



FUTURE 
YOUTH 

the ministry
experience scheme

Diocese of Guildford Church Information Pack 2026/2027



Contents

The Ministry Experience Scheme	3
MES & Future Youth Training in the Diocese of Guildford	5
Application process & timeline	7
Placement Costs	9
MES & National Minimum Wage	10
Volunteer Status & National Minimum Wage	12
Voluntary Worker Agreement	13
Writing a Volunteer Agreement	14
Volunteer Worker Agreement Example	15
Discernment	22
Safer Recruitment	23
How to Apply	32

The Ministry Experience Scheme

The **Ministry Experience Scheme (MES)** and the **Future Youth (FY)** stream are gap year opportunities supported by National Church to help those aged 18–29 gain valuable vocational and leadership experience as they serve in a voluntary capacity for a year in a church placement. The aim of the scheme is to help participants test a sense of calling and gifting as they receive some theological training and insights into their sense of vocation. It is a great opportunity for churches to have a young adult grow, learn, and support local church ministries.

Both schemes are run nationally and are delivered locally by dioceses with a small amount of national support. This support includes access to free training and residentials for the participant and **the church will receive a grant of between £750–£3,000 as a contribution to the cost of having a participant.** The schemes run September–July, with registration for church placements to host a participant happening before the end of February, and participant recruitment happening in the spring and before the 17th July 2026.

Central to the MES is the idea that the scheme exists more for people testing a sense of calling rather than it being a source of cheap labour for churches. MES participants, therefore, have a placement that helps them step into a variety of leadership opportunities and test a sense of calling into church ministry. Participants on the MES can have a focus ministry but this should not make up more than 50% of their placement hours. The Future Youth stream works almost identically to the MES, however, it is focused on children's and youth ministry, with participants able to fully specialise in these areas.



MES Continued ...

Both schemes should be cost neutral for participants and as such they should receive a weekly living allowance and accommodation paid for by the hosting church. Alongside accommodation and a living allowance, placements will also need to provide:

- A supervisor and supervision structure
- A mentor
- A participant role description (not a job description)
- A Voluntary Worker Agreement

More information about the national schemes can be found [here](#).



MES & Future Youth Training in the Diocese of Guildford

MES and Future Youth participants are required to undertake training as part of their year. Whilst most of their learning will happen in their church placements, the Diocese provides discipleship, theology, and practical ministry training through our **Foundations in Ministry course (FiM - Mondays, formerly known as 'First Timers')**. Every week, participants gather alongside other leaders in children's and youth ministry to learn and reflect on their practice together.

The first part of the morning draws in the **New Wine Discipleship Year** teaching, before participants engage in the theology and practical ministry training that our FiM course provides. The New Wine Discipleship Year also provides a residential teaching programme, an invitation to the New Wine Leadership Conference, and a 5-day mission trip abroad. We have chosen to add this to the programme as it greatly enhances the community and discipleship elements of the MES and Future Youth schemes for the participants. However, if you would prefer for your participant not to engage in the New Wine residentials, then you can indicate this on your application form.

The dates for these New Wine Discipleship Year residentials are as follows:

- UK Residential: Monday 2nd November – Wednesday 4th November 2026
- NW Leadership Conference: February 2027
- Overseas Residential: Monday 26th April – Friday 30th April 2027
- NW Festival: August 2028

Those joining our scheme receive all of this training, and some vocational sessions, which usually costs just under £2000, **at no cost**.



MES and Future Youth Training in the Diocese of Guildford

Participants also have some requirements to attend conferences and residentials depending on whether they are on MES or Future Youth. These are as follows:

MES:

- Thursday 13th January 2027 - Conference at St Mary's Marylebone

Future Youth:

- November 2026 - Residential 1 at The Hayes Conference Centre, Swanwick, Derbyshire
- Thursday 13th January 2027 - Conference Day at St Mary's Marylebone
- March 2027 - Residential 2 at The Hayes Conference Centre, Swanwick, Derbyshire

Both schemes:

There are also a number of Zoom calls throughout the year for participants to attend with National Church and we will offer 3 sessions supporting participants with exploring their vocation.



