

## Living Ministry Research Briefings

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

### Ordinand to Curacy

The early period of curacy, following the profound milestone of ordination, brings new working patterns, relationships and rhythms of prayer and the loss of some support networks, which can be difficult for families as well as curates themselves. However, this transition also often brings greater financial stability and vocational fulfilment.

#### Wellbeing challenges

- Moving to a new role and a new location poses **temporary challenges to energy levels**, from the physical requirements of the move and familiarisation with people, places, systems and tasks.
- **Housing** varies enormously, from high quality refurbishments to dirty, neglected properties. It contributes to the tone of welcome to the parish and impacts anxiety levels and initial relationships.
- While **finances** generally improve for stipendiary clergy on the move from ordinand to curate, some struggle between their last training grant (paid in advance) and their first stipend (paid in arrears).
- Curacy involves **new levels of demand**, varying according to previous experience. 25% of the 24 curates discussed workload and time management as a major issue occupying their mind.
- Some people **struggle to find curacies** for a range of reasons, leading to anxiety and sometimes feelings of rejection and disorientation.
- The **relationship between curate and training incumbent** is crucial and, in the early stages, can pose challenges relating to personality, working styles, expectations and power dynamics.
- Moving from a TEI environment to curacy involves **loss of established support structures**, including for many the close community of a college, sometimes resulting in a sense of isolation.
- **Families** also lose support structures and face the challenges of relocation. The transition to curacy may involve sacrifices both for and by families.
- Challenges to **spiritual wellbeing** include: loss of spiritual support, changes in working patterns, different traditions, increased workload, and facilitating rather than receiving ministry.
- While **vocational fulfilment** may increase, curates may also feel restricted in their new role. Some struggle to reconcile different aspects of identity or to constantly switch between roles.

#### Suggestions

##### For the ordinand/curate

- Consider changes and continuities in support structures: which to continue (e.g. contact with IME 1 peers; links with a TEI; spiritual direction; support from family, friends and colleagues); which new ones to start (e.g. new colleagues; community groups; local church networks; mentoring; coaching; diocesan groups); 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.
- Consider how to access preferred ways of worshipping if these differ from the curacy context.



### For TEIs during IME 1

- Provide: a solid grounding in spiritual habits and practices; theological and practical reflection on ordained ministry and leadership; and time-management training where appropriate, e.g. for those already juggling multiple roles.
- Consider how best to support, practically and emotionally, ordinands struggling to find curacies.
- Consider how best to support and care for those involved in formal processes.
- Consider the feasibility of continuing relationships with alumni where appropriate.

### For the diocese

- Ensure diocesan-owned housing is adequate and ready in time for moving day.
- Address cashflow difficulties between the end of training grants and the start of curacy stipends, especially if curacies are delayed.
- Offer practice-based time-management support for new curates, including mentoring.
- Consider how best to support those struggling to find their curacy or next post.
- Facilitate or encourage personality profiling and discussion of working relationships between curate and training incumbent (and the wider team where appropriate) from the start of curacy.
- Consider what support the person moving may need and how to provide this, e.g. facilitated groups; buddying; mentoring; coaching; counselling; and ongoing accompanied vocational discernment.
- Consider the situations and needs of families during transition periods, including schooling, family time and support for 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 wellbeing officers, as well as IME 2.

### For parishes

- Ensure parish-owned housing is adequate and ready in time for moving day.
- Consider the situations and needs of families during transition periods, including regarding privacy, expectations and family time.

## Resources

- **TEIs** and **dioceses** (often through training incumbents and IME 2 officers) offer support, advice and resources.
- 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>.
- **Facebook** support groups: 'Curates in Training,' 'Clergy Family Network' and 'Clergy Mummies.'
- The **Ordinands' Association** supports and represents those training for ordination.
- Matthew Caminer with Martyn Percy & Beaumont Stevenson (2015), **Curacies and How to Survive Them**, SPCK.
- Jon Marlow (2020), **Thriving in Curacy: Overcoming Problems in the Placement and Training of Curates**, Grove Books.

