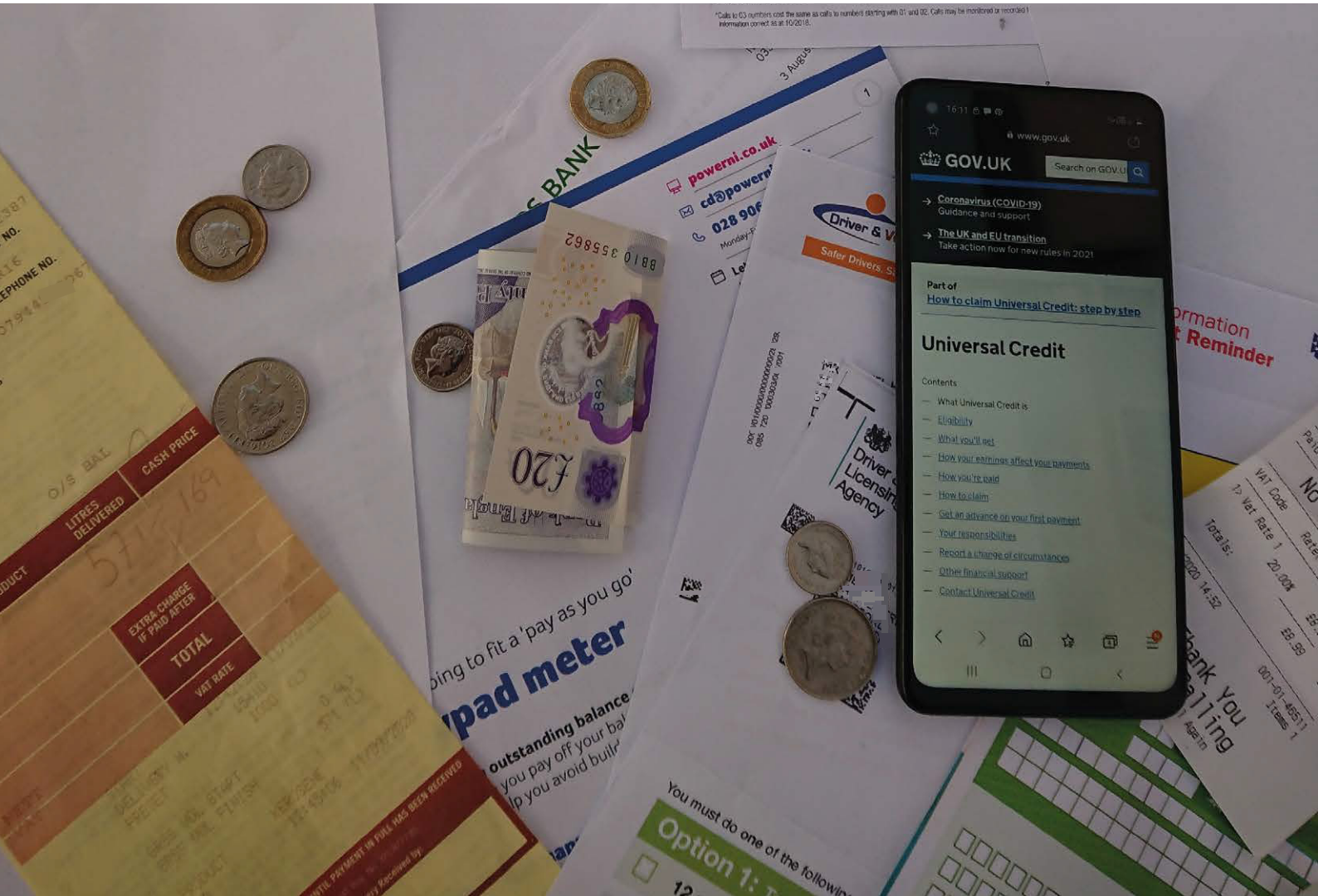


Constituency Casework Guide

COVID-19: Social Security and other forms of support for household finances

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Constituency Casework Guide

COVID-19: Social Security and other forms of support for household finances

28 October 2020

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to have a profound impact on the Northern Ireland economy. In the weeks and months ahead, constituency offices may experience an increase in constituents seeking information and advice on social security benefits, in particular Universal Credit, and other forms of support for their household finances. The purpose of this guide is to signpost constituency staff to existing sources of information on social security benefits; other forms of financial assistance that may be available; and sources of independent information and advice.

