Authorised Lay Ministry: Frequently Asked Questions

GENERAL

How are the costs met for the ALM training course?
- All the costs of training for ALM ministry are met by the Diocesan Board of Finance. Parishes are asked to support their candidates by helping with expenses such as those for travel to training venues.

How does a candidate qualify for acceptance on the course?
- To serve as an ALM a candidate needs to be nominated by their PCC for this ministry. Candidates for ALM will only be accepted for training if it is clear that their proposed ministry will be to provide leadership of an existing team or that such a team will be developed during the course of training. We also require that all applicants to the course can show some evidence of having completed a previous course of Christian education/training e.g. Foundations for Ministry, a Christian Basics course etc.
- A candidate therefore should normally be baptised, confirmed, and on the electoral roll of their sponsoring church.

What is an Authorised Lay Minister?
- Authorised Lay Ministers share in the public ministry of the local church, as they serve their local parishes. ALM ministry takes many different forms depending upon the parish base, but in general ALMs lead or establish a team of people working in an area of ministry and they also work to encourage and develop the gifts of others.
- ALMs are ‘authorised’ by the Bishop to exercise a particular ministry within their local parish. Their authorisation does not extend beyond the parish into the wider diocese, but may be exercised in other parts of a Team Ministry with the agreement of the PCCs and Team Rector. They do not hold the Bishop’s licence and their authorisation is not automatically transferable to another diocese.

Does a Parish have to be accredited for Collaborative Ministry?
- Ideally a parish will be accredited for Collaborative Ministry before candidates are nominated. If the parish is not accredited it should seek accreditation while the candidate is in training so that it is accredited by the time of commissioning. This helps ensure that there will be a supportive and collaborative ethos in the parish such that the ALM will fit with the wider ministry team in the parish, and be supported.

Do ALMs have to be baptised?
- Baptism is the sacrament and sign of Christian initiation, and all engaged in the ministry of the church, within the Church of England should have been baptised, and the incumbent should check with a potential ALM candidate that they have been baptised.
Do ALMs have to be confirmed?

Generally confirmation has been understood to be the gateway to Anglican ministry. In recent years, the admission of children to Communion before Confirmation, and the receiving into membership of those who were baptised and brought up in another denomination has meant that there is less clarity on the place of confirmation in the Church of England. In this context, those being nominated for ALM should generally either be confirmed, or in the process of being confirmed.

Is there an age-limit for ALM?

- There is no upper age-limit for ALM. If the incumbent and parish support their ministry and they are able to do it, that is what matters!
- There is a lower age-limit, which is set because of legal issues. An ALM needs to be over 18 at the time of commissioning, an “adult” in legal terms. This is not to say that children do not have a ministry, nor that a church cannot affirm the faith, contribution and involvement of children: it is to recognise the responsibility and role asked of an ALM which means they need to be adult.

TRAINING
What does the training involve?

- The ALM training programme is a nine month programme running from January to September, consisting of a core module and then particular training; there is also an induction day, and two study Saturdays; before the Commissioning there is a Quiet Day. All participants do the first eight week module which is a ‘core’ module exploring God’s call to ministry and developing a life of discipleship.
- This core module is taught in different venues, across the archdeaconries. Candidates then undertake the equivalent of two further modules in their chosen area of ministry which will consist of between 12 and 16 sessions depending on the area of ministry chosen.
- Dates and venues for these modules will be established each year when we have confirmed numbers of students for each ministry area. Some of the ministry modules may not be offered if there is insufficient interest to make a group viable.
- Candidates should be aware that some of the teaching will be on weeknight evenings and other elements may take place at weekends.
- The study day at the end of the course provides training in teamwork and collaborative ministry. It also brings together those from the parishes that the ALM is based in with whom they will share ministry e.g. incumbent, other licensed ministers, and the team the ALM will be working with.

Are there any written assignments?

- The course involves a limited amount of written work/practical assignments to aid and deepen learning – but this is not ‘graded’ as such. The course is open to people of all educational backgrounds and assignments on the course are designed to reflect this. Candidates pursuing the electives in youth or children’s ministry will in addition undertake assignments for the relevant Church College Certificate.

