



THE CHURCH  
OF ENGLAND

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DIOCESE OF  
RIPON & LEEDS



**RESPONSIBILITIES & GUIDELINES FOR UPKEEP &  
MAINTENANCE OF DIOCESAN HOUSING**

**2009**



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## **DIOCESE OF RIPON & LEEDS**

### Guidelines for Clergy in occupation of Parsonage & Diocesan Board of Finance (DBF) Houses

The care and maintenance of the housing of occupiers and those of occupier status, are the joint responsibility of the Housing & Estates Committee of the Diocesan Board of Finance, occupiers and PCC's.

The following guidelines are to be used by members of the clergy occupying parsonage & DBF houses.

This guide is not however intended to be completely comprehensive as the committee is continually reviewing policy and individual situations may sometimes require special consideration.

The Housing & Estates Committee meet three times a year and are responsible for considering all housing matters as well as other property issues. A Housing Forum has been established which meets once or twice a year to discuss housing issues and provides a focal discussion medium for the review of policy and management of clergy housing.

Approximately 160 houses are managed by the Property Team with an annual budget of £1.2m in 2009, which includes repairs and maintenance, improvements, council tax, water rates and insurance.

Further details on this and any other matter can be obtained from the:

Property Team  
Ripon & Leeds Diocesan Office  
St Mary's Street  
LEEDS  
LS9 7DP  
Tel: 0113 200 0549  
Fax: 0113 249 1129

The department consists of:

Michael Lindley  
Diocesan Surveyor & Secretary to the Housing & Estates Committee  
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Kath Hinchcliffe  
Property Assistant  
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## Acceptance Of Appointments

Potential appointees will have an opportunity to view the house associated with their ministry before accepting a post. Some works may already have been undertaken by this time in accordance with diocesan policy and within budgetary constraints; if not you can contact the Property Team to obtain details of the work proposed. If there is any further work you consider essential then please discuss this further with the Property Team.

You may move into the property not more than two weeks before the date of institution or licensing in order to allow any work on the property to be completed. If you require to move into the property before the two-week date then you must contact the Property Team prior to doing so. Please advise the Property Team of your proposed removal date. If you require any information on removal firms please contact Mrs Sheila Hufton in the accounts department on 0113 2000551.

## Vacancy

Before a vacancy occurs:

- Reinstatement of original fixtures and fittings should be undertaken where possible.
- The Occupier should pass a full set of keys on to the churchwarden as they will be responsible for looking after the security of the house.
- All gas, electricity, telephone and other meters to be read and accounts forwarded to the occupier's new address. NONE of these services should be disconnected.
- Garden and house are to be left tidy.
- Pass onto the Property Team details of any repairs required to the property or general comments on the use/operation of the house.

## Notes for Churchwardens

Responsibility for a parsonage house or curate's house owned by the Board of Finance whilst vacant rests with the churchwardens and PCC.

The churchwarden is usually the designated key holder during the vacancy. It is also their duty to undertake regular inspections of the property to check on the security of the house. Churchwardens should advise the local police when the property is vacant and allow for the provision of net curtains at windows to make the house looked lived in. Arrangements for maintaining the garden should also be made.

Utility bills are the responsibility of the PCC during a vacancy and arrangements should be made to transfer the account into the PCC's name, including the telephone so that the number is not lost and there is no delay in reconnection.

The central heating system in the house should be run constantly during the winter months (October-March) at a temperature not less than 6°C.

Whether in winter or in summer it is an insurance condition that **a responsible person appointed by the PCC at least twice a week must inspect the house internally**. The Housing & Estates Committee would expect that a responsible person should go into the house on a daily basis in



any case to pick up mail which can otherwise constitute a fire and security risk, and they should satisfy themselves that all is well with the heating system which should include running the system for a short period by turning up the room thermostat.

It is assumed that the responsible person will normally speak with the outgoing occupier about the operation of the system, or will have sufficient general knowledge of heating systems to operate the system.

