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CLERGY WELLBEING

Well-being, Flourishing in Ministry, Absence from Work, Sickness, Pastoral Care and Support for Clergy & Family Friendly

Clergy Wellbeing - an Overview

What is well-being?

Well-being is more than just 'feeling good'. A positive well-being involves the interplay of several factors. Physical, emotional, physical and spiritual health, together with the availability and quality of personal and professional relationships, within the wider context of vocation, all contribute to an overall sense of well-being.

The diocese has some practical things to think about in relation to 'clergy wellbeing' these are:

- ❖ *Value your vocation to be human – to be yourself, not your role.*
- ❖ *Limit your hours of work – maybe 50 hours should be the limit (a 40-hour week + the 10 hours a committed lay person may spend on church activities of all sorts).*
- ❖ *Some time each day which is yours.*
- ❖ *A full day off including the night before. I'd like to see, at least once a month, two days off together, including four weekends in the year, so you can go away and see family and friends.*
- ❖ *Life-giving hobbies in which you can be completely absorbed and away from your clerical role.*
- ❖ *A 'sixth-day' ministry which you thoroughly enjoy, in which you can equip yourself, and from which you might be able to enrich the wider life of the church locally, in the diocese or nationally.*
- ❖ *Regular treats – visits to the theatre, meals out, trips to a London exhibition etc.*
- ❖ *Reading – regular, non-guilty reading to feed the mind.*
- ❖ *Prayer – reliable, heartfelt, attentive praying – putting yourself before God unprotected and unafraid there to soak up the presence of God. Above all, 'sustain the sacred centre'.*

(see: +John's ADCLERUM letter to, 17 February 2009)

These should be seen and interpreted not as entitlements but as good ways of remaining health. Your entitlements to rest period and leave are outlined in your individual statement of particulars.

All clergy in our diocese are encouraged to take regular time off and holiday breaks for the benefit of their health. Time away from work and clerical responsibility is a vital factor in the wellbeing of those in ministry and their relationships with those close to them. Time for rest and re-creation is a biblical principle which should be at the heart of a ministry which models for others self-respect and a healthy way of working.

Flourishing in Ministry

Flourishing in Ministry is a resource from the Diocese of Oxford. It adds to the wealth of materials that are already available that can support each of us in our formation and personal resilience. [Download the booklet](#) or ask your archdeacon for a printed copy. Flourishing in Ministry is designed as something to write notes on and a guide to return to more than once.

This section of the site provides further information about the resources signposted in the booklet, along with additional sources of inspiration and support. The pages will be updated regularly, and we invite you to contribute suggestions and ideas for the page too. The diocese intends to publish a companion guide to help churchwardens and laity to better understand good practice in collaborative, shared ministry and what constitutes a reasonable set of expectations for congregations to have of their ministers.

We hope that *Flourishing in Ministry*, together with the additional resources on this page, will help to articulate principles that promote ministerial flourishing and support every minister to thrive in their life and ministry.

Sickness and Critical Illness

Continuing the theme of 'clergy wellbeing' we would like to emphasize that sometimes, despite all our efforts to remain healthy and good practices in the way we function, sickness occurs. Clergy are not immune from short, medium, long term and critical illness. It is, therefore, important to know how we manage it successfully for the sake of the individual concerned.

We continuously work to have systems, both centrally within the diocese and locally to best provide and coordinate the support. Archdeacons do their best to support all clergy in these circumstances.

We would encourage all clergy, to use all support networks and the pastoral and practical care that local clergy, senior colleagues, and local communities are able to provide.

Principles on managing sickness and critical illness

Our approach to managing sickness and critical illness are based on the following diocesan principles:

- ❖ **Healthy space for clergy to feel confident to talk about their health issues** – creating healthy relationships between clergy and incumbents, area deans and/ archdeacons is the first step we should take to ensure that clergy will talk freely about their health issues. You should feel confident to pick up the phone and ask for some time and space for you to discuss health matters with individuals in these roles and if not them, the area Bishop.

