

Guidelines for Clergy Living in a Parsonage House

2025 Edition



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1. Introduction

This booklet contains a set of practical and common-sense guidelines for all those who occupy a parsonage house under the management of the Diocesan Parsonage Board / Parsonage Scheme. This document is intended to be a helpful and supportive guide to help you enjoy living in your home.

It is not an exhaustive list of all the things that you might confront, and it is not a legal document.

The legal framework under which you occupy the house and how the Parsonage Board operates are referred to 'Chapter VII: Parsonages' of the Constitution of The Church In Wales: <https://www.churchinwales.org.uk/en/clergy-and-members/constitution/chapter-vii-parsonages>

The Parsonage Board aims to provide adequate and comfortable accommodation for the clergy of the Diocese. Sometimes, in the furtherance of this aim, disruption will be caused to the life of clergy and their families, and sometimes, because of financial pressures, it will not be possible to accede to specific requests. On these occasions your patience will be appreciated. We see the maintenance of parsonage houses as a cooperative partnership between the Parsonage Board and the occupants concerned.

The Diocesan Parsonage Inspector will be pleased to advise on any matters relating to the occupation and care of the premises.

Please see the separate page of key contacts within the house information pack.

2. Emergencies: out of hours, weekends, and public holidays

NOTE: If you smell gas, think you have a gas leak, or are concerned about fumes from a gas appliance, please call the free Gas Emergency Services immediately, 0800 111 999.

Please see the separate page in the house information pack for service and other useful contractors who can be called in emergency situations.

When there is a need for urgent repairs, e.g. blocked pipes, roof leaks, broken glass or locks, blocked drains, etc. you should instruct a local tradesman or public utility to carry out the necessary repairs immediately. The Diocesan Inspector should be informed of any faults at the earliest opportunity. Costs incurred by clergy will be reimbursed as soon as the relevant invoice is submitted to the Inspector, subject to checks for reasonableness and need.

In the case of the space or water heating systems, the alarm system, pest issues, locks,

and glass, or drain blockages please refer faults to the relevant service or suggested contractor, provided separately by the Diocesan Inspector.

Please note that Welsh Water is responsible for shared drains, where a drain crosses the boundary from or to the grounds of the parsonage. For guidance: <https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2019-06/transfer-of-private-sewers-lateral-drains.pdf>

3.0 Duties and responsibilities.

3.1 Duties of the Parsonage Board

Working within available budgets, the Parsonage Board will normally:

- Maintain and insure the structure and exterior of the building.
- Provide and maintain the installations for space and water heating and sanitation.
- Maintain all fixtures and fittings that are deemed part of the structure of the house.
- Install and maintain security systems, where found necessary by risk assessment.
- Maintain fire suppression systems where installed.
- Install and maintain fire and carbon monoxide detection.
- Install and maintain fixed facilities for cooking.
- Ensure that gas appliances are maintained and certified safe on an annual basis.
- Ensure oil / lpg / biomass appliances and storage tanks / silos are maintained annually.
- Ensure wood burning / solid fuel appliances are maintained, and flues swept annually.
- Ensure gutters, downpipes, and gullies, are cleared at least annually.
- Ensure cesspits / septic tanks are cleared, and treatment plant serviced, regularly.
- Ensure electrical installations are maintained in safe condition and inspected at least every 5 years.
- Provide shelving for the study only.

- Erect / maintain boundary fencing, where these are in the ownership of the Representative Body, to a maximum height of 2.0m, or other as limited by planning legislation. Please Note: The Parsonage Board is not obliged to provide pet-safe fencing.
- Ensure that the risks of exposure to asbestos containing materials, carbon monoxide, radon gas and Legionella bacteria are identified and appropriately managed.
- Carry out a condition survey of the property at least every five years.
- Arrange for the external decoration as required.
- Survey and manage trees and tall hedges.
- Pest control services are arranged through an approved contractor.
- Carry out improvements when appropriate and as funds permit.
- Carry out a survey of the interior condition prior to occupation and vacation of the property; this will include a photographic record, providing a reference point for inspections during and at the end of the occupancy.