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What specialist modules are currently available?
- Children’s ministry, Community, Mission, Parish Administration, Pastoral, Prayer and Spirituality, Worship, Youth.

What happens at the end of the training course?
- In September there is a Quiet Day for all candidates prior to commissioning at a diocesan service led by the bishop. All ALMs will need to be CRB checked, complete Safeguarding training and have their Role Description signed off before commissioning. Authorisation lasts for a period of three years and can then be renewed following a review by the incumbent and PCC.

VACANCIES and TRANSFERRING
Can a parish nominate a candidate for ALM Training during a vacancy?
- The PCC can consider nominating while in a vacancy but nominations should not be put forward without prior agreement from the Area Dean / Archdeacon. Parishes should be able to show that there will be support and care for the ALM candidate while in training.

What happens to ALMs in a Vacancy?
- In a vacancy (of incumbent), the ministry of ALMs may continue as normal, under the authority of the Churchwardens and PCC, as part of the Ministry Team in the parish, and with the support of the Area Dean.

Can a person transfer from another diocese?
- If someone has been an ALM or equivalent in another diocese they can seek permission to transfer to the new parish within which they worship. They should have become settled as members of the new church for six months before seeking re-authorisation. It is for the incumbent and PCC to support their request, with the support of the Local Ministry Officer. They should have a reference from their previous parish and / or from the training course they have done, and they will require a new CRB / DBS clearance. If these are in place and there is the support from the Parish, the recommendation would be put to the Bishop for the person to be commissioned. They would also be invited to the next Commissioning Service where they would be formally welcomed.

WORSHIP AND ROLE
Can an Authorised Lay Minister assist at Holy Communion?
- Normally ALMs should also be part of the team of Eucharistic Assistants in a parish: this is a recognition that ministry and worship are not separate things. Some will be more available to assist than others. The deployment of ALMs should not exclude others from having a ministry as a Eucharistic Assistant, and it is for the incumbent and PCC to agree who should be assisting at the Eucharist. There is a further ministry that some Eucharistic Assistants have, with due training and resourcing, namely the taking of Communion to the sick and the housebound. This ministry is not restricted to ALMs, but ALMs with a pastoral or worship-leading focus might well be those involved in this wider ministry, and this would then be reflected in their role description.
• When the parish nominates an ALM they should also therefore decide if that person should also be a Eucharistic Assistant, and the presumption is that they would also have this role. [Some may exercise it less often than others.] If the person is also put forward as a Eucharistic Assistant, then – as is the practice – the name(s) should be recorded by the PCC and an updated certificate requested through the Eucharistic Assistants Administrator (currently Mrs Judith Giles). The names of ALMs who are Eucharistic Assistants would appear on the certificate in the same way as any other person from the parish on the list.

• The names of those who share the wider ministry – taking Communion to the housebound and sick – also need to be recorded by the PCC along with details of their training.

Is a Worship ALM allowed to lead a whole service?
• A Worship ALM may lead all or part of an act of worship under the authority and supervision of the incumbent. They are not licensed to preach. Where no licensed minister is present (whether because the parish is in vacancy or for other reasons), the wardens are those responsible for ensuring that the service is held and conducted properly, and a Worship ALM – in agreement with the wardens - may lead Morning or Evening Prayer or a Service of the Word. However good practice means that the responsibility for leading such a service should be shared.

What is the difference between a Worship ALM and a Licensed Reader?
• The Office of Reader is a lay ministry in the Church of England nationally accredited, episcopally licensed and governed by Canon Law. Readers have undergone a more substantial training and are licensed by the Bishop to preach and teach as key elements of their ministry.

• ALMs are different not least in that they are selected by the parish and the authorisation is by the Bishop for ministry in that parish. Different dioceses have various models for recognised / authorised / commissioned lay ministries, and the training typically has less theological depth and is generally more practical in its focus.

• A Reader has the authority to conduct acts of worship: ALMs are authorised to assist in leading worship.

• There is more information on Reader Ministry on the diocesan website, www.manchester.anglican.org.