

Questions to Diocesan Synod – 8 March 2025

	From	Question	Response
1.	The Reverend Beth Keith Hallam Deanery	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The number of concerns raised by female clergy regarding harassment, inappropriate touching, or assault by male clergy. 2. The number of these concerns that have been formally lodged as complaints. 3. The number of complaints that have led to any form of action. 4. The number of female clergy who have made allegations and were subsequently encouraged to take time off, move to a different deanery, or leave the Diocese. 5. The number of concerns or complaints that have resulted in disciplinary action. 6. The number of Non-Disclosure Agreements (NDAs) that have been agreed upon in such cases. 7. Whether any clergy who have had allegations made against them have received financial settlements as part of their departure from the Diocese. 8. Whether any clergy who have made allegations have received financial settlements. 	<p><i>Response from Harry Steele, Bishop's Chaplain:</i></p> <p>This is a very important question and I am grateful to Beth for asking it: it is important that the Diocese of Sheffield is willing to reflect on its past – including some very distressing cases – and seek to improve on robust process as we seek to do all that is in our power to ensure that the parishes of the diocese are a safe place for all. This question could relate in part to safeguarding as well as dignity at work: I am grateful to Leo Colson, the Diocesan HR manager, and Revd Amanda Barraclough for the work they have undertaken, still in progress but nearing completion, on a new and vigorous Dignity at Work policy for the Diocese. Notably, this includes the selection and training of Anti-Harassment Advisors who will have an important role in this regard. I also remain grateful for the ongoing work of our safeguarding team and the fact that that already highly competent team is always developing and growing in wisdom and competence.</p> <p>The questions that have been asked are hard to answer for two reasons. Firstly, because of how the term 'harassment' should be understood – in its widest or more narrow understanding. Secondly, the answers are hard because of the period of time involved. The record of reported events of harassment, inappropriate touch, and/or assault by clergy are complete, and I am confident that if a member of clergy with a substantiated allegation of this nature made against them were to seek a licence or authorisation in another diocese, or sought to obtain a new licence or authorisation in the Diocese of Sheffield, that substantiated allegation would be reviewed and assessed appropriately before any action was taken. However, there is not an easily accessible list of such occurrences that can be consulted and reported on in a way that would be helpful to answer these questions. There is, of course, a confidential national list of</p>

			<p>serious incidents of this nature that have resulted in action being taken against a Clerk in Holy Orders such as a limited prohibition, prohibition, removal from office, deprived, disqualified, etc.</p> <p>My pointing out the difficulty in answering the questions is not an attempt to not answer them fully or to the best of my ability. I have tried to do that despite these difficulties.</p> <p>The answers below contain one instance where I have taken a wider understanding of the term 'harassment': this is reflected in all the answers but especially the answer to 6 and 7 where, if a narrower view were taken the answer to both would be 'zero'.</p> <p>Finally, before I answer the questions, it should be noted that the questions relate to such instances perpetrated by male clergy against female clergy. The numbers below would be greater if the question were also to include such instances against lay members of the Church, or indeed perhaps instances of harassment by laity toward female clergy</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 4 2. 4 3. 4 4. 1 person did move to a different diocese. It looks as if this were their own decision, although perhaps inevitable that they would have to. 5. 4 6. 1 – it was not technically a non-disclosure agreement, but a settlement agreement in which all parties agreed to observe certain confidentiality. 7. Yes – 1 8. No
2	The Reverend Stephen Gardner, Adwick le Street Deanery	Does the Chair of the Board of Finance agree that the proposed 10.7% rise in Clergy Stipends is not generous beneficence but simply returns the value of the clergy stipend, lost due to inflation, to its effective value in 2019 and if so,	<p><i>Response from Canon Ian Walker, Chair of the DBF</i></p> <p>Unfortunately the DBF has relatively little capacity to deliver what is requested here in terms of future commitments, because the value of the new National Standard Stipend will be determined centrally.</p>

can the chair tell us what steps the Diocesan Board of Finance will be taking to ensure that the stipend isn't allowed to decrease in value over the next 6 years in the same way that has been allowed and enacted by the Board over the last 6 years!

However, I am delighted to say that the intended effect of the proposed 10.7% increase in clergy stipends is that stipends, in inflation adjusted terms, will be as they were in 2011. It is also excellent news that the stipend will now be standard across the country.

