



Department for

Communities

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Annual Report on the Social Fund 2016/17

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Department for Communities

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PREFACE

Over the last year, the Social Fund continued to help people on low incomes through both the regulated and discretionary schemes. 2016/17 represented the final year in which all the elements of the discretionary social fund were available.

Over 125,000 Budgeting Loans were awarded totalling £56.38 million. This was in addition to over 48,000 Crisis Loans and over 14,000 Community Care Grants, which together totalled £17.19 million.

A total of 2,697 maternity grants were awarded, totalling £1.37m to families to help meet the costs associated with a new baby. Awards amounting to £2.29 million were granted under the Funeral Payment scheme. In addition, the Fund also provided assistance with fuel costs, with Winter Fuel Payments contributing to heating costs in 223,544 pensioner households.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the former Interim Social Fund Commissioner, Mr Walter Rader, for the dedication and commitment he demonstrated during his time in post. His commitment ensured the Fund continued to help alleviate financial hardship in our community.

This report provides partial figures for the discretionary element of the Social Fund. The main elements of the discretionary Social Fund for Community Care Grants and Crisis Loans were replaced by the Discretionary Support scheme on 28 November 2016. Crisis Loans for 'Alignment to benefit' living expenses were replaced with Short-term Benefit Advances.

Under the roll out of Universal Credit, Budgeting Advances will gradually replace Budgeting Loans.

Leo O'Reilly
Permanent Secretary
Department for Communities

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This is the twenty-ninth annual report on the operation of the Social Fund, and it is laid before the Northern Ireland Assembly in accordance with section 146(5) and (6) of the Social Security Administration (Northern Ireland) Act 1992.
- 1.2 The Social Fund scheme comprises a regulated scheme made up of Maternity, Funeral, Cold Weather and Winter Fuel Payments and a discretionary scheme comprising Community Care Grants and repayable Budgeting and Crisis Loans.

Source of data for this report

- 1.3 The figures in this report, unless stated otherwise, are taken from the Department's Social Fund Policy, Budget and Management Information System and from scans of the Social Fund Computer System¹. Together these data sources record details of every individual application, subsequent payment decision and any outstanding repayment record and also provide useful comparative data for various purposes such as average awards, what needs they cover and how various client groups are using the Social Fund. These comparisons are shown in the annexes to this report.
- 1.4 The figures in this report, unless otherwise stated, do not include clerical cases that have not yet been built onto the Social Fund Computer System.

¹ There is also a statutory requirement to produce a Social Fund White Paper Account. Current arrangements are that this is laid in the Northern Ireland Assembly separately.

2. THE REGULATED SOCIAL FUND

Sure Start Maternity Grants

- 2.1 The Sure Start Maternity Grant is a payment of £500 to provide important help for families with the costs of a new baby (or babies in the event of a multiple birth) if there are no other children under 16 in the claimant's family. The grant is available to recipients, and partners of recipients, of a qualifying benefit or tax credit. For claims in 2016/17 these are: Income Support; income-related Employment and Support Allowance; income-based Jobseeker's Allowance; Pension Credit; Child Tax Credit (at a rate higher than the family element); or Working Tax Credit (which includes a disability or a severe disability element).
- 2.2 Sure Start Maternity Grants is also available for the additional children of subsequent multiple births, even though there may already be a child under 16 in the family. This recognises that help is needed with the costs of each additional child of a subsequent multiple birth. For example where the birth of twins follows a previous single birth, a Sure Start Maternity Grant can be paid to help with costs of the additional child.
- 2.3 In 2016/17, 2,697 awards were made worth £1.37 million. Sure Start Maternity Grant statistics are in Annexes 1, 2 and 12.

