

Synod Accredited Local Church Leaders

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Appointing Local Church Leaders in the Eastern Synod

Approved by the Pastoral Committee 6th February 2024

Introduction

Local leadership is already being offered in many different forms beyond the traditional role of Ministers of Word & Sacrament across the Synod. Due to this, the Synod Pastoral Committee sees a need to formulate a framework and guidelines in which Local Church Leaders may be authorised to provide ministry to congregations in the Eastern Synod.

Establishing the need (including documentation required)

The need or desire for a Local Church Leader will be established through discussions between the local church and Synod (e.g. the Moderator, Mission and Training Officer, Pastoral Convenor, their Interim Moderator. or an Area Partnership Pastoral Advisor APPA).

There will then be a recommendation made to Synod Pastoral Committee outlining:

- The case for a Local Church Leader.
- How this fits the Pastorate Profile.
- How the cost of training and any other expenses will be met.
- The Local Church Leader's Role Description (see Appendix 1)
- Who will offer oversight.
- LCLs may be appointed to one church as part of a team ministry where there is a multiple church setting alongside Ministers of the Word and Sacraments and Church Related Community Workers.

Oversight:

All Local Church Leader's must be subject to the supervision of a minister of Word and Sacraments who will be appointed as a pastoral advisor. When making the appointment of any Local Church Leader it is the responsibility of the Synod to ensure that adequate provision is made to ensure that such oversight is carried out.

Once all that is needed is complete, Pastoral Committee will make their decision and if positive then the recruitment process will begin.

It may be that a local church has already identified a possible Local Church Leader. However, it is important that the recruitment process occurs in the order set down below.

Who can be a Local Church Leader

A Local Church Leader should be an Elder of the United Reformed Church or in an equivalent role in a LEP.

If they are not already an Elder, they should be ordained and inducted as an Elder before taking up the role of Local Church Leader. The Local Church Leader should be informed or reminded of the need to comply with Guidelines on conduct and behaviour for Elders and Ministers.

<https://urc.org.uk/urc-ministries/>

The recruitment process:

1: Becoming a Local Church Leader

- When a candidate has been identified, an interview will be set up by the Synod Pastoral Committee, who will decide on the candidate's eligibility to carry out this ministry.
- They will use the guidelines for a local interview for candidates for ministry of Word & sacrament and refer to the Local Church Leader's Role description. (see Appendix 1) Candidates will be expected to conduct their ministry in accordance with the Statement concerning the Nature, Faith and Order of United Reformed Church (Basis of Union, Schedule D).
- Safeguarding:

This is an issue of Trustee liability both for the Elders of the local church and for the Synod trustees and appropriate checks must be carried out before any Local Church Leader begins in post. The steps are:

- a) Self declaration form to be completed.
- b) DBS check carried out.
- c) CV provided.
- d) References must be taken up.
- e) Safeguarding interview must be carried out.
- f) Attendance at Safer sacred space/ boundaries awareness training (essential).

2: Introducing a Local Church Leader to a Church

- Once a candidate has been deemed eligible to carry out a Local Church Leader Role, Church Meeting will be asked to meet the candidate and vote on whether to accept this person, subject to concurrence by the Synod Pastoral Committee.
- The Church Meeting will be chaired by a representative of the Synod Pastoral Committee. The percentage of the vote required to be reached for the appointment to be made should be decided before the meeting. This should be a minimum of 75%.

3: Training (Mission and Training Officer can advise)

Portfolio of training before taking up a post:

- Stepwise: Faith Filled Life followed by Faith-Fuelled Leadership courses should at least have been started before a person becomes a Local Church Leader and should be completed within the first three years.
- Safer sacred space – boundaries awareness.
- URC Safeguarding to Intermediate level.
- An assessed Elders Meeting.
- Communion Training (where relevant).
- 'You're welcome' introduction to the URC.

In post training

- Completing any Synod courses that would prove helpful (in conversation with the Mission and Training Officer)
- Invitation to the Autumn Synod Ministers' Gathering - the local church will be asked to contribute to the cost of this.

4: Settlement Agreement and Finances

A Settlement Agreement or Contract (as applicable) will be agreed between the Local Church Leader, the local church and the Synod Pastoral Committee before the Local Church Leader takes up the appointment. (Appendix 6)

The local church will agree to cover the Local Church Leader's expenses in accordance with Synod guidelines.

