



DIOCESE OF COVENTRY

Clergy Housing Guide

For Occupants of Parsonages and other Diocesan Owned Properties

Ratified by the Parsonages Committee, March 2019 (updated Jan 2025)

FOREWORD

Welcome to the Diocese of Coventry. This guide has been approved by the Parsonages Committee and contains information and advice so that you and your family can enjoy your clergy home. Please keep it in a handy place.

Our aim is to use the housing budget fairly, equitably and wisely to provide a good standard of accommodation.

Upkeep of the property is a shared responsibility between the Diocese, clergy family and parish (please see Page 15 for a quick overview of who is responsible for what). The Diocese takes the lion's share of responsibility and maintains the structure and fabric of the building and the services to it. This includes such things as general repairs and maintenance, improvement works, payment of council tax, water rates and buildings insurance, etc. The occupant has a duty to take care of the house and gardens and to act as a good steward for the duration of their tenure and the Parish plays an important role during vacancy and leading up to the arrival of the new clergy occupant.

If you have any concerns about your clergy home please get in touch with the property team who will be glad to do what they can to help.

Canon Ian Francis, OBE.
(Former) Chair of Coventry Parsonages Committee

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MEET THE TEAM

PROPERTY OFFICE: The Property Office is based at the Diocesan offices at 7 Priory Row CV1 5EX. Office Hours are 9.00am – 5.00pm Mondays to Fridays. In the case of an **emergency** please refer to:

<https://www.coventry.anglican.org/what-to-do-in-an-emergency.php>

Property Manager

Nigel Campbell (Nigel.Campbell@Coventry.Anglican.org)

Telephone: 07958 623132

Nigel's role is to oversee the efficient management of the property portfolio. Please contact him should you wish to discuss strategic or general housing matters.

Property Office Administrator

Chris Evans (Chris.Evans@Coventry.Anglican.org)

Telephone: 02476 521 351 / 07496 460036

Chris is the first point of contact for general queries, day to day maintenance and repairs, administration, utilities, issues surrounding moving in/out of your property, Council Tax and project support relating to lets and Pastoral Schemes.

Diocesan Surveyor

Anthony Walker (Anthony.Walker@Coventry.Anglican.org)

Telephone: 07311329141 (Working Hours – 08:30 – 16:30 Mon, Tues, Thurs)

Anthony is our internal surveyor and assists the Property Office in managing the housing stock and oversees quinquennial & interregnum work and improvements.

Diocesan Surveyor

Tom Picking of Godfrey Payton (tom.picking@godfrey-payton.co.uk)

Telephone: 01926 492511 / 07720 774952

Tom is an external resource and assists the Property Office in managing the housing stock and oversees quinquennial & interregnum work and improvements.

MOVING IN

Welcome! Once your appointment has been announced, please contact the churchwarden(s) to arrange to see the house again should you wish to do so.

Necessary internal works will be carried out prior to your arrival. External works may have been deferred to coincide with the quinquennial if it is due.

Please contact the Property Manager to discuss property matters and to confirm your move date.

On the day you move in please take meter readings, notify Jane (please include photographs if possible), and arrange for the utilities (gas, electricity & telephone/broadband) to be transferred to your name from your move-in date. Telecoms information may be held by the Parish and may be arranged prior to move-in; the Property Office will have details of utility providers. If there is an oil-fired boiler then you should check to see if you need to arrange a delivery of oil.

Please contact the Property Office who will arrange for a suitably qualified contractor to connect/disconnect your gas or electric cooker.

The Diocese is responsible for Council Tax and Water Rates. Any communication regarding these should be forwarded to the Property Office. Please remember to notify the Property Office of any changes in circumstances which may affect the level of Council Tax or Water Rates i.e. single occupancy, disability etc.

The Diocese arranges buildings insurance cover but you are responsible for contents insurance.

Do not forget to transfer/pay your Television License.

WHAT TO DO IN AN EMERGENCY

The Property Office is available during working hours (9.00am to 5.00pm Monday to Friday) to give advice on the maintenance and upkeep of your home. For out of hours assistance please refer to the Diocesan website, or:-

Plumbing and Heating: SMS: 0121 713 2196. Please leave a message including details of the fault, and a contact name and address. SMS will return your call.

Out of hours emergency cover is available from 5.00 p.m. (4.00 p.m. on Fridays) to 8.00 a.m. from Monday to Friday, plus weekends and public holidays.