Funeral Payments

- 2.4 The Funeral Payment scheme continues to provide help towards a simple, respectful, low-cost funeral. Payments are made to a person responsible for funeral costs who is in receipt of (or whose partner is in receipt of) a qualifying benefit or tax credit. In 2016/17 the qualifying benefits and tax credits are the same as for the Sure Start Maternity Grant (see paragraph 2.1 above), but with the addition of Housing Benefit.
- 2.5 In 2016/17, 2,176 awards were made worth £2.29 million.
- 2.6 The Bereavement Service has continued to provide a means of claiming a Funeral Payment by telephone for people in receipt of income-related benefits, reporting the death of a relative or friend. Funeral Payment claims may also be made by completing and submitting the written Funeral Payment claim form.
- 2.7 Funeral Payment statistics are in Annexes 1, 2 and 12.

Cold Weather Payments

2.8 Cold Weather Payments provide help with additional costs of heating during periods of severe weather. The scheme runs from 1 November to 31 March each year. Every residential postcode in Northern Ireland is linked to one of the weather stations used in the scheme. A payment of £25 is made when the average temperature has been recorded as, or is forecast to be, 0°C or below over seven consecutive days at the weather station linked to the person's postcode.

2.9 In 2016/17, eligible recipients of a Cold Weather Payment were:

<u>Benefit in Payment</u>	<u>Qualifying Conditions for a Cold Weather Payment</u>
Pension Credit	Entitled to Cold Weather Payment (CWP).
Income Support (IS)	Entitled to a CWP if they receive a disability premium, a severe disability premium, any one of the pensioner premiums, a child disability premium within IS or Child Tax Credit (CTC) or they have a child under 5 years.
Income based Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA(IB))	Entitled to a CWP if they receive a disability premium, a severe disability premium, any one of the pensioner premiums, a child disability premium within JSA(IB) or CTC or they have child under 5 years.
Income-related Employment and Support Allowance (ESA(IR))	Entitled to a CWP if they receive the support component, the work-related activity component, a severe or enhanced disability premium, pensioner premium, or have a child who is disabled for whom they receive a disability premium within CTC or have a child under 5 years.

2.10 In 2016/17, because of the mild winter no payments were made.

2.11 Cold Weather Payment statistics are in Annex 1.

Winter Fuel Payments

- 2.12 Winter Fuel Payments help older people to meet heating costs. They are tax free and do not affect entitlement to social security benefits.
- 2.13 In total 304,175 people in 223,544 households benefited from a Winter Fuel Payment in 2016/2017. The total spent in 2016/2017 on Winter Fuel Payments was £52.8 million.
- 2.14 Households with someone who had reached State Pension age for women and aged up to 79 received £200 and households with someone aged 80 or over received £300.
- 2.15 Most people who had reached the State Pension age for women and who were normally living in Northern Ireland were eligible for the Winter Fuel Payment. Winter Fuel Payments are paid to people residing in another European Economic Area country or Switzerland as long as they have a genuine and sufficient link with the UK. The qualifying week for winter 2016/17 payments was the week beginning 19 September 2016.
- 2.16 From winter 2015-16, Winter Fuel Payments are no longer payable in European Economic Area countries (and associated territories) where the average winter temperature is higher than the warmest region of the UK (South West England). This temperature is 5.6 degrees centigrade.
- 2.17 The countries where Winter Fuel Payments are no longer payable are Cyprus, France, Gibraltar, Malta, Portugal and Spain.
- 2.18 The majority of payments were made automatically before Christmas 2016 without the need to claim. However, newly eligible people needed to make a claim if they were not receiving a social security benefit (or receiving only Housing Benefit or Child Benefit) during the qualifying week.

3. THE DISCRETIONARY SOCIAL FUND

Crisis Loans

- 3.1 Crisis Loans are repayable awards. Although there are no qualifying benefit conditions, Crisis Loans are only available in certain circumstances when a person has insufficient resources to prevent a serious risk to health or safety to themselves or their family. Crisis Loans are no longer available.
- 3.2 In 2016/17, a total of 48,232 payments were made, worth £6.79million.
- 3.3 Crisis Loan statistics are in Annexes 1, 3 and 8 to 11.

