

At Commissioning, Elders receive a Certificate signed by the Diocesan Bishop, signifying that they have the Bishop's authorisation to fulfil an Elder's ministry.

Prior to Commissioning, every Elder is required to complete a Declaration about their fitness to work with children and vulnerable adults and to attend a Safe-guarding course, in line with Diocesan Policy on Safeguarding. Pastoral Elders will also be required to have an enhanced DBS check. More information is available from the Administrator.

Training

Elders' training is designed to be flexible enough to support people's diverse ministries, to build on their existing skills and experience, and increase their confidence. The pattern of Elders' training across the Diocese is:

(1) *Basic Training*: a four-session course for groups which may be of interest to all, but which is **necessary** for all who are involved in, or considering, any kind of ministry, whether local (e.g. Lay Elder ministry) or national (e.g. Reader ministry or ordination).

(2) *Further Training* in Leading Worship and Pastoral Care (8 sessions each unit), one or both unit being done within 18 months of

Commissioning, according to the shape of the Elder's ministry.

Training may be run by the Incumbent or other local ministers, or by another Diocesan Leader. The A4 training packs are user-friendly and emphasise learning from experience of ministry. There is no formally assessed work, though Elders are asked to do preparation for the sessions.

More details and samples of training resources are available from the Lay Elders Administrator, and are on the Diocesan website (see below).

For more information

Enquiries about new Lay Elders, or their initial or ongoing training:

Lay Elders Administrator:

Mrs Lesley Steed

Diocesan Office

St Nicholas Centre

4 Cutler Street

Ipswich IP1 1UQ

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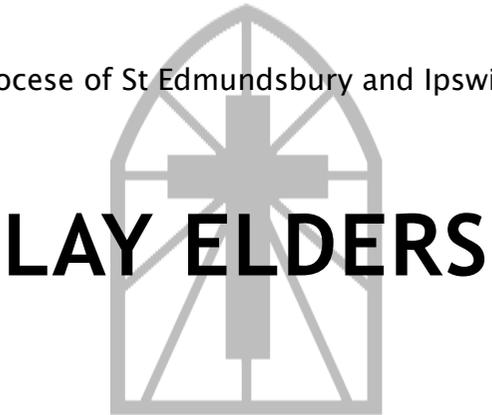
See also the Diocesan website:

www.cofesuffolk.org

Ministry, Education and Training Team

October 2017

Diocese of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich



LAY ELDERS

Lay Elders in our Diocese

Lay Elders began in our Diocese in the late 1960s as a pioneering experiment in lay ministry in a North Suffolk Deanery. Their ministry has developed and expanded so that there are now well over 500 Elders, spread across the whole Diocese.

What are Lay Elders?

Elders are men and women chosen by the local Church and authorised by the Diocesan Bishop for ministry in the local Church and community. They work mainly in the area of pastoral care and/or leading worship.

Their Commissioning takes place at any appropriate date in their parish Church. They serve initially for a maximum of three years, and may be re-commissioned for further periods of up to three years.

Who may be an Elder?

Anyone who is baptised and confirmed, a regular communicant, in good standing in the local Church and community, and able to fulfil the tasks of an Elder, may be considered for this ministry. There is no lower or upper age limit. See more below on how Elders are appointed.

Rules and Regulations

Lay Elders are unique to Suffolk, so they are not named in Canon Law. However, their ministry falls within what Canon Law permits lay people to do. In effect the ministry of Lay Elder gathers into a coherent ministry, valid in its own right, what Canon Law permits lay people to do occasionally. Our Diocesan Handbook has Bishop's Regulations for Elder ministry.

What do Lay Elders do?

An Elder's ministry is shaped by his/her gifts and availability, and local needs. If a benefice has several Elders, each one's ministry may have a different focus.

An Elder may do pastoral work, e.g. visiting people at home or in hospital, following up baptisms or funerals, visiting newcomers, working with young families or elderly people, visiting the local school.

Liturgically, an Elder may lead Morning and Evening Prayer and other forms of Service of the Word, read the Bible in worship, distribute bread or wine at Communion, and take Communion to people at home or in hospital. Although Elders are not licensed to preach, the several alternatives to the sermon permitted in Common Worship are open to Elders.

Working in a team

Every Lay Elder works in a ministry team, even if it is a team of only two, Elder and Incumbent. Often it is a mixed team of lay and ordained ministers, working across several parishes in a benefice. So an Elder needs to be a good team player, able to work with others and to value their skills and experience. If Lay Elders' ministry is being developed from scratch in a benefice, it is helpful if a *group* of them can be created, each with a different focus of ministry.

How is an Elder appointed?

The first step which an Incumbent and PCC should take is to review ministry needs locally, and then to consider if Elder ministry might help to meet them.

There should be thorough, well-informed discussion in ministry team and PCC. The Incumbent and potential Elder need to

talk together about what ministry could be offered, being realistic in the light of the Elder's circumstances. They need to consider how that ministry would be supported, and when and how appropriate initial and ongoing training will be given (see overleaf).

Approval by PCC

After these discussions, an Incumbent may put before the PCC a proposal to request a specific person's appointment to Elder ministry. At least 75% of the PCC needs to vote in favour before the request can proceed.

If the Elder will work in more than one parish in the benefice, the PCCs of *all* the parishes in which the Elder will minister should discuss and vote.

A *Request for Commissioning* form is then completed by Incumbent, Elder and PCC Secretary and returned to the Elders' Administrator. The Incumbent arranges a Commissioning with the Diocesan or Suffragan Bishop, or Archdeacon.

Usually, the *Order of Service* for Commissioning is included in the main Sunday worship in the parish church.