

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS - (Revised February 2009)

The next section of this document offers a list of Frequently Asked Questions, based on those regularly responded to at the Diocesan Office.

The list is divided into 4 main areas:

- Internal
- External
- Moving into your Home
- Moving out of your Home

1. INTERNAL HOUSE:

a. Internal Decorating: (See also 3 "Moving into your Home")

Q. What decorating can I do?

A. The house is your home and, like any home, you can carry out any decorating you wish. However, at the same time we would remind you that the house will also be occupied by your successors in office. Using wallpaper or very strong coloured paints will make redecoration more difficult and expensive for clergy coming to the house after you.

We recommend that any decorating you carry out accommodates a scheme using pastel colours. We would be grateful if you kept all the ceilings and any gloss work in your house to brilliant white paint. You are not permitted to apply any textured paint finishes to ceilings and walls. We will not sanction painting your kitchen units or utility room units.

The Houses Committee is able to offer up to £100 per year decorating grant to help cover the cost of decorating materials or labour. To apply for the grant, please send a letter and accompanying relevant receipt to the Diocesan Surveyor. You must confirm that the house has been decorated in accordance with Diocesan policy.

b. Floor Finishes: (See also 3 "Moving into your home")

Q. What type of floor finishes will I need to provide myself?

A. The Houses Committee are unable to provide floor finishes to rooms other than "wet areas" (kitchen, utility room, cloakroom, etc), the study, hall, staircase and landing. See also section **3. Moving Into Your Home**. We would request that you do not lay materials other than carpet without first discussing the matter with the Diocesan Surveyor.

Should clergy require help in choosing suitable carpets, the recommended Diocesan suppliers have a wide range of carpets to select from. Please call the office if you require contact information.

c. Cat and Dog Flaps:

Q. Am I able to have a cat or dog flap fixed through one of the external doors?

A. Where permitted, cat and dog flaps may be fitted through external doors only.

It is the responsibility of the clergy to pay for both the cost of the cat/dog flap, and the cost of installing such a flap within the external door.

We will also require that you pay for the cost of the future reinstatement of the door panel/door structure in advance of the work being carried out. Any work must be carried out by a contractor approved by the Diocesan Office.

As with any other structural alteration to the house, no cat/dog flap can be installed without the written prior consent of the Diocesan Surveyor.

d. Kitchen Appliances:

Q. Are any kitchen appliances provided in diocesan houses?

A. The Diocese does not provide or maintain any kitchen equipment ("White Goods" or cookers) within its houses.

Where a property has been purchased complete with built in kitchen equipment, the following policy has been adopted:

- i. Unless otherwise agreed, when the Diocese purchases a house (and prior to your occupation), work will be carried out to remove and make good kitchens which accommodate built-in "white" goods.
- ii. Repair of existing built-in "white" goods and cookers rests with you. If you are not willing to accept the cost of such a repair, then the Houses Committee will carry out necessary alterations to the kitchen layout to accommodate your own appliances, thus securing an equitable future kitchen layout. The Houses Committee will pay for the removal of the existing white goods and cookers.

e. Home Improvements:

Q. Am I able to request any improvements to my home?

A. The Diocesan Surveyor's department holds on its database a facility for recording requests made by clergy. The database holds information about work which, through budgetary constraints, or through prioritisation, we are unable to implement immediately. If such a request is made, you will receive a letter identifying the scope of the work, the priority it has received, together with a reference number which can be used when contacting the office at a future date. The items still remaining on the database at the end of a financial year are given a priority, are cost evaluated and incorporated into future budgets as considered appropriate.

Q. Am I able to remove or alter any fixtures and fittings in my home?

A. All fixtures and fittings included in your home are part of the fabric of the parsonage. If you would like to alter or replace any these items, please write or e-mail the Diocesan Surveyor before attempting any alterations.

f. Electrical Wiring and Equipment:

Q. What is the policy regarding electrical equipment and wiring within a parsonage house?

A. All electrically operated equipment owned by yourself is your responsibility. Its general safety and adequacy should be checked on a regular basis. It is important to note that faulty appliances can seriously affect residual current devices (the small switches in the consumer unit – these devices have replaced traditional wired fuses), the result of which will mean that your electricity supply will be cut.

