

Lincoln Focal Ministry Technical Guidebook

Called by God to leadership in the local church

Discerned, supported, and overseen by the Oversight Minister

Working together with colleagues in the Local Mission Partnership

Trained and recognised by the diocese, authorised by the bishop

A guidebook to a new and vital role in our churches in Lincoln Diocese to support them in their flourishing and growth.

A welcome and introduction from the Bishop of Lincoln

Dear Friends,

I am delighted to commend to you the new and important role of Focal Minister in the Diocese of Lincoln.

At the heart of our shared direction of travel, *Time To Change Together* (TTCT), is a commitment to working in partnership at every level – people, parishes, and ministers – for the flourishing of the local church.

Across Greater Lincolnshire we have more than 600 churches of every shape and size, and we want to see each of them responding to God's call in a variety of ways. Festival Churches gathering people to mark significant events in our lives; Community Churches as places of Christian belonging, rooted in our towns and villages; Mission Churches committed to growing in generosity and depth of discipleship.



In order to best serve this diverse 'ecology' of churches and communities, we need a variety of ministries. I am mindful of St Paul's description of the whole Church in 1 Corinthians 12: one body with many members, each bringing a variety of gifts, services and activities.

Focal Ministry is about the people of God being released and equipped to share in the leadership of the local church. Our inherited patterns of ministry have relied on parish priests taking on greater responsibility for more churches with no expectation of sharing the load with others. As we move forward together, this needs to change for the wellbeing and flourishing of all.

A Focal Minister is the 'go-to' person in our parishes: a leader, a public face of the worshipping community and a representative of the diocese for those whom we encounter day-by-day. I envisage Focal Ministers working alongside their church communities and modelling collaborative leadership, not only with the incumbent (or Oversight Minister) who holds the legal responsibility for the parish, but also with me as the Chief Pastor and Shepherd of this Diocese.

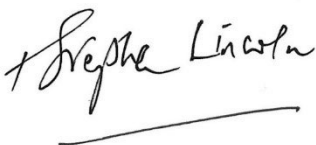
A new cohort of Focal Ministers will include those already serving as ministers in our churches: Priests and Deacons, Readers and ALMs, Churchwardens and other officers. For some, exploring Focal Ministry will be the first steps on a journey into recognised and formally commissioned ministry. I encourage you all, in this next chapter of our diocesan life, to think, reflect and pray about this: who are the potential Focal Ministers in our midst? How can we encourage and affirm them?

In this guidebook you will find more detailed information about Focal Ministry, including the process for discernment and training, and ultimately commissioning by me as your Bishop. I look forward to discovering together how church leaders can best serve the diverse body of Christ, in and for Greater Lincolnshire.

This is a different way of ministering for a different kind of church. I hope that our dedicated band of Oversight Ministers will see new Focal colleagues as a blessing for their flourishing and growth. I pray that many faithful disciples across Greater Lincolnshire will discover a fresh sense of vocation, affirmed and supported by their congregations, and explore how they may be part of this vision for fruitful leadership.

Jesus says: 'You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit – fruit that will last.' (*John 15.16*)

Yours ever in Christ,



Focal Ministry Pathway



Contents

1	Introduction	5
2	The role of the Focal Minister	7
3	Why a church should have a Focal Minister	9
4	Who might become a Focal Minister	10
5	Oversight and Focal together	12
6	Discernment	13
7	Training	14
8	Process	16
9	Additional Materials	17

Appendices

A	Provisional Nomination Form	
B	Focal Ministry Role Agreement Template	
C	Role Agreement Annexe – Legal Delegation	

I Introduction

This booklet is to inform and guide:

- those wishing to explore a new leadership role in the local church
- those churchwardens, PCC members and others who make decisions about their local church and want to understand what Focal Ministry might do for them
- those who are Oversight Ministers (Incumbents) exploring sharing the responsibility for one or more of the churches in their Cure of Souls with a Focal Minister
- those planning the selection, training and support of Focal Ministers.

In the Diocese of Lincoln, as a key element of A Time to Change Together, we have used the language of Focal Ministry quite a lot, as have a small number of other dioceses, and, as we increasingly hear, in the National Church. Now we are ready to roll out this new way of supporting and serving our churches, unlocking and honouring the leadership and ministerial roles of many, and releasing our Oversight Ministers from some of the burdens of responsibility.