Application process & timeline

- 1.** Churches will apply to join the scheme – with participant role description, details of supervision, ministry opportunities at their church, mentoring, accommodation and living allowance – **by 30th February 2026.**
- 2.** Once accepted onto the scheme, churches are required to safely recruit their participants. As such you will need to think about your advertising and recruitment strategy. As administrators of the scheme, we may receive enquiries from potential applicants who we are likely to connect to all of our registered church placements, however, we are not recommending these individuals and cannot guarantee their suitability.
- 3.** Participants will need to be recruited and registered with us **no later than 17th July 2026.** We cannot accept participants onto the scheme until you have completed their safer recruitment, including their DBS check. **It is extremely unlikely that we can accept participants without a completed DBS after this date.**
- 4.** To register a participant, please complete this online form. You will need to provide us with: the participant's name, DOB, DBS number and expiry date, a signed volunteer agreement, and the name and contact details of their supervisor. We need to receive this form by **no later than 17th July 2026.**
- 5.** Churches must then ensure that their participant has applied to the New Wine Discipleship Year (Guildford Hub) using this link: **by 31st July 2026.** This ensures that they are formally registered with New Wine for residentials.

Application process continued ...

6. Churches will set a start date for participants, which should be **no later than Monday 7th September.**

7. Churches must ensure that participants have completed Basic & Foundations Online Safeguarding Training by **Monday 7th September 2026.**

8. FiM-Mondays will begin on **Monday 7th September 2026.**

9. Placement churches will need to ensure ongoing supervision, structured ministry experience, and a local mentor are provided for their participant.

10. We will notify you in September of the amount of grant we can provide. 50% of the grant will be paid in October once the student has completed their start of year survey, and 50% will be paid in July once the student has completed their end of year survey.

We can only give grants to students who stay registered on MES or Future Youth pathways.



Placement Costs

Below is the budget that each church should be looking to set aside for its MES participants. The Diocese will provide £2000 worth of training and give a grant as a contribution to help you cover some of the below costs.

It is a National Church requirement that both schemes are cost-neutral for participants, which means that churches are required to cover expenses and accommodation & food of participants. As a result, we want to make sure there is parity across the diocese for those on the scheme and so churches joining **need to provide a cost of living allowance of £74 per week** for their participants between September and July (for 46 weeks).

Churches may also need to provide accommodation, perhaps with a host family or individual, and you may want to contribute towards the monthly costs of hosting a participant. The amount below is a discretionary cost rather than a requirement. This amount varies due to a number of factors, but is sometimes unclaimed by an accommodation host and comprises part of their annual giving to the ministry of the church. If you would like a template host family agreement and/or model code of conduct form between a host and participant, contact sophie.blake@cofeguildford.org.uk.

You will also need to think about providing IT equipment & subscription costs, providing a church email address, as well as travels expenses to support your participant. Again, these are discretionary costs as you might already have equipment they can use.

The table on the next page highlights some required and discretionary costs for different aspects of the scheme.

Placement Costs

Expense Category	Required cost for church per participant	Discretionary cost for church per participant
Living allowance (£74pw for 46 weeks)	£3404	
Travelling to training and residentials	£550*	
IT costs		£600
Recruitment		£200
Accommodation		(Avg. suggested donation of £280pm to host family) £3080
Total Required Costs	£3954	
Total Required and Discretionary Costs		£7834

MES & National Minimum Wage

We are including this guidance so that your PCC can decide whether or not they want to join up to the scheme having an understanding of the grey area that this scheme operates within. Key to navigating the scheme appropriately is to see the MES participants not as fulfilling a job role, but as volunteering within the parish in a vocational experience gaining capacity. This means that although they may have tasks they should not be treated or relied upon in the same way as an employee.

