

Guidance to dioceses and TEIs on support for ordinands who become parents

ISSUED BY THE MINISTRY COUNCIL

Basic principles

1. It is important to ensure that ordinands who become parents are properly supported and feel confident that they will receive the necessary support during any period of absence to enable them complete training and commence ministry. The underlying principles for supporting clergy office holders apply just as much to ordinands in training even though they need to be applied in the knowledge that ordinands have a different legal status from office holders (see paragraph 4).
2. It is desirable to encourage ordinands to share news or pregnancy confidentially with their DDO and TEI principal as soon as possible so that they can be made aware of the financial support and other help that will be available.
3. Attention is therefore drawn to considerations outlined in paragraph 2 of the covering note, and in particular the following.
 - a) How someone is treated by the Church at a potentially stressful period is likely to have a substantial impact on how they regard the diocese and the wider Church for the rest of their ministry. A timely investment could well pay dividends later, whereas a reluctance to provide support at the right time might damage or derail a potentially fruitful long-term ministry.
 - b) Sometimes particular sacrifices will have been made by ordinands and their families – for example a spouse changing jobs or moving house – and it is appropriate for the Church to provide appropriate support to ordinands and their families and enable them to complete their training.
 - c) At periods of transition (such as the moves between TEI and first curacy) may cause ordinands to experience particular n physical and mental stress, isolation, financial and material concern, vocational questions and a sense of dislocation. As well as starting in a new role and becoming a parent, ordinands will often be moving house as well. It is important, therefore, to be pastorally sensitive, and to keep any periods of uncertainty to a minimum when deciding what level of support is to be provided, particularly in cases where there is no legal entitlement to Statutory Maternity (and other) Pay and Leave. Particular care is needed around clergy housing and ensuring that arrangements for providing this are clearly communicated. We hope that this guidance will help dioceses to be clear about the support they will provide, and to keep uncertainty to a minimum.
 - d) This stress can be increased by uncertainty about the support someone facing parenthood can expect.

- e) Substantial sums and time will already probably have been invested in training. It is vital not to jeopardise this investment by being inflexible, or trying to avoid a comparatively small additional expenditure.
- f) Someone younger is likely to have many years of future ministry to give to the Church and is more likely to become a parent.

Legal status of ordinands

- 4. Ordinands are not office holders. During pre-ordination training, there is no legal entitlement to remuneration, and ordinands do not accrue pensionable service. In order to support ordinands, means-tested maintenance grants are often provided to full time students, but these are discretionary. Ordinands may have given up paid secular employment in order to study full time, and will often see their period of IME 1 training as part of their service to the Church, but, during their training, are not office holders but students. Therefore, ordinands have no *legal* entitlement to maternity (and other) pay or leave in the way that an office holder does.

Discretionary support recommended for ordinands

- 5. Ordinands who have been studying full time may not be eligible for statutory benefits¹. Dioceses are encouraged to provide whatever discretionary support is appropriate during any period of transition between finishing training and commencing curacy.
- 6. The level of support will need to take account of
 - the fact that training is provided on an annual cycle, and a period of absence is likely to mean that it is necessary to wait until a year has elapsed before recommencing training
 - ordinations usually only take place at Petertide and Michaelmas and office cannot start until after ordination.
- 7. It is recommended that during training
 - discretionary means-tested maintenance grants paid to those studying full time at a TEI should continue to be paid during any period of maternity or adoption related absence for up to one year to enable them to resume their studies;
 - accommodation should continue to be provided during that period;

¹ But students, particularly those in their first year, who have been working before starting their training, may qualify for statutory maternity allowance or even statutory maternity pay as a result of previous employment. For further details, see <https://www.gov.uk/maternity-allowance/eligibility>.

- thought should be given to providing options to attend formational events/courses while on maternity (and other) absence;
- efforts should be made to adopt flexible training for those returning to training from maternity (and other) related absence.

Pooling arrangements

8. It has been agreed that, when a diocese continues to pay a means-tested maintenance grant for up to a year during a period of maternity or adoption related absence while at a TEI, this may be included in the pooling system which shares the costs between the dioceses.
9. Absence should be allowed for up to two weeks for new fathers and secondary adopters, and they should continue to receive maintenance allowance. A maintenance allowance may need to be recalculated in the light of the new child and also any effect on spousal income.

Arrangements for ordinands who have completed training

10. Additional support may need to be made for those who are not office holders, for example someone who has finished training, but not yet started in a parochial office.
11. It will be important to be flexible as particular situations will vary. An ability to be flexible over training requirements can be helpful if this avoids the need to defer ordination. However, the period of training should not be cut short in order to accommodate maternity leave, if this results in a lower quality of training.
12. An ordinand is not an office holder until ordained, and ordination is conditional on obtaining a title post.
13. Ordinands who have accepted but not started a title post should inform their Director of Ordinands.
14. If a title post has been or can be agreed, it may be possible to defer ordination to this post, or to ordain to it before the start of or during maternity related absence.
15. If someone is not be able to take up a title post at the end of training for reasons of pregnancy or adoption, but is committed to or is seeking a title post, it is recommended that dioceses should consider paying a maintenance grant for up to a year as if the ordinand were still in training. Such maintenance grants may be included in the pooling.
16. Someone in this position may need support with housing, although legal advice will need to be taken in advance if it is intended to provide housing to someone who is not an office holder when that housing is normally given to an office holder for the better performance of duties.

17. Someone in this position is likely to be feeling particularly anxious and will need support. TEIs and dioceses should consider how best to provide this support to the ordinand in finding and taking up a suitable post.
18. There will need to be careful thought as to how far an ordinand in these circumstances will remain part of the TEI community and how far the ordinand will become part of the community where a title post will be served (if known) prior to commencing the post. This will include considering where it is most appropriate for the family to live.
19. These recommendations are intended to suggest a minimum level of support, but there is nothing to prevent a diocese from responding compassionately and creatively to the specifics of a particular situation where more support is needed.
20. The assumption should not be made that someone is called to self-supporting ministry simply because they have become or are about to become a parent.

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