Shared local ministry explained

‘whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus’ (Col: 3.17).

As a diocese, we want to honour all ministry: formal and informal; clergy and lay; paid and unpaid. Shared local ministry is part of our diocesan vision for sharing in leadership and ministry.

We aim for every parish to have an identified shape of ministry, shared between clergy and lay ministers, that fits the local context, serving the local church and wider community. Working together, they will be focal points for a genuinely local Christian presence.

Our model of church has sometimes been based on having a vicar and expecting them to do, or lead on, most things; including the things that don’t need to be done by a priest. The way in which benefices are configured often puts a strain on everyone, as well as taking energy away from the local. Shared local ministry aims to release and enable both clergy and laity, so that together we can find a more joyful and sustainable model.

Shared local ministry will take a unique shape in each place, fitting the context of the community and the gifts of the people. In some parishes there will be a large team, in others fewer - perhaps even one person. The combination of ministry roles will be different in every place. Some named public ministries formally represent God and the church. These ministries carry a specific responsibility for others and will come with oversight to give support and accountability so that all those who share in ministry can flourish. This approach is about finding the shape of ministry that is life-giving to the church and to those who serve in these roles.

# Diocesan support

Shared Local Ministry is core to our diocesan strategy that seeks to enable people to share in leadership and ministry. We are committed to learning together what it means to encourage a rich diversity of ministry roles, and encourage the growth of a culture of shared ministry throughout the diocese.

The diocesan support team are available to facilitate discussions about what shared local ministry might look like in your context. In support of that work, the lay ministry pathway provides a framework for people exploring a calling to local ministry and flexible approaches to equipping them in that ministry.

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# What does shares local ministry look like?

Shared local ministry will take a different shape in each place. However, it is helpful to think about the characteristics of shared local ministry, and what you would expect to see where it is thriving:

## Ministering a team

Collaboration is the essence of shared local ministry. The shape will be different in each place: frequency of meetings, forms of collaboration and the structure of a team will depend on local needs. What is important is mutual prayer and support, good relationships and collaborating wherever the opportunity arises.

## Growing a culture of ministry

Shared local ministry is an expression of the body of Christ. People respond to God’s call, using their God-given gifts to serve the church and community, and so develop and grow into ministry. All the baptised are called to be involved in God’s mission and ministry, and there are many Christians who have a ministry (whether they would use that word or not) that doesn’t have a formal title. Just as oversight ministers enable the gifts of local ministers, so local ministers enable the gifts of others, so that all can play their part in the ministry of the local church.

## Ministry integrated with mission

Mission is the church responding to God’s call, reaching out to the world in love. Where shared local ministry is flourishing, it will be noticeably engaged with the wider world.