Your home's electrical circuits are tested to NICEIC standards at the time of a quinquennial inspection, or that of in-going works. Where general electrical routine problems are encountered suggesting further investigation, an additional test is carried out at that time. The recommendations and standards of the IEE have been adopted.

It is essential to remember that under no circumstances should the electrical wiring, or its associated equipment (switches, power sockets, ceiling roses etc), be altered or tampered with by yourself, members of your family, or any unauthorised person. Under new legislation such work would be illegal. It is important to remember that the above requirements include electrical equipment in gardens.

Recent experience has shown that, where more than one computer is operated within a household and all computers are attached to surge protectors, there exists a possibility that your power supply can be cut as a result of the residual current devices being tripped. It is recommended therefore, that prior to calling the office about lack of electrical power, that you first of all unplug computers and check that the relevant RCD switch is enabled.

It is a sobering fact that in 2004 17% of all fires in homes in England and Wales were caused by electrical faults. As a result of those associated fires, 11 people were killed. A further 21 deaths occurred in homes as a result of electric shock.

It is recommended that all electrical equipment, used outside your home, should be protected by your own plug incorporating a residual current device. It is important to ensure that you use the equipment in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions.

When wiring a plug connected to your own equipment, ensure that it is wired correctly. Under the latest wiring specifications, the "yellow and green" wire is fixed to the "E" (earth) terminal, the "blue" wire to the "N" (neutral) terminal and the "brown" wire to the "L" (live or line) terminal. If your wires do not match the above colour codes, please check with the Diocesan Office prior to connecting your appliance.

g. Security Alarm Systems:

Q. Does the Houses Committee provide security alarm systems?

A. With the exception of recently built parsonage houses, we do not provide security alarm systems within our properties. However, where in the opinion of the appropriate Archdeacon and the Diocesan Surveyor, the house is regarded as being sited within an area subject to higher levels of crime, or is considered vulnerable, security alarm systems can be considered for installation, subject to the approval of the Houses Committee.

If your house has been provided with a security alarm system it is important to remember that the responsibility and payment for its maintenance rests either with yourself or your parish and it is recommended that a system be serviced every six months.

h. Telephones

Q. Who pays for my telephone?

A. We ensure that a British Telecom main telephone line services the house. However, the cost of rental for a telephone line and equipment rests with yourself or your parish.

If you feel that you require additional telephone sockets within your house (over and above those already installed), the cost of supply of the additional wiring and equipment must be met by yourself. However, prior to any authorisation, it is necessary to agree any work with the Diocesan Surveyor.

For the purposes of parish stationery and Diocesan directories, etc., we attempt to retain a telephone number with the property for the life of the house as a parsonage house. Therefore, when you leave your home, would **you please ensure that your telephone service provider retains your telephone number.**

i. Boilers and Heating Systems:

Q. Who pays for servicing my boiler?

A. The Houses Committee enters into contracts with heating engineers who carry out the servicing of your boiler on an annual basis. When your boiler is due for a service, you will receive a telephone call from the contractor, who will arrange a convenient appointment with you. At the time of the inspection, you will be issued with a "Landlord/Homeowner Gas Safety Record", which you should retain.

At the time of the service, please mention to the contractor any additional minor plumbing work that can be carried-out at the time of the boiler servicing (i.e. minor radiator problems, such as thermostatic controls, the boiler programmer, tap washers, etc.)

The Houses Committee does not service your gas cooker, or provide gas safety certificates relating to any of your own gas appliances.

Q. What happens if I run out of Heating Oil?

A. Please ensure that you keep a regular check on the level of oil in your storage tank. Many heating oil providers will now offer you a service, whereby they will check the level of oil in your tank and “top it up” if necessary. If you feel that the sight gauge is giving an inaccurate reading, please contact the Diocesan Surveyor’s office as soon as possible. The Houses Committee cannot accept responsibility for damage to heating systems as a result of clergy running out of heating oil. **Under these circumstances the Diocesan Office will invoice you for the full cost of the contractor’s work.**

j. Chimney Sweeping:

Q. Who pays for sweeping my chimneys?

A. The cost of sweeping a flue is the responsibility of clergy.

It is important to regularly sweep flues in order to ensure that there are no blockages following the spring/summer period. Further, you should use competent contractors, possibly someone with a recommendation from residents within your parish.

k. Wall Tiles:

Q. Am I allowed to change wall tiles, or to paint them with a proprietary paint?

A. It may be that you do not like the style or colour of wall tiles within your house. Our current policy is to provide wall tiles which are comparatively neutral, but also provide some variety either in texture, or in colours. However, wall tiles which are in a good condition, may not be replaced or painted.

l. Curtains and Blinds:

Q. Who provides curtains and blinds in my home?

A. All curtains and blinds are your own responsibility. Existing blinds will not be replaced from the Houses Committee budget. We do not provide replacement specialist blinds to roof lights.

Q. What can I store within the roof?

A. We try to discourage storage within the roof void for two significant reasons. Firstly, roofs are designed to receive light loads, mainly for access or properly designed water tank platforms. This is particularly significant where the house is a more modern structure where prefabricated roof trusses have been used. If heavy goods are stored (or lighter ones in high piles), then significant damage to ceilings (and even the roof structure itself) can occur. Secondly, with modern levels of roof insulation (up to 250mm) it is necessary to maintain the same thickness of insulant over the whole of the roof void. By allowing storage over the insulant, you are significantly decreasing its effectiveness and ensuring that your heating bills are higher than necessary.

m. Glazing to Windows & Doors:

Q. Who is responsible for accidental damage to glass in windows and doors?

A. Damage to windows and doors is covered under the Board’s block buildings insurance policy. Occupiers will be asked to meet the “excess” of any claim to replace broken glass. The current excess on the policy is £200. This means that you will be expected to pay for the full cost of any breakage up to £200. However, you will not be expected to pay for broken seals on double glazed units or structural related damage.

2. EXTERNAL HOUSE:

a. T.V. Aerials:

Q. Does the Diocese provide T.V. aerials?

A. The Houses Committee installs and maintains the main terrestrial television aerial and existing aerial sockets within a house. We do not supply additional television points. Where an existing aerial needs replacing, we will be able to upgrade the aerial to a digital unit. We are unable to upgrade aerials where the existing unit is in working order.

If it is your intention to install additional television sockets within your home, it will be necessary for you to obtain the prior consent of the Diocesan Surveyor. All work will be carried out at your own expense by approved contractors.

Many families enjoy watching programmes delivered by satellite and cable television stations. The erection of a satellite dish is an essential part of the installation and we would ask that the dish is placed in an unobtrusive position that will not cause structural defects, or encourage the ingress of surface water. It should be remembered that satellite dishes often require planning permission prior to erection, particularly in Conservation Areas and where your home is a listed building.

Where a cable company's installation is agreed, it is essential that you ensure that the cable company makes good any disturbance to a driveway, garden and wall areas. The wayleaves will need to be agreed by the Diocesan Surveyor and will be at the cost of the occupier and any documentation will be required to contain sketch drawings identifying the line of wayleaves and the position of aerials. These documents need to be held at the Diocesan Office.

b. Security Lights:

Q. Who replaces bulbs in external security lights?

A. Where external security lights exist in parsonage houses, clergy are responsible for changing the light bulbs. It is important to replace a bulb with an identical unit to that which exists. If damage to the light fitting occurs as a result of an inappropriate bulb, the Diocesan Office will be unable to refund cost of a new fitting. If help is required in identifying the type of bulb needed, please contact the Diocesan office.

When changing bulbs it is important to use adequate ladders. The work should be carried out in conjunction with another person giving support and stability to the bottom rungs of the ladder.

c. Drains:

a. Cesspools/Septic Tanks:

Q. Who pays for emptying our cesspool/septic tank?

A. The cost of emptying cesspools rests with the Houses Committee.

When you think that a cesspool or septic tank is becoming full, please contact the Diocesan Office, who will arrange and pay the cost of an appropriate contractor to empty the unit as soon as possible. It is generally recommended that a septic tank/cesspool is emptied once every 12 months, although some units are capable of working well after that period.

d. Gardens:

i. Garden Sheds:

Q. Am I provided with a garden shed?

A. We will not provide new sheds unless it is considered that there is a lack of adequate storage space within the house and its environs. Unless the existing shed structure poses a health and safety danger or the house storage facilities are considered inadequate, we will not repair "old" sheds. However, we will remove them if desired from the parsonage grounds.

ii. Garden Compost:

Q. Am I allowed to construct a compost heap within the garden?

A. Compost heaps are considered a necessary part of every day gardening and are often essential for the collection of general garden debris. However, we would ask that you ensure that the compost is well controlled, kept free from vermin and, at the end of your occupancy, (unless it is contained within a proper compost wall), is removed in total and the compost site made good.

iii Fences:

Q. Do you provide garden fences to control and retain family pets?

A. The only garden fencing which we provide is perimeter garden fences and those which isolate the house from the rear garden area. We do not provide fencing to control or retain pets, nor will we be able to amend existing fencing for those purposes.

iv Garden Planting:

Q. What recommendations are available when planting in my garden?

A. The Houses Committee requests that you do not plant any new trees in your garden nor any large shrubs close to the parsonage house or its out-buildings. We are very concerned about the effect of trees and shrubs on foundations and masonry. We are also anxious that new trees planted in a parsonage garden do not become protected by local authority Tree Preservation Orders. Further, we are concerned about the rising costs of tree maintenance affecting Houses Committee budgets. All self sown or newly planted trees will be removed from the garden prior to you moving into your home.

v. Parsonage Trees:

Q. Who is responsible for maintaining trees growing within my parsonage boundaries?

A. Fruit trees, shrubs and "dwarf" varieties of deciduous/evergreen trees are the responsibility of yourself. All other trees are the responsibility of the Diocesan Office. Please ensure that growth to those plants under your control is regularly controlled and that foliage does not affect the house masonry, nor impair the free flow of air around the house or out-buildings. Please remember that many parsonage houses are within Conservation Areas and may also have Tree Preservation Orders attached to them. Where this is the case, Local Authority consent will be required, prior to carrying out work (except in the case of an emergency). Please help us by reporting problems with trees to the Diocesan Office as soon as possible.

3. MOVING INTO YOUR HOME:

Every effort will be made to ensure that your move is as straightforward as possible. You will have an opportunity to meet the Diocesan Surveyor at your new home to confirm the work identified by him as appropriate move-in works. Schedules of this work will be available for your consideration before or at the time of your Parish interview. At that time you will be able to discuss your own ideas.

Following completion of any in-going works to your new home, the Diocesan Surveyor will produce a quinquennial inspection report on the property. The Houses Committee have agreed that you will be asked to review the document and, if in agreement, sign it as a true record of the condition and layout of your home. The document will be reviewed again at the time of your departure and you are expected to return the house in a similar condition to that identified in the survey report, in accordance with the Memorandum of Understanding

Q. What decorating will be carried out for me?

A. As part of new occupancy works, if deemed necessary (and subject to an agreement between the Archdeacon and the Diocesan Surveyor), the following rooms will be fully decorated:

1. Hall, staircase and landing,

2. Study,
3. Kitchen.

We are only able to decorate using a maximum of **four neutral colours**, (including white).

Clergy will be expected to carry out any further decorating required. To assist in this, the Houses Sub-Committee may make a discretionary grant of £100 towards materials. It is hoped that when re-decoration takes place, you take into consideration the future re-decoration of the house. See also 1. a.

Q. When moving into my new home, am I able to decorate the rooms differently from the advice given in the answer to question 1a of this FAQ?

- A.
- i. The colour scheme must be agreed with the Diocesan Surveyor,
 - ii. When agreed, a deduction will be made from your Diocesan moving-in grant at the rate of £200 per room. This cost allows for increased labour and materials needed for redecoration upon your departure.
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Q. Which floor coverings will be provided for me?

A. The hall, staircase, landing and study will be carpeted with a suitable material which is considered reasonably easy to clean and of a neutral colour.

Where houses have a separate entrance lobby, a suitably hard wearing and washable surface will be provided.

It has been decided that the most appropriate floor finish for wet areas (kitchen, utility room, cloakroom, bathroom, w.c., etc) will be a vinyl cushion floor. We request that you do not replace floor finishes provided by the Houses Committee without the prior consent of the Diocesan Surveyor. However, where such floor finishes are excessively worn, we will endeavor to replace them.