3.2 Responsibilities of Clergy

Clergy are responsible for:

- Anything that belongs to those living in the house.
- The provision of house contents insurance.
- Fuses, light bulbs, lampshades, batteries for doorbells, and similar consumable items.
- The maintenance of portable electrical equipment, see HSE guidance at: <https://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg236.htm>
- The provision of telephone equipment and TV aerials/satellite dishes (and appropriate licenses). Clergy are responsible for the installation and maintenance of TV and radio aerials and should ensure these conform to local planning regulations (please contact your local authority or the Diocesan Inspector for advice). You must seek the written approval of the Parsonage Board before erecting a satellite dish.
- The maintenance of internal decoration – see section 4.
- Cleaning of glass, internal and external.
- The maintenance of gardens – see section 6.

- Keeping footpaths and driveways clear of weeds and moss, clearing up fallen leaves and disposing of wind-blown debris.
- Keeping all internal waste pipes and traps clear of debris, hair, etc.
- The cost of repairing items damaged due to misuse or neglect.
- Any damage caused by their domestic animals.
- Creating enclosures/erect fencing to retain/prevent the escape of their domestic pets. Please seek the approval of the Parsonage Board beforehand.
- Ensuring correct insurances and care of the house, including appointing someone to inspect and care for the house during any absence, please notify the Diocesan Inspector of any absence exceeding 30 days.
- NOT making any structural alteration or addition to a parsonage or to the permanent fittings. And NOT making any alterations to any fixed services within or around the parsonage.
- Not keeping at, bringing to, or causing to be brought to the parsonage anything that might be considered to pose a risk to the health and safety of any occupants or visitors, contractors, and consultants.
- Informing the Diocesan Inspector of any problems with the house that might lead to structural damage or expense if left unattended, including any damage to the structure, fixtures or fittings which could be the subject of an insurance claim.
- Ensuring no business use, subject to the provisions described in Section 9.1.

It is not expected that clergy will necessarily carry out all these maintenance items themselves but may need to employ and pay local contractors. All contractors and occupiers must refer to the Asbestos Register within the house file before any work commences, including decorations.

It is recommended that you use contractors approved/suggested by the Diocese. All contractors should be properly insured and competent.

4. Maintenance of internal decorations

The Parsonage Board expects to provide clergy with a house in good internal decorative order. Clergy are required to keep the house in good decorative order, to the satisfaction of the Parsonage Board. The condition of the house will be photographed to provide a benchmark for future inspections and clergy are expected to return the house to the Parsonage Board in similar condition.

Houses will be provided with pastel or neutral shades to walls, if you wish to carry out any decoration works to personalise the house décor, please contact the Diocesan Inspector.

While recognising the desire to display paintings, photographs, etc. and to fix items to walls, you may be requested to remove such items and make good at vacancy, subject to discussion with the Inspector.

A regular check will be made to ensure that decorations are maintained to a good standard. Where decorations are not so maintained, you will be given a reasonable time to undertake the works.

5. Dealing with condensation and damp

Most 'damp' issues within houses are condensation. Where warm moist air meets cold hard surfaces the water condenses, and black mould develops where this moisture is left. The cold surfaces are made worse by a lack of heating or ventilation and where external walls are colder than usual because of their orientation or external factors such as high ground levels bridging the damp proof course and leaking pipes. **See also condensation pdf:** [www.ggf.org.uk/download/50.1 Condensation.pdf](http://www.ggf.org.uk/download/50.1%20Condensation.pdf)

Water ingress can occur through, for example, damaged roofs, failed seals to windows, leaking gutters and rainwater pipes. Please advise the Diocesan Inspector of any leaking pipes, overflowing gutters, or signs of internal dampness to enable prompt repair.

Please always make use of extraction/ventilation equipment and promptly report any faults. Ventilate the house by opening windows as often as possible.