*Checklist:*

1. ***Is there a supply of fuel available?***
2. ***Is there a time clock and do you know how to operate it? Ensure that the time clock is set to operate the heating system constantly.***
3. ***Is there a room thermostat? Set it not lower than 6°C (43°F).***
4. ***Are there thermostatic radiator valves? Set them to an intermediate position.***
5. ***Is there a frost-stat? Last line of protection only – do not rely upon it!***
6. ***Is the system working? If in doubt, refer to appliance instructions or seek advice.***
7. ***Where is the main stop tap? If you cannot locate it now is the time to ask.***
8. ***Open the loft access hatches to allow warm air into the roof void.***

If all seems to be in order then set and leave the system. As an additional precaution against prolonged flood damage, you may turn off the main water stop tap. If you do this, then regularly (say once a week) turn on the stop tap and top up the heating and domestic hot water system header tanks – and then turn it off again.

Finally:

**Be aware** that the most susceptible part of the system to frost damage is likely to be in the roof void and allow for this in heating the house, and leave the loft hatch open.

**Be aware** that automatic systems (timeclocks/froststats/pumps) can fail for a number of reasons, and usually at the least convenient times.

**Be aware** that whilst the PCC might save fuel costs in the short term by not running the system; in the long term it is not good for the system, the house, the parish or the diocese.

**Prior to the moving-in date of the new occupier, ensure that the house is clean and tidy and that the heating and other systems are working so that the house is welcoming as a HOME to the new occupier. Please ensure when a new occupier takes up residence that you hand over all keys and show them how to operate the central heating and any other systems e.g alarms and security lighting.**



## Housing & Estates Committee Procedures for repairs/improvements of Clergy Housing



### Repairs/Maintenance

The Board of Finance and its Housing & Estates Committee under the Repair of Benefice Buildings Measure 1972 are obliged to meet the cost of repairs to parsonage houses which occur whilst the properties are inhabited.

All occupiers have a general duty to assist with the upkeep of the property and are expected to undertake minor maintenance work themselves. Some examples of these are:

- Keep all hinges lubricated.
- Inspect and test smoke alarms – replace batteries at least twice a year.
- Clean extractor fan vents/grilles.
- Keep earth and vegetation below any damp proof course.
- Re-washing taps.

If going away for a week or so during winter please run the heating on constant at a low temperature of at least 6°C.

### Quinquennial Survey

Houses have a quinquennial survey undertaken on them at 5 yearly intervals and at this stage any major repair works will be undertaken. A fact finding sheet will be forwarded before the inspection so the occupier can outline any immediate repairs and concerns. The survey is undertaken by the Diocesan Surveyor, a copy of the report is sent to the occupier for comment and the relevant Archdeacon for information purposes.

### External Redecoration

External redecoration of the house is also undertaken on a 5 yearly rolling programme. Such works include painting and repair of window frames, boundary fencing and any other external woodwork or metal work. If any decay to external joinery is noted by the occupier this should be reported to the Property Team.

### Emergency and Non Emergency Repairs

Any non-emergency repairs should be communicated to the Property Team on **0113 2000549**, in the event of emergency repairs such as electricity or heating problems the occupier can contact an approved contractor and the work can be either invoiced to the Diocesan Office direct or paid by the occupier and reimbursed by the Housing & Estates Committee. A list of approved contractors is attached.

It is important to let the Property team know as soon as possible, if any work is ordered on this basis. If you are not able to contact one of these contractors you can use the yellow pages or local recommendations as a guideline. Payment of any work unauthorised by the Property Team may be refused if it was not essential or not the responsibility of the Housing & Estates Committee.

### Cold Callers

If you are approached by any contractors cold calling offering to do work it is often too good to be true. Always seek approval from the Property Team before ordering works.



