



North London
Pastoral Assistants

**Working Agreement; Discipline and Feedback Policy;
and Guidelines on External Supervision**

This document contains the Working Agreement, which must be read and signed by both the pastoral assistant and supervisor at the beginning of the placement and kept locally.

It also contains the Discipline and Feedback Policy and the Guidelines on External Supervision, which should be read and understood at the same time.

That this has been done is to be certified via the Onboarding Form at <http://www.north-london-pastoral-assistants.org.uk/documents.php>

Revised October 2025

A Working Agreement made between pastoral assistants, The North London Pastoral Assistant Scheme, and supervisors, which establishes expectations concerning behavior and mutual accountability whilst working as a ministry volunteer.

Mutual Expectations

The trustees expect that the pastoral assistant will:

- have a weekly time of supervision and theological reflection
- attend staff meetings and other appointments regularly and on time as agreed with the supervisor.
- claim all reasonable working expenses and that these will be met by the PCC
- be courteous, honest, and adopt a professional approach to work. To be ready for work every working day, be well rested each morning, well presented, and attentive during work hours.

In addition:

- Loyalty will be engendered and appropriate confidentiality will be respected.
- Feedback will be shared honestly and generously. There is an expectation that feedback will be acted upon by the pastoral assistant to the satisfaction of the supervisor.

Use of time

- Times of work will be used appropriately seeking a good rhythm of work, rest and play.
- Days off will be respected and used well. Ideally the evening before a day off will often be available.
- The pastoral assistant will take his/her full allowance of holiday, and holidays will be organized with reference to the supervisor with plenty of notice.
- Pastoral assistants will undertake no other paid work whilst they are on placement with the North London Pastoral Assistants Scheme. Any exception to this must be agreed with the trustees.

Worship

The trustees expect that pastoral assistants will:

- Take a place on the preaching rota (as negotiated) and to lead services as requested and in negotiation.
- Be present at all Offices and Mass on working days and will be courteous, honest and open, when excusing themselves.

Personal growth and development

The trustees expect the pastoral assistant:

- To develop into the rhythm of the day a regular prayer time.
- To develop into the rhythm of the week time to read.
- To visit a spiritual director regularly and take an annual retreat.
- To meet with an external supervisor provided by the North London Pastoral Assistant Scheme termly (i.e. at least three times a year: once before Christmas; once in the Spring; and once after Easter).
- To be given reasonable time for courses of study by negotiation.

Personal development

A Pastoral Assistant year is primarily a time for discernment and reflection. We expect the pastoral assistant:

- To attend spiritual and theological formation sessions giving these first priority
- To undertake other training by negotiation

Pastoral Responsibilities

The trustees expect the pastoral assistant to take an appropriate role in pastoral care within the placement parish with a commitment to good discussion and feedback with the supervisor.

Holy Order and Mutual Flourishing

The NLPA trustees wish to ensure that the scheme is one in which all Pastoral Assistants can prayerfully discern what God is calling them to do in his church. Trustees, parishes and clergy within scheme, whilst sharing a broadly similar approach to mission, evangelism and spirituality, also hold differing theological convictions about ordination; specifically whether or not the Church of England is right to admit women to Holy Order or not. Both positions are 'within the spectrum of teaching and tradition of the Anglican Communion' and PAs are required to acknowledge that they will abide by and uphold the principle of Mutual Flourishing as set out in the House of Bishops' Declaration on the Ministry of Bishops and Priests, particularly in the Five Guiding Principles which form part of that document (GS Misc 1076). They are set out below:

1. Now that legislation has been passed to enable women to become bishops the Church of England is fully and unequivocally committed to all orders of ministry being open equally to all, without reference to gender, and holds that those whom it has duly ordained and appointed to office are the true and lawful holders of the office which they occupy and thus deserve due respect and canonical obedience;

2. Anyone who ministers within the Church of England must be prepared to acknowledge that the Church of England has reached a clear decision on the matter;
3. Since it continues to share the historic episcopate with other Churches, including the Roman Catholic Church, the Orthodox Church and those provinces of the Anglican Communion which continue to ordain only men as priests or bishops, the Church of England acknowledges that its own clear decision on ministry and gender is set within a broader process of discernment within the Anglican Communion and the whole Church of God;
4. Since those within the Church of England who, on grounds of theological conviction, are unable to receive the ministry of women bishops or priests continue to be within the spectrum of teaching and tradition of the Anglican Communion, the Church of England remains committed to enabling them to flourish within its life and structures; and
5. Pastoral and sacramental provision for the minority within the Church of England will be made without specifying a limit of time and in a way that maintains the highest possible degree of communion and contributes to mutual flourishing across the whole Church of England

Accommodation

Each house provided by the North London Pastoral Assistants Scheme may have slightly different expectations and rules depending on circumstances. These will be laid out in a written agreement at the beginning of the year. We expect that:

- The pastoral assistant will abide by the agreed expectations and rules of his/her house.
- The pastoral assistant's privacy will be respected, and that their bedroom will not be entered without permission except in solely exceptional circumstances.
- The pastoral assistant resides at the accommodation provided, and that any exception to this is agreed with his/her supervisor.
- The pastoral assistant should not stay over night at the Vicarage or at any parishioner's house.

If, for whatever reason, a pastoral assistant is unhappy with their accommodation arrangements, they should:

- In the first instance, seek to resolve any difficulties directly with other residents or, where the matter is a practical one relating to repairs and maintenance, with the relevant administrator or owner of the property.
- If this does not resolve the issue, make use of the structures of the NLPA scheme, i.e. their supervisor and external supervisor.

