

VRF Grant Making Policy

Introduction

The Vicar's Relief Fund (VRF) was established by St Martin-in-the-Fields Charity (registered charity number:1156305). The VRF provides crisis grants to individuals at risk of, or currently experiencing, homelessness via frontline workers. Grants are given to prevent eviction or help access accommodation.

Who do we aim to support?

VRF grants are open to individuals across all 4 Nations of the UK who need help with:

Preventing Eviction: rent arrears (including a DRO and bankruptcy fees), service charge arrears, or money to pay for a hoarding clean up - where it will prevent eviction.

Accessing Accommodation: a contribution towards a rent deposit, rent in advance, ID, moving costs or temporary accommodation - where it will help someone access accommodation.

We may also apply discretion to consider awarding a grant for things not included above, if there is clear evidence the grant will prevent eviction or help access accommodation. This will be assessed on a case-by-case basis.

The number of individuals the VRF can award grants to is limited by the amount of funding available. We reserve the right to decline on budget in line with budget restrictions. In this scenario, priority is given to applicants who are currently homeless, or at imminent risk of, homelessness.

Please note that in no circumstances can a VRF grant be transferred to another client or be used for different purposes than set out in the application form.

We understand that sometimes you may apply for a client to access a property which then falls through. In this instance, please email us for approval to transfer the grant to a different property.

How much funding is available from the VRF?

We will consider paying up to:

- £350 for Preventing Eviction grants.
- £500 for Accessing Accommodation grants.

You can apply for more than one grant for the same client. However, the maximum amount we can award to any one client in any 12-month period is £500. The 12-month period is calculated from the date the initial application is received and is not calculated on a calendar year basis.

We reserve the right to use our discretion to award beyond our maximum amount in exceptional instances. This will be assessed on a case-by-case basis.

Who can make an application?

All applications must be submitted by a frontline worker on behalf of the individual in need of financial support from the VRF. We define a frontline worker as anyone in paid employment by agencies working to alleviate and prevent homelessness. Such agencies include, but are not limited to, charities, housing associations, Citizen's Advice, or statutory agencies such as the National Probation Service.

Please note that we cannot accept applications from volunteers.

We also do not consider applications from frontline workers employed by organisations with share capital.

In order to promote the safety and wellbeing of clients we can only accept applications from frontline workers whose organisation has a safeguarding policy and who have undertaken safeguarding training within the last 3 years.

Frontline workers must gain consent from the person they are applying on behalf of. We cannot accept or access any applications where consent has not been obtained.

How to make an application

Frontline workers are required to apply for an account via our VRF portal. This will involve filling out a 'New User Registration Form' with details about themselves and the organisation they are employed by. Frontline workers will not be able to make a grant application until this form is submitted and approved by the VRF team.

Accounts cannot be shared. Each employee who wants to have access to the VRF portal will need to set up their own account. Accounts need to be registered to email addresses that are individualised and have an organisation specific domain name. Where relevant we may accept a general email address for the agency, such as for employees of domestic abuse agencies.

We may carry out checks on the following publicly available resources, to verify the identity and eligibility of the agency:

- checking the Charity Commission's Register of Charity/Scottish Charity Register;
- checking the register of companies at Companies House;
- checking the register of approved social housing providers maintained by the Homes and Communities Agency; and
- checking the agency's website.

We will email frontline workers directly on the work email address they have supplied to confirm completion of their account authorisation.

Once registered, frontline workers will need to log on to our portal and complete the online grant application form on behalf of the individual requiring financial support from the VRF.

Frontline workers should carefully read our VRF [terms and conditions](#), [privacy statement](#), [help guides](#) and [FAQ's](#) before commencing and submitting an application.

Decision-making process

All applications that are submitted on any given working day are reviewed by our team, usually within five working days. Applications will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis, in accordance with the eligibility criteria set out above.

After an application is reviewed, our team will email the applicant and their line manager with a decision.

Please note that we do not consider funding for items/costs that have already been paid for.

Where an application is successful, the frontline worker will receive an email with an offer letter attached, containing details on the payment date and confirmation of the BACS details.

All payments will be made to the Frontline workers organisation or to service/housing providers. Payments will not be paid directly into an individual's bank account.

Appeals and re-submissions

Please note that our decision on whether to grant funding is final. Unfortunately, due to the high number of applications that we receive and our limited capacity, we are unable to respond to requests for re-considerations.

To keep our records and database as efficient as possible, we will delete any New User Registration Forms and VRF applications that are more than three months old and haven't been submitted / resubmitted. Please make sure that you submit / resubmit any grant applications within three months if the funding is still needed.

Submitting a new application for the same client

We are happy to receive a new application in respect of the same individual, regardless of whether their original application was successful or not, provided that the following two conditions are satisfied:

1. the applicant will not have received more than £500 in total of VRF funding within the previous 12 months (calculated from the date of their new application);
2. the applicant is applying for funding for a different purpose under the new application (for example rent arrears).

Evidence of expenditure

Once the funds have been spent, the applicant must provide evidence of expenditure to the VRF that the funds have been used as stated in the application.

Evidence must be provided within 6 weeks of the grant being paid. Evidence is required for all grants, even if we paid the funds directly into the applicant's organisation's account.

This must be uploaded to the reporting form, which is attached to the original application form within our flexi-grant portal.

A breakdown of the evidence we accept for each grant category and instructions on how to upload it to your application can be found on our [Help Page](#) under the heading Post-Grant Evidence.

Equal opportunities

We recognise that the needs of people who are homeless or are at risk of homelessness are diverse and often urgent. We are committed to equality of opportunity and seek to challenge and respond to disadvantage through the VRF.

Further information

For further information about the VRF, we recommend visiting our [help page](#).

Otherwise, please contact:

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