- ❖ **Respect for individual dignity and privacy** - whenever health issues are disclosed, we will ensure that we respect your dignity and privacy by keeping numbers of those involved to a minimum. If we need to obtain medical records or share information with professional bodies, such as Occupational Health (OH), we will always ask for your written consent (refer to the Pastoral care and support for Clergy).
- ❖ **Quality pastoral and practical care** - we will endeavour to keep regular contact with you throughout the stages of illness and/or longer-term treatment so that we can offer and/or link with local networks of colleagues, for the best professional, pastoral, and practical care. We will discuss this with you from the start and will be led by you in terms of deciding on the frequency of contact, thus respecting your personal needs.
- ❖ **Seeking medical and professional advice** – in order to take actions to support you, we may need to seek medical reports and professional advice. The obtained reports will offer practical advice, suggestions and recommendations phrased both in terms of fitness for duty, and short, medium and longer-term adjustments which will enable the individual to return to full capacity at work as safely as possible.
- ❖ **Exploring financial support is in place for individual concerned** - ensure that stipends are maintained within the appropriate diocesan and Church Commissioner policies and that in cases of hardship we will support the individual to identify grants and other benefits from appropriate bodies.
- ❖ **Flexibility** - it is important to reassure the individual who is going through illness that we are prepared to consider reorganisation of patterns or work; readjustment of duties and so on. This will give them the maximum flexibility to balance their medical treatment with maintaining effectiveness and efficiency at work. Whenever relevant, actions taken will be based on medical advice to ensure we are giving the most appropriate support (for example through the advice of the Occupational Health doctor (refer to the Pastoral care and support for Clergy)).
- ❖ **Providing information and support in identifying other sources of support** – whenever possible, we will help the individual to identify other sources of support that may help with their circumstances.
- ❖ **Providing assistance with cover arrangements** - often an individual is left to make their own arrangements at a time when they are feeling most vulnerable/ill. Whenever possible and within the means of the parish, we will endeavour to lighten this load and to help make cover arrangements for them.

Pastoral Care and Support for Clergy

Here are some services that are already in use across the diocese:

- ❖ **Occupational Health Advisers** - the Diocese has links with Occupational Health (OH) providers.

These may be used in cases of long-term absence. We may also recommend Occupational Health referrals to assist with designing appropriate phased returns to duties after a long-term absence. We will also recommend referrals where a health issue might be impacting on duties but where the office holder is still performing some or all their duties. This will assist the Diocese in providing support for the office holder.

In more detail, the process involves OH obtaining sufficient information in order to provide a clear, accurate and objective opinion on issues such as your fitness for work,

reasonable adjustments and rehabilitation to assist you in managing or recovering from your health condition from a work perspective and returning to work if you are absent. The archdeacon will usually discuss the referral with you and send a Referral Form to OH, which provides details of your duties as well as the health concerns.

The OH medical adviser will then undertake a consultation with you either on the telephone or face-to-face. They will ask you questions to gain a good understanding of your work and health, including but not limited to personal details; your physical and/ or mental health and condition; family, lifestyle and social circumstances; employment details. They may also like to have access to medical notes and/reports provided by your GP or a specialist. The whole process is done with your consent and your wellbeing in mind.

- ❖ **Counselling Services** - being involved with others as a clergyperson or spouse can be stressful because caring is stressful. In order to keep on caring, we must ensure our own lines of support are in place and functioning. At times, through internal or external pressures, we all may need special help in the form of counselling or therapy. In addition to Occupational Health providers, there are external counselling services that we may be able to access on your behalf and you may be referred to either upon your request or recommended by the archdeacon. It is important to note that each case is dealt with the greatest level of sensitivity and confidentiality. There are several avenues you may take. You can see your area bishop or archdeacon. They have details of counselling services and may suggest that you use these to contact a counsellor. Alternatively, you can directly approach the Pastoral Care Adviser. They will put you in touch with a counsellor who could be matched to suit your particular difficulty or the approach to the difficulty you would prefer to be taken. Their details can be found [here](#).

Counselling almost always needs to be paid for. Some financial assistance contribution may be available from the diocese.

For more information on these matters, your Archdeacon or your Pastoral Care Adviser will be able to advise further.

- ❖ **Work Consultants** - matters relating to ministry can be complex and may sometimes have an impact on you and your wellbeing. You may need to discuss with someone else for support, insight, and alternative ways of handling the situation creatively. From time to time, the help that is needed comes in the form of consultation with a work consultant or you can approach your Parish Development Adviser for information and advice;

- ❖ **Spiritual Directors** - This is an ancient ministry, sometimes called Spiritual Counsel, Prayer Guidance, or Soul Friendship. It is about taking the time to meet with another person and talk about one's spiritual journey, prayer and search for God. Many people find that this pattern of reflective companionship can be a significant help. People seek this ministry at different points in their lives and for various reasons. It can be a way:

- to make better sense of your faith journey.
- to find clarity and support at times of significant life choices.
- to respond more deeply to God's presence and move forward towards wholeness and freedom.

