



Department for
Communities

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Annual Report on the Social Fund 2023/24

April 2026



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Preface

The Social Fund continues to play an important role in supporting individuals and families on low incomes with essential costs at key points in their lives.

It is a regulated scheme made up of Sure Start Maternity Grants, Funeral Expenses Payments, Child Funeral Fund Payments, Cold Weather Payments and Winter Fuel Payments, and a discretionary scheme of Budgeting Loans.



These payments provide vital financial support for people in need by helping people and families on low incomes with certain one-off or occasional expenses as well as providing a source of affordable credit for the financially excluded.

In 2023/24, the Social Fund continued to help people on low incomes through both the regulated and discretionary schemes.

51,027 Budgeting Loans were awarded totalling £27.654 million.

A total of 1,946 Sure Start Maternity Grants were awarded, totalling £0.988 million to families to help meet the costs associated with a new baby.

Awards amounting to £3.284 million were granted under the Funeral Expenses Payment scheme.

Awards amounting to £0.480 million were granted under the Child Funeral Fund scheme, which was introduced on 1 June 2022 and is not a means-tested payment.

In addition, the Fund also helped with fuel costs, with Winter Fuel Payments contributing to heating costs to 307,746 pensioners totalling £125.328 million.

Awards amounting to £0.664 million were made under the Cold Weather Payments scheme.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Gordon Lyons'.

Gordon Lyons MLA
Minister for Communities

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This is the thirty sixth 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 There are two categories of Social Fund: the regulated scheme made up of Maternity Grants, Funeral Expenses Payments, Child Funeral Fund Payments, Cold Weather Payments, and Winter Fuel Payments; and the discretionary scheme comprised of Budgeting Loans that are intended to respond flexibly to meet exceptional and intermittent needs.

Source of data for this report

- 1.3 The figures in this report, unless stated otherwise, are taken from the Department's 2023/24 Social Fund Account¹, the Department's Social Fund Policy, Budget and Management Information System (PBMIS) and from scans of the Social Fund Computer System. Together these data sources record details of every individual application, subsequent payment decision and any outstanding repayment record and 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 volume figures for grants/loans awarded 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 a statutory requirement to produce a Social Fund White Paper Account. Current arrangements are that this is laid before the Northern Ireland Assembly separately.

2. The Regulated Social Fund

Sure Start Maternity Grant

2.1 The Sure Start Maternity Grant (SSMG) 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 2023/24 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) and Universal Credit. It is also possible to qualify if in receipt of a Support for Mortgage Interest Loan.

2.2 Sure Start Maternity Grants are also available for the additional children of subsequent multiple births. This recognises that help is needed with the costs for all but one of the additional children of a subsequent multiple birth. An example would be where the birth of twins follows a previous single birth, a SSMG can now be paid to help with costs of the additional child. In some instances, other children can be disregarded if the claimant has a formal or informal caring arrangement for them before the birth of their first child.

2.3 In 2023/24, 1,946 awards were made worth £0.988 million.

2.4 Sure Start Maternity Grant statistics are in Annexes 1, 2 and 8.

Funeral Expenses Payment

2.5 The Funeral Expenses Payment (FEP) 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 2023/24 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. Any payments made by the Department for Communities towards funeral costs are recoverable from the estate of the deceased if there are sufficient funds.

2.6 In 2023/24, 2,246 awards were made worth £3.284 million.

2.7 The Bereavement Service has continued to provide a means of claiming a Funeral Expenses Payment by telephone for people in receipt of income-related benefits, reporting the death of a relative or friend. Funeral Expenses Payment claims may also be made by completing and submitting the written Funeral Expenses Payment claim form.

2.8 Funeral Expenses Payment statistics are in Annexes 1, 2 and 8.

Child Funeral Fund

2.9 The Child Funeral Fund (CFF) was a new scheme introduced in Northern Ireland on 1 June 2022. The CFF provides a one-off lump sum payment of £3,056 to cover the expense of a funeral after the death of a child under the age of 18, or stillborn after the 24th week of pregnancy. The payments are tax free and do not affect entitlement to social security benefits. The CFF is available regardless of the income of the claimant but is dependent on certain criteria. A review of the Child Funeral Fund was undertaken in 2023, and a report was published on 9 August 2023. The review report covered the period from 1 June 2022 to 31 March 2023 and set out statistics about the number claims and the cost of the scheme, as well as recommendations. However, overall, the Department concluded that the fund was working as intended with the original policy and that no major changes were required.