Community Care Grants

- 3.4 Community Care Grants are not repayable. They help people with specific needs who receive a qualifying benefit to establish themselves, or to remain, in the community or to ease exceptional pressures on them and their family. The qualifying benefits are: Income Support; income-related Employment and Support Allowance; income-based Jobseeker's Allowance; and Pension Credit. Community Care Grants are no longer available.
- 3.5 For 2016/17, the Community Care Grant budget was £13.72 million and 14,110 payments were made worth £10.40 million. Unspent monies from this budget was then transferred to the new Discretionary Support scheme.
- 3.6 Community Care Grant statistics are in Annexes 1, 3 to 5 and 11.

Budgeting Loans

- 3.7 Budgeting Loans are repayable awards, which take the form of interest free loans. They help people, who have been in receipt of a qualifying benefit for at least six months, with intermittent expenses for which it is difficult to budget. The qualifying benefits are: Income Support; income-related Employment and Support Allowance; income-based Jobseeker's Allowance; and Pension Credit.
- 3.8 In 2016/17, a total of 125,315 awards were made, worth £56.38 million.
- 3.9 There is a single Budgeting Loans allocation, which is controlled and managed at a regional level to ensure that all Budgeting Loan applicants in the same circumstances are treated in a similar way wherever they live. From April 2013, this budget has been funded solely from recoveries without any additional Annually Managed Expenditure allocations.
- 3.10 The Budgeting Loan scheme will remain in place for applicants in receipt of existing income-related benefits until they migrate to Universal Credit (at which point they may be eligible for a Budgeting Advance). There will be no change to how Budgeting Loans are to be delivered.
- 3.11 Budgeting Loan statistics are in Annexes 1, 3, 6, 7, 10 and 11.

4. GENERAL ADMINISTRATION

- 4.1 In 2016/17, the Social Fund was delivered via the Department for Communities regional offices. This included a dedicated Crisis Loan telephone service to deal with applications.
- 4.2 The normal method of applying for Funeral Payments, Sure Start Maternity Grants, Budgeting Loans and Community Care Grants is in writing. The Bereavement Service, however, takes Funeral Payment claims over the telephone when a potential Funeral Payment recipient prefers this to making a written claim.

Reviews

- 4.3 A discretionary Social Fund applicant who was dissatisfied with the initial decision on their application may apply to have the decision reviewed. Consideration is given to whether the law (including Directions and Guidance) has been applied correctly, and the case handled fairly and reasonably.
- 4.4 A reviewing officer within the Department for Communities carries out the first review and the outcome is notified to the applicant. In 2016/2017 over 7,072 applications for first review were dealt with.
- 4.5 Applicants who remained dissatisfied were able to ask for a further review by a Social Fund Inspector at the Office of the Social Fund Commissioner. Social Fund Inspectors are appointed by the Social Fund Commissioner. In 2016/2017, Social Fund Inspectors delivered 1366 decisions.
- 4.6 The Office of the Social Fund Commissioner (OSFC) was abolished on 28 November 2016. Further review requests where the original Budgeting Loan application was made on or after 28 November 2016 were then dealt with by the Independent Case Examiner (ICE).
- 4.7 The Social Fund Commissioner reported separately on the standard of reviews carried out by Social Fund Inspectors. His report is published in conjunction with this one.
- 4.8 A summary of Social Fund review applications is set out in Annex 11.

Clearance standards

4.9 Local and regional performance is monitored against a comprehensive set of Social Fund clearance standards. The achievement against the standard in 2016/17 is shown below.

Average Actual Clearance Times (AACT) (working days)	AACT Standard	Achieved in 2016/17
Community Care Grants	12	8
Budgeting Loans	4	3.2
Crisis Loans	2	1.0
Local Review of above grants and loans	10	6.0
Funeral Payments	11	7.5
Sure Start Maternity Grants	5	3.1

4.10 The standard for Average Actual Clearance Times was met for all Social Fund applications.

5. FINANCIAL ISSUES

Background

- 5.1 Payments from the regulated Social Fund are entitlement based and not paid from a cash-limited budget. Regulations prescribe the circumstances and amounts that are payable.
- 5.2 Regional cash-limited budgets are allocated for loans and grants. There is a regional allocation for the Budgeting and Crisis Loans budgets. The grants budget was distributed to six Social Fund Benefit Processing Centres.
- 5.3 Since the introduction of the discretionary support scheme and the abolition of discretionary Social Fund, Benefit Processing Centres have reduced from six centres to one.

