

## **Why we have produced guidance to support clergy and ordinands who become parents**

1. Those called to public ministry are also called to other vocations. These enrich ordained ministry. There are times when clergy and ordinands who have, or are about to, become, parents are likely need additional support if their family life and, as a consequence, their ministry is to flourish.
2. Discussions about support for clergy and ordinands who become parents tend to focus on the potential additional costs. It is important to see this support as an investment and bear in mind the wider context.
  - a) How someone is treated by the Church at a potentially stressful period of their lives 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 clergy and their families – for example a spouse changing jobs or moving house – and it is appropriate for the Church to ensure that the support provided to clergy and their families is sufficient. If a spouse has had to resign from work voluntarily in order for the cleric to take up a suitable post, the spouse will find that he or she cannot apply for benefits because they had a job that they relinquished by choice. This can further compound hardship, add to pressure and make diocesan support even more essential.
  - c) Research<sup>1</sup> has shown that during periods of transition (such as the moves between curacy and first incumbent status post) clergy tend to experience physical and mental stress, isolation, financial and material concern, vocational questions and a sense of dislocation within the Church. This stress can be increased by uncertainty about the support someone facing parenthood can expect, particularly in cases where there is no legal entitlement to Statutory Maternity (and other) Pay and Leave, and will be unsure what to expect. 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) Variations in the level of support provided by dioceses can lead to perceptions of unfair treatment. Whilst dioceses have a degree of flexibility to pay more than the statutory minimum, the recommended level needs to be set at a sufficiently high level to ensure that stipendiary office holders are not disadvantaged at a time when they may be experiencing particular stress.
  - e) Substantial sums and time will already 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. Generosity and humanity on the

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<sup>1</sup> Living Ministry September 2018

part of the institutional Church is more likely to produce a fruitful harvest of long and fulfilling ministry.

- 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.
3. Ordained ministry will be exercised over a lifetime in a variety of ways that includes (but is not restricted to) training curacies, parochial ministry (both stipendiary and self-supporting), ministry as an employee (whether in a chaplaincy or a diocesan role), and ministry carried out with the Bishop's Permission to Officiate (usually but not always in retirement). Ensuring that ordinands and clergy who become parents are properly supported, therefore, should be seen as a timely investment that helps to enable ministry to be provided over a substantial period.
4. Having clear guidance in place that shows that clergy and ordinands who become parents will be supported benefits the Church's mission in a number of ways.
- a. Proper support for clergy and ordinands who become parents enables them to flourish and have a fruitful ministry.
  - b. Clergy need to be able to engage with all parts of the community, and be diverse, and, in that diversity, be representative of the communities they serve. Younger clergy – especially women clergy - are an under-represented group at present. Evidence<sup>2</sup> suggests they may be more likely to consider the possibility of a call to ordained ministry if there is guidance in place that visibly demonstrates that they will be supported if they become parents. It is recommended that the commitment of the senior leadership in the diocese to proper pastoral support for clergy and ordinands who become parents is made clear by having a policy including the policy on the diocesan website that is accessible to clergy, parishioners, and prospective ordinands.
  - c. Supporting parents in ministry will show that their ministry is valued by the Church and help them to be positive role models for others considering their vocations.
  - d. It is important for the Church to demonstrate that its care for children and family life goes beyond compliance with safeguarding requirements by supporting clergy parents in providing proper care for their children and dependants.

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<sup>2</sup> The research into young vocations conducted in 2015 shows young women struggling with the view that marriage/motherhood and ordained ministry are not compatible ([https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2017-10/journeys\\_towards\\_ordination.pdf](https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2017-10/journeys_towards_ordination.pdf)).

- e. It demonstrates that the Church is in the vanguard of good practice in its treatment of clergy office holders who become parents.
  5. The support provided (whether in the form of pay or housing or additional cover) will not always be something to which the recipient has a legal entitlement. For example, there is no entitlement to statutory maternity pay unless you have been paid for six months; and ordinands have no legal entitlement to support, whether in the form of discretionary means-tested grants or to maternity (and other) leave and pay. However, the primary consideration in every case is that support should be provided at the appropriate level. Sometimes this level will be greater than the legal entitlement.
  6. Diocesan family friendly policies - along with any supporting documents - should be fully available and accessible not only to clergy but to all members of the public. This will help to ensure not only that lay people are aware of the provisions, but also to reassure those considering the possibility of a vocation, that they will be supported by the Church in exploring their vocation and training for ministry.
  7. Dioceses should, therefore, ensure that their family friendly policies are available on their website.
  8. Sometimes clergy office holders may not wish to return immediately to full time ministry after maternity (and other) leave. They may request a temporary variation in how they carry out the duties of their office. The procedure for this can be found at <https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2019-04/Requesting%20time%20off%20or%20adjustments%20to%20care%20for%20a%20dependant%20April%202019.pdf>
- This procedure is provided separately as it also applies to clergy office holders who wish to request variations in how they carry out their duties in order to look after other dependants than children, such as a spouse or an elderly relative.
9. This guidance is provided in the expectation that some women will be offered and will commence their offices when they are already pregnant.
  10. The Equality Act contains provisions against discrimination on the grounds of pregnancy and maternity. The implications of the Equality Act for clergy recruitment are discussed in the guidance on clergy appointments at <https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2018-11/Annexes%20to%20Guidance%20on%20parochial%20appointments.pdf>. This guidance recommends, on grounds of equity that all appointments are treated for practical purposes as if they were subject to the Equality Act.
  11. This guidance is about maternity, paternity, adoption, and parental leave, but some of the principles underlying it may have wider application, for example in the case of clergy and spouses who choose to foster, and clergy who look after dependants who are not children. It is important to show pastoral sensitivity in all these situations.

12. Clergy are likely to continue to need support after returning from maternity (and other) leave, and it helpful to check that they are receiving this if they need it.
13. Concerns have been expressed about the implications of these provisions for diocesan employees, who are clergy, for example Diocesan Directors of Ordinands. However, the terms and conditions of clergy office holders are not strictly comparable with those of diocesan employees.
  - Clergy office holders have to provide their own cover during maternity leave and are not required to carry the instructions of an employer and in practice write their own role descriptions;
  - Clergy office holders have no set hours, and do not lose their entitlement to SMP if they carry out work during their maternity leave, so they can remain in contact with their congregations and the diocese without KIT days;
  - A house is provided for the better performance of an office holder's duties and he or she remains entitled to live in it during the period of maternity (and other) leave.
14. These considerations, however, do not apply to clergy who are employees of the DBF, and it will be more appropriate for their terms and conditions to be like those of other diocesan employees, although they may not find it easy when they are used to operating as office holders. But this is an adjustment that clergy moving from parochial ministry to hospital chaplaincy have to make, and this is no different.
15. Sharing good practice, tips and hints including creative communications and real life stories would be helpful. If you have good practice to share, please send details to [hr.clergy@churchofengland.org](mailto:hr.clergy@churchofengland.org) and your Dean of Women's Ministry.