

Church Recruitment & Employment Handbook

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1. Introduction

This handbook is designed to guide churches through the process of recruiting and employing staff in a way that is legally compliant, ethically sound, and aligned with Christian values.

It is intended for church leaders, trustees, volunteers involved in HR, and anyone responsible for staffing decisions.

Church PCCs, as employers, must adhere to employment laws and safeguarding regulations. This includes fair recruitment practices, proper documentation, and ensuring a safe working environment.

2. First time employer

- 2.1. If this is the first time the PCC has employed a member of staff, you will need to register as a new employer with HMRC unless the following applies:
- They are earning £96 a week or less
 - They don't have a pension or another job while still working for you
 - They don't receive any expenses or benefits

You'll still need to keep records of what you pay them.

- 2.2. Otherwise, you will need to register with HMRC, either by phone or writing to them. Guidance can be found [here](#). Once you have received confirmation from HMRC (this may take a few weeks) - you'll get a letter containing your PAYE and Accounts Office references. You'll need these to report and pay PAYE tax and National Insurance to HMRC. Then you'll need to [enrol for PAYE Online](#) before you can send payroll information to HMRC.
- 2.3. You will need to use either an accountant or payroll software to ensure you pay your employee correctly. There are a number of [free payroll software tools](#) that are recognised by HMRC including their own – **Basic PAYE Tools**.

- 2.4. You need payroll software to report to HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) online. The software will help you with tasks like:
- recording your employees' details
 - working out your employees' pay and deductions
 - reporting payroll information to HMRC
 - working out how much you need to pay HMRC
 - calculating statutory pay, for example maternity or sick pay.
- 2.5. You will need to have Employers Liability Insurance in place; this can normally be added to your Public Liability Insurance with your current provider.

3. Planning for Recruitment

3.1. What are the church's needs?

Is there a gap in ministry, administration, or operations that requires staffing or a new opportunity that you have received funding for? Identify what that gap is to be sure about whether you need to proceed with employing someone.

3.2. What is the role?

Define the role and create a job description outlining responsibilities, required skills, and qualifications. Be clear about what you want the person to do and be realistic about what is achievable within the hours of work you are considering. Include a person specification detailing ideal attributes, being clear about what is essential and what is desirable.

3.3. Will this be part-time or full time, permanent or fixed term?

For example, a youth worker might be part-time and fixed term, while an administrator could be permanent and either part-time or full-time.

3.4. What will the working pattern be?

Decide how many hours you want the person to work and if you require them to work on specific days and/or at specified times, whether they need to work on the weekend or any evenings, whether some of the role can be done at home or if you need to them to be present in the workplace.

3.5. Holidays – will you keep to the legal minimum?

The legal minimum leave entitlement for employees is 5.6 weeks of paid leave. This is made up of 4 weeks of annual leave and 1.6 weeks of Bank Holidays. (Please see Appendix 1 for how to calculate holiday for part time employees.)

3.6. What rate of pay?

Consider the rate of pay that is appropriate for the role, comparing to other similar positions in the sector. You will also need be aware of [National Minimum Wage rates](#), which is the legal minimum, and may want to ensure you keep above the [Real Living Wage](#), which is calculated on the real cost of living and normally a little higher than the National Minimum Wage rate. The Diocese of Norwich recommends payment of the Real Living Wage. Norwich Diocesan Board of Finance has adopted this as a minimum.

3.7. What other costs need to be considered?

You will need to take into account other costs, such as [Employers National Insurance](#), your employees entitlement to [Statutory Sick Pay](#) and ensure funding is available for salary, pension, and other costs. Consider grants or congregational support.

3.8. What will you pay the employee for any sickness absence?

You need to consider if you will pay employees Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) only, if they earn sufficient to be entitled, or if you will pay them enhanced pay, which could be full pay. (please see the link in 3.7 above that gives more information about how much to pay).

The question you must ask is whether you will want to deduct pay from an employee who works part time and takes a couple of days off for a stomach bug or a nasty cold. You wouldn't want them to come into work, but they might do so to avoid losing pay.

If you decide that you wouldn't want to be deducting pay in those circumstances, you need to set sensible limits on the amount of sickness absence you would be prepared to pay each year and whether that depends on the length of service.

