



THE DIOCESE OF
SHEFFIELD

**SHEFFIELD DIOCESAN BOARD
OF FINANCE LTD**

**INFORMATION
TO HELP
OCCUPANTS OF
PARSONAGE
AND OTHER
DIOCESAN PROPERTIES**

*As from 1 November 2021
Revision B*

INTRODUCTION

The following information is intended to inform and assist clergy and lay people living in parsonages and other properties in the Diocese of Sheffield.

This document is not intended to be comprehensive as the Sheffield Diocesan Board of Finance ("SDBF") is continually reviewing policy, and individual situations may sometimes require special consideration.

The stewardship of housing is a partnership between the occupant, the SDBF and the Parochial Church Council ("PCC"). The staff members at the Diocesan offices are always happy to answer questions about the care and upkeep of these properties, and are eager to be helpful. Please feel free to contact the Property Team at:

Property Team
Church House
95-99 Effingham Street
Rotherham
S65 1BL

(T) 01709 309100
(E) property@sheffield.anglican.org

Contents

PREAMBLE	7
Your Rights & Duties.....	7
Diocesan Policy and Objectives.....	7
Your Obligations.....	7
THE GUIDELINES.....	9
ADMINISTRATION.....	10
The Property Portfolio.....	10
The Finance and Property Committee.....	10
The Archdeacons.....	10
FINANCIAL FRAMEWORK.....	12
Budget.....	12
Contractors.....	12
Council Tax.....	13
Damage.....	13
Internal Decoration Grants.....	14
Insurance.....	14
Repairs: External.....	14
Repairs: Internal.....	14
Water Rates.....	15
LEGAL FRAMEWORK.....	16
Quinquennial Inspection.....	16
Alterations.....	16
Green Guide.....	16
Lettings and Lodgers.....	16
Party Wall, etc. Act 1996.....	17
Listed Buildings.....	18
FROM MOVING IN TO MOVING OUT.....	19
Acceptance of an Appointment.....	19
Prior to Moving In.....	19
Keys.....	19
Adaptations for the Disabled.....	19
Fixtures.....	20
Pets.....	20
Meter Readings.....	21
Self-Financed Improvements.....	21
PCC-Financed Improvements.....	21
USE OF THE HOUSE.....	25
Policy Statement on Clergy and parish offices.....	25
Study Policy.....	25
<i>Guidance Note</i>	26
Reception Rooms.....	28

<i>Guidance Note</i>	28
Insurance	28
GENERAL GUIDANCE (PROPERTY)	30
Air Bricks and Damp Courses.....	30
Asbestos.....	30
Chimneys and Flues.....	30
Condensation	30
Decorations – External	31
Decorations – Internal.....	31
Drains.....	32
Fixtures and Fittings.....	33
Flooding.....	33
Floor Coverings	33
Gutters, Downpipes and Water Butts.....	34
Insulation.....	34
Loft Ladders.....	34
Overflow Pipes.....	34
Pest Control	35
Replacement Windows.....	35
Security.....	35
GENERAL GUIDANCE (GROUNDS).....	36
Boundaries.....	36
Driveways.....	36
Fishponds.....	36
Gardens.....	36
Hedges.....	36
Japanese Knotweed.....	36
Lighting.....	37
Sheds and Greenhouses.....	37
Trees.....	37
MECHANICAL AND ELECTRICAL SERVICES.....	39
Alarm Systems.....	39
Boilers	39
Built-in appliances.....	39
Electrical Installations	40
Gas Installation	40
Heating	41
Secondary Heating.....	41
Private Sewage Installations.....	42
Septic Tanks & Cess Pits.....	42
Showers.....	42
WHAT THE DIOCESE DOES NOT PROVIDE.....	44
Carpets.....	44

Cookers.....	44
Cleaning.....	44
Curtains.....	45
Telephones.....	45
Television.....	45
EMERGENCY CALL OUT.....	47
APPENDIX 1: A CHECKLIST OF HELP.....	48
Appendix 2: Asbestos.....	50
APPENDIX 3: CARBON MONOXIDE POISONING.....	52
Appendix 4: Instructions to Churchwardens During Vacancies.....	56

AMENDED:

21/04/2021 Regarding payment of water rates

11/04/2023 Regarding provision of carbon monoxide alarms

01/05/2026 Update regarding names and decoration and heating advice

PREAMBLE

This section of the document sets out the terms on which, subject to the general provisions of the law, you will occupy your home, whether freehold or a license agreement. The remainder of these guidelines are written to help you understand the context and framework within which these rights and the diocesan policy and objectives are framed.

Your Rights & Duties

If you have the freehold or are under Common Tenure you have certain rights and duties in respect of the parsonage house and the land on which it stands. Some of these for example are set out in the Repair of Benefice Buildings Measure 1972 which includes the following general statement: *'The incumbent shall have a duty to take proper care of a parsonage house, being a duty equivalent to that of a tenant to use premises in a tenant-like manner.'*

If you hold a Licence to occupy then your rights of occupancy will be framed within the same terms as if you were an Incumbent.

Diocesan Policy and Objectives

The diocesan policy in relation to parsonage houses and other houses ("Property") is set out in detail in this document.

The diocesan property team ("Property Team") based at Church House are ready to help with any queries that you may have about your Property. During your occupancy, the team will be responsible for ensuring that the Property is kept in repair, is wind and water tight, and that the essential services – water, power, drainage, sewage, and heating are maintained. The team may also be responsible for any trees in the garden although this may depend on the size and type.

Your Obligations

Your obligations as occupant include the following:

- To inform the Property Team if there is any damage or defect requiring the team's attention.
- To be responsible for fruit trees, shrubs etc. in the garden.
- To keep the garden in reasonably good order, and not allow rubbish etc. to collect in the grounds.
- Not to make or allow any alterations to the property which have not been authorised by the Property Team, including modifications to the essential service installations.

- To consult the Diocesan Surveyor and Archdeacon if you intend to take in a lodger who is not a member of your immediate family.
- To vacate the property on leaving office and leave it in a clean and tidy state. (Please note that the SDBF has the right to recover from you the cost of repairing any damage caused during your occupancy and cleaning the property.)
- Please contact members of the Property Team or your Archdeacon if you have any queries or encounter any difficulties at any time. We want to do all that we can to enable you to be comfortable and feel secure in your new home.

THE GUIDELINES

ADMINISTRATION

The Property Portfolio

The Diocese of Sheffield covers an area of 580 square miles. There are nearly 170 parishes which are organised into two archdeaconries. There are around 160 houses that the SDBF is responsible for.

The Diocesan Estates also include a property portfolio in the form of glebe land.

The SDBF, through its officers, is committed to enhancing the service it offers to those who live in its properties and to the custodianship and husbandry of its property and land assets.

The Finance & Property Committee

The Finance and Property Committee ("F&PC") has directly devolved responsibilities from the SDBF for property matters with the following objectives:

To ensure that property is used and managed effectively as a support to the mission and ministry of the Church and allow the clergy and parishes to be renewed, released and rejuvenated.

To provide houses which are of a satisfactory standard, and which are maintained and, where necessary, improved in a manner that is timely and consistent with good value for money.

To recognise the impact on diocesan clergy, their families and other occupants of timely maintenance and repair as part of the pastoral care offered by the Diocese.

The Archdeacons

The Archdeacons have an important role in ensuring that the housing stock is fit for purpose. Primarily this is achieved through effective liaison with occupants, interested parties in the parishes and the Property Team. Each Archdeacon meets regularly with the Property Team to ensure that matters are being addressed particularly during the appointment process as vacancies arise.

The Property Team

The diocesan property team consists of two officers:

- Michael Lindley, Diocesan Surveyor
- Diana Forbes, Property Administrator

The Team report directly to the Diocesan Secretary who is the senior officer of the SDBF and as such attends both the Bishop's Council and is a member of the Bishop of Sheffield's Senior Staff.

The team is based at Church House in Rotherham and has responsibility for the maintenance and administration of the various Diocesan Property estates on behalf of the DBF and advising PCC's in relation to the properties for which the SDBF acts as Custodian Trustees.