5: Commissioning, terms of service and review

- There will be a Service of Welcome & Commissioning, at which the Synod Moderator or their appointed deputy will preside.
- The Local Church Leader will normally be appointed for an initial term of between three and five years (renewable). Their ministry shall be reviewed by a Synod Pastoral Committee appointed Review Group. A review should be held near the beginning of the last year of the post in order to give enough time to consider the continuing need for ministry, whether there should be changes to the agreement if the ministry is continued or whether the ministry should be brought to an end.

For review see Appendix 3

6: Accountability and Connectedness

- The Local Church Leader will be working under the authority of the Eastern Synod and oversight of this will be given both by a Minister of Word & Sacrament (appointed by the Synod Pastoral Committee) and by the Synod Pastoral Committee.
- The Local Church Leader is accountable to the local Elders (or the equivalent in a Local Ecumenical Partnership) and Church Meeting.
- The Local Church Leader is expected to engage in the life of the Synod and to attend events such as Synod meetings, training events and Area Partnership meetings regularly. The Local Church Leader will be invited to the Synod Ministers' Gathering and Spring School.

Appendix 1: Local Church Leader's Role Description

The Local Church Leader's role description will be related to the mission aims of the Church.

Items for the role description will probably include some of the following:

- To provide visible leadership in the church by worshipping at the church regularly.
- To lead worship on a regular basis (specify the intended frequency, e.g. the number of services per month)
- To give leadership to the church community in seeking to plan and develop the mission strategy of the church.
- To assist the Elders in planning for the nurture of church members.
- To teach, or to help provide teaching for, those seeking baptism, confirmation or membership.
- In association with the Elders, to be responsible for pastoral care of members.
- To chair Elders' and Church Meetings
- To give guidance to the Elders and Church Meetings on denominational matters.
- To represent the church at Synod meetings.
- To give leadership to the church in ecumenical matters, including representing the church on the local Churches Together.
- To make a regular contribution to the church magazine and/or website.

Accountability and connectedness

- to agree to abide by the URC statement of Nature, Faith and Order and the URC Code of Conduct for Ministers and Elders. Although a Local Church Leader is not a Minister of the United Reformed Church, these are the standards of leadership that are expected.
- to work with the oversight Minister of Word & Sacrament and the APPA (?) (on behalf of Pastoral Committee)
- to abide by URC safeguarding policies and procedures
- to be accountable to the local Elders (or the equivalent in a Local Ecumenical Partnership) and Church Meeting.
- to engage in the life of the Synod and to attend events such as Synod meetings, training events and Area Partnership meetings regularly.

Appendix 2: Local Church Leader Role Description Review

To be conducted approximately 6 months from the date of the Commissioning Service

Introduction

This review is to make sure that the role description for the Local Church Leader (LCL) fulfils the requirements as understood by the Church, and the LCL, and the expectations of both.

Depending on the outcome of the review, changes may be made to the role description.

Review Process

- The review will be conducted by a local APPA and a member of Pastoral Committee
- The panel will meet with the LCL and the Elders separately.
- The panel will talk to the Oversight Minister.
- The panel will prepare a report which will be shared with the Pastoral Committee for comment and changes to the role description may be suggested.
- Discussion of the report with Elders and LCL may result in changes to the role description or other measures being put in place (e.g. a change in the support system; a training need identified)

- If there is a new role description this should be signed and dated to make sure that this is the document worked from in the future, particularly as it will form the basis of the end of term review.

Areas to be covered:

These will depend on the role description. It will probably be useful to work through the role description and reflect on what is happening in terms of each section.

The review should also include these questions:

- How effective are the support structures for the LCL?
- How does the role description compare to reality in terms of work done and time needed?
- Should the role description be changed to reflect reality as against expectation?
- Is any additional training needed.

Appendix 3: Reviewing the Local Church Leader - Post and Person

Introduction

- At the beginning of the final year of the term of the Local Church Leader (LCL) post, the Synod will review this Ministry.
- The review should be based on the most current version of the Role Description drawn up between the local Church and the post holder.
- The review is undertaken in order to consider the continuing need for ministry, whether there should be changes to the agreement if the ministry is continued or whether the ministry should be brought to an end.