This guide is by no means intended to be definitive. The response to COVID-19 is constantly changing. Social media is an excellent source of up-to-date information on advice and guidance and links to key Facebook and Twitter feeds are included throughout this Constituency Casework Guide.

This guide was published on 28 October 2020; the information is correct at the time of publication but please be aware that social security arrangements are subject to frequent changes and so some details may become out-of-date.

Should MLAs or their constituency staff have any suggestions for information they would like to see in the guide, or have links to useful information that they would like to share, please feel free to contact the Research and Information Service.

1 Accessing social security benefits and other forms of financial assistance during the pandemic

Support for businesses subject to coronavirus restrictions

The current [Job Retention Scheme](#) is due to end on 31 October 2020. On 9 October 2020, the UK Government announced the extension of support via a new [Job Support Scheme](#) to provide financial assistance to businesses who are legally required to shut for some period as part of local or national restrictions due to COVID-19. The new scheme will come into effect on 1 November 2020 and details on the scheme are available [here](#) (further details on the scheme will be set out by HMRC in due course). The announcement of the new scheme was welcomed by the Minister for the Economy who [stated](#) that it “would have been reckless to end the furlough scheme without putting any UK-wide support in its place and would have been disastrous for the Northern Ireland economy”. On 15 October, the Finance Minister, also [announced](#) a new financial support scheme for businesses subject to coronavirus restrictions across all 11 council areas in Northern Ireland.

Despite these important financial packages, not all businesses will survive in the current economic climate. As a result, constituency offices may continue to experience an increase in constituents seeking support to (a) determine their eligibility for benefits and/or (b) apply for those benefits. Assessing eligibility and applying for benefits such as Universal Credit can be daunting, particularly for those people who have had relatively little previous experience of the social security system. However, there is a wealth of resources to help support both advisers and constituents. The purpose of this Constituency Casework Guide is simply to help navigate constituency staff to existing sources of information and advice, as well as providing contact details for organisations that can provide independent specialist support and advice on issues such as employment rights, social security, housing and childcare.

This guide focuses primarily on support for household finances from the social security system and other forms of support provided by the NI Executive. For COVID-19 business support, see www.nibusinessinfo.co.uk/business-support/coronavirus. For support relating to the Arts, Culture and Heritage see the Department for Communities (DfC) COVID-19 service updates webpage www.communities-ni.gov.uk/landing-pages/covid-19-service-updates

Advice and information on redundancy

It is likely that constituency staff are being contacted by people who have either been made redundant or face the prospect of redundancy. What benefits and financial support is available for people who have been made redundant is very much dependent upon their individual circumstances. But there is advice and information available:

- Information on [redundancy](#) and '[redundancy and benefits](#)' is available from the NI Direct website.
- [Law Centre NI](#) has produced a useful '[Redundancy: What are my rights?](#)' resource (updated in July 2020) with a range of Frequently Asked Questions which may be of assistance to constituents. Law Centre NI offer a [free advice service](#) on redundancy and employment law issues is available on 028 90244401. The Law Centre website states their advice lines are currently dealing with a high volume of calls. If a constituent is unable to make contact by telephone they can send an email, along with their contact details to employmentadvice@lawcentreni.org
- The [Labour Relations Agency](#) website also produced a number of COVID-19 resources on [redundancy](#) including a [webinar](#) .
- Being made redundant can have an overwhelming impact on a person's mental health. The [COVIDWellbeingNI](#) online hub provides a wide range of resources and contact details of organisations that can [provide support](#).