CONTACT NAMES AND ADDRESSES

Archdeacon of Sheffield & Rotherham

The Venerable David Gerrard
Church House, 95-99 Effingham Street, Rotherham S65 1BL
07902 756852
david.gerrard@sheffield.anglican.org

Archdeacon of Doncaster

The Venerable Javaid Iqbal
Church House, 95-99 Effingham Street, Rotherham S65 1BL
07469 850723
javaid.iqbal@sheffield.anglican.org

Diocesan Surveyor

Michael Lindley
Church House, 95-99 Effingham Street, Rotherham S65 1BL
07552 616797
michael.lindley@sheffield.anglican.org

Property Administrator

Diana Forbes
Church House, 95-99 Effingham Street, Rotherham S65 1BL
(01709) 309114
07928 822105
diana.forbes@sheffield.anglican.org

FINANCIAL FRAMEWORK

Budget

The SDBF is committed to providing realistic budgets for the maintenance and improvement of the property portfolio. The source of this income is through the Common Fund.

Works are carried out within three headings:

Improvements: Works of maintenance and repair that include 'improvement value' for occupants. (i.e. kitchens, bathrooms, internal decorations, new central heating systems, double glazing, insulation etc.)

Cyclical Maintenance: Planned maintenance works running on short defined cycles to meet requirements of legislation or definable maintenance cycles. (External Decorations – 5 yearly; Electrical Periodic Tests – 5 yearly; Electrical Visual Inspections & Gas safety checks – at changes of occupancy; and, Landlord's Certificates & servicing of boilers & heating appliances – annually.) Generally these cycles are driven by legislation.

Reactive Repairs

Inspection Repairs: Works of reactive repairs identified at the time of the Quinquennial Inspection or other visits carried out by the Diocesan Surveyor. *Other Reactive Repairs:* Unforeseen reactive repairs to breakdown identified by occupants.

The nature of reactive work should generally be minor and may involve an element of a 'holding repair' until major maintenance can be programmed.

Contractors

When contractors are working under the supervision of the Diocesan Surveyor, or some other appointed architect, surveyor, engineer or other individual; clergy, members of their families, and PCC officers, should normally address concerns about the work being undertaken, preferably in writing, via the Property Team to the SDBF. There may be exceptional circumstances where direct contact is necessary between the occupant of the property and the contractor to avoid a crisis situation.

Council Tax

Normally Council Tax in respect of the occupation of the Parsonage House is paid directly through the Diocesan Budget. Clergy and PCCs should refer correspondence regarding Council Tax to Church House. Council Tax is not paid when a house is temporarily unoccupied pending reoccupation by a Minister of Religion. Moving in and moving out dates must be communicated to the Property Team so that the appropriate reimbursements are claimed.

When houses are let, tenants become responsible for Council Tax.

The Diocese is also able to claim a Council Tax rebate for **Single Occupancy**. Where occupants live alone, or circumstances change this must be communicated to the Property Team otherwise the Diocese will be in breach of the law. Where appropriate such matters are dealt with in absolute confidentiality.

See also 'Lettings and Lodgers' (p.15)

Damage

The SDBF will adopt a pro-active approach in recovering the cost of damage caused during an occupation of a Parsonage. The provisions of section 13(4) of the Repair of Benefice Buildings Measure 1972 will apply with regard to the occupier paying for repairs resulting from a lack of reasonable care of the property.

Section 13(4) states:

“Where the report of a diocesan surveyor, whether under section 4 or section 8 of this Measure, specifies any repairs to a parsonage house as necessary by reason of damage caused or aggravated by any deliberate act of the incumbent or a previous incumbent or any default in his duties under this section, the Board may, on completion of the repairs, by notice require the incumbent concerned or his personal representative to pay to them the whole or part of the cost certified by the diocesan surveyor to be attributable to the said act or default and, if the notice is not complied with, the Board may take proceedings for the enforcement thereof:

Provided that in any such proceedings it shall be open to the defendant to show that the cost so certified is not attributable to such act or default as aforesaid, or that the amount required to be paid exceeds the cost so attributable, and judgment may be given accordingly.”

See also 'Pets' (p.19)

Internal Decoration Grants

Usually, a one off grant of up to £500 is given on receipt of invoices within three months of moving in. Under exceptional circumstances this can be reviewed. This should be discussed with the appropriate Archdeacon before moving in. No decorating will be undertaken by the SDBF other than consequential decorations as a result of major works.

Insurance

The SDBF insures the Property's (i.e. buildings insurance) together with their fixtures and fittings for standard risk including third party claims. Any damage or any claim for compensation should be reported immediately to the Property Team who will advise, and who will, if appropriate, notify the insurers.

Household contents are not covered, it is important that clergy make their own arrangements for the insurance of their personal possessions.

Repairs: External

External repairs, agreed by the SDBF to be necessary, are the responsibility of the SDBF. The SDBF, in consultation with the clergy concerned, reserves the right of discretion to remove unnecessary items and demolish superfluous buildings where this is agreed to be appropriate.

Repairs: Internal

The SDBF expects clergy to do very basic jobs such as replacing a missing screw. Care should be taken not to undertake any work which would put people at risk, nor to embark on repairs which are beyond the capabilities of those concerned. All non-emergency work involving the SDBF in expenditure must be approved through the Property Team before work is put in hand.

It is a legal requirement that work to the electrical installation should only be carried out by a 'Competent' Contractor¹. Work to the gas installation must not be carried out except by Gas Safe Register approved contractors.

¹ *"Competent Contractor"* includes any Full Scope Part P Competent Contractor carrying certification from NICEIC, ECA, ELECSA and NAPIT.

Water Rates

The PCC are responsible for the payment of water rates where there is a parish related part to a clergy appointment, unless there is an agreement in place with an external tenant in which case the tenants are responsible for water rates in respect of the houses which they rent.

Water bills should be passed onto the PCC for payment.

Any vacancies occurring after 21/04/2021 when temporarily un-occupied the SDBF will pay the water rates, but not on PCC owned properties

LEGAL FRAMEWORK

Quinquennial Inspection

These are carried out every five years. The Diocesan Surveyor normally undertakes the survey. The inspection will review the condition of the house and its grounds. The surveys are not intrusive and occupants are not asked to undertake special preparation prior to the survey. However, the surveyor will need to see all round the property and access should be afforded accordingly.

Following the survey a short report will be issued including a list of minor and holding repairs that will be undertaken as a result of the inspection. Proposals for improvement works will only be implemented as budgets allow.

Alterations

Incumbents should be aware that under the Repair of Benefice Buildings Measure 1972 no additions or alterations may be made to a Parsonage house, including its grounds and driveway, without the prior consent of the SDBF.

See also 'Self-financed Improvements'

Others who occupy houses owned by the Diocese should note that their occupation gives them no right to alter or add to the property.

Green Guide

The Church Commissioners publish a book on parsonage standards and good practice known commonly as 'the Green Guide'. The guide is applicable to new build parsonage housing.

The SDBF also uses the document as a broad guide to assess the suitability of existing housing or new acquisitions but, for a variety of reasons, it is unrealistic to expect that all parsonages will comply exactly with all the guidelines within the latest edition.

Lettings and Lodgers

The law governing the letting or leasing of a parsonage house or its grounds is complex and numerous approvals are required. If clergy or PCCs believe there are special circumstances that will make a tenancy or lease appropriate they should, in the first instance, contact the Property Team for advice on procedures.

There are legal considerations to be taken into account when clergy take in lodgers. The SDBF must be consulted and agreement reached before any such arrangement is made. In the event of an interregnum all lodgers must vacate with or before the incumbent.

Lodgers (i.e. a sub-let) should not be allowed in a property. There may be, from time to time, the need for members of your extended family to be with you in your home for longer periods, more than 6 weeks – for reasons of illness for example. In these situations you should notify the Diocesan Bishop, Archdeacon and the Property Team so that appropriate arrangements can be made for a licence, signed by all parties, to be put in place.

Under no circumstances should people beyond your immediate family and dependants be allowed to occupy the premises without notifying the appropriate authority and you must never charge rent.

If a house is going to be vacant for some time, the SDBF will look to let the property until such a time as the vacancy is filled or the house is put on the open market for sale. The letting is undertaken through professional letting agents. If the house is a parsonage house the landlords will legally be the Sequestrators (i.e. the area dean and churchwardens), under Section 1(1) of the Church of England (Miscellaneous Provisions) Measure 1992, however in practice they will have no involvement in the day to day matters of the tenancy, these being handled by the letting agent and the Property Team.

