



# The Appointment and Training of Training Incumbents

## Guidance on Good Practice

Revised 2017

*The formation of new clergy is essential to the on-going leadership of the church and to God's mission in a changing local and national context. The role of the training incumbent, in partnership with others, is critical to this. They take on an important role that lays down the foundations for a curate's future ministry as they move into posts of responsibility.*

*When this element of supervision, training and formation goes wrong it impacts enormously on individuals, the church, and our impact on the world. It is vitally important we get this phase of training right. To enable this, the church must support and train those identified and commissioned for the task.*

*It is clear from research, such as Dr Ruth Perrin's Vocational Pathways: Perspectives from Curacy,<sup>1</sup> that since the report's publication in 2014 progress has been made. It is also clear that there is some way still to go.*

*This revised and updated document is not the last word. It has been revised at a time of continuing change that will no doubt have an impact on how we choose to train our curates. Both the ambition to increase the number of new clergy (and hence curates) and the possibility of the introduction of a formal apprenticeship suggest that we will need to revisit it once more, i.e. to go on learning!*

*We hope this report will initiate further discussion as we continue to learn how best to develop training incumbents in the demanding role they do for the whole church and for the sake of the Gospel.*

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.ministrydevelopment.org.uk/initial-ministerial-education>

## Introduction

This guidance is intended to support the work of bishops and their ministry development officers (IME Phase 2 Officers, DDOs and others) in the appointment and training of training incumbents.

The formation of new clergy in their God given calling is a crucial task for the present and future of the Church, requiring discernment and the empowering of the Holy Spirit. The basic principles that lie behind this guidance are that our practice should be accountable, collaborative and responsible, taking seriously the demands of the role.

The role of the training incumbent is open to wide interpretation. This working group has focused on their role in supporting the development of a curate in the context of the Ecclesiastical Offices (Terms of Service) Regulations and the need to ensure the appointment of demonstrably capable Incumbents and Assistant Ministers.<sup>2</sup> In preparing this guidance we have also been working consciously within our present paradigm of an ‘apprenticeship’ model<sup>3</sup> with a curate serving as an assistant minister for several years and the incumbent of the parish(es) holding the role of training incumbent, imagining that this is where the majority of our practice will be rooted for the present. (For convenience, this guidance will normally simply refer to the curate’s or incumbent’s ‘parish’, though the reality may well be that they serve multiple parishes.)

However this is not intended to prevent dioceses exploring new patterns for the deployment of curates, or their support. The language of the report also assumes dioceses working independently, though it may be that working in partnership with other dioceses for aspects of this is a more effective approach.

This report was originally produced in 2014. It has been lightly revised by the CMD Panel in 2017.

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<sup>2</sup> Whilst also recognising that many of the notes on good practice also apply for the selection and training of those supporting licensed lay ministers in their initial ministerial education and development.

<sup>3</sup> Work is also being done to develop a formal government-approved Apprenticeship suitable for curates, which would be consistent with the church’s vision for curacy and would enable access to government funding.

## I. Selection of Training Incumbents

I.1. Careful selection of training incumbents is important and should be based upon the ability to train rather than on the Incumbent's need for assistance.

I.2. In order to assist in the selection of suitable training incumbents and parishes each diocese should have a clear statement of expectations. The criteria in Shaping the Future are a good starting point. However, it is useful to have a more detailed explanation of what the role involves and the qualities demanded of a training incumbent, including e.g. having their own consistent pattern of personal prayer, a commitment to and participation in their own continuing ministerial development, collaborative skills, self-awareness, and the ability to enable reflection on practice and theology. This enables a number of positive elements of good practice:

- Exploration of suitability, potentially in the context of MDR, i.e. enabling someone to grow into the role
- Initial assessment of training readiness
- Realistic discussions with PCCs about what is involved
- Open and transparent appointments processes with the possibility of applications alongside invitations to incumbents to consider the role

I.3. A clear statement of expectations makes it more possible to say to an incumbent that s/he is not currently ready to carry out the training incumbent role, and to give constructive feedback about why this view is being taken. Saying 'No' should be taken as an opportunity both for ministerial development and in contexts where the underlying issue is the need for additional ministerial resource in the parish, for creative conversations about how this might be achieved through other means. If, in ruling out the possibility of receiving a curate, issues of the incumbent's capability arise, these should be addressed.

I.4. The appointment of a Training Incumbent should be made on the basis of shared wisdom and following a personal interview with the Incumbent to ascertain such matters as continued spiritual life, reading, understanding of supervision, and, experience in enabling the ministry of others. It is also vital that the Training Incumbent is aware that a curate is a colleague in whose nurturing the Training Incumbent is sharing, not a junior assistant who will serve as 'their curate'.

I.5. Particularly useful information here may come from the observation of the potential training incumbent's ability to nurture lay ministry within the parish(es) they serve and their approach to vision setting within the parish. A successful Training Incumbent is one who will have already nurtured and supervised ministries in the parish and who has a collaborative approach to vision setting. They will need to have been in their present parish for long enough to demonstrate these behaviours are stable in this context. Those who can helpfully comment on the suitability of a potential training incumbent should be consulted as a matter of course. These are likely to include: Archdeacons, Bishops, DDO, and IME Phase 2 Officer, particularly with reference to training history and feedback from previous curate(s) which should always be taken into account.

