

The Oversight and Support of Authorised Lay Ministry

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Lay Development: *Fostering a culture of discipleship & equipping lay ministry*

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1) Introduction

Discipleship

All Christians are called to follow Jesus and to use their gifts and talents in God's service, whether at home, at work, in church and at play. Such a ministry of loving service of all who are baptised is the ministry of discipleship. However, there is also a flourishing of a wide variety of authorised lay ministries in the church.

Authorised Ministry

Authorised ministry is representative of the church. It should therefore be supported by the church with appropriately structured learning opportunities. It is also accountable to the authorising organisation within the church.

With the flourishing of lay ministry comes the responsibility for the church to support through oversight and reflective practice, within a structured relationship of supervision. As with licenced ministries, it is valuable and important for all Authorised Lay Ministers to have regular supervision.

Supervision is a structured relationship that should enable, support and give confidence to Authorised Lay Ministers. It does so by helping those in an authorised ministry to

- develop the skills for being effective in and developing this ministry
- inhabit the role and identity, appropriately exercising both authority and humility
- help the church to discern God's call for shaping and evolving a particular ministry

2) Which Authorised Lay Ministries?

By 'Authorised Lay Ministers', we mean those appointed by the church to:

- represent the church in the community
- lead a particular area of ministry
- encourage others to develop and use their gifts

All such ministries will have the support of the incumbent or chaplain and either the Parish or Benefice Church Council or a chaplaincy council. They will usually be commissioned in the local Parish, Benefice or Team.

However, authorisation within the church can come from a variety of bodies:

Diocesan Authorisation – authorised by a bishop

- Authorised Worship Assistants

Local Authorisation – authorised by an incumbent (with PCC agreement) or chaplain, and commissioned locally

For example:

- Lay Pastoral Assistants
- Youth and Children's work Leaders
- Music Leaders (including organists, choir directors)
- Street Pastors
- Facilitators for Small Groups / Small Discipleship Communities

There are other lay people exercising ministry locally, who are not 'authorised ministers' in this sense. For example, those who read or intercede in the church during public worship, or those who have the bishop's permission to assist with Eucharistic Administration (during a service of holy communion in the church or at a service home, in accordance with Regulations made under Canon B12). For these, proper preparation should be provided, but ongoing supervision is not anticipated.

3) The Selection, Appointment and Supervision of Lay Ministry

It is important that those authorising Lay Ministry have appropriate procedures in place for selecting appointing and authorising those in Lay Ministry.

Ecclesiastical Liability Insurance, for example, requires special arrangements for those exercising a pastoral ministry (such as Bereavement visiting team).

10 Pastoral Care Indemnity

It is a condition precedent to liability that you shall exercise reasonable care and diligence in the selection, appointment and supervision of persons undertaking pastoral care on your behalf.

Special Condition to extension 10
Ecclesiastical Parishguard Insurance (p.58)

However, while ‘reasonable care and diligence in the selection, appointment and supervision’ is necessary for insurance purposes in certain instances, they are good practice for all authorised ministry.

- Reasonable care and diligence includes making Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks (previously CRB checks), for those working with children (e.g. music directors) or bereaved people (e.g., bereavement visitors, for bereaved adults, especially the elderly, would count as vulnerable adults.)
- Appointments should be minuted by a PCC or chaplaincy and a voluntary agreement formed identifying the responsibilities and limits of responsibility. (This should not be ‘a contract’ or include such wording.)
- Supervision should be supportive as well be accountable, and should identify training needs to enable the volunteer to undertake the task.

Advice on such matters can be found on the Church Urban Fund website, listed in the bibliography.

4) Who offers Oversight and Support through Supervision?

Normally the Incumbent or Chaplain will take on this responsibility of supporting those who volunteer in an Authorised Lay Ministry. However, some of this work may be delegated.

Authorised Worship Assistants may be supervised by another licensed minister (Reader or Clergy).

Other forms of Authorised Lay Ministry may be supervised by a wide range of experienced ministers.

- A licenced minister (Reader or Clergy)
- A retired Reader or Priest, with Permission to Officiate (PTO)
- A trusted member of the PCC, with supervisory experience
- A Rural Dean (perhaps temporarily, during an interregnum)

It is essential for the person supervising to have

- Supervision skills
- Time available

It is also helpful for the person who supervises a Lay Minister to have

- A knowledge of the mission strategy of the Church (PCC(s), Benefice or Group)
- An awareness of the workings of the wider church (Deanery, Diocese, Local Ecumenical context)
- A commitment to growing in their own faith and learning

5) What is the Role of Supervision?