You would also need to put some conditions on it to protect the church from paying out excessive sick pay, particularly if someone is off for an extended period and you need to pay someone else to cover their absence. It is advisable to set this out in the principal statement; see section 5.

3.9. What about a pension?

All employers must provide a workplace pension scheme. This is called 'automatic enrolment'. You must automatically enrol an employee into a pension scheme and make contributions to their pension if all of the following apply:

- They are classed as a 'worker' (which includes employees). Further information on employment status can be found [here](#).
- They are aged between 22 and State Pension age
- They earn at least £10,000 per year (£192 per week)
- They usually work in the UK.

You do not have to contribute to a pension if the employee earns the following amounts or less: £520 a month or £120 a week.

The minimum employer contribution is 3% and the total minimum contribution is 8%. So, if the employer contributes 3% the employee will need to put in 5%. It is good practice for the employer to contribute the larger amount i.e. 5%, requiring the employee to contribute 3%. The Nest workplace pension is the simplest one to set up for small employers.

Further information can be found [here](#).

4. Contract of Employment

- 4.1. All employees have an employment contract with their employer. A contract is an agreement that sets out an employee's employment conditions, rights, responsibilities and duties. These are called the 'terms' of the contract.
- 4.2. Employees and employers must stick to a contract until it ends (for example, by an employer or employee giving notice or an employee being dismissed) or until the terms are changed (usually by agreement between the employee and employer).
- 4.3. As soon as someone accepts a job offer, they have a contract with their employer. An employment contract does not have to be written down.
- 4.4. The contract comprises the verbal offer, once accepted, the contents of the written offer and includes the contents of the Statement of Main Terms and Conditions of Employment, which should not contradict anything agreed in the verbal offer or set out in the offer letter.
- 4.5. Implied terms

Implied terms are automatically part of a contract even if they're not written down, which include such things as:

- employees not stealing from their employer
- your employer providing a safe and secure working environment
- a legal requirement like the right to the minimum holiday entitlement
- something necessary to do the job like a driver having a valid licence.

5. Statement of Main Terms and Conditions of Employment

- 5.1. An employer must provide employees a document stating the main conditions of employment when they start work. This is known as a "written statement of employment particulars". It is not an employment contract in itself but is part of it.

5.2. The written statement is made up of:

- the main document (known as a 'principal statement')
- a wider written statement

The employer must provide the principal statement on the first day of employment and the wider written statement within 2 months of the start of employment.

5.3. The wider written statement must include information about:

- pensions and pension schemes
- collective agreements
- any other right to non-compulsory training provided by the employer
- disciplinary and grievance procedures

It is good practice to make this information available at the start of employment, rather than wait two months.

5.4. Employers must tell employees or workers about any minor changes to the written statement. They must do this within one month of making the change.

5.5. The principal statement or Statement of Main Terms and Conditions of Employment

The principal statement must include at least:

- the employer's name
- the employee's name, job title or a description of work and start date
- how much and how often an employee or worker will get paid
- hours and days of work and if and how they may vary (also if they will have to work on Sundays)
- holiday entitlement (and if that includes public holidays)
- where an employee or worker will be working and whether they might have to relocate

- if an employee or worker works in different places, where these will be and what the employer's address is
- how long a job is expected to last (and what the end date is if it's a fixed-term contract)
- how long any probation period is and what its conditions are
- any other benefits (for example, childcare vouchers and lunch)
- obligatory training, and whether this is paid for by the employer
- the date that a previous job started if it counts towards a period of continuous employment.

5.6. Before you start the recruitment process you need to have a Statement of Main Terms and Conditions of Employment template ready to use. It is now a day-one right for an employee to have this in place. Check that it includes all the things you have considered and agreed such as the amount of sickness absence pay that you are prepared to pay or whether it's just SSP.

5.7. On the first day of employment the employer must also provide the employee or worker with information about:

- sick pay and procedures
- other paid leave (for example, maternity leave and paternity leave)
- notice periods

5.8. The employer can choose whether to include this information in the principal statement or provide it in a separate document. If they provide it in a separate document, this must be something that the employee or worker has reasonable access to, such as on the employer's intranet.

