



THE CHURCH  
OF ENGLAND  
**Diocese of St Edmundsbury  
and Ipswich**

# Curate Housing Handbook



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## Forward from the Chair of the Parsonages Committee

Welcome to the Diocese of St Edmundsbury & Ipswich.

This Guide has been prepared by the Property Team to help occupants of Diocesan houses and their families with the management of their home. It seeks to explain how the system of maintaining our houses works, and to set out clearly who is responsible for what, and when.

Responsibility for maintaining the property is shared between the Diocese and the occupants; this Guide seeks to provide information for occupants about how these responsibilities are to be met. The Parsonages Committee hopes that gathering this information in one document will prove useful to all involved and enable us together to care for the property wisely yet prudently, and hand it on in a good state for our successors.

The Diocese takes the lion's share of responsibility and maintains the structure and fabric of the building and the services to it. This includes such things as general repairs and maintenance, improvement works, payment of council tax, water rates and buildings insurance, etc. The occupant has a duty to take care of the house and gardens and to act as a good steward for the duration of their tenure. The parish plays an important role during vacancy and leading up to the arrival of the new clergy occupant. If you have any concerns about your clergy home please get in touch with the property team who will be glad to do what they can to help.

Ian Wigston  
Chair of the Parsonages Committee  
Trustee of the DBF

### The Purpose of this Booklet is to

- Explain how the system of maintaining diocesan houses works.
- Set out the rights and duties of all involved.
- Explain the procedures in case of emergencies.
- Provide answers to many routine questions.

**If you become aware of any building maintenance or repair issues, then please report them as soon as possible to the diocesan office staff on 01473 298512 or via email to: [property@cofesuffolk.org](mailto:property@cofesuffolk.org)**

## **Especially for Assistant Curates – Title Post Housing**

These days, assistant curates are no longer only placed in parishes that can afford to buy a house and therefore the provision of their accommodation is not regarded as a parochial responsibility but as the responsibility of the Diocesan Board of Finance (DBF). The St Edmundsbury & Ipswich DBF is committed to providing appropriate accommodation for all those entering ministry.

### **Process**

When the decision has been made to place an assistant curate with a Training Incumbent, the Diocesan Director of Ordinands (DDO) informs diocesan office staff, and they and the archdeacon will start the process of finding suitable accommodation.

Consultation takes place with the training incumbent regarding location and then trained diocesan staff begin to look for a suitable property. Members of the local church are encouraged to make suggestions about possible properties but all negotiations are carried out by diocesan office staff to ensure the integrity of the purchase process. When the legal purchase process of a suitable property has begun, your incumbent will be informed.

In some instances, of course, an assistant curate's house will already be available within the area and this will normally be retained for the new title post holder. Replacement of an existing house is only undertaken in the most exceptional circumstances.

### **Standards of Accommodation for Assistant Curates**

We aim to provide the most modern, cost efficient and comfortable accommodation possible within the constraints of location and budget. The minimum standard of accommodation for title post holders will usually provide:

- three bedrooms
- two separate reception spaces
- kitchen (with separate utility space if possible)
- ground floor cloakroom

Sometimes it is simply not possible (or necessary) for all the criteria to be met and some flexibility may be required where exceptions to the basic standard cannot be avoided, for example:

- where special needs exist
- where the location means that a property providing the standard accommodation is not readily available
  - where it proves difficult to find a property with two separate reception rooms

## **Responsibilities of the Property Committee**

1. To maintain the structure and exterior of the building (walls, roofs, windows, doors, gutters, drains etc.).
2. To provide and maintain the installations for the supply of heating, water, utilities and sanitation.
3. To make payments in respect of council tax, water/sewerage rates and building insurance (but not contents insurance).
4. To maintain all fixtures and fittings belonging to the house listed on the latest periodic inspection report.
5. To decorate and maintain public rooms (the downstairs WC, the hall, stairs, landing) in neutral colours.
6. To have smoke and carbon dioxide detectors fitted in the premises.
7. To provide flooring for wet areas (kitchen, utility room, WCs and bathrooms), halls, stairs and landings.
8. To provide basic curtain track fittings to each window or blinds to certain windows on a discretionary basis.
9. To maintain integrated cookers and hobs. Where integrated dishwashers are fitted and they break down beyond economic repair, the kitchen base unit will be adapted to suit a freestanding dishwasher which would be supplied and maintained by the Assistant Curate.
10. To prioritise and carry out improvement work when and where appropriate and as funds permit.
11. To manage through regular periods any large trees at the property (excluding modest fruit trees, hedges and shrubs).
12. To provide a BT point for business use only
13. To maintain boundary fences and hedges.