The 2016/2017 discretionary Social Fund budget

- 5.4 In April 2016, the total gross budget of £84.29 million comprised:
- £16.49 million of new annually managed expenditure (AME).
 - Budgeting Loan recoveries of £53.2 million.
 - Crisis Loan recoveries of £14.2 million.
- 5.5 The gross discretionary budgets allocated in April 2016 were:
- Community Care Grants £13.72 million
 - Budgeting Loans £53.2 million
 - Crisis Loans £16.97 million.

Recoveries

- 5.6 The Department for Communities' Debt Management Unit manages the recovery of Social Fund loans from the majority of people who are no longer in receipt of benefit.
- 5.7 In 2016/17 the Debt Management Unit registered 46,300 new Social Fund loan referrals.
- 5.8 £11.74 million was recovered through the repayment of Crisis Loans.
- 5.9 £55.46 million was recovered through the repayment of Budgeting Loans.
- 5.10 Details of recoveries are given in Annexes 1 and 10.

6. SUMMARY OF FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE

- 6.1 In 2016/17 the Social Fund provided payments of just over £77.2 million, with an additional £52.8 million of Winter Fuel Payments paid to 223,544 households that include someone who had reached state pension age for women.
- 6.2 Gross expenditure on Budgeting Loans was £56.38million, and gross expenditure on Crisis Loans was £6.79million. Expenditure on Community Care Grants was £10.40 million.
- 6.3 Overall during 2016/17, the discretionary Social Fund provided help in the form of 187,657 awards.

The 2017/2018 discretionary Social Fund budget

- 6.4 In April 2017 the total gross budget of £54.00 million comprised:

- Loans budget £54.0m

7. INDEX TO ANNEXES

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1. Social Fund summary statistics

The Regulated Social Fund

2. Sure Start Maternity Grants and Funeral Payments: awards by claimant group and by qualifying benefit or tax credit

The Discretionary Social Fund

3. Discretionary Grants and Loans gross expenditure by applicant group
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Social Fund Appeals

12. Summary of Social Fund Appeals

Client Groups and Applicant Groups

13. Client Groups and Applicant or Claimant Group definitions

NORTHERN IRELAND SOCIAL FUND SUMMARY STATISTICS

	REGULATED SOCIAL FUND			DISCRETIONARY SOCIAL FUND		
	SSMG	CWP	FP	CCG	BL	CL
Applications received	5,362	N/A	3,200	26,484	149,654	61,127
Initial decisions	5,375	N/A	3,208	26,990	147,002	61,245
Awards	2,697	N/A	2,176	14,110	125,315	48,232
Awards as % of initial decisions	50.2	N/A	67.8	52.3	85.2	78.8
Initial refusals	2,773	N/A	1,124	12,836	19,674	11,788
Gross expenditure £m	1.37	N/A	2.29	10.40	56.38	6.79
Recoveries £m	N/A	N/A	0.13	N/A	55.47	11.74
Net expenditure £m	1.37	N/A	2.16	10.40	0.91	N/A
Average award	£508.53	N/A	£1052.91	£603.11	£447.41	£139.67

KEY

SSMG = SURE START MATERNITY GRANT

CWP = COLD WEATHER PAYMENT

FP = FUNERAL PAYMENT

N/A = not applicable

CCG = COMMUNITY CARE GRANT

BL = BUDGETING LOAN

CL = CRISIS LOAN

NOTES:

