

Appointment of Chief Operating Officer February 2026

Chief Operating Officer

Thank you for reading this as you think about [Wakefield Cathedral](#), an amazing place at the heart of our city and district. There are huge opportunities here to lead, grow, and make a difference in our cathedral and diocese and in the wider community. We are looking for an energetic and highly competent person to oversee buildings, finance, and personnel as our chief officer, working closely with me, senior management, and trustees, and heading our staff. The post-holder will bring stability and professionalism, balancing clarity and compassion in overseeing the staff, willing to address some major challenges while also enabling us to make the most of our real opportunities.

There are challenges: a post-industrial community with worse health, education, and employment outcomes than the average; keeping the building open and lights on in a cathedral which is not a tourist attraction; one of the smallest but hardest-working staff teams in a Church of England cathedral. But as you read, please see with us the many joys and possibilities. This is a bright, light, and spacious place at the heart of the city and district; the congregations, volunteers, and staff are welcoming, willing, and faithful; we have an excellent and growing profile as a partner for community outreach and events; this part of West Yorkshire is well-connected by road and rail with wonderful heritage and culture.

We do not expect a new colleague to know it all from day one, or to be equally experienced in all aspects of this diverse role. So even if you're not entirely sure this role is what you are looking for, whether or not you've experience of working for a religious organisation, please drop me a line on dean@wakefield-cathedral.org.uk and we will arrange a conversation – I'd love to hear about you and share something about the cathedral, the area, and the role.

Thank you for reading and we look forward to hearing from you.

*with best wishes,
Philip Hobday.*

About Wakefield Cathedral

Setting and buildings

Physically at the centre of the city, Yorkshire's tallest spire lifts up our eyes – to raise aspiration and celebration in communities which often feel forgotten and under-resourced; to see the possibilities which only come from trusting in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth. There has been a church at the centre of Wakefield since at least 1086 and the oldest part of the cathedral dates from some time around 1100. All Saints' Church was substantially rebuilt in the mid-fifteenth century. It became a cathedral in 1888 when, having been first in the Diocese of York and then the Diocese of Ripon, a new Diocese of Wakefield was created. The cathedral was extended creating the peaceful and prayerful St Mark's Chapel as well as the Chapter House and vestries underneath in 1905. A substantial internal reordering was completed in 2014 which included the replacement of pews with chairs, new lighting, underfloor heating, and the installation of a labyrinth; this has given us a beautiful, clear, and bright space for prayer, worship, and events. With Bradford and Ripon Cathedrals, it is a seat of the Bishop of Leeds and now serves clergy, parishes, and schools across the large, diverse, and lively [Diocese of Leeds](#): a place of welcome, worship, and witness in the city, district, county, and region.

The pandemic stalled proposals for redevelopment on the north side of the cathedral, to create new and better toilet and accommodation facilities for our choirs and other groups which comply with contemporary health and safety / safeguarding needs; exploring possibilities is a key task for 2026. The cathedral also oversees the [Chantry Chapel](#), a fascinating historic building in its own right: as well as a programme of events and open days organised by the Friends of the Chantry, cathedral clergy take a *Book of Common Prayer* communion service on a Sunday evening once a month.

The Cathedral Offices are in a former townhouse adjacent to the Cathedral, and the Cathedral owns four houses in nearby Cathedral Close WF1 2DP. One is currently occupied by cathedral clergy and the other three are rented commercially.

Prayer and Worship

Wakefield has a strong grounding in the broadly Anglican Catholic tradition but clergy and worshippers come from a range of theological traditions, worship styles, and church backgrounds. Making the most of the choral tradition as a vehicle for worship and nurturing faith, alongside developing additional, fresh forms of worship and nurture, will be important in the next stage of our life. There are at least three services each day and usually four each Sunday.

Safeguarding

Conscious of our responsibility to care for everyone and of the church's failures in this area, we are committed to being a safe and welcoming place for all. Details of our safeguarding policies are [available here](#); professional casework and advice is provided by the [Diocesan Safeguarding Team](#) through a

Service Level Agreement. Along with the Diocese of Leeds and our sister cathedrals we expect to undergo an independent [INEQE audit](#) in 2028. Embedding the [National Safeguarding Standards](#), and the appointment of a Cathedral Safeguarding Officer, are the key next steps.

