



# HOUSES HANDBOOK



**Diocese of Wakefield**

*Property Service*

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# DIOCESAN HOUSES

## A Handbook

Our Houses are managed and maintained by the Property Management Committee of Wakefield Diocesan Board of Finance. This guide sets out the ways in which the Committee and its Officers can work together with those who live in the houses in its care.

The Committee must always operate within the limits of its resources and there are inevitably financial constraints. The cost of providing and maintaining these houses has a major impact upon the parish share.

This means that the Committee has to seek value for money in the way in which it carries out both short term repairs and long term improvements.

In this guide, the expression “we” means the diocese, its officers and committees. “Parsonage” properly means both Vicarages and Rectories, but much of this guide also applies to all our houses. “Committee” and “Board” both mean the Diocesan Board of Finance.

The work of the Property Management Committee is governed by the Parsonage Measures of 1938 and 1947, the Repair of Benefice Buildings Measure 1972 (Referred to in this document as “RBBM”) and the Endowment and Glebe Measure of 1976. Some responsibilities are now devolved to dioceses under the Church of England (Miscellaneous Provisions) Measure 2000.

## **THE HOUSE**

If you are offered charge of a parish with a parsonage you will be given the opportunity to inspect the house and make any representations. By this time, a Vacancy Inspection should have been carried out by the Assistant Property Manager, the Archdeacon, Churchwardens and other interested parties are invited to this inspection. Any necessary work may have been carried out by the time your appointment is made.

If you are taking up another post here, a suitable house will be offered to you: an inspection can also be made as above. You are also free to make representations about the house, if you wish.

### **1. MOVING IN - PARSONAGES**

It is very important that you advise the Assistant Property Manager and the Churchwardens of your proposed date of occupation at the earliest opportunity.

You will receive a list of benefice fittings which you should check and advise of any errors or omissions within 14 days.

When you take over a house, the hall, landing and staircase will be decorated for you, and redecorated at the first quinquennial after ten years occupation. A grant is made, on production of receipts, towards other decoration work- up to £250. After this, it is your responsibility to keep the interior furnishings in clean condition and interior decorations in good condition.

You are entitled to certain grants and allowances – a Resettlement Grant, a First Appointment Grant (parsonages, where applicable) and your Removal Costs. Contact the Finance Office at Church House.

Removal costs – if you wish these to be reimbursed, you should submit at least two written estimates for removal costs to the Property Office before entering into any contract. Removal costs mean charges for loading, transporting and unloading your household goods and furnishings, together with hire of packing cases etc and standard removal insurance. Where essential, the diocese will also pay normal packing costs relative to houses of this size, but this does not include specialist packing of antiques, or packing of, for example, large libraries, the dismantling of furniture, sheds and garden equipment and so on.

We do reserve the right to nominate a removal contractor, and place a maximum figure on recoverable costs. Do not make a firm contract for the removal until you are sure the house will be ready for occupation- in the case of a newly purchased house, this needs to be checked with our solicitor.

**Note:** The first three paragraphs do not apply if you are not of incumbent status.

## **2. LIVING IN THE HOUSE**

When you are handed the keys, you become the custodian of the house and are required to ensure that the house is kept secure and properly maintained. Whereas many items of repair are dealt with for you, the following are your responsibility and in the interests of all you would be charged for the damage should it be necessary (RBBM sec 13):

Any damage caused by dogs, cats or other “pets”: damage caused by unreasonable use – such as cracked wash basins, burns to worktops, broken windows and so on which would normally be the responsibility of a tenant.

Final cleaning of the house or removal of abandoned furnishings or other items. Maintenance of neglected or overgrown gardens (this item is unavoidably expensive if contractors have to be brought in).

On the other hand, if you find that any part of the house is not satisfactory in use or has not been handed over to you in what you regard as a satisfactory condition, you should advise the Property office. If you think that the house would benefit from any long term improvement, you should also advise accordingly.

There will most probably be information left for you from the Utility companies. Please inform them of your details: name, moving in date and meter readings. If there is no correspondence for reference, please see the information on the meters themselves. There is also essential information at the back of this handbook, should you need it.

