

*When moving house,
please leave this book
in a prominent position
in the study for the
sequestrators and your
successor.
Thank you!*

The Parsonage Handbook



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Foreword

by the Chair of the Property Committee



Housing plays a vital part in the ministry of clergy and other office-holders in our diocese.

The Property Committee and the Staff of the Property Department will do all we can to ensure that those who occupy parsonage houses feel as secure and as comfortable as possible in their home, and know that an efficient service is on hand when things go wrong or help is required.

We have to do this, of course, within the constraints of the budget allocated to us by Diocesan Synod, and we are very conscious of the need to exercise good stewardship of this by prioritising the most essential work and getting the best value for money when it is carried out. We try to keep a close eye on whether our housing stock continues to meet the needs of mission and ministry.

Whilst it is a privilege and a valuable benefit to have accommodation provided as a home and a base for ministry, we realise that the experience of living in a 'tied house' is never the same as living in a property you own. There are limitations and there can be frustrations, and the committee and staff will do our best to take account of these as we carry out our responsibilities.

We are extremely grateful to our Property Department staff for their hard work and expertise, and our hope and prayer is that everyone involved in the care of parsonage houses will work together happily and effectively for the sake of God's Kingdom.

David Bailey
Archdeacon of Bolton

Introduction

This updated guide is to inform clergy (and some other office-holders) and their families, as well as churchwardens, parochial church councils and architects, about arrangements for occupying and caring for parsonages in the Diocese of Manchester.

As well as explaining the legal position and the responsibilities of the occupant in respect of the parsonage house, it offers practical information and advice.

In any matter relating to parsonage houses, the first point of contact is the Diocesan Surveyor:

Church House, 90 Deansgate, Manchester M3 2GH

DarrenBamford@manchester.anglican.org

Telephone 0161 828 1400

Some Legal Background

The responsibilities of the Property Committee are governed by the Parsonages Measure 1938 and 1974, the Repair of Benefice Buildings Measure 1972, the Church of England (Miscellaneous Provisions) Measure 2005, the Endowments and Glebe Measure 1976, and the Ecclesiastical Offices (Terms of Service) Measure & Regulations 2009.

Under the Manchester Diocesan Scheme, the Diocesan Board of Finance is the Parsonages Board and the Board's functions are delegated to the Property Committee. The Committee is also responsible for other properties owned by the Diocesan Board of Finance which are not subject to the above legislation.

Occupying the house

- ◆ Clergy occupy their houses as 'representative occupiers'
- ◆ Their responsibilities are those of reasonable tenants
- ◆ The 'Repair of Benefice Buildings Measure 1972' lays down the diocesan responsibility to be equivalent to that of a landlord under the Rent Acts
- ◆ The Diocese is responsible for structural repairs and exterior decorations
- ◆ The occupant is responsible for non-structural repairs, internal decoration and maintenance of the garden

Taxation

The Chief Accountant of the Church Commissioners advises clergy:-

If you are living in tied accommodation (e.g. a vicarage) you will not be taxed on your use of the house as you will continue to be a representative occupier. However, you will become subject to a tax on services provided at the house.

Examples are:

1. Payments otherwise made tax free in respect of heating, lighting and cleaning.
2. Internal repairs that are not structural and internal decorations of your house, that are paid for by the Church, but would have been your responsibility had you been renting a house.

If you require clarification of any of the above, please contact the Head of Finance at the Diocesan Office.

Working in Partnership

The Property Committee works in partnership with various interested parties **with clergy (and other office-holders)**

The Property Committee has responsibility to make the best use of Diocesan funds to maintain clergy houses, and this can only be achieved with the co-operation of occupants. Though most clergy occupy the house by virtue of their office, they and their families are, in fact, 'custodians' of the house for themselves and future occupants.

They are required to take reasonable care of their homes, keeping them clean and in good decorative order. They have a responsibility under the Repair of Benefice Buildings Measure 1972 for routine maintenance, such as the clearing of gutters, sweeping chimneys, internal decoration, and small household repairs. The garden should be kept in reasonable condition with grass cut and paths cleared of moss and weeds

Clergy should contact the Diocesan property office if problems arise with their houses or if there are factors that they think should be brought to the attention of the Committee.

with Parochial Church Councils

Parochial Church Councils are asked to support their clergy in the care of the house. Help with small or routine jobs can be extremely valuable. During a vacancy, there will be a special responsibility to look after the house, and churchwardens, as sequestrators, will usually be expected to hold the keys. (see 'Vacancies' page 21). Advice and observations about housing from the Parochial Church Council are always welcome.

