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Church of England Clergy Homes and Warm Homes: Local Grant

Quick guide

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Introduction

The Church of England, through its network of regional dioceses, is responsible for approximately 9000 private houses all over England. Some of the families living in these homes would normally be eligible for Warm Homes: Local Grant funding via the owner occupier, private landlord or tenant path. However, the Church's distinctive tenure arrangements make determining the correct Warm Homes: Local Grant funding route complex, which complicates the normal application process.

This quick guide therefore sets out factors for grant recipients to consider if their local diocese is interested in applying for the funding. It should be useful to all grant recipients, as all should overlap with one or more Church of England dioceses (see figure 1 below).

The Church of England and net zero

The Church of England is comprised of numerous individual charitable organisations which includes 42 regional dioceses. These organisations are represented at a national assembly, known as General Synod, which debates and approves issues that affect the Church at a national level. In 2020, General Synod set the Church of England an ambitious challenge: to reach net zero carbon across its parish, cathedral, diocesan and school estates by 2030.

“General Synod voted in February 2020 for the whole of the Church of England to achieve net zero carbon by 2030. The vote recognised that the global climate emergency is a crisis.”

churchofengland.org

Since the target was agreed, the Church has created [a national plan](#) that sets out how best to move towards net zero. The plan states that emissions from buildings across the Church estate are in scope of the 2030 target. This includes housing for clergy, retired clergy and other staff, which is usually owned and managed by the local diocese.

Regional dioceses

Figure 1 below shows the network of 42 Church of England dioceses. Each diocese is a self-governing charity with its own Diocesan Board of Finance (DBF). Altogether, the housing that the DBFs manage is substantial:

- There are around 9,000 clergy houses across all English dioceses
- Portfolio sizes vary from 120 to 570 per diocese



Figure 1 shows the boundaries of the 42 regional dioceses in England

Although dioceses do not follow local authority or county boundaries, many overlap with one or more of the local authority areas that Warm Homes: Local Grant recipients operate in ([see the Government website for a full list](#)). This means that where the property and household are both deemed eligible under the scheme's guidance, funding could be available to make their home more energy efficient.

Warm Homes: Local Grant household eligibility

This quick guide does not overwrite anything in the Warm Homes: Local Grant policy guidance, which provides full information on eligibility. It includes performance targets and other metrics not referenced here. It notes that households are generally eligible under one of the following pathways ([Warm Homes: Local Grant, Policy Guidance for Local Authorities](#). Updated June 2025):

- **Pathway 1:** Households which reside within Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) Income Deciles (ID) 1-2 areas - a list of eligible postcodes is provided on [gov.uk](#) alongside this guidance.
- **Pathway 2:** Households which can demonstrate receipt of a specified means tested benefit can access via route 1 or they can access via route 2 of ECO Flex.

- **Pathway 3:** Households with an annual gross income below £36,000 or the 'after housing costs' threshold in line with our published equivalisation tables (which are dependent on household composition)¹

When a Warm Homes: Local Grant recipient deems that a DBF home is eligible (using the above and the other criteria), the relevant DBF can apply to that grant recipient for funding. Although the grant is only available to each home once, it can be applied for by:

- An owner occupier, where the property is lived in by the owner and the owner is eligible.
- A private landlord, where a landlord rents the property to an eligible household.
- A tenant, where the tenant is eligible.

Clergy housing tenure types

The complexity of the Church's tenure arrangements makes it difficult to determine from whom applications should be made. As homes are provided to in-ministry clergy as part of their role, there is often no tenancy agreement between parties. This means there is no 'tenant' or 'landlord' in the formal sense (as shown in the scenarios in figure 2 below). When a property is vacant, they are sometimes rented on the open market (scenario C).

	Scenario A – clergy named on title deeds and lives in property	Scenario B – a Diocesan Board of Finance named on title deeds, property lived in by clergy	Scenario C – a Diocesan Board of Finance named in the title deeds, property lived in by public
Title deeds	Clergy position e.g., Vicar of X	Diocesan Board of Finance	Diocesan Board of Finance
Occupant	Clergy	Clergy	Member of the public
Rent	No	No	Yes
Tenancy agreement	No	No	Yes
Maintained by	Diocesan Board of Finance	Diocesan Board of Finance	Diocesan Board of Finance

Figure 2 shows the different tenure arrangements of DBF owned property

¹ See the [Warm Homes: Local Grant, Policy Guidance for Local Authorities](#) for more information.

Warm Homes: Local Grant applications

The Department is unable to provide a single, definitive answer on the eligibility of DBF homes. This is because tenancy classification is assessed on a case-by-case basis by each Local Authority (LA) administering funding. It is the responsibility of the LA as the grant recipient to determine:

- The appropriate classification and eligibility, based on the specific ownership or tenancy circumstances of the household
- Whether the household meets the eligibility requirements
- Whether the proposed tenure aligns with scheme guidance and definitions provided to grant recipients.

Where non-standard tenures arise, such as common tenures, Local Authorities are given discretion to treat those homes as privately rented where those homes are not a clear case of owner Occupied or social Housing tenures.

This is provided the property meets the test for a domestic property set out in the policy guidance and all other eligibility criteria are met. Under previous schemes, Church of England properties have typically been treated as part of the private rented sector rather than as owner-occupied. If this was decided by a Local Authority to be the most accurate tenure for the relevant Church of England property under Warm Homes: Local Grant, the scheme would fully fund one eligible home per landlord. For any additional properties, landlords are required to contribute 50% of the upgrade costs.

If it was decided by a Warm Homes: Local Grant recipient that private rented was the most suitable application route for a relevant Church of England property, the following would apply:

- The scheme would fully fund one eligible home per DBF. This is even the case where a DBF crosses grant recipient boundaries
- For any additional properties, the Diocesan Board of Finance would be required to contribute 50% of the upgrade costs
- This means that the Diocesan Board of Finance should include its registered charity number on any applications for Warm Homes: Local Grant funding, as this will enable the available funding to be managed and tracked centrally.

Conclusion

The Church of England is committed to tackling the climate emergency and welcomes collaboration with community partners. This makes them a potential partner for Warm Homes: Local Grant recipients.

For those interested in finding out more about the Church's work to achieve net zero in their communities, they should see the following resources:

- This Sustainable Communities brochure shows how NZ work supports social action for vulnerable people.
- To learn more about projects underway in your area contact your local diocesan net zero Officer.
- To discuss the national NZ Programme and areas for collaboration please email nzcfundraising@churchofengland.org.



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