Sometimes the Committee will give approval for you to make alterations to the fabric of a house at your own expense. All proposals must be submitted in advance. The Committee will not give consent unless the work is carried out by an approved contractor, with any necessary statutory consents, and unless an undertaking is agreed that the improvement will remain when you leave, or, exceptionally, that you will make good the property following removal of a fitting or improvement (eg for an Aga type Cooker). In such cases, a bond may be required to cover such costs. The Committee would not normally recommend approval of items such as conservatories which are not essential and which add to long term maintenance costs.

## **3. INSURANCE**

The Diocese has a block policy insurance for its houses. This covers the main structure of the house and garage but not greenhouses or garden sheds. Insurance of the contents of the house and your personal possessions is your own responsibility. Anything belonging to the parish, such as office equipment kept at the vicarage must be insured by the PCC, especially during vacancies. Diocesan buildings' insurance covers the normal risks – storm, fire, flood and so on: in the event of any such emergency occurring, please would you notify the Property office immediately so that the Insurance Company can be notified and repairs put in hand. If you suffer any insurable crime, please obtain a police crime number and advise.

Third party liability: the buildings' insurance covers third party liability. If you receive any notification of a claim of this nature, written or verbal, you should forward it to the property office without making any response or comment at all to the sender– even acknowledgement– but please provide us with a note of the circumstances for the insurers.

#### 4. REPAIRS

**Quinquennial Inspection:** the Committee is required to inspect the house every five years to ensure that it is maintained in satisfactory condition. This inspection is normally carried out through the Property Office. You will be contacted and a mutually convenient appointment made for the inspection. It would be helpful if you could draw attention to any items of concern at the time of the inspection. You will be sent a copy of the report. Occupiers of parsonages have a right of representation and have a calendar month to make comments, if necessary. If you do make formal representations, these will be considered by the Property Management Committee, but if you do not, then the work can usually proceed under delegated powers. For other houses, informal representations may be made to the Property office. Tenders for the work required will be sought and your further co-operation will be needed so that the various contractors have access to prepare their estimates. You will be advised of the name of the successful tenderers and they will arrange with you a suitable date to carry out the work. If for any reason the work does not or should not start on the agreed date, please advise the Property Department.

Would you please note that the contractor is employed by the Board and in accordance with normal procedures, any instructions or variations for additional work should only be given through the Property Manager: any work not so authorised must be paid for by the person giving instructions.

Although in many cases the occupier of the parsonage has the freehold of the parish, he/she also has a duty of care to deliver up the house in its same condition at the end of the tenure. "The incumbent shall have a duty to take proper care of the parsonage house, being a duty equivalent to that of a tenant to use the premises in a tenant like manner" (RBBM sec 13) This section also covers alterations in 3.03

Work identified in the Quinquennial Report may well be carried out immediately in order to maintain the property in good condition but in principle the works may be carried out over the following five year period. It is intended that the Quinquennial Report should meet the requirements of the property and its occupants for the next five year period, apart from any emergency or breakdown which may occur. Non-emergency works are not therefore normally carried out piecemeal between Quinquennials.

Essential or emergency work will be carried out between the quinquennial Reports where necessary, and any such items should be notified to the Property Department. You should not instruct contractors or incur any expenditure on the Committee's behalf without prior approval, except, of course, in real emergency. This could include storm damage, serious leaks or complete electrical failure, especially outside office hours. Most houses are provided with secondary systems (immersion heaters, electric or gas fires) in the event of failure of the central heating system and it is normally expected that central heating repairs can be carried out during normal working hours. It can help for you to know some local contractors who can help in emergencies. The committee is also always pleased to hear of reliable local tradesmen who can work generally for the diocese. If you are able to carry out essential minor works yourself, the diocese will reimburse costs over £10 if agreed in advance.