In the case of non-parochial appointments, the Diocese normally takes on the same responsibilities as a Parochial Church Council.

with the Church Commissioners

The Commissioners agreement is sometimes required prior to the purchase, building or sale of parsonage houses. They also offer advice and guidance on a variety of housing topics.

with Patrons

The Patron is consulted about proposals to buy, build, improve or sell a parsonage house and/or its grounds, or the provision of an alternative site.

Provision and Disposal of Clergy Houses

The Property Committee has, within the limits of available finance, a responsibility to consider the replacement of unsuitable houses and to provide houses to meet new pastoral needs. The Committee, acting on behalf of incumbents, serves notice on the Parochial Church Council and the Patron and obtains, if necessary, the approval of the Church Commissioners for such proposals.

When it builds new houses, the Committee endeavours to meet the Church Commissioners' suggested standards in their publication "Parsonages – A Design Guide", known widely as the "Green Guide", but this is conditioned to some extent by funds available and variations agreed by the Committee.

Full information on the current suggested standard for parsonage houses in the Diocese of Manchester is available from the Diocesan Surveyor.

The cost of new houses (whether built or purchased) is met from the Diocesan Pastoral Account. The funding of any project is subject to the approval of the Diocesan Board of Finance.

Insurance and Utilities

Insurance

All parsonages for which the Property Committee has responsibility are insured under a comprehensive policy.

If the house suffers damage from theft, vandalism, storm or accident, then the Property Department should be notified as soon as possible. It is a condition of the insurance that if the damage was malicious the local police are to be informed.

Depending on the nature of the damage it may be necessary to carry out emergency repairs. Where possible, the Property Department should be contacted first.

In order to consider an insurance claim, the Insurers will require a clearly itemised written estimate, a brief description of how the damage occurred, the date of the occurrence, and, if appropriate, the name of the police station contacted. These details should be forwarded to the Diocesan Surveyor.

All insurance claims against the block policy must be made through the Property Department. All successful claims against the block policy are subject to an excess charge. For claims resulting from accidental damage the excess charge must be borne locally. Please note that claims for the loss or theft of house keys and the subsequent replacement of locks are to be made on the individual's household policies and not on the building insurance.

If other work is being carried out at the same time as insurance work, then care must be taken to obtain separate itemised estimates and accounts.

The Property Committee only insures the house, and not the contents. Occupants must make their own arrangements for the contents of the house.

It should be noted that on a house expected to be vacant for more than thirty days, the insurance cover will be reduced.

It is a requirement of our policy that during vacancies the house must be checked daily for damage and security.

Water Charges

The payment of these is the responsibility of the Parochial Church Council. Water Rates are not chargeable on empty houses. During a vacancy, the sequestrators should inform United Utilities and arrange a rebate if necessary.

Telephone

The Diocese will provide a telephone connection to the house. At the time of the initial installation telephone socket points will be fitted as follows: one in the study, one elsewhere on the ground floor and a third one at the discretion of the occupant.

Rental and other charges are the responsibility of the Parochial Church Council and/or the incumbent, together with costs of installation of any additional telephone equipment and broadband internet.

During a vacancy, the Parochial Church Council pays the telephone account until a new appointment is made. This can be refunded via the sequestration account.

If possible the Parochial Church Council should take the telephone in its own name, thus avoiding difficulties at vacancies. The occupant's name should, however, be inserted in the Directory.

Gas and Electricity

The cost of these is the responsibility of the occupant, who should look carefully at the various tariffs and discounts on offer from energy providers.

Security and Safety

Security

The Property Committee will ensure that parsonages are made secure to a reasonable standard.

Basic security measures that we would expect to provide in all houses are:

- ◆ window locks to ground floor windows
- ◆ five lever mortice locks to entrance doors
- ◆ external security lights with motion sensors
- ◆ an intruder alarm system with: movement detector to ground floor rooms and first floor landing; key fob operation with a panic button

Additional security measures will be considered in particular circumstances, e.g. in areas of high risk or where repeated incidents have occurred .

