



Benefice and Parish Profile Writing Guide

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The purpose of this guide

If you are reading this, your parish or benefice may have begun a period of vacancy. You will be considering many things: how to cover services, what needs to be done with the accommodation and so on. You will have seen your Archdeacon and s/he will have explained that you need a vacancy team and they will have told you where to find out about the legal responsibilities of Church Wardens and the wider process of managing a vacancy.

If you have accessed this document you will have seen the timeline that outlines all the processes that happen before, during and after a vacancy.

This guide is for the process of putting together a parish profile and role description for a new priest. There are sections on general advice, sections on what to include and some 'how to' sections. You will also find some comments from priests who told us what they were looking for.

If you would like more information or help putting together your profile, please contact Ministry for Mission so that we can work to support you.

Caroline Bruce

Parish Consultancy Officer

Ministry for Mission

E: caroline.bruce@bathwells.anglican.org

T: 01749 685127

Section One: General Advice

What is a Parish Profile?

The parish profile is the document on which a prospective applicant will base their decision to take the application further. It needs to be an appealing document to attract the right person. It needs to give a sense of 'what it is like' in this place and should give information beyond the purely technical. It is a 'shop window' of life in your parish.

It offers them an understanding of

- who you are
- what your vision for the future of your parish/benefice is
- what you can offer
- what you expect.

Preparing the profile provides a wonderful opportunity for the congregation to take time to reflect on where you are as a church community and where you hope to go. It is an opportunity to take stock and be honest about what is or isn't happening and what you think is needed for the future.

The profile is unique to your parish and benefice. Different people will approach the task in different ways and each church or group of churches will have a different context and purpose. In the following sections you will find the things that you need to mention, but they are not exhaustive. The order in which information is placed; the emphasis you choose and layout of the profile are your choice.

Top Tips

Here are some hints gathered from dioceses around the country on things you need to consider when writing a profile:

Remember who you are writing it for. It is both about what the candidate can offer you and also about what you can offer them. Try to imagine what a priest might be looking for: what sort of worship there is, how many services, what resources there are. Remember they are also a human being and think about how human needs (like holidays and a home) might be met. Imagine what a family person/a single person/someone who is not from the area would need to know.

The profile needs to be honest and show that you have really thought about who you are. You don't need to be perfect and it helps to show that you are aware of your weaknesses, as well as where your strengths lie. You need to show how you are prepared to engage with issues and how you understand them and also leave space for the candidate to feel that they could add something. Many clergy welcome a real challenge and discern God's call within it.

It needs to be appealing and interesting. Remember what it is that makes you excited to be a part of the church and locality and convey it. Use relevant quotes from the community to illustrate a particular point.

It needs to tell a coherent story The candidate needs to understand how the benefice works together. The role is for one person and so you will need to agree as a benefice what a single, coherent role looks like.

It needs to be human: The church is a community of people, so...

- Include photos of people and events in preference to photos of the outside of the church building, with the correct permissions. Visit www.bathandwells.org.uk/diocese/safeguarding/parish-safeguarding/ for further guidance.
- Consider adding photos of key people – this will be very useful for the candidate when they come to interview.
- It isn't (just) a business plan, it is also something that speaks of the spirit of the place.
- Don't just talk about key facts but give a sense of what is exciting/difficult
- Consider adding quotations from the community/worshippers.

It needs to be easy to read: so you need to think about things that will help: e.g. contents page, headings, grids and tables, short sentences.

It needs to be easy to look at. We live in a visual age so how it looks will help. Make sure it is web and email friendly, well set out, and easy to print off. Download our [Profile Formatting Guide for Publisher](#) for further details.

Don't try to include everything. Prioritising what you think is important will say something about you and will make the profile easier to read.

