

Ordained Local Ministry Guidelines

You are receiving this briefing paper because you have been assigned an OLM candidate at the BAP you are about to attend. There will be additional papers which accompany the application that will not be there for the other focuses of ministry. You will have had plenty to read already as you prepare for this but please do take time to look at those relating to the parish (or more likely Group of parishes) as these are the context that the candidate will know best and from within which they will best be able to answer your questions in interview. OLM candidates attending a BAP need to be viewed in relation to the context which has shaped their sense of call and the ministry they feel drawn to because it is the setting that has already nurtured them and within which they will most likely train and minister. It is essential that your questions relate back to this context in order that you can build a picture of what this candidate looks like within it.

It is quite often (though not always) the case that an OLM candidate is an older candidate with a good deal of life experience and possibly fewer academic qualifications than other candidates at the Panel. It is quite possible that they arrive at the BAP with a good deal of discernment made through parish, deanery and diocesan processes. These ought to be evident from references and sponsoring papers and the interviewer will want to take these insights into their meeting with them. OLM candidates are different from candidates for full-time, stipendiary ministry and should not be interviewed as such. This is an important perspective to maintain particularly if the difference should be reflected in your interview as outlined below.

The Criteria for discerning candidates for Ordained Local Ministry are essentially the same as those applied to other candidates attending a Bishop's Advisory Panel. However, some of the Criteria in the discernment of OLM candidates may require a different approach as a result of the different context for such ministry.

Criterion A (Vocation)

The **Vocation** to OLM may come essentially from the calling out of the local church and perhaps in response to a specific need for that church or group of churches. So the candidate may have been, *in the first instance* identified by others. The calling out of a vocation to meet a specific need in a particular context does not make the calling any less authentic, but it does need to be met with an understanding by the candidate that he or she has not only been identified by others but that they have *come to accept it as their own*. There should be ample evidence of this in the supporting paperwork and in interview you will need the candidate to show that the vocation first suggested by others has become an inner reality.

Where the process for a candidate's discernment has already been thorough at parish and diocesan level, there is often a high level of expectation and a non recommendation in such instances can lead to a sense of rejection for not only the candidate but the sending community and the personnel managing the diocesan processes. It is therefore crucial that if the view arrived at by the Advisers is contrary to that of those contributing to the paperwork based on months of discernment in context that it should be well evidenced.

- What evidence is there from supporting papers and in interview that the local church has taken responsibility for identifying and owning the sense of call?
- What evidence is there from supporting papers and in interview that the candidate has taken responsibility for identifying and owning the sense of call?
- What signs have already emerged that the local church is prepared to continue a responsible role in nurturing and supporting this call?

- Is there a consistency in the supporting papers in describing and affirming the sense of vocation and is the candidate able to articulate this?
- How has the sense of calling been shaped by the local context (the worshipping community; the wider local community; influential individuals)?
- What is the intended focus of the candidate's ministry (refer to the working/learning agreement) and what evidence is there that he or she feels called to it?

Criterion B (Ministry in the Church of England)

An OLM will be deployed locally but what is meant by local may vary from diocese to diocese. It is increasingly coming to mean within a group of churches and often a deanery, but it is still the case (particularly within more urban dioceses) that it means one parish. It is therefore important once again to become familiar with the context to which the candidate feels a sense of call. Given their local deployment, OLM candidates would not be expected to have an extensive knowledge of **Ministry in the Church of England** in a wide range of settings, but they would be expected to be fully conversant with the practice of ministry in the context in which they will serve. It is not appropriate to challenge a candidate as to why they are not prepared to be deployed other than locally; it is entirely appropriate to ask what difference 'being local' might make. It is more revealing of such a candidate to discover how well they know their local community and its needs. If they are to be part of a Ministry Team deployed within a number of churches within a group it will be important to know how they will respond to what is likely to be a degree of local diversity. What knowledge, gifts or expertise will they be able to bring to bear to this local diversity?

- What understanding does the candidate have of the nature of the Church of England as experienced in his or her local context?
- How aware is the candidate of the diversity of ministry in his or her local context? Can they work within that and what will he or she contribute to the ministerial team?

