

GENERAL SYNOD
CODE OF PRACTICE ON MISSION INITIATIVES
Explanatory Memorandum

1. The House of Bishops' Code of Practice on Bishops' Mission Orders is drawn up under section 84 of the Mission and Pastoral Committee 2011 and is laid before General Synod for approval in accordance with section 84(3) of the Measure, to replace the existing Code of Practice approved in March 2008. It replaces the Code of Practice issued in March 2008 and updated in July 2012.
2. A Bishop's Mission Order (BMO) is the instrument by which a bishop sets up or recognises a mission initiative, an established means by which the mission of the Church of England is carried forward, in parallel to the parish system, through fostering or developing other forms of Christian community. The legislative provisions for making BMOs are set out in Part 7 of the 2011 Measure.
3. Section 10 of the Mission and Pastoral etc. (Amendment) Measure 2018 has amended the procedure for making a BMO and simplified the legislative requirements for such Orders. These changes derive from the initial tranche of work under the Simplification strand of the Renewal and Reform programme.
4. It will now be possible for a BMO to be made indefinite from the outset (whereas previously the maximum duration was five years, after which the order must be renewed if it was to continue in effect).
5. When establishing a mission initiative, the Bishop is required to appoint a Visitor who exercises oversight of the initiative and provides encouragement and advice, as well as carrying out a statutory range of duties. Section 10 simplifies and replaces some of these specific requirements with a general power for the Visitor to take such steps as he or she thinks appropriate for "ensuring the proper governance of the mission initiative".
6. As well as updating the House of Bishops' Code to reflect the legislative changes, the opportunity has been taken to simplify and shorten the Code itself. In particular, the amended version simplifies the guidance on the discretionary initial exploration stage (see Part 2 of the Code), reflecting concerns that this may have discouraged the use of BMOs by presenting an unnecessarily complicated process prior to undertaking statutory consultation.
7. The flowcharts have also been updated to reflect the legislative changes and some of the earlier background material setting the context for the introduction of BMOs has been removed.
8. The skeletons for Orders and Supplementary Instruments do not form part of the Code but have also been updated and will be separately available to download from the Church of England website.

9. The Code of Practice specifically focusses on the process of setting up and reviewing BMOs. Other guidance and good practice is available elsewhere, for example on fresh expressions and pioneer ministry. Further work is in hand on separate guidance on the office holder/employment status of those working in BMOs.

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