Across the diocese we have active retired ministers with Permission to Officiate, self-supporting priests and deacons, Readers, Authorised Lay Ministers, and in reality lots of others taking a ministerial or leadership role in our churches, such as Churchwardens who sometimes lead worship in an emergency, and often take care of the people in their church or the wider community. Many hundreds of them. So why do we now need Focal Ministers? All the above have responsibility, training and some kind of recognition for their work in the church and are essential to its flourishing, especially in places with many smaller church communities. Focal ministry goes a step further.

The new and unique role of a Focal Minister

Focal Ministry is a new, unique and exciting opportunity for those called by God to:

- take on a large part of the responsibility for a church
- represent the diocese and the wider church to the people of that individual church (occasionally more than one)
- lead the church family into active discipleship, growth and mission to the wider community, without being licensed as incumbent, often without being ordained, and yet with the recognition and blessing of the actual incumbent, the parish and the diocesan bishop.

Who is in charge?

Incumbents have been building ministry teams for years, but generally they have retained the whole of the responsibility, seeking some task-based assistance, but not delegating leadership. Not effectively sharing some of their oversight. Focal Ministry invites people of good standing in the church and the community to share the responsibility and leadership, not just the work. All under the ultimate authority of the incumbent, and that all under the authority of the Bishop of Lincoln.

Why are we doing this now?

A Time To Change Together recognises any and every church is helped in its well-being, identity, flourishing, deepening discipleship, more effective outreach and service and growth, by having, where possible, its own leader, who is in turn a member of a supportive team. That leader does not need to be the incumbent. In a situation where incumbents are being asked to take on the oversight of an increasing number of churches, sharing responsibility is essential for the wellbeing of stipendiary clergy and the flourishing of every church. We also seek to value a variety of ministries, not just stipendiary priesthood.

Who gets a Focal Minister?

Any church that wants one and can help identify one. Any church that wants to mobilise for the kingdom. In Key Mission Churches and Local Mission Churches, the Oversight Minister will generally also fulfil the role of the Focal Minister. They may also have other focal ministers, perhaps leading specific ministries or fresh expressions within that church.

But we have 272 Community Churches and 190 Festival Churches, and there is no way a single incumbent can be sufficiently involved in all such churches committed to their oversight, to lead them, hands on, into flourishing. A church is a group of the faithful seeking to grow in faith, love, social action and joyful worship. To place a leader in each of these churches is a hugely daring ambition for our diocese.

The go-to person

For a worshipping community, the Focal Minister will be their go-to person. Working with their Oversight Minister, they will be the coordinator of their spiritual life together, supporter of their needs, voice in the wider community and in the Local Mission Partnership. They will ensure that the best possible worship, teaching, social action, outreach and sense of family and belonging is available to all – they clearly cannot provide all of that themselves.

Varied gifts and varied needs

No two candidates for Focal Ministry have the same gifts, the same calling, or the same ability to lead and minister in the parish. No two churches have the same needs, the same ambitions, and the same human, financial, spiritual or other resources for flourishing. So every Focal Ministry will be a one-off, designed around the minister and the church. No-one should feel that they cannot contemplate such a role just because they cannot do everything.

Which specific actions they can undertake for their church will depend on their other training and authorisations. Some are already licensed to preach, others to proclaim the words of others. Some can offer the sacraments, others support the offering and receiving of baptism and communion. Some will be gifted and authorised in pastoral care, and others may not have that vocation. Some will come into this new ministry with a range of gifts and authorised ministries, others will not, though they may explore them from within the new role. They may connect the church with other appropriate ministries from the Local Mission Partnership or beyond, and may in turn identify, encourage and value the ministerial skills of others on the church community. A Time to Change Together values collaboration very highly, and the Focal Minister will model that collaboration in being a supporter of the many skills of others.

The big questions are – is someone called by God to use their gifts to serve, lead and care for a specific church community, and is the church community willing to put its trust and its hope in such a minister?

