

BEST PRACTICE NOTE FOR SICKNESS ABSENCE

Members of clergy are not employees and therefore the usual employment law procedures and practices do not apply. However, in order to support clergy wellbeing, it is helpful that any cleric who has to be absent from their duties for more than a week should inform the Bishop. This would allow the Bishop to undertake his / her pastoral care responsibilities.

The Bishop should then make contact with the priest with a view to offering support. That contact might initially be by telephone. This contact will allow a discussion as to how best to offer support both to the priest and if necessary, to the congregation.

Should the absence continue, regular contact should be made. Some priests will prefer the contact by phone, whilst others will be happy for a visit.

These contacts are to offer support in whatever way is required and NOT as a means of putting pressure on the priest to return to 'duties' when not well enough to do so.

Discussion around a home visit should include a suggestion that the priest might be more comfortable if accompanied by a friend or relative.

Depending on the circumstances, discussion should take place around appropriate changes that could be made to allow an earlier return to duties.