The National Minimum Wage Act 1998 explicitly allows for the status of 'voluntary worker' who are not entitled to NMW payments. This is covered in section 44 ([here](#)), and reproduced below.

44. Voluntary workers:

- (1) A worker employed by a charity, a voluntary organisation, an associated fund-raising body or a statutory body does not qualify for the national minimum wage in respect of that employment if he receives, and under the terms of his employment (apart from this Act) is entitled to,—*
- (a) no monetary payments of any description, or no monetary payments except in respect of expenses—*
 - (i) actually incurred in the performance of his duties; or*
 - (ii) reasonably estimated as likely to be or to have been so incurred; and*
 - (b) no benefits in kind of any description, or no benefits in kind other than the provision of some or all of his subsistence or of such accommodation as is reasonable in the circumstances of the employment.*



MES and NMW continued ...

[F1(1A)] For the purposes of subsection (1)(a) above, expenses which

—
(a) are incurred in order to enable the worker to perform his duties,
(b) are reasonably so incurred, and
(c) are not accommodation expenses,
are to be regarded as actually incurred in the performance of his duties.]

(2) A person who would satisfy the conditions in subsection (1) above but for receiving monetary payments made solely for the purpose of providing him with means of subsistence shall be taken to satisfy those conditions if—

(a) he is employed to do the work in question as a result of arrangements made between a charity acting in pursuance of its charitable purposes and the body for which the work is done; and
(b) the work is done for a charity, a voluntary organisation, an associated fund-raising body or a statutory body.

(3) For the purposes of subsection (1)(b) above—

(a) any training (other than that which a person necessarily acquires in the course of doing his work) shall be taken to be a benefit in kind; but
(b) there shall be left out of account any training provided for the sole or main purpose of improving the worker's ability to perform the work which he has agreed to do.

"subsistence" means such subsistence as is reasonable in the circumstances of the employment in question, and does not include accommodation;

"voluntary organisation" means a body of persons, or the trustees of a trust, which is established only for charitable purposes (whether or not those purposes are charitable within the meaning of any rule of law), benevolent purposes or philanthropic purposes, but which is not a charity.

Volunteer Status and NMW

Determining status via assessing section 44 criteria is not straightforward and is a grey area open to interpretation. For guidance on this issue (and much more) the HMRC has an extensive online NMW Manual, which is there to provide “technical guidance regarding the entitlement and enforcement of the national minimum wage”.

Key sections in the manual relevant to this issue:

[NMWM04080 - Status: Determining the status of worker](#)

[NMWM05090 - Entitlement to National Minimum Wage: Voluntary workers](#)

It is worth reading these in full.

Other links:

[NMWM04105 - Status: Issues to consider when investigating interns](#)

[NMWM05315 - Entitlement to National Minimum Wage: Interns and Internships](#)

[NMWM05080 - Entitlement to National Minimum Wage: Volunteers](#)

[NMWM04100 - Status: Issues to consider when investigating volunteers](#)

Drawing out particular comments from the manual...

NMWM04080 - Status: Determining the status of worker

The page lists a whole number of issues that can be used to determine status, after doing so, however, it states:



Volunteer Status and NMW

“When determining the status of a person, there is no one single factor that is sufficient to determine whether they should be treated as a worker for national minimum wage purposes. Nor is it a question of simply counting up a range of attributes, but rather it is a question of assessing the position as a whole. It also needs to be considered that the tests should be applied to the real relationship and not necessarily what the parties have agreed verbally or in writing.”

This underlines the ‘grey area’ of determining status although it is clear that simply making statements about someone’s status does not mean anything unless actual working arrangements back up those statements – you may have a brilliantly worded and agreed volunteer agreement someone but if you treat them like a ‘worker’ then they will be entitled to NMW.