### **Procedure for ordering repairs**

The Property Team will forward a Maintenance Order to the relevant contractor with details of works to be undertaken together with the access arrangements. The contractor is asked to contact the occupier to make arrangements for access to the property before arriving on site. Upon completion of the works the contractor should produce the Contractors Notice of Completion slip, which is located at the bottom of the Maintenance Order. This is to be signed by the occupier on satisfactory completion of the works detailed on the order.

When the Property Team produce the Maintenance Order for the contractor they will also automatically send a letter to the occupier giving details of the contractor and the works to be carried out.

Please note that the contractor will only carry out the works which are stated on the Maintenance Order, if you require additional works you must contact the Property Team for authorisation.

### **Improvements**



The Housing & Estates Committee is not obliged to undertake improvements. However within budgetary constraints it does generally undertake any major improvements at a vacancy or quinquennial.

When a vicarage becomes vacant the Diocesan Surveyor will undertake a vacancy inspection along with the churchwardens, Archdeacon, Area Dean and members of the Housing & Estates Committee to consider any major improvement works (within policy and budgetary constraints), which may be required before the house is reoccupied.

### **Housing & Estates Committee Responsibilities**

#### **Alterations**

Before undertaking any alterations it is imperative that you contact the Property Team before any work is initiated.

#### **Boundary Fencing**

The Housing & Estates Committee will provide boundary fencing to the property to facilitate the safe care of children. The Housing & Estates Committee will take full responsibility for repair of the fencing, however if the responsibility is not defined in any deeds then it will be a shared responsibility with the neighbours i.e 50/50 unless otherwise stated.

#### **Cat flaps**

The Housing & Estates Committee permits cat flaps to be inserted into doors at the occupier's expense however upon departure from the property all surfaces must be made good.





### Clothes Posts

The Housing & Estates Committee will provide and maintain a clothes-post and/or hooks to which the occupier may attach a washing line. Provision and maintenance of any rotary clothes line is the responsibility of the occupier.

### Council Tax & Water Rates

The Housing & Estates Committee are responsible for paying council tax on all properties occupied by a full time stipendiary clergy person. Water rates are paid on parsonage houses and houses owned by the Board of Finance; if the property is owned by the PCC then the PCC are responsible for these.

### Curtain Tracks

The Housing & Estates Committee will provide curtain tracks in new houses except to kitchens and bathrooms. The occupier must leave serviceable curtain tracks and fittings in place on departure, irrespective of original provision.

### External Lighting

The Housing & Estates Committee's standard provision is: adequate lighting to the front and back doors and to the garage if necessary.



### Electrical

The Housing & Estates Committee will arrange for electrical systems to be tested and certified by an NICEIC registered electrician at vacancy and at every quinquennial.

Any works undertaken must be by an NICEIC approved contractor.

Due to recent changes in Building Regulations no alterations should be undertaken by occupiers to the existing circuits other than replacement of light fittings.

### Floor Coverings

Sheet vinyl flooring will be provided in the kitchen, utility room, ground floor cloakroom, bathroom and WC. In other areas of the house the occupier is responsible for providing floor coverings at their own expense.

### Garden Ponds

The Housing & Estates Committee has no restrictions on such garden features however the responsibility for maintenance rests with the occupier/PCC.



### Gas Fires

If a main gas supply exists the Housing & Estates Committee will provide a gas fire in the main lounge and a gas wall heater in the study. Servicing of the fires will be organised annually by the Property Team.



### Glazing

If a window is broken through an act of vandalism the Housing & Estates Committee will accept responsibility for payment of any invoices relating to this act. Where damage arises from domestic incidents the occupier will be held responsible for either the cost of the Insurance Policy excess (currently £250) or the full cost of the repair.

### Heating Service/Gas Appliances

The servicing of all gas appliances is undertaken annually and is organised by the Property Team.

### Insurance

All parsonage houses and houses owned by the Board of Finance are insured with the Ecclesiastical Insurance Group under a block policy and the premium is paid by the Housing & Estates Committee. The contents are not insured by the Housing & Estates Committee.

The Property Team should be informed immediately of any loss or damage incurred to the building.

