

Under Freedom of Information I'm seeking any policy documents, guidelines or regulations that would explain how benefits/social assistance is to be paid in the event that a claimant is homeless or becomes homeless.

I would also request any guidance on if this differs for calculating habitual residence for non-nationals in cases of homelessness.

I would prefer this information in electronic format if possible.

Information Management Branch  
DfC  
9 Lanyon Place  
Belfast  
BT1 3LP  
Phone:  
email: [FOI@communities-ni.gov.uk](mailto:FOI@communities-ni.gov.uk)

FOI Ref No: DFC/2023-0173

Dear

15<sup>th</sup> September 2023

## **Freedom of Information Act 2000**

I wish to confirm that the Department has now completed its search for the information which you requested on 18<sup>th</sup> August 2023.

A copy of the information held that is not publicly available is enclosed in the format you requested at **Annex B**.

All legislation relating to social security can be found in the public domain on the Department's website at: <https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/services/law-relating-social-security-northern-ireland-blue-volumes>

The Department's decision making guidance on social security can also be found on the Department's website at: <https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/articles/decision-makers-guide>.

There is no specific Habitual Residence Test guidance for people are or become homeless and there are no references to homeless or homelessness in the Department's Habitual Residence Test Guidance.

The Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE) administer Housing Benefit in Northern Ireland. As the NIHE is not part of the Department, you may wish to approach them directly for information relating to that benefit. You can submit a request under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 to NIHE by email to [foi@nihe.gov.uk](mailto:foi@nihe.gov.uk) , or by post to:

Freedom of Information  
Information Governance  
Planning Performance Risk & Governance  
Housing Executive  
Housing Centre  
2 Adelaide Street  
Belfast  
BT2 8PB

If you are dissatisfied with this response and wish to request a review of our decision or make a complaint about how your request has been handled, you may ask for an internal review within two calendar months of the date of this letter. You should write to the Information Access Manager, Department for Communities, Level 5, Nine Lanyon Place, BELFAST, BT1 3LP, or send an email to [foi@communities-ni.gov.uk](mailto:foi@communities-ni.gov.uk).

If you are not content with the outcome of the internal review, you have the right to apply directly to the Information Commissioner for a review of our original decision.

The Information Commissioner can be contacted at:

Information Commissioner's Office  
Wycliffe House  
Water Lane  
Wilmslow  
Cheshire  
SK9 5AF

If you have any queries about this letter, please contact me. Please remember to quote the reference number above in any future communications.

Yours sincerely

**Information Management Branch**

**FOIA 2000 - SCHEDULE OF RECORDS TEMPLATE**

| <b><u>No.</u></b> | <b><u>Details of Document</u></b>   | <b><u>All information released</u></b> | <b><u>Exemption used (if any)</u></b> | <b><u>Reason for application of Exemption</u></b> |
|-------------------|---|--|---------------------------------------|---|
| 1                 | Information that explains how benefits/social assistance is to be paid in the event that a claimant is homeless or becomes homeless | Yes – see Annex B                      | Not applicable.                       | Not applicable.                                   |

## **Annex B**

A person may make a claim for benefits regardless of their housing situation providing they meet the conditions of entitlement. Homeless customers without an alternative address may use a Jobs and Benefit office as their correspondence address. Customers without a bank account are paid by the New Payment Exception Service (nPES) by card or code via text or email which enables withdrawal of benefit at specified paypoints.