Criterion F (Leadership and Collaboration)

An OLM will not be an incumbent but will nevertheless have to exercise some **leadership** role within the local congregation, and possibly, to some extent, within the local community. OLM clergy are often described by their local communities as 'one of us' and are seen by many as the face of stability and continuity in a contrasting and changing world of ministry. They may take a lead in periods of vacancy and will need the kinds of skills and insights that will allow others to take a responsible role in the day to day running of the local church and model the partnership that has existed between local church community and candidate from the first moment of vocational awakening. It is important that this relationship is not lost the moment ordination arrives. In that sense it is always a leading from the 'grass roots'.

- What awareness is there of the impact of ordination on the candidate? What will be the response of those in the local church to the candidate's ordination?
- How has the candidate exercised leadership in the local church in the past? Will this change in any way after ordination?
- What type of leadership style does the candidate have? Can they adapt to more than one?

OLM candidates at interview will need to show the desire to be flexible in their working practices and able to work under the authority of the incumbent of the time. As an incumbent may change several times in the ministerial life of an OLM they will need to display a willingness and flexibility to work with quite different incumbents, some of who may be younger, and perhaps less experienced, than themselves. The ability to work alone in certain situations and to make some difficult decisions is occasionally necessary even when the emphasis is on a **collaborative** form of ministry.

- Is there evidence for this flexibility and openness?
- What is the style of working in the candidate's parish?
- Who will the candidate be working with and accountable to?

Sponsoring papers for an OLM candidate will normally contain a proposed Working/Learning Agreement. This is not the same as a job description and it may, in some instances, be carefully worked out and articulated in some detail. In other instances, there may be a skeleton that provides merely an outline of the sphere of ministry anticipated. Whichever appears before the Advisers the candidate needs to be clear that if recommended for training and thereafter ordination, they will embark upon a period of curacy and therefore ministerial formational learning. What marks OLM candidates out differently from other categories of ordained ministry is the commitment to doing this collaboratively and within the local context and the Working/Learning Agreement should give some indication that the local church is committed to shared learning and ministry, including the collaboration of local church leaders, ordained and lay. When considering the Working/Learning Agreement, Advisers might find it useful to ask the candidates:

- Is there evidence of the collaborative ministry of the whole local church, with a commitment to working in teams?
- What systems are available for the continuing education, support and supervision of the candidate?

Criterion H (Mission and Evangelism)

While a candidate for Ordained Local Ministry needs to show a commitment to **Mission and Evangelism** generally, it is in the delivery of that within their local community that they will be best able to address this criterion. Unlike those who are candidates who might anticipate incumbent status at some stage, an OLM should not be expected to provide *strategies* for mission at interview; rather they might better illustrate from their local knowledge what the mission needs are of their local community and perhaps offer examples of mission initiatives they have shared in or might hope to see happen in the future. In this sense, they should be able to demonstrate that they are *enablers* of mission. There should be some evidence that they are able to relate to those in their communities beyond the church community and communicate well with them in a language that is accessible and appropriate.

- How well can the candidate describe their local community needs and offer ideas (or even give examples) of how their church communities can address those needs through practical and pastoral care? How well can they relate this to the Gospel?
- Can the candidate identify the strengths and weaknesses of their local church community in meeting those needs?
- Can the candidate talk about how their faith prompts practical action and speak of Jesus Christ in an exciting and engaging way to their local context?

Criterion I (Quality of mind)

As described above many candidates for Ordained Local Ministry have a good deal of life experience but may well have grown up in an environment with few educational opportunities. Equally they may have enjoyed the benefits of Higher Education some years previously but be feeling somewhat nervous about the prospect of re-entering the world of adult education and theological study. While it is important that such candidates demonstrate the **quality of mind** for a course of study, they should demonstrate perhaps more so their passion to want to engage in such a course and be prepared to find support within them. Interviewers should remind themselves that OLM courses are principally praxis based and require the capacity to reflect upon the experience of ministry. Such courses are designed to support the mature candidate, returning to study or entering this level of study for the first time. They should always look for the *potential* of the candidate within these parameters of support and beware of any, even subconscious, age-ism. Candidates do need to show flexibility of mind, the capacity to have ideas and pre-conceptions challenged and the capacity to relate faith and life, but at whatever age the candidate, the interviewer needs to watch for passion and potential as well as being realistic about what they think the candidate's abilities are.

- Can the candidate make connections between life and faith with particular reference to their own community context?
- How might they develop a ministry of learning within that context? What ways of learning might best suit the community that has called them to serve amongst them?