

## Invitation to Tender

# Understanding the Wellbeing of Disabled Clergy

**Contact:** Dr Liz Graveling, [liz.graveling@churchofengland.org](mailto:liz.graveling@churchofengland.org)

### Key dates:

Deadline for submissions: 30<sup>th</sup> October 2023

Project completion: 30<sup>th</sup> November 2024

## 1. The Ministry Development Team

The Ministry Development Team is a department of the Church of England's National Church Institutions (NCIs) and directed by the Ministry Council. The task of the Ministry Development Team is to renew lay and ordained ministry throughout the Church of England. We do this by providing advice and support to dioceses, bishops and theological education institutions. We oversee the selection, training and deployment of ordained ministers, ensuring the Church is well equipped to serve God in living out its mission for many generations to come.

## 2. Background

Within the Church of England there have been recent calls for increased attention to the experiences of disabled people, both lay and ordained. A paper brought to General Synod by the Disability Task Group in July 2022 commented, 'If the Church is serious about us all having a new dignity and the fullness of life for all God's people, then disabled people must be freed to participate fully in ministry and mission and therefore feel fully included.'<sup>1</sup> More widely, the Emerging Church vision unveiled in 2021 states as one of its priorities, 'a church which is younger and more diverse' and, as one of its bold outcomes, 'a Church of England which fully represents the communities we serve in age and diversity'.<sup>2</sup>

There is currently little reliable data quantifying disabled clergy in the Church of England. In 2005, a 'disabilities audit' of clergy reported that 3.4% of respondents indicated they had a disability as defined by the UK Disability Discrimination Act 1995, compared with 10% of those in professional occupations in the UK.<sup>3</sup> A 2019 report commissioned by Ministry Division (now the Ministry Development Team) estimated that 15% of ordinands may be disabled and set out recommendations for funding support for disabled ordinands.<sup>4</sup> Most recent data in April 2023 from the longitudinal Living Ministry research into clergy wellbeing, which included clergy ordained since 2006, indicated that 9.4% of respondents considered themselves long-term sick or disabled, of which 36% said that their day-to-day activities were limited a lot and 44% a little.<sup>5</sup> The July 2022 General Synod paper noted that



As recently as October-December 2020 government data revealed that 8.4 million people of working age (16-64) reported that they were disabled, which is 20% of the working age population. And the pandemic has left more than 2 million people in the UK with Long Covid.<sup>6</sup>

Very little research has so far been conducted into the experiences of disabled clergy in the UK.<sup>7</sup> Living Ministry is a ten-year research project (<https://www.churchofengland.org/living-ministry>) conducted by the Ministry Development Team, exploring how ordained ministers flourish in ministry. The research follows four cohorts of clergy through their ministry at two-year intervals, each wave comprising a quantitative survey and a qualitative panel study. The programme has also published a series of additional, focussed studies including reports on the wellbeing of UK minority ethnic/ global majority heritage clergy (October 2022<sup>8</sup>) and the wellbeing of working-class clergy (forthcoming in October 2023). Because of low numbers (whether due to under-representation or to unwillingness to disclose disability), the longitudinal Living Ministry research has not been able to explore issues of disability in depth, although it is clearly an area with potential implications for wellbeing. To understand how positive and negative wellbeing are experienced by disabled ordained ministers, the Ministry Development Team is therefore seeking to commission a further stand-alone, qualitative research project.

### 3. Aims & objectives

#### Aim

To understand and contribute to improving the experiences and wellbeing of disabled clergy.

#### Objectives

- Identify disabled clergy's particular experiences of wellbeing.
- Identify ways of improving the wellbeing of disabled clergy.

#### Anticipated questions to be explored

- What are the particular factors that influence, threaten and pose barriers to the wellbeing of disabled clergy?
- How do experiences vary within this group and how does disability intersect with other factors affecting wellbeing?
- On what strategies and resources do disabled clergy draw to sustain, enhance and overcome barriers and threats to their wellbeing?
- How and how far is their wellbeing supported or hindered by the church at different levels?
- How can the church at different levels support and improve the wellbeing of disabled clergy?
- How far is the Living Ministry wellbeing framework<sup>9</sup> adequate to understand the experiences of disabled clergy?



### Anticipated policy implications

- Support the work of the Ministry Council:
  - Inform diocesan senior clergy and staff about structural barriers to the wellbeing of disabled clergy and how best to support these ministers;
  - Inform national, diocesan and theological education processes for disabled clergy, ordinands, and people in the discernment process;
- Inform the work of the national Disability Task Group;
- Inform the work of the Facilitation Group for the Covenant for Clergy Care and Wellbeing and the 'Big Conversation' on clergy wellbeing at all levels of the church;
- Contribute to the national Church of England Vision and Strategy, specifically the bold outcome of 'a Church of England which fully represents the communities we serve in age and diversity'.