See also 'Council Tax'

Party Wall, etc. Act 1996

Party walls exist where two properties share a common dividing wall; this can take the form of a property or structure for example a garden boundary wall or house wall. Before work can be commenced on such walls, agreement must be reached with the adjoining owner, and a Party Wall Notice served. If you should need any work doing or receive such a notice or your neighbour commences work on such a wall please contact the Property Team before commencing any negotiations.

Planning & Other Building Works concerned with Former Church Property

Many of the present parsonage houses have been constructed on land or in close proximity to the old parsonage and former church buildings.

When old parsonages and church property were sold off restrictions may have been placed on the property in connection with its use, extension or alteration and new building. Please inform the Property Team if any new developments or building works takes place on or around such property.

Statutory Notices

If a Statutory Notice has been served upon an Incumbent i.e. planning proposal, the Property Team should be informed immediately

Listed Buildings

Some houses are listed under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 as being of architectural interest and are required by law to be kept in good order. Alterations or major repairs require planning permission and Listed Buildings consent.

IT IS IMPORTANT TO NOTE: When a building is listed, it is **listed in its entirety**, which means that both the exterior and the interior are protected. In addition, any object or structure fixed to the building, and any object or structure within the curtilage of the building, which although not fixed to the building, forms part of the land and has done so since before 1 July 1948, are treated as part of the listed building.

It is a criminal offence to carry out work which needs listed building consent without obtaining that consent beforehand.

Occupants of a Listed Building will be informed of this fact at appointment.

FROM MOVING IN TO MOVING OUT

Acceptance of an Appointment

During a vacancy a visit will be made by the Diocesan Surveyor, who may be accompanied by the Archdeacon and others, to inspect the house and make recommendations about work that is required to the property.

A schedule of work will be prepared and implemented and the SDBF will finance all the repairs and improvement thought to be necessary and affordable within budgetary constraints.

Before anyone is offered a post in the Diocese, where the occupation of a house is part of the appointment package, the individual will be shown the house and made aware of any work that the SDBF have undertaken or are planning to do during the vacancy. Additional work may be agreed subject to the approval of the SDBF.

Prior to Moving In

The Property Team is normally informed of a pending appointment and some informal discussions may then take place regarding the Property. Please note that financial assistance is available for moving and first appointments. Details of which are available from Church House.

Keys

These are kept locally and arrangements for their hand over should be agreed with the Property Team. Priests-in-charge, assistant clergy and lay occupants of properties will not be handed the keys until a **license agreement** or **tenancy agreement** has been signed and returned to the Property Team.

The replacement of locks and keys as a result of loss or theft rests with the occupier and in most cases is covered by a contents insurance policy

Adaptations for the Disabled

It is the policy of the SDBF to undertake the reasonable adaptation of property to accommodate the needs of clergy and their resident dependants. It is not the policy of the SDBF to finance adaptations for occasional visitors to the house (whether family members or otherwise). However the SDBF will support self-financed adjustments

where these are both reversible and carried out to the specification of the Diocesan Surveyor.

Parsonages and all other housing are private dwellings and, as such do not come under the Equality Act 2010. It is not therefore appropriate or possible for the SDBF to make adaptations to properties for visitors. It is recommended that for the purposes of meeting the requirements of the Act that clergy make 'Alternative provisions' such as meeting individuals in their own homes or arranging meetings in other premises if it is impractical to have these at the parsonage, i.e. when meetings are large or there are disabled people who are unable to access the property.

See also 'Self-Financed Improvements'

Fixtures

The fixtures within a property are reviewed at vacancy and checked during the Quinquennial Inspection. Occupants are asked to consult with the Property Team prior to removing, altering or adapting fixtures.

White Goods

Washing machines, dishwashers and cooker should be connected or disconnected by a competent person. This can be arranged by the Property Team but the cost will need to be met by the occupier.

Instruction Booklets

All instruction booklets/manuals should be kept in a safe place and close to hand should any engineer/contractor be on site and want to undertake any servicing or repair of the appliances at the property.

Pets

If clergy families keep domestic pets they will be held liable for any damage that arises as a consequence and will be asked to pay for professional cleaning if deemed necessary. Under no circumstances should houses be modified, for example, by the fitting of cat flaps etc. unless prior written approval has been obtained from the Property Team.

See also 'Damage'

Meter Readings

Upon occupation and vacation of houses occupants should read all meters and readings passed to the Property Team. This is important for your own protection.

Self-Financed Improvements

Diocesan policies are broadly framed so that individuals are neither favoured nor disadvantaged by their own or local circumstances. There are occasions however where occupants wish to make improvements to properties that are outside the normal provision of the SDBF. The SDBF always considers requests for such improvements and applications should be made in writing to the Property Team who may then wish to visit the house with the Archdeacon.

In reaching its decision the SDBF will consider the effect of the improvement on the property in terms of both the local context and of the diocesan property portfolio. A key consideration will be the on-going cost of maintenance once the occupant has moved on. The SDBF may stipulate that the improvement must be removed at the end of the occupancy, if it is thought to be un-sustainable.

The improvements will only be allowed if they are carried out to a specification agreed with the Diocesan Surveyor and subject to inspection of the works on completion.

PCC-Financed Improvements

From time to time PCC's wish to support the ministry of their clergy (and indeed the work of the SDBF) by funding improvements to the property. Such improvements must be approved by the SDBF and will be assessed on the criteria outlined.

See also 'Self-Financed Improvements'

Security Precautions

- All doors and windows should be kept locked and alarms switched on in times of absence from the property.
- Cancel all deliveries, milk, newspapers and ask someone to check that the post is not sticking out of the letterbox. Alternatively, ask the sorting office to hold post.

- Don't leave notes for tradesmen. Telephone, text or email them instead.
- Ask a neighbour or friend to water the garden and indoor plants, mow the lawn and cut the hedge. They might also be asked to park their car occasionally on the drive or in front of the house and put the bin out on bin day.
- If everyone in the household is to be out until after dark, leave a light on in a room, not the hall. A time switch or light-sensitive fitting is recommended.
- In the house remember that curtains and blinds drawn in the daytime attract the thief.
- Make sure the doorbell is only audible from the inside – let people assume it is not working rather than not being answered.
- Disconnect telephones that can be heard left ringing (particularly those on window sills). Also, any answerphone message should always say “We cannot come to the phone at present”, rather than “we are not here”.
- Keep garage doors shut and locked. If the garage has windows, use curtains or blinds to block prying eyes. No car often means that nobody is home.

Fire Precautions

- Never leave matches or lighters where children can find them.
- Never leave a lit cigarette unattended – it may fall onto an armchair or carpet, which could catch fire, giving off dense smoke and fumes.
- Do not use candles where there are safer alternatives. If you do, never leave them unattended and extinguish them properly.
- Use fireguards around fires and heaters to protect children. Never place clothes on the guard to dry or put papers on the guard.

- Always stand portable heaters in a safe place where they cannot be knocked or tripped over. Keep them well away from furniture and soft furnishings, such as curtains and cushions and never place them next to beds or where objects may fall onto them.
- Check that your furniture conforms to current fire resistant standards. Look for the warnings on labels.
- Turn off and unplug electrical equipment unless it is designed to be left on.
- Keep curtains well away from any cooker and television sets.
- Do not leave aerosols in direct sunlight or use them near flames, hot electric elements or other potential sources of ignition. They may contain a flammable propellant gas.
- Do not place mirrors or bottles in direct sunlight as concentrated sun-rays can start a fire. Windows with a glass lens-like piece imitating old glass should not be used in south-facing windows.

Vacating

The house must be vacated within one month of leaving office unless where this is in the event of retirement whereby this may be extended to up to three months.

When vacating a Property the following advice must be followed.

- Keys must be left with the Churchwardens or if there is no parish connection to the house the Property Team
- Meters must be read and readings passed to the Property Team
- All water (including the heating and hot and cold water systems) must be drained from the house unless otherwise agreed. Arrangements for this are made by the Property Team once the house is vacated.
- The house must be made secure
- Fittings and fixtures must remain
- The house must be cleared of all furniture and personal possessions. Carpets and curtains may be left for the next occupants by private arrangement.
- The house must be left clean, tidy and in good repair.

- There must be twice weekly internal and external inspections of the house made by a Parish representative (this is a prerequisite of the insurance policy).