Vision and Strategy

The cathedral is open for everyone, for free, for three hundred and sixty-five days a year. Our Strategic Vision, [Firm in Hope](#), frames our work up to 2030. It has four strands:

- *Building the body of Christ.* Our regular congregations are growing younger and more diverse, but we need to do better at communicating with congregations and volunteers, and in providing a wider range of opportunities to worship and grow in faith.
- *A partner for mission.* Rather than seeing ourselves primarily as a *provider* of services and projects, we are increasingly focussed on being a *convenor and connector* in the city and district, drawing on our unique web of connections to bring together people of goodwill in business, education, heritage, the arts, local government, and Christian projects and churches of all denominations to celebrate and enable the good work that already goes on. An exciting partnership with a local charity means we can trial re-opening our cathedral café as a gathering and signposting space.
- *Optimising our assets for mission.* It costs around £2,600 a day to run the cathedral and we receive about £1,400 a day in central church funding. So we are working hard to increase and diversify our income streams through a wider range of events and activities which bring new and more diverse groups into the building. A key task for 2026 will be discerning what a major redevelopment project might look like and how it might be funded. A project to install solar panels at the cathedral and chantry chapel is the next stage in our environmental sustainability work which is led by a dedicated eco-group.
- *A cathedral for the whole diocese.* We are developing our role as one of the three cathedrals in the diocese, working to be a place of welcome and refreshment for clergy and parishes of all traditions and in all parts of the diocese, so we can be a source of spiritual and theological support in their demanding work. Cathedral clergy teach on diocesan courses, serve on area and diocesan groups, and offer preaching and worship cover across the diocese (not just the Wakefield Episcopal Area).

Staff

We have one of the smallest [staff teams](#) of an English cathedral but they are hard-working, committed, willing to muck in, and proud of their work and workplace. We rely heavily on a faithful band of volunteers who assist with stewarding, events, education visits, welcoming, choir chaperoning, bellringers, singers, flower arrangers, readers/intercessors/communion assistants, and more. The Dean served as a Residentiary Canon overseeing outreach, pastoral care, learning, and safeguarding from 2022 before being appointed Dean in autumn 2025. A Diocesan Residentiary Canon (from January 2025) is based half-time here and half-time as Lay Training Officer for the Diocese of Leeds. The Canon Precentor (from January 2024) oversees music, worship, and our relations with the Wakefield

Grammar Schools Foundation. There is a newly-licensed lay minister, and around 12 FTE lay staff. The Chief Operating Officer has principal responsibility for the oversight of lay staff, with professional support from the Diocese of Leeds People and Engagement Team who are retained under a Service Level Agreement.

Governance

The [Cathedral Chapter](#) is our governance / trustee body which oversees finance, fabric, strategy, and compliance. The [Cathedrals Measure 2021](#) as well as our [Constitution](#) and [Statutes](#) set out the legal framework, which now means Chapter members are trustees in Charity law and cathedrals are co-regulated by the [Charity Commission](#) and the [Church Commissioners for England](#). As well as the Dean and residentiary canons, it has up to eight non-executive members. All are thoughtful, prayerful, and contribute to cathedral life in a range of ways. Chapter currently meets about six times a year for a full morning on a Wednesday and has an annual away day.

About Wakefield

Wakefield as a city and district sometimes defines itself by what it is not or has been (for instance, post-industrial; post-mining; an area of relative deprivation and challenge). But there is a proud history, some fine buildings, a strong desire to work together for the good of our city and district, and above all great people (the population of the district, which covers the city and surrounding towns and villages, is around 350,000). We have excellent relations with [Wakefield Council](#) and the business community as well as local charities. There are particularly good links with [Trinity Academy Cathedral](#), the [Wakefield Grammar Schools Foundation](#), and [Wakefield College](#).

Wakefield itself has a thriving local [theatre](#); for arts, nationally-known venues such as the [Hepworth Gallery](#) and [Yorkshire Sculpture Park](#) are in the district as is the [Art House](#) which has a growing reputation; for sports, Rugby League is big around here and [Wakefield Trinity RLFC](#) has recently celebrated a major anniversary at the cathedral, while there are several good gyms in the city and other sports (notably [football](#) and [cricket](#)) in Leeds. There are also good National Trust properties around the city and much more: there's something of everything within easy reach!