Section Two: Process

It is best to start thinking about the profile in earnest AFTER the priest has left as the picture that emerges may change during the vacancy. You may have a profile from the last time. It is best to start this profile from a blank sheet of paper. The church will have moved on since the last vacancy. Only use a previous profile as a guide to show you how much you have changed since the last incumbency. You will need to take time as a community to consider who you are and what you really think is needed. Sometimes people will find it frustrating to have to do this work but it is a really important investment in the profile and your future.

1. Appoint a Profile Writing Team

It is a good idea to set up a Profile Writing Team. This is NOT necessarily the same group of people as those who are taking care of the day to day running of the parish/es. It does not have to have the elective representatives who will be on the interview panel. The team needs to include:

- one person leading the Profile Writing Team; editing and co-ordinating communication
- someone who knows how to use a computer and can make an attractive document
- someone who will take responsibility for coordinating communication
- someone who can take good digital photographs.

In order for the appointment to be successful, everyone needs to feel that they have had an opportunity to participate in the appointment process. This means that it is essential that the Profile Writing Team ensures that there is liaison:

- amongst themselves
- with the churchwardens
- with the parish reps on the interview panel
- with the congregation
- with the wider community.

The Profile Writing Team is working on behalf of the PCC(s).

The profile needs to have a coherent and cohesive feel and it is a good idea to begin with an overarching perspective of the entire benefice. You may want to have separate sections from each parish in a multi parish Benefice; however what emerges must be one profile for the entire benefice. You need to have a view of the whole that gives an honest picture of where you are.

2. Preparing for the profile

Before you can decide what sort of a priest you are looking for, you need to think about who you are and where you feel God might be calling your parishes. If you have a clear vision of who you are and what your purpose is, then the priorities and tasks will emerge. When the priorities are clear that will enable you to discern the tasks and priorities that **you** can tackle and what the priest needs to do. From the vision of who you are and where you want to go, you will see what sort of things need to be done. While remembering that the candidate can bring their own vision to the churches (and so leaving room for

that), you need to prioritise the tasks that will help you to fulfil the vision.



There are various things that you might like to consider:

- Afternoon tea with focus groups
- A folder in the back of the church or in a communal place where people could write prayers or make suggestions
- A special service of prayer for the vacancy
- A prayer walk
- Writing a vacancy prayer together

Ministry for Mission can offer facilitation for any of these ideas. For more information, contact caroline.bruce@bathwells.anglican.org

3. Surveys

This process will require consultation and discussion to ensure agreement and “ownership” across the benefice/parish.

A survey is the first step to discerning the Vision. See Appendix I, a guide to a performing a community survey in vacancy.

4. Vision Event

Armed with the results from the community survey, the Profile Writing Team should form a **Draft Vision Statement**. See Appendix II, The Vision Statement for more guidance.

You need to set aside time for a **vision event**. This is an opportunity for people to listen to one another and to achieve a realistic and coherent vision of what is possible and therefore what skills and qualities

the next priest will need. It is a chance for people to reflect deeply on their faith, why they come to church and what their hopes for the future are. On the day:

- Share the **Draft Vision Statement** with everyone
- Set priorities
- Look for what qualities are needed.

5. Overview

This is the section where the reader will get a flavour for whether the role is going to be a good fit for them. It will inform the interview and will be reviewed by the candidate once s/he is in post.

6. Complete profile writing

Ensure all required elements for the profile have been completed, including the contributions from the Deanery and Diocese.

7. Send for review

At this point, your draft profile is to be forwarded to critical friends, the Archdeacon's office and the Parish Consultancy Officer, Caroline Bruce.

8. Create final draft

Edit with agreed revisions.

9. Send to PCC for formal agreement

The PCC will need to formally agree the profile.

10. Write Role Description

Having established your vision, you will need to describe the focus of ministry and set out the key tasks and challenges. See Appendix III, Writing the Key Tasks and Priorities, and Appendix IV, Possible items for Consideration when Writing the Role Description.

Send the Role Description to the Archdeacon's office for consultation.

11. Advertising

When it comes to advertising, speak to your Archdeacon first. S/he will advise you as to the best way to proceed.

