Resourcing our Diocese

2025 (based on 2025 budgets)

What is the Common Fund and how does Free Will Offer fit in?

What do we mean by the diocesan ‘Common Fund’?

We could think of it a bit like the NHS – we all pay into a Common Fund from which the costs of caring for the health of everybody in the country is met. It means that everyone gets the treatment that they need regardless of the ability to afford it at the time they need it, and it also covers the costs of training new doctors and nurses, and preventative and reactive treatment. The Common Fund of the Diocese of York enables us to provide and support clergy and other ministry, now and in the future, across the diocese even where it can’t be fully paid for locally. It also reduces the burden of administration and legal work that local clergy and volunteers would otherwise need to do or pay for. The Common Fund provides proactive support for the ‘health’ of our worshipping communities and reactive resourcing when there are specific challenges to be faced. It covers the ‘direct costs of ministry’ (i.e. the cost of providing our vicars / priest in charges) and the ‘shared support costs’ (all of the other people and resources provided to support mission and ministry across the diocese).

Where does the money come from?

There are 4 main sources:

1. **Income from our Historic Assets**
   These are dividends and rents generated by the Stipends Capital Fund which is made up of investments and Glebe Land. The Diocesan Board of Finance (DBF) is required to manage this Fund to generate income to support clergy stipends. We also receive rental income from the houses that we let during clergy vacancies.
2. **Other Diocesan Income**
   We do receive income through investing our other reserves, rental income, from some modest grants and by recharging the costs of some posts to third parties.
3. **The National Church**
   This funding is administered under the authority of General Synod from money made available by the Church Commissioners.
4. **Contributions from Parishes**
   This is our largest source of income and includes both the Free Will Offer and Parochial Fees.

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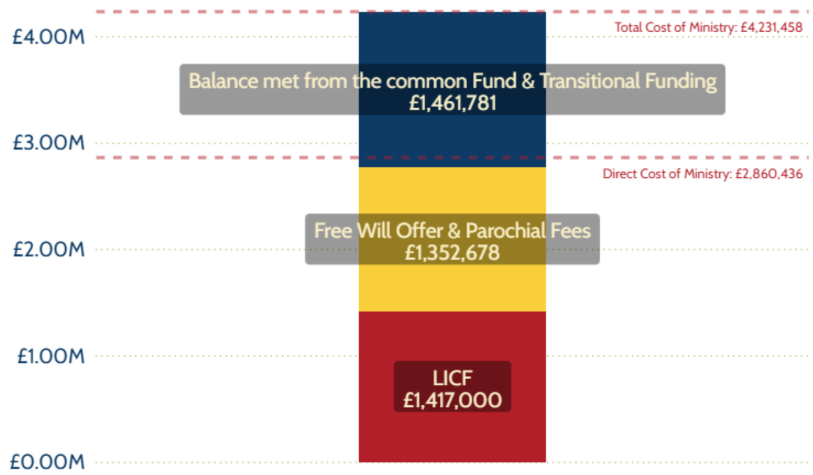
What financial support do we get from the national church?

For decades, there has been some national support for meeting the costs of stipends in dioceses. From 2016, as part of a major reorganisation of support for ministry, the total national amount committed to dioceses was increased but with the introduction of two separate streams of funding.

The first is now called the 'Diocesan Investment Programme' and exists to support dioceses with their plans to turn around the decline in attendance by enabling them to fund new roles (and churches) where there is a significant potential for sustainable growth. We have benefitted from over £5m of funding, which has been covering the bulk of the costs associated with Multiply and Mustard Seed for the six year span of each project, as well as capacity to support aspects of Living Christ's Story. Going forward we hope to submit bids for further grants in line with the Church of England Vision and Strategy for the 2020s.

The second is a mechanism to support dioceses with significant levels of deprivation. Population and deprivation figures are used in working out the level of support, with a clear expectation that this 'Lowest Income Communities Funding' (LICF) will be focused on our most deprived places, not used as a general subsidy. They no longer include factors such as the geographical size of a diocese and the number of church buildings.

Covering the Cost of Ministry in the Lowest Income Communities



As a result, the level of Church Commissioners' support in 2016 of £2.6million is gradually reducing by nearly half (in real terms) to £1.4m by 2025 *.

As we are nearing the end of the transition period, this reduction accounts for about £1.1m of the current budget

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shortfall because, although we have remained committed to supporting ministry in the places where life is tough, we have not seen a compensating increase in other income.

Inevitably this will require generosity and sacrifice from us all.

