities, the nuts and bolts of ordained ministry'. Their context supervisors, however, had more mixed views. One went so far as to state, 'I feel like what I'm trying to do with these guys is to get them to a point where, at the end of their training, they are better trained than I was at the end of my curacy,' and suggesting that mixed-mode placements now function in a similar way to first curacies in the days when they were routinely followed by a second curacy. Others observed that much depends on the previous experience and current capacity of the individual ordinand, and that stories of curates 'going straight into leading a church plant and having complete responsibility' place pressure on ordinands to complete Phase 1 as a fully formed vicar. Supervisors in the second group discussed the practical implications of mixed-mode training for the ordinand:

*You said that they are different from a curate and of course they are, but in our kind of set up ... actually they are not that different. I would be training a curate to do quite a lot of similar stuff to the stuff that we've done with X, because we're a bit more of a gathered church, we have slightly fewer occasional offices going. That's where I would say there's a bit of clarity needed, or at least an acknowledgement that we are preparing this person with some of the things that their curacy will also give them.*

This blurring of the distinction between ordinand and curate is present in the accounts of both staff and students of this mixed-mode institution. The former noted that many supervisors have been training incumbents of curates in the past, and may apply this experience to the supervision of ordinands without recognising the difference. The latter explained, in the words of one, that this pathway 'feels much more like a mini curacy.' Both expressed concern that current expectations of curates entering Phase 2 with little practical experience of ministry do not match up to reality for those trained on mixed-mode pathways: 'you've got the issue of someone coming from [a ministerial role] into the start of a curacy and likely he's going to be treated like a child' (Staff).

## 2.2 Transition between IME Phase 1 and IME Phase 2

This mismatch of expectations between IME 1 and 2 has implications for the transition between the two phases. Ordinands at one mixed-mode institution were concerned that dioceses did not understand the kind of training they had received and therefore did not always offer them appropriate title posts. One ordinand explained that he had been released from his diocese, having turned down two curacy offers:

*I had an interview with one Vicar and asked, 'What is your vision for the curacy?' It was, 'well you will follow me round for two years and see what I do and then you might have a go at something in your third year.' I've already been leading, so it felt like it would be a complete reverse, rather than looking at something I can get my teeth into a bit more.*

This is not the case with every mixed-mode ordinand and most experienced a fairly smooth process in arranging their title post. One participant is remaining in her context church to serve her curacy, a practice which enables continuity of learning although limiting the range of church experience. Some supervisors noted feeling under emotional pressure to offer curacies to their ordinands as an indication of approval, aware that the latter have seen this happening for some of their peers: 'there does seem to be an expectation of being on trial and if it goes well...'. This is also related to pressure felt by ordinands across all pathways to ensure they are not left without a curacy, partly to avoid uncertainty and partly, as mentioned by a mixed-mode supervisor and a residential ordinand, because IME 1 learning becomes less abstract and 'makes more sense' when the destination for which the ordinand is being prepared is known.

Mixed-mode students are not the only ones with the possibility of remaining in the same church for their curacy. Although most dioceses encourage or require ordinands to move, some self-supporting ministers may stay in their home church for reasons of work or family. While obviously easier from a practical perspective, this brings with it its own challenges: 'In a sense it makes that transition more curious, more difficult, because you haven't been taken away. You're still there, you just turn up the next Sunday with a dog collar on and "what was that about?"' (Non-residential, staff). Those who move to a new place may in this sense find the transition easier, particularly if, as with most residential, some mixed-mode and a few non-residential students, they have already loosened ties with their previous home by moving for IME Phase 1. On the other hand, it was also noted by non-residential TEI staff that it is in some ways easier for curates trained locally to move into Phase 2 with the same cohort of familiar faces, especially where their previous TEI is involved in the provision of IME 2 training.<sup>3</sup>

Despite this, and the longstanding nature of residential training, it would seem that the latter does not always fit seamlessly with IME Phase 2 (or vice versa). Curates arriving from residential training may have more theological depth<sup>4</sup> but less practical experience, in terms of both skills and parish life, and may therefore find the transition challenging (although there were also suggestions that those coming out of mixed-mode or non-residential training may already be burnt out). Moreover, while we have seen above that mixed-mode students may struggle with low practical expectations, residential students can face challenges regarding academic expectations that do not follow on from what they have achieved at college:

---

<sup>3</sup> This can have an isolating effect on new curates arriving from residential or mixed-mode training: see Perrin (2016), *op. cit.*

<sup>4</sup> See Perrin (2016), *op. cit.*

*a common frustration is that students have got an MA here and they are forced through the same academic processes of getting a second MA in their IME 2. ... Essentially it is quite clear in those situations, or seems to be clear to them, that the [diocesan] MA programme was largely set up to bolt onto the local non-residential training thing. (Residential, staff)*

Academic elements of IME Phase 2 vary between dioceses and not all require (or permit) curates to undertake an MA. Where TEIs (usually non-residential) are involved in IME 2 provision this may result in a more streamlined IME process as a whole for non-residential ordinands/curates, for example where an ordinand begins an MA during IME 1 and completes it during IME 2. This is also the experience of some mixed-mode students studying under Common Awards. The possibility of adjusting the traditional balance of a theory-focused Phase 1 and a practice-focused Phase 2 in order to extend this was suggested by one of the mixed-mode supervisors, noting that mixed-mode ordinands are currently expected to achieve the same academic qualification as residential ordinands, in fewer hours:

*maybe after three years not having a degree, but a diploma and then blending into your first year of curacy for some who are not academic high-flyers maybe, or their job situation is different, flowing the thing a bit more and delivering something that is more relevant to the situation that they are in.*

We have noted above that the content and structure of IME Phase 2 varies between dioceses<sup>5</sup>. This was noted as a key challenge by TEI staff, especially those of residential institutions whose graduates disperse across the country. It also, of course, works the other way: dioceses receive new curates from a wide range of training programmes. While diversity and flexibility are to be welcomed, they inevitably create transitional challenges between the two phases.

Successful transition between IME 1 and IME 2 therefore depends on both the continuity and relevance of the programme of learning and the provision of an appropriate title post and training incumbent. Regarding the title post, we have seen that what makes a post appropriate can depend on a number of factors, including current learning outcomes and geographic mobility. From a diocesan perspective this can be understood in terms of deployability, given that curacies are posts of responsibility for ordained ministers which fulfil needs of the diocese as well as those of the curate. In placing deacons, dioceses must ideally match not only geographic and learning requirements, but also hours available (i.e. full time or part time), curate-incumbent relationship, skills and churchmanship. Sometimes the preferences of the diocese do not match those of the future curate. This will be discussed further below, but in relation to the placement of deacons, DDOs from one region raised specific concerns regarding ordinands graduating from TEIs with a narrow churchmanship, noting in particular the church-based training of mixed-mode programmes:

*the churches in my diocese that can afford to employ a candidate will be of a certain type and they will have worshipped there. They will do their training there and it will be 'how do we deploy them?' ... Actually if you are working with the bishops to try and look at the mission of the diocese, how do you then deploy them in places they won't want to go?*

---

<sup>5</sup> See Perrin (2016), *op. cit.*

Mixed-mode ordinands recognise this dilemma, one observing,

*What [the dioceses] mean by 'deployability' is 'malleable': 'we just want to be able to send you anywhere'. In the context that we are talking about deployability, what we mean is we are being trained for a particular thing, consider that and send us in that direction.*

Similarly, ordinands in the other mixed-mode group expressed a willingness to serve anywhere geographically, but most were a little firmer about the kind of role they envisaged for themselves, all mentioning church planting with one stating, 'I think it is in the DNA for everyone.' On the other hand, the same mixed-mode student was the only ordinand in the study to assert that future ministers may need to be deployable across different kinds of ministry, (he felt this would be provided for better on his programme than at residential college):

*If there's a bit of a gap and there are not enough priests to go round and we are having to throw our hands to things that we might not normally do or what we know we can do very well, I had that in the back of my head a little bit [when deciding on training pathway]. If lots of priests are going to retire and then there aren't going to be quite enough and so you might have a team ministry or you might have three parishes who have all got their own traditions.*

### 2.3 IME Phases 1 and 2: key points

- Regarding what ordinands are being trained for there is a tension between generalisation for the sake of deployability, and specialisation to make use of particular skills and passions.
- IME has the dual function of training ministers towards a vocation and facilitating discernment of vocation.
- The difference between Phases 1 and 2 of IME consists largely in the balance of theoretical and practical learning, which is destabilised by mixed-mode training.
- Dioceses sometimes struggle to find appropriate title posts for mixed-mode deacons, and mixed-mode and non-residential ordinands may remain in the same church to serve their curacy.
- Residentially trained curates sometimes find the academic structures of IME 2 do not fit with their continuing learning requirements or preferences.
- Both IME 1 and IME 2 provision are diverse, which creates challenges to the integration of the two phases.