2 What support is available from the social security system – where do I start?

If a constituent has been made redundant, has had their hours of work decreased, or the household is on a low income, it is important to ensure that they are empowered to access all the assistance that they are entitled to. The [NI Direct website](#) provides an **overview of the different types of benefit** that are available, where and how to claim them. It also provides a section on '[Understanding the benefit system](#)' which provides an overview of how the social security system works in Northern Ireland and what information they should prepare to have ready before submitting their claim.

The NI Direct website contains a link to a '[Benefit Calculator Tool](#)' which a person can use to anonymously enter information about savings, income and outgoings to ascertain what benefits and tax credits they, or their family, may be entitled to. Whilst it is not suitable for certain groups, such as students and those aged under 18, it is a useful starting point. However, constituents may wish to check with an independent advice organisation whether they are getting the maximum range and rates of benefit and other forms of support they are entitled to. A list of independent advice organisations and contact details can be found in the last section of this guide.

The Department for Communities states that improving the uptake of benefits by people who are entitled but not claiming is a key priority. The '**Make the Call**' Service can provide an assessment of entitlement. Further information on 'Make the Call' is available [here](#). Phone **0800 232 1271** or email: makethecall@dfcni.gov.uk (alternative means of contacting the service for people with hearing, speech or language problems is available [here](#)). Please note that the Department may be experiencing a very high volume of calls during this time and it may take them longer to answer the call.

Important information:

Please note that a number of important COVID-19 related social security measures and other financial assistance measures have been implemented to provide additional financial assistance resulting from the impact of the pandemic. Section 4 of this guide provides details on where to find these and how to keep up to date with the latest information.



Help with accessing online information and online applications?

Constituency staff are undoubtedly aware that information on different benefits, and indeed the application process, for many benefits (particularly Universal Credit), are accessed online. The NI Direct website provides [advice](#) on internet access including information on accessing free internet access at local libraries. Free access would also normally be available in Jobs and [Benefits Offices](#) However, current restrictions due to COVID-19 may impact on the ability of some constituents to access information and advice in this way.

3 Claiming Universal Credit; 'New Style' Jobseeker's Allowance; or Employment and Support Allowance

The three main types of benefit that may be claimed by people who have been made redundant are:

- Universal Credit

And/or contribution-based benefits such as:

- 'New Style' Jobseekers Allowance (JSA)
- 'New Style' Employment and Support Allowance (ESA)

However, constituents may be entitled to a range of other benefits instead of, or in addition to, those outlined above. The Department for Communities website provides a useful [A to Z guide](#) on the social security benefits and other forms of financial assistance available.

Tax Credits have been replaced by Universal Credit. However, a [new claim](#) for Child Tax Credit can be made if a person:

- Receives [severe disability premium](#), or are entitled to it.
- Got, or were entitled to, severe disability premium in the last month, and are still entitled to it.

If a person is unable to make a new claim for Tax Credit, they may be able to apply for Universal Credit (or [Pension Credit](#) if they and their partner are [State Pension](#) age or over).



Looking for help with tax credits? Contact details for Tax Credits Helpline (which provides information on Working Tax Credit and Child Tax Credit) is available [here](#). Alternatively advice on eligibility for Tax Credits may be available from a number of the advice organisations listed at the end of this guide.

Universal Credit

The main benefit for people who have just been made redundant, who are out of work, or who are on a low income (including those who are in employment), is **Universal Credit**. However, eligibility will depend on a number of factors including income (both earned and unearned income), hours worked and capital/savings. The NI Direct website contains a lot of detailed information on Universal Credit, for ease of reference **Box 1** signposts the most important links.