What does that mean for our Lowest Income Communities?

The amount that we receive in LICF does not make up the difference between the share of direct ministry and shared costs associated with the Ministry Units (i.e. groups of parishes cared for by the same parish priest) serving the communities that lie in the lowest 20% of the national Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD).

The balance to be met is currently greater than our total investment income and the balance of Fees from the rest of the diocese.

As we consider our priorities as a diocese, if we are to continue to put the places where life is tough at the heart of our mission, we will need to consider how we allocate resources to support ministry in our Lowest Income Communities.

Who decides how much needs to be contributed to the Common Fund?

There is a fundamental principle that has been handed down from the early church – that the whole community of believers pool their resources to ensure that ministry can be provided to all of God's people. That philosophy underpins our approach to Free Will Offer in this diocese which relies on the realism and generosity of PCCs and, in turn, every member of every church.

Each year our Diocesan Synod passes the Diocesan Budget; so the Synod decides how much the diocese can spend on ministry, largely on the basis of how much local churches can pay into the Common Fund through their Free Will Offer.

But it is helpful to have some idea of how much it costs to support ministry – can you give us an indication for a typical parish?

There is great variety across our diocese and very many parishes share ministry provision these days so, for the purpose of this document, we have kept things as simple as possible by identifying the costs directly associated with ordained ministry, and then dividing all the other support costs by the number of Ministry Units we have.

On that basis, the cost of providing ministry works out at about £83,000 for a group of parishes led by a single stipendiary priest.

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Our Free Will Offer already feels like a lot of money. How does what we contribute compare with other dioceses?

From 2014-2023 the York average of Free Will Offer compared to total parish income was 31% against a national average of 33%.

Nationally York is 32nd out of 41 dioceses (i.e. there are 31 dioceses whose parishes give a higher proportion of their income). The range over a ten-year period is from 19% to 43%.

Over the last ten years Free Will Offer as a proportion of parish income has dropped by 4%.

This shows that we have got used to contributing less to the Common Fund than would be expected in other dioceses. The impact of increased expectations in areas such as Safeguarding, have been absorbed by making cuts elsewhere or relying on strong investment performance rather than increased contributions from parishes.

The Diocesan Leadership Team is committed to keeping the cost of ministry as low as possible, but we can no longer sustain the current levels of ministry and essential support without a realistic increase in income.

Why can't we solve this simply by cutting the shared support costs?

For a number of years, we have balanced the books with cost reductions where we have the option to do so. We will continue to keep costs to a minimum but as you can see from page 11, many of the 'central' roles are essential to functioning as a diocese: before removing any more roles we need to consider the impact of reducing the range and amount of support provided. During the 2021/22 consultation process we asked for information about the support that you find most helpful and any areas that you felt we could provide less of than we do at the moment. Although, understandably, parishes wanted to see costs reduced if at all possible, they were also looking for more support in some areas, particularly in relation to church buildings and working with children and families.

As part of the LCS process, we asked an independent consultant to look at the shared support functions. They reported that the vast majority of the work undertaken is mandatory (e.g. Safeguarding), essential (e.g. legal support) or key to achieving our LCS outcomes (e.g. lay training), with the few discretionary areas (e.g. provision of advice about church buildings and generous giving) either externally funded or currently under resourced to meet the demand. They were unable to find areas for major savings; rather they identified that York is under resourced in several areas which sometimes means that we don't have the capacity that we need to exploit funding opportunities or to improve processes for the benefit of parishes.

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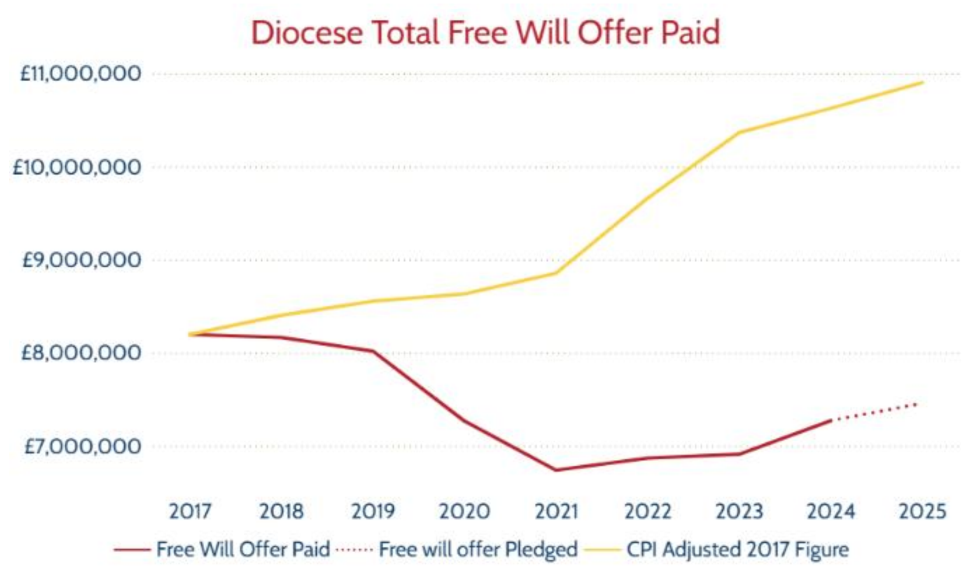
You can read more about the Shared Support costs on page 11.

