

## **HOUSE FOR DUTY POSTS**

### **FEBRUARY 2010**

'House for Duty' is an arrangement whereby a priest can live in a Parsonage House in exchange for carrying out certain duties in a parish, but without receiving a stipend. This may suit a minister on a pension (church or otherwise) or a self-supporting minister who receives an income in some other way which allows time for ministry. It is vital that anyone exploring this opportunity should be able to assure themselves and the Archdeacon that they have sufficient income to afford to live under these circumstances.

#### **1. The Legal Framework**

Parishes where this may be possible will be identified by the Bishop after discussion with the Churchwardens and the Priest in Charge. Because any priest appointed to a 'House for Duty' post is not, for legal reasons, 'the Incumbent', it will be normal to join the parish to another neighbouring parish. Whether or not the parishes involved are themselves united in a single parish will be a matter for local decision. The Incumbent of the whole benefice will have overall responsibility for the churches within the benefice, and the 'House for Duty' priest will be answerable to the Incumbent. However, this may not always be possible and it should be noted that two House for Duty priests in the Diocese are effectively Priests in Charge and are not accountable to the incumbent of a neighbouring parish. The House for Duty priest will hold the Bishop's Licence.

#### **2. Duration**

The agreement of a 'House for Duty' arrangement will last for five years or until the priest reaches the age of 70 whichever is the sooner, but after the introduction of Common Tenure in 2011 the post will be a permanent one until the age of 70. However it is expected that any such agreement will be reviewed regularly, consulting the individual concerned, the Archdeacon, the incumbent, and the parish.

In the case of clergy over the age of 70, it might be renewed on an annual basis, but only in exceptional circumstances and with the agreement of the incumbent and the PCC. Review of licences should be conducted by the Archdeacon six months before the expiry of the licence.

The priest may resign at any time, but has to give three months' notice, unless the Bishop is willing to agree a shorter period.

#### **3. Terms of Occupation of the House**

The exact terms of the occupation of the house will be determined on a case by case basis, but normally the Bishop's Licence will direct the priest to live in the Parsonage on the same terms as a Priest in Charge. The Diocese assumes responsibility for maintenance of the

building, but expects the internal decoration to be carried out by the Parish after consultation with the occupant. Parishes ought also to offer to help with the maintenance of large gardens, hedge cutting, and leaf clearance. The Parsonages Handbook explains these arrangements in fuller detail.

#### **4. Expenses and Fees**

Moving expenses and resettlement grants will be paid by the Diocese, but removal expenses at the expiry of a licence will not be paid. Parishes should meet in full all expenses incurred in connection with parochial duties. Fees for any occasional offices taken by the priest will be payable either to the Incumbent or assigned to the Diocese. The House for duty arrangement does not allow for any financial remuneration to the priest, as that would change the role into a part-time stipendiary one. However, special arrangements might be put in place locally within the benefice to show appreciation of the ministry being offered, though care is needed to avoid complications with tax.

#### **5. Duties**

The exact nature of the parish responsibilities and the title by which the priest is known (Vicar/Priest in charge/Parish Priest?) should be agreed locally and be in writing. It is normally expected that 'House for Duty' priests will conduct Sunday services and be available for a minimum of two full days a week (or their equivalent) for general parochial duties, which are likely to include week-day services, meetings and courses, occasional offices and pastoral work. Since there are a number of ways in which a 'House for Duty' ministry is exercised, clarity about expectations is vitally important, particularly when there is a change of priest, as this might mean a very different style of ministry. Parishes need to be willing to adapt their expectations accordingly and the Diocese will seek to offer a helpful educative process to the PCC, the church and the priest to enable this to happen.

#### **6. Holidays**

The priest will have the standard 6 weeks holiday per year, as specified in the Statement of Particulars under Common Tenure, and a couple of extra weekends off, making a total of eight weekends in all. On those eight Sundays the parish will pay for a visiting priest if necessary.

#### **7. Administration**

The Incumbent holds the overall legal responsibility for the administration of the benefice, and any responsibilities delegated to the 'House for Duty' priest will be by local agreement and in writing. Churchwardens are legally accountable to the Incumbent, but that may be delegated by her/him to the 'House for Duty' priest.

#### **8. Diocesan Parish Share**

Parish Share is payable by the benefice as a whole. The calculation of the 'ministry costs' element of Parish Share will reflect the fact that the priest receives no stipend and that no Employers National Insurance or Pension Contribution is payable. However, the cost of housing, other expenses (removal and resettlement grants) and training will be included. It will be up to the parishes in the benefice to decide how to divide Parish Share request and the Diocesan Secretary and the Archdeacon are available to help if a problem arises.

## **9. Role Description**

With the arrival of Common Tenure in early 2011 every priest will need to have a role description, that has been agreed by the Archdeacon (on behalf of the Bishop), the priest concerned, the Incumbent and the PCC(s) concerned. The document should include much of the information in this paper and also specific detail about local expectations, e.g. who chairs the PCC, is the priest expected to be a School Governor, does the priest set the mission strategy etc? Clarity on these matters is extremely important.

The role description will specify that they will be expected to participate in Ministerial Review and have an allowance for ongoing training as part of the Continuing Ministerial Development programme.

## **10. Review**

The 'House for Duty' arrangement will be reviewed when appropriate as part of the Deanery Mission and Pastoral Plan, but definitely 9 months before the current post-holder moves or retires. As circumstances change, so there needs to be the flexibility to consider different ways of delivering the best possible mission and ministry in that parish. If a House for Duty parish grows, flourishes and moves towards financial viability, discussions can take place about a different future arrangement for the provision of mission and ministry. It is acknowledged that ministry on 2 days plus a Sunday are unlikely to turn a church around and that a number of House for Duty priests offer much more time than that of their own free choice and consequently see the benefits.

## **Conclusion**

The 'House for Duty' arrangement is designed to be of mutual benefit to priest and people alike. The Diocese remains extremely grateful for the sacrificial service offered by those who enter into such arrangements.

**Julian Henderson**  
**February 2010**