### 3. Training decisions

According to the current system, decisions about training are made with reference to the Bishops' Regulations, which allocate points based on age, qualification, lay ministerial experience and ministry sponsorship category to determine what kind of training a candidate should receive. However, this apparently straightforward system conceals a great deal of complexity, including questions both about who makes the decisions and about the basis on which they are made.

Decisions about training are formally made by the sponsoring bishop, although in practice the extent to which the bishop is involved depends on the diocese, with some ordinands reporting direct discussions with their bishop and some talking only to DDOs. Often, DDOs act as the main point of contact for candidates and refer to bishops where necessary: 'I would draw the bishop in if I were really in a log-jam with somebody, but it is one of the delegated responsibilities that I take' (DDO).

In reality, the accounts of most DDOs and ordinands indicate that training decisions, within the parameters of the Bishops' Regulations, are ultimately made by candidates. DDOs generally see their role in this area as to provide guidance and sometimes to challenge and stretch candidates in their

training preferences, for example making them aware of other possibilities and encouraging them to step outside their comfort zone and visit a range of TEIs but,

*ultimately, not to overrule. Once we have done that stretching or challenging, if they are determined that they want to go to a particular kind, certainly in my experience that would be what we end up doing. (DDO)*

Where DDOs reported instances of candidates not being permitted their preferences, it was usually a matter of specific TEIs being ruled out on grounds such as current disorganisation, poor pastoral track record or churchmanship, rather than candidates being forcibly directed to a particular institution against their will (although this is not unknown).

From the ordinands' perspective, DDOs to some extent act as gatekeepers to training pathways, although sometimes direct access to the bishop means that the DDO is less involved or even bypassed. Most ordinands reported supportive relationships with their DDOs, who both listened to their perspectives and provided wisdom and direction. The influence of the DDO should not be underestimated, and a few ordinands perceived financial or other agendas at play within the advice they were given, or a lack of understanding or compassion. One young candidate, for example, was refused three years' full-time training despite not having a theological background. Another, older ordinand 'came out of my first DDO meeting feeling about three and a half inches high,' having been quizzed on her marital status (divorced) and lack of educational qualifications.

In deciding on the kind of training they will do and where they will do it, candidates may be influenced by a range of parties as well as DDOs and bishops, including TEIs (via open days, websites and personal contact), sending incumbents, family, friends and peers. It is evident that, with such a diverse and rapidly changing sector, it can be difficult to enable candidates to make informed decisions based on up-to-date information. While TEI staff and DDOs noted that sending incumbents are often extremely influential but draw on past experience which may be several years out of date, TEI staff asserted that DDOs may do the same:

*DDO influence is actually exercised from quite a narrow range of actual knowledge, contemporary knowledge as well. ... [We would welcome DDOs] coming round so that the DDOs coming here are not just DDOs coming to visit their own ordinands here. I actually want to see much more of the DDOs who don't, so that we can have a conversation with them about how we can serve them better and they can understand better what we are doing, so they don't get trapped into a pattern of always sending people to places that they already know. That relationship needs to be developed a great deal more. (Residential, staff)*

This is evident in the account of one ordinand, who asserted that her DDO had never heard of mixed-mode training. Another reported being presented with fewer options than a friend in the same diocese seeing a different DDO, although she was unsure whether her DDO was unaware of other possibilities or deemed them inappropriate. One group of DDOs acknowledged this as challenging, noting that 'the pattern is so diverse and shifting that it is really hard to keep on top of it. ... As DDOs when we meet ... we try to go round about the colleges because we can't physically visit them all.' Increased communication between TEIs and dioceses is desired by both parties, DDOs finding it helpful, for example, when TEIs keep them informed of training proposals for individual candidates, and unhelpful when candidates and TEIs arrange training without diocesan input. One DDO described intervening in a case where a candidate

*had already been off to one of the courses and had agreed with them her training, her placement, everything, without any consultation between the course and the DDO, and/or*

*the bishop, who had already said that she was not to go back to the church where she came to faith and where she had grown up.*

Decisions about training are therefore complex processes involving a four- or five-way conversation between the candidate, diocese (DDO and/or bishop), TEI (often initially more than one), Ministry Division and, for mixed-mode candidates, the context supervisor. This conversation does not always happen in a conventional order, as evidenced above.

Much of the above discussion relates to decisions about TEIs rather than about training pathways. It is not possible to separate cleanly the decision about pathway from that of TEI because the way they relate to each other varies between candidates as well as being influenced by other factors such as geography. For some, the place and manner of training are decided by a straightforward, linear process. This is especially so for candidates sponsored for assistant ministry or older candidates whose dioceses have age restrictions on access to full-time training (five of the nine participating non-residential ordinands were in this category). In these cases the only pathway usually available is part-time non-residential training (although two participants above the usual age limit reported their bishop providing extra money to allow them to enter residential college). Once this has been established the candidate can select between different training institutions if a choice is available, given that most people live in easy reach of only one or two TEIs and some dioceses deal exclusively with one institution. In such cases there is evidence of enormous flexibility on the part of TEIs in order to meet the needs of candidates, sometimes arranging new programmes of study around an individual's training requirements.

Some candidates have a choice of pathway as well as of TEI, although often the pathway is decided early on. The two residential colleges differed here: all four participating ordinands of one had also considered another pathway (three mixed-mode and one non-residential), compared with only two of the five ordinands of the other (both of whom considered non-residential). For the remaining three ordinands, residential training 'just seemed fairly natural':

*From the very start of the discernment process, that was what was expected that I would do. It was expected that I would be residential and it was expected that I would do [this programme of study].*

The mixed-mode ordinands were mostly fairly clear from the outset about the kind of training they wanted to do. Although most also visited some residential colleges, only one described that option as a serious possibility. The others developed their preference for mixed-mode training through involvement of their churches, personal contact with TEIs and their staff, friends undertaking similar training and, in one case a DDO. Diocesan reactions varied enormously (both by diocese and by TEI), from highly supportive ('It was my bishop that said, "You need to go here because you will go mad anywhere else."') to extremely wary ('[My DDO] was very anti-contextual training because she thought I'd be more deployable if I went away and studied').

Ordinands who considered more than one pathway often did not separate this from the decision about institution, assessing each possible TEI-specific pathway rather than deciding on pathway and then TEI. This highlights the blurred boundaries between pathways, with candidates, for example, deciding that they wished to train 'contextually' and seeking out TEIs that seemed to provide for this, including both mixed-mode and residential.

Within Bishops' Regulations, training decisions are influenced by a variety of factors, including things related to: (a) the person, e.g. gender, age, experience and personality; (b) personal circumstances, e.g. family, employment and location; and (c) external factors, e.g. diocesan budgets and bishops'

views on churchmanship. We will discuss below how some of these factors relate to different training pathways. For now, it is important to note that decisions are often largely based on practical issues (observed by one DDO reflecting on training decisions throughout IME 1 and 2: 'We talk vocationally, but actually we work on what is pragmatic'). The question of mobility is an obvious example, determining literally where candidates are able or willing to train.

While some of these influencing factors are beyond candidates' control, others require them to weigh up the impact of different pathways and institutions on aspects of their life (for example, whether to move as a family to a residential TEI). Because the decision is ultimately made by the candidates themselves, concerns were raised by some DDOs and TEI staff that too much leeway is given. Part of this relates to the question of deployability discussed above, in the sense that the needs of the candidate must be balanced against (or, some would argue, deferential to) the needs of the Church of England. A (residential) TEI member of staff suggested the perspective that

*you have been selected for training by the Church for the ministry of the Church which is catholic and national and therefore you have accountabilities and answerabilities within that, including maybe it having a more influential institutional say in where you go than you do.*

Underlying this is a concern that an element of the selection criteria, obedience, is not being demonstrated. In the words of one DDO, 'I want to be able to say, "you are signing up for obedience as well"'. Another (in a different group) gave the example of a candidate

*whose vocation is dependent on my allowing her to train in a particular way, because that will work for her ... you wonder if there's something about this has to fit my lifestyle. There's a real problem with signing that off as being obedient really. But it does seem to be increasingly the issue that her vocation is dependent on getting the right package and the context of training is part of that deal.*

The understanding of vocation to ordained ministry as something that transcends and directs one's lifestyle choices and is itself determined to some extent by the Church into which one is ordained, is problematised by a third DDO in the context of candidates living in relationship with others. Reflecting on questions faced by married candidates exploring the ordination of one spouse, she commented,

*I think there are quite a lot of people grappling with, 'how do we both have a vocation? How do we live that out?' Although I agree, there are definitely some deep questions about cost and sacrifice in vocation, I also wonder if some of the cost and sacrifice is holding out and saying, 'I don't know if I can do this because I'm married to someone who has a vocation to something else'. Who pays the cost and sacrifice? Is it the spouse? And are they going to follow you around for the whole of your ministry and put their vocation on hold?*

The question about obedience in theological education has two elements. One concerns the relationship between vocation and lifestyle. The other asks how this is worked out in the context of ministerial education: whether training is seen as a means to pursuing a vocation or as part of the vocation and therefore requiring discernment, as argued by staff in one residential TEI group:

*[The decision about training] is actually part of the vocational discernment, rather than a decision to be made subsequent to a vocation being affirmed.*

This again relates back to the question of deployability, depending on whether 'vocation' is understood as a candidate's specific future ministry (for example, as in the current provision of

specialised training for pioneer ministers), or whether it is understood as priesthood within the Church of England and discernment of training is therefore about the individual's priestly formation (character, discipleship etc.).