Reluctance

Some worshipping communities may decide they don't want a Focal Minister leading their collaborative life of discipleship. A few Oversight Ministers may be reluctant to share as much of their care of the churches in their Cure of Souls as Focal Ministry expects. So be it – but a reluctant parish will find it hard to flourish without this local leadership and Oversight Ministers will not generally be able to step in. Similarly, a reluctant incumbent will have to take on an onerous ministerial role, and maybe watch some churches in their care struggle to find their identity and flourish.

Some churches already have local ministers ably leading them in worship, service, and growth, and may not see the need for this new approach. We hope that prayerfully they may perceive the value of such existing ministry being better supported and episcopally recognised, and encourage their ministers to share their undoubted experience, skills, and charisms with a growing group of new practitioners.

2 The role of the Focal Minister

What might a Focal Minister actually do?

Being recognised as a Focal Minister does not, of itself, confer any general or specific authorisation. The shape of the ministry in any given place will depend on both: the Focal Minister's existing training and authorisation; and the agreement that they reach with their Oversight Minister. So, for example...

Within a specific church, the Focal Minister will, under the authority of the Oversight Minister, by specific agreed delegation:

- Be the everyday face of the church.
- Provide or facilitate the maintenance of a missional focus in all activities.
- Be at the heart of the pastoral life and relationships within the church community.
- Share in representing the church in the wider community, including schools, businesses and civic institutions.
- Work collaboratively, to encourage others, especially with Churchwardens, PCC, other ministers, those involved in presenting worship and those leading church activities.
- Ensure that the identified action of the church happens, but not expect to do it all themselves.
- Build a ministry team from people in the church and the wider LMP or DP, identifying and fostering the calling of others.
- Help the church to realise its vocation as expressed in its categorisation and vision.
- Encourage the congregation to belong and get involved in their local church and neighbouring churches in a local cluster or the wider LMP.
- Encourage and facilitate the discipleship of others.
- Be recognised by the church, incumbent and Bishop for an initial three-year period, after a six month probationary period, renewable by agreement.

If you are so trained and licensed/authorised, you may additionally:

- Lead the forms of worship that you are already authorised to conduct. Again, recognition as a Focal Minister does not, of itself, confer any authorisation to conduct public worship
- Preach, if so licensed
- Conduct occasional offices as appropriate
- Provide or coordinate pastoral care on behalf of the church, beyond the vocation of all the baptised to care for one-another.

Coordination

In some places, where there are several Focal Ministers caring for several Community or Festival Churches under one Oversight Minister, a Focal Minister might additionally be asked to coordinate the work of other Focal Ministers. If, for example, the Coordinating Focal Minister is a priest, and the others locally are not, then that suggests an interesting and effective pattern of local ministry that might emerge.

Within the Local Mission Partnership, the Focal Minister will:

- Communicate the unique character and vision of the worshipping community of their church into the Local Mission Partnership Leadership Team (LMPLT).
- Represent and uphold the vision and mission of the LMPLT back into the worshipping community of their church.
- Contribute collaboratively to the life of the Local Mission Partnership, always with a missional focus.
- Promote the collaborative life of other churches in the LMP
- Respect and support the role of the Oversight Ministers of their church and other churches in the LMP
- Lead the congregations into an invigorating and enriching shared life with others in the Local Mission Partnership

3 Why a church should have a Focal Minister

We believe that churches with Focal Ministers:

- are more likely to grow.
- develop more active disciples, living out their faith where they are.
- feel more confident about their life as a church and about their future.
- have more people involved in doing what needs to be done in church, enabling belonging, participation, and sharing the gospel.
- have more resources to be mission-focused locally.
- naturally work alongside others doing the same, across the Local Mission Partnership.

We believe that in Greater Lincolnshire, with its huge area, scattered communities and large number of churches, a confident pattern of Focal Ministers will often be:

- the most effective way to support the flourishing of churches and communities.
- the only realistic way of providing leadership, confidence and growth, especially in our less populous areas and in places with small or fragile church communities.
- an exciting challenge to vocation amongst those who love their local church and love the Lord Jesus Christ.
- a way of allowing the skills and licensed responsibilities of Oversight Ministers (Incumbents) to be used in the most effective way, sharing their responsibilities, ensuring pastoral and theological integrity, and complementing local skills to the benefit of all.
- a model for effective and sustainable ministry that will be of value elsewhere.