Timing

Bearing in mind that from the point from advertising until you have a new priest in post will be at least 5 months. The appointment process is two months and the notice period can be up to three months. The Archdeacons can offer more advice on the specifics of timing.

Section Three: What to include in the parish profile

You may find Appendix V, the Profile Writing Checklist useful.

Contents page

This helps the candidate to navigate the document.

Introduction

This is an important welcome, which sets the scene and invites the person to read on.

Overview

The overview is really important because candidates will look for a summary before they bother reading the whole document. The page sets out

- The vision and priorities
- The actions needed to achieve the vision
- Brief summary of what the parish offers
- Brief summary of the skills and qualities of the priest needed.

Who we are looking for

This is where the reader will get a flavour for whether the role is going to be a good fit for them. It will inform the interview and will be reviewed by the candidate once s/he is in post.

Who we are

Benefice

You may choose to write separate sections for each of the churches if you are part of a benefice. However, there needs to be a section which informs the candidate how the benefice functions as a whole. How do you work together? In what way do you keep your separate identities but draw together for certain things? If you are a multi parish benefice, the candidate will want to know that you have thought about how to manage it. Consider including what the benefice consists of: number of churches, number of communities, how long it's been in its current shape, anything you want to say about yourselves as a benefice.

General context

This section gives an overview to the candidate of the area. They may not know anything about the area if they come from outside the Diocese. You might like to include:

- Map, including relationships to places the candidate might have heard of
- Communication links: bus, train, motorway, and airport.
- What the place is like: rural area, seaside town, suburb, ex-industrial. Some idea of things that candidates might need to know (schools, colleges, primary schools), hospitals in the area, activities and points of interest for days off.

- You may find it helpful to point in the direction of the parish spotlights which are available to any candidate on line: www.bathandwells.org.uk/supporting-parishes/finances/parish-spotlights/

Worship

A service grid showing all services in their current pattern. Indicate which services are lay led and which form of worship is followed. You may want to add something that gives an indication of style: e.g. vestments are worn.

The average annual number of occasional offices for each church is also very helpful.

The future

PCC and congregations hopes for the future ministry of the church. Results of community and congregational surveys. What is going well and what could be done better? Priorities and tasks. What is the vision?

What we can offer

No profile would be complete without showing that as well as expecting something, you are mindful of the fact that you will be offering something as well. You might include:

Ministry

Administrative help: benefice office, administrator (number of hours, location)

Other licenced clergy: NSMs, retired clergy who take services

Ministry team: readers, lay pastoral assistants, lay worship assistants

Other ministries: listeners, intercessors, flower arrangers, organist etc.

The current membership of the PCC: especially where there is a full complement of church wardens and PCC officers.

General attitude: willing volunteers, able fundraisers, competent administrative helpers etc.

Things that show you care: respecting time off and holidays, the private space

Local ministry group/ecumenical links

Your Home

Accommodation: This is a description of the house and garden with photos. If there are any issues with the house, it is a good idea to mention how these are being addressed in a positive way. The property department will have the last quinquennial report, details of the house and may have good quality photos. You can contact the property department and find out more through the diocesan website www.bathandwells.org.uk/supporting-parishes/bricks-mortar/clergy-housing/

Individual churches and communities

Congregation and community

Community life e.g. thriving local pub, five shops, or the church is the only public space in community; this is a very popular retirement area, fetes and festivals, etc.

Ministry team include photos of the key members of the team: priests, readers, LWAs, churchwardens etc. It can also be helpful to know whether there is a full team of PCC members.

Church life: what goes on: Prayer groups, Bible study groups, youth groups, toddler groups, MU, special festivals, days away together, special times you may want to include (e.g. if you have compline in Lent), House groups, links with charities, links with community events.

Ecumenical Life: if you have a local ecumenical agreement of any kind, but also if the Anglican churches are the only place of worship in the benefice it is a good idea to mention these.