NMWM04105 - Status: Issues to consider when investigating interns

For national minimum wage purposes there are no special rules in respect of interns. Depending on the arrangements between the parties an intern can be either:

- A worker
- A voluntary worker
- A volunteer

NMWM05090 - Entitlement to National Minimum Wage: voluntary workers

There is no definition of what constitutes a reasonably estimated expense. Unless only actual costs have been reimbursed, a common-sense judgement should be taken to decide if the payment for expenses would be appropriate and realistically incurred in each individual worker’s employment. This will be particularly important where an employer is paying expenses as “round sum allowances” because there is a risk that some voluntary workers will receive expenses greater than can be realistically incurred.

Writing a Volunteer Agreement

Voluntary Worker Agreement

Following advice from the national church who operate the MES scheme, it is suggested that churches signing up the scheme create a Voluntary Worker Agreement.*

Again, following advice from the National Church, those on your MES should be called **participants**, rather than interns or apprentices, as this creates confusion with other schemes and weakens the voluntary agreement. **Please do not refer to this document as a 'job description' or 'worker contract'**. You can use the terms role and role description but be clear that these things are key elements of the participants role, rather than duties to perform. Again, you are entering into an agreement with expectations; not a contract with obligations. This means things like working hours and annual leave are expectations not contractual obligations or requirements. As a result, talk about problem solving procedures rather than grievance and discipline policies.

*This advice is provided as an example of how an agreement could be created. It does not constitute legal advice and the National Institutions of the Church of England do not adopt any duty of care to any party by its provision.

Adapt the following TEMPLATE as best suits your particular circumstances and scheme



Voluntary Worker Agreement

Parties to this agreement:

Name of parish/diocese:

Name of voluntary worker:

Address:

Contact details:

Name of supervisor:

Name of scheme leader:



Throughout the remainder of this agreement, the voluntary worker shall be referred to as the 'participant'.

Summary of the scheme's aims:

The Guildford Diocese MES is a one year scheme is a one-year voluntary scheme that helps people explore and discern their calling, possibly to ordained or lay ministry in the Church of England. The year includes ministry experience, theological training, community living and vocational discernment.

Summary of participants' aims:

The scheme aims to give participants experience of Christian ministry and leadership, in the context of parish church life, to give them an informed and realistic understanding of that ministry in order to support their own discernment of God's call in their life.

Participants will also be given an opportunity to undertake theological study and training to help them appreciate the knowledge and skills that would be needed for the ministry they are exploring and help them develop their vocation and fulfil the potential of the year.

Voluntary Worker Agreement

Participants are expected to live together in community. Participants will be able to support and encourage one another in their vocation and ministry. Accommodation and a subsistence allowance are therefore provided as an integral part of the Scheme.

Or...

Participants are expected to live in the area where they will serve to gain a better understanding of the environment of ministry. Accommodation and a subsistence allowance are therefore provided as an integral part of the Scheme.

Organisation of the Scheme and Status of Participants

This Agreement is not a contract of employment and is not intended to be. You are not required to participate in the Scheme or to offer your services and may stop volunteering at any time. This Agreement sets out how the Scheme will operate and our expectations of You.

Participants are “voluntary workers”. As a voluntary worker, you offer your services to the PCC/diocese without the PCC/diocese being under any obligation to pay you for your services and the PCC/diocese agrees to use your services as and when required and available. So far as practicable you will do what you have offered to do and at the times that you agree, but both the PCC/diocese and you recognise that you are not under any obligation to work for the PCC at any time or at all and nor is the PCC under any obligation to provide you with any work.

This agreement is intended to explain how the Scheme will operate and to reassure participants that their time on the Scheme will be rewarding. Whilst participants are asked to read this document and sign it, there is no intention to create any contract of employment between the participants and either the PCC/diocese.

Voluntary Worker Agreement

Expenses

Although you will receive no salary, gratuity, or payment in kind, you will be paid a subsistence allowance of £74 per week in recognition of general expenses that are likely to be incurred to ensure a reasonable standard of living.