How serious is the financial challenge?

From its inception in 2014 to 2019 the aggregate level of Free Will Offer remained broadly static, before reductions following the pandemic. In real terms it has been eroded between 2017 to 2025 by over £3m by these reductions and the impact of inflation.



Income from the Church Commissioners is also reducing...

As we've already indicated, from 2016, the Church Commissioners changed the way they allocate funds to all dioceses so that their core support is focused on our most deprived places, not used as a general subsidy. As a result the level of Church Commissioners support in 2016 of £2.6million is gradually reducing by nearly half (in real terms) to £1.4m by 2025 *.

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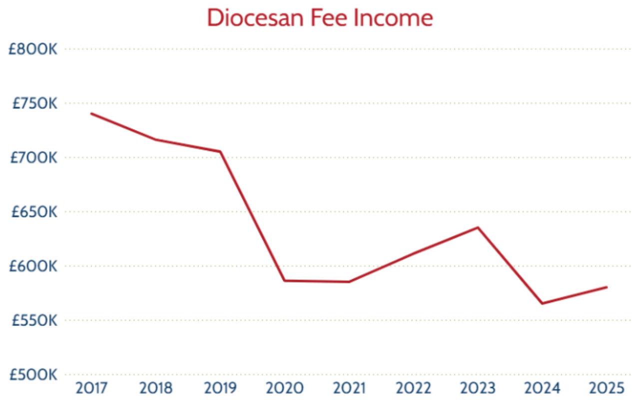
...and Fee income has also reduced by over 20% in the last 8 years



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The result of these combined changes is a widening gap between costs and income

		YDBF 2025 budget £000
Income:		
	Free Will Offer	7,548
	Fees	580
	Investment & rental income (net of costs)	1,291
	Multiply, Mustard seed, Strategic capacity & 3rd party funded	1,785
	Low income community funding (LICF)	1,417
	Transition funding (ends in 2025)	85
		12,706
Costs:		
	Cost of providing stipendiary ministers (stipend, pension, housing)- based on establishment posts	8,877
	Multiply, Mustard seed, Strategic & 3rd party funded	1,952
	Pooled costs of supporting mission - new ministry**	1,663
	Pooled costs of supporting mission - general**	3,283
		15,774
	Less: budgeted impact of vacancies during the year	(701)
		15,073
	Excess of expenditure over income	**(2,368)**
	exceptional items	92
	Investment gains on unrestricted funds	200
	Excess of expenditure over income and investment gains	(2,076)

This view of our budgeted income and expenditure shows that, even with further cost reductions, we plan on spending **over £2m** more than the income we receive in our 2025 budget.

We have been running an operating deficit for a number of years. So far we have been able to use reserves to cover these shortfalls which have also been disguised in recent years by increases in the value of the investments that make up our reserves, sometimes close to year end just in time to improve the position reported in our formal accounts.

It does not change the fact that, on a straightforward comparison of income and expenditure, we are living beyond our means. The shortfall in income is equivalent to c. 30% of the Free Will Offer and Fees income streams (which are the only ones over which we, collectively, have some form of control).

