

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

What has happened to the ALM Scheme?

The Canterbury ALM scheme was developed as a training programme to enable and equip lay ministry in the local church. It was aimed at those who were already engaged in areas of ministry in their local church as well as those who were starting out. The course was first delivered alongside the Seite OLM scheme, and episcopally authorised. From 2007 it was delivered in two parts: a core module followed by an elective such as pastoral care or worship leading. The first courses took place in early 2000 with a total of 494 participants taking part, some of whom completed more than one elective. The electives which have been developed and run include:

- Pastoral assistant – 14 courses
- Worship leader – 13 courses
- Healing and wholeness – 6 courses
- Children; Youth; Fellow Pilgrim; and Schools – 13 courses
- Evangelist; and Mission enabler – 5 courses
- Funeral and bereavement – 5 courses (available to experienced worship leaders, pastoral assistants or readers)

ALM course participants required the support of their PCC and parish priest. The parish priest or supervising minister act as supervising minister throughout the longer course, and beyond (attending the first and last sessions highlighting what supervision is best practice). Applications were not normally accepted during a vacancy.

The ALM Scheme as described above came to a natural end around 2020 as churches grappled with the covid pandemic. Since then a more flexible and adaptive approach has underpinned the desire to equip, encourage and develop local lay ministry across our diocese. Recognising lay ministry locally is largely the responsibility of the incumbent and PCC with some lay ministries recognised at diocesan level (ie Anna Chaplaincy and Lay Funeral Ministry) and others at national level (ie Readers/Licensed Lay Ministry).

I am an ALM how does this affect me?

Those who are currently Authorised for Lay Ministry can continue within their roles and maintain regular reviews and recommissioning at 3 year intervals; however this is subject to recognition by their incumbent and PCC.

It should be noted that the Diocesan ALM Scheme was not intended to create a new lifelong category of lay ministry and should not be seen as such.

I feel called to ministry in my local church what should I do next?

If you feel a call to lay ministry in your local church; then a conversation with your incumbent or local minister is always a good starting point. They will be able to assist you in exploring your calling and guide you in the next steps.

Is being a locally recognised lay minister portable?

No, however, if you were to move to a new parish or relocate away from this diocese your gifting and prior ministerial experience may be taken into account in your new worshipping community.

What happens during a clergy vacancy?

The churchwardens are supported by the area dean. Lay ministry which is already recognised in the parish continues as before. The churchwardens and area dean would be responsible for providing oversight, supervision, support and review.

Advice on recognising new lay ministry during a vacancy is available from the Diocesan Lay Ministries Adviser.

When a vacancy comes to end, there is an expectation that those who are already locally recognised as lay ministers will continue to exercise ministry under the terms of their current ministry agreement.

What training is needed?

When someone takes up a locally recognised lay ministry, their gifts, calling and prior ministerial experience should be taken into account. If there is a need for further training this may take the form of local bespoke training, diocesan training courses or other study/courses.

What about Safeguarding?

The Parish is responsible for ensuring locally recognised lay ministers have completed the mandatory checks and training appropriate to their role. Parishes should also ensure records are kept in accordance with the Parish Safeguarding Handbook. Advice is available from the Diocesan Safeguarding Officers.

Is there a Diocesan Register of locally recognised lay ministers?

No, records should be retained within the parish. For administrative purposes, the Diocesan Mission and Ministry team keeps a record of diocesan courses and attendance lists.

Can I also be an Anna Chaplain?

Yes, there is a diocesan element to discerning a call to Anna Chaplaincy, but applications will be considered on an individual basis.

What about funeral ministry?

Lay ministers may only be authorised for funeral ministry if they have completed appropriate training which is recognised by the Diocese. Annual training for Lay Funeral Ministers normally runs from the Autumn to Summer. Contact the Mission and Ministry team for more information.

What can a Reader do that I can't?

Locally recognised lay ministers may appear to do many of the things which Readers can also do. In our diocese we want to be encouraging and enabling missional lay ministry which by its very nature will need to be adaptive and flexible.

Because Readers are licensed for ministry by the Bishop they will have completed theological studies which equip them for exercising a ministry which is nationally recognised and transferable between dioceses.

Do I need permission to do the things I do?

All Christians are commissioned at their baptism to a ministry of loving service, witnessing to the Faith in and through their everyday lives. Much of what we do is as a faithful disciple, you could set up things like a 'good neighbour' scheme in your local area or establish a prayer group in your workplace.

It is only when we act (or are seen as acting) in the name of the local church that we need to seek appropriate permission and recognition from the incumbent and PCC.