Box 1: Universal Credit information

Universal Credit	
<p>Where can I find information on eligibility and how to apply?</p>	<p>Universal Credit – UC is payable to people over 18 years old but under Stage Pension age who are on a low income or out of work. It is also available to 16 and 17 year olds in specific circumstances. Universal Credit includes different support elements to assist with the costs of housing, children and childcare. It also provides financial support for people with disabilities, carers, and people who are too ill to work. Detailed information on Universal Credit, including information on eligibility; steps you need to take to get ready to apply; how to apply is available; and how other benefits may impact upon UC; payment rates etc is available on the NI Direct ‘Before you Claim Universal Credit’ webpage.</p> <p>It is important for people applying for Universal Credit to read the ‘Getting ready of Universal Credit’ section in particular and follow the five minute, five step process.</p> <p>A range of information videos explaining the key stages of the UC journey is also available here (also available in sign language).</p>

	<p>Information on making and managing a claim is available from the NI Direct website here and a Department for Communities step by step guide on making and managing an online UC claims is available here.</p> <p>Information on UC when a person is already in employment, starting employment or self-employed is available here.</p> <p>Before claiming UC, it is also important that constituents and constituency staff are aware of other important information including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Asking another person or organisations to deal with your claim if you are unable to and the rules around this; ▪ Deductions that can be taken from your UC payments; ▪ Information on support for childcare costs. ▪ Information on the child element of UC including the ‘two child’ limit.
<p>What about payments?</p>	<p>In Northern Ireland, UC is normally paid to a household twice a month. A claimant will receive their first payment five weeks after submitting their claim. Further detailed information on payments is available on the NI Direct website here. Alternative payment options are available depending on personal circumstances e.g. a monthly payment, or split payments between members of a couple in a household. The NI Direct website states that claimants should speak to their Work Coach or Case Manager for further information on this.</p> <p>Universal Credit consists of a monthly ‘Standard Allowance’ depending on age and whether a person is single or in a couple. Additional amounts are added for elements such as e.g. childcare, caring responsibilities, housing costs. A claimant is permitted to earn a certain amount before UC is reduced (this is known as the “Work Allowance”). Further information on these is available here.</p>
<p>Is there any financial support available while waiting on payment?</p>	<p>If the five-week wait is likely to place a claimant in financial difficulty, a number of options may be available:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ An advance payment of up to 100% of a claimant’s estimated UC payment may be available but this will need to be repaid. Further information on eligibility, how to arrange a payment, circumstances in which a person may be refused an advance; and repayments is available here. ▪ A Universal Credit Contingency Fund Payment which is a one-off non-repayable grant that may be available to people experiencing financial difficulties who are normally within their first UC assessment period following a new application to UC. To request a payment, claimants should contact

	<p>the Financial Support Service or their Work Coach who will check eligibility. Further information is also available here.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A Budgeting Advance may be available for those already in receipt of UC. It is a loan to help pay for emergency household costs (e.g. buying essential household items such as a cooker) or for helping get a job or stay in employment (e.g. to pay for items such as work clothes, travelling expenses etc). Further information on eligibility, loan amount, how to apply and repayments is available here.
<p>What about cross border workers?</p>	<p>Information on cross border workers is available from the NI Direct website here (see section 'cross border workers and COVID-19').</p>
<p>The Universal Credit Service Centre</p>	<p>For enquiries about Universal Credit or support with a claim, constituents can contact the Universal Credit Service Centre on 0800 012 1331 (free phone) or 0800 012 1441 (textphone for deaf or hard of hearing customers or customers with speech difficulties). The NI Direct website states that due to COVID-19 the Department for Communities is currently experiencing a very high volume of benefit calls and that it may take longer to answer a call.</p>
<p>Are there any useful UC-related tools my constituent can use?</p>	<p>The Universal Credit money manager (provided by the Money Advice Service) is a tool designed for people on Universal Credit or making a claim for Universal Credit. To use the tool make sure to click on the map of Northern Ireland.</p>
<p>Changes to UC due to COVID-19</p>	<p>Information on the impact of COVID-19 on UC claims and claimants is available from the NI Direct website here (see final section of the webpage 'Universal Credit').</p> <p>The standard allowance for Universal Credit (and working tax credit) has been increased by £1,040 per year (equating to a £20 uplift per week). <i>This support is expected to be withdrawn in Great Britain in April 2021.</i> In response to an Assembly question the Minister states that she will keep this matter under review.</p> <p>Face to face appointments at Jobs and Benefits offices continue to be suspended. From 15 July claimant commitments have been introduced for all UC new claims only. Work coaches will contact claimants by telephone to discuss assistance with moving into employment. See NI Direct for further details.</p> <p>Extra financial support may be available to people in a financial crisis or requiring support. See NI Direct for further details (the 'extra financial support</p>