### 4. Method

The detailed methods to be employed will be determined by the researcher(s), in consultation with the Advisory Group. We envisage the main method to be qualitative interviews and/or focus groups, or similar, with clergy who are Deaf, disabled, neurodivergent, or have experience of long-term mental health conditions or chronic illness. The Church of England does not hold reliable data on disability so other approaches will be required for sampling and recruitment. The Advisory Group may be able to assist with suggestions of and access to formal and informal networks.

### 5. Deliverables

The following outputs will be required:

- 1) A full report of the research findings, to be published on the Church of England website and disseminated by the Ministry Development Team within the national church, dioceses and theological education institutions as appropriate.
- 2) An accessible, practical summary or other resource, based on the research findings, for senior clergy, diocesan staff and individual clergy, to be available on the Church of England website alongside other Living Ministry resources.

### 6. Contractor

We welcome applications from individuals and teams. As well as possessing expertise in qualitative research methods, the researcher or research team should:

- Include researcher(s) who have lived experience of disability;



- Be respected and trusted by disabled clergy who may be reluctant to share their experiences, and particularly by disabled global majority heritage clergy;
- Be sympathetic to the Christian faith;
- Be familiar with key structures and processes of the Church of England;
- Be aware of any potential impact of the research on their own wellbeing and have in place appropriate professional support (please include this in your research budget if necessary).

## 7. Contract management

### Dates

We expect the research to begin in early 2024 and be completed by 30<sup>th</sup> November 2024.

### Management

The research is commissioned by the Archbishops' Council's Ministry Development Team and co-funded by Clergy Support Trust. It will be managed within the Ministry Development Team by Dr Liz Graveling and supported by the project Advisory Group. All research commissioned by the Ministry Development Team must receive approval from the National Church Institutions' research ethics panel.

### Budget

The research budget is £30,000, to include all expenses and VAT. Payment will be on receipt of invoices.

## 8. How to apply

### Dates

- Deadline for tender submissions: 9am Monday 30<sup>th</sup> October 2023
- Notification of decision by: 10<sup>th</sup> November 2023

### Submission

Please send submissions via email to [liz.graveling@churchofengland.org](mailto:liz.graveling@churchofengland.org), including the following information:

- A detailed method for undertaking the study, including the conceptual approach to disability;
- An indication of what a practical resource might look like;
- Details of the researcher or team and how they meet the criteria given above, including relevant experience, allocation of time and roles where appropriate, and main contact;
- Details of how personal information and confidential data will be handled;
- A timescale for the project;
- A breakdown of costs, including daily rates.



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<sup>1</sup> Committee for Ministry of and among Deaf and Disabled People, 'Affirming and Including Disabled People in the Whole Life of the Church', GS 2270, July 2022. <https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2022-06/gs-2270-affirming-and-including-disabled-people.pdf>.

<sup>2</sup> Archbishop of York, 'Simpler, Humbler, Bolder: A Church for the Whole Nation which is Christ Centred and Shaped by the Five Marks of Mission', GS 2223, June 2021. <https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2021-06/gs-2223-vision-and-strategy.pdf>.

<sup>3</sup> Research & Statistics Department, 'Church of England Clergy with Disabilities Audit 2005', Archbishops' Council, July 2006.

<sup>4</sup> Bates, P., 'Funding Support for Ordinands with Disabilities in the Church of England,' Ministry Division, 2019.

<sup>5</sup> Unpublished data.

<sup>6</sup> Committee for Ministry of and among Deaf and Disabled People, 'Affirming and Including Disabled People in the Whole Life of the Church', GS 2270, July 2022. <https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2022-06/gs-2270-affirming-and-including-disabled-people.pdf>.

<sup>7</sup> See, for example, Jacobs, N. L. (2019), *The Upside-Down Kingdom of God: A Disability Studies Perspective on Disabled People's Experiences in Churches and Theologies of Disability*, PhD Thesis, SOAS University of London. <https://doi.org/10.25501/SOAS.00032204>. Also, research conducted among clergy in the Diocese of London by the Diocesan Disability Ministry Enabler.

<sup>8</sup> Stone, S. (2022), 'If it wasn't for God': A Report on the Wellbeing of Global Majority Heritage Clergy in the Church of England. London: Archbishops' Council. <https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2022-10/focussed-study-3-gmh-clergy-wellbeing.pdf>.

<sup>9</sup> See *Negotiating Wellbeing: Experiences of Ordinands and Clergy in the Church of England*, p. 10-11 <https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2018-10/Living%20Ministry%20Qualitative%20Panel%20Study%20Wave%201%20Report.pdf>, and the Living Ministry Wellbeing Map, <https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2020-10/Wellbeing%20map%20updated%2024-09.pdf>.