Should you wish to lay laminate floors in your home, you will require the consent of the Diocesan Surveyor prior to installation. Should consent be given, it will be necessary for you to accept that you will need to remove the floor prior to your departure. You will also need to make good items such as skirting boards or doors (which may need to be replaced) which are affected by the laminate.

4. MOVING OUT OF YOUR HOME:

Q. What am I expected to do upon leaving my home?

A. Prior to leaving your home, you will be contacted by both the clergy and lay representatives of the Houses Committee who will arrange a visit to meet with you and discuss your views about the suitability (or otherwise) of the parsonage. It would be most helpful if you were able to inform them of your impressions (both good and bad) of the house.

Would you please inform the Diocesan Surveyor's office of the names of your utility service providers, together with your customer reference numbers.

You will need to carefully note your utility meter readings and inform the respective companies of your intended leaving date and, of course, to ensure full payment of outstanding costs.

For gas, it is best practice to turn off the mains supply at the tap adjacent to the meter. However, you will need to extinguish your boiler and any other pilot lights first.

For heating oil, it would be most helpful if you were able to retain sufficient heating oil in the tank for the boiler to be re-fired and the heating system to be tested after you have left. To leave the tank with little oil in-situ can lead to costly repairs to the boiler fuel pump and burner.

During winter months, however, the central heating should be left on a minimum setting.

For electricity, you merely inform the service provider.

For telephone, contact the service provider. However, please ensure that the main parsonage telephone number is retained.

Please remove all your possessions from the house, roof voids, garage and any out-buildings.

Before or on the day of departure, you should make sure that the property and all its contents are properly cleaned, including carpets, etc.

Please arrange to have your post redirected by the post office.

During any vacancy, the maintenance of the parsonage gardens is the responsibility of the churchwardens and PCC. Frequently, members of the church volunteer to keep the gardens tidy. However, if voluntary labour is not available and the P.C.C. is not able to meet any costs incurred, then the Diocesan Surveyor must be informed.

Finally, please **return one set of keys to the Diocesan Office**. It would be helpful if one of your churchwardens retained a further set.

b. Reimbursements:

In order to control Houses Committee budgets, aside from emergency call-outs where you have been unable to contact a diocesan emergency contractor, it is **essential** that no work is carried out at your home without the prior authorisation of the Diocesan Office.

c. Insurance:

The Houses Sub-Committee has a block policy insuring the structure of all diocesan clergy houses. This policy does NOT cover any contents. It is your responsibility to ensure that all your personal possessions and appliances are insured by separate cover.

GENERAL ADVICE ON PROTECTING YOUR HOUSE DURING EXTREME COLD WEATHER CONDITIONS:

It is essential that every precaution be taken to avoid **frost damage** and **burst pipes** during cold weather. If in doubt, please contact the Surveyor's Department for further advice.

Should you be going away at any time during a period of cold weather, please take all necessary measures to ensure that there is sufficient background heat in your house to prevent either hot and cold pipes or the boiler freezing up. It would be also helpful if someone was asked to keep a watchful eye on the house.

Where radiators are fitted with thermostatic radiator valves, it would be sensible to turn these down to the frost stat setting after which they will only come on when the room temperature reaches around 4 or 5 degrees centigrade. The boiler can operate normally and its internal thermostat will allow it to cut off when the water temperature has reached the pre-set limit, thus saving expenditure on unnecessary heating. With relatively low temperatures in the house, should your roof accommodate any water supply tanks, it would be sensible to leave the roof void access door open.

Whilst you are away, it is also sensible to ensure that the stopcock is turned off to limit any damage in the unfortunate event of a serious leak.

Where a house is heated by oil, it would be prudent to check oil tank fuel levels beforehand to ensure a sufficient supply of heating oil. Please remember that should the heating oil run out, the cost of enabling the system will not be met from the Houses Committee budget.

Do not underestimate the onset of a severe cold spell. It must be stressed that if repair costs arise from negligence to take reasonable precautions, then the Houses Sub-Committee will not be expected to pay for reinstatement and repairs – nor possibly will its insurers.

