



# Social Security Contributions and Benefits (Northern Ireland) Act 1992

## 1992 CHAPTER 7

### PART VIII

#### THE SOCIAL FUND

#### 134 Payments out of the social fund.

- [<sup>F1</sup>(1) There may be made out of the social fund, in accordance with this Part of this Act—
- (a) payments of prescribed amounts, whether in respect of prescribed items or otherwise, to meet, in prescribed circumstances, maternity expenses and funeral expenses; and
  - (b) payments by way of community care grant, crisis loan or budgeting loan [<sup>F2</sup>to meet—
    - (i) other needs, and
    - (ii) in the case of payments by way of budgeting loan, those needs for which provision is made by paragraph (a),]in accordance with directions given or guidance issued by the Department.]
- (2) Payments may also be made out of that fund, in accordance with this Part of this Act, of a prescribed amount or a number of prescribed amounts to prescribed descriptions of persons, in prescribed circumstances to meet expenses for heating which appear to the Department to have been or to be likely to be incurred in cold weather.
- (3) The power to make a payment out of the social fund such as is mentioned in subsection (1)(b) above may be exercised by making a payment to a third party with a view to the third party providing, or arranging for the provision of, goods or services for the applicant.
- (4) In this section “prescribed” means specified in or determined in accordance with regulations.
- [<sup>F3</sup>(5) In this Part—

*Status: Point in time view as at 17/02/2016.*

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“budgeting loan” means a loan awarded in circumstances specified in directions issued by the Department for the purpose of defraying an intermittent expense;  
“community care grant” means a grant awarded in circumstances so specified for the purpose of meeting a need for community care;  
“crisis loan” means a loan awarded in circumstances so specified for the purpose of meeting an immediate short term need,  
and any reference in this subsection to meeting a need or defraying an expense includes a reference to helping to meet the need or to defray the expense.]

#### Textual Amendments

- F1** S. 134(1) substituted (5.4.1999) by S.I. 1998/1506 (N.I. 10), **art. 66(1)**; S.R. 1999/168, **art. 2(a)**  
**F2** Words in s. 134(1)(b) substituted (17.2.2016) by The Welfare Reform (Northern Ireland) Order 2015 (S.I. 2015/2006), **arts. 2(2), 77**; S.R. 2016/46, **art. 3(3)**  
**F3** S. 134(5) added (5.4.1999) by S.I. 1998/1506 (N.I. 10), **art. 66(2)**; S.R. 1999/168, **art. 2(a)**

### 135 Awards by social fund officers.

- [<sup>F4</sup>(1) Whether a payment mentioned in section 134(1)(b) above is to be awarded, and how much it is to be, shall be determined by an appropriate officer, that is to say, an officer of the Department who, acting under its authority, is exercising functions of the Department in relation to payments so mentioned.]
- (2) [<sup>F5</sup>An appropriate officer] may determine that an award shall be payable in specified instalments at specified times.
- <sup>F6</sup>(3) .....
- (4) An award [<sup>F7</sup>of a crisis loan or a budgeting loan] shall be repayable upon such terms and conditions as before the award is paid the Department notifies to the person by or on behalf of whom the application for it was made.
- (5) Payment of an award shall be made to the applicant unless [<sup>F8</sup>the appropriate officer] determines otherwise.

#### Textual Amendments

- F4** S. 135(1) substituted (29.11.1999) by S.I. 1998/1506 (N.I. 10), **art. 78(1)**, **Sch. 6 para. 53(1)**; S.R. 1999/472, **art. 2(1)(a)**, **Sch. 1**  
**F5** Words in s. 135(2) substituted (29.11.1999) by S.I. 1998/1506 (N.I. 10), **art. 78(1)**, **Sch. 6 para. 53(2)**; S.R. 1999/472, **art. 2(1)(a)**, **Sch. 1**  
**F6** S. 135(3) repealed (5.4.1999) by S.I. 1998/1506 (N.I. 10), **art. 78(1)(2)**, **Sch. 6 para. 53(3)**, **Sch. 7**; S.R. 1999/168, **art. 2(b)**  
**F7** Words in s. 135(4) substituted (5.4.1999) by S.I. 1998/1506 (N.I. 10), **art. 78(1)**, **Sch. 6 para. 53(4)**; S.R. 1999/168, **art. 2(b)**  
**F8** Words in s. 135(5) substituted (29.11.1999) by S.I. 1998/1506 (N.I. 10), **art. 78(1)**, **Sch. 6 para. 53(5)**; S.R. 1999/472, **art. 2(1)(a)**, **Sch. 1**

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### 136 Principles of determination.