You will also be able to claim for particular expenses occurred that are associated with travel/ministry costs etc. **Outline how claims are made and who authorises them.**

For the period of time that you are acting as a voluntary worker you will also be provided with accommodation. Should you cease to be a voluntary worker for any reason, you will be provided with notice to leave the accommodation. **Outline how bills and utilities work with regards to payment.**

Key dates:

Outline the following:

- When the scheme begins and ends (September to July).
- What a typical week/month may look like – time in parish/placement, time in theological learning/study, time in community activities.
- How long a typical week will be and the usual periods for day(s) off.
- List any one-off activities that are likely to form part of the year e.g., conferences, retreats.



Voluntary Worker Agreement

The Scheme will provide a range of opportunities for participants to explore ministry with regard to the aims of the placement in which they are placed. These opportunities might include leading worship, preaching and teaching, pastoral work, mission and evangelism, youth work, schools work, social transformation projects, and community engagement with other partners.

Each participant's involvement will depend on the needs of the parish and their gifts for ministry. Participants will be encouraged to develop their own particular strengths and interests, and the intention is for the roles to have some flexibility to allow them to grow and develop around the individual.

Support and Discernment

Describe how participants will be supervised and mentored. Who will do that?

The Diocese will provide free training through its Foundations in Ministry-Mondays programme for MES and FY participants. These happen on Mondays between 10:30 and 2:30 during term times. Alongside this the diocese will also host three Vocational Discernment Seminars and Conversations as part of its provision for MES and FY Participants.

Are there any formal review processes linked with discernment participants need to be aware of?



Voluntary Worker Agreement

Time-off

Remembering that participants are volunteers, describe the expectations for having time-off.

- How many days across the year is expected?
- How many Sundays off are expected?
- Are there key times to try and avoid being off e.g., the build-up to Christmas and Easter?
- How is time-off arranged and agreed?

Leaving the Scheme

Whilst it is envisaged that all participants will complete the Scheme, as a sign of their commitment to the Scheme and to the parish in which they are placed, this agreement is binding in honour only and there is no legal obligation to complete the Scheme.

Should it become necessary for a participant to leave the Scheme early, due to changes in their personal circumstances or otherwise, the participant would be expected to first discuss their decision with their supervisor. It is hoped of course that if anything arises everything will be discussed in a supportive and positive manner.

Standards of Behaviour

Participants are expected to act at all times with due consideration for others and in a manner that reflects the fact they are volunteering for the Church. Clear departures from a high standard of Christian behaviour will be a cause of serious concern and may give cause to terminate participation on the scheme, including, but not limited to, any lawbreaking (including driving offences and the misuse of illegal substances).

Voluntary Worker Agreement

The Scheme/parish/diocese has implemented an Equal Opportunities Policy and does not tolerate discrimination on the grounds of sex, marital status, gender reassignment, race or ethnic origin, religious or philosophical belief, sexual orientation or age.

Problem Solving Procedures

Participants should expect their time on the Scheme to be a positive experience, however, it is acknowledged that from time-to-time problems can arise.

If a participant has a problem or a complaint, in the first instance they should try to discuss the matter with their supervisor. If they are unable to resolve the matter, the Intern should speak to scheme leader. They may be able to help resolve the problem informally, or the participant may be asked to provide further details in writing so the matter can be taken forward on a more formal basis.

Occasionally it may be necessary to investigate a problem and during that time, the participant's involvement in the Scheme may be put on hold. Following investigation, if the matter is resolved the participant will normally resume their participation in the Scheme. Alternatively, there may need to be some discussion about how the problem should be resolved, or participation in the Scheme may end early, in which case they will be told why.

Outline what will happen with regards to accommodation provision and expenses allowance during any investigation period.

Refer to and/or provide the following documents for participants (some of these maybe covered in any induction):

Voluntary Worker Agreement



- Whistle Blowing Data Protection
- Privacy Policy
- Confidentiality
- Health and Safety

Participants are expected to comply with all the policies referred to.