I stated in Synod on 30th November that in the past we benchmarked our stipends with other dioceses to ensure that we were able to attract clergy and that furthermore we would look at stipend levels again when more funds became available. Katie Bell then pointed out to Synod that a national review was underway that may impact decisions moving forward.

It is wonderful to hear that additional funds have been made available to Sheffield DBF to, at least on a transitional basis, fund these increases.

It is important though for Synod to be aware of a couple of matters in this regard:

Firstly, in the past we have paid above the National Minimum Stipend ("NMS") recommended by General Synod for clergy of incumbent status and at the NMS level for curate status clergy. The new recommendations are for dioceses to adopt a National Standard Benchmark ("NSB") for clergy of incumbent status and the NMS for curate status clergy. The NSB and NMS will be determined centrally with the intention that they track the CPIH inflation measure.

Secondly although over the last few years, the value of stipends, like many other people's incomes, has not kept up with inflation during the cost of living crisis, the DBF's receipts of Common Fund, the principal source of funds to pay for stipends, have fallen by almost half (48%) in real terms since 2011. This, coupled with the fact that the national support to Sheffield to increase stipends is for a limited period only means we need to not lose sight of the fact that, for our

			sustainability, we need to pray for growth in our churches and our churches' giving.
3	The Reverend Malcolm Liles, Attercliffe Deanery	From the Annual Returns for the past 3 years can we be told now many services have been led by clergy with PTO?	<p><i>Response from the Reverend Harry Steele, Bishop's Chaplain</i></p> <p>This is not easy to ascertain as the PTO ministerial forms are returned in two formats: some are emailed as pdf or word documents whereas others are paper copies that are posted. If they were returned as an online form then it would likely be easy to get this data - I am not convinced it would be simple to collect them as an online form.</p> <p>As it is, it would require going through over 50 forms per year and assessing the data to come up with the figure you have asked for . This is obviously not impossible but would take some considerable hours of work.</p>
4	The Reverend Malcolm Liles, Attercliffe Deanery	Will the reduction in funding for Racial Justice work by the Archbishops Council affect this work in our own diocese?	<p><i>Response from Bishop Pete:</i></p> <p>As Bishop Sarah was at pains to convey at General Synod, the apparent reduction in funding is more perceived than real; and in any case, the answer to the question is No.</p>
5	The Reverend Malcolm Liles, Attercliffe Deanery	I understand that the House of Bishops will again be discussing LLF at its meeting in October, and that some dioceses such as Oxford have been consulted on progress so far. However, there is no consultation in our papers for this meeting. How can the clergy and laity of this diocese convey their current views to that meeting by other than a consultation?	<p><i>Response from Bishop Pete:</i></p> <p>Materials were circulated in April for formal consultation by Diocesan Synods, but they included proposals for a particular form of delegated episcopal ministry, calibrated to permit bespoke PLF services. It became clear in May that these proposals did not carry the support of the House of Bishops. Different Dioceses have responded to this in different ways. Just 18 Dioceses have gone ahead with some form of consultation (1 of which approved a motion from the floor at the very start of the item to move to next business). The majority of Dioceses have taken my view, that the time to engage Synods in consultation is when we have a firm proposal on the table to consult over. The most recent advice from the LLF Programme Board was as follows: When the diocesan consultations were first planned, the Programme Team were confident that the suggested framework for discussions would</p>

			<p>provide helpful insights. Responses from some dioceses that have already held their informal consultation identified challenges in holding these consistently enough to provide the type of feedback required. Some dioceses who were due to hold their consultations before the summer have now decided to postpone these to a later date. Other dioceses are opting to hold conversations around LLF in Synods without the detailed consultation and feedback. The Programme Board recognises that different dioceses will take different approaches and that some dioceses may choose to pause holding these.</p>
6	The Reverend Malcolm Liles, Attercliffe Deanery	<p>In the penultimate paragraph of the Safeguarding report submitted to the April Diocesan Synod it states "The safeguarding team have reviewed the advice around the leadership course and PTO version. Where did that advice come from? I have been in touch with HR at Church House Westminster and they do not know of any advice to the effect that clergy with PTO should be limited to 5 services a year if using the PTO pathway. I have not heard of any other diocese implementing this either.</p>	<p><i>Response from the Reverend Harry Steele, Bishop's Chaplain and acting Safeguarding Lead</i></p> <p>The Church of England has guidance on the core safeguarding pathways that can be accessed here:</p> <p>https://www.churchofengland.org/safeguarding/safeguarding-e-manual/safeguarding-learning-and-development-framework/section-3-core-safeguarding-pathways</p> <p>In that document the required attendees on Leadership training are,</p> <p>'All clergy holding the bishop's licence, commission, authorisation, or permission (including PTO where exemption has not been given) including Honorary/Assistant Bishops and Chaplains.</p> <p>The document 'Practice Guidance: Safer Recruitment - Permission to Officiate' specifies:</p> <p>'For those holding PTO, the bishop granting permission should determine the level of training required in consultation with the DSA: for those who will be in active ministry, C3 is the required module; for those who will only rarely be engaged in ministry it may be more appropriate for C1 to be completed.</p> <p>The House of Bishops' Training and Development Practice Guidance (2017) states at 3.4 that: There may be some extenuating</p>