We believe that in due course, our large groups of Key Mission Churches and Local Mission Churches, offering distinctive ministries to diverse congregations within their local church family, may want to explore:

- a form of Focal Ministry to empower leadership of those varied ministries and congregations.
- the use of Focal Ministry to lead Fresh Expressions of Church.
- Focal Ministries as a means of leading the planting, renewal or seeding of worshipping communities in areas of new or revitalised housing.

4 Who might become a Focal Minister?

People may confidently explore Focal Ministry:

- As baptised, confirmed, regular communicants, fully involved in their local church (if someone is not confirmed, that could be done as part of their training and formation).
- As someone on the Electoral Roll of the proposed church or one very close by.
- As persons in good standing in their local community and church.
- As persons whose skills and calling are recognised by the Oversight Minister (or Rural Dean), who is confident to collaborate with them.
- If the PCC makes a formal declaration of sponsorship of their candidacy.
- If they agree to take on and satisfactorily complete an appropriate course of training.
- As long as they are Safely Recruited and compliant with Leadership Safeguarding.

As part of training and discernment, and prior to Episcopal Commissioning, a candidate will need to

- Agree with their Oversight Minister and sign a Role Agreement, including a schedule of agreed roles and exclusions, with agreed specific delegation of responsibility.
- Provide evidence of support for this role for the Bishop who will be assured of their suitability, satisfactory training, formation and clear role by their Oversight Minister, and the Warden of the College of St Hugh.

Focal Ministry isn't dependent upon previous training, though many will bring previously acquired skills and authorisations to the role. The training provided by the College of St Hugh and required for all those taking on the role of Focal Minister, regardless of previous train or role, will:

- Concentrate on the representative role of the in the specific place/community and the wider church.
- Emphasise formation in the role of the Focal Minister as a collaborative leader, under the authority of the Oversight Minister.
- Recognise that every church setting is different, and the strengths and calling of every potential Focal Minister is different, so everything is about the fit, not some one-size-fits-all model.
- Clarify what the extent and limit of responsibility might be.
- Establish practices that value and support the roles of others in the church.
- Clarify where, how and when the Focal Minister can find support and guidance for their role and for issues that arise.
- Provide strategies that protect the well-being of the Focal Minister.
- Suggest ways of being a prayerful presence at the heart of the local church.

Focal Ministers will be an everyday presence and focus of ministry within their church and community. Focal Ministry is a role not dependent upon previous training and can be prayerfully considered by all in the church. Once authorised as a Focal Minister, they may possibly seek discernment, training and recognition for other specific ministries.

Many are already providing a ministry that is very much akin to Focal Ministry. We hope such people will make part of the first tranche of candidates for Focal Ministry, sharing their skills and experience whilst exploring the distinctive elements of his role.

This is a relational ministry, and all parties, especially the Oversight Minister and the Focal Minister must feel confident in that relationship.

Focal Ministers are people who love God, love their church and love their local community and will already be a recognisable and trusted person in church life.

They will need to be:

- faithful in public worship and private prayer.
- passionate about living out their faith in church life and in their local community.
- an encourager, a listener, a pray-er and a disciple.
- deeply committed to their own church community and to the mission it shares with others in its Local Mission Partnership.
- flexible, open and approachable, a trusted and respected member of the church community.
- a life-long learner.
- already a go-to-person for the church in the community.
- someone who holds the continuity from Sunday to Sunday.
- someone who notices and uses the skills of others, to build on what God is already doing there, thereby encouraging and enabling others to participate.
- an enthusiast about helping others grow as disciples too.
- clear about the need for welcome, love and care for all in ways which reflect the Gospel.
- gifted in drawing into the action of the church, so that all can take part.

5 Oversight and Focal Together

In each church or worshipping community that opts for Focal Ministry, the Oversight Minister continues to hold the legal responsibilities vested in the incumbent by the laws of the Church of England, including the right to chair the PCC (See the ‘Annexe for Legal Delegation’ for further guidance on this.) They will expect to have a collaborative relationship with the Focal Minister. However much of the incumbent role is shared or delegated, it must be clear that all legal authority resides with the Oversight Minister, who may share as much or as little as they choose, set out in a Focal Ministry Role Agreement, locally agreed, signed, and the deposited with the Diocese.

