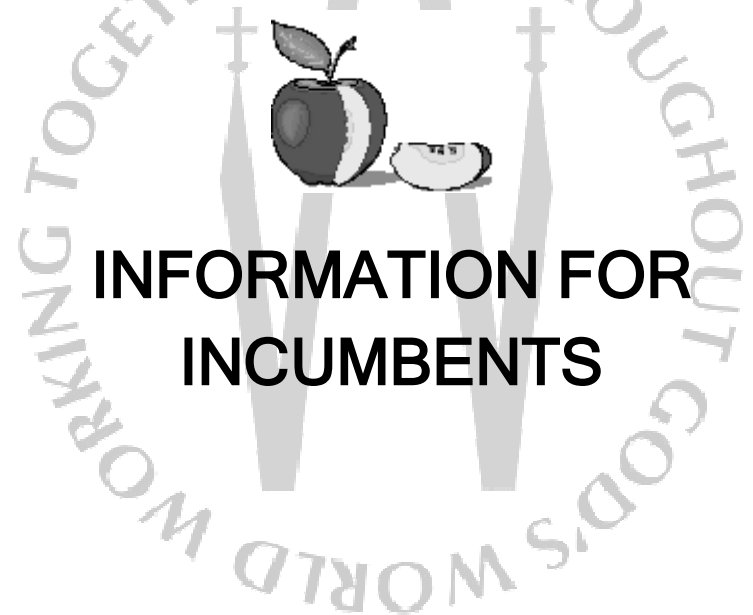


- ILA1 How can we help you?
- ILA2 Basic Information
- ILA3 Who's Who in the Scheme
- ILA4 The Basic Parish Programme
- ILA5 Starting the Scheme: a step by step approach
- ILA6 Candidates for Ordination
- ILB1 Criteria for Inclusion of Parishes
- ILB4 Information about Core Groups
- ILB5 Joining the Core: information for potential members
- ILO2 The Call to Ordained Local Ministry
- ILO4 Ordination Training: the three elements



Wakefield Ministry Scheme



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Local Ministry

The Wakefield Ministry Scheme is one of a growing number of similar programmes for Local Ministry Development in the Church of England and elsewhere within the Anglican Communion. It comprises a process of exploration and training spread over three years to help parishes develop their congregational life in shared ministry, service and outreach. Included within this is the option for Ordained Local Ministry, whereby suitable candidates may be discerned, selected and trained for a ministry of diaconate and/or priesthood within their own parish. The Wakefield scheme was piloted from 1995 and began officially in 1998. The ordination component received House of Bishops approval in 1999.

About the Wakefield Ministry Scheme process

The Parish Programme requires a 'Core Group' of about six to ten people to lead it and see it through (see below). Over the three year period, the Core Group gather with other similar parish groups several times a year for Diocesan sessions (some full days, others half days or evenings) which introduce a new theme or topic each time. These include: Working Together, Exploring Ministry, Worship, Outreach, Pastoral Care and Community Awareness. There are also twice-yearly gatherings to explore Spirituality and Prayer.

Following each diocesan session, the topic is followed up in the parish by means of a selected option from a 'menu' of resources, designed to enable each parish to pursue the theme at a level and by a method appropriate to its situation. Resources include course units aimed at the Core Group for its own training; parish education courses designed to be run in small groups in the manner of a Lent course; sermon materials with suggestions about after-church discussion; study materials for individual use; practical project ideas. Each year a parish should aim to complete at least one Core Group study unit, one course for the wider congregation, and one practical project.

to leave and to join. Each year one or two may rightly feel the time has come for them to step back from this particular commitment; others may have progressed on their Christian journey to a stage where this way of offering their gifts has become right for them. Again, given relationships of trust and charity, this turnover of Core Group membership should be able to be handled smoothly.

And after the three years

The Wakefield Ministry Scheme process should lead in time to the vision and the practice of collaborative ministry, steered and fostered by the Core Group, becoming fully part of the lifeblood of the church. When the three-year Basic Parish Programme has been completed, the Local Ministry process should go on. From time to time the diocese will offer resources and events to help refresh the Core Group and the process in parishes which completed the formal Scheme some time ago. And of course, WMS Course Units can always be run again in the parish for a fresh intake of people who have not done them before!

Having read all this what then?

If you have not already done so, fix up an appointment with one of the the WMS Staff Team to talk it through and begin to discern the way ahead for your parish. Staff will be pleased to come and address your PCC, and are also available to come and preach at a Sunday service, and to give a presentation about the Scheme and stay behind after church to answer questions if you wish. There are also a number of Exploratory Courses to help get people started with thinking about the sort of issues the Scheme addresses, which you are welcome to use to help you decide. Whichever route you follow, ultimately there needs to be a PCC decision to go ahead, and then the wheels can be set in motion for starting the Scheme.

This leaflet (ILB2) cannot tell you everything about the Wakefield Ministry Scheme, but there is a wide range of others which contain more detail about various things referred to here. These include:

The Diocesan Helper

Every parish that joins the Scheme is allocated a person from outside the parish to be their Diocesan Helper. He or she is chiefly there to accompany the Core Group through the Scheme as their friend, mentor, guide and consultant, to introduce a dimension of external objectivity and to form a regular link between the parish and the diocesan personnel of the Scheme. The Ministry Scheme Officer will consult you before inviting a particular person to be your parishes' Helper, and will normally arrange for he or she to meet with you to discuss the Scheme in the parish before any definite appointment of the Helper is made. Subsequently as stated above the Helper's involvement will be chiefly with the Core Group: your own oversight and support of the Group from an internal parish perspective should be complemented by the Helper's role as the external person.