### 3.1 Training decisions: key points

- Training decisions are ultimately made by candidates, in the context of a multi-way conversation between candidate, DDO (and/or bishop), TEI, Ministry Division and (for mixed-mode students) placement supervisor.
- In the context of a rapidly changing sector, it is difficult for DDOs to keep up to date with information about IME 1 programmes.
- Candidates have differing degrees of choice, regarding both pathway and TEI, and immense flexibility is sometimes required of (particularly non-residential) TEIs to meet the needs of individual candidates.
- Decisions about pathway are not always separated from decisions about TEI.
- Candidates and DDOs negotiate decisions about training within a tension between practicality, obedience and choice in the context of vocation. How far is vocation to ordained ministry transcendent and how far is it negotiated?

## 4. Strengths and challenges of training pathways

At the beginning of this section it is important to emphasise that the aim of this research is not to compare training pathways against each other in order to identify a single best model of IME, but to assist in wise decision-making about different kinds of training. We have already established that the sector is diverse and boundaries between pathways are blurred, therefore some of the areas below cut across different pathways. Moreover, the perspectives of ordinands represented here were gathered while they were still in the first phase of IME. While this has been broadened by the inclusion of staff, supervisor and DDO voices, it is difficult to evaluate formational outcomes while the process of formation is ongoing. The second part of this study,<sup>6</sup> which examines perspectives of those involved in IME Phase 2, makes some steps towards gaining a longer view of training outcomes, although longitudinal work is required to achieve understanding of outcomes beyond training.

Within the sampling limitations set out earlier, none of the 29 ordinands participating in this study stated that, looking back, they would have preferred a different training pathway. Some had reservations of varying degrees about the precise programme, structure or content of their training, which will be discussed below. However, overall ordinands felt the pathway they were on was appropriate for them and the phrase 'I think everyone should train like this' (or equivalent) was used by some students on all three pathways. This is obviously limited to the experience of each student, but it indicates that ordinands in all three pathways see value in their particular model.

### 4.1 Location and dislocation

The obvious difference between non-residential, mixed-mode and residential training is one of place, both geographic and social. Broadly (with many variations), residential training implies relocating away from one's current place of residence to live and study in a close-knit residential community for two or three years; mixed-mode training may or may not mean physically moving, while 'home' becomes centred on one's context church and sometimes substantial travel to and from college is required; and non-residential training involves continuing to live in the same place and often to work in the same job, travelling (again, often some distance) to college and placement

---

<sup>6</sup> See Perrin (2016), *op. cit.*

churches. Within the accounts in this study, discourses of location and dislocation in relation to both one's previous (and subsequent) life and to the world beyond the immediate learning community feature heavily in terms of learning and formation.

One of the difficulties in assessing strengths and challenges of models of theological education is that often the challenging aspects of training are also its strengths, in the sense that challenge is necessary for growth and formation. One strong narrative evident particularly in the accounts of the staff and ordinand groups of one of the residential TEIs was of an intentional formative process of dislocation, 'this deconstruction and reconstruction pattern which they have to go through' (staff), where the difficulties of leaving one's life behind and entering a residential institution are not to be mitigated, but are intrinsic to formation:

*You expect dislocation and I think that's almost universal. People are dislocated, sometimes very positively because they really want to be dislocated and for others it has come harder than they expected. ... Whilst one helps people through that, one doesn't apologise for that ... it is creating the personality and character. (Staff)*

The ordinands at the same TEI talked about this at length, describing their personal journeys of formation in terms of profound identity reconstruction:

*It has forced me to lose that identity of someone who likes to fix. I'm not quite sure what my new identity is and I've put down the 'L' word, 'liminal' there ... You go through this place of being stripped of everything. It is not so much that college rebuilds you. It is more that Christ forms you into the person that you are needed to be for his Church. ... I know that I was not strong enough as a person to have really been able to be broken in the way that I have been able to be in the safe context of residential training.*

This process has many facets, which vary in emphasis for different ordinands. For some the geographic distance is important ('there was something important about going away and coming back'); for others it is about laying down former ministries, healing from past experiences, changing previously formed mind-sets, and/or challenging how far one's identity is dependent on a professional (or other) role (the word 'de-skilling' was used by ordinands in both residential groups). A similar narrative of dislocation was apparent in some of the stories of the second group of residential ordinands:

*For me, the necessity was to strip away the identity of the job and the community I was coming out of. I see it as two years that are incredibly self-indulgent and, frankly, navel-gazing, but I know that will stand me in good stead and give me the opportunity to form in a way that, hopefully, I will be able to give it back again.*

While residential ordinands such as those represented above tend to move physically to live within a new learning and worshipping community (whether their accommodation is on-site or off-site), ordinands on other pathways are less likely to move and, where they do, their physical location will be centred on a church rather than a college. The intentional, physical coming away from the rest of the world for a two- or three-year period is therefore not part of the formational process for non-residential and mixed-mode ordinands. Rather, formation takes place precisely through being located in and engaging theologically with life outside college, as articulated by a mixed-mode tutor discussing the aims of IME 1:

*The word that springs to mind for me immediately when you ask the question is 'formation'. ... It is something through this integrated process of academic learning, learning to think*

*critically and theologically, and to reflect on your experience of life theologically, drawing God into that conversation about 'how am I living and what's happening around me?'. Also getting the in-depth experience of reflecting on ministry in context ... Within this wonderful mix of things, watching this person form and change and develop Godly character.*

Staff of the other mixed-mode TEI described the necessity for ordinands to learn to 'think contextually' in order to minister effectively in whatever contexts they found themselves in during their future ministries. They also discussed the challenges of forming in ordinands rhythms of worship and prayer outside a close worshipping community: '[A]ren't we trying to find a spirituality which is really rooted and missional, but it needs to be able to work with the demands of life?'

Mixed-mode and non-residential ordinands have slightly different dynamics. Mixed-mode ordinands are full-time students and, while not living in a residential community, their lives may still be almost completely focused on their training, so the theological reflection described above engages mostly (not entirely) with church-based experiences. Non-residential ordinands are diverse, some being full-time, some part-time while not working and others combining study with employment; however, for most, the fact of being located within the (non-church) world while learning to make sense of it theologically is an intrinsic part of their formation:

*one of the things that is very present in all of this is students' ongoing experience of work, or engagement in their home lives, family life, which really becomes part of their formation ... what we are doing is bringing their complex lives into this dynamic here. (Non-residential, staff)*

The disadvantage of this complexity is that the enormous demands of training at the same time as managing work and family life tend to crowd out space for the theological and personal reflection and the in-depth study experienced by ordinands on other pathways. One non-residential student described learning to do just enough to manage the academic component: 'we call it the "forty percent". All we need is forty percent, we just need forty percent'. Another observed that it was his theological understanding that suffered:

*For me, married, children, full-time job with lots of travel in the job. How one gets through it I really don't know. I don't know, because sadly at times you are going from one assignment to another. You haven't got any real time for theological reflection. You haven't got any real time for yourself and God and understanding the whole theology aspect of our training. You are literally leaping from one assignment to another and hitting deadlines.*

A further aspect of the discussion regarding location and dislocation is the nature of practice in learning. Ordinands, whichever route they follow, are in a state of liminality, a transitional place between laity and clergy where their identity is being challenged and formed and where, at the same time, they are learning to take up positions of responsibility. Staff of all three pathways used the language of safety and protection to describe that learning process in IME Phase 1, which was also reflected in the accounts of the mixed-mode and residential ordinands (although absent from those of the non-residential ordinands):