I.6. Appointments into pioneering and mixed-mode posts require considerable care and if experience and expertise is limited in the diocese consultation with colleagues in the region and nationally should take place. Their supervision and training should be in partnership with a Training Incumbent who understands inherited models of ministry alongside someone with particular experience/knowledge of Pioneer Ministry (see further the guidance issued in 2009 and the Church Army report on good practice in deploying and working with pioneer curates, available at <http://www.churcharmy.org.uk/Publisher/File.aspx?ID=154975>).

1.7. In the case of Self Supporting Ministers it may for practical reasons be impossible (or at least highly undesirable) to place them in a parish other than the one in which they reside. Where the curate is an Ordained Local Minister there will, of course, be no expectation of them moving parish. In these cases it will be essential to offer training at an early stage to enable the incumbent to be considered a possible training incumbent and if necessary to rule out the possibility. It may also be desirable to offer temporary placements to such curates to extend experience where this is not available within the home parish. Where the incumbent's ability to train a curate is found to be lacking it will be necessary for another person to undertake all or part of the role (either as sole or joint training incumbent, or in a mentoring capacity for the curate).

## 2. Training of training incumbents

### 2.1. Working with and identifying potential.

It is essential that potential training incumbents understand and own the expectations of the diocese upon them for this role before accepting it: if a curacy is agreed (at the request of the Bishop), and the Incumbent is only subsequently informed about what is expected of them, this is a recipe for significant difficulties. The incumbent may well not then own key elements of the curacy process, rather than seeing agreement to work within this process as a condition of the agreement that s/he should be a training incumbent.

This may be facilitated by a one-to-one meeting with an IME 2 Officer or equivalent, and/or by setting out in writing what the role entails. However, serious consideration should also be given to potential training incumbents undertaking formal training, as part of a process of mutual discernment, about the appropriateness of their taking on this role. This may take the form of existing specialist provision but could also include participation in a diocesan leadership development programme, or a training incumbent training programme. It should be made clear that this is a process of discernment. An important element is the inclusion of some form of peer and tutor observation, ideally in a supervisory and training interaction. This might be best achieved through well-structured training exercises, with observation.

### 2.2. Before each curate arrives:

**Note:** This section is entitled, 'Before *Each* Curate Arrives', because it is essential that those who have previously been training incumbents reflect upon their work with a former colleague and learn from it. Even experienced training incumbents therefore need to engage in some substantial process of review and planning before each new colleague arrives. This may be achieved by experienced and new training incumbents undertaking training together – and there are some real advantages in this, in terms of the sharing of experience; nevertheless, consideration may need to be given to a different course for experienced training incumbents, especially in dioceses with large numbers of curates.

Substantial training should take place at this stage, a residential component is desirable in order to model the space and time necessary for learning and to convey the seriousness of this activity. This area of training is difficult and demanding, and consideration should be given to various ways of sharing resources across dioceses. It should include the following elements:

#### 2.2.1. The curacy process:

Training Incumbents need to understand the purpose of the Church of England curacy in the light of developments since the Hind Report, including the use of the House of Bishops' Agreed Formation Criteria in

shaping training, and the process for Assessment at the End of Curacy (AEC). They need to be clear about how these national guidelines have been contextualised in their own diocese's curacy process. Training in the curacy process will therefore include work on:

- understanding the nature of the curate's ministry prior to ordination and the gifts and experience that he or she brings to ordained ministry
- understanding the nature of the training the curate has already experienced and exploring their expectations as to what learning looks like;
- working with the final college/course/scheme report in identifying training goals;
- devising learning / ministerial agreements, including clear annual learning / training goals;
- any portfolio or other system for monitoring learning that the diocese makes use of;
- engagement with diocesan IME Phase 2 training provision;
- writing evidence-based reports; and
- the diocesan system for Assessment at the End of Curacy (AEC).

#### 2.2.2. Supervision:

Training in supervision needs to include the following elements:

- understanding the purpose of supervision and its functions (planning and managing the curacy, supporting the curate, reflection and learning) in the specific context of the Church of England curacy. It may be helpful here to compare and contrast supervision in the curacy context with supervision in other professions, in order to be clear about a model of supervision suitable for the supervision of a curate;
- good practice in supervision (e.g. the frequency of meeting, the priority of supervision meetings, the content of meetings, keeping records, reviewing how supervision is working, etc.);
- the skills involved in good supervision (e.g. listening, giving feedback, enabling reflection, giving space for curates to explore their feelings about and responses to challenging incidents in ministry), and the qualities that enable good supervision (e.g. good self-organisation, self-awareness, being unthreatened by a colleague's abilities, genuine concern for a colleague's well-being, etc.);
- handling difficulties, poor performance or conflict.

This training should provide opportunities for observed practice and feedback; the learning of skills demands not only understanding theory, but the opportunity to practice these skills in observed situations and to receive feedback. Formation requires a breadth and depth of experience that will bring spiritual challenge as well as challenge in skills.