Review Process

- A local APPA will first ask the local Church and the LCL if they wish this Ministry to continue. If either party does not wish to continue then support will be given by Pastoral Committee and an exit interview arranged.
- Pastoral Committee will create a Review Group. This should consist of three members, with at least one minister and one elder, one man and one woman. One of the members could be a local APPA. None of these should be members of the Church where the ministry is being exercised. One of the members of the team will be designated as Convenor.
- The Convenor will send a questionnaire to the LCL to be filled out prior to meeting with the Review Group. (see Appendix 4)
- At the same time the Convenor will send a letter to the Elders to outline the process and laying out the areas for Elders to discuss in the absence of the post holder so that views can be expressed openly. (see Appendix 5)
- The Review Group should collect views from the post holder, the minister with oversight, and the church involved.

It is important that the meetings take place in the following order

1. The Review Group discuss the questionnaire responses with the LCL. Any issues raised will inform the discussion with the Church.
2. The Review Group meet with the Oversight Minister.
3. The Review Group meet with the Local Church to reflect on the questions outlined in the letter sent to them by the Convenor and also any issues it is felt appropriate to discuss following the above meetings.
4. If it is needed following the Church Meeting the Review Group will meet again with the LCL. (e.g. if there are clear differences in emphasis in Ministry)
5. If it is needed the Review Group will meet a small group comprising the LCL and two Elders to see if a way forward can be found

- After meeting with the relevant people, a report is prepared by the Review Group, checked with the post holder for matters of accuracy and then presented to the Synod Pastoral Committee.
- The local APPA and/or the Moderator may meet with the post holder before deciding on any recommendations about a further term of service, or changes in the settlement agreement. If there is another term of service then the approximate time for the next review should be put in place
- The report, plus any Pastoral Committee recommendations will be brought to the Elders and/or Church Meeting. The Convenor or another of the Review Group may attend if necessary.

Areas to be covered

The review process will include questions as to how the role has been carried out in relation to the role description and will address whether the role description therefore needs to be redefined as work has developed.

Where appropriate it will also cover some of the following categories

- Team working
- Involvement in the wider church and with ecumenical partners
- Effectiveness of support and management structures

As far as possible a clear distinction should be kept between issues relating to the post and those to do with the post holder.

Appendix 4: Questionnaire for the Review of a Local Church Leader post

to be completed by the post holder

This questionnaire needs to be sent to the Review Group prior to meeting with them.

It will be confidential; however, it may be that there are issues that arise from of it.

The Review Group will discuss with you what issues should then inform the discussion with the Elders meeting.

There may be other issues that could go to the Pastoral Committee without being discussed with the local Church.

You may feel it is appropriate that either your Oversight Minister or an accompanier be found to help you to work through these questions. If so, please contact the Convenor of the Review Group who will facilitate this.

1: Your Assessment of your ministerial activities

This exercise is to help in reviewing what has happened during this term in your role as Local Church Leader, and then to compare the reality with the expectations as embodied in your role description.

NB do make sure you have the most up to date version of your Role Description!

Under each heading please

- look at the amount of time that you spend on this activity.
- consider whether it is reasonable, in proportion to your other commitments.
- consider whether it is adequate: is it a source of frustration that you cannot give more time to this area of Ministry?
- rate your effectiveness in this area of Ministry.

When considering the 'time' aspect, take into consideration the preparation time required for a particular activity.

2: Further questions to answer

- If, in reality, your time usage and priorities have differed significantly from that anticipated, why has this happened?

- Are the reasons good (a growing church requiring more emphasis on teaching!) or bad (too much gap plugging)?

- Are there any tasks that have been added on to your work that are not in the Role Description? Why has this happened?

- Do you see a need for changes in your role as a result of this review? If so, what?

- Are there changes that you should be pressing for, both in the Mission Strategy of your local Church and in your role description, to address the problems that have hampered your Leadership in the last three years? (If your Church has not undertaken a Mission Review then this could be one of the recommendations of this review)

- Are there areas of your Ministry where you believe that additional training would increase your effectiveness?

- Are there any special skills/knowledge/aptitude/interests you would like to be able to use more in your Local Church Leadership? What are they and why do you think this has not happened up to now?