I confirm that I have read the above information regarding my participation in the Scheme. I acknowledged that its terms are binding in honour only and it is not intended to be a legally binding contract and can be cancelled at any time at the discretion of either party.

Signed:

Voluntary Worker (participant):

Print name:

Date

On behalf of the PCC:

Print Name:

Date:

Discernment

Discernment

MES is a year of vocational discernment and so assessing a candidate's desire to discern vocation should form part of the recruitment practice. It is important, however, that any discernment element is **not** wedded to ordination only. This could be detrimental to good candidates and end up excluding people unnecessarily.

The language of discernment can create helpful feedback to candidates – they also need to discern if a scheme is right for them.

The process

It is not uncommon for candidates to already be known to scheme leaders through diocesan or church networks prior to application. It is also common for schemes to be able to offer more placements than they get applications. So, getting on an MES scheme is not usually a competitive process where candidates need to be 'better' than others to be accepted. It is worth thinking through recruitment processes in the light of the above observations which show that MES is somewhat unique to other application/interview situations.

- It is good practice for the recruitment process to be 'friendly' but not 'familiar'.
- It is fine for the process to be 'encouraging' for candidates, but it must also be 'robust'.
- Overall, it is important to be fair and consistent to all candidates.

Schemes are encouraged to make interviews reasonably formal, meaning:

- Using the same framework of questions for all candidates
- Using a scoring system for responses
- Ideally having 3 interviewers for different perspectives

Safer Recruitment

Signing up for the scheme does not guarantee you a participant.

Once approved as a placement, you will be able to start recruitment. Both the National Church and Diocese will be signposting towards the scheme, but **you are responsible for your own recruitment of participants.**

Participants should be safely recruited following the process outlined by the Church of England. Identify who is responsible for overseeing the participant's placement and ensure that they have completed the most recent safer recruitment and people management training.

You must talk with a Diocesan Safeguarding Advisor about the recruitment process, making sure the processes, at all stages, are robust from a safeguarding standpoint. This does not have to be repeated each year, only if recruitment processes, including those involved in running them, change.

The overall process should look as follows. We have provided some suggestions on the following pages for how to advertise and promote the role. Read on for info on:

- Role descriptions
- Person specification
- Advertising and promoting the role
- The application process
- Confidential Declaration Form (CDF)
- Shortlisting applicants
- Interviews
- Pre-appointment checks and DBS



Safer Recruitment

Role Descriptions

Create a role description which outlines the expectations of the role, ensuring that it includes information on:

- To whom the participant will report
- The extent of the role's contact with children, young people and vulnerable adults and the responsibility for safeguarding.
- A statement that the person appointed will be expected to work within the policy and procedures of the relevant safeguarding policy.
- A statement that the person will be required to attend relevant safeguarding training.
- General statements relevant to all roles, such as requirements relating to health and safety.
- The time commitment anticipated (including, for example, setting up, clearing up, preparation during the week, meetings, training).
- Where appropriate, a statement that the person appointed will require an enhanced DBS disclosure (with/without barred list/s check).

Person Specification

Create a person specification and outline:

- Any qualifications or specific training required for the role.
- Any experience needed.
- Knowledge, skills and competencies required to carry out the duties of the role.
- General attributes which must include the need for commitment to the protection and safeguarding of children, young people and vulnerable adults.
- Any Occupational Requirements under the Equality Act 2010 – e.g. for this role there is a genuine requirement for an individual to be a practising Christian.

Safer Recruitment

Advertising the role

Advertisements/notices provide the first impression of a Church body. An important part of this message is to highlight that the Church body is fully committed to safeguarding and protecting the welfare of children, young people and vulnerable adults.

It is therefore good practice to include a statement which confirms the Church body's commitment to safeguarding on all written advertisements/notices., e.g. "[Insert name of Church body] is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, young people and vulnerable adults. All post holders and volunteers are expected to share this commitment."

You should also clearly outline the pre-appointment checks that are required for the role, e.g. "All appointments are subject to acceptable pre-appointment checks, including a satisfactory Enhanced DBS Check".

