

## Living Ministry Research Briefings

Full report: *Moving in Power: Transitions in Ordained Ministry* [www.churchofengland.org/living-ministry](http://www.churchofengland.org/living-ministry)

### Transitions Between Posts

Movement between posts beyond curacy often results in improved wellbeing and less stress than the other transitions considered in the research. Although the challenges of relocating still exist, the move (and its timing) is usually a choice and, unless the new role is bigger in scope or seniority, there is little change in level of responsibility. However, the factors that initiate the transition may be stressful: several participants moved in order to exit a difficult situation. A key contributor to wellbeing and often a factor in deciding to change job, is authenticity in one's role: the ability 'to be me.'

#### Wellbeing challenges

- Before the move itself, the **situation triggering the transition** may be detrimental to wellbeing for a range of reasons including vocational, interpersonal and health-related. Clergy may feel trapped in a job or have difficulty finding a more suitable role.
- Relocation brings with it **temporary demands on energy levels** of familiarisation with a new role, new relationships and the local area, along with the physical challenges of moving house.
- **Workload** may increase, especially if moving to a bigger role, potentially impacting on spiritual, physical, mental, relational and participation wellbeing.
- Clergy may feel **isolated** in a new role, especially if they have also moved diocese.

#### Suggestions

##### For the person in transition

- Pay attention to continued and new support structures and networks, including which to continue from the previous situation (e.g. contact with IME 1 or 2 peers; spiritual direction; support from family, friends and previous colleagues); how to develop new sources of support relevant to the new role and context (e.g. new colleagues; local community groups; local church networks; mentoring; coaching); and which to protect and nurture (e.g. time with family and friends).
- Take time to prepare families emotionally as well as practically for a move.
- Develop a range of sources of support and feedback, considering what your needs are for different aspects of wellbeing, what is beneficial, and what each source provides, e.g. spiritual direction, mentoring (formal and informal), buddies, informal peer groups, facilitated groups, coaching, family and friends.
- Consider using personality or team profiling tools to facilitate team relationships.



### For the diocese

- Consider what kinds of support the person moving is likely to need and what can be offered to provide this, e.g. facilitated groups; buddying; mentoring; coaching; counselling; and ongoing accompanied vocational discernment.
- Ensure clergy receive pro-active, periodic contact to check how they are doing, especially during the first weeks and months of a new post.
- Consider the situation and needs of families during transition periods, including regarding schooling, encouraging family time and connecting clergy spouses as appropriate.
- Invite clergy to connect and participate in the diocese early on following a move, e.g. through clergy conferences, bishops' social or study invitations, and/or discussions with CMD or wellbeing officers.
- Consider wellbeing issues during recruitment processes.
- Take time to understand why clergy have moved from their previous role (if they are willing to share) and how this might affect their wellbeing.
- Ensure housing is adequate and ready in time for moving day.

### For parishes and patrons

- Consider wellbeing issues during recruitment processes.
- Be considerate with demands placed on clergy, especially during early days in a new role.
- Consider the situation and needs of families during transition periods, including regarding privacy, expectations and family time.
- Ensure housing is adequate and ready in time for moving day.

### Resources

- **Dioceses** offer support, advice and resources on most issues. Some have dedicated wellbeing officers.
- The National Ministry Team's **How Clergy Thrive** resources are available online at <https://www.churchofengland.org/resources/diocesan-resources/ministry/ministry-development/living-ministry/living-ministry>
- **Bridge Builders** offers people in Christian leadership roles training, coaching and consultancy in the interpersonal relationships and handling conflict.
- **Clergy Support Trust** offers financial support (including health and wellbeing grants) and other initiatives to promote clergy wellbeing.
- The **Sheldon Hub** offers an independent online community for those in ministry and a bank of resources on wellbeing, including a section on 'changing roles.'
- **St Luke's** works with dioceses to provide reflective practice groups and other wellbeing support.
- **Facebook** groups for peer support: 'Clergy Family Network' and 'Clergy Mummies.'
- Claire Pedrick & Su Blanch (2011), **How to Make Great Appointments in the Church: Calling, Competence and Chemistry**, SPCK.