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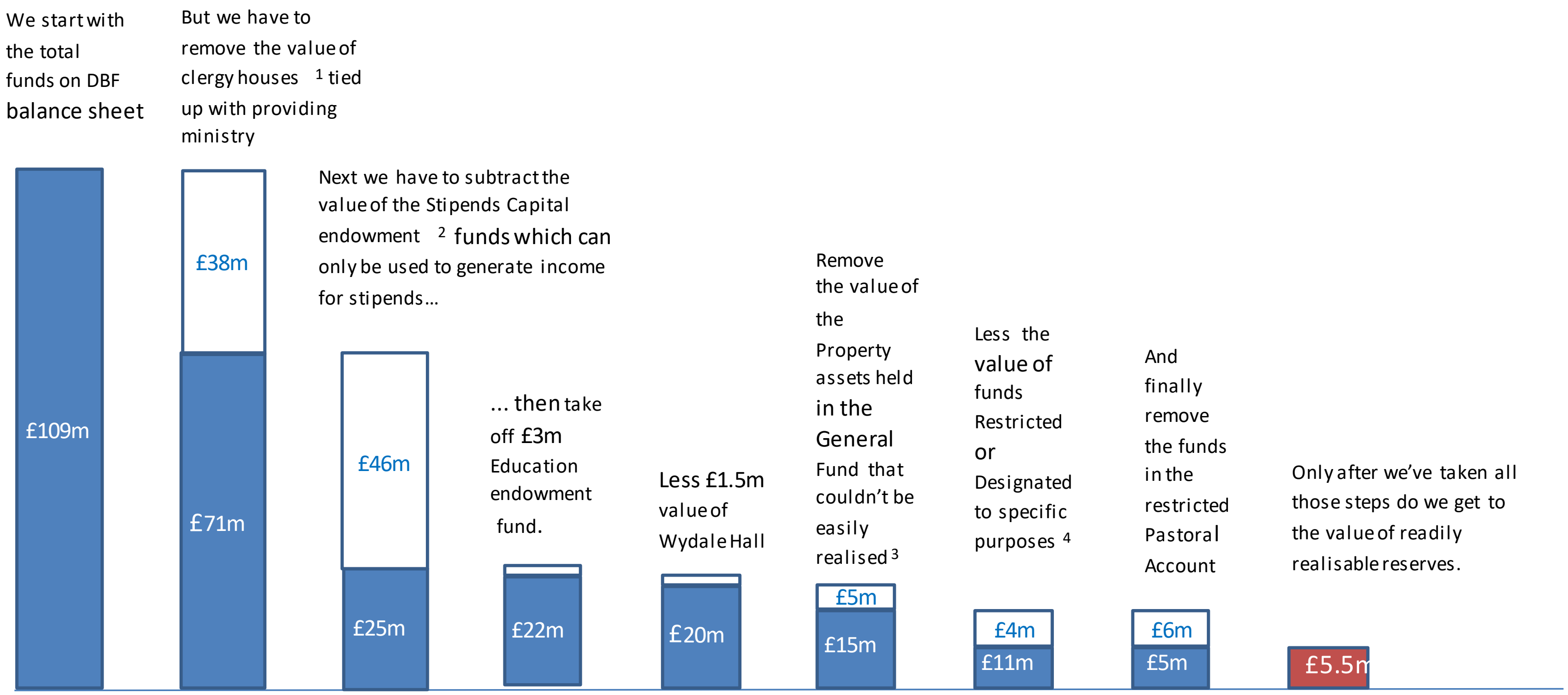
We thought that the diocese has lots of assets – why are we concerned about using our reserves?

Most of the assets that we show in our accounts are either clergy houses, 'endowments' (i.e. where we can only use the income from rents, dividends or interest) or 'restricted funds'. In neither case can we use the capital for general running of the diocese. The chart below shows how the total asset value on the diocese's 'books' reduces to a relatively small amount of readily realisable funds.



1. Parsonage Houses Fund; Diocesan Parsonages Fund
2. Only the income from endowment funds can be used, the capital must remain intact
3. Property without which the diocese couldn't function (Diocesan office) and houses held in the General Fund (such as houses for the Archdeacons and a number of curates and self supporting ministers)
4. Restricted and designated funds include the National grant for Multiply that will be spent over a number of years together with receipts from the sale of parsonages and closed churches which can only be used for specific purposes and a suplus on the pension scheme.

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Most of our restricted funds do relate to supporting ministry (e.g. Multiply and Mustard Seed) but some relate to proceeds of property sales. If any restructuring of ministry frees up assets, the intention would be to use them in the most effective way possible to support ongoing ministry.