If a role is being recruited outside of the Church of England Pathways system, there must be a suitable recruitment privacy notice in place.

Where to promote, and how?

Consider:

- What diocesan newsletters and networks can you communicate MES through – general newsletter, CYP ministers, Growing Faith network, etc?
- What diocesan wide events can you communicate through?
- How can you reach senior leaders in the diocese – who can spread the message further to other leaders?
- Can you reach clergy through deanery meetings? These can be a good setting where you can reach several clergy/churches in one go but the meetings are small enough for people to ask questions and find out more detail than a diocesan email would give them.

Safer Recruitment

- What about the cathedral and the events they hold?
- Posters! It might seem a bit dated, but can you get posters about MES up in prominent places – diocesan offices, the cathedral, prominent churches.

How does your website look?

- Describe the vision to invest in people and see them grow.
- Describe what previous participants have gone on to do. Tell their stories.
- What will participants be doing?
- Describe the ministry placement churches and the area.
- Describe the training element of the year.
- Describe any specifics in the programme such as retreats or conferences people will get to attend.
- Be practical. o Talk about the finance and accommodation arrangements. Start and end points of the programme.
- Be clear about how to find out more for anyone wanting to make the next step. Have contact details, maybe downloadable application forms.
- Design your website so that it doesn't go 'out of date' frequently.
- Use national branding, logos and video. Even if a scheme has its own website the diocesan website should also still mention MES on its vocation's pages – and link to the main website.
- Once a good website has been created all other promotion of the scheme can point people towards it as a simple and effective 'next step'



Safer Recruitment

Reaching 18-30 year olds

- Are there any chaplains you can work with to promote MES?
- Have you considered contacting university students through their Christian Union (CU)?
- Contact the UCCF Christian Union (www.uccf.org.uk/christian-unions) or Fusion network (fusionmovement.org). The experience of others shows that building a relationship with UCCF/Fusion is important to build trust. Serving the students (e.g. speaking at the CU) is important, not just trying to leverage the relationship for MES purposes only.
- Have you tried contacting a university's Theology Department? Any final year students might be interested in ministry having finished studies. Can you contact the department directly?
- Are there any non-denominational Bible Colleges your area? They might have final year or part-time students looking for next steps in ministry.
- Often Bible Colleges might run a vocation fair and invite in different Christian organisations to present to students.



Safer Recruitment

Application process

All applicants must be given access to the following information:

The Church body's:

- Statement of its commitment to ensuring the safety and wellbeing of children, young people, and vulnerable adults
- Safeguarding policy
- Safer recruitment policy
- Whistleblowing policy
- Recruitment of ex-offenders policy
- The role description and person specification
- The volunteer agreement
- The selection procedure for the post
- A privacy notice detailing how the applicant's personal data will be processed during the recruitment process.

All application forms must ask for:

- Personal details including current names, former names, date of birth and contact details (home address, email address, telephone number).
- Qualifications, where appropriate/required.
- A personal statement addressing the criteria set out in the person specification, including details of the skills and attributes the applicant believes they bring to the MES
- Full history and description of work with children, young people and/or vulnerable adults, whether paid or voluntary, with dates, and, where applicable, an explanation of any gaps.
- Full history and description of church involvement where it includes work with children, young people and/or vulnerable adults, with dates and, where applicable, an explanation of any gaps.
- A separate Confidential Declaration form
- Request for details of appropriate referees
- A declaration that all information provided on the application form is "true & complete".

Safer Recruitment

Confidential Declaration Form

A Church of England Confidential Declaration form must be completed by all applicants for positions engaging in regulated activity or otherwise working/having substantial contact with children, young people or vulnerable adults which requires an enhanced (with/without barred list) DBS check.

All recruitment documentation must detail the Confidential Declaration requirement for that particular role and the basis on which that requirement is made, so that the applicant is aware from the outset.

If an applicant does not want to complete a Confidential Declaration form then the application process must be terminated.