To learn more about who conducts the sessions, how they are run; frequency and cost implications, visit the [website](#).

Reporting sickness

There is an expectation that **all sickness is reported** to enable parishes to organise work differently and provide cover for normal running of the services. At the same time, in the case of stipendiary clergy, this is so that we comply with the Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) scheme and its administration.

While all stipendiary clergy, unable to perform their duties because of sickness, are **required** to telephone or e-mail the Incumbent or Area Dean and the HR & Stipends Administrator at Diocesan Church House as soon as possible, associate clergy may want to follow the same procedure due to the reasons provided before.

Please refer to the diocesan process for reporting sickness which can be located [here](#).

Pay entitlement when sick and procedure

Although you are not employed, you are normally entitled (because you pay Class 1 National Insurance contributions) to receive Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) if you are ill. Under this Scheme, we are responsible for paying the first 28 weeks sick pay. If you become ill and cannot carry out your duties, you can, therefore, claim sick pay provided the illness lasts for at least 4 consecutive days (including Saturdays, Sundays and Public Holidays).

If entitled to SSP, stipend will be paid according to SSP rules. Sick pay works on a rolling 12 months period and takes account of all absences within that period.

At present, this entitles full time stipendiary clergy to receive their full stipend for 28 weeks providing the following requirements are met:

- ❖ For sickness absence of **up to seven days**, a self-certificate must be obtained, completed and submitted to the HR & Stipends Administrator at Church House (a copy of the self-certificate form [SC2 form] can be downloaded [here](#) or obtained from either the HR & Stipends Administrator at Diocesan Church House or by contacting Payroll Services at Church House in London.
- ❖ If the sickness absence lasts **more than seven days** the original Doctor's Certificate (also known as a 'Fit Note') signed by a GP or other medical practitioner must be submitted to the HR & Stipends Administrator at Diocesan Church House who will keep a copy and forward the original to the Church Commissioners.

After the 23rd week of absence the Church Commissioners issue form SSP 1 which gives details of the actions needed when statutory sick pay ends after the 28th week, concerning claiming other state benefits and invalidity allowances.

If you are ill for longer than 28 weeks, or if for any reason you are not entitled to Statutory Sick Pay, Clergy Payroll Services shall write to you with further advice.

Full stipend will be paid until the 28th week of absence, after which the Bishop has the following **discretion**:

- ❖ To reduce the stipend by up to 50%
- ❖ To reduce the stipend by the amount of Incapacity Benefit received and any other allowances 1 months' notice should be given.

Current diocesan practice is to reduce the stipend by the amount of benefit received so that the equivalent of a full stipend is maintained.

The situation will be continuously monitored, and medical certificates are always expected to be submitted.

For any period of extended sickness, the Archdeacon will keep in touch with the minister to assess progress and to see if an occupational health referral should be made. An occupational health referral may be considered at 28 weeks of absence.

If after an extended period of sickness, a minister is being advised by their doctor, or as an outcome of an occupational health referral, to consider early retirement, advice and support regarding the process will be available from the Archdeacon and Diocesan Secretary.

The Church Commissioners' clergy illness procedures can be found [here](#).

Returning to duties

After any period of extended sickness and once a minister has been deemed fit for work by their doctor, they should notify their Archdeacon that they are ready to return to work. The Archdeacon will discuss with the minister any issues around resuming their duties. This may take the form of a Return to Duties interview. This is to ensure that the right level of support is provided to the individual clergy returning to their duties and where applicable, that any ongoing health issues are taken into account. Where appropriate, a phased return to duties might be recommended.