Wakefield is very well-connected, with the M1, M62, and A1(M) all very nearby (there are three M1 junctions around the city!). London is two hours away by regular fast train, and you can be in the beautiful and varied landscapes of the Yorkshire coast, the Dales, the Pennines, or the Peak District in about an hour by car. York, Leeds, and Sheffield, with their cultural and commercial life, are easily accessible in a short car, bus, or train journey.

There is a range of options for schools and there are employment opportunities in Wakefield or easy commuting distance. The connectedness of the city means it is relatively accessible for reaching family or friends.

About the Diocese of Leeds

On Easter Day 2014, the former dioceses of Wakefield, Ripon and Leeds, and Bradford were dissolved and a new Diocese of Leeds was created. The diocese is large both in people and scale, covering 2,425 square miles with a population of 2.6 million; there are 433 parishes, 236 schools, and around 270 stipendiary clergy. It is also very diverse, with something of everything except the sea! The Bishop of Leeds oversees the whole Diocese and we are currently praying for the next Bishop who we expect to welcome in late 2026 / early 2027; the recently-published [Statement of Needs](#) is a good overview of the diocese. There are five Episcopal Areas (Leeds, Wakefield, Ripon, Bradford, and Huddersfield) each with an Area Bishop and an Archdeacon. The three cathedrals work closely together, sharing diocesan events and special services equally; the Deans meet monthly and senior staff are encouraged to stay in touch to share challenges and ideas.

Safer Recruitment

Wakefield Cathedral takes its responsibility for the safeguarding of children, young people and vulnerable adults very seriously and their welfare is paramount in all areas of cathedral life. The Cathedral's policies and processes [can be found here](#). All clergy, lay staff, and volunteers are properly recruited, screened, trained, and supported. The post-holder will be required to undertake all relevant Church of England safeguarding training.

About the role

The Chief Operating Officer co-ordinates the work of the Cathedral's staff and works closely with the Dean in overseeing day-to-day operations. As with all the Cathedral's senior management roles, the post-holder must be comfortable both representing the Cathedral at a senior level externally and overseeing staff, budgets, risk management, and projects – while being willing to be hands-on on a busy and demanding site in a small team. The Chief Operating Officer oversees work in fabric, finance, and administration, working with staff, professional advisers, and key governance committees. Staff leadership is an important aspect of this role; our new COO must continue to develop a modern and effective working environment and support our hard-working staff including through completing the roll-out of up-to-date HR policies and procedures.

Role Description

General

- Co-ordinate the work of the lay staff in delivering day-to-day cathedral operations;
- chair senior management team meetings (roughly fortnightly), attend staff meetings (monthly), diary meetings (roughly five a year), meetings of Chapter (trustee body) and its committees, and other meetings as needed;
- ensure where needed that minutes or notes of meetings are taken and monitoring implementation of actions / decisions.

Building the Body of Christ

- Champion diversity and inclusion across the community of the Cathedral, providing opportunity and support for staff in their training and development;
- engage positively with the Cathedral community, including the congregations, volunteers, and external stakeholders who are key to the Cathedral's life and development.

A partner for mission

- Support the work of the staff team and provide a sounding-board / sense check to colleagues as they develop initiatives and projects in worship, mission, and outreach.

Optimising our assets for mission

- Chair the fortnightly senior management meetings, following up key actions and decisions;
- working with professional HR advisors, ensure that policies and process to recruit, manage, train, and support staff are up-to-date and implemented consistently;
- scope and recruit to a new finance officer role (the role to be determined scoped depending on the Chief Operating Officer's skills);
- oversee planning and implementation of the budget, balancing severe financial constraints with the many opportunities and possibilities for the Cathedral to serve the diocese and local communities;
- ensure that the Cathedral meets all legislative, regulatory, and reporting requirements, and complies with ecclesiastical and charity law and regulation, and best practice in risk management;
- enable the effective running and forward-planning of Chapter and its committees, including timely and well-written papers, good record-keeping and the timely flow of information to trustees;
- with professional advisors, (e.g. Architect, Archaeologist, insurers, and the Fabric Advisory Committee), ensure the cathedral meets its statutory and legal commitments for the repair, maintenance, and health and safety of the Cathedral's buildings and of those who come into them;
- work with the Dean and Development Officer on raising the Cathedral's profile and fundraising in the wider community.