		<p>circumstances in which bishops may wish to exercise a degree of discretion in implementing the requirements for training, for example with clergy who because of infirmity never exercise their PTO. The Bishop should seek the advice of the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser prior to giving discretion. If the PTO is being exercised – no matter how limited the circumstances – there remains a requirement for training, but it may be that C1 is a more appropriate level than C3. Where such discretion is exercised, the bishop should record it in the blue file of any clergyperson or the appropriate record of lay ministers.</p> <p>This should only be used in exceptional circumstances. Any exemption from any training must be recorded in the Blue File and monitored.'</p> <p>It is noted that this document uses terms for the different levels of training that have now been superseded.</p> <p>The consultation with the DSA, diocesan safeguarding trainer, and bishop has taken place. It seems logical to assume that in an act of public worship that is led by someone who has the bishop's Permission to Officiate, and in the very likely event that they are the only ordained person there, and that they are wearing some sort of robes and/or clergy collar because they are leading the act of worship, that a member of the public would assume that that clergy person has the full authority of a Clerk in Holy Orders (which they do) and they are therefore a 'leader' who should be able to respond fully to safeguarding needs if they should arise in the moment. Therefore, they are to undertake the Leadership safeguarding module and have completed Basic and Foundation training. They will also need to have completed the training, 'Raising Awareness of Domestic Abuse'.</p> <p>Following the spirit of the guidance quoted above, it is recognised that some priests wish to maintain Permission to Officiate as it is important to them that they could function as a priest even if, because of age or other factors, they do not do so. Furthermore,</p>
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7.	Mr Pete Sandford, Ecclesall Deanery	The Diocesan Strategy 2025-31 proclaims a "commitment to social justice through ... equipping our people to speak out against	<p><i>Response from Alex Shilkoff, Strategic Programme Director</i></p> <p>This question appears to broadly be about social justice. Many of our churches are of course already engaged in various aspects of social</p>

		<p>prejudice and connect with their communities".</p> <p>Whilst acknowledging the commitment to resourcing and actions against racial prejudice, what specific resources and actions will be allocated, when, and by whom with particular reference to the increased prejudice faced a) by LGBTQIA+ people following the recent Supreme Court ruling on gender (especially Trans people) and b) to Disabled people in the context of the Leader of His Majesty's Loyal Opposition casting doubt on the genuineness of disability?</p>	<p>justice work in their communities and more widely. In the recent SMMIB award we have secured funding for a paid role to support the Board of Faith & Justice in developing their programme of work and supporting social justice more broadly across the Diocese. The Job Description for this role will be developed in the autumn as part of the delivery of the refreshed strategy which is newly in place.</p> <p>In terms of direct training Revd Anesia Cook has adapted some of our established unconscious bias training and some equality diversity and inclusion training produced by the Methodist church to be delivered across the Diocese. This has been introduced as the next step on from the unconscious bias training which has been completed by hundreds of people across the Diocese since 2020. This new training is felt to be a positive development as it is broad, not only covering racial justice, but also more tailored to a church context with theological underpinning. This training has been trialled with St John's Owlerton PCC and the feedback was extremely positive. Consideration is being given as to how to roll this out with more trainers than just Anesia.</p> <p>The Bishop also has an LGBT+ Adviser and a Disability Adviser to ensure that experiences of these communities are given suitable awareness at a senior level.</p> <p>A well-known factor in breaking down prejudice is folks getting to know people who are different to them. At Deanery level how could different people getting to know each other be facilitated? It is possible to initiate somethings centrally, but local connections are often the most powerful.</p>
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