**Central Heating:** the Diocese has a contract with a heating engineer to maintain the heating system. You will be provided with details of this, together with an emergency number. The engineer will contact you annually to service and test the central heating and gas fire installation: please ensure that access is available, for your own safety. All our appliances are inspected annually for safety. This applies to all fittings which are the property of the diocese, but **not** to any fitting- usually a cooker- which you may introduce yourself, and for which you are therefore responsible. We can arrange for any such appliance to be inspected at the same time for you, if you will reimburse the cost. If an engineer should “condemn” any appliance and turn it off, the engineer will advise us – but it can speed matters up if you also let us know immediately. For gas leaks – see section 10.

**Access:** to fulfil the Committee’s obligations officers or appointed contractors may require access to the property at reasonable times to inspect or carry out work. (RBBM Sec 11). In the absence of agreement, 14 days notice of entry may be given, but access can be made immediately where repairs are urgently needed.

## 5. SECURITY SYSTEMS

Most houses are equipped with a security system. It is in your interests to keep it operational. Make sure you know how the “panic buttons” work, and keep its key safe. If you are unsure of any part of the operation of the system, contact Property Services. Make sure you have an instruction booklet for the system, and an emergency phone number, in case of serious malfunction outside office hours. Security lighting is also provided in many cases. Please ensure that this is maintained in working order and new bulbs or strips fitted where necessary. The replacement of ordinary tungsten or halogen bulbs and strips is your responsibility. The replacement of “orange” or similar commercial-type dusk to dawn lights in higher risk areas is the responsibility of the board.

## 6. SERVICES

**Water:** A water meter may be installed if you wish. The expense of this should be met by the PCC and the Property office must be informed. Water service charges are also paid for by the PCC.

**Gas & Electricity:** Because of the wide variations in consumption and requirements and the various packages on offer, the Diocese does not have a gas contract with any particular supplier. As the consumer, you are free to make your own arrangements but please advise the Property office of the name of your gas supplier. Please avoid gas contracts which involve a standing charge during vacancies.

Similar remarks apply to electricity supplies. In all cases involving both gas and electricity, the contract is with yourself and not with the Board of Finance and should be made clear to the suppliers. When you finally leave – see 9.2.

## 7. MAINTENANCE

The Maintenance of the structure and exterior of the house is the responsibility of the Diocese. However, there are a number of ways in which you can assist in keeping these costs to a minimum.

**Gutters, gullies and drains:** occupiers are expected to carry out basic and preventative maintenance – for example keeping gullies clear of leaves, clearing gutters or having them cleared where practicable: or taking care over what is put into the drains. Where necessary, routine clearance and maintenance of gutters and gullies is included in the quinquennial works. Between quinquennials gutters will only be attended to only if they are vulnerable and inaccessible: this usually applies to older houses with valleys, attic storeys and so on. Badly blocked and surcharging downpipes or gutters constantly overflowing because of breakage or misalignment will also be dealt with. It is hoped that a basic attempt will first be made by occupants to clear blocked drains, but if they persist, we will have these attended to, usually using the local authority. Please do not call out commercial rodding or jetting firms unless it is a real emergency – raw sewage running in the house, for example: and please do avoid blocking the drains with bulky or non-degradable items – nappies and pads of all kinds, plastic, cooking fat, building materials and so on.

**Roof and loft:** please notify any loose or missing slates or tiles especially after a storm. Lofts are dangerous places if they have no safe access and walkways, and as such are not intended for storage, which would be at your own risk. The normal “floor” of a loft is actually only the ceiling of the level below, not designed for loading.

**Pest control:** rats and mice can sometimes be the result of food left on your own or neighbouring property. They can enter houses through very small holes. If you have a problem with rats, please contact the local authority pest control service or advise the Property Office. We will reimburse rat treatment, but only if arranged with us in advance. You should deal with mice or other rodents yourself – various traps or poison are available, including humane traps through the RSPCA. You should also deal with the costs of disposal of wasps’ nests yourself – sometimes the Local Authority will help or give advice or aerosol wasp killers are available: take care! Squirrels are becoming an increasing problem and can cause damage in roof spaces: try to prevent them entering, and if you are unable to do so, contact the assistant property manager.