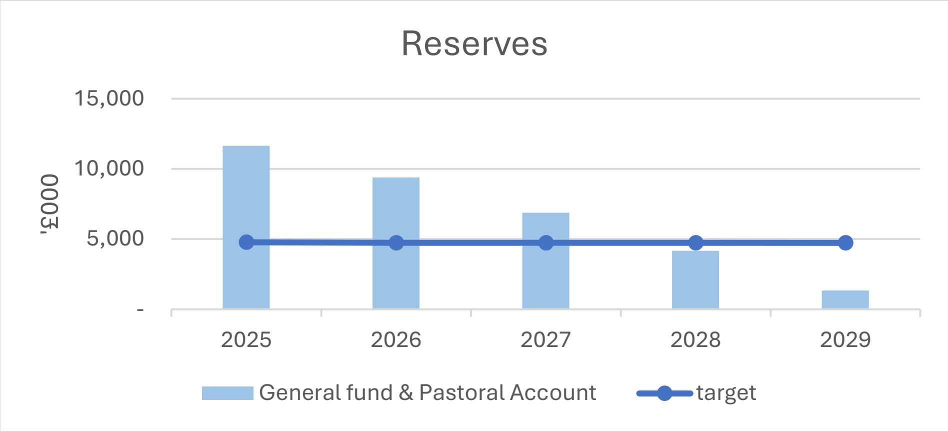
The Diocesan Synod and DBF have already used about £1.5m of the restricted funds that won't be required for replacement housing to offset the DBF share of the Multiply and Mustard Seed project costs, but even so, we will still need to draw on an additional c.£2.0 million per year from our reserves if nothing else changes.

The issue we face is that a) those assets are finite, and b) the more we spend those assets on propping up the deficit budget, the less income we will generate to fund stipendiary ministry in the longer term.

What is the picture over the next few years?

The graph provides a simple comparison between realisable unrestricted reserves and the prudent level of reserves we need to carry as a charity, equating to the cost of 4 months' operational activity (principally underwriting the stipends, salaries and housing on which over 250 ministers and diocesan staff currently depend).

At the point of the PCC consultations in 2021/2022, our forecasts assumed that Free Will Offer would recover to pre-Covid levels by 2023 but then remain flat, but this recovery is taking longer. If Free Will Offer income recovers sooner, and/or increases, that would obviously improve the picture.



Any forecast involves making assumptions, but looking ahead, on the current basis, using a reasonable assumption of moderate investment growth, the need to cover ongoing deficit budgets in the coming years would mean that our realisable unrestricted reserves together with funds in the pastoral account would fall below the prudent minimum level set by the DBF trustees by 2028.

We could extend this to 2031 by selling further properties and releasing some of the endowed Stipend Capital Funds (using total return accounting rules), but this will in turn reduce annual income.

So something has to change – we cannot run deficit budgets for ever.

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The national church is currently reviewing the situation across the country – York is not alone in having these kinds of budgetary challenges. We are anticipating that further national support will be forthcoming in 2026 * as part of a nine- year national commitment on the part of the Church Commissioners to support dioceses in reaching sustainability in a way that reduces the likelihood of needing to make short term funding decisions that result in adverse missional outcomes. It is anticipated that this support will include an increase in the amount of Lowest Income Communities Funding, reduction in diocesan apportionment of national costs, and some tapered grant support to recognise the post-Covid shortfalls being experienced by almost every DBF. The National review is also expected to propose an increase in clergy stipend and pensions, hence increasing those costs significantly.

As a DBF, we are looking again at our assets, both the houses that will not be required for ministry (as the number of housed clergy stabilises at a new level in line with agreed Deanery Plans) and the land and investments that make up the Stipends Capital Fund. Disposal of some property will allow us to replenish the Pastoral Account, and we are leveraging 'Total Return Accounting' from 2025 to allow us to make use of some of the historic gain in the value of our Stipends Capital Fund to supplement the income that it currently generates. In both cases however, as the capital values reduce, so will the income that we obtain. That means that our ability to fund the mission and ministry of the diocese will still be directly dependent on the level of parish contributions via Free Will Offer and Fees.

We do have time to 'Transform our Finances and Structures' to get things onto an even keel. In doing so our priority remains on 'Reaching those we currently don't' and 'Growing Churches of Missionary Disciples'. But if this situation is to stabilise, we must take action.

If the diocese is short of money, surely the Church of England is rich and could help?

The historic assets of the Church of England are held by the Church Commissioners. Just like the diocese the bulk of these assets are endowments that are invested to produce income, or represent the value of properties. So, as for the diocese, in reality the money available to spend is a very small proportion of their apparent wealth.

The first call on the Commissioners' funds relates to historic clergy pension fund commitments which places statutory constraints on the use of their assets. They also are required by law to pay bishops' stipends and provide some limited funding to cathedrals, and to resource some operational responsibilities arising from the relationship between the Church and Parliament.