- What are the key responsibilities and objectives which you believe are appropriate for the future of your role should your time as Local Church Leader be extended?

- What amendments if any, do you think should be made to the role description (in consultation with the Synod Pastoral Committee?)

Appendix 5: Review of Local Church Leadership

Letter to Elders covering the remit of the review

Dear Elders of _____,

As _____ has now entered the final year of this term of Local Church Leadership it is time for a review. This will consider the continuing need for ministry; whether this particular Local Church Leadership is continued or whether the ministry should be brought to an end. Also, if it is to be continued, whether there should be changes to the role description or Settlement Agreement/Contract (as applicable)

Pastoral Committee have set up a review group which will meet with the Local Church Leader, the Oversight Minister and with you. These meetings will be held separately so that views can be expressed openly. The whole process has been laid out in the document Appointing Local Church Leaders in the Eastern Synod which is attached.

At the meeting the following areas will be explored. The expectation is that you will have already discussed your answers together (without the Local Church Leader being present) It is useful to consult with other members of the Church as well in order to gain a wider range of views. It is not expected that everyone will agree.

The review group will be in touch very soon with a date for the meeting and if in the meantime you have any questions, please contact either the Moderator or the Convenor of Pastoral Committee.

Questions for the review

Re the Post/ Ministry

- What difference has having a Local Church Leader made for your church?
- How has the work of the Local Church Leader reflected the agreed role description? Why is that?
- What reflections do you have about the mission of the Church and how the Local Church Leader has helped engage with this?
- What reflections do you have about the present and future priorities for ministry?

Re the Person

- What comments would you like to make about the work of your Local Church Leader?
- What care and support structures are in place for your Local Church Leader?

Appendix 6: Draft terms of settlement for a Local Church Leader

This Settlement Agreement is made between

The Eastern Synod,

(the Pastorate)

and

(the Local Church Leader))

Both Local Church Leader and Pastorate will:

- be bound by the Plan for Partnership, and
- the provisions of the Basis for Union,
- adhere to the Guidelines for Standards of Conduct and Behaviour of Ministers and Elders and any subsequent such documents agreed by Mission Council and General Assembly.

1. Purpose

The Synod recognises this Local Church Leader as:

The agreed role description is attached.

2. Term

The appointment shall initially be for years, effective from and shall be reviewed by a review group set up by the Synod Pastoral Committee at the end of the last year of the term.

3. Scope

The Local Church Leader will generally make hours per week available for Local Church Leader duties and will lead worship on occasions each month/quarter/year.

4. Housing

The Local Church Leader will be responsible for arranging their own accommodation.

5. Travel

The pastorate will reimburse the Local Church Leader for using their own car/transport in accordance with the recommendations of the HMRC, and for costs of public transport, upon submission of a written claim (*as agreed*), and subject to annual review in the light of recommendations from URC Synod and/or finance department.

6. Administration, Telephones and Computer

The pastorate will reimburse the Local Church Leader for all administrative expenses, including stationery and postage, upon submission of a written claim. Telephone expenses will be reimbursed on the basis of actual calls made in pursuance of pastorate duties, plus % of the line rental charge.

7. Education for Ministry

The pastorate will support the Local Church Leader in undertaking ongoing training in consultation with Ministries Committee and to attend the annual Synod Ministers' Gathering and Spring School, for which the pastorate will pay. For any Sundays involved in these provisions the pastorate will be responsible for arranging and paying for pulpit supply.

The Pastorate will offer a book allowance of £ (the suggested figure is at least £250) to be offset against the purchase of books, computer software, resources, etc.

The pastorate will contribute % of the cost of regularly replacing a computer for the Local Church Leader's use, normally every four years.

8. Mission Review

The Local Church Leader and pastorate will participate in the Mission Review process.

9. Re-negotiation and Review

The Synod, pastorate and Local Church Leader are willing to re-negotiate these terms of settlement during the course of a ministry at the request of the Synod Pastoral Committee. Any suggested changes from the pastorate or the Local Church Leader will be subject to the agreement of the Synod Pastoral Committee.

The terms of this agreement will be reviewed every two years by the Elders and when changes are made to Synod and General Assembly guidelines.

Signed Local Church Leader
..... for the Pastorate
..... for Pastoral Committee

Date