*[P]eople can have a really hard time. How much better to do that in the context of college, before you are ordained and when you have got a tutor, supervisor, you are in a safe place and you've got chaplains and counsellors. ... Actually being able to have those moments, real desert moments I guess, in the context of this type of training is really helpful. (Mixed Mode, ordinand)*

*A lot was about to change in my life ... That really caused me to have to reflect and challenged me on who I was as a person. Apart from all this, what does it mean to be a deacon, priest? Actually what does it mean to live in this new state of being? I think having this environment was a safe place to help me continue some of those reflections.*

(Residential, ordinand)

What differed was how this sense of being in an acknowledged place of safety related to practical learning. The extent to which the latter was understood as rehearsal for the 'real' practical and relational ministry that would come in curacy, or as real ministry in itself, varied enormously. Ordinands in both residential groups used the word 'play' to describe their learning, although in slightly different ways. One group discussed working out their spirituality within the residential community:

*A: We do quite a lot of playing, don't we?*

*B: Just because it is a place where we get to take risks, not that there aren't consequences to those risks in a residential community, and frequently there are ... but in terms of playing with relationships and in terms of just being able to explore them in a fairly safe environment in order to explore and play with our vocation and what evangelism and all those sorts of things mean, this is an incredible setting to do this. I'm not saying we are not playing with live ammunition, we are, but there's something about being here amongst fellow brothers and sisters which means we are able to test the boundaries slightly and get feedback from that.*

An ordinand from the other residential TEI, which places a greater emphasis on church placements, described practical learning in the relatively relaxed context of her placement:

*It gives us scope to, I want to say 'play', but obviously it's not playing, but actually that is a fantastic space for us to make mistakes and experiment a little bit, with a little bit of guidance - as much as we want really.*

Her comments were made in relation to the contrasting experience of a fellow ordinand, who described a heavier sense of responsibility within a smaller church team. His experience perhaps more closely resembles that of the mixed-mode ordinands, all of whom had a definite sense of learning through 'real' ministry:

*You feel much more involved, not just watching how a church works, but getting stuck into being part of it and leading something, starting a project, whatever it might be.*

The sense of responsibility is heightened for mixed-mode ordinands (as another participant put it, 'we're actually working; this is something we're properly doing for the Church.'), some of whom are employed by their context church and all of whom are aware that the church is contributing to their training costs. Although the wisdom of giving someone ministerial responsibility at the beginning of their training was questioned by some, mixed-mode supervisors emphasised the necessity of a good return on investment in terms of both the ordinand's formation and the ministry of the church, and some DDOs also supported this approach. One gave the example of

*one candidate in particular who is heading towards a BAP, I can see would have an enormous impact in a local parish and community over three years of training whilst she is working part-time for ordination and would gain immeasurable experience as well. Actually that's a good use of her and a good use of developing her.*

These discourses of safe places and practice were absent from the accounts of the non-residential ordinands. This may be because, having to negotiate multiple domains (such as work, family, church and training) simultaneously, the notion of 'place' is itself ill-defined. Moreover, the huge amount of time and effort required in such negotiation is likely to make it difficult to relate to words such as 'self-indulgent', 'navel-gazing' and 'play'. By all accounts, non-residential training is enormously demanding and, while one group of ordinands praised the pastoral support provided by their TEI, the other group found it severely lacking.

Although non-residential ordinands did not describe 'practising' (rehearsing) ministry, nor did they place much emphasis on involvement in 'real' ministry. Several of them already had years of ministerial experience as Readers or in other roles, so they may view ministry practised during training as a continuation of those roles rather than as learning. Their understanding of the structure of IME as a whole was largely of a firm divide between theory in Phase 1 and practice in Phase 2:

*After three years I am personally at that point now where I don't believe I can read any more ... books [or] write any more essays right now. But I'm ready to go into ministry. I'm ready for the practical, the apprenticeship that the curacy offers. Just to get all this three years' worth of talking and writing into some practical context.*

The 'locatedness' of non-residential training therefore appears to be less about ministerial practice or location within a particular Christian community and more about location within the world: learning the skills to engage theologically and practically as priests with the reality of everyday life.

In the discussion above, the terms 'dislocation' and 'location' have been used primarily to describe ordinands' relationship with the world beyond their immediate learning community. They have not been intended to imply a distinction between models of training that are more 'unsettled' and 'settled'. Used in that, latter, sense, we can identify elements of location and dislocation across all three pathways: residential students are firmly located within their TEI community and mixed-mode and non-residential students are dislocated in a new place, a new role or a challenging learning environment. All ordinands undergo a profound process of identity change, inevitably associated with a sense of dislocation. As one (residential) tutor put it,

*It needs to be hard. That's part of formation. It needs to be jarring and unsettling. There needs to be commitment involved. You need to get stuck in with people who have made similar sacrifices.*

All these aspects of formation can be found in all three pathways, but often manifest in very different ways. Moreover, one (mixed-mode) tutor questioned whether a complete deconstruction and reconstruction of identity needs to be intentionally designed into IME: 'I'm of the mind that we shouldn't do that to people deliberately, we should let God do it.'

A key question about formation, then, is not so much whether it happens in the various training pathways, but what any particular model of formation is achieving. For example, as another (residential) tutor suggested,

*If the caricature is that the experience of a non-residential course is to intensify the way that one can manage that diverse existence, or what you call the real world, and the thing that a residential course particularly offers is that kind of dislocation which involves a rethink of vocation in a way which redirects it, I wouldn't want to put those in a hierarchy of importance, effectiveness or suitability at all. I think I would say that there is something really intensely different about what they are about.*

Those involved in decisions about training must therefore consider what kind of formation is required for each candidate in the context of the characteristics and circumstances of the individual person and the requirements of the ministry ahead of them. A wider question is the extent to which different kinds of formation are required for different kinds of people or for different roles.

#### 4.2 Relationships within the learning community

Intrinsic to the discussion above about location and dislocation are relationships, and how they play out within and beyond the formational learning community. Relationships were expressed as important in three interrelated ways: priestly formation, support and peer learning.

In terms of priestly formation, community plays a key role both in creating the process of dislocation discussed above, through the intensity of living (for residential students), studying and worshipping with a relatively small group of people, and in supporting them through it.

This relational intensity is highest for residential ordinands, which is unsurprising given that they spend much more time together than do ordinands on any other pathway. Ordinands in both residential groups placed an extremely high value on this aspect of their training (particularly one group, who spent more than a quarter of their time discussing it and noted that ‘the mood in the room has visibly kind of lightened and energised talking about that’). This close-knit community of others on similar spiritual and vocational journeys was reported as crucial to the reconstruction of identity that we have discussed, for example:

*Suddenly I'm in a room full of however many people who are at exactly the same point in this part of their life as I am. That's liberating, but it is also, oh man, you start comparing yourself. I think one of the main lessons I learned was not to become so self-conscious, but more self-aware. Probably that has come through being in relationship with other people who are at the same point in life as I am.*

Because activities such as eating and worship, alongside a vast range of social activities and organised groups, are carried out communally, residential ordinands have plenty of opportunity to engage with others of diverse walks of life, including different ages, personalities, professional backgrounds, marital and family statuses, sexualities and faith histories.

*So the fact that we live, work, study, pray together, forms us and we bring some of this academic into that, into our living. You will hear people say that they learn more by chatting over lunch for this formation than they do in the academic. ... It is being together, praying together.*

Such an intentional emphasis on community with high levels of relational intensity is not easy for everyone, especially those who are unable to participate fully. None of the ordinands in this study was a part-time or weekly resident at a residential college; however, one tutor recalled his own experience as a non-resident at residential training:<sup>7</sup>

*I got really frustrated at college because they were always banging on about community and being formed in community, but to me they never took account of the fact that I was a member of two different communities. Nine to five I was at college, but evening and weekends I was at home with my family and talking to my neighbours and going to my local church. (Non-residential, staff)*

---

<sup>7</sup> See also experiences described in See Perrin (2016), *op. cit.*

Even for those fully immersed in the community, the experience was critiqued by some. A DDO commented on

*an emotional pressure about living and sharing everything with folk in a residential setting that when term gets towards its end, you can see having an effect on the way people behave.*

Others described interpersonal conflicts blowing up out of proportion, with a tutor of a non-residential TEI remembering a psychotherapist attached to one college wanting 'to drill a hole in the wall of the college to get that tension out' at the end of term. Residential TEI staff recognised the need to manage such an environment, but also asserted that

*That's all part of preparation for ministry ... They learn, and work out, if they are successful, strategies for making boundaries and finding space and bolt holes and escapes. ... In a sense, the intensity is just 'welcome to what you are heading towards and you need to learn how to cope with it'.*

