

## **Process Around a Curate Not Being Signed Off**

### **Principles underpinning signing off:**

2010 C of E Guidelines state that:

- *Assessment, when well-structured and related to ministry can be a powerful tool for learning and formation.*
- *For the sake of both candidates and the churches they will serve, it is important to be able to determine that future incumbents and associate ministers can be appointed with some confidence to appropriate posts and supported into CMD. Poor appointments can be hugely costly all around further down the line.*
- *Should it be necessary to take capability proceedings against a serving minister, it will be important to be able to show that they were given the appropriate training and demonstrated their capability before appointment.*
- *For the great majority of candidates assessment is likely to lead to the affirmation of their ministry in a public way. Assessment can also highlight areas of particular giftedness.*

Further national direction on processes for signing off, or not doing so, are found in section D of the House of Bishops Code of Procedure (at <https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2018-01/code-of-procedure.pdf>)

Therefore assessment is for the good of the individual and the church and demonstrates pastoral care for the clergy, but also addresses issues of accountability and diocesan reputation.

### **In addition:**

- Although each diocese has its own form of assessment, every diocese assesses curates against the House of Bishops' Formation Criteria (for those ordained from 2023 onwards, Formation Qualities). Therefore there should be parity in levels of competency reached.
- Curates selected for incumbent status ministry are nationally deployable and many will move diocese for a post of first incumbency. Therefore the outcome of the assessment is transferable across the C of E.
- Any post-curacy process ought to be seen within this framework and principles. Clergy must meet the incumbent status criteria if they are to be incumbents. A person might move to a different diocese and the prevailing issues could emerge again if any assessment or reassessment process hasn't been robust enough.
- We must be clear that the end of curacy assessment is a definite one. There is no point in making this decision if a year or two down the line it could be set aside/ ignored without a proper process of reassessment.
- Reassessment should not be considered as a possibility for everyone and it would be unfair to get curates' hopes up if that is unrealistic.

- If the issue preventing sign-off relates to gaps in training, this should be fairly easily remedied before the end of a usual curacy by a placement or additional directed training. Having a flexible sign off date that falls between 3 and 4 years is beneficial to the curate and diocese.
- There should be flexibility about curacy end date and final assessment if there are extenuating circumstances or pastoral need, e.g. moving parish, health issues or close family bereavement.
- Under Section 29 of Common Tenure Regulations:
  - (1) A person who holds or is to hold office under Common Tenure may be appointed for a fixed term or under terms which provide for the appointment to be terminated on the occurrence of a specified event if—*
  - (c) the office is designated as a training post and*
  - (3A) An office designated as a training post may continue to be designated as such for a period of no more than one year following the completion by the office holder of the initial ministerial education.*
- Likely issues preventing sign-off will relate to capacity for formation and 'teachability' or issues of character and disposition, which underpin all the Formation Criteria. These are harder to address, though with God's grace it is possible that someone will grow and mature enough to be reconsidered.

### **Process for stipendiary/incumbent status curates:**

#### **1. Draft 2<sup>nd</sup> Year Review report**

- If a curate *may* not be signed off, this should be made clear and reflect concerns expressed throughout IME Phase 2.
- At end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> year of curacy the draft report should clearly indicate whether further development is needed and in which areas. A meeting between the curate, Curate Training Officer and the TI will then take place when the report is discussed. Outstanding gaps or issues requiring further development will be clearly identified and also what action, support or assistance is required to address those gaps/issues. A clear agreement will be made identifying specific and focussed training and also further dates for meetings to monitor progress. The possible consequences will be made clear if adequate improvement does not happen within the given time frame. There will be a formal note of the meeting summarising key points of discussion and action points.

#### **2. Curate is formally told outcome in November of 4<sup>th</sup> year**

- A final report is completed and sent to the Bishop of Hereford.
- The Bishop of Hereford sends the curate a formal letter, together with a copy of this process note. The curate is told to meet the Curate Training Officer or other appropriate diocesan colleague to discuss the outcome and its implications.
- A note goes in the curate's blue file.

- If the curate believes there are grounds for an appeal, Common Tenure includes a procedure for dealing with the grievances of the clergy. Details of this procedure can be accessed at <https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2017-10/grievanceprocedure-cop.pdf>

### **3. Diocesan List**

- Curate's name to be added to a Diocesan List of Curates who have not been signed off

### **4. Appropriate support is given**

- Curate is designated an appropriate person to be a ministerial companion during the time of transition, meeting regularly to offer pastoral support and vocational guidance<sup>1</sup>.
- The archdeacon, in conjunction with the Diocesan Secretary, offers appropriate guidance in relation to financial, practical and family support.

### **5. Formal end to curacy**

- Curate should have the opportunity for a proper farewell in the parish.
- Curate to vacate housing by the date stipulated on their Statement of Particulars.
- Stipend ceases on the date stipulated on their Statement of Particulars.

### **6. PTO/Licence**

- PTO or a licence will not be normally given for at least six months. It may be given after six months at the Bishop's discretion, and advice from the ministerial companion must be sought and taken into account.

### **7. Reconsideration of outcome**

- Cannot happen for at least two years (in line with BAP procedures).
- The process is initiated by the curate, and should be accompanied by a supporting letter from the ministerial companion indicating clear evidenced reasons.

### **8. Director of Ministry meets the candidate**

- Initial assessment will focus on the issues identified in the candidate's end of curacy report that led to her/him not being signed off. An interview with the Director of Ministry or Director of Vocations & Ordinands, coupled with the letter from the ministerial companion will lead to an assessment as to whether or not the candidate is teachable and has demonstrated adequate formation to proceed towards a reconsideration of the assessment outcome. There will be a formal note of the meeting summarising key points of discussion and any action points.
- A report setting out the initial assessment will be sent to the Bishop of Hereford and include a recommendation either not to proceed or to proceed towards a reassessment process.
- If the decision is not to proceed, a note will be put in the candidate's blue file.

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<sup>1</sup> The skills required for this person are akin to that of a training incumbent

- If the candidate believes there are grounds for an appeal, Common Tenure includes a procedure for dealing with the grievances of the clergy. Details of this procedure can be accessed at <https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2017-10/grievanceprocedure-cop.pdf>

#### 9. **Placement**

- Candidates to be reassessed will undertake a year- long parish placement with an experienced incumbent. This will normally be self-supporting without housing, but options for stipendiary placements and/or provision of housing can be explored. The Director will meet with the candidate and incumbent and outstanding gaps or issues requiring further development will be clearly identified and also what action, support or assistance is required to address those gaps/issues. A clear agreement will be made identifying specific and focussed training and also further dates for meetings to monitor progress. The possible consequences will be made clear if adequate improvement does not happen within the given time frame. There will be a formal note of the meeting summarising key points of discussion and action points.

#### 10. **Report**

- The incumbent will complete a report, assessing against the House of Bishops Formation Criteria within a month of the placement ending.
- The incumbent and curate will meet with the Director to discuss the report.
- The Director will send a recommendation to the Bishop of Hereford.

#### 11. **Outcome**

- The Bishop will write to the candidate informing them of the outcome.
- The candidate should be given appropriate support to look for a post of first responsibility, e.g. from their archdeacon, mentor or spiritual director.
- A note will be put on the candidate's blue file.

#### **Process for self-supporting/assistant status curates:**

The process is identical for self-supporting curates, except that issues of housing and stipend are not relevant, which allows more flexibility for beginning the process later and adjusting the successive timings accordingly.

Review date: January 2029