For Common Tenure appointments, the rights and responsibilities related to sickness absence are set out on of the Ecclesiastical Offices (Terms of Service) Regulations 2009 (Reg 27) and, in addition to all the details above, include the following points:

- ❖ An office holder who is in receipt of a stipend is unable to perform the duties of his or her office because of illness for a period of **one working day or longer** he or she must report the absence to the nominated person stated on the SoP.
- ❖ All reasonable endeavours should be made to ensure that the duties of the office are performed by another person during a period of absence.
- ❖ If the time off is protracted, the Bishop may make other arrangements for the discharge of these duties.
- ❖ Payment of stipend after entitlement to Statutory Sick Pay has expired is conditional on the agreement of the Bishop (or his representative) and on guidance from the Archbishops' Council.
- ❖ If the Bishop has reasonable grounds for concern about the office holder's physical or mental health, he may direct that the office holder undergoes a medical examination

by a mutually agreed medical practitioner and he may, in serious cases, need to instigate the capability procedure.

Supporting critical illness

Due to some unique characteristics, such as impact on the individual and those surrounding them, it is important that we discuss this matter separately.

There are four key stages to critical illness, namely 'diagnosis'; 'treatment'; 'recovery' and 'returning to duties'. Each case is 'unique' and will be treated sensitively. Pastoral support will be important at all levels.

During a period of recovery and returning to full capacity/duties the Diocese may take professional medical advice on what is most appropriate for the individual. A referral may be made by the Archdeacon, for the individual to meet with the Occupational Health (OH) service who will give both the individual and the Diocese professional advice.

As explained in the Pastoral Care and Support for Clergy section above, the Occupational Health professional will look at the nature of work, workload, current family and other pressures, and priorities, and give their advice on what is realistic and what is not advisable. It is usual that more than one OH appointment will be made so that the OH professional can advise and help the individual, their senior colleagues, senior staff, to make adjustments, track progress and increase workload gradually and so return to their full duties safely. These may include a range of temporary changes, such as:

- ❖ Reduced working hours;
- ❖ Reduced days;
- ❖ Only working one or two sessions a day/week etc;
- ❖ Change in role;
- ❖ Reduced responsibilities;
- ❖ Recommendations to assist plans for transport to and from work engagements;
- ❖ Onward referral for other professional specialist advice and guidance (where appropriate, these costs may be met by the Diocese), and any other reasonable adjustments that would be helpful.

In the most serious of cases, it may be that an individual will not be able to return to or maintain their duties. Where the individual's doctor/specialist and the Occupational Health professional concurs, the Diocese will make the appropriate applications/arrangements through the Clergy Pension Scheme and continue to offer pastoral support.

Disability and Related Issues

Through management of short, medium, long term sickness and critical illness, issues of disability may arise. The Equality Act 2010 and more specifically the Disability Discrimination Act, shape the path in handling such issues. The Diocese will do all it can to address any disability issues arising to ensure that appropriate reasonable adjustments are

made that will enable the individual to work effectively. Centrally, the Archdeacon and Diocesan Secretary will make the appropriate links with departments, for example, Glebe, Buildings & DAC Department and Department of Mission, to ensure the individual is supported, and their needs are addressed appropriately; and will also ensure that there is access to appropriate professional advice and support which will ensure that the individual is able to take up/continue their role effectively.

In circumstances where specific equipment is required, e.g. specialist software; adaptations to property etc, the Archdeacon will provide advice on funding and resourcing.

Other Matters of Clergy Wellbeing - Health and Safety

The Diocese of Oxford is committed to ensure a safe working environment for clergy and accredited lay workers and to equipping them to minister safely. However, office holders are deemed to be responsible for their own health and safety.

Clergy and accredited lay workers should take all possible steps to ensure the personal safety of themselves and their families in relation to their houses and church office and vestries.

In the event of any incident involving verbal abuse, threats or actual violence to a priest, deacon or a member of their household, they should contact their Area Dean or Archdeacon immediately; they will provide immediate practical and pastoral assistance. Police should also be informed.

Health and safety concerns related to housing should be raised with the Glebe, Buildings and DAC department at the Diocesan Church House. Basic precautions include:

- ❖ Ensuring that porches and entrances are well-lit, using spyholes;
- ❖ Not inviting unknown visitors beyond the office or study in a house;
- ❖ Not leaving unknown visitors unattended in an office or house;
- ❖ Not seeing children alone;
- ❖ Ensuring that other people know when you are seeing people.

A comprehensive guide on security issues may be found [here](#).

Another source is 'Ecclesiastical', a specialist insurance and financial services company offering advice and expertise and caring protection. For general information please visit their [website](#) or access their '[Church Health and Safety Guidance](#)'.

More generic health and safety guidance is available at the [HSE website](#).