2.10 The CFF claimant must have accepted responsibility for the funeral costs. The child must not have reached their 18th Birthday at the time of their death or must have been stillborn after the 24th week of pregnancy. The funeral must have taken place in Northern Ireland on or after 1 June 2022. The claim must be made within 6 months of the funeral. The £3,056 payment can be made to the responsible person, to the funeral director, or split between the two.

2.11 In 2023/24, 156 awards were made. £395,778 was paid directly to claimants, and the remaining £84,014 was paid to funeral directors.

2.12 Child Funeral Fund statistics are in Annexes 1 and 5.

Cold Weather Payment

2.13 A Cold Weather Payment provides 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.

2.14 In 2023/24, eligible recipients of a Cold Weather Payment were:

Table 1 – Qualifying Conditions for a Cold Weather Payment

Benefit in Payment	Qualifying Conditions for a Cold Weather Payment
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 a 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.
Universal Credit Qualifying conditions	<p>Entitled to a CWP under Universal Credit if they are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • not employed or self-employed; AND • they, or their partner, receive a limited capability for work element (with or without a work-related activity element); or • they receive the disabled child element within their assessment; or • have a child under 5 years. <p>Universal Credit recipients who are employed or self-employed will only be eligible for CWPs if they have a disabled child or eligible young person in the family.</p>

2.15 In 2023/24, there were 26,397 Cold Weather Payment awards totalling £0.664 million², as the weather conditions for payment of these were met.

2.16 Cold Weather Payment statistics are in Annex 1.

Winter Fuel Payment

2.17 Winter Fuel Payments help older people to meet heating costs. They are tax free and do not affect entitlement to social security benefits.

2.18 In total 307,746 people benefited from a Winter Fuel Payment in 2023/24. The total spent in 2023/24 on Winter Fuel Payments was £125.328 million.

² A CWP is £25, and the total 2023/24 expenditure for CWP is £0.664m. The total expenditure for the year reflects manual and returned payment adjustments and may not therefore equate totally to the number of CWP claimants stated.

2.19 Households with someone who had reached State Pension age for women and aged up to 79 received between £250 and £500, households with someone aged 80 or over received between £300 and £600. It should be noted that in response to the rising cost of living, the WFP amount was temporarily increased for Winter 2023/24.

2.20 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. People do not receive a payment if during the qualifying week they:

- were in prison
- were in hospital receiving free treatment for more than 52 weeks
- needed permission to enter the UK and do not qualify for help from the Department
- have been living in a care home for the previous twelve weeks or more and receive Pension Credit, income related Jobseeker's Allowance or income-related Employment and Support Allowance.

2.21 The qualifying age for Winter Fuel Payments for men and women is increasing in line with the overall increase in State Pension Age.

2.22 Winter Fuel Payments are paid to people residing in most European Economic Area countries or Switzerland if they have a genuine and sufficient link with the UK. The qualifying week for winter 2023/24 payments was the week beginning 18 September 2023.

2.23 The countries where Winter Fuel Payments are no longer payable are Cyprus, Greece, France, Gibraltar, Malta, Portugal, and Spain.

2.24 The majority of payments were made automatically before Christmas 2023 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.

2.25 The Department for Work and Pensions administers and manages Winter Fuel Payments in relation to eligible customers in Northern Ireland.

3. The Discretionary Social Fund

Budgeting Loans

- 3.1 Budgeting Loans are interest free loans which are repayable from benefit awards. 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 for. The qualifying benefits are Income Support; income-related Employment and Support Allowance; income-based Jobseeker's Allowance; and Pension Credit.
- 3.2 In 2023/24, a total of 51,027 awards were made, worth £27.654 million.
- 3.3 There is a single Budgeting Loans allocation, which is controlled and managed centrally 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.
- 3.4 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. A Budgeting Advance is not an award from the Social Fund).
- 3.5 Claimants that migrate from Universal Credit to Pension Credit will once again qualify for a Budgeting Loan.
- 3.6 Budgeting Loan statistics are in Annexes 1, 3, 4, 6 and 7.