Where an alarm system is fitted the Diocese is not responsible for its maintenance. It is recommended that parishes take out a maintenance agreement with an NSI registered company.

If you have concerns about Parsonage security, please contact the Diocesan Surveyor.

Smoke Detectors

Occupants are strongly advised to fit smoke detectors in their houses and check them regularly.

Health and Safety at Work

All contractors working for the Parsonages Board do so within the current Health and Safety at Work Regulations. Occupants are asked to take extra care of themselves, their children and their pets, when contractors are present in the house.

The Diocesan Surveyor should be contacted for advice on any Health and Safety at Work matters.

Emergencies

Emergencies

If an emergency occurs during normal working hours it should be reported to the Property Department who will organise the appropriate response.



In circumstances that require urgent attention out of office hours the Diocese provides emergency call-out services.

Before contacting an emergency call-out provider, please bear in mind that they will charge the Diocese at 'out of hours' rates, which can be very expensive. Please consider whether the matter could wait until instructions can be given during office hours by the Property Department Staff.

Inappropriate use of emergency call-out services may be charged to the occupant.

An up to date list of emergency call-out numbers can be found on the diocesan website: www.manchester.anglican.org/resources-for-ministers/emergency-clergy

Where possible this should be checked before relying on the numbers on the back of this booklet, which may be changed from time to time.

Listed below are various emergency situations and basic advice for dealing with them. An up to date list of emergency call-out numbers can be found on the diocesan website: www.manchester.anglican.org/resources-for-ministers/emergency-clergy Where possible this should be checked before relying on the numbers on the back of this booklet, which may be changed from time to time.

Break-ins

inform the police and obtain a crime number. The police usually have contractors who will board up properties as necessary.

Gas leaks

inform United Utilities Gas Leak Line.

Boilers and central heating

Telephone the contractor responsible for the annual gas maintenance visit. If they are unavailable telephone the diocesan emergency call out number.



Burst pipes and plumbing

ensure that the water is turned off at the stop tap, contact the diocesan emergency call out number.

Electrical failure

if the circuit breaker (RCD) trips and fails to re-set on the power circuits to the household plug sockets the following action should be taken

- ◆ unplug all domestic items and re-set the switch.
- ◆ If it fails to re-set and it is considered an emergency contact the diocesan emergency call out number.
- ◆ If it re-sets, plug in individual items until the circuit fails, this would indicate a faulty appliance.

Intruder alarm malfunction

call out the relevant alarm maintenance company.

Broken windows

contact the diocesan emergency call out number.

Storm damage to property or trees

Call the diocesan emergency call out number. If other properties are damaged or passing traffic or pedestrians are in danger, inform the police.

Quinquennial and Vacancy Inspections

Houses are inspected every five years and when a vacancy is to be filled. A copy of the report is forwarded to the occupant or Sequestrators and a summary report to the Property Committee.

The Property Committee reserves the right to delay or bring forward a Quinquennial Inspection. Houses that are considered unsuitable and on the current list for replacement will not normally qualify for any improvement works.

Clergy are asked to share the contents of the Quinquennial Inspection report with the Parochial Church Council. Comments are invited on the report, specification and any improvements that might be considered. If no comments are received in writing within four weeks, the Property Department will put the work in hand.

The Buildings Officer will try to make a supervisory visit to the site while work is in progress. Problems or concerns should be reported to him to allow him to relay these to the contractors.

The Buildings Officer has been instructed that when Quinquennial/vacancy works are completed he should, wherever possible, inspect them in the presence of the occupant and the contractor. The responsibility remains with the Buildings Officer to ensure that the schedule of works is completed satisfactorily. The occupant can, however, point out to the Buildings Officer areas of work felt to be sub-standard or incomplete.

In cases of dispute, the Diocesan Surveyor will carry out an inspection of the disputed work and make a decision. If this is not conclusive the Diocesan Surveyor will ask members of the Property Committee to visit and come to a decision..

