



Clergy Sickness Absence Policy and Procedure

Section 8 – Clergy handbook

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Review and Amendment Log

Version Number	Amendment date	Updates Made
V1	Unknown	Section 8 Clergy Handbook
V2	August 2026	The policy has been expanded to include wellbeing, clarity on reporting processes and roles and responsibilities.



1. Purpose

The Diocese of Derby is committed to supporting clergy during periods of sickness absence with pastoral care, practical help and clear guidance. This policy sets out how sickness absences should be reported, recorded, supported and reviewed, including arrangements for cover, occupational health advice, return to ministry, stipend and statutory sick pay.

The policy recognises that clergy may sometimes feel under pressure to continue with essential duties while unwell. Its purpose is to reduce that pressure by making clear that illness should be reported, care should be provided, and appropriate cover and support should be arranged so that clergy can recover and return to ministry safely wherever possible.

2. Scope

This policy applies to stipendiary clergy who hold office in the Diocese of Derby and whose stipend is administered through the national clergy payroll arrangements including those who hold office under Freehold or Common Tenure, under the Ecclesiastical Offices (Terms of Service) Measure 2009. It also provides a pastoral framework for non-stipendiary, self-supporting and other licensed clergy, although the stipend and sick pay provisions apply only where there is an entitlement to stipend and statutory sick pay.

3. Principles

The Diocese of Derby will apply this policy in a way that is pastoral, fair, consistent and proportionate. The underlying principles are:

- care for the individual and their household within a clear pastoral framework;
- respect for privacy, confidentiality and dignity;
- early and appropriate practical support for the parish, benefice or ministry context e.g. the Archdeaconry Administrators can provide a list of those with PTO to cover services;
- timely medical and occupational health advice where this would assist recovery, return to ministry or consideration of adjustments;
- clarity about stipend, statutory sick pay and any change to pay arrangements;
- recognition that mental and physical health should be treated with equal seriousness and care;
- reasonable adjustments where a disability, long-term health condition or other protected characteristic may be relevant;
- alignment with the diocesan values of generous faith, courageous hope and life-giving love.

3.1 Wellbeing

Where a period of sickness absence occurs, the Diocese will seek to provide appropriate pastoral, practical and professional support, recognising that every situation is different. Clergy are encouraged not to struggle alone and to discuss any wellbeing concerns with their Archdeacon, the HR team or another appropriate diocesan colleague at the earliest opportunity. Wellbeing provision is outlined on the diocesan website or is available from the HR department or your Archdeacon.



4. Process

4.1 Reporting sickness absence

Clergy should report sickness absence on every occasion when they are unable to fulfil their normal duties or usual workload because of ill health.

1. On the first day of absence the clergy person should notify the HR department (HR@derby.anglican.org) and should also ensure that churchwardens and any relevant person or Area Dean are aware that cover may be required.
2. If the clergy person is part of a team ministry or curacy, the locally agreed senior colleague should also be informed so that immediate pastoral and practical arrangements can be made.
3. Where the clergy person is unable to make contact personally, a family member or appropriate colleague may notify the relevant people on their behalf.
4. The clergy person must ensure HR is notified so that absence can be recorded and any national clergy payroll requirements can be met.

4.2 Arranging cover

As per the statement of particulars, clergy are required to make all reasonable efforts to make arrangements for the duties of their office to be performed by another person during any absence due to illness which may, where appropriate, consist of notifying a responsible person or authority of the absence such as your training incumbent or Area Dean, who are available to help and support you.

In larger parishes or teams, cover may be arranged locally. In smaller or more isolated contexts, support from the Area Dean, deanery colleagues or the Archdeacon may be required. Churchwardens, parish administrators or colleagues may assist with cancelling or rearranging appointments where necessary.

4.3 Recording absence and certification

Accurate records of sickness absence will be maintained by HR for support, payroll, safeguarding of wellbeing and consistency of practice. Health information will be handled as confidential special category data.