#### 2.2.3. Diaconal and priestly formation and ministry/incumbency skills:

Within the curacy, the recently ordained need to be helped to develop specific skills, but this takes place within an overarching process of formation involving the development of spirituality and ministerial character. The training of training incumbents therefore needs to give space and attention both to offering models and techniques for coaching curates in specific skills, and also to understanding and working with this broader formational vision. This includes the way in which the Church community is able to discern and follow vision and to enable a wide variety of ministries.

#### 2.4. During the curacy:

Training Incumbents should be offered support and ongoing training once the curacy has begun. There may be different models for this, and questions over how it can be adequately resourced, but the following should all be considered:

- opportunities to meet with the IME Phase 2 Officer (or other appropriate diocesan appointee) to reflect on their work as a training incumbent and discuss issues and challenges;
- training events on specific areas of the work (e.g. giving feedback, training colleagues in preaching or liturgy, etc.);
- opportunities to meet with other training incumbents to reflect on their work in this role and discuss issues and challenges (although issues of the curates' confidentiality need to be considered carefully here); this work could periodically take the form of group supervision or action learning sets;
- opportunities to engage in training alongside their colleagues.

Training issues here overlap with those of the supervision and support of training incumbents. Dioceses should make arrangements for training incumbents to be supervised themselves in relation to the supervisory work they are doing with curates, and/or provide opportunities for them and their curate to meet a mentor on at least two occasions a year to discuss their training/working relationship, and give opportunities for issues to be discussed with a trusted third party. In addition that curates should be asked periodically to feedback in the form of appreciative enquiry on the training they are receiving.

## 2.5. Following the curacy

It is best practice that training incumbents should be debriefed. Diocesan Officers may require support and training to enable them to do this with confidence. Curates will usually have the opportunity to speak with sponsoring Bishops at the time of the assessment at the end of curacy, extending this to include a meeting with Training Incumbents would be desirable. However there is limited evidence of general practice in the debriefing of training incumbents.

## 3. Learning Agreements

3.1. Learning agreements are intended to help plan out the training over the span of the curacy. They should include reference to:

- the curate's end of IME Phase 1 report (NB training needs are not just academic). It is essential that the training incumbent and the IME Phase 2 Officer should have access to the final report from college, course or scheme.
- the House of Bishops' Formation Criteria and particular forms of assessment operating in the diocese. These should clearly differentiate expectations for Assistant and Incumbent status ministers.
- the curate's expected ministry, so that it is clear that learning/training is part of the agreed work of the curate, and that it is directly related to the valuable ministry in which s/he is engaged.
- opportunities for learning in the parish and beyond

3.2. They should be regularly reviewed by the Training Incumbent, Curate, and IME Phase 2 Officer (or equivalent).

3.3. The learning agreement should be engaged with in any transfer from Assistant to Incumbent status ministry. It also serves to record learning in the case of a temporarily suspended or incomplete curacy. It represents, along with any assessment, an important record of what experience, further training and formation may be required.

Note: Whether the training is offered as Incumbent or Assistant status ministry it is important to remember that training is about depth and breadth. It is most unlikely that a curate offering only limited time in parish ministry (less than half-time over a four year curacy) will be able to adequately fulfil the House of Bishops Formation Criteria for an Incumbent status ministry over a normal curacy period.

## 4. The Training Handbook

4.1 How you go about training curates and training incumbents should be documented so all know what is expected. The sorts of things to include are:

- Roles and expectations of a training incumbent
- Learning agreements
- What to do if things go wrong – this should make clear informal and formal processes

If it is not in the handbook it is not going to be known. It should complement and signpost the diocesan handbook or wherever clergy terms and conditions for the Diocese are to be found. Matters that were historically in a 'Curates Handbook' are now part of terms and conditions.

As the Handbook will be the first point of reference a cross reference would be useful. Dioceses need to ensure training incumbents receive an up-to-date copy of this as part of their preparation for receiving a curate, for example through giving them a physical copy, or one on a data stick, or having the incumbent acknowledge receipt of an email to which it is attached.

## 5. Resources

J. Harrison and R. Innes *Clergy in a Complex Age: Responses to the Guidelines for the Professional Conduct of the Clergy*, SPCK (2016)

K. Lamdin and D. Tilley *Supporting New Ministers in The Local Church*, SPCK (2007)

J. Leach *Pastoral Supervision: A Handbook*, SCM Press (2009)

R. Simpson, P 128 *Supervising a Curate: A Short Guide to a Complex Task*, Grove Booklets (2011)

T. Ling and L. Bentley (eds) *Developing Faithful Ministers: A Theological and Practical Handbook*, SCM Press (2012)

*Dignity at Work – Working together to reduce incidents of bullying and harassment*, Archbishops' Council (2008)

*Guidelines on Deployment to title post and IME 4-7 for Ordained Pioneer Ministers*, Ministry Division (2009)

*Shaping the Future – new patterns of training for lay and ordained*, Ministry Division (2006), especially Appendices 3-5