1. Average SSMG award reflects multiple births.
2. There is no requirement to claim Cold Weather Payments.
3. The number of discretionary awards made after review is not included in the table. However, gross expenditure does include awards made after review, reconsideration or appeal.
4. For the regulated Social Fund, the method of calculating average awards is to divide gross expenditure by the number of awards (including those made after reconsideration or appeal).
5. For the discretionary Social Fund, the method of calculating average awards is to divide initial gross expenditure (excluding the value of review awards) by the number of initial awards.
6. The difference between applications received, initial decisions, awards and initial refusals, is due to: applications being withdrawn; applicants rejecting or not responding to loan offers; and, not decided at the time the count was made.
7. Cold Weather Payment figures are taken from Departmental records.
8. Figures and percentages may not sum due to rounding.

**SURE START MATERNITY GRANTS AND FUNERAL PAYMENTS
AWARDS BY CLAIMANT GROUP**

Claimant Group	Sure Start Maternity Grants		Funeral Payments	
	Awards	%	Awards	%
Pensioners	4	0.1	713	32.8
Unemployed	450	16.7	311	14.3
Disabled	210	7.8	53	2.4
Lone Parents	266	9.9	88	4.0
Employed	522	19.4	10	0.5
Others	1,245	46.2	1,001	46.0
Total	2,697	100.0	2,176	100.0

AWARDS BY QUALIFYING BENEFIT OR TAX CREDIT

Qualifying Benefit	Sure Start Maternity Grants		Funeral Payments	
	Awards	% of Total Awards	Awards	% of Total Awards
Income Support, Employment and Support Allowance (income related), Jobseeker's Allowance (income-based) and Pension Credit	1,511	56.0	1,773	81.5
Child Tax Credit (at a rate higher than the family element)/Working Tax Credit (which includes a disability or a severe disability element)	1,186	44.0	163	7.5
Housing Benefit	N/A	N/A	240	11.0
Total	2,697	100.0	2,176	100.0

NOTES:

1. Claimant group definitions are in Annex 13.
2. These tables include awards made after reconsideration or appeal.

3. If an award is made to a claimant who receives more than one qualifying benefit or tax credit, then the award is recorded under the qualifying benefit or tax credit which appears first in the table above.
4. Figures and percentages may not sum due to rounding.

DISCRETIONARY GRANTS AND LOANS
GROSS EXPENDITURE BY APPLICANT GROUP

Applicant Group	Community Care Grants		Budgeting Loans		Crisis Loans	
	Amount £	% of Total Amount	Amount £	% of Total Amount	Amount £	% of Total Amount
Pensioners	2,217,270	21.3	4,578,291	8.1	231,667	3.4
Unemployed	575,337	5.5	8,207,927	14.6	2,316,578	34.1
Disabled	3,910,639	37.6	18,466,242	32.7	2,082,676	30.7
Lone Parents	1,763,231	16.9	15,147,842	26.9	1,318,744	19.4
Others	1,939,516	18.6	9,987,018	17.7	843,177	12.4
Total	10,405,993	100.0	56,387,321	100.0	6,792,842	100.0

NOTES:

1. Applicant group definitions are in Annex 13.
2. This table includes awards on review.
3. Figures and percentages may not sum due to rounding.

COMMUNITY CARE GRANTS - EXPENDITURE BY DIRECTION 4

Direction 4 Condition Satisfied	Amount £	% of Total Amount
Direction 4(a)(i) People moving out of institutional or residential care	201,770	1.9
Direction 4(a)(ii) Helping people stay in the community	4,824,190	46.4
Direction 4(a)(iii) Families under exceptional pressure	4,956,529	47.6
Direction 4(a)(iv) Prisoner or young offender on release on temporary licence	3,678	0.0
Direction 4(a)(v) People setting up home as a planned programme of resettlement	256,034	2.5
Direction 4(b) Travelling expenses	163,791	1.6
Total	10,405,993	100.0

NOTES:

1. If more than one condition is satisfied by an application it will be recorded under the first condition, in the order set out in the table.
2. This table includes awards on review.
3. Figures are estimated as the Management Information System does not split expenditure made after a review by the part of direction 4 satisfied.
4. Figures and percentages may not sum due to rounding.