Accountability

The Core Group remains accountable to the PCC which has approved its composition. PCC agendas should regularly include space for a report on Core Group activities as for other sub-committees and working groups. There needs to be clarity about when any new initiatives originating from the Core Group require a PCC resolution in order to be put into effect. In some cases (e.g. changes to patterns of Sunday worship) it goes without saying that this is legally necessary. In others (e.g. introducing lay-led marriage preparation) it will be wise to give PCC time to discussion and not just present a *fait accompli* from the Core Group. In other instances local custom will vary but hopefully relationships of trust and charity will be such that PCCs need not 'vet' every smallest detail of developments in which Core Groups may be involved (e.g. introducing some new material for a baptism preparation course unless there are major cost implications!)

The PCC should also review the membership of the Core Group annually. If the process by which the Group was first set up was not over-bureaucratic, it should not be too difficult for people both

Most educational units include questions intended to help parishes establish priorities and aims for ministry and mission: out of these will come requests for specific training, which the WMS Staff will then provide from diocesan resources. The design of the process means that roughly the first half of the three years is likely to consist mainly of exploration, sharing, study and discussion; during the second half practical skills training in areas identified by the parish will occupy a more prominent role.

About the Core Group

Once the PCC has given approval to the parish entering the Scheme, a Core Group needs to be set up. Some dioceses call this a 'Local Ministry Team'. In Wakefield, however, we see this term as describing just one possibility: typically in a small congregation of, say, no more than 25 people, the Core Group is likely to comprise the active heart of the church, the people who will effectively share in ministry.

However, as most congregations are larger than this, the role of the Core Group in many cases is likely to be different. In quite a large church of say over 100 people, with numerous organisations in place, the Core Group will probably have a co-ordinating role, helping to promote and oversee shared ministry development according to a common vision within an overall structure.

Other parishes will see the Core Group as primarily a 'vision-building' group or a 'think tank', taking the lead in a process of parish education designed to stimulate and explore fresh ideas and new patterns of ministry. As incumbent you will need to be clear about what kind of Core Group your parish will have.

The Wakefield scheme does not lay down rules about how to form a Core Group. In some parishes there is already a *de facto* ministry leadership group of some kind in place; in many it is reasonably obvious from the start who the core people are in the church. However the group is gathered, in due course a list of names needs to be approved by the PCC.

You may wish to consult others about this and then approach potential Core Group members yourself before putting a list before the PCC. Alternatively you may prefer the PCC itself to volunteer suggestions from which the list can be produced. Some churches have used a wider process inviting names to be submitted by the congregation or even by electoral roll members, though for this to work it is essential that people have an adequate understanding of the Scheme first. In some diocesan schemes elections are held from among a list of candidates, though in Wakefield we do not particularly recommend this.

We hope we can trust to local knowledge about what is the right way for each parish, with the proviso that the process is properly owned by the PCC. Preferably, at least half the Core Group should also be PCC members, to avoid the possibility of conflict between two 'power bases'. It should go without saying that a Core Group must not be composed of the vicar's choice of 'progressive' people set over against a more 'traditionalist' PCC!

In sum: try to get a reasonably representative spread of age groups, background and traditions, with good linkage into the various organisations and networks of the church and the parish community. Core Group members should also be good team players, or at least ready to work as such: very maverick radicals and very entrenched traditionalists may be problematic in the group, unless being part of it is a way of affirming and harnessing their talents, and the rest of the group is strong enough to cope with them.

The role of the incumbent

Your role as legally defined is not altered by the presence of a Core Group and the practice of local shared ministry. The accountability and authority of the incumbent remain in place, and you therefore need to be closely aware of the group's activities and ongoing life. Whether or not you choose to be a **member** of the Core Group yourself is your decision: broadly

speaking we should expect this to be more likely in a single parish, single church situation where you are the full-time resident incumbent, and less likely where the Ministry Scheme is being used as a way of developing the life of a small daughter church or one particular church in a multi-parish benefice, where you are not resident. However, if you are a member of the Core Group it will be desirable for the group to be capable nevertheless of meeting without you; if you are not a member you should of course be free to attend meetings at any time where there is a need for you to do so!

In a local shared ministry parish, the incumbent's role of pastoral oversight and ministry leadership will be exercised in a collaborative way: the official Report on Local Ministry **Stranger in the Wings** (1998) identifies the following features of this:

- being a good listener and enabler;
- being willing to act as guide, adviser and consultant rather than benevolent dictator or efficient delegator;
- being willing to share leadership in ministry;
- being willing to see ideas and policies, the fruit of his or her professional knowledge and experience, postponed or rejected;
- giving support and training, in particular to members of local ministry teams and group leaders;
- holding regular meetings with leaders for consultation and planning;
- through all the above, maintaining the incumbent's own proper ministry of word and sacrament;
- continuing to learn and being willing to explore new ideas;
- understanding and accepting that collaboration is better, but is not usually either easier or quicker.