



THE DIOCESE OF **SHEFFIELD**

Appointing a new Oversight Minister

A GUIDE FOR CHURCHWARDENS AND PCCs

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1. Introduction

1.1 Vacancies in the Diocese of Sheffield

A vacancy brings challenges and uncertainty, but it can also be a time of opportunities: an opportunity for lay leadership to grow and to explore the ministry of each member in the life of the church; an opportunity to discern prayerfully God's particular call to the church at this time; and an opportunity to reflect on the kind of person the parish needs to provide the oversight, leadership and support required for the church to fulfil its mission and ministry. A vacancy can be a valuable and fruitful time for new imagination and strategic thinking about opportunities for growth and development.

In recent years the Diocese of Sheffield has been responding to the need to reshape its patterns of ministry and deployment of a reduced number of stipendiary clergy. Parishes now belong to Mission Areas; each Mission Area has been allocated a number of stipendiary clergy deployed as Oversight Ministers. Your previous incumbent may have been an Oversight Minister, in which case you will have some experience of this, or it may be that this will be the first time that you will be looking for an Oversight Minister. In any event, as you think about the needs of your parish during the vacancy and beyond, you are encouraged to also consider the perspective of the Mission Area to which your parish belongs.

The aim of this booklet is to help you, your parish and the other parishes of the Mission Area to understand and navigate your way through this process. There are also people who can answer questions and provide support during the process, including your Area Dean, Archdeacon, Associate Archdeacon-Transition Enabler (AATE), and the Bishop's Chaplain.

The vision of the Diocese of Sheffield remains as follows:

The Diocese of Sheffield is called to grow a sustainable network of Christ-like, lively and diverse Christian communities in every place which are effective in making disciples and in seeking to transform our society and God's world.

We seek to do this via the diocesan strategy, summarised as

Renewed, Released, Rejuvenated

Renewed – maintaining as a first priority a real reliance on the Spirit of God in prayer and worship and in the consecration of our lives, as individuals and communities.

Released – where they have become burdensome, from the constraints of administration, compliance, inherited structures and buildings; and liberating the untapped potential of individual disciples and whole congregations, so that the whole people of God are mobilised for the whole mission of God.

Rejuvenated – growing the church younger and more diverse, and planting new congregations.

1.2 A note on terminology

Your previous minister may have been a Vicar or a Rector (an incumbent), or a Priest-in-Charge. In this guide, the term ‘Oversight Minister’ is used to cover all such leadership roles (which are usually, though not always, stipendiary).

1.3 Diversity

The Diocese of Sheffield is consciously seeking to build diverse Christian communities, reflecting the social diversity of the communities we serve and the theological diversity of our parishes. To do this we seek to foster diversity amongst our ordained and lay ministers. Your parish is encouraged to consider how under a new ministry you may be able to plant a new congregation to reach age or social groups who currently don’t connect with your traditional parish life.

If your parish has an agreed theological position that (whilst valuing human diversity) sees humanity represented in Christ through a male-only priesthood, there are legal processes to ensure that such conscience is respected and that we flourish mutually in a diverse diocese. If this applies to you, this should be considered as early as possible. The Archdeacon (or AATE) and Area Dean will be able to explain the procedure and work with you on this.

2. Preparing to appoint a new Oversight Minister

The appointment of a new Oversight Minister (and other clergy or lay appointments in a church) is different from a secular recruitment process. In particular, it is about discerning God’s call and seeking God’s

provision. It is therefore essential that the whole process is grounded and surrounded in prayer. A vacancy would be a good time to introduce and use the Diocesan Vision Prayer (it may already be established in your parish's liturgy and prayer life):

**Living God,
Jesus calls his followers to seek first your Kingdom.
Renew us as we make your love known;
Release us to share freely together in mission; and
Rejuvenate us to be fruitful in your service.
Give us courage, wisdom and compassion,
that, strengthened with the grace of the Holy Spirit,
we may as the diocese of Sheffield both flourish and
grow,
through Christ our Lord. Amen.**

Use this prayer each week in your Sunday worship. Encourage as many as possible in your congregation to sign up (via the diocesan website) to the Diocesan Prayer Community of people who commit to pray this prayer, along with the Lord's Prayer, and to read at least one verse of Scripture each day. In this way, together, we will be renewed in our discipleship and grow in fruitful mission and faithful service.