**Mould and dampness:** there are generally two forms of dampness in a house. Rising damp soaks up from the ground and enters living accommodation if there is no adequate damp-proof course. This is very rare in modern houses. Penetrating dampness can enter around chimneys or window openings or through blocked or defective gutters and downpipes. A certain amount of this has to be tolerated in older houses but not in modern properties. Other apparent dampness is often caused by condensation. This can be a problem in inadequately ventilated modern houses which have showers, washing machines, tumble dryers and ample hot water – and double glazing.

Ensure that the house is uniformly and adequately heated and ventilated. Do not have cold areas – for example, an unheated bedroom with a north wall. Keep bathrooms ventilated. Avoid drying clothes on radiators, especially in unventilated areas – e.g. halls and landings. If “black mould” develops, it can be cleaned off with bleach or proprietary cleaners, but look for the causes – excessive humidity, lack of ventilation. Showers and baths are another cause of

apparent dampness. Try to ensure that there is always an adequate seal around the shower tray and/or bath: watch for any tell-tale staining on the ceiling below. Advise immediately if this occurs. Keep any shower curtain inside the bath, and discourage children from too much water play!

Do not use undiluted bleach or abrasive cleaners on sinks and baths, especially around metal fittings. Blu-tak (and similar material) used for posters and so on leaves a greasy residue after a while that requires a primer before decoration. Please avoid it or be prepared to redecorate before leaving as a courtesy to your successors.

**Central heating and gas fires:** ensure that you are familiar with the workings of the timer and control gear. Engineers advise setting the boiler thermostat towards the maximum for economy and efficiency. Ensure, too, that you have a bleed key – certain radiators will become cold at the top and will need the air “bleeding” regularly. Run the central heating occasionally during the summer to free residues from the pump. **In the event of a plumbing or heating emergency please contact Dale Stephenson Limited, telephone 07712 789 999 or 07734 971 042. (Please see full list of suggested emergency numbers on the back page)**

There is a risk with any gas heating appliance of leaking carbon monoxide- signs are changes in the flame colour to a brighter orange-yellow and staining above the fire itself. Advise if concerned. A detector can be purchased. Do not obstruct any room ventilators provided for gas fires. Because we must comply with regulations, and meet future needs, do not alter or exchange fires or surrounds without prior arrangement: basic “living coal” basket-type “pub” fires can prove costly and unsatisfactory without a convector provision, and therefore we do not provide or authorise them, except with a convector facility.

**Gardens, drive and paths:** it is expected that you will keep gardens tidy, and drives and paths clear of moss and weeds to minimise damage and maximise safety. Shrubs and hedges are your responsibility: please keep these to a maximum height of 2.5m. We find that garden neglect can annoy neighbours and lead to complaints. Trees are the responsibility of the Committee: many are subject to preservation orders of various kinds. If there are any dead or diseased areas, especially where they may be a hazard to the public, please advise the Property Service. When you leave, it is always appreciated by the next occupants and by your neighbours if the garden is tidy, and arrangements are made for the PCC to occasionally keep it so during summer months. The Board of Finance is unable to arrange garden maintenance during vacancies – it is very expensive – and so much depends on the garden being left in a tidy condition, and then maintained periodically so that it welcomes a successor.

**Fencing:** is a high maintenance item. Wood rots and perishes and blows down in gales. Your boundaries will be hedged, walled or fenced to mark the boundaries and provide a degree of security and privacy – but it is not always justifiable to provide further fencing within the boundaries to improve security, or for pets, except on a small scale, or in high risk areas. Beyond general safety and security, it is the occupants’ responsibility to provide safer areas within a property for their specific needs

**External – Outbuildings:** The Property Manager has the option in some cases to declare old outbuildings “redundant”: this means that they will no longer be repaired or insured, but are sometimes retained for use if you wish. Sheds and greenhouses are neither provided nor insured by the diocese.