Visibility

The Oversight Minister will not be invisible in the church where Focal Ministry has been chosen. Even when there is a substantial degree of delegation that has been agreed by the two parties, it is essential that the Oversight Minister has sufficient presence in worship and the wider life of the church to make a reality of their role as incumbent, to embed the congregation in the wider life of the church and the Local Mission Partnership, and to be able to support and guide the Focal Minister.

Formal relationship

There must be a regular pattern of meetings between the Oversight Minister and the Focal Minister, set out in the Focal Ministry Role Agreement. These might, for example, be monthly in-depth meetings guiding the role and work of the Focal Minister in the context of the agreed understanding of the ambition for the flourishing of the particular church. One of these should constitute an annual review, another a sign off at the end of a six month probationary period. In addition, regular opportunities should be taken to pray, worship and plan together. The amount of time allocated to supervision will need to be consistent with the nature of church and the scale of the ministerial task. A collaborative style and relationship will reassure and strengthen the hand of the Focal Minister, model this good Christian practice for others in the church and recognise the generous offering of time and skills.

Sacramental role

Where the Focal Minister is ordained, they may well have a sacramental role in the local church. This should leave space for the sacramental role of the Oversight Minister. Where the Focal Minister is not, then they should make it their business to ensure sufficient sacramental input to worship, occasional offices and the life of the church, drawing on the appropriate ministers in the local church, in the Local Mission Partnership and maybe further afield, from a list and in a manner agreed with the Oversight Minister. The Oversight Minister may and should provide some of that sacramental and occasional office ministry, but it might be counterproductive for all concerned if that were the only or the majority sacramental input.

Problems

Not every Focal Ministry will go perfectly, and not every oversight relationship will be smooth all the time. Regular supervision will help. Oversight ministers will sometimes need to be sacrificial in allowing the Focal Minister to operate according to their distinctive gifts. Focal Ministers will sometimes need to see that the wisdom and experience of the Oversight Minister, and their legal and pastoral responsibility for the parish, will mean accepting their ultimate authority. The Oversight Minister and Focal Minister should attempt to resolve differences prayerfully and locally. Where this is not working, or the lay representatives of the parish are expressing concern, then there are other persons who can be drawn into the process of resolution. Rural Dean (unless they are providing the Oversight Ministry in a vacancy), Partnership Dean or Lay Co-Lead, Archdeacon, and, as a last resort, the Bishop. Ultimately, the Oversight Minister may consult the Bishop to consider suspending or terminating the authorisation of a Focal Minister. The Focal Minister should use this process of resolution if they believe they are not being carefully led by the Oversight Minister. We pray these provisions will never be needed.

Relationship with other ministers and church leaders

The Oversight Minister will have the responsibility for the formal process of discerning and supporting other ministers. Some such responsibility will be vested in the Rural Dean. The Oversight Minister may delegate to the Focal Minister the responsibility for growing, leading and supporting a ministry team in the local church. This should be worked out and shared with clarity.

6 Discernment

A candidate's prayer, reflection and conversations may have made them confident that God is calling them to this or a similar ministry. However, as a public ministry on behalf of the Church of England in the Diocese of Lincoln, Focal Ministry needs to be tested by others with authority in the church. The key person in discerning a Focal Ministry in a local church in this diocese is the Oversight Minister – the incumbent. They share with the Bishop the Cure of Souls, and hold the legalities of that role, set out in Canon Law. They can, we are advised by our Registrar, delegate some their legal responsibilities but they must be assured of the credentials of the person to whom they are delegating.

This process, preceding a programme of training and formation, should not be unduly daunting, but the care with which it is done is evidence of the high expectations of this Focal Ministry role in the Diocese of Lincoln.

When it is agreed, by the Oversight Minister and the prospective Focal Minister, that a candidate should enter the discernment and training process, a Provisional Nomination Form will be completed, with some questions that provide evidence of the qualities and characteristics in which we hope and trust a Focal Minister will dwell. The Oversight Minister will use a discernment proforma, along the following lines. This will be the fruit of an open and prayerful conversation, and candidates may be confident there are no surprises or secret statements. There are no tests, and the process shouldn't feel like an academic evaluation. It is a checklist of the qualities in which it is hoped a Focal Minister may dwell. Nomination Forms will be locally completed, mutually agreed, and signed off, accompanied by a PCC motion sponsoring the candidate, and held centrally by the Warden of the College of St Hugh.