Your Archdeacon (or AATE) and Area Dean will consult with you as early as possible in the vacancy to help your parish consider the needs of both the parish and the Mission Area, and how this informs the kind of Oversight Minister you are looking to find. Particularly if this is the first time you're looking for an Oversight Minister, these may be some of the key issues to consider:

- How your parish fits into the Mission Area; what are your church's particular needs and strengths?
- How are lay people already involved in your parish's mission and ministry? Do you have any Focal Ministers/Leaders? How does your church identify, train and release lay ministries?
- Whether your parish (and the other parishes in the Mission Area) would benefit from a period of interim ministry (for an initial three years), if there are specific things that need to change in order to prepare the way for a longer-term appointment.
- Where your Oversight Minister will live – in your parish, or elsewhere in the Mission Area?

Your Archdeacon (or AATE) and Area Dean will lead this process of consultation on behalf of (and in close liaison with) the Bishops. There will be conversations with the PCC, the Bishop's Staff, and, if necessary, with the Deanery and Diocesan Mission and Pastoral Committees. These conversations will help the Bishop and Patron(s) decide how ministry in your parish should be resourced in the context of your local Mission Area. This process will help in determining the gifts and abilities to be sought in a candidate.

3. Identifying the new Oversight Minister

3.1 The process for appointing an Oversight Minister

Once a vacancy has been declared, the Bishop will state whether they are content for a process leading to the licensing of a new Oversight Minister. In many cases where an Oversight Minister is to have oversight of more than one parish, it is likely that the 'patron's right of presentation' has been suspended (see appendix for an explanation of what this means), and the Oversight Minister will be licensed as 'priest in charge'. Whether the right of presentation has been suspended or not, the following process will be followed more or less the same in both situations.

3.2 Meetings and process prior to recruitment and/or advertising

	Meeting name	What for?	When?
1	Pre-Vacancy Meeting (sometimes called a pre-Section 11 Meeting)	The PCC meets with the Archdeacon (or AATE). This is an informal meeting to discuss the process. At this meeting you will learn more of how the vacancy works, and how to begin work on the Parish Profile (which should happen as soon as possible). The meeting could suggest likely candidates to become the parish reps, and set the date of the Vacancy Meeting (sometimes called a section 11 meeting). The pre-vacancy meeting could happen before the vacancy has begun (although, of course, the minister who is leaving should <i>not</i> be at this	As soon as it is known that there will be a vacancy, and while the current minister is still in post, it is possible to have a Pre-Vacancy meeting. If the parish is not suspended there is a timeframe on when things need to be done by, so an early

		meeting of the PCC). It is good if the date of the next meeting, the vacancy meeting, can be set and secured in diaries as soon as possible.	Pre-Vacancy might help.
2	Vacancy Meeting (sometimes known as a Section 11 meeting)	<p>This is a meeting of the PCC. The patron is not allowed to be present, but the PCC can ask for the Archdeacon or AATE to be there (providing the Archdeacon is not representing the bishop who is patron)</p> <p>This meeting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • appoints the Parish Representatives (two members of the PCC who act on behalf of the PCC throughout the process) • signs off the Parish Profile or the process by which the profile will be drafted • Agrees a Person Specification which outlines essential and desirable qualities, qualifications and gifts needed for the job • Agree certain sections of a Role Description which summarises the expectations of the Bishop, diocese and parish and sets out the priorities for the post • Requests a Section 12 meeting if the PCC considers it is required (this is not compulsory) <p><i>It is possible to have more than one meeting to agree all the above in which case it is formally minuted at the final meeting of the PCC</i></p>	As soon as possible after the vacancy date and <i>within six months</i> of that date. (If the patron's rights have been suspended, this timeframe is not applicable).
3	(Optional) Joint meeting (sometimes called	This is a meeting between the PCC and either the patron or the Bishop (or Bishop's representative) or both. Any of those three parties can call a joint meeting. It is to discuss the Parish	Sometime after Section 11 meeting and within six months of receiving notice

	Section 12 meeting	Profile. Parishes rarely ask for a joint meeting.	of vacancy (again, not applicable if the patron's rights have been suspended)
4	Advertise	Once the parish profile is complete then advertising the role can begin. The manner in which it is advertised will vary – the Archdeacon (or AATE) will advise.	

