**DIOCESE OF ST EDMUNDSBURY & IPSWICH**

**SICKNESS POLICY AND PROCEDURES**

**Policy**

***Principles:*** We are committed to supporting the health and fitness of all office holders both for

their own personal well being and to ensure the ongoing work of ministry and mission in the diocese. The aim of this policy is to support clergy in times of sickness, to assist their return to

work at the earliest opportunity and to minimise the effects of any sickness absence.

The policy is based on principles of respect for individual dignity and privacy, quality of pastoral and practical care, and adherence to professional medical advice where appropriate.

We will endeavour to apply the principles and procedures fairly and consistently in every case, and

with due regard to diocesan policy in respect of related issues such as health and safety, discipline, capability, disability etc. However, it is recognised that this policy may not cover every

circumstance which may arise when dealing with ill health issues and therefore reserve the right to

vary the procedural aspects of this policy in individual cases and after consultation with the individual concerned.

**Guidelines**

***Reporting illness:*** Clergy are urged not to delay seeking early medical help in the case of

illness. It is recognised that the commitment of office holders and the nature of clerical duties means that clergy often undertake light duties when they are unwell. However, the new Terms of

Service for clergy require statutory records of sickness to be kept for all office holders (both

stipended and self supporting) and diocesan policy is that the designated officer should be notified of any instance of sickness that prevents the carrying out of normal parochial or pastoral duties.

***Pastoral care during sickness absence:*** Pastoral care will be provided through the rural dean

who should be notified of all illness. Where an office holder is absent on extended sick leave the senior clergy will share responsibility for maintaining pastoral care of them and their family and will

remain in regular contact including periodically visiting them at home.

Pastoral care during periods of ill health is equally important for non stipendiary and self supported

ministry, and longer term or serious illness should also be brought to the attention of the rural dean who should advise the archdeacon

***Cover arrangements:*** Where there is a team situation cover arrangements will be the

responsibility of the incumbent or team rector, otherwise the rural dean is responsible for ensuring arrangements are made for covering services and pastoral matters.

***Long term sickness absence:*** Where sickness appears to be longer term, and in any case after

28 weeks, a professional opinion from an Occupational Health (OH) doctor will normally be sought and the individual may be required to undertake a medical / health assessment. This will focus on

the impact of the medical condition on ability to fulfill the role; workload and priorities; and what

reasonable adjustments might be made to facilitate a return to full capacity. It is usual for more than one OH appointment to be made in order that progress can be tracked and referrals may be made for short term intervention eg professional counselling or physiotherapy etc.

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***Disability:*** In support of all sick clergy, including their family circumstances, we will follow the spirit

of the Disability Discrimination Act (regardless of whether or not the individual’s circumstances fall

within the legal definition of a disability to which the Act applies).

Where a critical illness has left an individual with a disability, or where an individual with a disability

is appointed to an office holder’s role, we will take responsibility for working with the individual to ensure that appropriate reasonable adjustments are made that will enable the individual to work

effectively.

***Sick pay:*** Full stipend will be paid for the first 28 weeks of sickness in any twelve month calendar

period, and this will include any Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) element. Thereafter entitlement to payment of stipend is at the discretion of the bishop but will normally be limited to a further six

months at half stipend. During this period the cleric is required to claim SSP directly and a corresponding stipend adjustment will be made. After this period entitlement to payment of stipend

ceases and will only be extended in exceptional circumstances and where a full return to normal working is anticipated.

***Management of sickness absence***: Whilst the over riding concern of this policy is the support

and rehabilitation of clergy in times of illness, account must be taken of the impact of such absence on parochial and other ministry and on the wider mission of the church. In the event that the level

of sickness absence prevents an office holder from carrying out their reasonable ministerial duties,

formal action may be triggered. This may include conducting formal interviews and issuing warnings. In extreme cases absence through sickness may result in termination of office on the grounds of capability. However, it should be understood that the diocese’s first priority is always to facilitate resumption of ministry.

***Return to work:*** On return to work, the rural dean and/or senior clergy may, if appropriate,

arrange to meet with the cleric to confirm their fitness to work and ensure that any appropriate adjustments are in place.

In the most serious of cases where the office holder’s doctor/specialist and the Occupational

Health professional concur that an individual will not be able to return to or maintain their duties, we will make appropriate applications / arrangements through the Church of England Pensions Board.

In consultation with the clergyperson the bishop will agree a period of time for continuing

occupancy of the current property (normally of the order of three months) and we will work with the individual and their family to seek appropriate alternative accommodation. Pastoral support to both the individual and their family members will be of paramount concern in this instance.

**Sickness procedures**

**1.** On the first day of absence you should telephone the church wardens and either the

incumbent/team rector or the rural dean to enable notification and cover.

**2.** Where the absence lasts for less than 7 calendar days you should:

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notify the church wardens and rural dean of your return to work

submit an Inland Revenue standard self certificate Form SC2 to the designated officer at the diocesan office. A hard copy of this form is appended but is available online either directly from <http://www.hmrc.gov.uk/forms/sc2.pdf>or via the Church Commissioners website at [http://www.churchofengland.org/clergy-office-holders/clergypay.](http://www.churchofengland.org/clergy-office-holders/clergypay.aspx)

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**3.** Where the absence lasts for more than 7 calendar days you should:

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continue to keep the church wardens and rural dean notified as above

comply with all reasonable requests in respect of Occupational Health assessment, where applicable

submit **medical practitioner’s** certificate(s) (required in all cases) on a regular basis to cover the entire period of sickness

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**4.** Where the absence lasts for more than 28 weeks you should:

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on receipt of the Church Commissioners’ notification, apply to receive Employment and

Support Allowance (ESA) from the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) which you can do by contacting Jobcentre Plus (tel: 0800 0556688)

notify the designated office immediately of the amount of ESA you receive continue to maintain communication in respect of OH and pastoral care notify the designated officer on your eventual return.

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**5.** Where your doctor advises that you may be fit for work taking into account certain advice you

should inform your incumbent/team rector or rural dean of any recommendations

altered hours or amended duties.

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The designated officer for notifying sickness absence is the HR Manager.

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