- (1) In determining whether to make an award [<sup>F9</sup>of a community care grant or a crisis loan] to the applicant or the amount or value to be awarded [<sup>F10</sup>an appropriate officer] shall have regard, subject to subsection (2) below, to all the circumstances of the case and, in particular—
  - (a) the nature, extent and urgency of the need;
  - (b) the existence of resources from which the need may be met;
  - (c) the possibility that some other person or body may wholly or partly meet it;
  - (d) where the payment is repayable, the likelihood of repayment and the time within which repayment is likely;
  - (e) any relevant allocation under section 147(1) to (4) of the Administration Act.
- [<sup>F11</sup>(1A) Subject to subsection (2) below, in determining whether to make an award of a budgeting loan to the applicant, or the amount or value to be awarded, an appropriate officer shall have regard to—
  - (a) such of the applicant’s personal circumstances as are of a description specified in directions issued by the Department; and
  - (b) the criteria specified in paragraphs [<sup>F12</sup>(b), (d) and (e)] of subsection (1) above,  
<sup>F13</sup> ... ]
- (2) [<sup>F14</sup>An appropriate officer] shall determine any question in accordance with any general directions issued by the Department and in determining any question shall take account of any general guidance issued by the Department.
- [<sup>F15</sup>(3) Without prejudice to the generality of subsection (2) above, the Department may issue directions under that subsection for the purpose of securing that allocations under section 147 of the Administration Act are not exceeded.]
- (4) Without prejudice to the generality of subsection (2) above, the power to issue general directions conferred on the Department by that subsection includes power to direct—
  - (a) that in circumstances specified in the direction [<sup>F16</sup>an appropriate officer] shall not determine an application and, without prejudice to the generality of this paragraph, that [<sup>F16</sup>an appropriate officer] shall not determine an application which is made before the end of a specified period after the making of an application by the same person for a payment such as is mentioned in section 134(1)(b) above to meet the same need and without there having been any relevant change of circumstances since the previous application;
  - [<sup>F17</sup>(aa) that in circumstances specified in the direction an application for an award of a community care grant may be treated as an application for an award of a crisis loan, and vice versa;]
  - (b) that for a category of need specified in the direction [<sup>F16</sup>an appropriate officer] shall not award less than an amount specified in the direction;
  - (c) that for a category of need specified in the direction [<sup>F16</sup>an appropriate officer] shall not award more than an amount so specified;
  - (d) that payments to meet a category of need specified in the direction shall in all cases or in no case be made by instalments;
  - [<sup>F18</sup>(da) that the amount or value of a budgeting loan is not to exceed a sum specified or determined as specified in the direction;]
  - [<sup>F19</sup>(e) . . . . .]
  - (f) that a payment such as is mentioned in section 134(1)(b) above shall only be awarded to a person if either—

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- (i) he is in receipt of a benefit which is specified in the direction and the circumstances are such as are so specified; or
- (ii) in a case where the conditions specified in sub-paragraph (i) above are not satisfied, the circumstances are such as are specified in the direction,

and the power to issue general guidance conferred on the Department by that subsection includes power to give [<sup>F20</sup>appropriate officers] guidance as to any matter to which directions under that subsection may relate.

[<sup>F21</sup>(4ZA) A direction under subsection (4)(da) may require the sum to be determined by applying, or by a method that includes applying, a multiplier specified in the direction in circumstances specified in the direction to the most recent relevant sum published by the Department.