	<p>section'). Further information on support and advice with housing is available in sections 4 and 5 of this guide.</p> <p>Work Capability Assessments for people making new claims to UC and ESA had been paused due to COVID-19. However, The Department's medical providers have confirmed they can now undertake these assessments by paper based receive or telephone assessments until face-to-face assessments can be resumed. See NI Direct for further details.</p>
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'New Style' Jobseekers Allowance

Universal Credit replaces income-based Jobseeker's Allowance for new claimants. However, if a person has been credited with sufficient National Insurance contributions they may be entitled to claim '**New Style' Jobseeker's Allowance**. This is similar to contribution-based Jobseeker's Allowance (i.e. a partner's income and savings will not affect how much a person is entitled to). A person can only claim 'New Style' JSA for up to 182 days. New Style JSA can be claimed on its own or at the same time as Universal Credit. However, if both are received at the same time, the 'New Style' JSA payment will be deducted from the Universal Credit payment. Further information on 'New Style' JSA including eligibility and the claims process is available [here](#).

The claims process for 'New Style' JSA is via an interactive form. However, if constituents are unable to complete the claim online then they may claim by contacting the Department for Communities on **0800 022 4250**. During the COVID-19 period telephone lines may be busy and longer waiting times may be experienced. Further information on how to claim for people who use sign language is available [here](#).

'New Style' Employment and Support Allowance

A person who is fit for work, but has lost their job due to COVID-19, should make a claim for either Universal Credit or New Style Jobseeker's Allowance. However, if a person cannot work due to an underlying health condition, are self-isolating or have been diagnosed with COVID-19 and they are not entitled to Statutory Sick Pay, they may be eligible to claim '**New Style' Employment and Support Allowance**. Further information on 'New Style' ESA including eligibility, how to claim, how long a person will be entitled to the benefit, and the interaction of New Style ESA with other benefits can be found [here](#).

However, in certain circumstances people should claim the older types of ESA instead. If in doubt, constituents should contact one of the organisations listed at the back of this guide for specialist advice and guidance.

Welfare reform and other issues to be mindful of when assisting constituents

These are some issues to be mindful of when dealing when assisting constituents with social security issues, i.e. –

- the [Benefit Cap](#);
- the [Social Sector Size Criteria](#) ('Bedroom Tax'); and
- the '[two child limit](#)' relating to Universal Credit.

Further information on these is available from '[welfare changes in Northern Ireland](#)' section of the NI Direct website. A number of mitigation measures in the form of 'Welfare Supplementary Payments' may be available to some claimants but not to others. Further information on the Supplementary Payments are available [here](#).



The [Welfare Changes Helpline](#) is available for anyone requiring assistance or advice about any of the changes relating to welfare reform. The helpline is operated by Advice NI and can be contacted on 0800 915 4604. Alternatively, a number of independent advice organisations are available across NI who can help with benefit queries. You can search for these on the Advice NI website [here](#).