General Building: Derek Lloyd: 07810 632142

Electrical: John Earl Services Ltd (Adam Earl): 07801797465 / 02476305617

Drainage: Drains Are Us Ltd: 024 7628 4486 or 07970 963 486

Locks: Coventry Locksmiths (Eddie Smith): 07813 946 363

Trees: Longfield Tree & Hedge Care (Tom Bale): 07710 451375 or **Offa Tree Surgeons (Christian):** 07813 650110

Diocesan Surveyor: Tom Picking: 07720 774952

Emergency Plumbing Issues:

If you think you have frozen pipes then follow the guidance on the Severn Trent website:

<https://www.stwater.co.uk/help-and-contact/faqs/what-do-i-do-if-i-think-my-pipes-are-frozen/>. Burst Pipes: Turn off the stop tap and open all cold-water taps.

In case of a fire:

Get everyone out of the building and stay out. If possible, close all doors and windows behind you to delay fire spreading. Dial the Fire Service immediately on 999.

If you need to open a closed door, check to see whether it feels hot first. If it does, there may be fire behind it, so don't open.

Plan a Fire Escape Route:

Plan what you would do if there were a fire in your home and always keep the escape routes clear.

Make sure everyone in your home is familiar with the escape plan.

If the main exit from your home locks with a key make sure the key is always easily accessible and everyone in your household knows where it's kept.

Keep the area around electric meters and boilers clear of flammable materials and to allow easy access at all times.

You can find more detailed advice on the Fire Service website: <https://www.fireservice.co.uk/>

In the case of a gas leak:

If you significantly smell gas, turn off the gas lever at the mains (next to the gas meter) by pulling the lever down.

Do not operate electrical switches – on or off - as a spark could ignite the gas.

Immediately, put out any naked flames and cigarettes and open windows and doors.

Ring the local gas emergency telephone number: 0800 111 999.

You can find more detailed gas advice on the following website: <http://www.nationalgridgas.com/safety-and-emergencies>

HEALTH & SAFETY POLICIES AND PRACTICES

ASBESTOS: An asbestos survey has been carried out on your home (if built pre-2000). A copy of the report is held by the Property Office and the Diocesan Surveyors, Godfrey Payton. Asbestos Containing Materials (ACM) in good condition or undisturbed are not hazardous to health. The condition of all suspect materials will be monitored. You should not undertake any repairs to the fabric of your house without first notifying the Property Office and referring to the asbestos report.

CARBON MONOXIDE DETECTORS: Your property should be fitted with at least one carbon monoxide detector in every room where there is carbon burning equipment (boiler, cooker, gas or real fire). If this is not the case, please notify the Property Office who will reimburse you for the purchase of long life detectors. Please test the detectors weekly.

COVID-19: We have procedures issued to all our contractors to ensure they are adopting best practice to minimize the risk of Covid-19 infection spread. We have a document for what you should expect from a visiting contractor and how you can prepare. If you do not have a copy, please ask the Property Office or access the Diocesan website.

ELECTRICAL SAFETY CHECKS: Electrical tests are carried out by NICEIC qualified contractors as part of the

Quinquennial work. No electrical work should be carried out unless commissioned by the Property Office. Please report electrical concerns immediately.

GAS/OIL BOILER & GAS SAFETY INSPECTIONS: Annual safety checks and servicing are arranged by the Property Office. SMS Heating Ltd are the appointed contractors and will contact you to agree a convenient time to visit. Please ensure you respond to their request for access. Any problems with your boiler or fire between services should be reported to the Property Office.

PONDS: Occupants are discouraged from creating ornamental ponds in gardens. If a pond already exists the Property Office will arrange to have it filled in or made safe upon request. Should you choose to retain a pond then you will be responsible for its maintenance and safety.

SMOKE DETECTORS: Your property should be fitted with two smoke detectors – one on each floor of the house. These are either battery operated or hard wired. The Property Office is responsible for their replacement and repair but regular checking/testing and battery maintenance is the responsibility of the occupant. Please test the detectors weekly.

TREES: Large trees are the responsibility of the Property Office and are managed as part of the Quinquennial work program. Occupiers are requested to monitor trees in the garden and to report any concerns to the Property Office. Ornamental trees, fruit trees, hedges and shrubs are the responsibility of occupants and should be pruned as part of regular garden maintenance. Some trees are subject to a local Tree Preservation Order which means that they may not be pruned or cut down without permission; all trees in a Conservation Area are protected.