NB: As alluded to above, if the right of the patrons to present a candidate has been suspended, then the process will follow a very similar pattern to that which process which happens if the right of presentation has *not* been suspended.

3.3 The interview

One of our bishops will always hold a one-to-one conversation with the shortlisted candidates prior to the panel interview. He/she will feedback to their representative (usually the archdeacon or an AATE) their impressions on the shortlisted candidates. In very rare cases the bishop may exercise his/her right to eliminate a candidate from the interview process.

It is usual for shortlisted candidates to meet with the Parish Reps and to be given a tour of the parish, the church and the vicarage. There may be a social gathering to give key members of the parish and Mission Area the opportunity to meet the candidates informally. This is not part of the interview, but can still be an important 'getting to know you' time for both the parish and the candidates. The candidates will be invited to bring along their spouse or civil partner to this part of the day. It is important for both the candidate and the parish to understand that this is informal but a key part of the mutual discernment, and everyone involved (especially those who meet the candidates but are not part of the Interview Panel) needs to maintain complete confidentiality about the candidates' identity, both now and after the process has been completed.

The purpose of the formal parish interview is two-fold: to help candidates discern whether this is the right post for them; and to assist the Interview Panel in determining the most suitable candidate to recommend to the Bishop (and Patron). To that end, the interview will follow this format:

- Interviews will commence promptly and end punctually.
- The interview will open and close in prayer, led by the Archdeacon or other designated panel member.
- Each candidate will then give a short presentation or preach a short sermon (they will have been asked to prepare this when invited to interview), as an opportunity to demonstrate their communication skills and relevant experience.
- The Interview Panel will ask a series of questions which have been previously agreed by them and circulated by the Archdeacon (or AATE). In the interests of fairness these should be the same for each candidate.
- The members of the Interview Panel will be provided with a 'score sheet' to help them record the candidates' answers and their impressions of the candidate
- Inappropriate questions are not permitted (e.g. proposed length of stay, level of spouse involvement etc.)

3.4 After the interview

Once all the interviews have been conducted, the Panel will stay on to review each candidate in terms of character, skills, knowledge, communication, presentation and overall 'fit' for the role. If possible, the Panel will agree one preferred candidate.

The Archdeacon will inform the Bishop (and Patron if they have not attended the interviews) and will endeavour to contact the preferred candidate on the same day. The Archdeacon will also contact the other candidates and offer to provide feedback (which can be given either immediately or after a day or two for coming to terms with any disappointment).

It is vital to ensure that all members of the Interview Panel understand that complete confidentiality continues to be observed until such time as an announcement can be made. 'Leaks' are not fair to anyone, and have been known to lead to candidates withdrawing their acceptance of a post.

The announcement can only be made when directed to do so by the Bishop through the bishop's chaplain, who will also coordinate the required DBS process and liaison with the candidate's current diocese. It is made on the same Sunday in all parishes concerned – those which the candidate is leaving, and those to which they are coming.

APPENDIX – Suspension of the right of presentation

It is the Patron of the parish who has the right to present a candidate to be its incumbent. The Patron may be an individual, an organisation (e.g. CPAS, Simeon's Trustees, etc) or the Diocesan Bishop). If you don't know who the Patron of your parish is, the Bishop's Chaplain should be able to tell you.

It is permitted for the Bishop, after consultation with the PCC of the parish, the Deanery Synod Lay Chair, Area Dean and the DMPC (Diocesan Mission and Pastoral Committee), to suspend a Patron's right of presentation if it is deemed necessary for the purposes of pastoral reorganisation or other major strategic change. The consultation is just that – the Bishop does not have to follow the advice or wishes of any of those consulted: although they normally would.

Where the right of presentation has NOT been suspended, the process for appointing a new incumbent is governed by legislation – there is a statutory process to follow, including meetings usually known by the sections of the legislation that apply (e.g. section 11 or section 12 meetings). These have been mentioned above. In this instance the Bishop's Chaplain will be in touch with the necessary forms.

Where the right of presentation HAS been suspended, strictly speaking these legal formalities no longer have to be followed. However, it is our practice to follow the same process steps and to involve the Patron as fully as possible. The Patron offers a supportive presence to the parish at such times, and their input can enable parishes to face challenging issues and make informed decisions. The Archdeacon or AATE will explain this further to the PCC as required in such cases.