Once these commitments are met, the Commissioners do support the wider church through grants to support mission and ministry in dioceses. The overall amount of money distributed has increased significantly over the last ten years, and we have benefitted from this for a number of projects including our Multiply and Mustard Seed work.

A programme of central cost reductions has enabled the amount that dioceses contribute to national costs to be frozen. Major areas of new expenditure (e.g. safeguarding, and online

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campaigns) that benefit the whole country have been met via savings or additional national funding rather than falling directly on dioceses.

See more at www.churchofengland.org/about/leadership-and-governance/church-commissioners.

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A more detailed look at the Shared Support Costs

You can find a one-page summary of these costs in Appendix A.

On the following pages we will try to respond to a number of common questions.

How much of the 'shared support costs' relate to training future ministers?

34% of the costs relate to pre-ordination training, funding our curate posts and the discernment and training of additional self-supporting lay and ordained ministers. We must invest to select and equip ministers to serve in each Ministry Unit into the future.

Looking at it another way, for every full-time stipendiary incumbent, priest-in-charge or associate minister in the diocese at the moment, we are investing just under £9,865 each year in training another stipendiary clergyperson for the future.

What are the rest of the shared support costs?

That leaves about £19,300 of other shared costs per Ministry Unit. Some of these costs relate to specific functions or posts that we are required to have by law (including Faculty Jurisdiction, Education, Safeguarding and the role of Diocesan Secretary). There are others where we are obliged to make appropriate provision (e.g. Training). As a charitable company of this size and managing a significant asset base we need resources to manage our finances, assets and HR responsibly.

In comparison to other dioceses, York has very few additional posts beyond the minimum that we need to fulfil our statutory responsibilities, or to enable an operation of the size of the diocese to function effectively. In recent years we have sought to reduce both headcount and other expenditure, funded by the general fund, where possible, and will continue to do.

Whilst not all the costs are related to people, the majority are. The focus of these roles is either to directly support those in ministry in our parishes, chaplaincies and schools or to help mission indirectly, for example by managing the assets of the diocese to generate income.

At the moment we benefit from a number of posts that are being funded via grants (shown on Appendix A as externally funded) or where the DBF has agreed to match fund grants from the sale of assets rather than the Common Fund. These include all the posts associated with Multiply, Mustard Seed and Living Christs' Story strategic capacity posts. When the grants run out over the next two to three years, we will either need to find other ways to fund the roles or we will lose that support.

A number of functions based at Diocesan Office are funded via restricted income (e.g. to support some of the Education team) or are allocated as part of the direct cost of Ministry (e.g. posts directly related to the provision of clergy housing). The table below shows the breakdown of the other costs that are currently being met from the Common Fund.

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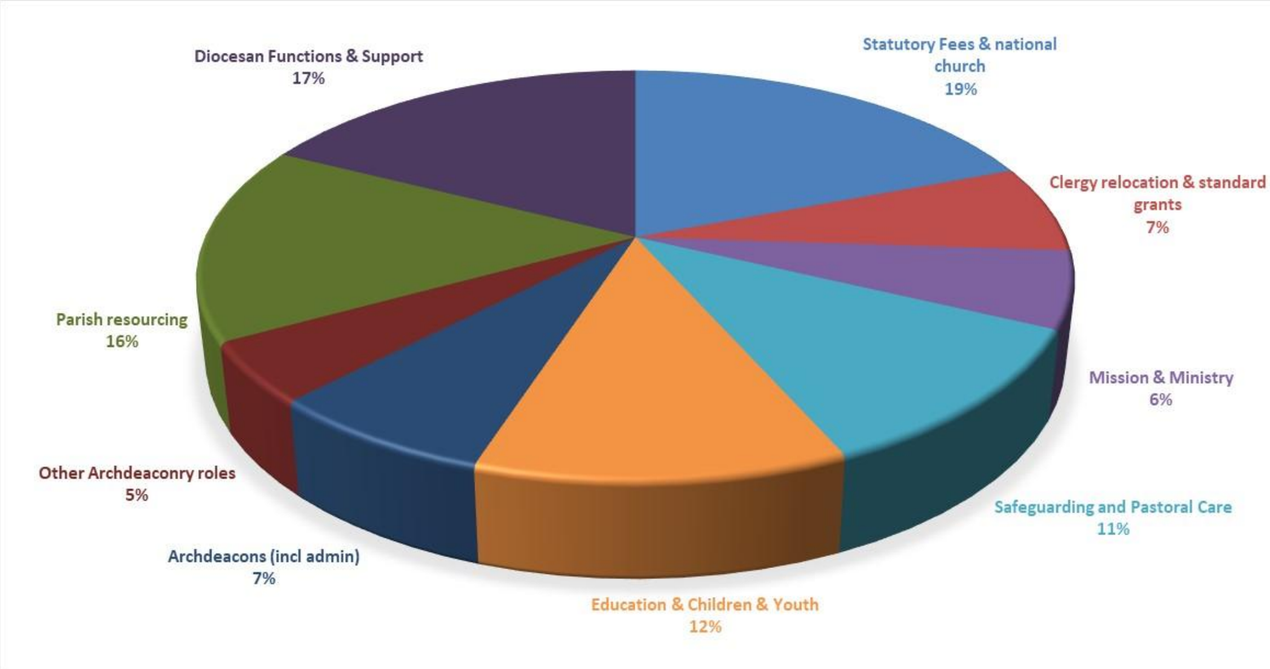