Given that there is typically a five-week wait on a first payment for Universal Credit, Advice NI have [called for clarification](#) of when people (particularly those who may not be eligible for assistance under the new Job Support Scheme) should claim Universal Credit in order to receive pay payment for their first Assessment Period in order that they are not left in financial difficulty at Christmas. Advice NI have also expressed concern about the impact of final furlough payments on the first Assessment period; the potential reinstatement of the 'Minimum Income Floor' and its impact on the self-employed; and the impact of redundancy payments on eligibility for UC. For further information see Advice NI [blog](#) article. Constituency staff may wish to keep a watching brief on these issues.

4 Where can I access the latest information on COVID-19 related information on social security and financial assistance measures?

Recommended first points of contact for constituents and constituency staff looking for the latest COVID-19 related information on social security benefits and other forms of financial assistance is:

- The Department for Communities [Benefit Services Updates](#) webpage; and
- the '[Coronavirus and Benefits](#)' webpages of the [NI Direct](#) website.

These both provide information for people either claiming benefits, or considering claiming benefits, during the pandemic and should be frequently updated.

Extra financial support may be available and further information on this can be found on the NI Direct website [here](#).

Support available	Where can I find more information?
<p>The Finance Support Service (DfC)</p>	<p>Provides support to people who are in need of short-term financial help. A range of grants and loans may be available including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The Universal Credit Contingency Fund Short-term Living Expenses Grant ▪ Discretionary Support during the COVID-19 pandemic ▪ Discretionary Support COVID-19 Short Term Living Expenses Grant ▪ Discretionary Support ▪ Short-term Benefit Advances ▪ Social Fund Budgeting Loans <p>Further information on these is available here and contact details and information on the Financial Support Service is available here. Note the Service may be experiencing a high volume of calls during this time.</p>



Tips on accessing the latest information on COVID-19 social security-related issues:

- Check the **Department for Communities and NI Direct webpages** for information on a regular basis.
- Keep up to date with **announcements** by following the **Department for Communities on Twitter** <https://twitter.com/communitiesni> and keep up to date with Executive announcements <https://www.northernireland.gov.uk/> and <https://twitter.com/niexecutive>
- Following advice organisation on Twitter – e.g. **Advice NI** <https://twitter.com/AdviceNI>; **Housing Rights** <https://twitter.com/HousingRightsNI>; **Law Centre NI** <https://twitter.com/LawCentreNI>. Find local independent advice organisations in your constituency and follow them (Search NICVA’s [CommunityNI](#) for voluntary and community sector organisations across Northern Ireland). Search Advice NI’s network of members [here](#).
- Law Centre NI publishes a bi-monthly social security bulletin providing updates on the latest social security legislation and policy including updates on Universal Credit. You can subscribe to the bulletin [here](#).
- **Subscribe to RightsNet (through the Assembly Library)** – The NI Assembly Library has a subscription to RightsNet which is an online resource providing access to the latest social welfare developments and case law; see [here](#) for further information. Daily news alerts can be sent to your email address.

5 What other non-COVID related support is available for low-income households?

Many households in receipt of Universal Credit, and indeed other households on low income, may be entitled to a wide range of additional payments and allowances. Constituents and constituency staff may wish to **check their eligibility** to ensure that they are receiving the maximum amount that they are entitled to during this difficult financial period. **Box 3** outlines a range of payments and allowances which may be available.