The formative aspect of community described by residential students is echoed by non-residential ordinands, who also described questioning and reaffirming vocational identity in relation to other people:

*you start with all that stuff [rule of life] and then it's like 'but is that who I am?' 'Who do I need to be at the end of this?' Then you come full circle and realise that it is okay to be just who I am. God just wants me. He called me. He didn't call me to be [another student], he called me to be [me]. And that's all okay. I think it takes you a while to figure that stuff out.*

While these students do not live together for extended periods, they narrate similar experiences of intense formative relationships through the residential weeks and weekends, which build community with other ordinands:

*The weekends are pretty intense and that's just two days. Summer School is seven days and ... you are eating together, worshipping together, you have mixed year groups. It's to do with the community aspect of it and being able to share stuff with each other.*

Community for non-residential ordinands, then, is still there, but in a different form to that experienced by residential ordinands. One non-residential tutor described it as closer in nature to the wider Church:

*the idea of a community which continually gathers, disperses and re-forms, as opposed to a community which is one place. We are continually breathing in and breathing out. We are continually gathering together as a community then going back to our different contexts then coming back together again. The more I've gone on with this approach, it has made me ponder that dynamic as something that mirrors what church is like - the continual dispersing to be Christians in the world, gathering together again, dispersing to do our ministries.*

A tutor from the other non-residential TEI described the training as relevant to contemporary 'life without buffers,' where 'the worlds of work and family responsibilities and leisure are mixed in with each other and exerting pressures on each other and making life quite complex for many people.' This is reflected by a mixed-mode ordinand who also moves in and out of different communities, observing,

*We are part of a worshipping community in our church that we are formed in and then obviously we worship together as part of [college]. I think that's quite interesting as well, which community ... is the one that is the core formation?*

Identity (re)construction in the context of formative relationships was not an aspect of community emphasised by either group of mixed-mode ordinands, although they also meet together for residential. Rather, both groups placed value on a sense of collegiality and shared purpose: 'The friendships that I've made here have been really powerful. You are all passionate about mission and you are all passionate about people.' An ordinand in the other mixed-mode group identified better with the concept of 'team' than with 'community':

*I feel that we are team-mates on mission together and that you gain a different ... type of community with the people who are in the trenches with you ... That's how it feels week in, week out.*

This experience was not shared by everyone in the group, in particular two ordinands on a different (also mixed-mode) programme, who felt they lacked 'camaraderie' with other students. Otherwise, however, ordinands from all three pathways were in agreement that a key aspect of their learning community is the support it provides from other students. One residential ordinand referred to 'a mutual pastoral responsibility for one another;' a mixed-mode ordinand described how, after a tragedy during the training, 'it was unbelievable to realise how close we were;' and a non-residential ordinand explained, 'You always feel like your course-mates understand. ... The support and relationships that you build with your course-mates are the best thing about training in this way.'

In terms of ordinands' learning, we have already seen the value placed by residential students on informal 'down-time,' such as 'chatting over lunch' and social activities. The scale of opportunity for this is strongest on residential pathways, although non-residential and mixed-mode ordinands stressed that they remained in close contact with other students outside of college. The richest moments of peer learning, emphasised by all ordinands with the exception of one of the mixed-mode groups, come through contact with people who are different from oneself, for example in age, gender, social background, family status, churchmanship or profession. Learning can be identified at two levels: firstly, broadening one's outlook by understanding perspectives of other people and, secondly, learning to value and collaborate with people with whom one would not normally relate. So, for example, a young mixed-mode student described

*making great friendships with people who are old enough to be your parents. They are really rich friendships full of experience and perspective from people that you maybe wouldn't click with outside.*

Bishops' Regulations and personal circumstances of candidates mean that student populations vary between training pathways. Two of the biggest deciding factors are age and geography, meaning that, overall, residential and mixed-mode ordinands are likely to be younger while older candidates are directed towards non-residential training. Non-residential candidates normally attend a TEI within reach of their home, whereas residential candidates may move across the country to their preferred institution. For mixed-mode students, geographic location is more varied: while some stay in their home church, others uproot themselves from a distance.

One of the most important aspects of difference, discussed by ordinands, staff, DDOs and supervisors, is that of churchmanship. All six TEIs, including the two residential colleges, were keen to stress that they provide a diverse learning community spanning all theological backgrounds. While participants other than those related to the residential colleges generally viewed residential TEIs as narrow in churchmanship (a factor strongly influencing decisions about training), staff of these TEIs in each case recognised a predominant identity in a particular tradition, but pointed to a broad range of students, tutors and placement churches:

*I wouldn't want us to be branded as one sort of churchmanship. It is so important that we are serving the Church of England in its breadth and comfortable with that.*

Non-residential TEIs, although narrower in geography, are generally considered much wider in orthodoxy, largely because their ordinands in most cases have little choice of training pathway or institution. As we have seen, non-residential colleges are regional institutions, often working with specific constituent dioceses. Candidates who choose or are directed to non-residential training via Bishops' Regulations and DDOs are likely to attend their local regional TEI.

Mixed-mode programmes vary in churchmanship. As a more recent model of training they tend so far to be associated either with a particular church or group of churches, or with a previously established TEI. Because context churches currently contribute to the training costs, the range of possible participating churches is also limited. Some mixed-mode programmes therefore particularly attract candidates of a particular (often charismatic evangelical) theological background which, as we have already seen, prompts caution in DDOs who place value on deployability. However, of the participants in this study, two in one group were not charismatic evangelical and the other group, as mentioned in the methodology section above, was probably not entirely representative of the TEI. Ordinands in the latter group highlighted the range of churchmanship:

*I think what's so good about this way of training is that you have a diverse group of people who are really broad theologically, every type of church you can imagine in the Church of England.*

The ordinands went on to discuss the extent to which their learning community was dominated by the charismatic evangelical sector, concluding that much of the diversity arose from the intermingling of mixed-mode and non-residential students. In all four mixed-mode and residential institutions, students studied alongside non-residential students (and in three of the TEIs also with non-Anglican students), either on a daily basis or at certain times such as residential weeks and weekends. This mixed economy of training pathways emerged as an important factor in the ability of TEIs to offer a diverse learning environment, crossing not only churchmanship but also other axes of social difference that influence training decisions, such as age and geography.

#### 4.3 Relationships outside the learning community

Relationships within the learning community are not the only ones that ordinands must manage during their training. We have already discussed the importance of dislocation within formation, and this has enormous implications for continued relationships with those who are not undergoing a similar process. Notwithstanding the blurred boundaries between training pathways and the diversity of experience within them, broad differences can be identified between the three pathways regarding how these relationships are negotiated.

For residential students, entering training usually requires a physical move away from one's existing community, which sometimes entails leaving behind loved ones. One ordinand described the challenge:

*I think we struggle. It is very hard to be away from your loved one for most of the year. I think [he] thinks that, when he does come here, that everybody is so lovely to him that he feels he has a place here, but of course it is never quite the same because he doesn't get fully integrated into it.*

It was observed by other ordinands that maintaining deep relationships outside the college requires intense effort:

*I think the specific difficulty with residential training, where I've seen difficulties in the past, and there have been people that this hasn't worked out for, is when they have tried to also hold on to some life outside. ... [I]t is a strain when you leave a part of your heart outside of the bubble. That is the area which does ask you to be very immersive.*

Usually, married candidates and those with children have the options of: taking their spouse and/or children with them to residential college; commuting to residential training on a daily or weekly basis; or entering non-residential or mixed-mode training. In this study, all the residential students were resident on a full-time basis; however, some of the other participants had experience of commuting to residential college, as we have seen above.