Discerning Qualities for Focal Ministers

Topic	Seeking	Shared perception	Confident	To work on
Faith	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Confident faith in triune God 2. Familiarity with Jesus's life, teaching and availability 3. Understanding of the role/nature of the Spirit 4. God's saving purpose and action 5. Bible reading and use 6. Creeds 7. The Kingdom 			
Spiritual Life	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A pattern of prayer 2. Personal theological reflection 3. The sacraments and their use 4. Forgiveness 5. Engagement in worship and its qualities 			
Discipleship	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Christian lifestyle 2. Generosity 3. Service 4. "in Christ" 			
The church	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Distinctively Anglican 2. Community, place, action 3. Belonging 4. Collaborative project 5. There for the whole community 			
Mission	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Daring to speak faith to others 2. Confident to make and grow disciples 3. Making the church an attractive community 4. Speaking out for justice 5. Caring for God's creation 			
People and place	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Belonging in a church 2. Love/respect for others in community 3. Understanding of value of your church/place 4. Friendships 5. Respect for variety and difference 6. Patience 			
Personality	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Openness 2. Warmth 3. Self-sacrifice 4. Persuasiveness 5. Collaboration 			

7 Training

Learning Objectives Previously Agreed and their Underpinning Themes

The Learning Objectives for Focal Ministry have two distinct and underpinning themes that will shape the training provided:

- Focal Ministry is a *representative* ministry. Previously, such representative ministry has largely, if not solely, been centred on the person of the Incumbent, but Focal Ministers will not be Incumbents. Training will therefore need to focus on the nature of representative ministry and how it is to be exercised by a Focal Minister who is not the incumbent;
- Focal Ministry is a *person-shaped and context-specific* ministry. Since the range of backgrounds and experiences that individual candidates will bring to Focal Ministry vary so vastly, the expression of this ministry will vary similarly. For example, a recently retired Incumbent with PTO may function in a way that is publicly almost indistinguishable from a traditional parish priest.

By contrast, an Authorised Lay Minister will be able to offer pastoral ministry and lead some public worship but will need to work with colleagues in the LMP to organise sacramental and homiletic ministry.

Further, as well as the variation in backgrounds, experience, skills and resources that an individual Focal Minister may be able to offer, there will be variation in local circumstances. Put simply, Oversight Ministers are likely to vary in how much oversight they want to, or can, provide. While it is important to emphasise that Focal Ministers must be able to function as ‘the minister’ in their context, it will be for local negotiation and discernment to decide what level of independence is practical and desirable in that context.

Finally, the core TTCT principle of offering the ministry that can be resourced, rather than attempting to resource a pattern of ministry that has been inherited, requires ‘boots on the ground’ to give shape and content to what is locally possible.

Cutting across both of these is an assumed structure of authority and accountability that is genuinely new. Functions previously belonging exclusively to ordained incumbents may in future be exercised by Focal Ministers. So, in the delivery of these fundamental learning objectives, attention will need also to be given to both:

- How authority will be delegated from Oversight Minister to Focal Minister so as to embed a shared understanding of how representative ministry in the context will be shared, and for this sharing to be intelligible and real to the local community.
- How accountability will be ensured so that the Focal Ministry is exercised under genuine oversight but not stifled.

The Timetable and Content

The table below sets out the training timetable with some additional notes. In addition to attending these training sessions:

- Candidates will be placed in small groups for reflective practice. Reflection sessions will be scheduled and overseen. Attendance at these sessions is not optional, but permission for absence will not be unreasonably withheld.
- Candidates will be invited to contribute reflections, written, or recorded, after each of the online sessions, and feedback on these will be given. Feedback does *not* mean grading, but the Bishop may take it into account prior to final authorisation.

Placing some learning about Theological Reflection very early in the programme underlines the importance of reflective practice in turning instruction into formation (although the sharpness of the distinction is over-stated by that turn of phrase).

