

Recommended Salary Scales for Organists 1 January – 31 December 2025

Revisions to this guide since 2021 have responded to the proliferation of streamed services since the COVID-19 outbreak, and historically high levels of inflation. An increasingly testing issue is the accelerating rate of church closures; in creating this document the SFO has sought to offer advice that is sustainable and practical for organists and church authorities alike. In these difficult times, the SFO affirms the crucial importance of healthy pastoral relationships between clerics, office bearers and organists, with this document seeking to encourage conversation and consideration rather than offering prescriptive regulation. Constituting the SFO's recommendations for best practice, the following guidance should form a starting point to encourage dialogue exploring the unique circumstances of each individual church and organist.

Level of adjustment

The SFO Committee agreed that the 2024 Organists' Recommended Salary Scales should be increased by 5.1% from 1st January 2025, reflecting the same increase in the Retail Price Index¹ across the 12-month period from August 2023 to July 2024. Any adjustment below RPI figures would create salary lags, resulting in greater financial burdens in future—in this era of instability, the SFO feels the most sustainable course is to be transparent and fully responsive to the current situation. The 2025 scales are shown on the following page, with the 2024 scales (*italicised*) for reference. Discretionary adjustments above these recommended levels would be appropriate where finances allow, particularly in cases of long service or notable commitment.

This document has been developed through conversation with representatives of the Church of Scotland. Please note: the basis period used for SFO calculations currently covers an earlier date range than those used by the Church of Scotland and Scottish Episcopal Church in producing their organisational pay awards for clergy and lay workers. The SFO is exploring the possibility of closer alignment with regard to phasing, and is developing an expanded version of this document. This will offer guidance and information on a more comprehensive range of topics relating to working conditions of organists across multiple denominations.

Streaming of services

Musicians' recorded performances are protected as property rights by statute, and consent for broadcasting these performances is not often given within existing contracts. The Musicians' Union, with endorsement from the Royal College of Organists, published guidance on per-service additional fees for streamed worship,² but it is the opinion of the SFO that these rates are too high to represent a sustainable solution for many churches on a weekly basis. It is, however, crucial that the intellectual property rights of organists are protected and respected; the SFO therefore emphasises that churches are legally obliged to obtain written consent from organists prior to any streaming.

Streaming can enable participation in worship from those unable to attend services in person. Where this is the intention, the SFO suggests the broadcast could be made available for one week or until the next service (whichever is sooner), with no increased fee for organists—although it is essential that consent is obtained, and it would be wholly reasonable to discuss an additional fee in respect of this. For broadcasts remaining available over longer periods (e.g. special services) the SFO recommends organists refer to the Musicians Union rate card depending on the availability period:

1 month: £60 / 3 months: £75 / 6 months: £100

¹ [Office for National Statistics: Retail Price Index](#)

² [Musicians Union: Organists & Ceremonies Rates](#)

Salary	<i>2024 rate for reference</i>	Extra service or deputy fee	<i>2024 rate for reference</i>	Wedding fee
A: Churches without choirs				
£2,106–3,283	<i>£2,004–3,124</i>	£81	<i>£77</i>	£121
B: Churches with choirs making an occasional contribution to worship				
£3,283–5,141	<i>£3,124–4,892</i>	£81–99	<i>£77–94</i>	£121–149
C: Churches with choirs making a regular and individual contribution to worship				
£5,141–6,876	<i>£4,892–6,542</i>	£99–130	<i>£94–124</i>	£149–195
D: Churches with competent choirs singing full choral services				
£6,876–10,282	<i>£6,542–9,783</i>	£130–142	<i>£124–136</i>	£195–214
E: Churches employing a professional director of music with extensive responsibilities				
£10,282 minimum	<i>£9,783 min</i>	£142 min	<i>£136 min</i>	£214 min

Notes

1. Wedding fees are set at 150% of extra service rates, accounting for the likelihood of recording (either professionally or by guests). There should **not** be any additional uplift for recording/streaming.
2. The SFO seeks to promote a culture of professionalism with the publication of this document, believing ‘the labourer is worthy of their hire’. As such, the salary bandings take into consideration the training, skill, resources and preparation necessary for an organist to fulfil their duties. Churches and organists alike should ensure the levels of competency offered and requested are appropriate to the style of worship, and work to build mutual respect by fully considering and acknowledging the responsibilities of both parties.
3. These guidelines are not mandatory. They exist to provide a basis from which organists and churches can agree solutions appropriate to their individual circumstances. The SFO encourages open dialogue and negotiation between parties in these matters.
4. This document does not constitute formal legal advice. The Church of Scotland offers a pro-forma contract which can be downloaded free of charge.³ The SFO encourages parties to seek advice from a solicitor or professional adviser on any matters regarding taxation or individual contracts.
5. This document will be reviewed during 2025, with revised guidance produced for 2026.

³ [The Church of Scotland: Church organists](#)