



6th October 2022

To: All Stipendiary clergy and those for whom the Diocese provides housing

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

£340 hardship grant to help clergy with rising energy costs

The news continues to bring difficult tidings of high inflation, particularly driven by the energy cost increases, which are affecting our whole society. The Government has announced a significant scale funding intervention which will see energy bills capped at £2,500 a year for a typical household from 1 October 2022 for the next two winters, alongside an increased grant of £400 energy bills rebate. This is very welcome, but we know that for many colleagues the current cost of living increases are causing considerable concern.

How we can help

Faced with this reality we want to help.

Thanks to a grant drawn down from the Church Commissioners, we are offering a further one-off hardship grant of £340 to any stipendiary clergy and those for whom the Diocese provides housing who considers they need it to help cover their costs. We have been advised that by providing it as a hardship grant in the manner planned it will not be taxable.

Together with the hardship grant offered earlier in the year of £300, this brings total grants offered this year to £640.

Keeping it simple

All a colleague needs to do to access the support is to fill in an online questionnaire confirming they need the grant. It is offered on a one grant per household basis.

You don't need to justify why you need it, just that you consider you do.

[Access the Hardship Fund form](#)

If you don't feel you need a grant, then there is no need to fill out the form.

Why we are offering the grant in this way

We hope that by paying the grant on request, and foregoing a complicated application process, it is the fairest way to:

- ensure we are not impacting on already scarce diocesan resources which we know are stretched
- get financial support to those who need it the most, as quickly as possible.

Further Support

There are some other external forms of support available that clergy can access, and we have included details of these at the end of this letter.

Finally, financial concern will bring anxiety and stress. For whatever reason you may be experiencing difficulties with your mental wellbeing, please remember that the Diocesan Counselling Service is here to help you. You can find details on the Diocesan website [here](#).

Please don't suffer alone. If you have any questions about the grant or concerns about your financial situation, please don't hesitate to be in contact with your Archdeacon.



**Jonathan,
Bishop of Rochester**



**Matthew Girt,
Diocesan Secretary**

Details of additional sources of support:

Clergy Support Trust – The Clergy Support Trusts provides support to Anglican clergy (serving and retired) and ordinands, and their families, in the UK & Ireland.

If you're in financial difficulty or struggling with clergy life, they are there to help.

They have an eligibility checker to see if you qualify and to explore the grants available to you in times of need. Visit: <http://www.clergysupport.org.uk/>

Dr Plume's Trust - The purpose of the Trust is to assist necessitous stipendiary clergy (beneficed or licensed), within the area of the old Diocese of Rochester. This means, the whole area of the present Diocese of Rochester **except for** Bredhurst, Linton, Penge, Rainham, St. Mark, Broadwater Down.

There are no hard and fast rules which have to be applied when judging necessity, as individual circumstances are always taken into consideration, but the following points should be borne in mind:

- I. "Necessitous" implies that a person is in some financial difficulty.
- II. Assistance will not normally be given towards school fees unless private tuition is thought to be unavoidable.
- III. Diocesan or Church Commissioners' moving or first appointment grants are intended to be sufficient to cover basic expenses. Supplementary grants will not be given simply to provide a higher standard of furnishing.
- IV. Normally the Trustees are not in a position to entertain second applications within a five-year period, but exceptional circumstances will be given consideration.

All enquiries should be directed to the receiver:
Mr Kevin Ross, 43 Grosvenor Crescent, Dartford, DA1 5AP
Email: plumetrust@gmail.com

All applications will be forwarded to a member of the trustees who will personally interview the applicant before the meeting at which the application is to be considered.

With thanks to Rev Nigel Bourne for passing this on, here's a list of (at least some) energy suppliers who offer grants to their customers:

- British Gas Energy Support Fund - [apply for a grant on the British Gas Energy Trust website](#)
- Scottish Power Hardship Fund - [apply for a grant on the Scottish Power Hardship Fund website](#)
- Ovo Energy Fund - [apply for a grant on the Ovo Energy Fund website](#)
- E.ON Energy Fund - [apply for a grant on the E.ON Energy Fund website](#)
- E.ON Next Energy Fund - [apply for a grant on the E.ON Next Energy Fund website](#)
- EDF Energy Customer Support Fund - [sign up to the priority services register to apply for a grant on the EDF Energy website](#)
- Bulb Energy Fund - [apply for a grant on the Bulb Energy Fund website](#)
- Octopus 'Octo Assist Fund' - [apply for a grant on the Octopus website](#)

If residents can't get a grant from their own supplier, they might be able to get a grant from the British Gas Energy Trust - you don't have to be a British Gas customer to be eligible.

Local grants may also be available; it's possible to see what's available in a given area via the [Simple Energy Advice website](#).