For DDOs, family relationships are a vitally important factor in training decisions (indeed, some candidates decide not to pursue a potential vocation to ordained ministry because of the impact the training will have on their family), and they generally take care to talk to both partners (and children where appropriate) to ensure the best solution is identified. All options involve some degree of cost or sacrifice for the candidate, their family, or both. Those who move with their families uproot them from communities, schools and jobs, knowing that after two or three years they will have to do the same again: as one male residential ordinand asked, 'Why uproot three children for two years and then move back again?'. His decision to do so was based on the sense that his family also required some kind of formation, in working through expectations of the future ('we certainly made a decision to move as a family just to have a chance to get our heads around what the future held') and in experiencing what it meant to move as a family within a relatively safe environment:

*That thought of our first move and all the trauma of what that may or may not bring, also coinciding with me having this very public role in ministry, could be a complete disaster. So, to have that experience of moving the family to [college], and having had some experience of what that might mean, at least we know what to expect when we go somewhere, was just perfect. Traumatic, but really worthwhile. Then to have the support network of people who were going through that at the same time, and having the experience of building up new relationships at the school gates, building resilience for the kids for them to work out different support structures.*

However, he acknowledged that the move was 'tricky' for at least one of his children. Some parents are unable or unwilling to allow their family to make this sacrifice, as articulated by a woman doing full-time training at a non-residential TEI:

*Thinking about residential college, that wasn't an option for me because I've got a family and I was also working as well. [Non-residential training] was much more flexible for my personal circumstances. It worked for the family. Family needs to come along with you and for me to go off to residential college, 'see you later, have fun,' wouldn't work. I wouldn't be in the right frame of mind, nor would my family. It would be too much of a burden on them. Ministry is about bringing everybody along. [Non-residential training] accommodates that. ... I've got a fifteen year old and a seven year old. They are all settled in school and you have to think of their needs as well as my own.*

The question of whether or not to move one's family has no obvious answers. The two examples above show two different approaches, both based on the premise that the family does not remain detached from ministry. In some cases the intention is for the spouse to be very much involved in future ministry, in which case residential training may be chosen as providing opportunities for both

partners to study. DDOs and residential TEI staff were keen to challenge any assumptions that it is best to keep one's family in the same place if possible:

*People do assume that it would be easier not to move at the point of training. Whereas, doing non-residential training can put a huge strain on family life because you are coming home every evening and spending all evening in front of the computer and not engaging with their family at all. Whereas, possibly, if they are in residential training they might get home at half five or six and have a nice evening at home with their family. (DDO)*

This is borne out to some extent by the accounts of residential ordinands with families, although it was also acknowledged that heavy workloads meant that boundaries between study time and family time were sometimes difficult to maintain.

The decision of the male ordinand above was made easier by the fact that his wife 'felt her calling was to stay at home with [the children].' For those whose spouse is in paid employment and unwilling or unable to stop work, full-time residential training may not be possible without splitting the family. In some cases it is possible to arrange a weekly commute to a residential college in order to maximise quality family time, as in an example given by a DDO of a candidate who

*initially assumed that he would do part-time training because his wife wants to carry on working and they have got children who are at a stage in their education where they shouldn't be moved probably. ... He was saying that he didn't want to be away, but the reality is that we've now decided that he will be a weekly boarder, because when he is at home he is available to the family. Whereas, if he is at home part-time, he will not be available to the family.*

However, often this is not possible and non-residential and mixed-mode students sometimes experience enormous pressure on family life. One mixed-mode ordinand with three children, for example, described each week for a term having to wait until her husband arrived home at 8pm before leaving to travel a significant distance to stay overnight and attend a module the next morning.

Training decisions are sometimes heavily influenced by the job and income of the ordinand's spouse. Sometimes this was enabling, for example one student referred to by a tutor (not a participant in this study) was able to do her preferred option of mixed-mode training because she did not need to be paid by the placement church. Sometimes it was restrictive, for example a different woman (under the age of 32) being advised that she did not need to earn money and should therefore train part-time for self-supporting ministry.

As in these two cases, there are gender implications to decisions regarding families and spouses. While in theory all the same options are open to women as to men, the reality is that there are far fewer male than female spouses of residential ordinands (spouses' groups at residential colleges are often referred to as 'wives' groups'). This is partly to do with lower numbers of female than male vocations under the age of 40 and higher numbers of women in the over-40 age group.<sup>8</sup> However, it is also the case that married women are disproportionately less likely to enter residential training. In this study, four of the five male residential ordinands were married with children (two of these

---

<sup>8</sup> See Graveling L. (2015), *Young Vocations: Journeys towards Ordination*, Ministry Division. [http://www.ministrydevelopment.org.uk/UserFiles/File/TRIG/Young\\_vocations\\_journeys\\_towards\\_ordination.pdf](http://www.ministrydevelopment.org.uk/UserFiles/File/TRIG/Young_vocations_journeys_towards_ordination.pdf)

families were started during training), while two of their four female counterparts were married and none had children.

Anecdotally, the gender balance in this regard is more even on mixed-mode programmes, one tutor asserting, 'we attract quite a lot of mums. They seem less willing to uproot their family and move half way across the country to full-time residential college.' This is backed up by a DDO, who stated, 'I currently have 11 people on mixed mode ... and only one of them is a bloke, all the others are women, because "we couldn't move away because of my husband's job"'. Of the mixed-mode ordinands participating in this study, two women were married with children, one engaged and two unmarried, while three of the men were married (one with a child and one with a baby on the way), one engaged and one unmarried. Our non-representative sample follows the theory that non-residential training is most accessible to married women: out of eight female participants, five were married (four with children), two divorced (both with grown-up children) and one unmarried. Only two male non-residential ordinands took part, both married with children.

Other research<sup>9</sup> indicates that, more widely, men's careers continue to be privileged over women's, and women continue to bear the majority of childcare responsibility. It is therefore not only harder for women to enter full-time training, but also to move their family geographically. It may also be possible that full-time residential training is not seen as a good option for women wanting to start families, as suggested by a (residential) TEI member of staff, who asserted, 'residential training can be excellent for women at all stages of life and all circumstances, but it needs a bit of working at.' Certainly, DDOs indicated that family-friendly policies, for example being allowed to breast-feed during lectures, attract female candidates.

Family-friendly residential environments are not necessarily so attractive to single candidates, however. Two young, female, full-time ordinands, both mixed-mode, were put off residential training by friendly suggestions at open days that they could babysit other students' children. Single ordinands face their own challenges in residential training: although usually more able to relocate geographically, they enter training alone and, while not having to manage time pressures from family, need to be disciplined about setting their own boundaries. They are also required to move into university-style accommodation, often having been used to their own home. Younger ordinands who had recently left university reported this as a contributing factor in choosing mixed-mode training:

*I wanted more of the mixed mode having graduated only in 2013 and spent two years in halls of residence I was adamant not to go to that kind of format again.*

Another explained that she did not want to have to keep vacating her room:

*From a practical perspective, I just didn't want to have to move out of the college room every term. Actually at twenty-four I'd moved house every year. My parents are all right. We don't get on that well and it would definitely get worse if I had to go home for a month every term.*

In this case, the ordinand preferred a more secure, 'rooted' environment. This contrasts somewhat with the picture of residential training as a two- or three-year 'bubble' depicted above in the discussion about internal relationships: while residential colleges can be intense relational

---

<sup>9</sup> See Graveling L. (2015), *Women and Leadership in the Church: Insights from Gender and Management Literature*, Ministry Division.

[http://www.ministrydevelopment.org.uk/UserFiles/File/TRIG/Gender\\_and\\_management\\_review.pdf](http://www.ministrydevelopment.org.uk/UserFiles/File/TRIG/Gender_and_management_review.pdf)

and Graveling L. (2015), *Vocational Pathways: Clergy Leading Large Churches*, Ministry Division.

[http://www.ministrydevelopment.org.uk/UserFiles/File/TRIG/Vocational\\_pathways\\_large\\_churches.pdf](http://www.ministrydevelopment.org.uk/UserFiles/File/TRIG/Vocational_pathways_large_churches.pdf)

environments, the training is broken up by relatively long holidays. The intensity of mixed-mode and non-residential training, on the other hand, continues through placements and other commitments throughout the year.

Some ordinands also expressed more of a desire to maintain relationships beyond their college because of their single status. While one mixed-mode student chose that pathway partly 'to have a bit more control over actually keeping friendships,' a residential student described keeping close contact with her sending church:

*in a personal, social support context, I still feel very integrated with my church back home ... and my friends and support network there. That might be partly because I'm single, so I tap into that a bit more maybe.*

#### 4.4 IME Phase 1 content: academic studies and placements

The range of training programmes within the three pathways is enormously varied. No single group contained ordinands all following the same programme, and possibilities included (as well as residential variations) full-time and part-time; two years and three years; diplomas, BAs and MAs; and awards from different universities. In some groups all of these routes were represented in various combinations. Although TEI staff emphasised the integrated nature of the first phase of IME, ordinands across all pathways understood their learning largely in terms of a balance of academic study and practical experience, along with worship, prayer and community as discussed above.