Please ensure air bricks and ventilators, including trickle vents to windows, are kept open and clear; keep furniture, etc. away from internal vents and keep ground levels below external air bricks. The provision of air via ventilators and air bricks in rooms with gas appliances is essential for your own safety.

Please ensure that the property is kept at an even temperature especially during the winter months and make sure rooms are not deprived of heating for significant periods of time. When away from the house, maintain heating at a low level to prevent condensation forming within the house and to reduce the risk of freezing pipes.

It is necessary to ensure ground levels do not compromise the damp proof course and maintain at least 150mm clearance below the damp proof course level. If in any doubt, please contact the Diocesan Inspector.

Where repairs have been carried out to correct damp in walls, the residual moisture can take a long time to dry out; in thick stone walls this can be several years. Please be patient while the drying process happens naturally (or with dehumidifier assistance) to later enable redecoration.

6. Maintenance of gardens

Clergy are required to keep their gardens and grounds tidy and to undertake general maintenance thereof. Gardens and grounds should be handed back in the condition as provided (a photographic record will be made at entry).

A clear margin to allow access for maintenance should be kept clear of plants, shrubs, and grass.

Lawns should be mown regularly.

Hard or gravel surfaces such as paths and drives should be regularly cleared of weeds.

Fallen leaves should be swept up.

Training plants, particularly ivy, up the walls of houses is discouraged, and any such growth must be cut back to prevent clogging of gutters and growth into roof spaces.

Please do not plant new shrubs or trees within 3.0m of the house or 1½ times the mature height of the tree / shrub whichever is the smaller.

All trees and hedges over 2.4m are the responsibility of the Parsonage Board, and any concerns are to be reported to the Diocesan Inspector as soon as they become apparent; no work to trees or high hedges should be undertaken by clergy.

We understand the desire to provide refuges for wildlife, please refer to the guidance provided by the Royal Horticultural Society, <https://www.rhs.org.uk/wildlife>.

If you have any difficulties maintaining your garden, please contact the Diocesan Inspector.

7. Fixtures and fittings

Any fixtures - including shelving, fitted wardrobes or cupboards, fitted kitchen units, working surfaces, sink units, cooking or other appliances, extractor hoods, bathroom and lavatory fittings, showers, and tiling – existing at the date of occupation, or added thereafter by the Parsonage Board, are deemed to belong to the Parsonage Board. None of these items may be removed or altered without the express permission of the Parsonage Board.

Please always obtain permission of the Parsonage Board to install any fixtures and fittings within a parsonage property.

8. Services

8.1 Electrical installation

Please make yourself familiar with the location of the main trip switches for your house to enable a rapid response to any emergency.

Electrical installations are inspected regularly to help ensure the health and safety of the occupiers. Any concerns about the electrical installation, for example, dimming lights, sparking sockets or switches, faulty sockets, or frequent failure of light bulbs, should be reported to the Diocesan Inspector as soon as possible. Do not make, or cause to be made by employing external contractors, any alterations, or additions to the electrical installation under any circumstances.

8.2 Gas and oil-fired heating systems, and wood burning and solid fuel appliances.

Please make yourself familiar with the location of the emergency shut off valve for the relevant fuel supply, usually adjacent to the meter/tank, to enable a rapid response to any emergency.

All gas and oil-fired systems are serviced annually and inspected for condition and to help ensure safety. The contract covers all elements of the heating and hot water systems, gas fires, and gas cookers, including LPG systems.

Wood burning, and other solid fuel appliances will be inspected by the service contractor annually and flues swept.

Remove air (bleed) radiators only with the pump and boiler turned off, to prevent more air being drawn into the system. Some systems are sealed and should not be vented at all, if in doubt contact the service contractor for advice.

8.3 Water

Please make yourself familiar with the location of the main stop tap to enable a rapid response to any emergency.

Please report to the Diocesan Inspector, as soon as they become apparent, any water leaks from pipes, appliances, or heating equipment. Do not make, or cause to have made by employing a contractor, alterations, or additions to the water systems.