4. General Administration

- 4.1 In 2023/24, Budgeting Loans, Budgeting Loan Reviews and Sure Start Maternity Grants were delivered by the centralised Social Fund Team in Lisburn Jobs and Benefits Office. Funeral Expenses Payments and Child Funeral Fund Payments are delivered by the Department for Communities' Bereavement Service.
- 4.2 The normal method of applying for Funeral Expenses Payments, Child Funeral Fund, Sure Start Maternity Grants and Budgeting Loans is in writing (the appropriate application forms can be downloaded or requested by post). Budgeting Loan applications are now supported with an online application facility available on the Nldirect website. The Bereavement Service, however, takes Funeral Expenses Payment and Child Funeral Fund claims over the telephone when a potential Funeral Expenses Payment or Child Funeral Fund recipient prefers this to making a written claim.

Reviews

- 4.3 A regulated Social Fund applicant who is dissatisfied with the initial decision on their application may apply to have the decision reviewed under a mandatory reconsideration within 14 days of the original decision. Applicants who remain dissatisfied can appeal the decision.
- 4.4 A Reviewing Officer within the Department for Communities carries out the first review and the outcome is notified to the applicant. In 2023/24, 146 applications (does not include Funeral Expenses Payments) for first review were dealt with.
- 4.5 Applicants who remained dissatisfied were able to ask for a further review by the Independent Case Examiner (ICE).

Clearance standards

- 4.6 Clearance times for the operational delivery of the Social Fund are monitored against a comprehensive set of clearance standards. The table below shows clearance against: The Average Actual Clearance Times (AACT) standard (column 2).

Table 2 – Clearance Standards

Average Actual Clearance Times (AACT) (working days)	AACT Standard	Achieved in 2023/24
Budgeting Loans	10	3.2
Local Review of above loans	5	1.8
Funeral Expenses Payments	20	10.82
Child Funeral Fund	20	15.09
Sure Start Maternity Grants	5	4.3

Data sourced from the Social Fund Computer System (SFCS). The AACT achieved figures have been rounded.

5. Financial Management

Background

- 5.1 Payments from the regulated Social Fund are entitlement based, and regulations prescribe the circumstances and amounts that are payable.
- 5.2 Cash-limited budgets are allocated for the Budgeting Loans, Funeral Expenses Payments, and Sure Start Maternity Grants.

Recoveries

- 5.3 The Department for Communities' Debt Management manages the recovery of Social Fund loans from most people who are no longer in receipt of a legacy benefit.
- 5.4 In 2023/24 Debt Management registered 26,395 Social Fund loan referrals.

2023/24 Discretionary Social Fund budget

- 5.5 £34.163 million (£33.166 million from Budgeting Loans, £0.997³ million from Crisis Loans) was recovered through the repayment of loans.

2023/24 Regulated Social Fund budget

- 5.6 £0.180 million of Funeral Expenses Payments were recovered from estates.
- 5.7 Details of recoveries are given in Annex 1 and 6.

³ The recovery figure for Crisis Loans is taken from the Department's Central Payment System (CPS).

6. Summary of Financial Performance

6.1 In 2023/24 the Social Fund provided payments of just over £28.642 million (£27.654 million Budgeting Loans & £0.988 million Sure Start Maternity Grants), with an additional £125.328 million of Winter Fuel Payments paid to 307,746 people who had reached state pension age. In addition, the Social Fund provided payments of £3.284 million for Funeral Expenses Payments, £0.664 million for Cold Weather Payments and £0.480 million for Child Funeral Fund payments in the 2023/24 year.

6.2 Gross expenditure on Budgeting Loans was £27.654 million.

6.3 Overall during 2023/24, the Discretionary Social Fund provided help in the form of 51,027 awards. (See Annex 1)

2023/24 Discretionary Social Fund budget

6.4 Budgeting Loans budget allocated for 2023/24 was £31.160 million.

6.5 Loan recoveries during the year were £33.166 million against a forecast recovery of £34.375 million. Recoveries provided 100% of the funds needed to meet gross expenditure.

7. Index to Annexes

General

1. Northern Ireland Social Fund Summary Statistics. Unless otherwise stated the figures in the Annexes are taken from the Department's Social Fund Policy, Budget and Management Information System (PB MIS) and from scans of the Social Fund Computer System

The Regulated Social Fund

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

The Discretionary Social Fund

3. Budgeting Loans: gross expenditure by Applicant Group
4. Budgeting Loans: reasons for initial refusal by Applicant Group
5. Child Funeral Fund Disallowances
6. Budgeting Loans Recovery and Repayment Source
7. Summary of Budgeting Loans Review applications