**COMMUNITY CARE GRANTS -
REASONS FOR INITIAL REFUSAL BY APPLICANT GROUP**

Counts

Reason for Refusal	Pensioners	Unemployed	Disabled	Lone Parents	Others	Total
Savings sufficient to meet cost	59	0	13	0	3	75
Not in receipt of a qualifying benefit & unlikely to be	93	143	457	45	520	1,258
Excluded items	97	87	378	202	148	912
Amount less than £30, not travelling expenses	0	0	0	0	0	0
Direction 4 not satisfied	670	1,166	2,793	1,632	1,793	8,054
Previous application and decision	9	15	60	20	20	124
Insufficient priority	357	56	1,082	249	332	2,076
Other	32	10	51	46	201	340
Total	1,317	1,477	4,834	2,194	3,017	12,839

Percentages

Reason for Refusal	Pensioners	Unemployed	Disabled	Lone Parents	Others	Total
Savings sufficient to meet costs	4.5%	0.0%	0.3%	0.0%	0.1%	0.6%
Not in receipt of a qualifying benefit & unlikely to be	7.1%	9.7%	9.5%	2.1%	17.2%	9.8%
Excluded items	7.4%	5.9%	7.8%	9.2%	4.9%	7.1%
Amount less than £30, not travelling expenses	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Direction 4 not satisfied	50.9%	78.9%	57.8%	74.4%	59.4%	62.7%
Previous application and decision	0.7%	1.0%	1.2%	0.9%	0.7%	1.0%
Insufficient priority	27.1%	3.8%	22.4%	11.3%	11.0%	16.2%
Other	2.4%	0.7%	1.1%	2.1%	6.7%	2.6%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

NOTES:

1. The qualifying benefits are: Income Support; income-related Employment and Support Allowance; income-based Jobseeker's Allowance; Pension Credit.
2. Applicant group definitions are in Annex 13.
3. Figures and percentages may not sum due to rounding.

BUDGETING LOANS

**INITIAL AWARDS BY FAMILY COMPOSITION 2016/17
(INCLUDING COMPARISON WITH 2015/16)**

	No. of Awards	Gross Expenditure £m	Average Award £	% of Total Number of Awards		% of Total Gross Expenditure	
				2015/16	2016/17	2015/16	2016/17
Single person, no children	81,510	24,332,959	298.53	55.7	55.8	41.8	43.5
Couple, no children	7,220	3,285,560	455.06	5.0	4.9	5.9	5.9
Single person or couple with children	57,419	28,285,147	492.61	39.3	39.3	52.2	50.6

Notes:

1. This table does not include awards and gross expenditure on review.
2. This table does not include awards for which no partner flag was recorded. In 2016/17 this accounts for less than 1% of the total number of initial awards (966 cases).
3. Figures and percentages may not sum due to rounding.
4. These figures were obtained from scans of the Social Fund Computer System.

BUDGETING LOANS

REASONS FOR INITIAL REFUSAL BY APPLICANT GROUP

Counts

	Pensioners	Disabled	Lone Parents	Unemployed	Others	Total
Outstanding Social Fund debt	2	80	41	64	50	237
Not in receipt of a qualifying benefit	0	1,006	113	1,061	1,049	3,229
Not in receipt of a qualifying benefit for 26 weeks	149	1,129	899	2,679	892	5,748
Other	277	3,542	1,019	3,362	2,256	10,456
Total	428	5,757	2,072	7,166	4,247	19,670

Percentages

	Pensioners	Disabled	Lone Parents	Unemployed	Others	Total
Outstanding Social Fund debt	0.5%	1.4%	2.0%	0.9%	1.2%	1.2%
Not in receipt of a qualifying benefit	0.0%	17.5%	5.5%	14.8%	24.7%	16.4%
Not in receipt of a qualifying benefit for 26 weeks	34.8%	19.6%	43.4%	37.4%	21.0%	29.2%
Other	64.7%	61.5%	49.2%	46.9%	53.1%	53.2%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

NOTES:

1. The qualifying benefits are: Income Support; income-related Employment and Support Allowance income-based Jobseeker's Allowance; Pension Credit.
2. Figures and percentages may not sum due to rounding.