Where claims arise from domestic incidents the occupier will be held responsible for either the costs or the policy excess (currently £250).

### Nameplates

Nameplates are only provided for newly constructed parsonage houses. The provision for an existing house is a matter for the occupier/PCC.

### Pets

The Housing & Estates Committee permits pets to live in the houses however any damage caused to the property by pets must be paid for by the occupier.



### Septic Tanks

The Housing & Estates Committee will meet the reasonable costs of emptying septic tanks but arrangements for emptying should be made locally.

### Showers

Showers are provided by the Housing & Estates Committee and usually consist of an instantaneous electric shower and shower curtain rail.

### Smoke Detectors

The Housing & Estates Committee will provide 50% reimbursement against receipts for smoke detectors. The Committee strongly advises that all clergy install smoke detectors as required.

### Trees

The Housing & Estates Committee is responsible for the upkeep of mature field type trees only. Ornamental trees in the vicarage grounds are the responsibility of the occupier/PCC. If the property lies within





a conservation area or the trees are protected by a Tree Preservation Order then local authority permission is required.

The Board will also deal with any trees that are a danger to persons or property.

## **Occupier & PCC Responsibility**

### **Burglar Alarm & Security Lighting**

These are not standard on properties however a grant can be sought from the Housing & Estates Committee towards installation. Each grant is at the discretion of the Committee dependant upon circumstances. Maintenance of the alarm system is the responsibility of the PCC. Details for applying for a grant can be obtained from the Property Team.

### **Chimney Sweeping**

Chimney sweeping is the occupier's responsibility: during a vacancy the responsibility transfers to the churchwardens and PCC and should be undertaken at least once a year.

### **Cooker**

The provision and maintenance of the cooker is the responsibility of the occupier.

### **Drains**

The Housing & Estates Committee will meet any costs with regards to blocked drains so long as the blockage has occurred within the boundaries of the property and has not been caused by the action of the occupier.

### **Driveways**

The PCC is responsible for the resurfacing of the driveway as required.

### **Gutters**

The occupier should arrange for the checking and cleaning out as necessary of gutters and fall-pipes after the autumn leaf fall. The Housing & Estates Committee will make reimbursement of reasonable costs incurred.

### **Internal Decorations**

The occupier is responsible for interior decorations to the house, except where work is necessary in consequence of major repairs. Grants are available from the Housing & Estates Committee to a maximum of £1,000 or 50% whichever is the least at vacancies and only on parsonage and curates houses. It is only payable against invoices for work carried out within 3 months of occupation or against receipts for materials.

The assistance of the PCC should be sought with decorating during occupancy.

### **Keys**

Replacement or loss of keys following theft, or loss of keys, should be claimed through household contents insurance and is not the responsibility of the Housing & Estates Committee.



### Pests & Vermin

Responsibility for removal of wasp's nests, vermin, etc, lies with the occupier/PCC. However if a specific entry point can be found the Housing & Estates Committee will pay for infill, etc, as required.



### Sheds & Greenhouses

The Housing & Estates Committee give permission for sheds/greenhouses to be erected in the garden but it is the occupier's responsibility to do so and to maintain them.

### Trees & Garden Maintenance

The Housing & Estates Committee will not maintain orchard or ornamental trees (e.g. apple, flowering cherry, laburnum, cypresses). It is the responsibility of the occupier for the upkeep of the garden. If any immediate works are needed at the time of vacation the Housing & Estates Committee will seek reimbursement for the remedial works.



### Telephone/private cable telephones

Telephone points will be provided in the study, kitchen and main bedroom, any further extensions will be undertaken at the expense of the occupier.

### TV Cable/Aerial/Satellite Dish

Installation of Cable or Satellite Dishes is permitted with the written approval of the Housing & Estates Committee and subject to an undertaking that the responsibility for any and all consequential costs arising is formally accepted by the PCC.

TV aerials are the responsibility of the occupier.