School Links: what are your links with the local schools like? Is it a place where the incumbent goes in to do assemblies, or are there greater levels of integration such as 'Open the Book', School governorship, foundation governors from church members? If you have a church school in one or more of your parishes, consider contacting the Education Department who may be able to offer further information that can attract incumbents to work more closely with schools. Also contact the head teacher of the schools asking how they would hope to work with an incumbent. Always remember that if you include pictures of children you need to ask permission. www.bathandwells.org.uk/supporting-children/

Finances

As with other parts of the profile, you need to be honest and show that you have thought about the financial state of the parish. We recommend including the following information:

- Parish Share payments
- Unrestricted/restricted reserves
- If you are a registered charity
- Provide a link to the accounts
- Gift Aid Scheme and/or planned giving
- Any outstanding or planned building works

It is helpful if to think about how your money and your mission work together. Do you think that mission comes after the money is there or do you believe that if you do the mission the money will come? For help with any aspect of finance see the webpages: www.bathandwells.org.uk/supporting-parishes/finances/

Buildings

Church buildings: keep it clear and very short, but be honest about things that need attention. If you want to talk about the history or architecture of the building, you need to say why this is important.

Attached buildings: kitchen/ cloakroom, halls, foyer, side chapels etc.

Other church buildings: halls, other houses.

Deanery and Diocese

Deanery and Chapter

The Area Dean or Lay Dean will make a contribution here, to give background about the Deanery, the Chapter, future plans etc.

Diocese

The Archdeacon needs will supply a contribution giving the diocesan context, setting out the Diocesan strategy. Reference could be made to the wealth of resources available to support clergy in their ministry..

Finally...

Is there anything else that you want to add? You could finish with a final comment or photo - something that will help the candidate to remember you by!

Remember to surround the whole process in prayer. If you have done all of this, and it has been approved by the Archdeacon, it's time to advertise.

Appendix I: Community Survey in Vacancy

Aim	<p>To allow people to have their say</p> <p>To build up a picture of what is needed</p> <p>To make the process inclusive</p>
Who is it for?	<p>EVERYONE e.g.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The congregation • The community • The school? Teachers? Students? Parents? • The link group? • Other community groups?
How should it be delivered?	<p>Up to you!</p> <p>Person to person works best</p> <p>Social media/survey monkey?</p> <p>Leave it in church or hand out in church?</p> <p>Go into school, ask someone in school to deliver it?</p> <p>Other local places where people gather?</p>
Timing?	<p>If you are doing it in person then when would be a good time to ask the most people?</p> <p>Have you any events planned? Are there any regular meetings it could be done at? When do schools break up?</p> <p>If you are leaving them in situ, how long will be given to answer and collect?</p>
Collecting, writing up and analysing	<p>When?</p> <p>Who?</p>
Questions?	<p>Not too many because you will have to collate them e.g. 5 or 6</p> <p>All the same for everyone? All the same for everyone except children?</p> <p>Confidential or for sharing? Good idea to check</p> <p>Think about what you are trying to find out and why</p>
Examples of community survey questions	<p>What do you like about being part of/living in this community/in parish name?</p> <p>What do you think is/are the most pressing need(s) of this community?</p> <p>What would you like to see happening?</p> <p>What does the church do here?</p> <p>How could the church serve the community better?</p>

Appendix II: The Vision Statement

The vision statement will work like a destination on the bus, telling you and the candidate where you hope to be going. It should feel like a magnet that draws people to you – something that says ‘why’ and not just ‘how’. It cannot be done by one or two people but should be as the result of as wide a consultation as possible. It is really worth taking time to think about the vision of your church/churches and what you see as the key tasks, strengths, weaknesses, challenges and opportunities.

Consider where you are now, you might include:

- Why do we do what we do?
- What do we do well? What could we do better?
- What challenges do we face? Where are our opportunities?



Appendix III : Guide to writing Key Tasks and Priorities

Having established your vision, you will need to determine what will need to be done to achieve this and what the key tasks and priorities are. You will need to describe the focus of ministry and set out the key tasks and challenges.