Supervision has three functions:

- It should be **supportive**, offering encouragement and an opportunity to share concerns. Part of this will involve praying together and for each other. Supervision will also provide a safe and confidential place to talk through the challenges and difficulties of the role.
- It should be **educative**. Whilst study opportunities will be available in various ways, it is crucial that the supervisor meets regularly with those exercising this ministry to study together; to reflect on issues of pastoral care and the mission of the church; to address the challenge of proclaiming the faith afresh; to share resources and develop liturgical skills; to encourage a deeper self-knowledge and spiritual maturity among those engaged in ministry.
- It should be **normative**. This refers to the Incumbent's and Church's responsibility for the care and cure of souls, and hence to have regard for issues of safeguarding and good practice in the exercise of ministry.

Unpacking these further, we might think of them in terms of roles:

| | |
|---------------------------------|---|
| SUPPORTIVE / restorative | |
| • Pastor | Providing personal support, understanding and care |
| • Mentor | Offering guidance, challenge, support, encouragement |
| • Facilitator | Identifying and overcoming conflict situations, through mediation, advocacy. |
| EDUCATIVE / formative | |
| • Tutor | Providing learning situations where people may reflect upon recent experience and current practice |
| • Advisor | Identifying learning needs for competence and enabling ministerial development. Help support the supervisee identify learning needs and learning opportunities |
| • Reflector (Co-learner) | Reflection on the church's mission and God's purposes, to help integrate the supervisee's ministry within wider mission and ministry strategy and theology of the authorising church body (e.g., the PCC) |

NORMATIVE / administrative

- Overseer Providing accountability, evaluation, feedback
- Consultant Helping the church to evaluate the appropriateness and effectiveness of the church's strategic organization and support of its lay ministry

The balance of these three will vary in supervision: e.g.

- Lay Pastoral Assistants may need the opportunity to reflection on difficult experiences they have encountered (divorce, bereavement) - and the model of supervision may be a supportive pastoral model.
- New Authorised Worship Assistants may still be learning about worship and its relationship to mission – for whom the model of supervision may educational.

A supervisor should travel with the supervisee on the journey toward accountable ministry.

A supervision meeting is not a planning or business meeting, organising diaries and schedules. It is best for such meetings to be either with someone different, or at a different time.

6) Expectations of Supervision

6.1 Initial meetings

Initial meetings should

- Be intentional about getting to know one another, as well as one another's ministries and roles in this relationship.
- Consider and evaluate together the prior experience the supervisee brings (as former learning may give us useful skills and experience we bring to a ministry, or may involving expectations and conditioning from a different sphere that we need to let go of for a new ministry).
- Establish bounds and limitations of confidentiality, and appropriate lines of report.

6.2 General meetings

These should

- Be regular, with a monthly or bi-monthly meetings pattern of meetings.
- Reflect on your own experience and practice as well as what the supervisee is doing.
- Review ministry and reflect on practice.
- Ensure the ministry being exercised gives an appropriate challenge: - energising challenge, without being daunting.
- Consider how to keep others in the church informed of the ministry and any support needs (prayer, finance or other people).
- Keep a watching brief as to supervisee's work/family/church/study/....life balance!

6.3 Group Supervision

Supervision may sometimes be with other members of a ministry team and sometimes individually.

Where a group of people exercise the same ministry, it is can be both effective and time saving to have supervision in groups. With a supportive dynamic, groups can help people reflect on both similar and different experiences.

However, this can make accountability difficult, and it is wise to ensure that not all supervision sessions are group supervision.

6.4 Learning Portfolio

A learning portfolio is a log that gives evidence of learning through a training course and/or through experience and reflection. It is a good practice for all in Authorised Ministry to establish and keep such a portfolio of learning. This might involve:

- A brief account of some practical situations, which has been explored in supervision, noting what was learned through reflecting on it. This might have a sheet after engaging in ministry (e.g. a service you have lead) with the following sections.
 - ? What happened/what did I experience?
 - ? What did I learn from this?
 - ? What will I do differently next time?
 - ? What further support or resources do I need next time?
 - ? What is my next step in this area of learning?
- Identification of learning needs or training undertaken.

The purpose of portfolios is to identify learning achieved, and areas for growth and development. It provides a record for annual reflection.

For Authorised Worship Assistants, the portfolio record of learning will form part of the renewal of authorisation every three years.

6.5 Annual review

A good practice is to have an annual review.

The review should help both supervisor and supervisee to recognise either strategic change in the church's ministry needs or personal change (such as in growth in confidence and personal development, or changed family responsibilities).

A review may to a new ministry with new challenges (e.g. Reader ministry) or to a less demanding ministry.

6.6 Periodic Review

A longer term review will be needed, perhaps every other year, or every 3 years. We change much over such a period of time, as does the church. It is appropriate we have a structured opportunity to rethink personal and ecclesial priorities, and have permission to recognise change.

For Authorised Worship Assistants, a review will help the bishop to evaluate whether it is appropriate, both for the candidate and also for the church, to renew authorisation for the next three years.

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