A – Z OF PROPERTY POLICIES

Alterations: Alterations to the house require the consent of the Property Office beforehand.

Bathrooms: Bathrooms will be replaced when they may be more sensibly replaced than repaired.

Mirror: Provided in family bathroom.

Shaver Point: One point is provided as standard.

Shower: A shower (usually Mira Sport electric) is provided. Consideration would be given to the provision of a separate shower cubicle if a shower over an existing bath was impractical.

Shower Curtain: A rail is provided where it is not possible to provide a shower screen. Shower curtains are the responsibility of the occupant.

Toilet Roll Holders & Towel Rails: Provided as standard.

Bats: Bats are a protected species. If you discover them at your property, please notify the Property Office without delay.

Boundaries: There should be no encroachment onto or from the property. Any boundary queries should be referred to the Property Office.

Burglaries: Should you be unfortunate enough to experience a burglary, these are the steps to follow:

- Notify the police immediately and get a crime number.
- Contact the Property Office.
- Notify the Archdeacon (Pastoral).
- Contact your contents insurance provider.
- If it is outside office hours, then you may take reasonable steps to instruct urgent repairs and send the invoice to the Property Office for reimbursement.

Carpets: Carpets are occupant responsibility. If there is a trip hazard, particularly on the stairs then the Diocese may meet the cost of repair or replacement (this would not extend to the landing and hall). Vinyl or similar floor covering is provided in the kitchen, utility room, cloakroom, bathroom and WC.

Central Heating: Gas or oil central heating is provided as standard and servicing and maintenance falls to the Diocese. The occupant is responsible for ensuring that:

- radiators are bled of air periodically.
- the boiler is not switched off during cold months.
- the oil supply does not get too low or run out.

Chimneys: Sweeping solid fuel use chimneys and removing obstructions such as birds' nests is the responsibility of the occupant and should be undertaken annually and receipts retained. Chimney cowls are fitted as standard.

Condensation & Mould: Condensation often occurs when warm moist air comes into contact with a cold surface and left unnoticed can form mould growth. The direct cause of condensation can be a combination of a low air temperature,

high humidity and poor ventilation. Always keep the house well ventilated, particularly kitchens and bathrooms and, if condensation mould does occur, ventilate the room and clean off the mould with a fungicidal wash or a bleach solution. Bathrooms should have a working mechanical extract vent, activated with the use of the lights or shower.

Conservatories: The Property Office does not install conservatories. Where there is one, then it will be maintained unless the Surveyor recommends its removal.

Cookers: The provision of a cooker, whether free standing or built in, is the responsibility of the occupant including its maintenance and repair. If you decide to change the cooker then it must be installed by an approved contractor. If this proves difficult then please contact the Property Office for advice to arrange for a suitably qualified contractor to connect/disconnect your gas or electric cooker. If a built-in oven or hob breaks down, the Property Office will arrange for its replacement or will re-configure the space for a standard 600mm free standing appliance.

Cracks: Cracks in plaster are often due to shrinkage and should be dealt with as part of the internal redecoration. Cracks which appear to be structural (e.g. in brick or stonework, usually appearing on both the inner and outer faces of the wall) may be due to subsidence and should be reported to the Property Office without delay.

Curtains and Blinds: These are occupant responsibility.

Curtain Tracks: Standard 'Swish' type tracks are provided.

Day-to-Day Repairs: Occupants are expected to carry out minor (non-electrical) repairs costing less than £100 at their own expense provided that they feel competent to do so. For all other repairs, please contact the Property Office.

Decorations (external): The Property Office will organise external decorations as part of the Quinquennial program.

Decorations (internal): If required, the Property Office will decorate in neutral colours the Hall, Stairs and Landing at the start of the occupancy. Occupants may carry out internal decoration as required/desired. PCCs are encouraged to contribute to the cost of those parts of the house which could be considered 'public', i.e. study and downstairs cloakroom.

Dishwashers: Plumbing connections for dishwashers will be provided as standard.

Door Bells & Knockers: The Property Office will provide either a door bell or a door knocker. Bell batteries are occupant

responsibility.