See also 'Damage'

Spouses in Parsonage Houses Following Death in Service

Following the death of a serving clergy person, the spouse should be reassured that he/she will be able to remain in the house for a maximum of six months. During that period, the Bishop's Visitor will work closely with the family to discuss and consider their future housing needs.

USE OF THE HOUSE

Policy Statement on Clergy and parish offices

Background

The provision of this policy has become necessary because, in recent years, Parish Offices have evolved and the tendency for these to be integral with the parsonage study is beyond the scope of the Parsonages Green Guide and the remit of the SDBF.

Definitions

Parsonage Study: Every Parsonage must include a separate room designated as the study. This must meet the parson's need for a place of work and quieter activities, both pastoral and administrative, and to hold in privacy interviews and small meetings without disturbance. Sufficient space in the study for these activities will prevent their encroaching on family life elsewhere in the parsonage.

Crucially, the use of this space (as with the rest of the house) is under the control of any given incumbent and not the churchwardens, PCC or other members of the church. The study is not intended to accommodate parochial plant. Nor is it designed to be the administrative centre of parish affairs. However, any particular incumbent may engage, at their discretion, the services of a secretary or assistant to work from the parsonage study.

Parish Office: This facility, where it exists, should not be integral with the parsonage house. It may therefore be the place of 'work' for an incumbent and Parish Administrator and will be a focus for administrative functions beyond the scope of the incumbent's private and personal matters. The size and nature of the Parish Office will vary greatly depending on the size and shape of ministry in the benefice. The provision of a Parish Office facility is a local matter and under the control of the incumbent, churchwardens, and other officers of the benefice or parish.

Study Policy

The SDBF will identify and designate in each parsonage house a room to serve as the Study. Each such room will be equipped with bookshelves, telephone point and adequate power points to enable the safe operation of a personal computer and task lighting etc. Where practicable and subject to finances this room will be adjacent to the

front door, a ground floor toilet and, if layout allows, a lobby will be divided from the rest of the accommodation by some form of partition.

Having met the criteria of providing a designated study space in each parsonage house the SDBF does not feel it appropriate to define exactly how that space is used by clergy, except within the scope of the guidelines offered in the above definitions. **The decision on how the study is used rests solely with the incumbent at the time.**

However, the SDBF encourages the Archdeacons and Property Team to meet with PCC's and Churchwardens at the commencement of a vacancy in order to reinstate the "normal" use of the Parsonage Study and to reiterate the incompatibility of any existing uses of the study that may be construed as being more appropriate to a Parish Office. This is to avoid embarrassment for the local church and any successor in office as current practice may be incompatible with the new incumbent's expectations or requirements of how they choose to use the parsonage as a focus and administrative base for their ministry.

Guidance Note

The SDBF encourages all diocesan clergy to be careful in the use of terms. The preferred designation is 'Study' and the use of the word 'office' is discouraged as it confuses and raises local expectation as to the use of the study within the parsonage by others.

The 'Green Guide' applies to 'new build' parsonage houses. Certain compromises in layout may have to be accepted in houses that already exist in the Diocese or where a property is purchased to provide a new parsonage house. The SDBF aims to move houses as close to the 'Green Guide' as practical within the physical constraints of any building. Clergy are encouraged to adopt sensible modes of operation within the context of their own local situation.

The SDBF asks that practices are not set up locally that would be difficult to sustain during a vacancy or may be incompatible with the lifestyle or expectations of any future incumbency. It is the "right" of such use that is being cautioned rather than what is "acceptable use". Critically any uses of the private accommodation (i.e. beyond the study

and ground floor toilet) by others should be clearly defined as being at your personal discretion.

PCC's and church officers need to be encouraged not to see any accruing right for the study to become a centre for parish administration. The nature of the study and the rest of the house are essentially private. To give indication that it is otherwise is to open the door to complication in terms of insurances, public liability, employment law and so forth.

During a vacancy, it is not appropriate to have a parish secretary, administrator or parochial plant located in the parsonage. This is to enable preparatory works to be undertaken for the new incumbent or to enable the house to be let if practicable. The test applied by the SDBF and its officers to a locally designated 'parish office' on a Parsonage site is whether it is possible or appropriate to use the house independently from the 'designated' space by a party who is not the incumbent of the parish i.e. a tenant. In all instances where this test fails the use must desist during any vacancy (unless agreement is made between the Archdeacon, Diocesan Surveyor and Churchwardens) and may only be reinstated at the discretion of the new incumbent.

Rights of access during a vacancy are reserved to a local key holder, the diocesan officers and any contractors they may engage. All keys held by others must be returned to the churchwardens.

PCC's and churchwardens should note that to ask prospective candidates how they intend to use the house if appointed during the interview process might be considered inappropriate.

Guidance on Study Layout

Clergy are asked to consider very carefully the layout of their study. As a general rule of thumb when meeting with other people in the study, clergy are advised that they should position themselves between the interviewees and the door. This is to enable you to escape from any difficult or threatening situation and to raise the alarm. Furniture layout may play a part in enabling you to protect your own person in the event of such a situation arising.

Similarly, in the current climate of allegations of improper behaviour by clergy and other individuals towards parishioners, do bear in mind that the placing and height of furniture such as chairs can impact on the impression gained by others of any situation. A 'professional and welcoming' appearance is probably more appropriate than 'homely and intimate'. Common sense should prevail but do give the matter serious consideration.

Reception Rooms

The Green Guide clearly states that: "one of the family rooms (generally the living room) should be sufficiently large to allow clergy to offer hospitality to their parishioners. However this room should not be regarded as a substitute for a proper parish meeting place elsewhere."

Guidance Note

In reviewing the use and designation of the Parsonage Study, the SDBF feels it appropriate to reiterate the above guidance and its clear emphasis on 'hospitality' rather than the normally assumed 'use for meetings'. Meeting facilities and arrangements for meetings are a local matter and are beyond the scope and remit of the SDBF and the proper use of the parsonage house. As with the Study, any existing arrangements involving the 'use' of the reception rooms should lapse with a vacancy. They may only be reinstated at the discretion of the new occupants of the parsonage.

Insurance

Local arrangements must be made for the insurance of any contents in the parsonage. This is normally the responsibility of the occupant but where any "grey area" arrangements exist and parochial plant has crept into the parsonage, appropriate actions for insurance should be taken and clearly defined.

The Changing Shape of Ministry

The SDBF recognises that the nature of ministry today is very different from past decades. It is the SDBF's remit to protect, where it may, the private nature of the Parsonage House. It also reviews, from time to time, the nature of that provision where opportunities for new build or alteration exist or become practicable.

The SDBF and its Officers will always consider the existing parsonage houses within the context of pastoral or other structural reorganisation with a view to ensuring that appropriate provision is made in new benefices. The nature and shape of the 'built' provision in a benefice is crucial and the SDBF recognises the parsonage and its facilities as an important component in that provision.

GENERAL GUIDANCE (PROPERTY)

This guidance is offered so that you are able to assist in the maintenance of the Property you occupy and to ensure that all that can be done locally is being carried out so as to avoid costly repairs arising from untimely notification of problems to the Property Team.

Air Bricks and Damp Courses

Most houses have these. It is essential to see that earth and vegetation is prevented from blocking air bricks and that no earth is above the damp course. Walls should be kept clear of earth to a depth of about 9 inches (225 mm) below ground floor level or 6 inches (150 mm) below the damp course. In particular care should be taken if occupants are altering garden and/or paving levels.

Asbestos

The Diocese has a duty of care, in its role as a property manager, to any contractors engaged to undertake work on vicarage premises and will ensure that the appropriate legislation is followed. In parishes where ministers and other church workers operate from PCC owned property the Diocese draws attention to the duty of care that rests with the building owner.

See also Appendix 2 – ‘Asbestos’

Chimneys and Flues

The regular sweeping of chimneys used for open fires, or for any solid fuel burning stove, is essential. Blocked chimneys or flues can be fatal. Chimney fires can cause great damage to the house and unnecessary inconvenience to the family. Keeping chimneys clear is the occupant's responsibility.

Where appropriate the sweeping of flues to open fires will be carried out by the Property Team during a vacancy and before a new incumbent moves in.