## **Responsibilities of the Resident**

1. To report any repairs and maintenance issues particularly leaking taps or toilets as soon as possible (water leakage is now monitored through the water meters) – refer to “What to do” section.
2. To implement and pay for any repairs made necessary by misuse, neglect or damage, including damage caused by animals. This may include any costs incurred for drain clearance, e.g. where blockages have been caused by fat deposits or toilet wipes.
3. To maintain internal decoration in good order. Non-public rooms may be painted in a colour of choice yet décor must be returned to a neutral colour at the cost of the resident prior to vacating the premises.
4. To provide and replace all floor coverings as required excepting the wet areas, hall, stairs and landing, which will be provided with vinyl floor covering and carpet respectively. Woodblock flooring will be subject to occasional major refurbishment but the general sanding, staining and polishing of these surfaces is the responsibility of the resident.
5. To provide and repair any appliances (the Property Committee will endeavour to provide standard 600mm spaces for typical appliances).
6. To maintain all garden areas including hedge trimming, pruning of fruit trees, shrubs, grass cutting, beds & borders and keeping driveways and paths free of weeds. Please refer also to the safety section. Failure to maintain the garden in reasonable order may result in the relevant archdeacon appointing a gardener to do so at the incumbent’s expense.
7. To provide any fencing required to keep pets within bounds.
8. To make arrangement for the installation and maintenance of all radio or TV aerials and satellite dishes and ensure that they conform to local planning constraints.
9. To ensure adequate home contents insurance – strongly recommended. All personal belongings are the responsibility of the resident.

10. To advise the diocesan office staff if the property is to be unoccupied for more than 28 days – this is an insurance requirement and will effect cover if not pre notified
11. To report immediately to the diocesan office staff any problems that may lead to structural damage if left unattended or any damage that may be subject to an insurance claim.
12. To keep pre-arranged appointments with contractors and to give access to the Diocesan Surveyor.
13. To inform the diocesan office staff of work not carried out within a reasonable timeframe.
14. To seek consent from the diocesan office staff before installation for any cat or dog flaps and to meet the costs of installation and reinstatement when vacating the property.
15. To pay for any installation, rental or maintenance costs associated with the telephone service regarding personal phonelines.
16. To make arrangement for chimneys and for wood-burners in use to be regularly swept or inspected (HETAS recommends once or twice a year depending on usage). Certificate to be supplied to Diocesan Surveyor
17. To report immediately to the diocesan office staff any notices or letters received from statutory bodies such as Local Authorities, HM Land Registry or Historic England. This is particularly important where notice is received of a nearby planning application.
18. To note that no part of the premises may be used for any purpose other than as a domestic dwelling. The use of the premises for commercial business use is strictly prohibited.
19. The property may not be altered in any way without the consent of the Property Committee. Work organised at the occupier's cost and under the supervision of the Diocesan Surveyor may be permissible.
20. To provide and maintain any garden sheds that do not form a part of the structure of the house.
21. When moving from the property, all post is to redirected to the new address, all keys to be returned to the diocesan surveyor, to clear all personal belongings from the house, loft, outbuildings, garage and garden – any costs incurred for removal may be recharged to the resident.

