



The Church of England
in Essex and East London
Diocese of Chelmsford



PREPARING A PARISH PROFILE

Guidance for Parishes





For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.

Romans 12:4-5 NIV

Introduction

The parish profile is a foundational document that is used by church leaders, diocesan officials, and search committees to clarify the specific gifts and leadership style required in the next incumbent.

The profile is a key document which has two aims:

It introduces your parish to anyone interested in applying for the role - it is often the first impression a possible new priest will get of the parish.

It is the PCC's guidance note for the parish representatives considering a candidate.

A good, honest, attractive profile should make it easier to get the right person for your parish. So it's worth taking the time to get it right.

The profile is shared with the Bishops and Archdeacons to help them look for the right person for the role. It will also be read by anyone interested in applying.

This guide provides some practical tips and gives a suggested structure to help you write a successful profile.

Some tips for a good profile

Be upbeat and positive

Tell potential applicants why your parish is a good place to be. Highlight the good things happening in your parish, however big or small.

Be honest

Don't hide challenges and also show that you are willing to work with the right person to overcome any difficulties and work to the future.

Keep it simple

Use short paragraphs, clear headings, and bullet points. Also avoid using jargon. You will need facts and figures but don't make them too detailed or complicated.

Clear and attractive presentation

Your profile does not have to be designed by a professional but using an attractive design will help the reader.

Use photographs, ideally of people rather than buildings. The profile will come to life with photos of the different people connected to your Church.

To help you with the design of your profile, there are template parish profile documents available to download from the diocesan website.

Web and email friendly

The Parish Profile will be shared online and emailed to interested people - ensure the design works effectively in digital formats.



Keep it human

Candidates will want to know about the kind of people they are likely to be working with. Include quotes from the people in the congregation about the different aspects of your Church. You can use their quotes (and pictures) to add colour and flavour to the text.

Don't try and put everything in

The Parish Profile should inform and inspire potential candidates. You can't fit everything in, and leaving some gaps will help you work out who is interested enough to ask for more.

Remember who you are writing this for

Assume the reader has no prior knowledge of your parish. Be clear, descriptive, and informative throughout. Use the Parish Profile to introduce your parish and give a true sense of its character.

Be inspiring and challenging

It can be tempting to present a picture of a perfect Church or one that is beset with problems.

Show all sides, be clear about what's important, what may need changing and where the new priest can make a difference. Let potential candidates get a glimpse of the current reality and the potential future.

Highlight your digital presence

Include links to other ways people can discover your Benefice – e.g. website, A Church Near You page, Social Media @handles.

Check it with others

Ask others, including those not involved in writing the Parish Profile, to read a draft. Fresh eyes will help identify things that are unclear or missing.

Remember: People want to read something, straightforward, upbeat and honest. Enough to make them think “that’s sounds like the place I want to be”. But not too over the top, so that they wonder “that can’t be true”.





Section by section: an attractive profile

We recommend your profile has five sections in this order.

Although this is the order we recommend the profile should be presented in, it may not be helpful to write in this order.

Section 1: The wider context

Section 2: Summary of the profile

Section 3: About the parish/context

**Section 4: The person you want to fill this role
(person specification)**

Section 5: What you want this role to be (role description)

Aim for your Parish Profile to be around eight pages (A4) - long enough to convey your story; but short enough to hold attention.



Section 1: The Wider Context

In this section you can add a statement from the Bishop of Chelmsford, which can be downloaded from the diocesan website. Your Area Office can provide information about your Episcopal Area and your Area Dean about the Deanery.

Section 2: Summary of the Profile

This is a brief, attractive overview that introduces the most important points from the whole document. It should help someone quickly see what is distinctive about your parish and why they might want to join you.

You may want to think of up to three points that answer each of the following questions and put them as your summary:

- Who we are?
- What do we do (and in particular what do we do that is different)?
- How do we go about doing it?
- What do we want from the person in this role?
- What can we offer the person coming here? (this could include information about housing).

If you have a parish vision or mission statement you can include it here.

Although this appears first in the profile, consider writing it last. That way, you can be confident it accurately summarises your context.

Section 3: The Parish/Parishes/Benefice

This is usually the longest section. It may be helpful to divide it into subsections which detail what the parish is like as a place, what the church/worshipping communities are like, how the worshipping communities relate to the wider community, and the buildings in the parish and how they are used.

The place

In this section provide an overview of the local context, including:

- The location- a map can be helpful.
- Population size and detail about the demographics.
- A description of the parish setting - urban, suburban, rural, village, new town, etc.
- Local schools, facilities and transport links etc.
- Any notable features – local landmarks, or local history. Add anything that will give a sense of what the place is like.
- The three best things about living here (optional but effective).