**Decorations:** it is expected that the house will be maintained and handed over in satisfactory internal decorative order. When you eventually leave the house, please try to avoid leaving very personalised decoration schemes, dark colours etc. which may be a problem for the next occupants – please redecorate in such situations to make the house an attractive proposition for your successors.

## 8. MOVING OUT – VACANCY

As soon as you know the date when you are leaving the house, you should notify the Assistant Property Manager. At that time, please make arrangements to meet the Assistant Property Manager and hand over your keys. A key must be left with the Assistant Property Manager on the day that you vacate, together with a note of who else is holding keys. *You remain responsible for the property and any costs relating to it until such time as the keys are formally handed over to the Property Department.*

On the day you leave, please read all meters – gas, electricity and water – and advise the suppliers. Arrange to have bills sent on to you and advise that any future communication regarding gas & electricity should be sent to Wakefield Diocesan Board of Finance Church House 1 South Parade Wakefield WF1 1LP- not individuals. Water remains the responsibility of the PCC. Please make sure that the PCC is reimbursed for private telephone calls and make arrangements with the PCC over arrangements for the diversion or answering of calls on the official vicarage number after you leave. Do not ask specifically for any services to be disconnected: advise the suppliers that occupation will continue in due course.

A lighting drop and fitting with bulb must be left in every room. Never leave bare wires, especially around the cooker point – this is very dangerous - have your cooker properly disconnected and made safe where necessary. Any of your gas fittings which are removed (cookers should in any event have a safety bayonet fitting) should have the mains supply properly capped off. For parsonages, all benefice fittings including curtain runners and hooks must be left in the house.

Please leave the house clean and cleared of all rubbish or unwanted items including lofts and garages. If you are unable to clean out the house yourself, please arrange for contractors to do this. Please ensure that kitchen cupboards and the spaces around appliances which have been removed are cleaned after use. Please do not leave items outside for removal. Take these to the nearest waste disposal centre. If you fill your wheelie bin please ensure that someone puts it out for collection: these should then be stored in the garage to prevent theft. Do not leave potentially hazardous or dangerous items such as freezers, fridges, gas cylinders or any flammable materials at the property.

Please leave the study clear and arrange with the Churchwardens to remove any parish items for safe keeping, especially the contents of filing cabinets with personal details. Photocopiers and office equipment may only be left in houses on the strict understanding that the parish will insure them, and they will be removed if and when required. Your parish may want to retain some use of the study or even hold meetings there. Although the Board wishes to co-operate over such arrangements, they can only be made on a strictly informal basis and any future occupant must have full discretion over the continuation of arrangements of this kind. The

parish may be asked to vacate completely when this becomes necessary – for example when work is to be carried out – and in the winter months the central heating will be turned off and drained down. If electricity (or gas) is to be used, then the PCC will have to take responsibility for all charges after you leave, and will have to insure against theft (as above) and third party risks.

## 9. SAFETY

Please observe the following points:

- (a) You should regularly test and replace batteries in smoke detectors. Respect your electrical circuits: do not overload them, and use the correct fuses.
- (b) Only use electrical lighting circuits for lights. If you have a problem with plugs overheating, fuses blowing or similar concerns, advise the Property Service.
- (c) Only use electrical garden or DIY equipment with a circuit breaker device.
- (d) If you smell gas, turn off the supply (lever next to the meter – turn through 90°:) ventilate the area and call Transco's Gas Emergency Service (near G in 'phone book). Do not operate electric switches or naked lights. Ensure that you have a meter box key, where applicable.
- (e) You should never store any materials in the house which may invalidate the insurance policy as you may then be liable for the consequences. Do not store petrol, flammable liquids or gases.
- (f) Ensure that fires and heaters are properly guarded where children are involved.
- (g) Beware of chip pans. Never fill the pan more than a third full and do not leave it unsupervised. Keep a fire blanket at hand and know how to use it. Never throw water on a chip pan fire.

If there is a fire:

Close the door of the room where the fire is. If a closed door feels warm, do not open it.

'Phone the Fire Brigade by dialling 999 from outside the house.