Condensation

Millions of homes in the UK suffer from condensation every year. Condensation is simply a result of warm, moisture laden air coming into contact with a cold surface and turning from a warm vapour into condensing water droplets.

Condensation usually appears on windows and mirrors. In extreme cases, it can cause mould to appear inside cupboards, on clothes inside

wardrobes and behind furniture close to or in contact with external walls. Fortunately, extreme cases like this are very rare and the problem should be dealt with or recognised long before this situation arises. If you think you have a problem with condensation please contact the Property Team.

The occupants of the house can greatly assist in preventing condensation problems where possible, for example:

by using extractor fans provided in kitchens and bathrooms and not turning these off at the isolator;

by having a constant gentle and even heat throughout the property; i.e. not turning off the heat in unused rooms and not going from extreme heat to cold.

Exceptionally bad cases of condensation can cause health problems to occupants and damage to the fabric of the building.

Decorations – External

The SDBF will arrange for the outside of the house, including its outbuildings, to be painted, stained or treated with preservative as appropriate at five yearly intervals.

Decorations – Internal

AT VACANCY: See 'Internal Decoration Grants'

AT OTHER TIMES: If redecoration is necessary as a consequence of building works authorised and carried out by the SDBF, then reasonable costs involved will be met. If redecoration is necessary as the result of an insurable event such as fire, flood or structural movement, then the Property Team will make the necessary arrangements.

UNDERTAKING THE WORK: Many PCCs assist clergy and some occupants "Do it Themselves". If you or other volunteers carry out the work, care must be taken to ensure that everyone works safely, within their competence and to a decent standard. Whatever method you adopt the Property Team trusts that you will hand over the house in good order.

Thought should be given to colour schemes. Please try and use neutral shades and avoid bold colours.

Drains

TOILETS: Sewers are only designed to take away water, toilet tissue and human waste. All paper and plastic waste, such as sanitary products, nappies and wet wipes, should be wrapped up and placed in a bin. Even the smallest of items, like dental floss and cotton buds, can have a damaging effect as they collect in the filters at sewage treatment works and can cause machinery to break down.

Although wet wipes are very useful when toilet training toddlers or removing makeup, they should be disposed of in the same way as nappies – in the bin. Wipes do not break down like tissue, so may not get washed away down the pipe. When wipes mix with solidified fat, they set hard, forming a solid obstruction. Even items that are marketed as 'flushable' or 'biodegradable' contribute to blockages.

Although these items disappear when you flush the toilet, they do not break down in the sewers, as they take a number of years to disintegrate.

SINKS: Fat and oil poured down the sink after cooking is most likely to block your drains. Fat may be in liquid form when you pour it away but it quickly cools down and becomes hard, forming a thick coating around the inside of the pipes. When fat mixes with other items, such as wet wipes, it can form a solid obstruction, restricting the flow in the pipe and causing a blockage. The wastewater running through the pipe will then find an alternative place to flow out from, which may cause flooding.

Please note, these items must NOT be flushed down a toilet or poured down a drain:

- Fat and oil
- Wet wipes
- Female hygiene products
- Nappies
- Kitchen roll
- Food waste
- Incontinence products
- Colostomy bags
- Cotton wool/cotton buds
- Razor blades
- Tights

- Plasters and bandages
- Latex products
- Dental floss
- Medicines and tablets
- Engine oil, chemicals and paints

Chemicals, solvents, engine oil and paint should be taken to a local refuse site and medicines to a pharmacist for safe disposal.

Should the SDBF have to unblock a drain and the blockage is caused due to improper use of the drain the cost of the service will be recharged to the occupant.

Fixtures and Fittings

The SDBF provides and maintains various fixtures and fittings in its properties. These are reviewed at vacancies and at the quinquennial inspection.

These items should not be removed, altered or adapted without first consulting with the Property Team.

The fixtures and fittings are considered to include the electrical services (power points, switches etc.), heating systems, kitchen, bathroom fittings, internal doors and miscellaneous items.

When necessary and appropriate the DBF will consider the improvement of all fixtures and fittings (including kitchens and bathrooms) to bring them up to modern standards. Normally consideration is only given to this as vacancies occur or at the time of the quinquennial inspection.

Flooding

Flooding can occur as a result of surface water issues as well as river issues, it is recommended that you subscribe to the flood warning scheme <https://www.gov.uk/sign-up-for-flood-warnings>

Floor Coverings

The Diocese is responsible for providing floor coverings to the study, entrance hall, kitchen, toilets and bathrooms. In the study and this will be in the form of carpeting and in other areas this will be vinyl sheet.

Gutters, Downpipes and Water Butts

All gutters, down pipes, gullies and drains should be cleaned once a year during the autumn once leaves have fallen from the trees. A further clean in areas surrounded by trees may be beneficial earlier in the year. Clergy, or during a vacancy, the PCC, should make any appropriate arrangements with a local contractor and submit a claim for the expenditure to the Property Team. Great care should be taken to ensure qualified contractors carry out the work safely. People should not be asked to use ladders unless they have been properly trained and qualified for the purpose. The Property Team arranges gutter clearance at properties at the time of the renewal of external paintwork i.e. once every five years.

Under no circumstances should clergy or members of their family undertake gutter clearances themselves, particularly above single storey height, in the light of the risks to health and safety.

If you decide to install a rainwater butt, please ensure it has an efficient overflow system connected back into the rainwater downpipe. Omission of the overflow connection will result in dampness to the property and potential subsidence to the structure.

Any damage to gutters, downpipes, gullies & drains due to negligence or unauthorised adaptations, must be paid for by the occupant.

Insulation

All lofts should be insulated. Most lofts already have fibreglass quilt insulation to a minimum depth of 4 inches (100 mm). If a loft is lacking this insulation then the Property Team should be advised. The laying and subsequent disturbance of insulating material should only be carried out by personnel with the proper protective clothing including a mask.

Loft Ladders

It is not the policy of the SDBF to install a loft ladder. Roof voids are not designed for storage.

Overflow Pipes

If you notice that you have water leaking or dripping from an overflow pipe please inform the Property Team immediately.

This could be indicative of a much more serious problem and in the worst cases could result in your home being flooded.

Please do not ignore leaking overflow pipes. They are easy to fix in the early stages but can cause costly and major problems to the structure if left unattended.

Pest Control

The top ten common household pests in the UK are flies, fleas, ants, wasps, mice, rats, spiders, moths, woodlice, bedbugs and cockroaches. Please contact the Property Team if you are experiencing any issues. Occupants must ensure that domestic pets such as cats and dogs are regularly treated to prevent flea infestations. Costs of works will be met by the SDBF unless it is related to the actions or inactions of the occupier.

Replacement Windows

Houses have single glazing, secondary glazing or double glazing. The SDBF will consider replacing existing singled glazed windows or secondary glazed windows with double glazed sealed units during a vacancy, at the time of the quinquennial inspection or where exceptional circumstances prevail. Priority will be given to replacement of windows where insulation is poor; the fabric has deteriorated or there is a security dimension and is subject to budget availability.

Security

The SDBF places a high priority on ensuring that houses have good physical security including high quality locks to British Standard on stout doors and windows that can be locked shut.

It is not appropriate or possible to seek to make Parsonage houses into fortresses, for inappropriate measures can single them out as targets and are therefore counter productive.

Clergy concerned about the security of their house are advised to consult with the Property Team who will be able to offer guidance on good practice.

See also 'Alarm Systems'

See also 'Lighting'

GENERAL GUIDANCE (GROUNDS)

Boundaries

When work is required to existing boundary fences, walls etc., the Property Team must first be consulted. Responsibility may be with the owner on either side, or it may be shared with them. If responsibility is with the property or partly with the property, then the SDBF will meet the cost or its share of the cost. However, should the repair to the boundary be necessary due to neglect, the occupant will be liable for the cost. The SDBF cannot meet the expense of changing boundary fencing for the occupant's preferred type for their children or domestic pets.

Driveways

Clergy families should keep all paved areas in good condition with weeds removed and drains kept clear of earth and other obstructions. Any deterioration of the surface should be reported to the Property Team.

Fishponds

The SDBF is not responsible for the upkeep or maintenance of fishponds. When you vacate your property please ensure that all fish have been removed from the pond and that no on-going maintenance will be required after your departure.

Gardens

Maintenance of gardens is the responsibility of the occupant.

