

Responding to the Cost of Living Crisis

Rising inflation, especially in the areas of food, transport, electricity and gas, and reductions in state benefits are causing increasing financial and emotional pressure for families and individuals living across the island of Ireland. To assist with the Church of Ireland's pastoral response to this crisis, the Church and Society Commission has prepared the following list of sources of support and is asking parishes to take a pro-active approach by:

- encouraging anyone to ask for help when they sense that they are in need;
- being more aware of neighbours who may be struggling with finances;
- knowledge of and supporting local foodbanks;
- an awareness of the impact of these pressures on family relationships.

Many diocesan orphan societies exist for the benefit and welfare of vulnerable children and their families in financial need. Information on how to apply for assistance from local societies can be obtained from diocesan offices.

The Society of St Vincent de Paul – www.svp.ie – has a presence in all counties and the Salvation Army operates churches and centres in Dublin and major towns across Northern Ireland – a listing with contact details is available at www.salvationarmy.org.uk/ireland

Protestant Aid, operating in the Republic of Ireland, treats all genuine calls for help equally. Its primary activities include grants to alleviate poverty or distress; annuities for the elderly; allowances for heating/energy costs; school expenses; second-level education grants; and third-level loans. Contact details: www.protestantaid.org / 01 668 4298.

Christians Against Poverty's helpline, for anyone struggling with debt in Northern Ireland, is 0800 328 0006 and a postcode search is available at www.capuk.org. The Money Advice and Budgeting Service (MABS) provides a similar free and confidential service in the Republic – debt advisors can be contacted on 0818 07 2000 or a call-back requested by emailing helpline@mabs.ie or texting by WhatsApp on 086 035 3141.

All of these organisations provide assistance to anyone in need regardless of religious or social background.

Grants or benefits may also be available from local authorities and social welfare officers. Examples of support have included funding for slow cooker schemes and Warm at Home packs. Diocesan Mothers' Unions have successfully applied for government funding on a cross-community basis to meet social need.

Key contacts for support and advice from public services

Republic of Ireland		
Department of Social Protection	Income support helpline: 0818 800024	All other helplines are listed at www.gov.ie/dspphonenumbers
Competition and Consumer Protection Commission	01 402 5555 1890 432 432	Visit the consumer hub: www.ccpc.ie/consumers
Commission for Regulation of Utilities	1800 404 404	Energy and water advice at: www.cru.ie/customer-care
Northern Ireland		
Department for Communities	Make the Call – to check if you are missing out on any benefits, services and support to which you are entitled: 0800 232 1271	
Consumer Council	0800 121 6022	www.consumercouncil.org.uk
Utility Regulator	028 9031 1575	Energy and water advice at: www.uregni.gov.uk