A contractor's performance report will be issued to the occupant for completion and returning to the Property Department. This will assist the Property Committee in monitoring the work of the contractors etc.

Interim Repairs and Maintenance

Clergy have an ongoing responsibility to look after the house, and to keep it in good order between Quinquennial inspections. Gutters, downspouts and drains should be kept clear and running freely and small jobs (e.g. changing tap washers etc.) should be undertaken or arranged on a DIY basis.

If it is necessary to use a ladder to gain access for repairs (e.g. cleaning gutters or similar), occupants should give careful regard to their own safety and should not lean ladders against plastic guttering.

If it is thought necessary for repairs to be carried out professionally, please contact the Property Department. If such work is likely to assume significant proportions the Buildings Officer will visit and if necessary make a report for the Property Committee's consideration. If damage occurs maliciously, accidentally or by storm then it may be possible to make an insurance claim. The procedure for this is set out on page 8.

Non-urgent expenditure should not be incurred without the Committee's prior approval.

PVCu Doors and Glazing

These fittings, while offering various advantages over softwood, do require a degree of care in their maintenance. PVCu windows and doors do not rot, warp or lose their colour in normal use. They can, however, be permanently damaged by carelessness and by using unsuitable cleaning materials.

Do not stand ladders directly against a PVCu windowsill. Do not use a blowtorch or any other very hot appliance near to the window. The glazed areas should be cleaned as normal glass. The PVCu section should be cleaned with a non-abrasive liquid cleaner. Do not clean with scouring powder, wire wool or bleach.

Windows or doors must not be painted, nor should curtain fittings be fitted directly to the window frame.

Central Heating and Gas Appliances

Gas and oil fired central heating boilers and gas fires in parsonage houses are serviced annually at the expense of the Diocese. Under the terms of the service agreement, if there is a problem with the central heating or gas fires the first call should be to the maintenance contractor allocated to the parsonage. A Landlord's Gas Safety Certificate will be issued by the contractor after the annual maintenance visit.

If there are any queries in respect of maintenance contracts, please contact the Property Department.

Any work undertaken by other contractors on central heating systems or gas fires without the prior approval of the Diocesan Surveyor must be paid for locally.

Interior Decoration

In general, Interior decoration is the responsibility of the occupant, but please note the following points

Any redecoration needed as a direct consequence of authorised works will be undertaken by the Property Committee as an integral part of the work.

Redecoration will be to a basic standard, unless the occupants provide their own wallpaper or other materials.

If redecoration is required as a direct consequence of an insured event then the Property Department should be consulted so that the possibility of meeting the cost of remedial redecoration through an insurance claim can be investigated.

The Property Committee wishes to encourage clergy to keep their houses reasonably decorated and to this end provides a decoration grant. For details of current rates, please contact the Diocesan Surveyor.

The Property Committee has no wish to dictate internal colour schemes, nor has the power to do so, but it does request that strong colours on woodwork and painted walls be avoided. These colours are expensive to cover over and the cost of doing so is not the Committee's responsibility.

Failure to keep the house in reasonable decorative order may be considered to be neglect (see p. 20)

Condensation

Modern properties suffer from problems due to condensation. Water running down the inside of the windows is obvious evidence of this, but it has less visible effects as well. Condensation can result in damage to decorations, mould growth on walls, rotting timber work and mould in clothes. More often than not it is not caused by structural faults, but through incorrect heating and ventilation.

Ventilation is vital and does not automatically cause heat loss. Comfort is a balance between humidity and temperature.

When double glazing is provided, the Property Committee recommends that permanent ventilation is included. Extractor fans are provided in kitchens and bathrooms and should be used.

Condensation damage can be very expensive to rectify and the Property Committee could view such damage as neglect on the part of the occupant (see p.20)

Kitchens and Bathrooms

When refurbishing a kitchen or bathroom the Committee will invite the occupants to choose fittings and design elements from within a standard range. The Diocesan Surveyor can give details of these. Bathroom tiles and sanitary ware will be white.

The provision of a cooker is the responsibility of the incumbent. A cooker grant is available and details can be obtained from the Diocesan Surveyor.

The Diocese will provide connections for automatic washing machines and dishwashers. Tumble dryers (except condensing dryers) need to be vented to open air. Owners should supply the venting kit and the Diocese will cut the relevant aperture for fitting.