- If through normal supervision a resolution is not able to be reached, to ask their supervisor to refer the matter to the trustees. Any decision of the trustees will be final. As the NPLA has finite resources, pastoral assistants should not expect to be offered alternative accommodation even as a last resort.

Administration

The trustees expect the pastoral assistant

- To keep a diary responsibly.
- To use the office space appropriately.
- To answer phone calls and emails and text messages in reasonable time.
- To be punctual, well prepared, and responsive when working.

Money and the payment of living expenses

- The trustees commit to paying the pastoral assistants of the NPLA their living expenses promptly each month.
- We hope that pastoral assistants are able to budget appropriately. If a pastoral assistant encounters financial problems, he/she should speak in the first instance to his/her supervisor, who will discuss it with the trustees. The trustees will then respond appropriately to each case.
- The trustees consider it inappropriate for pastoral assistants to lend and borrow money from each other, and for supervisors, parish employees, parishioners and PCCs to lend money to pastoral assistants.

Print: _____

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Print: _____

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Processes for feedback, discipline, and the resolution of dispute

The North London Pastoral Assistants Scheme hopes that all supervisors and pastoral assistants will work hard to develop a healthy working relationship characterized by mutual respect, courtesy, and accountability.

However, the trustees also recognize that working relationships can break down. It may be that supervisors feel the need to refer an issue to the trustees in the case of a very complex dispute or a serious infraction of a pastoral assistant's working agreement. It may also be that pastoral assistants wish to share concerns of their own about the effectivity of the working relationship.

This document outlines the trustees' expectations for action in situations in which a pastoral assistant's behavior is deemed by a supervisor to be habitually inappropriate, or in the light of a serious incident or complaint. Also outlined at the end is the process by which pastoral assistants can raise concerns.

Supervision

Each pastoral assistant and supervisor should expect to spend a dedicated, one-to-one focused session each week (of around an hour) in supervision.

If there are aspects of the pastoral assistant's behavior that the supervisor wishes to discuss with the pastoral assistant, this should be done in the first instance in this context. A record should be made of each supervision, the topics discussed, and actions agreed.

A record of these regular meetings should be kept by the supervisor.

Referral of a matter to the trustees

If a matter has continued to be unresolved, a pastoral assistant's behavior has continued to be inappropriate, or a serious incident has taken place, the matter should be referred to the trustees in an email copied to all the trustees.

A meeting will be organized in which a trustee is present with the supervisor and pastoral assistant. The trustee should ideally come from outside the parish in which the pastoral assistant is placed.

A record of the meeting will be made by the trustee which includes the decisions made by all those present, and the expectations and actions which were agreed should take place. This record will be emailed to all present at the meeting.

In the case of a serious incident, or particularly inappropriate behaviour, this communication may take the form of a warning that if the pastoral assistant's behavior

does not change, the placement will be brought to an end. This record will be copied to the clerk who will file it centrally.

The early ending of a pastoral assistantship placement

If a matter is concluded to the satisfaction of the supervisor (for example, a pastoral assistant's behavior improves, or an inappropriate incident is not repeated), he should signal this to the trustees at an appropriate time within a month of the meeting.

If, however, the matter has continued to be unresolved or a pastoral assistant has continued to fail to fulfill the requirements of his/her working agreement, further meetings may be held with the same trustee present who was involved in the first meeting.

If it has not been already issued, a formal warning may be sent to the pastoral assistant that if an issue is not resolved or if behavior does not change, the placement will be brought to a close by the trustees.

All correspondence will be copied to the Clerk who will keep a record of it.

The trustee and supervisor may come to the conclusion that the most appropriate course of action is to bring the placement to an end and to ask the pastoral assistant to leave. This decision should be communicated to all the trustees by email. The Chair will write to the pastoral assistant concerned informing him/her that the placement has been brought to an end and that he/she will be expected to vacate the accommodation provided by the NLPA. The detail of the time scale in which this is expected to happen will be decided in conversation with the supervisor concerned.

The NLPA Scheme will then cease to pay the pastoral assistant's living expenses from the beginning of the month after the date of the letter sent by the Chair.

What happens if there is concern that the supervision being offered by the Scheme is not what it should be?

The trustees take their responsibility to give our PAs the best possible experience very seriously. If anyone is at all concerned and wants to alert the trustees of the NLPA Scheme about a matter, they should contact our lay trustee Judy Powell judy.powell@posp.co.uk.

As a trustee without direct supervision of any of our PAs, Judy is well placed to deal with issues that may be brought under the heading of 'whistleblowing'. Judy will report directly to the Chair.

Guidelines on External Supervision

What is the role of an external supervisor?

The role of an External Supervisor is to meet with pastoral assistants once a term during their placement time (we do not expect them to use time off for this). It aims to be an opportunity when they can reflect on their experience, and talk about how it feels for them to be doing what they are doing.

The role is not that of a spiritual director, as they will be expected to be seeing one regularly, although there will, of course, be some crossover.

In the event of difficulties with their supervisor, or with other colleagues in the parish, or with parishioners, such things being reported, we would ask that the external supervisor does the following:

1. Initially help the pastoral assistant work out how to sort the problem themselves, offering strategies which may help come to a resolution
2. If this fails, or if it is considered that the issue raised is of a particularly serious nature, we would ask the external supervisor to contact the pastoral assistant's Supervisor and talk it through with them, having agreed with the pastoral assistant how you will be approaching this conversation*.

The trustees ask the external supervisor to inform them if the pastoral assistant is not attending meetings so the supervisor can instruct them to do so.

** It is important the PA knows this is going to happen, to safeguard trust. The intention of the external supervision role is to try to de-escalate problems before they become more serious.*