Social Fund Appeals

8. Summary of Social Fund Appeals

Client Groups and Applicant Groups

9. Client Groups and Applicant Group definitions

ANNEX 1

NORTHERN IRELAND SOCIAL FUND SUMMARY STATISTICS 2023/24

	REGULATED SOCIAL FUND				DISCRETIONARY SOCIAL FUND	
	SSMG	CWP	FEP	CFF	BL	CL
Applications received	3218	-	2783	156	52,848	-
Initial decisions	3218	-	2780	161	53,062	-
Awards	1946	26,397	2246	156	51,027	-
Awards as % of initial decisions	60.5%	-	80.8%	96.27%	96.1%	-
Initial refusals	1320	-	556	6	1583	-
Gross expenditure £m	£0.988	£0.664	£3.284	£0.480	£27.654	-
Recoveries £m	-	-	£0.180	-	£33.166	£0.997
Net expenditure £m	£0.988	£0.664	£3.104	£0.480	£-5.512	£-0.997
Average award £	£507.71	£25.00	£1462.16	£3,056.00	£541.95	-

KEY:

SSMG = Sure Start Maternity Grant, CWP = Cold Weather Payment, FEP = Funeral Expenses Payment
CFF = Child Funeral Fund, BL = Budgeting Loan, CL – Crisis Loan, N/A = Not Applicable

NOTES:

- SSMG, CWP, FEP CFF and BL figures for Gross Expenditure and Recoveries are taken from the DfC Social Fund Account 2023/24. Remaining SSMG, FEP and BL data is sourced from the Policy, Budget and Management Information System.
- The figure for recoveries for Crisis Loans is taken from the Central Payment System (CPS).
- Average SSMG award reflects multiple births.
- There is no requirement to claim Cold Weather Payments.
- The number of discretionary awards made after review is not included in the table. The draft gross expenditure figure does include awards made after review, reconsideration or appeal processed in the 2023/24 financial year.
- For the regulated Social Fund, the method of calculating average awards is to divide draft gross expenditure by the number of awards (including those made after reconsideration or appeal).
- For the discretionary Social Fund, the method of calculating average awards is to divide initial draft gross expenditure by the number of initial awards (excluding the value of review awards).
- 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.
- Figures and percentages may not sum due to rounding.

ANNEX 2

SURE START MATERNITY GRANTS AND FUNERAL EXPENSES PAYMENT AWARDS BY CLAIMANT GROUP

Claimant Group	Sure Start Maternity Grants		Funeral Expenses Payments	
	Awards	% of Total Awards	Awards	% of Total Awards
Pensioners	0	0.00%	701	31.2%
Unemployed	1686	86.6%	0	0.0%
Disabled	6	0.3%	662	29.5%
Lone Parents	2	0.1%	0	0.0%
Employed	2	0.1%	0	0.0%
Others	250	12.8%	883	39.3%
Total	1946	100%	2246	100%

SURE START MATERNITY GRANTS and FUNERAL EXPENSES PAYMENTS - AWARDS BY QUALIFYING BENEFIT OR TAX CREDIT

Qualifying Benefit	Sure Start Maternity Grants		Funeral Expenses 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	1689	86.8%	1973	87.8%
Child Tax Credit (at a rate higher than the family element)/Working Tax Credit (which includes a disability or a severe disability element)	257	13.2%	142	6.3%
Housing Benefit			131	5.8%
Total	1946	100%	2246	100%

NOTES:

1. Claimant group definitions are in Annex 9.
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.

ANNEX 3

BUDGETING LOANS – GROSS EXPENDITURE BY APPLICANT GROUP

Applicant Group	Budgeting Loans	
	Amount £	% of Total Amount
Pensioners	£1,992,817.71	7.2%
Unemployed	£2,833,498.92	10.2%
Disabled	£6,558,191.42	23.6%
Lone Parents	£3,650,207.47	13.1%
Others	£12,765,597.91	45.9%
Total	£27,800,313.43	100%

NOTES:

1. Total Expenditure figures in this table may differ from Annex 1, as data is obtained from the Department's Social Fund Policy Budget and Management Information System (PBMS) rather than the Social Fund Account 2023/24.
2. Applicant group definitions are in Annex 8.
3. Expenditure includes awards made on review, reconsideration or appeal.
4. Figures and percentages may not sum due to rounding.