6. Recruitment and Selection Planning

Consider when you want someone to start and plan your recruitment process in line with that. You need to allow time for various stages in the process, whilst needing to keep the process as short as possible. The stages are:

- 6.1. Agree who will shortlist and interview and agree a date for these in line with the other stages. It is good practice for at least two people to conduct the interviews.
- 6.2. Advertising – allow at least ten days, including two weekends, before the closing date
- 6.3. Shortlisting – diary time within a couple of days of the closing date
- 6.4. Invite people to interview, giving them a week's notice
- 6.5. Hold interviews and decide within 24 hours whether to make a job offer.
- 6.6. Once acceptance of the offer is received in writing (email is sufficient), agree a start date. The applicant is likely to have to give notice if already in another job and this may be four or five weeks.

Due to all these different stages, it is likely to take a couple of months from the post being first advertised to getting a person to start in their role.

- 6.7. Agree whether you want applicants to complete an application form or whether you will accept a CV and covering letter.
- 6.8. Prepare interview questions that assess both technical skills and alignment with church values. Include scenario-based questions. This will need to include safeguarding questions if the role includes regulated activity, which is any role that involves substantial contact with children and/or vulnerable adults. Please follow the [safer recruitment and people management guidance](#). If this is the case, you need to ensure that interviewers have completed safeguarding training.

7. Recruitment Process

7.1. Advertising

Draw up your advert providing clear information about the job role including pay and hours, how to apply, the closing date and the planned interview date. If you want applicants to complete your application form you will need to advise them how to access it e.g., please email office@xxxxx.com and request the application form.

7.2. Advertise the role on church websites, social media, denominational job boards, and local community boards.

7.3. After the closing date you will need to shortlist candidates based on essential and desirable criteria from the person specification.

7.4. Invite the candidates to interview and ensure these are held in a suitable space without interruptions with a minimum of two interviewers.

7.5. During the interview you must not ask any potentially discriminatory questions related to age, marital status, childcare, sexuality etc. All candidates must be asked the same questions and given time to respond.

7.6. Make notes during the interview so these can be referred to afterwards. These must be objective and clear.

7.7. Following the interviews a fair decision needs to be made on who to appoint, and a verbal offer made, subject to satisfactory references, Right to Work checks and a DBS (criminal record check) if that is relevant and the role involves working with children and/or vulnerable adults.

7.8. If the candidate accepts the verbal offer, then a written offer can be sent, setting out the main terms including pay, hours, holiday etc. and again making it clear that it is subject to satisfactory references, Right to Work checks and a DBS (criminal record check) if that is relevant.

7.9. Start the checks

- Send out references (preferably two including one from their current or most recent employer)
- Start DBS check if needed

- Ask the candidate to bring in the relevant documents so a Right to Work in the UK check can be completed. The Right to Work check must be completed before they commence employment.

7.10. Once the checks have been completed the Statement of Main Terms and Conditions of Employment can be prepared, signed by a designated member of the PCC and sent to the candidate for signing.

8. Preparing for the new employee

Before your new employee starts it is important to have everything ready for them. This will help give them the confidence that they have made the right decision in taking up the offer of employment with you and that you value them.

8.1. Workspace

- Prepare your new employee's work area and office space and equip it with supplies
- Order appropriate access keys/ security cards and make sure they work
- Arrange for parking, if required
- Deliver any equipment and technology for remote employees

8.2. Technology

- Ensure necessary equipment (computer, phone) and software is in place
- Arrange for access to common drives, files, and email groups

8.3. Communications

- Share the news about the new starter with everyone so they are ready for their introduction.
- Assign the new employee a mentor who can show them the ropes, answer their questions, and even show them where they can get lunch.

9. Onboarding and Induction

9.1. A new employee joining your team is an important development for you and your team. It is understandable that you want them immersed into their role and the culture as quickly as possible. But rushing into things doesn't set them up for long term success. This is where onboarding and induction comes into play. Before your new employee's start date, you'll need to ensure that their contract, policies and paperwork are all dealt with. Then when they do start, there should be a proper induction plan in place to ease them into their role and the organisation.