CRISIS LOANS- GROSS EXPENDITURE BY APPLICATION PURPOSE

Purpose	Amount £	% of Total Amount
Items or services	4,395,033	64.8
Rent in advance	355,687	5.2
Living expenses (general)	1,438,797	21.2
Living expenses (alignment)⁽²⁾	594,438	8.8

NOTES:

1. This table includes awards on review.
2. An alignment payment is to cover living expenses up to the first payment of benefit or wages.
3. Figures and percentages may not sum due to rounding.

CRISIS LOANS
REASONS FOR INITIAL REFUSAL BY APPLICANT GROUP

Counts

	Pensioners	Unemployed	Disabled	Lone Parents	Others	Total
No serious risk to health & safety	72	1,474	1,698	670	628	4,542
Help available from another source	3	20	18	9	8	58
Excluded items	8	131	132	50	37	358
Inability to repay	0	17	9	0	10	36
Suitable alternative	0	5	1	5	21	32
Enough money to pay for crisis	0	2	2	1	2	7
Previous application and decision	3	198	206	64	76	547
Insufficient priority	0	9	1	1	0	11
Benefit sanction/disallowance	0	222	2	7	27	258
Other	64	3,687	3,303	1,469	982	9,505
Total	150	5,765	5,372	2,276	1,791	15,354

Percentages

	Pensioners	Unemployed	Disabled	Lone Parents	Others	Total
No serious risk to health & safety	48.0%	25.6%	31.6%	29.4%	35.1%	29.6%
Help available from another source	2.0%	0.3%	0.3%	0.4%	0.4%	0.4%
Excluded items	5.3%	2.3%	2.5%	2.2%	2.1%	2.3%
Inability to repay	0.0%	0.3%	0.2%	0.0%	0.6%	0.2%
Suitable alternative	0.0%	0.1%	0.0%	0.2%	1.2%	0.2%
Enough money to pay for crisis	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Previous application and decision	2.0%	3.4%	3.8%	2.8%	4.2%	3.6%
Insufficient priority	0.0%	0.2%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.1%
Benefit sanction/disallowance	0.0%	3.9%	0.0%	0.3%	1.5%	1.7%
Other	42.7%	64.0%	61.5%	64.5%	54.8%	61.9%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

NOTES:

1. Applicant group definitions are in Annex 13.
2. Figures and percentages may not sum due to rounding.
3. The 'Other' reasons category includes initial refusals where Direction 14c has not been satisfied.

LOAN RECOVERY

AVERAGE WEEKLY REPAYMENT DEDUCTIONS FROM INCOME SUPPORT,
JOBSEEKER'S ALLOWANCE AND PENSION CREDIT

		Feb 2016	May 2016	Aug 2016	Nov 2016
Average deduction	IS	£18.93	£18.91	£18.44	£18.60
	JSA	£10.48	£10.33	£10.48	£10.71
	PC	£18.26	£16.92	£18.52	£18.23
Number of deductions	IS	22,380	20,740	21,660	20,780
	JSA	13,740	12,925	12,025	10,960
	PC	5,020	4,560	4,280	4,400

NOTES:

1. Data from Income Support, Jobseeker's Allowance and Pension Credit Quarterly Statistical Enquiries.

REPAYMENT SOURCE 2016/17

	Crisis Loans		Budgeting Loans	
	Amount £	% of Total Amount	Amount £	% of Total Amount
Income Support & Pension Credit	2,822,012	24.0%	23,135,606	41.7%
Jobseeker's Allowance	3,193,587	27.2%	7,172,326	12.9%
Employment and Support Allowance	4,744,398	40.4%	21,410,098	38.6%
Incapacity Benefit	34	0.0%	150	0.0%
Other benefits	366,055	3.1%	1,947,441	3.5%
Cash	623,404	5.3%	1,799,708	3.2%

NOTES:

1. Social Fund loans are recoverable from most Social Security benefits.
2. Figures and percentages may not sum due to rounding.