- For absence of up to seven calendar days, clergy may self-certify in line with current statutory and national clergy payroll requirements.
- Where absence continues for more than seven calendar days, the clergy person should provide a fit note or other acceptable medical certification from a registered healthcare professional.
- Fit notes should be sent to HR as soon as possible so that they can be recorded and passed to national clergy payroll where required.
- Further fit notes should be provided where absence continues beyond the period covered by the previous fit note.



4.4. Pastoral care and keeping in touch

Pastoral care will normally be offered through the Archdeacon, Area Dean, other senior clergy or the HR department as appropriate. The Bishop of Derby holds responsibility for the care of clergy in the diocese and shares this responsibility with others according to role and context.

The Diocese will seek to maintain appropriate contact during sickness absence. The frequency and route of contact should be agreed wherever possible with the clergy person, taking account of their health, privacy, family circumstances and the needs of the parish or ministry context.

Keeping in touch will be supportive rather than pressurising. It may include checking wellbeing, discussing practical support, confirming cover arrangements, signposting resources, reviewing fit notes, and planning for a safe return to ministry when appropriate.

4.5. Occupational health and professional support

Where absence is long-term, recurrent, work-related, stress-related, or where there are concerns about the impact of a health condition on ministry, HR may recommend an occupational health referral. Occupational health advice will assist the Diocese and the clergy person to understand fitness for duties, likely timescales for return, potential reasonable adjustments, phased return arrangements and any health and safety considerations.

The occupational health practitioner is independent and will provide advice within medical confidentiality and data protection requirements. Consent will normally be sought before medical information is obtained or shared.

Other professional support may include counselling, pastoral supervision, spiritual direction, financial wellbeing support, Access to Work, or other diocesan wellbeing resources where appropriate.

4.6. Sick pay and stipend

For stipendiary clergy, the Diocese will follow national Church of England clergy payroll requirements and the provisions set out in the clergy person's Statement of Particulars.

Clergy who are unable to undertake their duties due to ill health are normally entitled to Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) for up to 28 weeks in accordance the regulations, subject to eligibility and the provision of the required medical certification. The Diocese provides enhanced sick pay for the first 26 weeks of absence, ensuring that clergy continue to receive their full stipend during this period. Following the end of the enhanced payment period, SSP alone will be payable for a further two weeks, where eligibility continues.

Before the end of the 28-week period, HR and/or national clergy payroll will advise the clergy person about the expected end of SSP/stipend provision and the need to consider any applicable state benefits, such as Employment and Support Allowance or Universal Credit. The clergy person is responsible for making any claim to the Department for Work and Pensions and for keeping the Diocese informed of relevant information where this affects pay or support.

Any extension to stipend provision beyond the normal entitlement will be considered only in exceptional circumstances and must be authorised through the People and Places governance process, administered by the HR department.



4.7. Return to ministry

When the clergy person is ready to return, they should notify HR, their Archdeacon or agreed diocesan contact. Where absence has been short, a brief return-to-ministry conversation may be sufficient to confirm that the person is fit to resume duties and to identify any immediate support required.

Where absence has been long term (6 weeks or more), or where there are concerns about health, workload, stress, safeguarding, disability or ongoing adjustments, HR and the Archdeacon should consider whether a return-to-ministry discussion, occupational health advice, risk assessment or phased return plan is needed.

A phased return may include temporary changes to workload, duties, working pattern, diary commitments, administrative expectations, meetings, travel or parish responsibilities. Phased returns to work are usually no longer than 2 weeks, up to a maximum of 4 weeks. Where statutory sick pay and stipend have been exhausted, this will be reinstated at the start of the phased return and will be reviewed at the end of the phased return period.

4.8. Disability, long-term health conditions and reasonable adjustments

The Diocese will consider reasonable adjustments where a clergy person has, or may have, a disability or long-term health condition. Adjustments will be discussed sensitively with the clergy person and, where appropriate, informed by occupational health, medical advice, Access to Work or other specialist advice.