## **General Advice for Occupiers/Occupiers**

### Asbestos

There may be asbestos products within parsonage houses; left undisturbed these are perfectly safe. However if for any reason you suspect that some materials contain asbestos and have been disturbed please contact the Property Team immediately.

### Burglary or Break-in

You must in the first instance:

- Contact the Police
- Make the house safe and secure. Call the local glazier from the recommended contact sheet if possible, or glazier from yellow pages. (The Housing & Estates Committee will pay/reimburse the cost through the insurance)
- If the incident happens out of office hours then contact Ecclesiastical Insurance 24 hour line – 0845 603 8381. *This line reaches the claims department between the hours of 8am to 6pm and out of hours provider between 6pm and 8am.*
- Contact the Property Team on 0113 2000549 and give details of
  - how and when damage occurred
  - name of Police Station and crime reference number.

### CDM Regulations

It is worth bearing in mind that when major works are being carried out at the property the Housing & Estates Committee must adhere to the Construction Design & Management Regulations 2007. These in effect impose statutory duties on clients, designers and CMD co-ordinator with the aim of improving health and safety. They only come into play when:

- the work lasts for more than 30 days or involving more than 500 person days of work;
- 5 or more people on site at any one time;
- if any demolition work is to be carried out.

The Property Team deal with any necessary Health and Safety issues.

### Condensation

Please keep rooms well ventilated especially bathrooms/kitchens to help prevent condensation. When these rooms are in use any extractor fans must be switched on and if possible a window opened to help air flow.

### Disability Discrimination Act 1995

Where the occupier invites persons into the house for meetings they are under a duty to make reasonable alternative arrangements if the physical nature of the property makes it difficult or impossible for disabled people to attend.





## Emergency Plumbing Issues



**Frozen Pipes:** If the pipe freezes, turn off the water supply at the stop tap, usually located under the sink. Open all cold water taps and flush the WC to empty the water storage cistern and then very carefully thaw out the pipes, this should not be undertaken quickly as there may be splits in the pipe which will not be evident until the pipes have thawed.

**Burst Pipes:** The first thing to do is to prevent water passing the point of the leak. Start by turning off all the stop taps, if the escaping water cannot be controlled immediately, open all cold water taps so that the pipework and storage system drains quickly. **DO NOT TURN ON THE HOT WATER TAPS.** Switch off the central heating system and any electric immersion heater, and then call the Property Team who will endeavour to get a local plumber out as soon as possible. However if this happens after office hours or on a weekend, please contact a plumber from the recommended contractors sheet at the back of this booklet.

## Emergency Gas Issues

In the event that you smell gas you must:

- **Never** light a naked flame/smoke/strike a match etc.
- **Never** turn off or on any electrical appliance (including light switches).
- **Always** put out naked flames.
- **Always** well ventilate the room by opening doors and windows.
- **Always** keep people away from the affected area.
- **Turn off** the gas at the control valve if possible.

Transco operate a free emergency 24 hour telephone number if you detect gas, please call **0800 111 999** and then inform the Property Team of the incident.

## Enamelled Bath - Cleaning

Enamelled baths should only be cleaned with non abrasive cleaners so as not to damage the enamelled surface. Examples of these include any Cif or Flash creams and sprays. Bleach or scouring pads must never be used on enamelled surfaces.

## Fire Precautions

As a precautionary measure all appliances should be switched off over night to prevent a situation where a fire may occur:

- Never leave matches or lighters where children can find them.
- Never leave a lit cigarette or pipe unattended – it may fall onto an armchair or carpet, which could catch fire, giving off dense smoke and fumes.
- Do not use candles where there are safer alternatives. If you do, never leave them unattended and extinguish them properly.