A Cathedral for the whole diocese

- Play a full part in the work of national and local networks, identifying areas of possible collaboration;
- work with counterparts in Ripon and Bradford Cathedrals to share experience, challenges, and learning from our different contexts.

Person Specification

The post-holder will be:

- someone with significant leadership and management experience who can inspire, influence and engage teams of staff, volunteers, and partners, able to manage staff in a consistent and even-handed way, modelling collaboration and sustaining a positive team culture;
- someone with proven experience and ability to manage operational performance with tight financial constraints in a multi-faceted environment, and highly competent in the management of a budget;

- experienced in working collaboratively with a trustee board (or equivalent), inspiring trust and confidence and building an effective working relationship between trustees and the executive.
- decisive, able to prioritise and drive key strategic initiatives, experienced in leading teams and managing projects;
- excellent at communication, both written and oral;
- committed to helping create a safer workplace and culture, including undertaking all necessary safeguarding training, following all safeguarding policies/procedures, and modelling good safeguarding practice in their own conduct;
- confident in the distinctive contribution they can make but sensitive to the different perspectives and opinions of others, able both to step back to support and step forward to lead as appropriate;
- capable of working in a busy, complex, outward-facing environment;
- IT-literate including Microsoft Office, sharing an electronic diary;
- committed to their own training and development and to facilitating that of others.

Desirable

- chief officer / senior management experience;
- operational experience in a faith-based and / or charitable organisation;
- track record of working with volunteers as well as paid staff.

Terms and Conditions

The Chief Operating Officer is accountable to the Dean for all matters relating to their terms and conditions of appointment and the Dean will be their line manager.

Hours

This is a full-time role (35 hours / week) based in the Cathedral Office, though we would also consider a 0.8FTE appointment (28 hours / week) or the possibility of some flexible working. Overtime is not paid; time off in lieu will be given.

Annual Leave

The full-time annual leave entitlement is 29 days per year plus 8 statutory bank holidays and 3 customary days. The leave year starts on 1 January.

Pension

The post-holder will be enrolled in the Church of England Workers' Pension Scheme from the commencement of employment. This is a non-contributory scheme for the employee, with the cathedral contributing 8.5% to the pension.

Salary

The starting salary for this role is in the range of £44-£48,000 depending on experience.

Training and Development

The post-holder will be encouraged to develop their skills and undertake training where relevant including compulsory online training which all staff complete.

Terms and conditions

- Offer of the position will be subject to satisfactory references and safer recruitment processes, and satisfactory proof of Right to Work in the United Kingdom. There will be a probationary period of six months.
- As well as a thorough, structured induction programme, the post-holder will have peer support and training from other Chief Operating Officers in the Diocese and nationally through the [Association of English Cathedrals](#) and [Cathedral Finance and Administrators Association](#). The Dean will discuss with the post-holder other options for mentoring and learning, and all staff can access wellbeing support through the [Employee Assistance Programme](#).
- Senior staff are provided with a laptop and mobile phone along with office space in Cathedral Centre, 8-10 Westmorland Street, WFI IPJ.

Referees

For shortlisted candidates, Wakefield Cathedral will take up references from three referees.

Application Process

Candidates are strongly encouraged to arrange a time to speak with the Dean by emailing dean@wakefield-cathedral.org.uk before applying. Please complete the application form on [Pathways](#) by **12 noon Friday 17th April 2026**. Shortlisting will be the following week.

Shortlisted candidates will be invited to visit the Cathedral Offices to meet key staff, and have the opportunity of an online briefing with two Chapter Members (trustees). These are to help candidates understand the context they would be working in and ask any questions; they will not form part of the recruitment process.

Interviews will take place at Wakefield Cathedral on **Tuesday 5th May 2026**. There will be a panel interview beginning with a short presentation to the panel on a topic to be advised. Reasonable travel expenses will be reimbursed.

The interview panel will be:

Philip Hobday

Dean of Wakefield

Jane Evans

Senior Non-executive Chapter Member (trustee)

Alison Dean

Chapter Member (trustee) and Chair of Finance Committee

Jason Carr

Chief Operating Officer, Sheffield Cathedral

Anna Earnshaw

Director of People and Engagement, Diocese of Leeds.