ANNEX 4

BUDGETING LOANS – REASONS FOR INITIAL REFUSAL BY APPLICANT GROUP

Counts

Type	Pensioners	Disabled	Lone Parents	Unemployed	Others	Total
Outstanding Social Fund debt	0	4	7	2	3	16
Not in receipt of a qualifying benefit	0	85	13	82	718	898
Not in receipt of a qualifying benefit for 26 weeks	49	4	0	2	9	64
Other	34	148	24	74	325	605
Total	83	241	44	160	1055	1583

Percentages

Type	Pensioners	Disabled	Lone Parents	Unemployed	Others	Total
Outstanding Social Fund debt	0.0%	1.7%	15.9%	1.3%	0.3%	1.0%
Not in receipt of a qualifying benefit	0.0%	35.3%	29.5%	51.3%	68.1%	56.7%
Not in receipt of a qualifying benefit for 26 weeks	59.0%	1.7%	0.0%	1.3%	0.9%	4.0%
Other	41.0%	61.4%	54.5%	46.3%	30.8%	38.2%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

NOTES:

1. Claimant group definitions are given in Annex 8.
2. The qualifying benefits are Income Support; income-related Employment and Support Allowance income-based Jobseeker's Allowance; Pension Credit.
3. Figures and percentages may not sum due to rounding.

ANNEX 5

CHILD FUNERAL FUND – DISALLOWANCES

Disallowance Reason	Figures
Death could not be verified	1
Hospital paid for Cremation	2
Funeral outside Northern Ireland	1
Late Claim	1
Withdrawals	1
Total	6

NOTES:

- 1 application was disallowed as death could not be verified.
- 2 applications were disallowed as the applicant had not accepted responsibility for the funeral expenses as it was a hospital cremation & hospital paid for it. No Funeral Director had been appointed.
- 1 application disallowed as the funeral service or ceremony did not take place in Northern Ireland. Funeral service was in Cavan.
- 1 claim was disallowed as it was outside the six-month time limit for applying.
- 1 application was withdrawn as applicant's wife had already made a claim.

ANNEX 6

BUDGETING LOAN RECOVERY – AVERAGE WEEKLY REPAYMENT DEDUCTIONS FROM INCOME SUPPORT, JOBSEEKER’S ALLOWANCE AND PENSION CREDIT

		Feb 2023	May 2023	Aug 2023	Nov 2023
Average deduction	IS	£13.35	*	*	*
	JSA	£12.49	£12.28	£12.77	£13.06
	PC	*	*	*	*
Number of deductions	IS	560	*	*	*
	JSA	1805	1650	1570	1395
	PC	*	*	*	*

NOTES:

1. Data from Income Support, Jobseeker’s Allowance and Pension Credit Quarterly Statistical Enquiries.
2. UC recovery data for Budgeting Loans is not available for inclusion in the 2023/24 report.
3. * Indicates that the sample size is too small to report estimates.

REPAYMENT SOURCE 2023/24

	Budgeting Loans	
	Amount £	% of Total Amount
Income Support & Pension Credit	£9,168,742.07	31.3%
Jobseeker's Allowance	£2,584,099.18	8.8%
Employment and Support Allowance	£16,553,944.21	56.5%
Incapacity Benefit	£0.00	0%
Other benefits	£733,846.77	2.5%
Cash	£271,250.48	0.9%
TOTAL	£29,311,882.71	100%

NOTES:

1. The total repayments in this table may differ from Annex 1, as data is obtained from the Department's Social Fund Policy Budget and Management Information System (PBMIS) rather than the Social Fund Account 2023/24.
2. Social Fund loans are recoverable from most Social Security benefits.
3. Figures and percentages may not sum due to rounding.
4. UC recovery data for Budgeting Loans is not available for inclusion in the 2023/24 report.

ANNEX 7

SUMMARY OF BUDGETING LOAN REVIEW APPLICATIONS

First Reviews	Budgeting Loans
Number of applications for first review	3
Number of decisions revised at first review	2
Percentage of applications revised at first review	66.67%

NOTES:

1. The number of reviewing officer decisions reviewed excludes applications for Social Fund Commissioner 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.

ANNEX 8

SUMMARY OF SOCIAL FUND APPEALS

Type of Payment	Number of appeals	Number heard and decided at hearing	Number decided in appellant's favour
Funeral Expenses Payment	13	12	2
Sure Start Maternity Grant	5	4	0

* Additional information provided by TAS – there were 2 FEPs and 0 SSMGs superseded by the Department in 23-24

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. Number of appeals heard and decided at hearing' may not necessarily have been received in the same financial period.

ANNEX 9

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 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 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 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.

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