The academic, classroom-based aspect of training is largely associated with accreditation and the qualification that the ordinand will receive at the end of IME 1. There is prestige attached to some academic qualifications, although this was not particularly evident in this research. The academic programme to be followed is agreed by the ordinand and the TEI, based on factors such as age, previous qualifications, ministerial experience, number of years of study and personal circumstances. It is not necessarily the case that students will aim for the highest possible qualification, and tutors may encourage them not to do so in order to maximise their formation:

*Rather than just bagging MAs, it is about making sure that people think theologically for mission and ministry so that though they are not the highest level of degree, they are working it into their very theological reflections and thinking and instincts. (Residential, staff)*

Similarly, a non-residential ordinand described taking a vocational perspective to resolve her frustration with not being able to achieve a higher qualification than her Reader training had already afforded her:

*You come back to, 'well, what is the reason we are doing this?' Is it to get an academic qualification or is it to meet your vocation? When you take that academic hat off ... and say, 'actually, I am here to be trained for ordination and it doesn't matter what the piece of paper says' then you get your head back into the right frame of mind again.*

In some cases the programmes of study did not seem to fit easily with the number of years of training. On one hand, a residential student explained that her main qualification 'only runs for two years but I'm here for three, so I will be doing some description of postgraduate thing in my third year.'<sup>10</sup> On the other hand, two-year mixed-mode students were concerned that they had missed elements of training, having effectively started the three-year course as second years.

---

<sup>10</sup> See also Perrin (2016), *op. cit.*

Quality of teaching was measured by participants by the quality of those delivering it, with staff from all three pathways keen to stress the qualifications of tutors. One residential institution (and its students) placed extremely high value on its links with an Oxbridge university and the teaching accessible there by its ordinands. Mixed-mode and non-residential staff highlighted the variety of tutors and their grounding in practice as well as their academic credentials:

*we draw in a huge variety of tutors to teach. ... That means that almost everybody involved in the course is also a practitioner. We have some able theologians, biblical scholars, sociologists of religion and all sorts of other people working with us, both within the core team and within the more dispersed team. ... That means that we can bring a huge variety of people into play in terms of intellectually and academically what are we doing, but also in terms of practice. (Non-residential, staff)*

Several participants cautioned against candidates deciding on non-residential training on the basis that it is less academically rigorous. Given the extra time pressures, high degree of self-study and concentration of lectures into small time-spans, it was generally agreed that succeeding in this kind of training requires immense academic capacity:

*You need superhuman stamina to do a part-time course, and you have to have superior powers of concentration and categorisation and organisation and time management and everything. It is actually in some ways more rigorous to do the part-time course. It is not, academically, an easy option at all. (Residential, staff)*

While academic rigour is to be welcomed, it raises questions about accessibility of training for those without previous academic qualifications. Non-residential TEs are used to catering for a range of educational backgrounds (as one tutor put it, 'We've had everything in the classroom from people who left school barely with O-levels to a Professor of Theology') and often have specialist support available for those needing help with study skills. However, concerns were raised from several participants about the disproportionately high numbers of educated and middle-class ordinands and limited accessibility in both selection and training for some (one supervisor pointing out, for example, that most non-residential training is completely inaccessible to people who do not drive).

The integration and balance of academic and practical learning have already been discussed in relation to the aims of IME Phase 1. What remains to be explored is the placements, which are part of all three pathways and form the basis of mixed-mode training. Mixed-mode students spend three days a week in these 'contexts' (usually in one but sometimes splitting their time between two), alongside working towards their theological qualification. Some aspects of practice are assessed, for example through sermon recordings and supervisor reports, and students are usually required to submit assessed reflections and other pieces of work related to their placement. However, although the placement is considered essential to the ordinand's formation, those three days are themselves not accredited. One group of mixed-mode ordinands felt this was unfair, arguing that their practical learning is not recognised and, 'the result ... is you are doing a full-time degree in half the number of hours that a normal university student would get.' However, while some suggested the placement should receive accreditation, others disagreed because of

*the stigma that is already attached to contextual training, which is 'oh you are not going to be as academic', or 'you're not going to be as theologically-minded as those people who went somewhere else'.*

The issue of accreditation was not only raised by mixed-mode students: one group of residential ordinands questioned why their course on leadership was not accredited through Common Awards,

suggesting that, 'as frequently with educational syllabuses, they don't seem to have caught up yet' with changing requirements for ministers. There is perhaps a question here about what gives value to a piece of learning or formation, and whether staff and students understand this in the same way, given that a tutor from the same TEI stated, 'we have set our face against the approach that if you are doing it, it must be for credit. We have some quite explicit non-accredited activities.'

Placements vary enormously between pathways and between TEIs. Most ordinands experience at least two placements (sometimes several more) during IME 1, sometimes including non-church contexts, and it has not been possible to involve all their supervisors in this research. The voices represented here are the supervisors of the church placements in which ordinands spend most of their time. For mixed-mode students this is their context church which lasts the whole of their training; for non-residential students it is their home church; and for residential students it is their main placement. As the residential TEIs in the study differ in their approach to placements and only one of them provided access to supervisors, the perspective of residential supervisors is limited.

Given that each group of ordinands was asked the same set of questions, but allowed space to develop the topics of discussion as they wished, it is interesting to note how much time was spent in total discussing placements. Both mixed-mode groups used between a quarter and a third of their two hours to talk specifically about this element of training, while the non-residential ordinands spent between 10% and 20% of the time discussing it. The groups of residential ordinands were vastly different from each other, with one (whose TEI places emphasis on long-term, integrated placements) spending nearly a quarter of their time on this subject and the other (with shorter-term placements) less than 5% (this group, as mentioned above, spent much of their time discussing community life; they did not mention placements until specifically questioned about them). This serves yet again to highlight the blurred boundaries and diversity between and within training pathways.

On the whole, supervisors reported positive experiences of hosting students, noting the privilege of being part of an ordinand's training and watching them develop. Benefits to their congregations included encouragement from being considered a church able to train ordinands and inspiration in terms of prompting members of the congregation to consider their own vocation, as well as the value of the relationships formed and the work carried out by the ordinand. There tends to be a sense of loss when the ordinands complete their training and move on (except in the rare cases where they remain in the same church as curate). This is all the more so for supervisors of non-residential ordinands, who are often also their sending vicars and therefore lose a key member of the congregation. Usually, in this case, the loss begins at the start of IME 1, as the ordinand steps back from church responsibilities in order to make time for study. Some supervisors, especially those working alone, also value the ordinand as a colleague with whom to share thoughts and ideas.

Non-residential students, as one put it, 'are considered to be on placement from day one;' however, the context of this 'placement' is usually the ordinand's home church (some reported moving church to what was considered a more suitable environment, although this did not always work out). Rather than taking on extra duties, ordinands are more likely to reduce their parish activity to allow time for study. They also have extended periods on placements in other churches or non-church contexts, which are not represented in this study. At least one of the TEIs placed more importance on these other placements than on the home church, which was reflected in the accounts of some of the supervisors:

*I almost feel that there's an expectation from [the college] that incumbents in the sending parishes don't actually do very much. So, when they have one who is committed to their*

*ordinand and is prepared to work with them, they've almost seemed not to know what to do with me.*

In general, the non-residential supervisors in this study tended to have little direct contact with the TEI, communication taking place mostly via the ordinand. The supervisors associated with one institution reported an annual briefing day, although one had no knowledge of this. All those connected with the other TEI commented that they had received little or no guidance at all:

*I've had little communication. Well, zero really from the people from [the college] directing me in what the ordinands should be having experience of whilst on a placement. I think as a parish priest I've had to go, 'well, if they are being trained to be ordained they are going to need experience in these things', but I think it would have been nice to have had something from [the college], if only a standard template. I have received nothing really.*

The residential supervisors expressed a strong sense of being an integrated part of their ordinands' training and high levels of satisfaction with communication about their role: 'I'm impressed with it actually. It has been well organised and you know where you are and what is expected.' They described regular meetings with the groups of ordinands placed in their churches, along with a clear handbook, training and review mornings for supervisors (which they found helpful to their wider ministerial development), easy contact with placement tutors and specific updates on individual students' learning requirements.

A similar structure was in place at one of the mixed-mode TEIs, including a handbook, an annual supervisor briefing/training day, an annual *in situ* visit to the ordinand, termly updates via email and an open telephone line to a tutor. However, the staff appeared clearer about this than the supervisors, who expressed a desire for 'clear expectations' and 'more guidelines'. This call was echoed in the other mixed-mode group:

*my feeling is that we could have done with more discussion about role, both in terms of who am I in relation to this individual, but also in terms of what is this individual heading towards because of the distinctive nature of their training experience. I don't think I've ever had an in-depth discussion about that with [the college].*

This partly reflects the differing balance of college and placement elements of training between residential and mixed-mode models: whereas the residential students are located primarily in college and placed in churches (in groups) for about five hours a week, mixed-mode supervisors are managing an individual student (occasionally more than one) on a 0.5 full-time equivalent basis, whose primary location is in the church. Supervisors are aware of a high level of responsibility in their ordinand's training but do not all feel adequately equipped or informed about individual training requirements.