Box 3: Additional financial support

Support available	Where can I find more information?
Free school meals and uniform grants	The Education Authority for Northern Ireland (EA) is responsible for assessing eligibility for Free School Meals and Uniform Grants. Information eligibility criteria; the application process; a series of FAQ and contact information is available here .
Help with health costs	Help with health costs including free dental treatment, free sight tests, vouchers towards the costs of glasses or contact lenses; and help with the costs of travel for treatment on referral by a doctor or dentists. Information on eligibility criteria and how to claim is available here .
Sure Start programmes	Provide support for parents with children aged under four years old who are living in disadvantaged areas in Northern Ireland. Find out here how Sure Start can help, what services are available and what Sure Start partnerships are available in your constituency.
Sure Start Maternity Grant	This is a one-off tax free payment of £500 may be available to help towards the cost of maternity and baby items. Information on eligibility and how and when to claim is available here .
Help to Save scheme	This is a new type of savings account aimed at helping low income households build savings and receive tax-free bonuses. Certain claimants of Universal Credit and certain people entitled to claim Working Tax Credit can receive tax-free bonuses. Further information is available here .
Funeral Expense Payment	May be payable to meet some of the costs associated with funeral expenses. Payment eligibility criteria, costs the payment will cover and repayment information is available here .
Support for Mortgage Interest (SMI)	May be available to homeowners receiving certain income-related benefits (e.g. Universal Credit). SMI is a loan to help towards mortgage interest payments (but cannot be used to help pay the amount borrowed, insurance policies or mortgage arrears). Further information on eligibility, payments and repayments, and the application process is available here .
Mortgage Interest Run On	May be available if a person (or their partner) has stopped getting income-based Jobseeker's Allowance, Income Support or income-related Employment Support Allowance because they are begun employment or their hours of work have increased. Payment for an extra four weeks' mortgage interest element of housing costs may be payable. Further information is available here .
Rate Relief and Rate Rebates	Rate Relief and Rate Rebates (for Universal Credit claimants) may also be available. Further information is available here .

6 What if my constituent is concerned about housing, debt and household budgeting, food and fuel costs?

Housing support

The **Housing Rights** [Housing Advice NI](#) website contains a very helpful '[Coronavirus and housing section](#)' for homeowners, social housing tenants, private tenants and landlords; and students. Information is also available in a range of languages. Contact details for Housing Rights helplines is available in the final section of this guide.

The **Department for Communities** has a dedicated [COVID-19 page](#) which provides the latest information on COVID-19 and the Department's housing services. The Department has also published [COVID-19 guidance for social housing landlords and tenants](#) and [guidance for private rented sector landlords and tenants](#) which should answer many questions constituents in financial difficulty may have around issues such as rent payments and financial support.

For homeowners concerned about mortgage payments, **Housing Rights** provides [information and advice](#) on mortgage payment holidays and mortgage arrears.

The **Northern Ireland Housing Executive** website contains information on [rent and housing support](#) during the COVID-19 period including information and contact details for those who are homeless, or threatened with homelessness, see the section '[What do I do if I am homeless or at risk of becoming homeless](#)'.

Debt advice

Information on dealing with debt problems is provided on the [NI Direct website](#) including information on obtaining independent debt advice. [Advice NI](#) also provides a **Debt Service helpline** on 0800 028 1881 (email debt@adviceni.net) and a **Businesses Debt Service** on 0800 083 8018. The Consumer Council can provide assistance with budgeting and debt advice, resources and information are available to download [here](#).

The [Money Advice Service](#) also provides free and impartial advice on household finances including debt, mortgages, budgeting, pensions, insurance, illness and disability.

Energy and fuel costs

The **Consumer Council for Northern Ireland** provides a [range of free online and interactive tools](#) and guides aimed at assisting consumers with saving money on fuel, energy, insurance broadband etc.

Insurance, credit cards, contacting lenders

The Financial Conduct Authority also provides information and guidance on COVID-related issues such as insurance, personal loans, credit cards, overdrafts. This information can be accessed [here](#).

7 Where can my constituent access specialist independent advice?

The telephone helplines of many organisations may receive a high volume of calls over the coming weeks. If you are unable to contact them by telephone please refer to the organisation's website which should provide alternative methods by which they can be contacted (e.g. by email).