The process for completing this section is as follows:

- a. List the relevant key areas of the role
 - Think about who will carry them out and how you might expect your new priest to contribute to them so that it is realistic and relevant.
 - Use different headings if that is helpful, but not more than eight.
- b. For each of these key areas, produce statements setting out the desired outcome
 - What is done and to what/with whom. Describe each main activity and state the role holder's responsibility in connection with the activity.
 - The following examples are in a tabular format but this is not required, a narrative statement is equally appropriate.
- c. When you have drafted the statements, check that:
 - They represent the key responsibilities of this specific role
 - They incorporate the specific local and diocesan issues;
 - They focus on addressing the role purpose and key challenges of the role, and are not simply tasks or activities;
 - Each is distinct from the others, and describes an area in which results may be achieved;
 - There is an appropriate balance between chaplaincy to the congregation; pastoral care and mission in the community; wider ministerial interests; and care of self.

The role description is a living document as priorities change over time; your new priest will review the role description with their Archdeacon after about six months in office.

For further inspiration see section 3. Further guidance on writing role descriptions is also available on the diocesan website: www.bathandwells.org.uk/supporting-ministry/hr-employment/guidelinesclergy/

How to write the key tasks – role description

Consider the possible ideas of statements outlined in Appendix X when drafting the key tasks; however it is important to ensure that the specific local and diocesan context is reflected:

How to draw up a person specification: the process

The person specification should be drawn up after a process of taking time out to think about who you as church/churches really consider yourselves to be. Once you have identified the vision and the tasks, you will be able to discern what skills and experiences are needed. When you have worked out what skills are needed, you should then be able to think about the sort of qualities that you are looking for.

Skills

Consider what sort of skills would be needed from the priest to help you achieve the key tasks. These might include experience and qualifications. For example: If you want to grow the church, you may have decided you need to think more deeply about your children's ministry – what sort of experience and qualifications might be needed in the priest for this? You may be a large benefice with an active lay membership, so you might need a priest with a proven track record of team leadership. You might be at

the stage of recognising that in order to meet the needs of the place you need a priest who can discern and develop the ministry of lay people etc.

Note which skills are essential and which desirable.

Qualities

In addition to these skills, what sort of qualities would the priest need to have?

You might like to ask your community to write down three qualities on separate post-it notes that they would see as essential for a priest for your churches, and then see which seem to be the most desirable. Check that these fit with the vision, the key tasks and the skills.

- The spiritual qualities you are hoping for
- The leadership style (collaborative leadership, leads from the top, gives spiritual direction of the churches, embraces change)
- The approach (communicates well, people person, encourages lay involvement, has a heart for children's ministry/mission/rural ministry etc.)

Appendix IV: Possible Items for consideration when writing the Role Description

1. Mission and outreach

Possible ways this might be expressed include.....

- developing a ministry that encourages new people to Christian faith
- supporting existing Christians in evangelism and discipleship so that members of the parish are encouraged to show God's love in action
- developing relations with community and external organisations to promote positive links with the church
- making full use of opportunities for outreach and service to the community, collaborating where appropriate with other parishes and agencies, so that assistance is provided to the community as effectively as possible
- Working with other churches in the deanery to assist in implementing the diocesan mission strategy.

2. Leadership and working collaboratively

Possible ways this might be expressed include.....

- leading the Church in setting and holding its vision
- inspiring, motivating, challenging and empowering members of the church, individually and collectively, to achieve that vision
- sharing ministry as appropriate and working collaboratively with others, (including clergy colleagues, churchwardens, PCC, staff and volunteers), so that individuals' gifts and talents are identified and used effectively in any given situation or task
- Encouraging and building up the community of faith.

3. Worship and preaching

Possible ways this might be expressed include.....