Modern baths and shower trays are usually manufactured from acrylic (a type of plastic). This material is very durable and colourfast. However, the high gloss finish to the bath can be permanently damaged by carelessness or by using unsuitable cleaning materials. Do not use scouring powder, wire wool or bleach agents to clean bathroom fittings.

Insulation

The Diocese expects to provide adequate loft insulation and, at the time of writing, has a programme in hand for installing cavity wall insulation in those properties which are suitable for it.

Further information can be obtained from the Diocesan Surveyor.

Care of the Garden

In general, care of the garden is the responsibility of the occupant. Offers of help from 'green-fingered' parishioners may well be appreciated by clergy and others who don't have quite as much skill or enthusiasm!

Paths, gates and boundary fences are the responsibility of the Committee.

Should the garden become unkempt and overgrown, this may be regarded as 'neglect' and the outgoing occupant be required to pay the cost of restoring it to good order (see p.20)

The cutting down or lopping of trees within the parsonage grounds is the responsibility of the occupant. However, the Property Committee is conscious of the cost involved in 'tree work' and will try, within budgetary restrictions, to fund expensive works.

It should be noted that trees may be listed for preservation or are in a conservation area, in which case Local Authority's consent is required before any work to them is undertaken. Failure to comply with this requirement can result in the prosecution of the occupant.

New trees should not be planted near to the parsonage house. Poorly sited trees can cause damage to the structure of the property, the drains or boundary walls/fences. Remember the crown of the tree roughly equates to the size of its root system. Do remember that what may be a delightful tree to the owner can be a real problem to a neighbour who loses light and has to clear leaves from their property.

Care must be taken when removing trees. Some trees, in certain soils, if removed too quickly, can cause structural damage by 'ground heave'.

Advice on tree work is available from the Diocesan Arboriculturalist via the Property Department.

TV Satellite Dishes Improvements Neglect of Houses

TV Satellite Dishes

These should only be fitted to a property on the clear understanding that when the property is vacated the device is removed and all making good is undertaken to the Diocesan Surveyor's satisfaction and at the occupier's expense. The same applies to specialist radio antenna. Any damage caused to a property as a consequence of fitting such devices is the responsibility of the occupier.

Improvements

Improvements are normally carried out at the time of Quinquennial and Vacancy repairs. Improvement work is subject to the availability of funds and the Committee's approval. The Committee, working within its financial constraints, endeavours to improve older parsonages to the current standard, although in some houses this is not practicable. Sometimes improvements are only made possible if the occupant or the PCC is willing to make a contribution to the cost (which cannot be refunded in the event of future sale or change of use of the property)

Any improvement work put in hand without prior approval of the Property Committee will not be funded.

Neglect of Houses

We are pleased that virtually all occupants look after their houses and keep them in good decorative order. In very rare cases, though, it is evident that reasonable care has not been taken, and in these circumstances, after inspection by members, the Committee may charge the occupant the cost of work required to bring it up to an acceptable standard.

Vacancies

If a property is to be vacated, it is essential that the Diocesan Surveyor is contacted as soon as a moving date is known.

Before leaving a parsonage house the occupant should ensure that the gas, electricity and water meters are read, and that arrangements are made with telephone and other media suppliers for final accounts to be forwarded to their new address. None of the utilities or telephone should be disconnected as this leads to reconnection charges and inconvenient delays.

The churchwardens should also read the meters on the first day of the vacancy and ensure that future bills are forwarded to the PCC for payment.

When vacating a parsonage, the occupant should ensure that it is left in a clean and tidy condition. All rubbish is to be disposed of, cupboards emptied and cleaned, floors swept, garden tidied and grass cut.

The house keys are to be left with the churchwardens.

When the house is vacated the Diocesan Surveyor, together with the churchwardens, will carry out an inspection of its condition. The Area Dean and/or Archdeacon may also attend.

During a vacancy the churchwardens are responsible, with the assistance of the Property Department, for the security and condition of the house.

Empty houses are vulnerable to vandal attack. The PCC is asked to do all it can to protect a house by ensuring all locks, bolts and other protective devices are put in operation. They are asked to keep up an appearance of habitation (e.g. having curtains at windows and lights on time switches) and advising the police of the vacancy.

