

The General Synod of the Church of England has voted overwhelmingly in support of a new deal to co-ordinate and improve the approach to the care and well-being of clergy.

Members voted to adopt a covenant committing parishes, dioceses and the wider church as well as individual clergy to sharing responsibility for the welfare of ministers and their households.

The Revd Canon Simon Butler, who headed the working group which drew up the covenant, said: "There is a widespread acknowledgment that we can and must do better to support clergy in ways that promote good practice and prevent occasional stress becoming a harmful and chronic condition.

"It will be a great boost to many clergy to see the General Synod taking a lead, and I hope to see the wider church following in the coming months."

The measures backed by the General Synod include work to promote access to pastoral supervision for clergy including coaching, consultancy or mentoring, in line with support provided to other caring professions.

It follows growing demand for pastoral care in parishes amid complex social needs, a report from the working group noted.

Synod also approved plans to promote awareness of stress and the dangers of burnout as part of training for ordained ministry and new resources for licensing and induction services highlighting the care and well-being of clergy.

A report from the working group recommended that Parish Profiles – the description of a parish and its mission - and job descriptions for clergy undergo regular reviews to ensure they are realistic and that ministers have a clear idea of the role they are being asked to undertake.

Under plans approved today by Synod, clergy, parishes and dioceses will be invited to contribute their responses to the Covenant as part of a 'Big Conversation' inspired by a series of questions set out in a document prepared by the Working Group. Churches and dioceses will also be invited to adopt the Covenant.

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