Reasonable adjustments may include changes to duties, diary management, meeting patterns, communication expectations, equipment, travel, support in the parish, phased return arrangements, or other practical measures to enable effective and sustainable ministry. A health passport can be agreed to support the clergy person in explaining reasonable adjustments to their parish where this is appropriate. A health passport (sometimes called a Health Support Passport, Health Adjustment Passport, or Wellbeing Passport) is a confidential document agreed with the clergy person, the Archdeacon and HR department, that records an individual's health condition, disability, neurodivergence, or wellbeing needs, together with any support or reasonable adjustments they require at work. It helps individuals with disabilities or health conditions identify and communicate the support they need at work or to return to work after a period of absence. It also provides continuity if key stakeholders change, such as the churchwarden.

4.9. Recurrent absence, capability and wider concerns

Where there are repeated periods of absence, prolonged absence, or concerns that ill health may be affecting the clergy person's ability to fulfil ministerial duties safely and sustainably, the Diocese will seek to respond pastorally and fairly. This may include occupational health advice, review meetings, adjustment planning, discussion with the Bishop or Archdeacon, and consideration of any relevant clergy terms of service, capability procedures or ill health early retirement where this is relevant.

Where absence occurs alongside safeguarding, conduct, risk, grievance or other formal concerns, the relevant diocesan procedures should be followed separately and carefully, with appropriate advice from HR, safeguarding and senior clergy. Sickness absence should not prevent necessary safeguarding action, but any process should take account of the clergy person's health and capacity to participate.



5. Related policies and documents

The following policies and documents apply alongside this policy:

- Clergy Handbook;
- The clergy person's Statement of Particulars;
- National Church of England clergy payroll [guidance](#) on sickness and statutory sick pay
- Statutory Sick Pay [regulations](#)
- Diocese of Derby clergy wellbeing [resources](#);
- Occupational Health referral procedure;
- Ecclesiastical Offices (Terms of Service) Regulations 2009
- Covenant for Clergy Care and Wellbeing
- National Church of England [guidance](#) on Access to work;
- Safeguarding policies and procedures where relevant;
- Menopause Policy.

6. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion plays a vital role in creating an environment in which everyone can reach their full potential. The Diocese appreciates and celebrates difference and individuality, respecting everyone as being made in God's image and having intrinsic value. There is no place for any form of discrimination.

This policy must be applied fairly, consistently and without discrimination. Those supporting clergy should consider whether sickness absence may relate to disability, pregnancy, menopause, neurodivergence, mental health, caring responsibilities or any other protected characteristic or relevant personal circumstance. Advice should be sought from HR where adjustments, risks or equality considerations arise.

8. Confidentiality

The Diocese upholds the rights of data subjects to have their information processed in a lawful, transparent and fair manner, in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR, and will process personal information in line with its privacy notices.

Health information is confidential and should be shared only with those who need it for legitimate pastoral, operational, payroll, safeguarding or legal reasons. Where information needs to be shared to arrange cover or adjustments, the clergy person should normally be involved in agreeing what can be said and to whom, unless there is a legal, safeguarding or other overriding reason to share information.



Appendix 1: Quick checklist for clergy

- If unwell and unable to fulfil normal duties, notify the HR department (HR@derby.anglican.org) and relevant local colleagues on the first day of absence.
- Make sure urgent services, pastoral commitments and appointments are covered or cancelled through local arrangements.
- Provide self-certification or fit notes in line with requirements laid out in this policy.
- Stay in appropriate contact with the Archdeacon, HR or agreed diocesan contact.
- Ask for support early if health, workload, parish expectations or return to ministry are becoming difficult.
- Discuss any possible reasonable adjustments, phased return or occupational health referral where this would help.

Appendix 2: Quick checklist for HR and senior clergy

- Record sickness absence accurately and confidentially.
- Ensure immediate cover and pastoral support are considered.
- Confirm certification requirements and payroll implications.
- Maintain agreed, supportive contact during absence.
- Consider occupational health or other professional support at an appropriate stage.
- Review the 26-week pay position in good time and prepare the clergy person pastorally before formal payroll communications.
- Plan return to ministry carefully, including phased return and reasonable adjustments where appropriate.
- Keep equality, safeguarding, data protection and wellbeing considerations under review.