- Use fireguards around fires and heaters to protect children and never sit too close to a fire. Clothes or the chair itself could be easily set alight, particularly if you fall asleep. Never place clothes on the guard to dry or put papers on the guard.
- Always stand portable heaters in a safe place where they cannot be knocked or tripped over. Keep them well away from furniture and soft furnishings, such as curtains and cushions and never place them next to beds or where objects may fall onto them.
- Check that your furniture conforms to current fire resistant standards. Look for the warnings on labels.
- Turn off and unplug electrical equipment unless it is designed to be left on.
- Keep curtains well away from any cooker and television sets.
- Do not leave aerosols in direct sunlight or use them near flames, hot electric elements or other potential sources of ignition. They may contain a flammable propellant gas.
- Do not place mirrors or bottles in direct sunlight as concentrated sun-rays can start a fire. Windows with a glass lens-like piece imitating old glass should not be used in south-facing windows.

### Instruction Booklets

All instruction booklets/manuals should be kept in a safe place and close to hand should any engineer/contractor be on site and want to undertake any servicing or repair of the appliances at the property.

### Letting of Houses

If a house is going to be vacant for some time, it is policy now where possible for the Housing & Estates Committee to let the property out for 6 monthly periods until such a time as a new occupier has been appointed or the house is put on the open market. The letting is undertaken through professional letting agents. If the house is a parsonage house the landlords will legally be the sequestrators (i.e. the area dean and churchwardens), however in practice they will have no involvement in the day to day matters of the tenancy, these being handled by the letting agent and the Property Team.

### The Party Wall etc Act 1996

Party walls exist where two properties share a common dividing wall; this can take the form of a property or structure for example a garden boundary wall or house wall. Before work can be commenced on such walls, agreement must be reached with the adjoining owner, and a Party Wall Notice served. If you should need any work doing or receive such a notice or your neighbour commences work on such a wall please contact the Property Team before commencing any negotiations.

### Part P – Building Regulations

Part P was introduced in January 2005 which requires that only registered electricians may undertake electrical works on domestic





property, if not the work must be inspected by the local council. If any electrical work needs to be undertaken please contact the Property Team for approval.

### Planning & Other Building Works concerned with Former Church Property

Many of the present parsonage houses have been constructed on land or in close proximity to the old rectory and former church buildings. When old vicarages and church property was sold off restrictions may have been placed on the property in connection with its use, extension or alteration and new building. Please inform the Property Team if any new developments or building works takes place on or around such property.

### Security Precautions

All doors and windows should be kept locked and alarms switched on in times of absence from the property.



- When the house is to be left empty for more than a day, always tell a reliable neighbour or friend, but only tell those who need to know.
- Cancel all deliveries, milk, newspapers and ask someone to check that the post and free newspapers are not sticking out of the letterbox. Alternatively, ask the post sorting office to hold post.
- Don't leave notes for tradesmen. Telephone them instead.
- Ask a neighbour or friend to water the garden and indoor plants, mow the lawn and cut the hedge. They might also be asked to park their car occasionally on the drive or in front of the house and put the bin out on bin day.
- If everyone in the household is to be out until after dark, leave a light on in a room, not the hall. A time switch or light-sensitive fitting is recommended.
- In the house remember that curtains and blinds drawn in the daytime attract the thief.
- Make sure the doorbell is only audible from the inside – let people assume it is not working rather than not being answered.
- Disconnect telephones that can be heard left ringing (particularly those on window sills). Also, any answerphone message should always say “We cannot come to the phone at present”, rather than “we are not here”.
- Keep garage doors shut and locked. If the garage has windows, use curtains or blinds to block prying eyes. No car often means that nobody is home.

### Statutory Notices

If a Statutory Notice has been served upon an occupier i.e planning proposal, the Property Team should be informed immediately.



## **Complaints Procedure**

### Complaints against contractors

If you are unsatisfied with any works or the behaviour of contractors in the first instance please contact and discuss the matter with the Property Team on 0113 200 0549.

### Complaints against Property Team

If for any reason a situation arises where you are not satisfied with the actions by the Property Team then in the first instance you should contact the Diocesan Surveyor. If the situation cannot be resolved at this level, it will then be referred to the Diocesan Secretary. If not resolved at this level the matter will be referred to the Chairman of the Housing & Estates Committee.