Timetable for the Second Cohort

	<i>Mode of Delivery</i>	<i>Attendance</i>	<i>Broad Content</i>
22nd February 2025	All day; in person	Focal Ministers and Oversight Ministers	Understanding and re-imagining local, representative ministry. Hopes and fears. What about me?
22nd April 2025	2 hours online	Focal Ministers Only	Reflective Practice. Learning to interpret ministerial (and other) experiences in the light of faith.
6th May 2025	2 hours online	Focal Ministers Only	The Church and the Church of England. What do we represent?
20th May 2025	2 hours online	Focal Ministers Only	Ministry. How do we represent it?
10th June 2025	2 hours online	Focal Ministers Only	Collaboration and Teamwork. Working as part of a team. Working on your own.
12th July 2025	All day; in person	Focal Ministers and Oversight Ministers	So What’s the Plan? Putting it all together into something that we think will work for us in our local context.

Different Backgrounds

The training is required of *all* candidates for Focal Ministry, from those who have many years of experience in ordained ministry through to those who currently have no authorisation to minister in any capacity. The reasons for this are worth setting out:

- Whatever experience a candidate has, Focal Ministry as we conceive it is *new*. Experienced Incumbents will need to learn how to exercise Focal Ministry under the Oversight of an Incumbent. Authorised Lay Ministers will need to learn how to exercise Focal Ministry as opposed to simply ‘helping out’. These extremes may need to ‘meet in the middle’;
- Highly experienced ministers who offer themselves as Focal Ministers will bring a great deal to the cohort. The approach to learning proposed places a high value on reflection in the whole group, the small groups, and individually. Groups of this kind learn at least as much from each other as they do from the ‘instructor’;
- This amount of training is about the same in volume as that expected for the ‘Practice Modules’ of the ALM training. In other words, it is about the minimum level of training we expect for an expression of ministry that has considerably less autonomy than that envisaged for Focal Ministry. This is a point about consistency of approach, but also about the significance that we attach to the Ministry in question.

8 Process

By the time candidates are recognised by the Bishop in this role, they will need:

- To be confident God is calling them to serve as a Focal Minister, maybe in addition to other roles in the church.
- To have discussed it with their Oversight Minister, others in the local or wider church, with their nearest and dearest, and those identified in the Diocese to support the discernment of this ministry.
- To complete a Focal Ministry Provisional Nomination Form, including support from their Oversight Minister (or Rural Dean during a vacancy), and submit it to FocalMinistry@lincoln.anglican.org or in writing. Requires evidence of baptism, confirmation, regular communion and good standing.
- As soon as possible after submission of the Proposal Form, or before, to receive the formally agreed sponsorship of the PCC.
- To have joined a cohort of others exploring this ministry in the customised training programme with the College of St Hugh. This is quite light touch, is thinly spread over a number of months, and gives time, space, materials and contacts to help their formation into what is a very different role in their church, in relation to the wider church and in relation to their Oversight Minister than they will have experienced before.
- At the conclusion of this training to complete, agree and sign, with their Oversight Minister (or with their Rural Dean during a vacancy), a Role Agreement, a process of Safer Recruitment including references and declarations (even if they've already been safely recruited – this is a different role), evidence of Leadership Level Safeguarding (they don't have to repeat it if it is up to date), on evidence of all of which the Bishop, on the advice of the Warden of the College of St Hugh, will issue an authorisation to this ministry, for three years with a 6 month probation period at the end of which the Oversight Minister and the Focal Minister must reaffirm the role.
- To be welcomed into this ministry either in an act of worship in their own church or in a service in the wider Deanery/LMP/Deanery Partnership.
- To be added to the local church's and the wider diocesan database of ministers.

This process is likely to take a minimum of three months for discernment and three months for training. You should explore with your parish, your Oversight Minister and your Training Team, opportunities carefully to try out some aspects of the role during this time and explore ministry in one or more different churches.

9 Additional Materials

Copies of the following are available on the diocesan website as and when required or by request from the College of St Hugh:

- Focal Ministry Provisional Nomination Form
- Focal Ministry leaflet for PCCs and the local church, candidates and other ministers
- Form of PCC motion sponsoring a candidate for Focal Ministry
- Template for a Role Agreement
- Annexe for more formal delegation of responsibilities if needed
- Leaflet on legitimate expenses for Focal Ministers (tba)
- Well-being and support information for Focal Ministers (tba)
- Leaflet on additional training and authorisation to expand the role of the Focal Minister (tba)
- Sample of a suitable simple liturgy to welcome and commission a Focal Minister (tba)