Written evidence submitted by Peterborough Diocese Board of Finance (ATE0252)

The Peterborough Diocese engages clergy to work across all areas of the diocese encountering people where they live, work and play. We are committed to ensuring that our clergy represent the diversity of ministry available to the Church of England.

One of our clergy is the Reverend Canon Linda Jane Butler who has been employed in the diocese since 2003 initially as our Chaplain Among Deaf People and more recently as the Team Rector of Kingsthorpe.

Jane’s work would have been greatly inhibited had she not been able to secure funding for her interpreters through Access to Work. The payments received have enabled her to be an effective resource for the diocese and she is leading a significant turnaround in her parishes.

The recent decision to suddenly reduce the funding available by capping the hours that can be considered for the proper remuneration of interpreting services has been hugely distressing for Jane and for those she ministers to, particularly as the level of interpreting and the associated £30 an hour fees have been in place for a decade.

Jane has offered the following contribution to the Committee which the diocese fully endorses:

“My name is the Reverend Canon Linda Jane Butler I am profoundly deaf with a Db loss of 120. At present I am working as Rector of the Kingsthorpe Parish (population of over 23,000) within the Diocese of Peterborough. As far as I am aware my situation with regard to Access to Work is unique as I am the only full time profoundly deaf Canon working within the Church of England.

At present I have a team of interpreters, as it is not feasible to employ one full time interpreter due to the long hours which do not fit into a 9 to 5 working environment. My allotted amount of hour is at present 37 which I have tried to increase to 43 with no success. For many years since my hearing deteriorated to its current level I have received these hours with my interpreters being paid at £30.00 per hour. Without warning this amount has been reduced to £18.89 per hour.

I was appointed Priest in Charge of Kingsthorpe Parish in 2010 becoming Rector this year. Below I have listed some of the responsibilities incurred whilst carrying out this role.

1. Supervision of 2 priests (one of whom is underachieving the Diocese is aware of this situation), we are in the process of getting a youth worker and possibly a curate both of whom would also require supervision. I am at present also supporting a candidate through the discernment process to become a priest. A youth intern has also been appointed who will start in September 2014.

2. In the past 3.5 years children/youth work has developed from nothing to 7 groups with an age range of 0-18. The work in schools has also developed with myself attending school assemblies on a more regular basis.

3. When I arrived there was no pastoral work - there are now pastoral visits to people at home, in residential homes, regular visits to hospitals, post baptism and funeral visits as well as taking home communion.

4. I meet a growing number of people after the services. The number of services has increased as we have developed a family service and a celebration of marriage service.
5. Across the team we have developed business meetings, bible study groups, prayer meetings, fundraising events (which include the local community), 5 core groups and other meetings with Church wardens from all three churches to discuss issues relating to each separate church.

6. There are regular meetings of Kingsthorpe Churches Together which include the other denominations within the parish, this also includes attending special services for all the churches together.

7. As well as my responsibilities within the parish I am involved in both the Diocese and the Deanery attending Diocesan Synod, Bishop’s Council, the Deanery Standing Committee, Deanery Synod, meetings for the women priests, Bible days and Bishop’s roadshows.

8. My interpreters also take and make phone calls which can vary in length from 5mins to over 30 mins, and provide support with English received and sent.

9. All of the above work would not be workable if I didn’t have the support of my interpreters for 43 hours a week. The meetings can vary from “1 to 1” or involve as many as 150, sometimes a full school assembly which can be very lively.

I feel that it is my right as a disabled person to be able to choose to attend all of the above with the appropriately qualified interpreters making me equal to any hearing person in my position.”

20 June 2014