Once you are out of the house, stay out. Do not enter to recover possessions.

Be aware now of escape routes from all parts of the house. If double glazed, you may wish to keep an axe or hammer in a safe place upstairs to assist emergency exit, but the basic night-time rule is to leave by the stairs and normal routes, protecting these by closing doors before going to bed.

## **10. DISABILITY and ACCESS – Parsonages**

It is the policy of the Board to follow the spirit of any legislation designed to improve the access and use of buildings for people with disabilities.

New Vicarages have level access and WC facilities for visitors, with easier access. We try to adapt refurbished vicarages similarly. If you or a member of your family living permanently at a diocesan house needs an adaptation to assist with a disability, please advise. If possible and reasonable, the committee will assist.

Meetings involving members of the public should be held where anyone invited to attend who has a disability can be accommodated. In some situations where a Vicarage is to be used (and this is by no means obligatory) but is currently unsuitable, it may be necessary to hold the meeting somewhere else. Problems of this nature should be identified at Quinquennial Inspections, to see if a solution can be found.

No general provision is made in non-parsonage houses, unless there is a specific need to accommodate a resident – as above.

### **Appendix: GENERAL STANDARDS FOR PARSONAGE HOUSES**

It is our general policy to look to provide the following although it may not be possible to do so in every property -any improvements are subject to financial availability and the approval of the Committee. This may not always apply to “other” houses where the priority is to meet the needs of an occupier in terms of accommodation and location.

Nevertheless this gives a guide to what is policy or possible.

Safe and level access to ground floor entrance with cloakroom and wc: provision for disabilities here if possible.

Easy access to Study with sufficient shelving and gas or electric heater.

Lounge with secondary gas or electric heater.

Separate dining room.

A kitchen with range of units and areas of tiling.

A point for fridge: gas and electric cooker points and space for your standard sized cooker.

Plumbing for dishwasher. Extractor fan or hood.

A utility room or kitchen area with plumbing for automatic washer: Where possible, space for dryer.

Floor covering to Kitchen and Utility room.

Four bedrooms, at least two being double in size.

Bathroom with shower – separate, cubicle or over-bath – and w.c.

Adequate airing cupboard.

Driveway and at least single garage.

Gas central heating system.

Double glazing: this is subject to an improvement programme: currently 25% of vicarages do not have double glazing.

Adequate number of power points, but not necessarily multiple points for computer installation- use appropriate plug bars.

Safety provision according to occupier- internal glass, staircase, landings etc

Security system and some external lighting.

Adequately fenced rear gardens Gates: Vicarage or Rectory Sign.

### **What is not normally provided – some points for guidance**

Cooker: people have different preferences: we provide space for a standard 600mm cooker. If a cooker is already installed in a “bought-in house”, we will maintain but not replace it. If it becomes unfit, then a space for your own cooker will usually be provided: similar remarks apply to other acquired kitchen appliances.

Loft ladder or storage: for reasons of safety and construction. If we provided anything, it would have to meet all eventualities. Roof spaces are not (especially in modern houses) intended for walking or heavy storage. If there is an existing loft ladder, it can only be used at your own risk.

Sheds and Garden Stores: our insurance does not cover these.

Open coal fires or grates: our standard has to be a gas fire.

Carpets: but if you can leave behind some carpets, this is often appreciated.

TV aerials and telephones: with the wide choice – cable, aerial, dish, we leave this to you (all telephone and television cables are under the responsibility of the PCC). Please preserve the vicarage telephone number if changing suppliers or moving – this can now be done.

### **OUT OF HOURS EMERGENCY NUMBERS**

<b>DALE STEPHENSON LTD</b>	<b>07712 789 999 07734 971 042</b>
<b>CALDER SECURITY COMPANY</b>	<b>01924 371 941</b>
<b>(TRANSCO) BRITISH GAS</b>	<b>0800 111 999</b>
<b>(ELECTRICITY) NPOWER</b>	<b>0800 375 675</b>
<b>BT LINE FAULT</b>	<b>0800 800 151</b>

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