

Bishop's Guidelines for lay distribution of the Holy Sacrament

Background

The Bishop encourages the ministry of lay people in the distribution of the consecrated bread and wine (Holy Sacrament) at Holy Communion.

The [Administration of Holy Communion Regulations 2015](#) (Regulations) regulate the authorisation of such ministry in accordance with Canon B12.

Who may give authority?

While the Bishop retains overall responsibility for authorising ministry, by this guidance and for the purposes of the Regulations, the Bishop gives a general authority to the incumbent or priest-in-charge of each parish in the diocese (or, during a vacancy in a parish, the relevant rural dean) under which the incumbent, priest-in-charge or rural dean may

- authorise persons to distribute the Holy Sacrament in that parish and
- withdraw that authority at any time.

It is recommended that any authority should be given in the form of the pro forma annexed.

Who may be authorised?

As with the appointment of any volunteer, the Church of England's [Practice Guidance: Safer Recruitment](#) must be followed before anyone is authorised to distribute the Holy Sacrament. Appendix 8B of the Practice Guidance deals with the circumstances in which a DBS check is required. A DBS check without barring information is likely to be required if the authorised person is to distribute the Holy Sacrament to people in their homes (for example, the sick or housebound). An enhanced DBS check with barring information is likely to be required if, as part of this ministry of distributing the Holy Sacrament to people in their homes, they also provide personal care, assistance with cash, bills or shopping, and/or conveying someone to or from healthcare, personal care or social care (but not to or from Church activities) because their ministry then becomes that of an Authorised Lay Minister. If a DBS check of either kind is required, it should be renewed every five years and appropriate safeguarding training undertaken. In the case of any doubt, the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser should be consulted.

Those authorised to minister as a Licensed Lay Minister, Lay Worship Leader or Lay Pastoral Assistant are already authorised to distribute the Holy Sacrament as part of their existing authority to minister.

Baptised children who are admitted to Holy Communion may be authorised to distribute the Holy Sacrament but only in the context of public worship in church or of worship in a school.

No one may be authorised without

- the person giving authority being satisfied that they are a regular communicant of the Church of England and
- the consent of the PCC and
- in the case of a child at a church school where the service of Holy Communion is to take place in that school, the consent of the head teacher of the school.

Each person should be authorised for a period of three years. It may be helpful for administrative purposes to have all authorities due for renewal at the same time and so the first period may be for less than three years. Subject as above, the authority may be renewed.

As this is a public ministry, a list of the names of all those to whom authority has been given and the date upon which their authority expires should be displayed in the church to which they relate and, where services of Holy Communion take place in a church school, in that school.