Please consider the installation of a water meter to reduce costs and to encourage water saving; this also helps reduce costs to the parish / benefice / Ministry Area during vacancies.

8.4 Septic tanks, cesspits, treatment plants and drains

Septic tanks / cesspits / treatment plants require care in use to ensure they keep working and to prevent blockages, please, for example:

Use only mild / bio-degradable detergents and soaps.

Do not dispose of expandable paper / textile products into the system, for example, sanitary towels, wipes, cotton buds.

Do not dispose of cooking oils or fats into the system.

Be aware of what is discharged to drains as blockages are an increasing problem. Do not flush wipes of any kind down the toilet and do not pour fat down the kitchen sink waste.

NOTE: Some drains are the responsibility of Welsh Water; the initial run from the house to the first inspection chamber will nearly always be the responsibility of the Board, however, Welsh Water are responsible for clearing drains which serve more than one property – if you call out a contractor, they should, where appropriate, direct the problem to Welsh Water, reducing the cost of repairs to the Board.

8.5 Security and fire

If you have any concerns about security of the house and grounds, or about vandalism, please contact the Diocesan Inspector for advice, or refer to The Church In Wales document “General Guidance for Clergy on Parsonage Security”:

<https://www.churchinwales.org.uk/en/clergy-and-members/clergy-handbook/general-guidance-clergy-parsonage-security/>.

A risk assessment will be carried out and appropriate systems installed, which will be covered by a service contract; providing an annual service and emergency response when needed.

Houses are fitted with mains powered smoke and heat detection (including battery back-up), which will be checked annually. Occupiers should ensure the detectors are working by testing monthly; when the detectors beep, they need new batteries, please check the instructions in the house file before trying to replace them. If replacement is not possible, please contact the Diocesan Inspector as soon as possible.

8.6 Carbon monoxide

Houses are fitted with carbon monoxide detectors, either stand alone or incorporated into fire detectors, in each room with a combustion appliance, and where flues from such appliances pass through. Occupiers should ensure the detectors are working by testing monthly; when the detectors beep, they need new batteries; please notify the Inspector as soon as possible.

8.7 Energy efficiency

All houses have been assessed for energy efficiency and the recommendations from those surveys are being incorporated into works when time and funding allows.

Please see “[A Practical Path to Net Zero for Parsonages](#),” for guidance on how you can help in the use of your house, choice of energy provider, etc. If you have any questions or suggestions, please contact the Inspector.

9. Legal matters related to parsonage houses

9.1 Business use

It is accepted that family members, residing in the Parsonage, may need to work from home. Should they wish to carry on paid, home-based activity, such as music lessons, tutoring, arts and crafts, administrative works, etc., please advise the Parsonage Board. This will help in assessing and managing any risks associated with that activity and ensure that there is no conflict with the RB’s insurance of the house.

No formal business use such as sub-letting, retail or bed and breakfast, is to be carried out in the property, including outbuildings.

Under no circumstances are the clergy allowed to rent, let, or allow to be let all or part of the Parsonage or its grounds, or any other part or parcel of associated property holding, including house swaps and holiday lets of any type.

9.2 Parish use of Parsonages

The parsonage is provided primarily as the home and study for the appointed member of the clergy. It is to be emphasised that the parsonage property should not be regarded as an alternative facility for a proper parish meeting room or office. Accessibility and personal security issues might give rise to difficulties for the individual, the Diocese, and the Representative Body. Any equipment owned or rented by and for parish, Local Ministry Area, Ministry Area, or Mission Area business that is kept on the parsonage premises, should be removed when the house is vacated unless otherwise agreed with the Parsonage Board.

9.3 Legal notices

If any legal notice is served on you, concerning the parsonage, such as planning applications on adjacent property, a compulsory purchase order or a proposal from CADW to list the parsonage, please pass these on to the Diocesan Inspector as soon as possible.

Any delay could result in the opportunity being lost to make objection to the proposals, which could, if accepted, seriously affect the amenities and value of the property.

NOTE: Under no circumstances should clergy on their own account respond to the notice, without first contacting the Diocesan Inspector.