Drains: Please: -

- DO NOT pour fatty substances down the sink.
- DO NOT flush items down the lavatory that can cause a blockage.
- DO NOT pour forbidden substances into the drains that could enter water courses, e.g. oil or paint.
- keep drain covers clear of debris, leaves and silt.
- in the event of a blockage contact the Property Office.

Drives and Paths: Drives and pathways will be inspected during the Quinquennial inspection and any necessary repairs carried out. Occupants are requested to help control costs by keeping drives and paths clear and free from weeds.

Dustbins: All bins (refuse, recycling & garden waste), and costs associated with them, are the responsibility of the occupant.

Extractors and Cooker Hoods: Extractor fans are provided in some kitchens and bathrooms and require regular cleaning by the user to keep them working effectively. Please notify the Property Office if faulty.

Fences: The DBF will provide secure boundary fencing to all vicarages. Where a public right of way runs through a property it will be securely fenced off to prevent members of the public straying into the garden. Fencing is not provided for pet enclosures. The maintenance and repair of fences is the responsibility of the Property Office unless the boundary belongs to a neighbouring property. Occupants are not to plant trees and shrubs in such a position that they are likely to damage fences or obstruct access and self-set bushes and ivy should be removed before they become established.

Garages/Parking: A house will normally have a garage but not always. The Diocese is not obliged to provide parking for second cars, caravans, boats etc.

Garden Sheds & Greenhouses: These are an Occupant responsibility.

Gardens: Occupants are responsible for garden maintenance and must keep the gardens in good order. This includes the maintenance of hedges, pruning of fruit trees and similar work.

Gutters: Repairs and maintenance are the responsibility of the Property Office. Please notify us if you notice your gutters overflowing.

Hedges: These are the responsibility of the occupant and should be maintained/pruned at least once every year. The Property Office may consider undertaking work on tall beech or coniferous hedges, but occupants are expected to trim all hedges on a regular basis to avoid the need for costly work.

Ivy: Removal of long-standing ivy growth from boundary walls can de-stabilise them leading to costly repairs. Guidance should be sought from the Property Office or at the Quinquennial Inspection before undertaking such work. Please do not plant or set ivy to grow up buildings or walls, including the walls of your house, it can be very destructive.

Improvements: Improvements are noted during Quinquennial and Interregnum Inspections and added to a list to be carried out on a priority basis. Requests for improvements from occupants can be considered for inclusion onto the list. If an occupant has pastoral reasons for a particular improvement to be prioritised they should contact the Archdeacon.

Infestation: Occupants should take measures to avoid doing anything that will attract vermin. Infestation by mice, rats, wasps, flies or other pests should be reported to the Property Office immediately.

Insulation: Cavity wall insulation is considered in properties where the construction permits. Loft insulation and lagging are provided as standard.

Intruder Alarms/Lighting: Intruder Alarms are not provided as standard. However, if an alarm is already installed then annual maintenance/servicing and repairs are the responsibility of the parish. Security lighting is provided as standard; replacement of bulbs is the responsibility of the occupant.

Japanese Knotweed: This plant is extremely invasive and can cause serious damage to buildings. Please notify the Property Office if you spot it growing in the garden or vicinity.

Locks (Door): A 5-lever external lock is provided as standard to the front door.

Locks (Window): Locks to easily accessible windows may be provided as required.

Lofts: Items may be stored in the loft where flooring is provided but it is important that the loft is not overloaded and that weight is spread as evenly as possible. A loft ladder and light are provided as standard.

Parish Office/Meeting Rooms: The property must **not** be used as a parish office or meeting room.

Pets: Pets may be kept in the house or garden, but occupants are expected to exercise common sense in their choice of animals with particular regard for the maintenance of the property and relations with neighbours. The Property Office is not responsible for provision of additional fencing for pet enclosure, nor does it provide cat/dog flaps.

Planning Applications: Please advise the Property Office immediately of any planning applications that are submitted for neighbouring properties.

Quinquennial Inspections: The Diocesan Surveyor will inspect the property every five years and schedule a program of repairs and external decoration. A copy of the Quinquennial Report is sent to occupiers who may make representations to the Property Office if they consider the schedule does not cover all necessary work. Repairs will be carried out in line with the Repair of Benefice Buildings Measure; improvements will be subject to Parsonages Committee procedures. However, if there are repairs you considered important, please let us know straight away so we can prioritise them.