It is expected that gardens will be kept in good order by the clergy or, during vacancy, by the SDBF.

Hedges

Hedges are considered as part of the garden and as such are the responsibility of the occupant, or, in a vacancy, the SDBF. Expenditure on maintenance will not be reimbursed. In exceptional circumstances the SDBF may consider a grant towards costs.

Occupants of parsonages should not plant *Cupressus leylandii* as hedge screening because of its rapid growth. Hedges should be kept at a height that is easy to maintain. (Max 6ft or 1.8m)

Japanese Knotweed

There are increasing instances in properties where we have to deal with infestations of this difficult weed. First, it is important to note that

it is illegal to plant or propagate this plant. Secondly, it is extremely invasive and causes serious damage to buildings and other structures.

The weed is difficult and expensive to deal with but it is vital that it is removed once it is seen on site. This is a task for a specialist contractor and should not be attempted by occupants. Please contact the Property Team if you see the plant in your garden.

The stem of the plant can reach 3m high and is bamboo like in appearance. The leaves are 'heart shaped' and a lush green colour. It produces white flowers around September and October depending on it's geographical location. It grows with great speed.

Lighting

The outside of the house should be well lit for convenience and safety and to help with security. Each house is different and what is required will depend on local circumstances, the position of the house, the closeness of streetlights etc. Where additional security is required, the SDBF will consider meeting the cost of automatically operated external lights controlled with daylight sensors. Consideration will normally be given to the installation of these as vacancies occur or at the time of the quinquennial inspection.

Sheds, Summerhouses and Greenhouses

The SDBF is not responsible for the maintenance or provision of sheds, summerhouses or greenhouses. If the occupier wishes to provide their own please contact the Property Team to discuss further.

Trees

Advice should always be sought from the Property Team before any tree is planted or replaced. Trees grown in proximity to buildings can cause severe and very expensive structural damage.

Written permission must be obtained from the Property Team before a tree is felled. Normally the work will be organised through the Property Team, however, you may be required by the SDBF to remove sapling trees at a quinquennial inspection. These will normally be immature self-sown forest trees.

There are regulations in force concerning trees covered by Tree Preservation Orders and trees in Conservation Areas. The Local Authority strictly enforces these regulations. Their written consent is required before any tree work is carried out even if the tree is diseased

or dead. Unauthorised lopping or felling, or the causing of damage to a tree, will result in a fine and can cause much ill feeling. Normally when work to trees is required the Property Team will appoint a specialist contractor who will be required to conduct consultations with the Local Planning Authority before proceeding.

MECHANICAL AND ELECTRICAL SERVICES

Alarm Systems

Intruder Alarm Systems

The majority of houses have intruder alarm systems. The installation of an alarm system, where there is none, will be considered by the SDBF as vacancies occur or at the time of the quinquennial inspection. Where the need is clearly demonstrated, the SDBF will consider installing an Intruder Alarm System.

The maintenance costs of the system will be paid by the SDBF. An Intruder Alarm System should comply with British Standard 4737 and quotations will only be sought from reputable specialist contractors that are firms either recommended by the Police or on the official list of NSI registered firms.

Smoke Alarms

Smoke alarms should be fitted to all houses. Maintenance of these, and the replacement of the batteries, is the responsibility of the occupant. The occupier should test these on a weekly basis and change the batteries every 6 months.

Carbon Monoxide Alarms

The SDBF will meet the cost of provision. Maintenance of these and the replacement of the batteries is the responsibility of the occupant. The occupier should test these on a weekly basis and change the batteries every 6 months.

Boilers and Air Source Heat Pumps

The SDBF has arrangements in place for the annual servicing of gas fired and oil-fired boilers as well as Air Source Heat Pumps. If servicing is not taking place on an annual basis, or is not satisfactory, the Property Team should be advised.

Built-in appliances

In certain situations built in appliances may be found in kitchens. The SDBF is committed to maintaining these appliances. However, a pragmatic approach will be taken towards removing these anomalies (normally at vacancy or kitchen refurbishment) and arrangements will be made where current occupancies exist to enable new appliances to be purchased.

Electrical Installations

The SDBF is required by law to undertake a periodic inspection (every 5 years) of the electrical installations. This inspection may highlight necessary repairs or upgrades to the system and these works are given a very high priority as not to undertake such repairs may affect occupant safety.

Additionally diocesan contractors undertake visual inspections of the installation at each change of occupancy.

Occupants are reminded that recent changes in legislation require registered contractors undertake all electrical works. Occupants must not adapt or alter the electrical systems installed in the property.

Gas Installation

The SDBF has in place arrangements for the annual testing of the gas installation including all appliances in the house. The testing will usually coincide with the servicing of any gas-fired boiler. The SDBF, in consultation with the clergy family concerned, reserves the option of removing unsafe gas fires when it considers this to be more appropriate.

Gas fired cookers will have a visual inspection as part of the annual gas test.

Work to the gas installation and to gas appliances may only be carried out by Gas Safe Registered contractors. This is a legal requirement necessary on grounds of safety.

If there is a suspicion of a gas leak the following procedure should be followed:

Extinguish all naked flames. Do not switch on or off any electric lights or appliances because the spark in the switch may cause an explosion.

If possible turn off the gas supply at the mains.

Ensure good ventilation by opening doors and windows wide.

Seek help. Call NATIONAL GRID – Tel: 0800 111999

See also 'Cookers'

Heating

It is the policy of the SDBF to provide all houses in its care with full central heating. Where gas is available this will normally be the fuel provided. Oil will be the secondary resort. In areas where gas becomes available the system may be adapted but this will be at the discretion of the Property Team within the context of the age and condition of the existing system.

[Heating Advice from Citizens Advice](#)

Heating Oil Tanks

The Property Team has in place provision for the annual servicing and inspection of domestic oil installations. Please make sure you order your heating oil in good time and never allow the tank to run dry or until empty. This will cause your whole system to stop working and will additionally require a qualified heating engineer to attend site, remove all the air-locks from the system and get it working again. Any costs for such avoidable work will be fully recharged to the occupant at the time of the repair. If you suspect an oil leak anywhere in the system it is essential that you inform the Property Team immediately. Leaks can be noticed by smell, grass and plants dying or brown patches appearing on your lawns or borders.

Please be extremely careful when gardening, digging, strimming or cutting the grass when you are anywhere near the oil pipes or oil tank in your garden.

LPG Gas Installations

The gas tank and fittings installed on the tank are the property of the LPG supplier who is responsible for regular maintenance.

Secondary Heating

It is the intention of the SDBF to provide secondary heating in the study and the principal living room. This heat source is designed to enable other areas of the house to be kept cooler through the day or to provide a boost in cold weather or when hospitality is being offered. The secondary heating source should therefore be instantaneous in nature (i.e. a gas or electric fire). The DBF does not consider wood burning stoves to be capable of providing such a provision.

The SDBF recognises where solid fuel fires already exist they should not be removed. However the installation of new solid fuel appliances will

only be considered by application to the Property Team and by the PCC or occupier being responsible for the cost.

Private Sewage Installations

The Property Team has in place annual provisions for the inspection and maintenance of private sewage installations.

It is particularly important that the guidelines concerning what may or may not be flushed down your toilet or put into the drains are strictly adhered to for this type of installation.

See also 'Septic Tanks' and 'Drains

Septic Tanks & Cess Pits

The SDBF will meet the reasonable costs of emptying septic tanks but arrangements for emptying should be made locally. Please note these items must NOT be flushed into a septic tank:

- Baby wipes
- Cat litter
- Chemicals: bleach, thinners, oils, varnishes, paints, pesticides
- Cigarette butts
- Coffee grounds
- Cooking oil
- Cotton swabs (Q-tips)
- Dental floss
- Female hygiene products
- Latex products
- Medicine
- Nappies

The above list is by no means exhaustive but indicates the wide range of products that are not compatible with a septic tank.

Showers

The normal provision is an instantaneous electric shower over the bath, thermostatically controlled for safety, but some houses, for various reasons, have other arrangements.

Curtains and shower doors must be properly positioned to avoid water getting on to the floors. All seals should be regularly checked and any defects reported to the office early before significant water damage can occur.

Emergency Plumbing Issues

Frozen Pipes: If the pipe freezes, turn off the water supply at the stop tap, usually located under the sink. Open all cold water taps and flush the toilet to empty the water storage cistern and then very carefully thaw out the pipes, this should not be undertaken quickly as there may be splits in the pipe which will not be evident until the pipes have thawed.