Special Leave

In particular circumstances, the Bishop or Archdeacons may exceptionally grant an additional period of special leave. Special leave is designed to support clergy when

unforeseen emergencies arise – particularly those related to children or dependents. A dependent may be someone who can reasonably be said to rely on the office holder for assistance. This excludes any discretionary special leave such as extended study leave or spiritual leave.

Clergy should refer to ‘The right to request time off work or adjustments to the duties of the office to care for a dependent’ part of the Family Friendly Guidance for Clergy document, should they need to explore the possibility of making a change to their working pattern or taking a longer period of time off to care for a dependant.

Spiritual Leave

All clergy are encouraged to take the inside of a week each year for spiritual refreshment, whether on retreat or at cell group meetings.

The Diocese of Oxford has the Spiritual Direction Network known as the SpiDir Network in Berks, Bucks and Oxon what is a network of spiritual directors who offer to accompany you as you explore your personal journey. For further information click [here](#).

Retreats

As mentioned above, all clergy are encouraged to take an annual retreat. The Retreat Association provides advice on making a retreat, finding a spiritual director and links to over 200 retreat centres across the UK and beyond. Further information can be found on their [website](#).

Sabbaticals/Study Leave

Stipendiary clergy are encouraged to think about taking a period of Sabbatical/Study Leave of up to 3 months, approximately every ten years and you are encouraged to raise this question at your annual ministerial development review. It is generally envisaged that Sabbaticals will include three elements: a holiday (rest), a course of study (renewal) and a retreat.

Sabbatical/study leave is available to licensed ministers (lay or ordained, stipendiary or self-supporting) and office holders who have been served at least 2 years in their current post and have fulfilled at least 10 years of service (doesn't have to be within the Diocese of Oxford) and have not had a sabbatical in the last 10 years. A limited number of grants are available from the diocese and applications must be received by 30 June to be considered for the following year. The full diocesan policy on Sabbatical - Study Leave, the Application Form and details of your archdeaconry adviser may be located [here](#).

You may want to visit the diocesan websites dedicated to continuing ministerial development of our ministers where you will find a range of useful documents and resources to support your learning journey, including:

- [Learning for Discipleship and Ministry](#)
- [Grant Making Trusts](#)
- [More information](#)

Alternatively, please contact your area Parish Development and CMD Adviser in the Department of Mission who will be able to advise and guide you on this journey.

Time Off for Public Duties

Clergy may spend a reasonable time on public duties other than the duties of the office without any loss of stipend (if applicable). Clergy are requested to discuss the details of the public duty and the associated time off with the Bishop or Archdeacon prior to commencement.

Public duties include work done for a public authority, a court, a tribunal, charity or trade union.

If a member of clergy is called for jury service, they are required to claim the attendance allowance. Please contact the HR & Stipends Administrator for further guidance.

For Common Tenure appointments, detailed conditions for such time off are specified in clause 23 of the Regulations. These may be summarised as:

- ❖ The amount of time spent must be reasonable in all circumstances, taking into account the time required for the duty and how much time has already been spent on this (or other) public duties.
- ❖ The impact of the public duties on the office holder's day to day duties must be reasonable in all circumstances
- ❖ Agreement for performance of such public duties must be granted by the Bishop
- ❖ Consideration should be taken of any remuneration that is received in connection with the duties of the office to determine whether a reduction in stipend is reasonable.

Family Friendly Guidance

Maternity, Paternity, Shared Parental, Parental and Adoption Leave and Time Off to Care for Dependants

As a clergy office holder, you have the same legal rights to parental leave and pay as an employee and are entitled to claim the four different types of statutory parental pay and leave available. Further information can be found on the [Church of England website](#).

The diocese has a Maternity, Paternity, Shared Parental, Parental and Adoption Leave and Time Off to Care for Dependants Policy that is known as Family Friendly Guidance for Clergy and can be found [here](#).

If any clergy is interested in finding out more about Maternity, Paternity, Shared Parental, Parental and Adoption Leave and Time Off to Care for Dependents they should contact their Archdeacon for advice.

Babies born to clergy households

The Diocese has a diocesan baby grant available to all stipendiary clergy (currently £200 for curates and £150 for those of incumbent status) to every clergy family with a new baby. Please contact your Archdeacon of all new arrivals, including adoptions at any age who will be able to advise you how to claim this.