9.2. Plan and implement an induction timetable that includes the following:

- Receipt of a copy of their signed Statement of Main Terms and Conditions of Employment
- Collection of banking information and NI number to enable payment of salary
- Collection of emergency contact information
- A welcome on their first day with a tour, introductions, where facilities are, fire exits and any key safety information.
- Explain church mission, values, safeguarding policies, and expectations.
- Meet key people including their line manager, those they will have regular contact with.
- Their manager will need to meet with them and set initial goals and schedule regular check-ins, provide guidance and information about their duties and set clear expectations about communication and performance.
- Provide an explanation of the probationary period.
- Provide essential training such as basic health and safety.
- Clarify expectations and limits regarding booking leave and entitlements.
- Clarify process regarding reporting of sickness absence and any sick pay entitlements.

10. Probation Period

10.1. Key things you need to know about Induction and probationary periods:

- Induction will usually begin when employees start work in a new post and end once they are fully integrated into the job and organisation
- Employers should support and give guidance to new employees
- Induction should cover health and safety and equal opportunities training at an early stage
- Employers must not discriminate against employees in the design or delivery of induction training and between who is offered such training and induction
- Any different terms that apply during probation should be confirmed when offering employment
- Employers should confirm its intentions with regard to any continuation of the probationary period before the planned expiry.

10.2. To enable a successful probation period the following are key:

10.3. Clearly defined expectations during the probation period

Set out performance and learning goals. By clearly managing expectations, you provide certainty to your new employee as to what they need to achieve to pass the probation period.

10.4. Regular meetings

Regularly check-in with your new employee to get a real sense of how they're progressing. This gives your new employee every opportunity to raise questions about the organisation and their role. At the same time, you get to see their attitude and personality up close which will help you make a call on whether they're a good fit with the other staff members and your culture.

10.5. Real work

If you don't give your new employee suitably challenging work during their probationary period, how can you possibly assess whether they are right for the role? This needs to be realistic, in line with their role and expectations, without overloading them before they have had chance to learn.

10.6. Mentoring

By providing a mentor, you can help the new employee better get used to the working environment. With ready access to an experienced colleague, they know who to turn to for advice, information and support. This helps improve their self-confidence and ability to meet expectations.

10.7. Hire or fire?

You should actively manage the employee during probation and should not wait until it ends. Before the end of the probationary period, you must decide as to whether you want to keep the employee or terminate their employment. You need to keep good records that show what training has been provided, records of one-to-one meeting discussions and any feedback and guidance given. If performance or behaviour is not to the standard required, the employee needs to be advised promptly, and clear expectations set out with time to improve.

10.8. If you want guidance on how to approach successful and unsuccessful probationary periods, the ACAS website has template letters that you can use. If you decide to terminate the employment based on unsatisfactory performance during the probationary period, you need to follow the usual steps ACAS sets out for dismissals of this nature.

11. Managing Staff

11.1. Provide regular supervision and pastoral support to ensure the new employee is supported in learning their role, that expectations are clarified and errors or any concerns are rectified in a timely way. It is best practice to continue this beyond the probation period.

- 11.2. Conduct regular reviews of their performance and set goals. This helps ensure that the employee feels valued, they are clear about what you expect and understand priorities.
- 11.3. Offer training opportunities for professional and spiritual development.
- 11.4. Have clear procedures for grievances and disciplinary actions.
- 11.5. Review salary on an annual basis, even if the decision is that there will be no increase this needs to be communicated.

12. Ending Employment

- 12.1. Staff may resign with notice—typically one month, depending on what is set out in their Statement of Main Terms and Conditions of Employment.
- 12.2. Employer cannot give notice and end the employment without following a fair process. Even under the circumstances of a fixed term contract where the end date was specified in the offer letter and the Statement of Main Terms and Conditions of Employment, the employee must receive written confirmation, with the appropriate notice, that the contract will terminate on the agreed date.
- 12.3. Redundancy may occur due to funding cuts or restructuring. Follow legal procedures and seek advice before commencing a redundancy process.
- 12.4. Dismissal must be fair and documented in line with the Disciplinary Procedure. Seek HR/legal advice if needed.
- 12.5. Conduct exit interviews to learn from the experience and improve practices.

13. Other key considerations

- 13.1. Follow safeguarding policies, especially for roles involving children or vulnerable adults.
- 13.2. Ensure the workplace complies with health and safety regulations.
- 13.3. Handle personal data in line with GDPR. Keep records secure and confidential.

13.4. Promote equality and diversity in recruitment and employment.

14. Useful websites and other sources of information

Find out more about hiring someone at www.acas.org.uk/hiring-someone.