Pooled costs of supporting mission- general	Total	Per Ministry Unit *	
	£000	£	%
National Church & Statutory Fees	628	3,697	19%
Clergy relocation & standard grants	227	1,334	7%
Mission & Ministry	199	1,169	6%
Safeguarding, Pastoral Care	370	2,177	11%
Education & Children & Youth	381	2,243	12%
Archdeacons	237	1,392	7%
Other Archdeaconry roles	156	916	5%
Parish Resourcing	510	3,002	16%
Diocesan Functions & Support	574	3,379	18%
Total	3,283	19,310	100%
(* - based on 170 Ministry units)			

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Let's take a look at the Support Costs in a bit more detail…

National Church Contributions & Statutory Fees

These account for almost a fifth of the remaining shared support costs (i.e. other than training) and are agreed by the Church of England's General Synod.

Most of these relate to the costs of running the central functions of the Church of England and the costs associated with the Church's Housing Assistance for the Retired Ministry (CHARM). Whilst the national costs are heavily supported by the Church Commissioners, each diocese is asked to make a contribution. In our case this a little over £400,000 per year *.

There are also statutory fees associated with the Diocesan Registry (an independent legal firm) and all Faculty Fees; ensuring parishes do not have to worry about legal fees they might not be able to afford.

Clergy Relocation & Standard Grants

There is a statutory requirement for these payments to be made and by pooling them it avoids PCCs having to meet unexpected costs associated with removals and other grants paid to clergy at the point that they complete training or move to a new post.

In many dioceses such costs are included within the Direct Costs of Ministry calculation rather than the shared costs.

Mission & Ministry Team

This team exists to support those engaged in a variety of ministries in our parishes, chaplaincies and worshipping communities. The budget associated with this team is split between:

- the direct cost of ministry (e.g. Clergy Continuing Ministerial Education),
- the shared costs of future ministry (e.g. Vocations, and Curate and Lay Ministry training) and
- the other shared support costs, (including general-funded Revitalise costs and the wider co-ordination of activities).

The remaining posts are funded by our Strategic Development Grants from the Church of England centrally (Multiply, Mustard Seed, Discipleship) and the time limited DBF match funding which has been excluded from the cost data.

Safeguarding and Pastoral Care

These costs relate to a number of other areas of support that have a direct benefit on the life of parishes.

Firstly, Safeguarding – the whole church's culture has shifted so that we rightly recognise and resource Safeguarding as very important in the life of every parish

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and diocese. The relevant legislation requires certain provisions to be in place including DBS checks and access to professional training and support – again, by pooling the costs of the provision we are able to ensure that all the necessary services are available to parishes when they are needed.

Alongside supporting our Safeguarding Team in relation to the care for survivors of abuse, our Adviser in Pastoral Care enables us to be more effective in our support for ministers (lay and ordained). In turn this has been cost-effective in reducing long term absences and improved wellbeing.

Education and Children & Youth

We are engaged with over 18,000 young people, their families and all those involved in the life of the 122 church schools and academies in the diocese. The diocese has a number of statutory responsibilities in relation to these schools as well as involvement in the production of each of the locally agreed RE syllabuses used in the non-church schools across our diocese. In addition, the team provides support for every parish in their own engagement with schools through the provisions of training and resources.

The team also supports parish-based work with Children & Young People, aligning our approach with the national Growing Faith framework which seeks to engage in faith development in partnership between schools, churches and households.