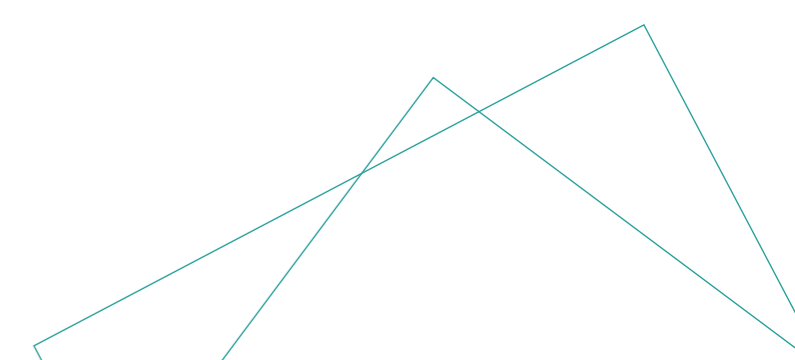
You can use the 2021 Census Data which the Church of England has mapped onto parishes, this can be viewed at www.churchofengland.org/about/data-services/resources-publications-and-data or by scanning this QR code. Use data so that it's informative without being overwhelming.

The church communities

In this section you can use a mixture of facts, figures and narrative to describe church life today as well as future challenges.

You might like to include:

- A list of services.
- A brief description of the variety of worship patterns.
- The overall Church Tradition.
- Congregation demographics.
- If and how children and young people are involved in the life of your church.
- The different expressions of Church, from formal Sunday and midweek services to Bible-study groups and prayer meetings, from youth clubs and fellowship groups to Café Churches and Network Churches.
- The numbers of people involved.



Detail your strengths, challenges, and areas of potential growth. Include some quotes and pictures that capture parish life and show people doing the activities you describe.

Ensure you balance any challenges with positives. It's tempting to focus on what needs improvement, but be sure to also recognise what's going well - what your church does best and can rightly be proud of.

The Church in the wider community

This section gives details of the part your church plays in the life of the local community.

You may want to list:

- The weddings, baptisms, funerals that you do (approximate numbers are helpful), plus any support you offer to people as part of Life Events ministry.
- Groups and activities taking place in Church buildings.
- The different services you offer to the community from home communion to befriending services, from film clubs to toddler groups, from lunch clubs to quiz nights.
- Your work with the schools in your parish.
- Any special relationships with local organisations and institutions (e.g. hospitals, residential homes for the elderly, homeless organisations, prisons).
- Any special links with the local authority or particular civic responsibilities.
- The different ways Church members are involved in the community.
- How you work with other churches and denominations.
- Your support for home and overseas mission and charities.

Be clear to distinguish between what you currently do and what you aspire to do.

The Church and its buildings

Use this section to provide a realistic overview of the buildings you have and any plans for change.

Include:

- The condition of buildings and any urgent or upcoming works. If no works are required, show that the buildings are suitable for your current needs.
- The availability of volunteers for maintenance.
- How often each building is used and by whom.
- The scope for new mission and ministry activity within the buildings.
- The routine and foreseeable cost of buildings maintenance. Buildings can be a huge element of the PCC's budget. If there is major repair work on the organ or to the roof then this can completely skew parish finances.





Section 4: The Role

Using one page, outline what you hope the person called to this parish will do, and reflect on what you believe God is calling them to be in this context.

Spend time in prayerful reflection as you describe the kind of leadership your parish needs at this stage in its life.

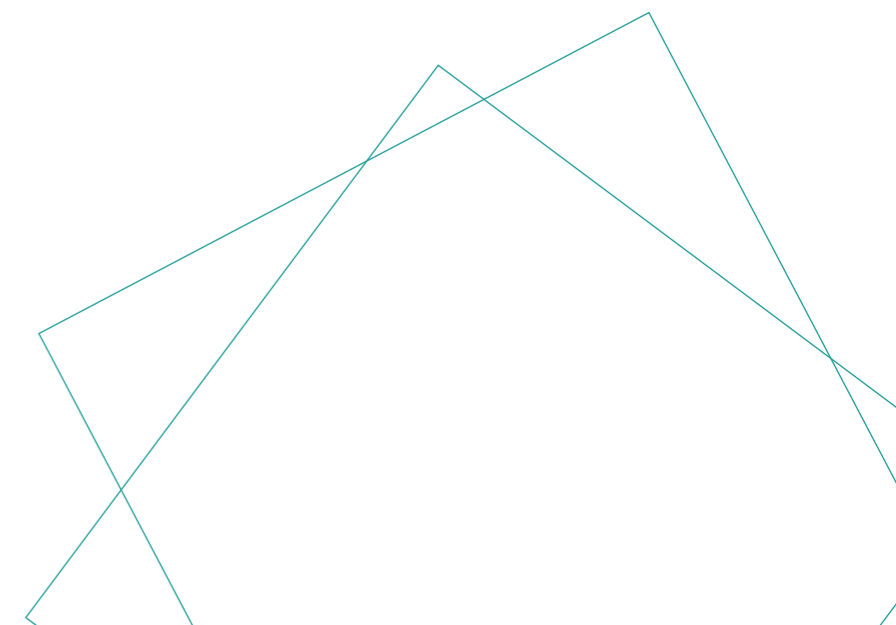
Section 5: The Person

Be specific about your needs – help potential candidates to see if they fit those needs, if their particular gifts and skills fit this role, rather than generically describing ‘a good vicar.’ And be careful not to describe a wish-list of impossible ideals.

Prayerfully discern the essential qualities that are needed from a new priest in your context.

This section must include statements confirming that the person appointed will be:

- Prepared to uphold the Guidelines for the Professional Conduct of the Clergy.
- Committed to having due regard for safeguarding guidance issued by the House of Bishops.



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