The Confidential Declaration form must only be viewed by those who need to see it as part of the recruitment & selection process. Church bodies must have an appropriate policy in place to ensure information is reviewed and retained appropriately, in line with current data protection legislation.

Shortlisting Applicants

Shortlisting must be completed by the lead responsible person, and applicants must be shortlisted for interview based on the evidence provided in their application form; usually only those who meet all the essential criteria as defined on the person specification must be shortlisted (even where there is only one applicant).

Application forms must be properly scrutinised and any gaps or queries must be highlighted and marked for further exploration if the applicant is shortlisted and invited to interview.



Safer Recruitment

Interview process

Interviews must be held with a panel of at least two (ideally three), one of whom is the designated responsible person trained in safer recruitment and people management, and should be face-to-face. Wherever possible, interview panel members must not be closely related to the candidate. If this is unavoidable, the conflict of interest must be declared, and arrangements must be made for an additional person to be present.

There are no set interview questions for the MES, however, interviews must explore issues relating to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, young people and vulnerable adults through a combination of questions that encompass the Church body's values and expected behaviours, identifying whether the applicant is suitable to work within these areas. This will include questions that focus on establishing skills, knowledge, qualifications & previous experience.

You can find more guidance on the interview process [here](#) including examples of questions for voluntary roles.

It is very important that should a scheme say 'no' to an applicant that they are able to demonstrate, as objectively, as possible why that decision was made. This is particularly the case in a non-competitive environment as this will mean that it was decided a candidate was not suitable for MES rather than others being more suitable. Why were they not suitable? It can't just be based on a feeling they wouldn't quite 'fit'.

Aiming objectivity will also help not give a 'yes' to someone simply because a scheme still has placement to fill if they are not suitable. This can be a pressure as everyone involved is keen to make use of the placement opportunity and would love to have an MES participant but recruiting an unsuitable candidate is not helpful.

Safer Recruitment

Pre-appointment checks & DBS

All applicants must be able to provide proof of identity, and all pre-appointment checks must be confirmed in writing, scrutinised to ensure authenticity, documented and recorded, and followed up if they are unsatisfactory or if there are any discrepancies in the information received.

Schemes must collect at least two references (of over 18s) after an offer has been made to a candidate – with the offer conditional on satisfactory references as a safeguard to verify the legitimacy of the candidate.

Taking up references prior to interview increases the risk of prejudicing the recruitment process. A reference that conveys any areas of weakness in a candidate who you have not yet met can paint an unfair picture. This advice has been given by the NCIs HR department; if a scheme wishes to do things differently, they are strongly advised to check with their diocesan HR department first.

It is important to receive written references, to maintain good transparency of the recruitment process and decision making. Verbal follow-up to a written references can be very useful and is encouraged, given MES is somewhat unique (a volunteer role, not a job, and generally candidates are not competing with each other for places). The additional information on a candidate can be useful to prepare for them well (not to base offer decisions on). Dated notes on any verbally gathered information should be made.

Please ensure that you read and follow the instruction for DBS and identity checks detailed on the Church of England safer recruitment website.

You will then need to provide a satisfactory induction for your participant, ensuring that they also complete their Basic and Foundation safeguarding training.

How to Apply

Applications to become a MES placement should be made using this [link](#).

The process is fairly straightforward and we are requesting the information so that we can add the correct information to the national register of placements. We have space for up to 10 MES/Future Youth Students this year and we will be reviewing applications from churches as we receive them.

The formal closing date for applications will be 30th February 2026, however, we are able to accept applications after this date if you get in touch with us.

How will grants be assigned

Grants will be assigned on a financial needs basis, but all churches should receive at least £750 towards the scheme alongside free training and vocational support for MES Students.

The main contact and coordinator for the Diocese of Guildford's MES will be the Youth Catalyst Project Coordinator, Sophie Blake who can be contacted at sophie.blake@cofeguildford.org.uk with any questions.