Housing Rights

Housing Rights provides a comprehensive housing advice website (www.housingadviceni.org) which contains a wealth of resources on a wide range of housing issues covering the private rented sector, owner occupation, social housing, repairs, financial assistance for housing, housing rights and obligations etc. The website has a very helpful section on COVID-19 housing related issues (e.g. mortgage payments, eviction, repairs, problems paying rent):

www.housingadviceni.org/coronavirus

Housing Rights provides an advice line and those who are struggling to manage with housing issues during this time can contact: Tel: **028 90245640** (9.30am to 4.30pm, Monday to Friday).

For details on how to contact Housing Rights by email and other alternative methods, see [here](#).

Housing Rights also offers a specialist support '**Renting Rights**' service to assist young people in housing need providing advice and information, casework, and advocacy and mediation. For contact details and further information see www.housingrights.org.uk/renting-rights



Want to keep up to date? Follow on Twitter: <https://twitter.com/HousingRightsNI>

Advice NI

[Advice NI](#) can help (Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm) with:

- Freephone advice helpline **0800 915 4604** or contact advice@adviceni.net or text ACTION to 81025
- Freephone [welfare changes hotline](#) can be contacted on **0800 915 4604**
- Advice NI also operate the Community Helpline – Tel: 0808 802 002 or Text ACTION to 81025 or email Covid19@adviceni.net. The helpline is open seven days per week, 9am to 5pm.

In addition to this, an **Independent Advice Network**, operates throughout Northern Ireland, find contact details on your local office [here](#).

Advice NI has also compiled a range of [information](#) on benefits, tax credits, employment, food, heating, medicine, money and debt.



Want to keep up to date?

Follow on Twitter: <https://twitter.com/AdviceNI>

Law Centre NI

[Law Centre NI](#) provides information for advisers and for the public in relation to COVID-19 on legal and policy developments around employment, social security and immigration.

The advice line number is **028 9024 4401**. However, the Law Centre has been dealing with a high volume of calls, so if you are unable to make contact by telephone, please send an email, along with your contact details, to:

- For benefits advice: benefitsadvice@lawcentreni.org
- For employment advice: employmentadvice@lawcentreni.org
- For general inquiries: admin@lawcentreni.org

Law Centre NI has published a [wide range of information](#) on the latest social security updates and commitments as well as FAQs publications on redundancy, employment rights, and FAQs for the self-employed during the COVID-19 pandemic.



Want to keep up to date? Follow on Twitter: <https://twitter.com/LawCentreNI>

Employers for Childcare

[Employers for Childcare](#) has a free to access [Family Benefits Advice Service](#) which provides advice to parents on benefit entitlement and financial support with childcare. Advisors can also

provide guidance to employers on issues relating to childcare, employment entitlements and workplace legislation.

Freephone **0800 028 3008**



Want to keep up to date? Follow on Twitter: <https://twitter.com/EFCCG>

Helplines NI

Helplines NI has provided a list of [COVID-19 helplines](#) including contact details for local community services and support as well as contact details for a wide range of organisations who may be able to provide assistance on a wide range of issues including mental health and parenting support; see [here](#).



Want to keep up to date? Follow on Twitter: <https://twitter.com/HelplinesNI>

Children and Young People's Strategy Partnership

The [Children and Young People's Strategy Partnership](#) (CYPSP) is also a good resource to identify organisations that may be able to provide support on a range of issues during this time. It provides a list of organisations and contact details that can be filtered by support type e.g. domestic violence, child protection, drug/alcohol misuse – this information can be found [here](#).



Want to keep up to date? Follow on Twitter: <https://twitter.com/cypsp>

This information is provided to MLAs in support of their Assembly duties and is not intended to address the specific circumstances of any particular individual or organisation. Whilst we strive to ensure that the information provided here is up to date, the information provided by external websites referred to may change frequently. This guide should not be relied upon as providing legal or professional advice, nor as a substitute for it. A suitably qualified professional should be consulted if specific advice or information is required.

The Research and Information Service is available to discuss the content of this briefing with Members and their staff, but not with the general public.