Burst Pipes: The first thing to do is to prevent water passing the point of the leak. Start by turning off all the stop taps, if the escaping water cannot be controlled immediately, open all cold water taps so that the pipework and storage system drains quickly. **DO NOT TURN ON THE HOT WATER TAPS.** Switch off the central heating system and any electric immersion heater, and then call the Property Team who will endeavour to get a local plumber out as soon as possible. However if this happens after office hours or on a weekend, please contact a plumber from list of Contractors provided by the Property Team or by making your own enquiries locally.

WHAT THE DIOCESE DOES NOT PROVIDE

Carpets

Carpets, other than to the study, are not provided by the SDBF and are a private matter for occupants. At the end of your occupancy you may leave these items behind for the use of your successor in office. It should not be assumed by incoming occupants that carpets or curtains will be left for their use as a matter of course.

Carpets in particular are vulnerable to damage, particularly if the property has been let during a vacancy. Whilst the SDBF endeavours to vet its tenants through their agents it cannot be guaranteed that carpets will be left in a usable state once the property is returned to clergy use. Any serviceable carpets present within a house at the start of a new incumbency should be regarded as a bonus whether the previous occupant was a tenant of the SDBF or a predecessor in office. If outgoing clergy wish to negotiate a payment from their successors in office for carpets or curtains they should indicate their intention to do so to the Property Team.

The moving grant offered by the SDBF is intended to cover, in part, the costs of carpets and curtains.

The SDBF provides and takes maintenance responsibility for vinyl flooring surfaces in kitchens, toilets and bathrooms.

Cookers

The SDBF do not provide cookers.

The occupant will be responsible for ensuring that the appropriate engineer is engaged (Gas Safety Registered for gas or "Part P Certified" for electric) to fit the cooker and supply the Property Team with a copy of the certificate.

The normal provision for a space to put the cooker will be a 600 mm gap.

See also 'Built in appliances'

Cleaning

Under normal circumstances the SDBF does not provide cleaning prior to the move-in of a new priest. If however, the SDBF has

undertaken works in the property, a builders clean will be commissioned.

Curtains

The SDBF does not provide curtains or rails for any area of the property. The resettlement grant offered by the SDBF is intended to cover, in part, the costs of curtains.

Telephones

The initial installation of telephone sockets for the 'public number' is the responsibility of the SDBF. Where occupants wish to install a second line for personal private use they may do so but all arrangements for this are personal and local.

Usually a socket will be provided in the study and main bedroom. Any other additional sockets will be at the expense of the occupier and the approval of the Property Team.

The repair, maintenance, and replacement of the telephone are the responsibility of the clergy or of the PCC as locally agreed.

The SDBF is not responsible for installing, maintaining or providing extra points for answering machines, computers or other office equipment.

Cable Telephone. The installation of fibre-optic telephone cables is not permitted except on written application. Installation is subject to the written approval of the SDBF and to an undertaking that the occupant and/or PCC formally accept the responsibility for any and all consequential costs arising.

Television

The SDBF has responsibility for the provision or repair of TV aerials.

Cable TV. The installation of fibre-optic telephone cables is not permitted except on written application. It is subject to the written approval of the SDBF and to an undertaking that the householder and/or PCC formally accept the responsibility for any and all consequential costs arising.

Satellite TV. In more remote locations cable TV will not be available and TV reception may possibly be poor. The installation of satellite dishes is not permitted except on written application and is subject to the written consent of the SDBF. Consent will usually be given subject to

an undertaking that the occupant and/or PCC formally accept the responsibility for any and all consequential costs arising from provision or removal.

The erection of a satellite dish may require the consent of the Local Authority, and the householder should make his or her own enquiries about this.

EMERGENCY CALL OUT

Outside office hours and in the event of emergency you are authorised to engage local contractors to effect immediate repairs to make the property safe and secure. This repair may not necessarily be the final repair and may be a holding repair to enable the Property Team or others to come and advise on the final outcome of any particular event.

As a first port of call seek help from the list provided by the Property Team or from local advice on a suitable contractor.

All breaches of security **MUST** be reported to the police and a crime number obtained so that the Property Team are able to make a claim through the insurance policies.

All instances where Emergency Procedures have been followed should be communicated as soon as practical to the Property Team.

[Emergency Contacts](#)

APPENDIX 1: A CHECKLIST OF HELP

It may be helpful to use the following list, as a way of identifying problems, and some simple bits of routine maintenance, that any householder is used to. It is not an exhaustive list, but might be a basis for a discussion between you and the PCC.

ONCE A YEAR

- Look at the trees in your garden for defects - Spring and after high winds and gales
- Check the central heating header tank is full and the ball valve free to move.
- Ensure insulation in the roof space has not been disturbed and pipe lagging is in place - autumn.
- Clear rainwater disposal system - autumn.

TWICE A YEAR

- Walk round the house during or after heavy rain to check that rainwater is not over-spilling or running down the walls from defective gutters or blocked downpipes.
- Check the electrical plugs on your appliances are safe.
- Clean out extractor fans.
- Kill weeds in driveway and if applicable rake gravel from sides and middle into wheel tracks.
- Oil hinges and stays to doors and windows.

FREQUENTLY

- Keep rainwater and kitchen gully gratings free of leaves and other debris.
- Look at roofs for defective or missing slates or tiles.
- Switch on central heating circulator for a few minutes once a week in the summer months. Radiator valves must be open for this to be effective.
- Check for leaks on toilets, overflows, flush pipes, etc.

WHEN REQUIRED

- Wipe up condensation from window sills in winter.
- Scrub with a solution of household bleach or mould killer any mould on window joinery or walls.
- Tighten loose screws on hinges, locks, latches and other fittings before damage occurs, this also includes all doors and cupboards in the property.

- Beware frost damage while away from home

APPENDIX 2: ASBESTOS

Control of Asbestos at Work Regulations 2012

These regulations came into full effect in April 2012. The regulation requires that Asbestos Containing Materials (ACMs), which were used extensively in a wide range of construction materials throughout the last century, are managed and maintained.

Key points to note are that:

- The use of Asbestos in construction materials started in the 19th century and increased gradually until World War II. Large quantities were employed throughout the 1950s, 1960s and early 1970s. Its use was subject to an informal ban from 1969 onwards with a total ban from 1999 onwards.
- Asbestos is only dangerous when the microscopic fibres are released. Therefore ACMs in good condition or encapsulated ACMs are not hazardous to health.
- Asbestos fibre inhalation is most likely to occur when the ACM is disturbed. Therefore monitoring and maintaining ACMs in-situ is often less hazardous than removing the materials.

Where is Asbestos in Buildings?

The short answer to this is nearly everywhere. Asbestos has good heat insulating properties, is fire resistant and its fibres are a good reinforcing agent in plastics. It is not found in naturally occurring building materials such as timber, stone or brick.

Typical applications are:

- Sprayed coatings to steel work for fire protection
- Laggings and packing for heat insulation of service pipes and tanks
- Asbestos Insulation Board (or AIB) used as a fire lining or often as ceiling tiles
- Rope and gaskets located round oven doors or electrical distribution box covers
- Mill boards and papers
- As a binding material in Asbestos cement
- Floor tiles, mastics and roofing felt
- Decorative paints and plasters including ARTEX.

The above list is by no means exhaustive but indicates the wide range of applications and by implication the locations of where ACMs are likely to be located.

Why is Asbestos a problem?

Although Asbestos has many good properties for use in construction (see above), the material is made up of tiny fibres, which when released can be inhaled and lead to various respiratory diseases such as lung cancer, Asbestosis and Mesothelioma. Exposure to the fibres, like lead poisoning, is cumulative, as the body has no mechanism for getting rid of the fibres. Remember though that undisturbed or encapsulated asbestos is entirely safe. Removal of the material is not necessarily the right solution to the situation.

APPENDIX 3: CARBON MONOXIDE POISONING

WHY ARE WE TELLING YOU THIS NOW?

We are in the process of installing better insulation in your home, reducing draughts and reducing heating bills. However, if air circulation is reduced the risk of Carbon Monoxide poisoning can be increased and we want to make you aware of preventative measures.