Archdeacons

Each of our three Archdeacons support and advise about 150 parishes. They each have some part time administrative support.

Other Archdeaconry Roles

We still have a small number of specialist locally-deployed roles such as University Chaplains and the East Riding Social Responsibility officer. They are accountable to the relevant Suffragan Bishop.

Parish Resourcing

Under 'Parish Resourcing' we provide support in the areas of Church Buildings, Generous Giving and Communications. There is a broad range of support on offer, such as advice on church buildings, support for grant applications, deployment of the Parish Giving Scheme, and media relations in good times and bad – not simply supporting those involved in these practical aspects of local ministry but also, where possible, sharing the burden in difficult situations.

Diocesan Operations & Support

Every diocese has to follow the law and best practice as a charity and a company, as well as legislation that is specific to the Church of England. This category includes the shared costs of running the charity (e.g. Finance and Asset Management), support for statutory procedures (e.g. Patronage, Pastoral Reorganisation, Closed Churches and

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Synodical Government), HR and general administration.

These posts also offer support to parishes, providing specialist advice in the areas of Finance, HR, parish governance and PCC owned properties and trusts.

You haven't mentioned the team who look after Property – how are they funded?

The costs associated with the provision of clergy housing have been included in the direct cost of ministry, and we treat the costs associated with administering the property in the Glebe estate as a deduction from investment income.

But what about…?

The diocese does not pay for the items listed below – they are either independent or they are funded by the church nationally. Therefore, they don't feature in the Shared Support Costs and no money raised in parishes goes towards them.

- York Minster – in fact York Minster makes a significant Free Will Offer to the Common Fund.
- Bishopthorpe Palace or its staff.
- Stipends or expenses of bishops, or their administrative support, although we do provide the houses for the Suffragan Bishops.
- Salaries of staff in church schools.

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Appendix A

2025 Budgeted Pooled Support Costs: c. £4.9m

Pooled support costs include everything not directly associated with the remuneration, pensions or accommodation of incumbents and associate ministers. The bulk of the budget relates to staffing. but also includes expenses directly related to the different areas of activity.

•The costs associated with Bishopthorpe and Suffragan Bishops are met directly by the Church Commissioners.

•All of the costs associated with York Minster. including clergy stipends. are met directly by the Minster. Note that the Minster makes a Free Will Offer to the Common Fund to support ministry in the rest of the diocese.

• The figure includes c £lm of allocated national costs (including pre-ordination training) together with relocation costs and statutory fees met by the DBF on behalf of parishes.

• An indication of the key areas of ministry and support activity funded within this budget heading is provided below.

In each case. headcount relates to Full Time equivalent (FTE) posts (excluding vacancies) in the 2025 budget unless otherwise stated. Additional posts that are currently externally funded have been shown for information

Licenced Ministry:
Number of people (FTE)

	DBF Funded	Externally Funded
Curates	15	
Archdeacons & other Archdeaconry based roles*	6.5	1.3
Multiply Ministers		5.7
Totals	**21.5**	**7**

** includes Administration support to Archdeacons*

Support Roles:
Number of people (FTE)

	DBF Funded (common fund)	DBF Funded (projects)	Externally Funded
Living Christ's story *(incl Multiply & Mustard Seed, strategy)*		3.3	12.9
Mission & Ministry *(incl. Training, V ocations & support for new worshipping communities)*	8.4		0.5
Safeguarding & Pastoral Care	5.1		
Education*, Children & Youth	5		4
Parish Resourcing *(incl Church Buildings, Stewardship, Communications, Closed Churches and Mission & Pastoral)*	7.6		0.6
Diocesan Functions & Support* *(including Finance, Asset Management, HR, Governance & Strategic Coordination)*	9.4		4.6**
Totals	**35.5**	**3.3**	**22.6**

** these items include posts required by legislation or for statutory compliance by the DBF ond/or Parishes (eg Diocesan Safeguarding Advisor, Director of Education, Diocesan Secretary, DAC, Safeguarding & Finance Staff).*
***4.6 staff in the Property Team are funded via property income or included in the cost of providing housing in respect of stipendiary and House for Duty appointments.*

Exampled of other significant pooled costs:

• Pre - ordination Training	£ 497,930
• National Church	£ 412,500
• Clergy Removals and relocation grants	£ 226,800
• Registry, Chancellor & Faculty Fees	£ 216,000

** This is before the outcome of the 2026-2028 Triennium funding review – for 2026 onwards LICF is expected to increase by around 1/3, the contribution to National costs to reduce and stipends to increase.*