Should you need the services of our heating engineer, please see contact details on page **23**.

CONDENSATION

Condensation occurs on cold surfaces such as windows, floors and walls. Unseen, it can also occur within the fabric of the structure. It can damage the décor, floor coverings, clothes and bedding and can cause mould on walls and ceilings, as well as being a catalyst for rot.

New buildings often take a long time before they are fully dried out and may need extra heat and ventilation in the interim period.

Intermittent heating causes condensation to gather when the air and surfaces cool.

Extractor fans, where fitted, should be used whenever water vapour is being produced, i.e. cooking, washing clothes and bathing. Doors and windows should be kept closed when using the fan and it should be left running until any mist clears from the windows.

Tumble dryers (other than condensing types) for laundry should have the moist air ducted to the outside.

TO MINIMISE CONDENSATION

- Keep all rooms warm and ventilated with an even temperature throughout
- Keep kitchen doors closed when cooking, washing or drying clothes. Open the window or use the extractor fan, where fitted
- Keep the bathroom door closed when bathing and open the window or use the extractor fan, where fitted
- Avoid the use of paraffin heaters and flueless gas heaters in unventilated rooms (note that paraffin produces a volume of water equal to the amount of fuel used)
- If possible, keep some heating on at all times during cold weather

IF CONDENSATION OCCURS

- Heat the room
- Mop up as much as possible
- Open the window a little
- Keep doors shut
- Contact the Diocesan Office should you experience continuous excessive condensation.

REMEMBER:

WARMTH AND VENTILATION HELP REVENT CONDENSATION

GAS SAFETY REGULATIONS

Under the Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulations 1998, where gas is supplied to a property, all gas appliances in that property must be inspected at least once in every 12 months. The gas appliances at the property will have already been inspected within the previous 12 months and the Gas Safety Inspection Record will either be at the property, or given to you at the start of your occupation. When the annual inspection becomes due during the term of your occupation, we will arrange for a Gas Safety Register engineer to attend the property and carry out the safety inspection under these regulations.

The Regulations were brought in to protect you from carbon monoxide poisoning and it is imperative that you allow access to the engineer to carry out this very important safety check.

The Diocesan Surveyor's Department will need to arrange to remedy any defect, fault of repair found to be necessary following the safety check.

SHOULD YOU SUSPECT A GAS LEAK AT ANY TIME, RING TRANSCO IMMEDIATELY ON 0800 111999 – DO NOT WAIT

SHOULD YOU SUSPECT A CARBON MONOXIDE LEAK AT ANY TIME, RING TRANSCO IMMEDIATELY AND SEEK MEDICAL ADVICE STRAIGHT AWAY – DO NOT WAIT – INFORM THE DIOCESAN OFFICE AS SON AS YOU ARE ABLE

CARBON MONOXIDE POISONING

Carbon Monoxide can be given off by appliances that burn fossil fuels such as coal, coke, charcoal, wood or oil. It is not just confined to gas fires or boilers. It is odourless, colourless and tasteless which makes it difficult to detect, but the effects are deadly.

Please check that:

There is adequate ventilation in the room that houses the appliance and the ventilation is not sealed or blocked up. This particularly applies to designated ventilators near boilers and open fires (both floor and wall grilles).

If the room has double glazing there is adequate ventilation

Chimneys and flues are professionally swept on a regular basis

The throat plate is cleaned monthly

Ash is removed regularly

Appliances and flues are professionally served on an annual basis

The flame in an appliance is blue and is not an orange or yellow colour

There are no sooty stains on or just above appliances

Coal or wood fires are not burning slowly or going out

The fire is not difficult to light

There is no smoke in the room

Flueless portable heaters have adequate ventilation

If you suffer unexplained symptoms such as:

Drowsiness

Headaches

Chest pains

Giddiness

Sickness

Diarrhoea

Stomach pains

You *could* be suffering from carbon monoxide poisoning. Switch off your appliances and see your doctor at once. If the suspect leak is from a gas appliance, RING TRANSCO IMMEDIATELY ON 0800 111999. DO NOT WAIT. INFORM THE DIOCESAN OFFICE AS SOON AS POSSIBLE