Rights of Way: Occupants are asked to ensure that members of the public are not able to walk or drive across their gardens regularly other than using the main route to the front door. Long term use may establish rights by prescription.

Septic Tanks: Occupants are responsible for arranging the emptying of septic tanks; the invoices should be sent to the Property Office for payment.

Shelving: Study shelving to a maximum of 30m or according to the size and shape of the study is provided as standard. Occupants may add shelving at their own expense but should take care not to damage the building fabric. If additional shelving is added and is removed on departure, the occupant must make good any damage.

Sub-Letting: Sub-letting or sharing occupancy with any non-family member of any part of the property is not permitted.

Telephone / Broadband: Telephone and broadband are the responsibility of the occupant.

Television Aerials and Satellite Dishes: These are an occupant responsibility.

Washing Machines: Plumbing for washing machines is provided as standard.

Washing Line/Rotary: Occupant responsibility.

Woodblock Flooring: Sanding, polishing and staining wood floors are the responsibility of the occupant.

Wood Burners and Additional Gas Heaters: With General Synod’s commitment for the Church of England to be Net Zero by 2030, wood burners and gas fires are discouraged. On request, the Property Office will arrange for their replacement with an electric fire/heater, and/or the infilling of the opening.

QUICK OVERVIEW OF WHO’S RESPONSIBLE FOR WHAT

Diocese	Clergy Occupant
General repairs and maintenance	Minor repairs (up to £100)
Interregnum/Quinquennial Inspections and subsequent works	Organising gutter clearance (cost reimbursed by Property Office)
Cooker Installation/Removal only	Provision of cooker and maintenance/service
Annual gas/oil servicing and subsequent works	Annual sweeping of chimneys
5 yearly electrical safety checks	
Improvement works	Provision of white goods / appliances, shower curtain, rotary lines
Security alarm provision	Security alarm maintenance and servicing
Reimbursement of smoke/carbon monoxide detectors	Supply of smoke/carbon monoxide detectors (cost to be reimbursed). Regular testing of the same.
Buildings insurance	Broadband/cable/TV aerials
Major tree works	Gardening, pruning and patio cleaning
Provision and repair of boundary fences	Pet proofing the garden
External decoration 5 yearly Hall, stairs & landing during vacancy (if required)	Cleaning & internal decorating
Water resistant flooring to kitchen, utility, bathroom, WC	Carpeting throughout
Payment of Council Tax, water rates & buildings insurance	Payment for gas, electricity, oil usage & contents insurance

Parish
Care and security for the house & garden during vacancy, supported by the Property Office where required.
Weekly inspections during vacancy.
Paying for the telephone line rental charges during a vacancy if the number is to be retained.
Cleaning the house/tidying the garden for the arrival of the new clergy family.
Security alarm maintenance.

MOVING OUT

So long, farewell! Once you know you are leaving then please notify the Property Office who will send Guidelines on Vacating clergy property. Costs incurred by the Diocese to redecorate or repair/replace floor covering, other than fair wear and tear, will be recharged to the occupant.

Please leave the house clean and completely empty (including garages and outhouses), and remove PCC/Parish related items such as photocopiers, files etc.

Heating: during colder months please leave the heating set continually at 15°C and open the loft hatch to circulate warm air in the roof space. If the system is oil fired then please tell the Property Office if the oil supply is low.

Cookers: Please contact the Property Office who will arrange for a suitably qualified contractor to connect/disconnect your gas or electric cooker.

Telephone: Please ask the Parish if the telephone number is to be retained. Line costs and other telephone charges during a vacancy fall to the Parish.

Utilities: Notify gas and electricity providers of the final meter readings and let the Property Office have a copy of the readings and the supplier's details; ideally a copy of the last bill. Please also ask the utility companies to address correspondence to: Coventry DBF, Property Office, 1 Hill Top, Coventry CV1 5AB.

Redirecting the post: Occupants are responsible for arranging the re-direction of mail with the Post

Office and ensuring the Parish set up re-directions for any parish mail. Should mail be delivered when the property is vacant it should be collected by a Churchwarden or Parish representative and, if appropriate, sent as soon as practicable to the Property Office.

Contents: Built in appliances, log burners, shelving and any flooring provided by the Diocese should not be removed from the property.

Securing the house: On the day of departure please ensure that the house is secure (please do not lock internal doors) and hand over keys to the churchwarden(s) with the alarm code.