WHAT IS CARBON MONOXIDE- WHY IS IT A PROBLEM?

Carbon monoxide (CO) is a colourless, odourless, tasteless, poisonous gas produced by incomplete burning of carbon-based fuels, including gas, oil, wood and coal. It is quite different from, and much more dangerous than, carbon dioxide. Carbon-based fuels are essentially safe to use. It is only when the fuel does not burn properly that excess CO is produced, which is potentially lethal. When CO enters the body, it prevents the blood from bringing oxygen to cells, tissues, and organs.

You can't see it, taste it or smell it but CO can kill quickly without warning. According to the NHS statistics around 60 people die from accidental CO poisoning some of which are caused by solid fuel, gas fires and flues that have not been properly installed and maintained or that are poorly ventilated. Levels that do not kill can cause serious harm to health if breathed in over a long period. Many people associate CO poisoning with poorly maintained student bed-sit accommodation, but the risks are just as great in the private and rented housing sectors.

WHAT THE SDBF DOES TO MINIMISE RISK AND MEET ITS OBLIGATIONS.

The SDBF ensures that any work carried out in relation to gas appliances in our property is undertaken by a Gas Safe Registered engineer, competent in that area of work.

As your housing provider we have a legal duty to carry out an annual gas safety check and maintain gas appliances. We provide you with a copy of the completed gas safety check certificate. We also service oil fired appliances.

WHAT PREVENTATIVE MEASURES CAN YOU TAKE AGAINST CARBON MONOXIDE EXPOSURE?

Always make sure there is enough fresh air in the room containing your appliance (whether it is gas, oil, wood or coal fired). If you have a

chimney or a flue, ensure it is not blocked up and also ensure that wall vents are not covered

If you plan to install a fire in a bedroom, do not use unflued appliances like paraffin heaters and cabinet heaters.

Get your chimney swept from top to bottom at least once a year by a qualified sweep

If you have appliances that use other fossil fuels (wood or coal fired), make sure they are serviced and maintained by a competent person. For information on competent persons' schemes, visit the Communities and Local Government websites

You must never allow an unqualified person to install or carry out work on an appliance

You must never block airbricks or other ventilation equipment – if draughts are a persistent problem in your home please ask the advice of the Property Team

DOES HSE RECOMMEND THE USE OF CARBON MONOXIDE ALARMS?

HSE strongly recommends the use of audible carbon monoxide (CO) alarms as a useful back-up precaution but they must not be regarded as a substitute for proper installation and maintenance of gas appliances by a Gas Safe Registered engineer. Before purchasing a CO alarm, always ensure it complies with British Standard EN 50291 and carries a British or European approval mark, such as a Kitemark. CO alarms should be installed, checked and serviced in line with the manufacturer's instructions.

You can be particularly at risk from CO poisoning when you are asleep, because you may not be aware of early CO symptoms until it is too late. Having an audible CO alarm could wake you and save your life.

DOES THE SDBF SUPPLY CARBON MONOXIDE ALARMS?

The SDBF will supply or reimburse, on request, a battery powered CO alarm for each appliance if there is not already a hard wired or battery operated CO alarm.

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS OF CARBON MONOXIDE POISONING?

Early symptoms of carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning can mimic many common ailments and may easily be confused with food poisoning, viral infections, flu or simple tiredness. Symptoms to look out for include:

- headaches
- breathlessness
- nausea
- dizziness
- collapse
- loss of consciousness
- tiredness
- drowsiness
- vomiting
- pains in the chest
- stomach pains
- erratic behaviour
- visual problems

For more information visit the NHS or telephone NHS 111 service by dialling 111.

If you or your family experience any of the above symptoms and you believe CO may be involved, you must seek urgent medical advice from either your GP or an accident and emergency department. You should ask for a blood or a breath test to confirm the presence of CO. Be aware, CO quickly leaves the blood and tests may be inaccurate if taken more than four hours after exposure has ceased.

HOW DO I KNOW IF I AM AT RISK FROM CARBON MONOXIDE?

Although carbon monoxide (CO) is a colourless, odourless and tasteless gas, signs that indicate incomplete combustion is occurring, resulting in the production of CO, include:

- Yellow or orange rather than blue flames (apart from fuel effect fires or flueless appliances which display this colour flame)
- Soot or yellow/brown staining around or on appliances
- Pilot lights that frequently blow out
- Increased condensation inside windows

WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I THINK MY APPLIANCE IS SPILLING CARBON MONOXIDE?

- Switch off the appliance and do not reuse until remedial action has been taken

- Shut off the gas supply at the meter control valve (if you know where it is)
- Open all doors and windows to ventilate the room - do not sleep in it
- Visit your GP urgently and tell him/her that you believe your symptoms may be related to carbon monoxide poisoning and request either a blood and/or breath sample
- Contact the Property Team to effect arrangements for repair

(Source: this document has been adapted from the Health and Safety Executive Website. <http://www.hse.gov.uk/gas/domestic/index.htm>)

APPENDIX 4: INSTRUCTIONS TO CHURCHWARDENS DURING VACANCIES

During vacancies the foregoing guidelines will be of use to churchwardens, who as part of their duties take on responsibility for benefice property. In particular they are required to ensure the following guidance is adhered to:

- a. The Churchwardens should notify the Property Team that the house has become vacant so that adjustments can be made in Council Tax payments to the local authority and that arrangements can be made by the Property Team to inspect the Property.
- b. Please ensure you obtain a full set of keys from the occupier and ensure that these are not handed out indiscriminately.
- c. All houses are insured with the Ecclesiastical Insurance Group. A condition of the block policy is that, when a house is empty, a security check (including the efficacy of locks) should be carried out by the Churchwardens or a deputy twice weekly, both inside as well as outside the premises. Inform the local police that the property is empty and if possible put up net curtains at windows and freestanding lamps on timers to make the property look lived in.
- d. Discretion is left with the PCC to decide if the telephone line should be retained and if it is the PCC should pay the telephone bills during the vacancy. If the telephone is discontinued a new number may be allocated when it is reconnected.
- e. While the house is unoccupied, the water, gas and electricity should be turned off at the mains for reasons of insurance. The Property Team will make arrangements for the water to be drained by a plumber from cisterns, pipes and radiators. Burst pipes are not covered by insurance.
- f. Parish equipment should be removed from the parsonage house unless the Archdeacon has consented to them remaining. It should not be assumed that a new successor in office would automatically consent to their return once the appointment has been made.

- g. Please contact the Property Team prior to ordering a repair and if you are in any doubt about the scope of work required. DO REMEMBER that the need for a minor – such as a slipped slate – may indicate larger imminent failures of which the Property Team may need to be aware. Major Repairs, of course, have to be considered by the SDBF. Unauthorised repair expenditure will not automatically be passed for payment, so it is always worthwhile contacting the office. In an emergency the Archdeacon should be contacted.
- h. Electricity/gas/oil/water and all service charges are the responsibility of the SDBF during a vacancy.

If the house is to be let out during the vacancy, **responsibility for the utility bills will be passed to the tenant.**
- i. The Churchwardens must notify the Property Team immediately when anything occurs which might involve a claim under the Insurance Policy.
- j. The SDBF does not maintain any contents insurance. The Churchwardens should ensure that appropriate contents insurance remains in place for any items remaining in the property.
- k. The SDBF are responsible for the upkeep of the garden of the parsonage house.
- l. When a new Incumbent or Priest in Charge comes to the Parish the removal expenses will be reimbursed in full by the SDBF if the removal is within the British Isles. A resettlement grant will also be paid towards the alterations of curtains and carpets. The PCC should not purchase carpets or curtains from the outgoing Incumbent.
- m. Prior to the moving-in date of the new occupier, ensure that the house is clean and tidy and that the heating and other systems are working so that the house is welcoming to the new occupier.
- n. The Property Team will deal directly with the appropriate local authority and water supplier to ensure both Council Tax and Water Rates bills are set up once an occupier has moved into a property.

- o. During a vacancy the Bishop can authorise the Sequestrators (i.e. the churchwardens and area dean) to grant a lease of a parsonage house under section 6 of the Church Property Measure 2018. The Property Team will arrange for the house to be let if time allows and this will be made with a suitable letting agent who will manage the tenancy. This provides income for the SDBF, reduces Common Fund, provides security for the property and reduces the duties placed on churchwardens.