- leading worship that gives glory to God, prayerfully, competently and confidently
- planning, organising and conducting a programme of worship that supports the church's vision and needs for ministry including appropriate use of resources, music, teaching and preaching
- planning, organising and conducting a programme of teaching which supports the Church community, develops its faith and responds to the needs of different ages and levels of faith or knowledge
- Reflecting, interpreting and preaching the gospel in a way that will encourage faith development, adapting content and style for different audiences, occasions and purposes.

4. Pastoral care

Possible ways this might be expressed include.....

- identifying pastoral care needs and ensuring appropriate structures and skills to provide this to the community (including parish visitors, pastoral assistants and other teams)
- giving support to those in need of pastoral care as appropriate, including baptism and marriage preparation, care to the sick and dying, bereavement, individual support and visiting
- Communicating effectively and appropriately in both written and verbal form with people of all ages and situations in society, inside and outside the church.
- Demonstrating active listening and empathetic behaviour.

Continued over

5. Stewardship and parish organisation

Possible ways this might be expressed include.....

- working with the PCC and churchwardens to ensure that structures and resources for parish organisation are appropriate, including clear boundaries and accountabilities of roles
- ensuring that structures, processes and policies in relation to services, weddings, baptisms and funerals, health and safety, financial, fabric, staff management, etc. meet diocesan and legal requirements.
- managing his or her time effectively through personal administration, planning and organisation, working in a team, chairing meetings, interpersonal skills and taking appropriate breaks
- Following an appropriate pattern of work that enables a full spiritual and personal life, as well as meeting the demands of ministry.

6. Personal development and spirituality

This might include.....

- continually developing personal skills and knowledge in relation to ministry through courses of study, reading, consultancy, training courses and workshops
- maintaining a prayerful spiritual life with appropriate support networks (including spiritual director or equivalent and regular retreats)
- recognising that s/he is on a life journey involving development of theological understanding and spiritual reflection
- inspiring growth in others through learning and example and by acting as a model of the love of God in action
- care and development of themselves and their personal relationships, including adequate time for family life, friendship, recreation, renewal and personal health, through taking a weekly day off and their full holiday entitlement.

Appendix V: Profile writing checklist

Team:	<p>Editor</p> <p>Someone to format the document</p> <p>Representative from each parish</p> <p>Proof readers</p> <p>Advert writer</p>	
Contents page		
Introduction:	Welcome	
Overview:	Summary of vision, priorities, actions required, parish offer and skills and qualities required	
Who we are looking for:	<p>Vision for the future of the benefice</p> <p>Key tasks (role description) which will enable us to carry out the Vision</p> <p>Skills (person specification) of the priest and the congregation that will allow us to achieve the Key Tasks</p> <p>Qualities of the priest we are looking for</p>	
Who we are:	<p>Benefice outline general history and likely future, how people work together and what is done separately.</p> <p>Context information on the wider demographics, type of community, local institutions, schools, local youth work, other community groups.</p> <p>Worship service details (worship grid), style, usual attendance, Christmas and Easter with usual attendance, number of occasional offices in the last year.</p> <p>The future PCC and congregations hopes for the future ministry of the church. Results of community and congregational surveys. What is going well and what could be done better? Priorities and tasks. What is the vision?</p>	
What we offer:	<p>Ministry other clergy - active and retired Readers, local ministry team, administrators, other active groups, PCC - roles filled?</p> <p>The Rectory or Vicarage property details and information on any planned work.</p>	
Individual churches:	<p>Congregation size of Electoral Roll, usual Sunday attendance, study groups, children's and youth work, magazine or newsletter, chaplaincies, ecumenical links, overseas links, fetes and festivals.</p> <p>Finance attitude to money, parish share, stewardship scheme, state of finances, fund raising, details of capital projects in progress or under consideration, policy on expenses.</p> <p>Buildings details of churches including state of repair, halls and other property, any major projects including re-ordering.</p>	
Deanery and Diocese:	<p>Deanery information to be provided by the Area Dean, what peer support is available, what are the Deanery plans?</p> <p>Diocesan information to be provided by the Archdeacon</p>	
Something nice to end with		