### **Location and availability**

The curate's house will nearly always be within the benefice for which the training incumbent has responsibility and consultation will have taken place with the incumbent at an early stage to establish preferences regarding location. However sometimes factors surrounding the allocation of title posts mean that it can be very difficult to acquire a property of the required standard in the preferred location at the right time. Careful planning is also needed to ensure a property neither stands vacant for too long prior to occupation, nor its purchase is too last minute for peace of mind. This may particularly be the case in a difficult property market or where the period between a decision to proceed with a title post and the ordination date is very short. But, although guarantees cannot be made, it is aimed to get as close to the required location and standard as possible

### **Good stewardship**

We are committed to providing you with the best possible accommodation both within the constraints mentioned and alongside good stewardship of diocesan resources. Even within the diocese, house prices vary considerably from place to place and therefore properties of varying values may be acquired taking into consideration their investment return and ability to be resold. However, our first concern is always the delivery of good quality accommodation to support those in ministry

### **Visiting the house**

It is not usually possible to visit a property prior to completion of its purchase although if you are moving into an existing diocese property we may be able to view with you. Your Training Incumbent will be kept fully informed of progress during the acquisition process and you should feel able to be in touch with

him or her if you have any concerns during this stage. As soon as the purchase has been completed you will be invited to visit.

### **Administrative Matters**

As your ordination approaches you will receive a letter from the Archdeacons' PA dealing with many administrative matters including arrangements for your stipend, removal, resettlement and first appointment grants. The HR Assistant or Property Administrator at the diocesan office will be happy to deal with any queries you may have about these practical aspects.

### **Moving in**

Every effort will be made to ensure that your move is as smooth as possible and that any work required to the house will be completed prior to your arrival. It is expected a house will be ready for occupation approximately two weeks prior to ordination. Maintenance of your house will be supervised by diocesan office staff and overseen by the Property Committee and archdeacons, applying the same principles as are outlined earlier in this housing booklet.

### **In an emergency**

1. **In diocesan office hours:**

Contact the diocesan office on 01473 298512

2. **Outside office hours:**

If you have an urgent repair/issue which cannot wait until the office re-opens, you can contact the following contractors who have agreed to provide emergency cover:

**Heating (gas/oil) and plumbing**

EPPH – 01473 559071

**Electrics**

EPPH – 01473 559071

**Door and window repairs**

Ipswich Glass and Glazing – 07790 201045

(N.B. Interim emergency arrangements are organised during statutory holiday periods such as Christmas and Easter and you will be advised accordingly).

3. **De Minimis:**

Strictly Emergency works outside of office hours of up to £300 may be undertaken without the prior consent of the diocesan office staff or relevant archdeacon. You should pay the contractor and forward the invoice and confirmation it has been paid to the diocesan office with bank details and it will be reimbursed to your bank account.

### **Safety and Security**

#### **Gas**

Annual safety checks on central heating boilers and other gas appliances are arranged by the diocesan office staff to comply with the Gas Safety Regulations. Prior authorisation must be obtained before any alternative arrangements are made. Occupiers are responsible for their own appliances/cookers. If an appliance is found to be faulty, the Diocese contractor will disconnect the appliance and leave it with the curate for disposal.

## **Oil**

Annual safety checks on central heating boilers are arranged by the diocesan office staff to comply with the OFTEC recommendations.

## **Electricity**

Periodic Testing is organised by the diocesan office staff and undertaken in accordance with current recommendations. Prior written approval must be obtained for any alterations or adaptation of fixed wiring electrical installations or equipment. Curates are responsible for their own appliances. If a personal appliance is found to be faulty, the diocese contractor will disconnect the appliance and leave it with the curate for disposal

## **Trees**

Many trees are subject to Local Authority protection. Therefore, no work (annual pruning excepted) is to be carried out without consultation with diocesan office staff. Please inform the diocesan office if you have any concerns regarding the trees in your garden.

## **Smoke Detectors**

At least two will normally be provided. Residents should test the alarms weekly and report any faults to the diocesan office.

## **Carbon Monoxide Detectors**

At least one will normally be provided. Residents should test the alarms weekly and report any faults to the diocesan office.

## **Asbestos**

To ensure the safety of our occupiers and contractors, and in accordance with the Control of Asbestos at Work Regulations (2012), the Property Committee has undertaken a survey for the presence of asbestos at all homes. A copy of the report should be available at the property for inspection by residents and visiting contractors. Please ensure that you familiarise yourself with the report, and report any disturbance of asbestos containing materials (ACMs) to the diocesan office staff immediately.