9.4 Insurance

The fabric of the building and any fixtures for which they are responsible are insured by the RB. The Church In Wales' insurers, the Ecclesiastical Insurance Group plc, provide cover for the RB against any third-party claims for which they are legally liable arising from damage or injury sustained whilst a third party is on Parsonage Board premises and whilst the clergy are carrying out duties on behalf of the Church; this includes damage caused by any part of the structure, for example, falling roof tiles.

10. Access, inspection and works

10.1 Access for inspection

Access to Parsonage Board property should be offered to the Parsonage Board's representatives, and, the Diocesan Inspector and contractors, at appropriate times to inspect and to plan works. Whenever possible this will be at a time mutually agreed with the parties concerned.

NOTE: See, *The Constitution, Chapter VII, Part IX, Section 23.5* (link on page 2 of this document).

10.2 Contractors and consultants' access for work

The Parsonage Board employs a variety of approved and trusted contractors and consultants to carry out works of repair and improvement, and to provide professional services. Any comments, or other complaints, are to be directed to the Diocesan Inspector, as soon as issues arise, to help early resolution; issues can include quality, continuity, failure to attend at appointed times, attitude, and cleanliness.

Please allow access to water and toilet facilities for any contractors working on site; they will have been advised to keep such facilities clean and tidy. If there is any reason not to facilitate such access, please let the Inspector know to enable provision of alternative facilities; this might impact the timing and cost of planned works.

Clergy must not, under any circumstances, give direct or additional instructions to contractors, employed by the Parsonage Board. Any such action resulting in added cost,

not agreed with the Diocesan Inspector, will be charged to the clergy.

The Diocesan Inspector is always willing to use contractors recommended by parishes, particularly those with church connections, and invite them to carry out work, if it can be shown the contractor is suitably qualified and experienced and can conform to statutory legislation. Details of experience, ability and specifically appropriate insurance cover should be submitted to the Diocesan Inspector. The final choice of contractor remains with the Parsonage Board who must have regard to the cost and the reputation of the contractor as well as to any local connections.

11. Vacancy

11.1 Vacating the parsonage house

Please notify the Diocesan Inspector, Archdeacon, and Inspector as soon as possible after giving notice to the Bishop that the parsonage will be vacated; and later inform them of the official moving date as soon as that is known.

Early notification will enable an Inspection to be carried out by the Diocesan Inspector, giving enough time for you to carry out any remedial works that are the responsibility of the clergy and for a follow-up inspection where necessary. Any damage or deterioration to the property for which you are responsible, other than normal wear and tear, which has not been made good within a given time will result in a charge being made.

Please leave the parsonage, including the roof void, outbuildings, and all bins, clean and empty of rubbish and personal possessions and in a condition suitable to be re-occupied. Ensure all equipment belonging with the parsonage is clean and in safe working order. It is your responsibility to arrange for all utilities to be transferred to the benefice when you leave. Read all meters and arrange for payment of final bills; do not request the disconnection of services. Set up redirection of all mail to your new address or cancel unwanted subscriptions.

The time limits for vacating the parsonage are as follows:

- Determination of the appointment – vacate at once.
- Moving to a new appointment – vacate on termination with the usual notice to the Diocesan Bishop for moving post.
- Retirement – vacate 1 month after the date of retiring.
- Notice to quit served by the Representative Body – vacate within 2 months.
- Failure to adhere to the conditions of occupation (damage, neglect, etc.) – vacate within 14 days of notice.

- Death – authorised dependents are allowed two months from the date of death; the Bishop can grant an extension of 1 month.

NOTE: See also, The Constitution, Chapter VII, Part IX, sections 24 – 27 inclusive (link on page 2 of this document).

11.2 Custody of a vacant parsonage house

When a parsonage house is unoccupied during a vacancy, responsibility for the custody of the house passes to the appropriate clergy local team leader and the Churchwardens as described in The Constitution of The Church In Wales, Vol. I, Chapter VII, Part VI (**link on page 2 of this document**).