(4ZB) A relevant sum is a sum determined from time to time by reference to so much of any relevant allocation under section 147(1) to (4) of the Administration Act as is available for making payments.]

(5) In determining a question [<sup>F22</sup>an appropriate officer] shall take account (subject to any directions or guidance issued by the Department under this section) of any guidance issued by [<sup>F23</sup>the appropriate officer nominated for his area under Article 36 of the Social Security (Northern Ireland) Order 1998].

#### Textual Amendments

- F9** Words in s. 136(1) inserted (5.4.1999) by S.I. 1998/1506 (N.I. 10), **art. 67(1)**; S.R. 1999/168, **art. 2(a)**
- F10** Words in s. 136(1) substituted (29.11.1999) by S.I. 1998/1506 (N.I. 10), **art. 78(1)**, **Sch. 6 para. 54(1)**; S.R. 1999/472, **art. 2(1)(a)**, **Sch. 1**
- F11** S. 136(1A) inserted (5.4.1999) by S.I. 1998/1506 (N.I. 10), **art. 67(2)**; S.R. 1999/168, **art. 2(a)**
- F12** Words in s. 136(1A)(b) substituted (29.6.2007) by Welfare Reform Act (Northern Ireland) 2007 (c. 2), **ss. 50(a)**, **60(2)(a)**
- F13** Words in s. 136(1A) repealed (29.6.2007) by Welfare Reform Act (Northern Ireland) 2007 (c. 2), **ss. 50(b)**, **60(2)(a)**, **Sch. 8**
- F14** Words in s. 136(2) substituted (29.11.1999) by S.I. 1998/1506 (N.I. 10), **art. 78(1)**, **Sch. 6 para. 54(2)**; S.R. 1999/472, **art. 2(1)(a)**, **Sch. 1**
- F15** S. 136(3) substituted (29.6.2007) by Welfare Reform Act (Northern Ireland) 2007 (c. 2), s. 60(2)(c), **Sch. 7 para. 1(3)**
- F16** Words in s. 136(4) substituted (29.11.1999) by S.I. 1998/150 (N.I. 10), **art. 78(1)**, **Sch. 6 para. 54(4)(a)**; S.R. 1999/472, **art. 2(1)(a)**, **Sch. 1**
- F17** S. 136(4)(aa) inserted (5.4.1999) by S.I. 1998/1506 (N.I. 10), **art. 67(1)**; S.R. 1999/168, **art. 2(a)**
- F18** S. 136(4)(da) inserted (17.2.2016) by The Welfare Reform (Northern Ireland) Order 2015 (S.I. 2015/2006), **arts. 2(2)**, **78(2)**; S.R. 2016/46, **art. 3(3)**
- F19** S. 136(4)(e) repealed (5.4.1999) by S.I. 1998/1506 (N.I. 10), **arts. 67(1)**, **78(2)**, **Sch. 7**; S.R. 1999/168, **art. 2(a)(c)**
- F20** Words in s. 136(4) substituted (29.11.1999) by S.I. 1998/1506 (N.I. 10), **art. 78(1)**, **Sch. 6 para. 54(4)(b)**; S.R. 1999/472, **art. 2(1)(a)**, **Sch. 1**
- F21** S. 136(4ZA)(4ZB) inserted (17.2.2016) by The Welfare Reform (Northern Ireland) Order 2015 (S.I. 2015/2006), **arts. 2(2)**, **78(3)**; S.R. 2016/46, **art. 3(3)**
- F22** Words in s. 136(5) substituted (29.11.1999) by S.I. 1998/1506 (N.I. 10), **art. 78(1)**, **Sch. 6 para. 54(5)(a)**; S.R. 1999/472, **art. 2(1)(a)**, **Sch. 1**
- F23** Words in s. 136(5) substituted (29.11.1999) by S.I. 1998/1506 (N.I. 10), **art. 78(1)**, **Sch. 6 para. 54(5)(b)**; S.R. 1999/472, **art. 2(1)(a)**, **Sch. 1**

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