## **Condensation**

Condensation is a problem which has become more prevalent since standards for modern construction have changed. When warm moist air, produced naturally through daily living comes into contact with cold surfaces, water droplets within the air will condense on the cold surfaces such as windows and cold areas of wall. In due course, prolonged moisture build-up may result in mould growth or timber rot.

Installation of replacement double-glazing, draft exclusion, closure of chimneys and replacement doors are all factors which are likely to reduce natural ventilation within a property. The consequence of this is that warm moist air is unable to escape to the open air. The Property Committee aims to reduce issues of condensation through providing extractor fans to kitchens and bathrooms

Residents can play their part in reducing condensation by ensuring that:

- a) washing is not dried within the house,
- b) extractor fans are used where possible,
- c) the property is kept adequately warm,
- d) the property is ventilated through opening windows and doors as moisture is produced.

## **Disability**

The parsonage house is considered a domestic dwelling with public access by invitation. Where practical, assistance in providing improved access will be considered.

## **Water Softeners**

These are not provided but where they are fitted the resident is responsible for maintenance.

## **Security**

Suffolk is generally regarded as one of the safest counties within which to reside. Some houses have limited security devices (alarms, external lighting etc.). These are not generally provided by the Property Committee but where they exist maintenance and servicing is the responsibility of the resident.

## **Moving on at the end of your Curacy**

### **When moving out**

When moving to a new post, you will be required to vacate the house within one month of the date of your curacy finish date. If for some reason you are unable to vacate, this needs to be discussed with your DDO and Archdeacon at the earliest occasion. Any extensions may be subject to payment of market rent on the house along with council tax and utilities for the extended period.

### **Death in Service**

If you should die whilst in occupation of the house, any member of your household who is living in the house at the time, may stay in the house for up to three months from the date of your death. If for some reason they are unable to vacate, this needs to be discussed with the Archdeacon at the earliest occasion. Any extensions may be subject to payment of market rent on the house along with council tax and utilities for the extended period.

### **And finally**

We understand the stresses and strains of moving house, particularly when you first experience the dependence of your home on your deployment. If you are concerned about your move into your new post, please be in touch with your Training Incumbent who will liaise with diocesan staff or the relevant archdeacon.

## Useful names and addresses

### Archdeacon of Sudbury

The Ven. Dr David Jenkins  
Sudbury Lodge  
Stanningfield Road  
Great Whelnetham  
Bury St Edmunds  
IP30 0TL

Tel: 01284 386942

[Archdeacon.david@cofesuffolk.org](mailto:Archdeacon.david@cofesuffolk.org)

### Archdeacon of Suffolk

The Ven. Jeanette Gosney  
Park Road  
Ipswich  
IP1 3ST

Tel: 07710 479497

[archdeacon.jeanette@cofesuffolk.org](mailto:archdeacon.jeanette@cofesuffolk.org)

### Archdeacon of Ipswich

The Ven. Rhiannon King  
c/o The Diocesan Office  
St Nicholas Centre  
4 Cutler Street  
Ipswich  
IP1 1UQ

Tel: 01473 298500

[archdeacon.rhiannon@cofesuffolk.org](mailto:archdeacon.rhiannon@cofesuffolk.org)

### Diocesan Secretary

Mrs Anna Hughes  
The Diocesan Office  
St Nicholas Centre  
4 Cutler Street  
Ipswich  
IP1 1UQ

Tel: 01473 298500

### Head of Property & Diocesan Surveyor

Mrs Dawn Gillett  
The Diocesan Office St Nicholas  
Centre  
4 Cutler Street  
Ipswich  
IP1 1UQ

Tel: 01473 298532

[property@cofesuffolk.org](mailto:property@cofesuffolk.org)

### Diocesan Director of Ordinands and New Ministries

The Revd Tim Jones  
c/o The Diocesan Office  
St Nicholas Centre  
4 Cutler Street  
Ipswich  
IP1 1UQ

Tel: 01284 729148

[tim.jones@cofesuffolk.org](mailto:tim.jones@cofesuffolk.org)

### Chairman of the Parsonage Committee

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