In the case of vacant property where works are in progress, it is imperative that site visits are made only at times agreed with the Diocesan Inspector and contractor.

12. Complaints procedure

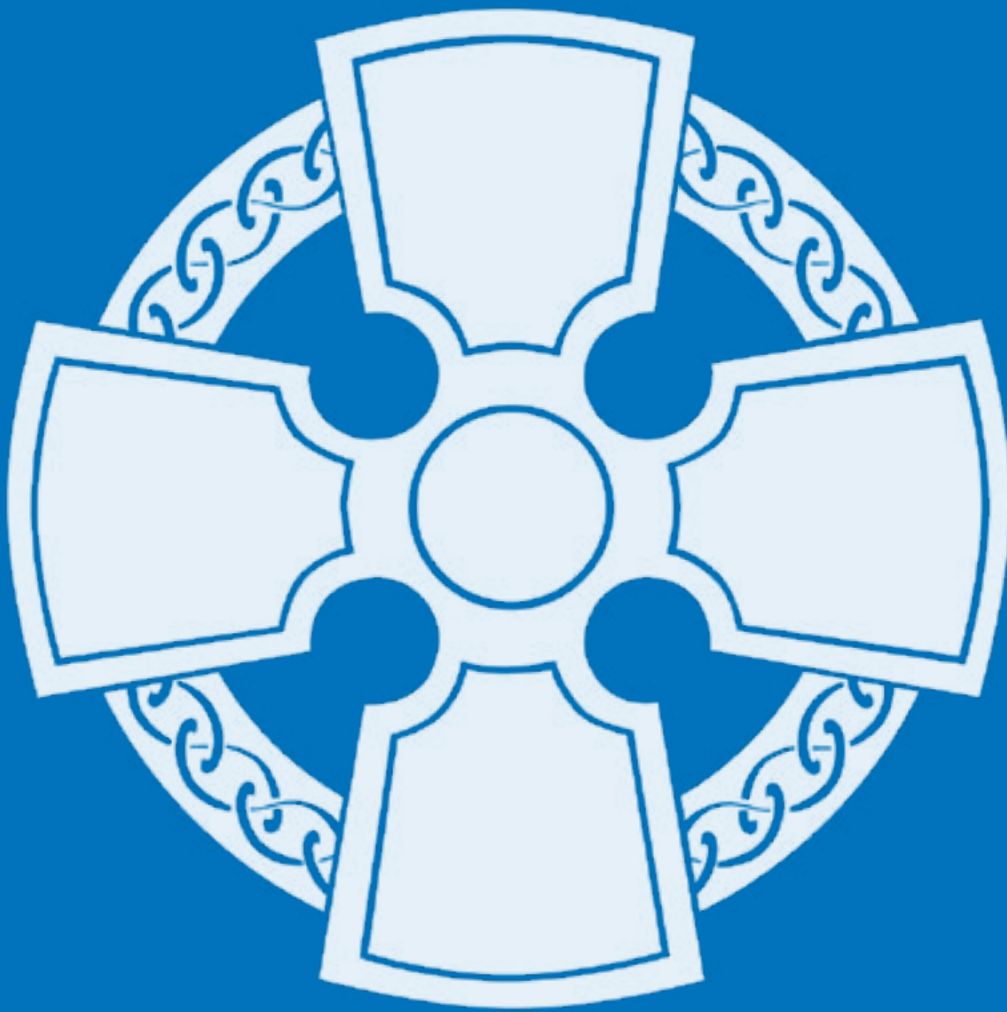
We realise that maintaining an estate having a value of many millions of pounds and spread across the Diocese is a complex matter and occasionally mistakes will be made.

If you have a complaint about any aspect of the Parsonage Board work, please address this in the first instance to the Diocesan Inspector with full details.

If you do not receive a response within 7 days, please write to the Chair of the Parsonage Board via the Diocesan Secretary.

Correspondence for the above should be made to the Diocesan Office and marked confidential.

NOTES



Guidelines for Clergy

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