Find more template checklists at www.acas.org.uk/templates-for-employers

Appendix 1

How to Calculate Holiday Entitlement for Part Time Staff

Full-time staff normally receive paid bank holidays. It is a legal requirement that part-time staff should receive a pro-rated bank holiday allowance, even if they don't work on those days. The holiday calculation includes both the normal minimum annual leave entitlement of 4 weeks, plus the Bank Holiday entitlement of 1.6 weeks (8 days). This ensures fair treatment and avoids discrimination.

There are two common methods:

1. Based on Days Worked Per Week

Use the formula: $\text{Holiday entitlement (in days)} = \text{Days worked per week} \times 5.6$

2. Based on Hours Worked Per Week

Use the formula: $\text{Holiday entitlement (in hours)} = \text{Hours worked per week} \times 5.6$

Examples

Example 1: Employee A

Works: Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday - Hours: 5 hours per day = 15 hours per week

Holiday entitlement in days (using formula 1 above):

$3 \text{ days} \times 5.6 = \mathbf{16.8^* \text{ days per year}}$

Holiday entitlement in hours (using formula 2 above):

$15 \text{ hours/week} \times 5.6 \text{ weeks} = 84 \text{ hours per year}$

To convert this back into days: $84 \text{ hours} \div 5 \text{ hours/day} = \mathbf{16.8^* \text{ days per year}}$

Example 2: Employee B

Works: Wednesday and Friday - Hours: 6 hours per day = 12 hours per week

Holiday entitlement in days (using formula 1 above):

$2 \text{ days} \times 5.6 = \mathbf{11.2^* \text{ days per year}}$

Holiday entitlement in hours (using formula 2 above):

$12 \text{ hours/week} \times 5.6 \text{ weeks} = \mathbf{67.2 \text{ hours per year}}$

To convert to back to days: $67.2 \text{ hours} \div 6 \text{ hours/day} = \mathbf{11.2^* \text{ days per year}}$

From this you can see that whichever way you calculate it you get the same amount of entitlement in days. It is good practice to round up to the nearest half day for that person. So, for person A round up to 17 days and for person B round up to 11.5 days.

When a Bank Holiday occurs on their working day, they will need to cover that day using their combined holiday allowance. It is helpful to work this out in advance for the year.

Below is a worked example for 2026 and 2027. This needs to be checked each year to be fair to all employees, regardless of the days they work.

Employee A works Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday. This means that 5 of the 8 Bank Holidays fall on their normal working day in 2026. Therefore 5×5 hours = 25 hours (or 5 days) need to be deducted from their holiday allowance, 17 days – 5 days = 12 days remaining (equivalent to 4 weeks).

In 2027, 6 of the 8 Bank Holidays fall on their normal working day. Therefore 6×5 hours = 30 hours (or 6 days) need to be deducted from their holiday allowance, 17 days – 6 days = 11 days remaining (equivalent to 3 weeks and 2 days). Overall, in both years they will receive 17 days of paid leave.

Employee B works Wednesday and Friday. This means that 2 of the 8 Bank Holidays fall on their normal working day in 2026. Therefore 2×6 hours = 12 hours (or 2 days) need to be deducted from their holiday allowance, 11.5 days – 2 days = 9.5 days remaining (equivalent to 4.5 weeks).

In 2027, again 2 of the 8 Bank Holidays fall on their normal working day, so the calculation is the same. Overall, in both years they will receive 11.5 days of paid leave.

See next page for tables of Bank Holiday dates for 2026 and 2027.

2026		
Date	Day of the week	Bank holiday
1 January	Thursday	New Year's Day
3 April	Friday	Good Friday
6 April	Monday	Easter Monday
4 May	Monday	Early May bank holiday
25 May	Monday	Spring bank holiday
31 August	Monday	Summer bank holiday
25 December	Friday	Christmas Day
28 December	Monday	Boxing Day (substitute day)

2027		
Date	Day of the week	Bank holiday
1 January	Friday	New Year's Day
26 March	Friday	Good Friday
29 March	Monday	Easter Monday
3 May	Monday	Early May bank holiday
31 May	Monday	Spring bank holiday
30 August	Monday	Summer bank holiday
27 December	Monday	Christmas Day (substitute day)
28 December	Tuesday	Boxing Day (substitute day)