Mixed-mode supervisors are also aware that their church is contributing financially towards the training of the ordinand. Financial viability for this model of training is often assessed on a case-by-case basis, where DDOs, TEIs, supervisors and ordinands come up with personalised solutions that meet the requirements of the diocese, Ministry Division, TEI, church context and ordinand. This results in an array of practical arrangements both between and within dioceses. Examples of different funding arrangements include:

- Top-up grants from diocesan budgets or possibly elsewhere (unspecified). These may be awarded at the discretion of the bishop, or placements may meet the criteria for specific diocesan funds such as mission or community projects.

- Accommodation, which may be provided as part or all of the contribution of the placement church. Sometimes this is property owned by the church and sometimes rented.
- Students waiving remuneration and continuing to live in their home, financially supported by their spouse.
- Employment by the placement church for a specific role, e.g. Children's and Families' Worker. This may be a new job or the continuation of a previous role.

Some participants also expressed uncertainty about the costs of mixed-mode relative to residential training, for example asserting that the expense may be similar overall or that some residential models are in practice very similar to mixed-mode but attract higher levels of funding.

Variations in funding arrangements affect the relationship between the student and the placement church, particularly if the student is employed to carry out a specific role. To a certain extent, however, all placements were understood within an employment framework because of the recognised financial contribution of the host church. Several issues arise from this.

Firstly, students and supervisors must negotiate time off and holidays on an individual basis, given that placements are not subject to academic terms. Although it seems that guidelines do exist, confusion was expressed concerning how much holiday was appropriate (often six Sundays per year, in some cases understood as pro rata, i.e. three Sundays) and when it should be taken. The conflict in identity between student and employee emerges particularly at Christmas and Easter, working times for ordained ministers but when students would normally expect to be on holiday. Supervisors were unclear on how to approach this, some allowing time off and others requiring the ordinand to work.

There was also a lack of clarity about what counts as time off, given that residential weekends take the student away from the church, and how far supervisors should be flexible in recognising the demands of home and study, particularly around essay deadlines.

*there are many ... mornings when we have a staff team meeting where [my supervisor] will just say, 'it's ok, just go home, don't come in this morning because you need to be writing an essay.' ... However, we have still had difficult conversations where I have booked holiday and she's said, "but you were at [a residential week]," so recognising that that is not holiday, it is work.*

This is often a dilemma for supervisors, recognising the pressures on ordinands while managing the needs of the church. Some also point to the formational aspect of time pressure: 'I do treat it in my mind that this is preparing them for the reality of sacrificial ministry.'

Secondly, concerns were raised that obligations towards the context church may impinge on quality of training. In the words of one DDO, 'we must be clear that it is training and that the placement for mixed mode isn't just the way they earn a few bob by letting the Brownies into the church on a Monday'. This can be a particular issue when the placement is a continuation of a previous job. One mixed-mode ordinand described difficulty in reducing her hours once she had begun her training:

*You just know that for ministry to be successful and to continue, that there are hours that need doing, so you do them. ... For me, at least, my placement supervisor just sees it as a job because I was there already. She doesn't really acknowledge... she's not like yours that would say, 'well, you've got an essay due in.' What I do is stay up all night and write the essay.*

While it was recognised that participation in the training of an ordinand is to some extent a privilege and a blessing, and that some churches do not feel they benefit much from the experience beyond this, the supervisors participating in the research generally weighed carefully the costs and benefits of hosting an ordinand, talking explicitly about ‘value for money’.

Finally, different financial situations can lead to questions of accountability, given that power dynamics between stakeholders are deeply influenced by funding arrangements. One supervisor described the diocese as having ‘less of a money lever on us’ regarding job descriptions etc. because it had not contributed financially to the placement. On the other hand, concerns were also expressed (by DDOs) that the limited number of churches that can afford to take part in this kind of training scheme creates a churchmanship imbalance in the range of available parishes, given that many larger churches are evangelical,<sup>11</sup> and (by supervisors) that some ordinands may find themselves in a placement based on the affordability of the church rather than the quality of the supervisor.

#### 4.5 Strengths and challenges: key points

##### *Crosscutting issues*

- If the strengths of training pathways often lie in the challenges faced by ordinands, which aspects of identity are to be challenged and which to be accepted?
- Formative processes of location and dislocation work differently in different pathways. What kind of formation is each pathway achieving and are different kinds of formation required for different people or different roles?
- Mixed economies of training pathways contribute to the formation of individuals.
- Accreditation is understood by ordinands as attributing value to certain aspects of training and, by its absence, reducing the value of other aspects. This has an impact on mixed-mode training, the context half of which is not accredited.
- Women who are married and/or have children are likely to be more restricted in training options.

##### *Residential training*

- Challenging worshipping community to facilitate priestly formation.
- Safe environment to practise ministry.
- Supportive environment to encourage mobility and deployability of individuals and families.
- Disengagement may not provide skills to engage with the rest of the world.
- Marginalisation of those unable to participate fully in the community.
- Less accessible to married women and mothers.

##### *Non-residential training*

- Constant engagement with reality of everyday life.
- Reflective of wider church dynamics.
- Widely accessible.
- Diverse churchmanship.
- Extremely demanding in time and energy, meaning less time for reflective formation.
- Challenge to provide adequate pastoral support.

---

<sup>11</sup> On the other hand, one supervisor expressed frustration that, in a large church with relatively high numbers of vocations, they were financially unable to meet the demand for ordinand places.

### Mixed-mode training

- Constant engagement with theology and practice.
- Realistic experience of ministerial life.
- Accessible to those unable to move.
- Competing demands on time with dual student-employee identity.
- Potentially narrower focus so less deployability.
- Limited placements available.

### Conclusion

There are no easy, across-the-board answers to questions about the best models of IME for different kinds of people. As one (non-residential) tutor put it,

*I imagine you could never reach a point where you could have some algorithm whereby you measure certain characteristics of a person and you put it through the algorithm and it says, 'therefore, you should do this type of training.'*

What this study has done is to highlight some of the strengths and challenges of the three different pathways currently in operation, and to identify some fundamental issues and questions underlying how decisions are made about training, both for individuals and at a national level.

First, the current language at play in relation to IME is varied and confusing, revealing (or, more often, concealing) a diverse sector where, although administrative needs require the categorisation of training programmes, the boundaries are not clear-cut. Most TEIs run a range of programmes and each in different ways, so that a particular residential programme, for example, may have a great deal in common with a particular mixed-mode programme of a different institution. Training generally remains defined in relation to the 'traditional' residential model, which invites constant comparison, both healthy and unhealthy. Despite changes in sponsorship categories a decade ago, ordained ministry continues to be referred to by most people in relation to remuneration.

The two phases of IME work better together for some people than others. While this does not run tightly along pathway lines, the introduction of mixed-mode training has challenged the existing balance of theoretical and practical learning, meaning that mixed-mode deacons and their dioceses sometimes struggle to find suitable arrangements for curacy. Moreover, for many people the wide range of provision in both IME 1 and IME 2 complicates smooth transition between the two phases.

The diverse nature of IME 1 is helpful and healthy in several ways, including making training accessible (although challenges remain in areas such as gender and education<sup>12</sup>), recognising differences in training requirements for different people, and providing opportunities for different people, training in different ways, to learn from each other. It is also challenging for those who have to hold together a complex array of options to enable a variety of candidates to enter training, and for those involved in deciding on training programmes for individuals. While decisions are usually made by candidates (and for some are very straightforward), this is usually in the context of a multi-way conversation between several parties. In the context of such a diverse and rapidly changing sector, those providing advice and guidance are not always adequately informed about all the possibilities and knowledge may be out of date and no longer relevant.

---

<sup>12</sup> Some axes of social difference, such as disability and ethnicity, did not feature in this research, which may indicate that the Church faces even greater challenges in these areas.

Underlying most of these issues is the contested relationship between vocation, formation and deployment. Vocation appears to be understood in two different ways, one relating to one's identity as a priest and the other to one's functional ministry. The purpose of IME is both to train and form ministers in a vocation and also to facilitate discernment of that vocation, whatever it means. Vocation is also informed by the Church into which candidates are eventually ordained, which may result in tension between the requirements and preferences of the Church and those of the candidate, in relation both to deployment and to formation. Vocation often appears negotiated between the candidate, their practical circumstances and relational responsibilities, and the Church, in terms of what it can and will offer regarding training and future ministry. With a multitude of different candidates and a multitude of different ministerial roles, there are differing views on whether ordinands should be trained as generalists, in order to be deployable wherever needed by the Church, or as specialists, pursuing specific callings which may be strategically encouraged. This is crucial to decisions about training: if, as indicated above, formative processes work differently in different pathways, the statement that 'all training pathways can be used with confidence' must be understood not only in terms of quality of formation, but also in the context of the individual candidate and what they are being trained for.