The garden should be kept tidy and free from litter to avoid the appearance of being unoccupied.

The PCC should also arrange for the house is visited, if possible on a daily basis but at least twice a week, to check its security, to ensure that the boiler is working (in the winter) and to clear mail.

As a last resort the committee will consider boarding up the property, however, this can be counter-productive as it advertises the fact that the

house is empty. Further advice on these matters can be obtained from the Diocesan Surveyor.

During the vacancy the Board of Finance will reimburse the parish for a reasonable amount of gas, electricity, telephone and charges for heating and maintaining the house during the period October to March, providing that the following control settings are used:

- ◆ Boiler thermostat set at 140° Fahrenheit (60° Centigrade).
- ◆ Room thermostat set at 45° Fahrenheit (7° Centigrade).
- ◆ Time clock set to operate from 0200 to 0500 and 2000 to 2200

This should only be done when it is known that the boiler is protected by a frost-stat. If the boiler is not protected or it is expected to be a prolonged vacancy, the whole system, together with the domestic water system, must be drained and the rising main turned off.

In addition the gas should be turned off at the meter (do not have it disconnected) and circuit breakers that are not required switched off. Please note that before relighting the boiler you should ensure that the system has been refilled and tested.

Financial Matters

In a vacant benefice, local fee income, which is normally paid to the incumbent (e.g. for weddings, funerals etc) is paid instead into the 'Sequestration Account'. The Churchwardens and Area Dean are normally appointed as 'sequestrators' and administer the account. Guidance for sequestrators is issued from Church House at the beginning of a vacancy.

Once the parsonage is vacated, unfurnished and being held vacant for a minister of religion it is exempt from council tax charges and the local authority should be informed accordingly.

Once the house is vacant and unfurnished it is exempt from the payment of water rates and United Utilities should be informed accordingly.

Gas, electricity and telephone bills should be paid from the sequestration account, but these should relate only to use for maintenance of the property and not for other parish purposes.

Letting a Parsonage House

There are circumstances when it may be necessary or expedient for someone else to occupy the whole or part of a parsonage house. There are two legal alternatives to provide for this, depending on the circumstances of each individual case, but note that occupants cannot enter into agreements that run beyond the term of their occupancy.

The first alternative (where the occupant is sharing possession) is to grant a licence of occupation where the occupier is to become in effect a lodger. It is essential for this type of agreement that the occupant shares some part of the accommodation.

The second alternative is to grant a tenancy. In this case the tenant is entitled as a right to exclusive possession of either the whole of the parsonage house, or that part of it to which the tenancy relates.

Any tenancy granted should be an assured shorthold tenancy and arranged through the Diocesan Registrar, as legal notices are required to be served before the lease is entered into.

The Diocesan Surveyor can offer advice on the letting of parsonages.

The PCC pays the Council Tax for the incumbent. A 25% discount is available for single occupancy. Any lodgers will cancel this discount, and they must therefore pay the additional tax plus any rent agreed.

Please contact the Diocesan Surveyor when considering entering into any agreement, or with queries relating to Council Tax.

No persons are to take up residence in a parsonage house during a vacancy without the written approval of the Diocesan Property Committee.

Emergency Numbers

During office hours call Darren Bamford at Church House 0161 828 1417



Central Heating

Manchester / Salford Archdeaconry	Heatinglobal	0161 211 6955
Bolton / Salford Archdeaconry	Craggs	01204 697157
Rochdale Archdeaconry	Barnes & Booth	01457 872582

Utilities

Gas supply leak	British Gas	0800 111999
Electrical supply failure	Norweb	0800 1954141
Water supply leak	United Utilities	0845 7462200
	or	0800 330033

Alarm

Use your existing maintenance company;
if none retained, call

CIA2000 0161 624 8500

Broken Windows

Montrose Glass 0800 888 6123

Insurance

Ecclesiastical 01452 528533

Police

Greater Manchester 0161 872 5050

Lancashire 0845 125 3545

All police (*Non-emergencies*) 101

If you have any questions please contact the Property Department:

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4th floor, Church House
90 Deansgate
Manchester
M3 2GH
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