SUMMARY OF SOCIAL FUND REVIEW APPLICATIONS

First Reviews	CCG	BL	CL	Total
Number of applications for first review	5,274	664	1,134	7,072
Number of decisions revised at first review	2,654	236	260	3,150
Percentage	50.3%	35.5%	22.9%	44.5%

NOTES:

1. The number of reviewing officer decisions reviewed excludes applications for Social Fund Inspector review that were outside the Inspector's jurisdiction or withdrawn.
2. Percentages have been calculated using non-rounded figures.
3. Totals may not sum due to rounding.

SUMMARY OF OFFICE OF SOCIAL FUND PART YEAR STATISTICS

From April to Dec 16

- Social Fund Inspectors (SFIs) delivered 1366 decisions.
- Inspectors changed 24.7 % of Community Care Grant decisions and made 195 awards resulting in a spend of £102,193.28 from the CCG budget.
- Inspectors changed 9.2% of Crisis Loan decisions and made 51 awards resulting in a spend of £12,278.89 from the loans budget.
- Inspectors upheld 100% of Budgeting Loan (BL) decisions.
- OSFC provided feedback to the Department about the findings in each of the cases which an Inspector reviewed.
- OSFC provided quarterly Statistics Reports on decision making in each of the Department's Social Fund district areas.

From April to Dec 16, 18% of the decisions reviewed by Inspectors were substituted, resulting in:

- 195 Community Care Grant awards at an average of £524.07 per award;
- 51 Crisis Loan awards at an average of £240.76 per award

2016/17 Appeals

Appeals

Type of Payment	Number of appeals	Number heard and decided at hearing	Number decided in appellant's favour	Percentage decided in appellant's favour
Funeral Payments	69	70	10	14.29%
Sure Start Maternity Grants	16	21	1	4.76%

SOURCE: Figures are provided by the Appeals Service NI.

- NOTES:

1. The number of appeals is the number received by the Appeals Service NI.
2. Percentages have been calculated using non-rounded figures.
3. 'Number of appeals heard and decided at hearing' may not necessarily have been received in the same financial period.

Client Groups

Social Fund payments are wide ranging from payments to help with intermittent unexpected expenses (mainly to those in receipt of qualifying benefits), to payments aimed at certain groups to help with particular events. The fund does not therefore fall exclusively into any one of the Departmental client groups of **Children**, **Working Age** and **Older People**, although Social Fund payments are either paid to, or benefit, all of these groups. Some statistics in this report are shown by applicant or claimant groups that fall into one or more of the wider client groups.

APPLICANT OR CLAIMANT GROUP DEFINITIONS

PENSIONERS

Includes:

- applicant or partner at minimum state pension age or over with Pension Credit
- applicant or partner at minimum state pension age or over in receipt of state retirement pension

Includes also where applicant is under minimum state pension age and partner is:

- minimum state pension age or over with Income Support (IS) pensioner premium
 - 80 or over with IS higher pensioner premium
 - minimum state pension age to 79, disabled with IS higher pensioner premium
-

UNEMPLOYED

Includes:

- unemployed or with training allowance
-

DISABLED

Includes:

- in receipt of Employment and Support Allowance
 - applicant or partner aged under minimum state pension age with IS disability premium
 - lone parent with IS disability premium
 - family with IS disability premium
 - others with IS disability premium
 - in receipt of other benefit for incapacity or disablement
-

LONE PARENT

Includes:

- person who has no partner and is receiving Income Support because they are responsible for a child
-

OTHERS

Includes:

- involved in a trade dispute
- in paid employment
- not known or unallocated

NOTE: It is possible that an applicant who is unemployed may receive a disability or pensioner premium. Such an applicant would be counted as unemployed.