

**NORTHERN IRELAND SOCIAL SECURITY AGENCY**

**SOCIAL FUND ACCOUNT**

**for the year ended 31 March 2004**

**Prepared pursuant to section 146 (4) of the Social Security**

**Administration (Northern Ireland) Act 1992**

**The Northern Ireland Social Security Agency**  
**Social Fund Account**  
for the year ended 31 March 2004

*Laid before the Houses of Parliament by the Comptroller and Auditor General  
for Northern Ireland in accordance with Paragraph 12(2) and (4) of  
the Schedule to the Northern Ireland Act 2000 and Paragraph  
27 of the Schedule to the Northern Ireland Act 2000 (Prescribed  
Documents) Order 2004*

*4 May 2006*

*Laid before the Northern Ireland Assembly  
Under Section 146(4)  
of the Social Security Administration (Northern Ireland) Act 1992  
by the Comptroller and Auditor General for Northern Ireland*

*4 May 2006*

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## **FOREWORD**

### **Presentation of Account**

1. The Agency presents its Social Fund Account which is prepared in accordance with section 146 (4) of the Social Security Administration (Northern Ireland) Act 1992 and the Department of Finance and Personnel's accounts direction.

### **Statutory Background**

- 2.1 The Social Fund was established in 1987 under Article 33 of the Social Security (Northern Ireland) Order 1986 and continued in being by Section 146 of the Social Security Administration (Northern Ireland) Act 1992. Section 134 (1)(a) of the Social Security Contributions and Benefits (Northern Ireland) Act 1992 provides for maternity and funeral payments in prescribed circumstances. Section 134 (1)(b) of that Act provides for other needs to be met in accordance with directions and guidance issued by the Department for Social Development in respect of loans and community care grants. Section 134 (2) provides for payments in prescribed circumstances to meet extra expenses for heating incurred or likely to be incurred during periods of very cold weather.
- 2.2 The first phase of the Social Fund comprising maternity and funeral payments came into operation on 6 April 1987. The second phase was introduced on 11 April 1988 and replaced all remaining supplementary benefit single payments and some urgent needs payments. Regulations were introduced in November 1988 which provided for payments to be made to certain Income Support customers following a period of cold weather, enhanced by further regulations in November 1991 to include payments when cold weather is forecast. The Winter Fuel Payments scheme was introduced by the Department under Regulations made in exercise of powers conferred by Section 134 (2) of the Social Security Contributions and Benefits (Northern Ireland) Act 1992, which came into operation on 16 January 1998.
- 2.3 Payments from the Fund are split into two broad categories, regulated and discretionary. Regulated payments are maternity expenses, funeral expenses, Cold Weather Payments, and Winter Fuel Payments and are demand led. Discretionary payments comprise Budgeting Loans, Crisis Loans and Community Care Grants and are demand led and cash limited. All payments are made subject to relevant qualifying conditions being met. From October 1996 Jobseeker's Allowance (Income Based), which replaced Income Support payable to the unemployed, became a qualifying benefit for Social Fund payments.

### **Categories of Payments**

- 3.1 Sure Start Maternity Grants - The Sure Start Maternity Grant scheme was introduced on 27 March 2000 to replace the £100 Maternity Payment. It is available to families on Income Support, Jobseeker's Allowance (Income Based), Pension Credit, Child Tax Credit or Working Tax Credit.

The Sure Start Maternity Grant is a payment of £500 to provide help for families with the costs associated with

the expenses of each baby expected, born, adopted or who is the subject of a parental order.

- 3.2 Funeral Payments - The Funeral Payment Scheme provides for a simple, respectful, low-cost funeral to recipients of income-related benefits and tax credits. The full list of qualifying benefits is: Income Support, Jobseeker's Allowance (Income-Based), Pension Credit, Child Tax Credit, Working Tax Credit and Housing Benefit.

In 2003 two changes were made to Funeral Payments. The upper limit for non-specified funeral expenses increased from £600 to £700. Also, from October 2003, the funeral payment limit where items have been provided for by a pre-paid funeral plan was increased from £100 to £120 in line with the increase to the main limit.

In October 2003, Pension Credit replaced the previous Income Support provision for pensioners. Legislation was amended to ensure that recipients and partners of recipients of the new Pension Credit can qualify for Funeral Payments.

- 3.3 Cold Weather Payments - Cold Weather Payments of £8.50 to certain Income Support or Jobseeker's Allowance (Income Based) customers are made when the average temperatures in an area are, or are forecast to be, at or below 0 Degrees Celsius for a period of seven consecutive days. This is based on information from the Meteorological Office in relation to weather stations and postcodes linked to those stations.

- 3.4 Winter Fuel Payments - The Winter Fuel Payments scheme was introduced in January 1998 to specifically help older people with their winter fuel bills. The eligibility criterion is that during the specified week the household has an occupant ordinarily resident in GB or NI aged 60 or over. The need to be in receipt of a qualifying benefit, which existed prior to 16 December 1999, has been removed. Winter Fuel payments are tax free and do not affect entitlement to other Social Security benefits.

It was announced in April 2003 that households with someone aged 80 or over would receive an extra tax-free payment of £100. The 80+ payment was paid with Winter Fuel Payments from winter 2003/2004. The qualifying week for winter 2003/2004 payments was the week beginning 15 September 2003.

- 3.5 Budgeting Loans - Payable to customers in receipt of Income Support or Jobseeker's Allowance (Income Based) to help with major items of expenditure or services for which it may be

difficult to budget. Loans are repayable, normally by deduction from benefit.

- 3.6 Crisis Loans - Payable without regard to a qualifying benefit to customers faced with emergencies or the consequences of a disaster. Loans are repayable either by direct repayment or by deduction from certain benefits.
- 3.7 Community Care Grant - Payable to promote the community care of customers qualifying for Income Support or Jobseeker's Allowance (Income Based). The main purpose is to help vulnerable groups lead independent lives in the community rather than go into institutional or residential care, or to help such people re-establish themselves in the community following a period of such care; ease exceptional pressures on families; and to help with certain urgent travelling expenses.

### **Financial Basis of the Social Fund**

4. The Social Fund is, in part, financed by grants from the Consolidated Fund, which in 2003/04 were payable from DSD Vote RfR A, line 14 (3) for regulated expenditure, line 15 (3) for winter fuel payments and line 16 (3) for discretionary expenditure. In addition, section 74 (1) of the Social Security Administration (Northern Ireland) Act 1992 provides for the repayment of loans, recoveries of which help finance the fund; and section 74 (4) of the Act provides that payments to meet funeral expenses may be recovered from the deceased person's estate.

### **Annual Report on the Social Fund**

5. The Department for Social Development is required by Section 146 (5) and (6) of the Social Security Administration (Northern Ireland) Act 1992 to prepare an annual report on the Social Fund and to lay a copy of the report before the Northern Ireland Assembly. This report and the Annual Report of the Social Fund Commissioner for 2003/04 were published on 17 November 2004.

### **Audit Arrangements**

6. The Comptroller and Auditor General is required under section 146 (4) of the Social Security Administration (Northern Ireland) Act 1992 to examine and certify the Social Fund account and to lay copies of it, together with his report thereon, before the Northern Ireland Assembly.

### **Statement of Accounting Officer's Responsibilities**

- 7.1 Under Section 146 (4) of the Social Security Administration (Northern Ireland) Act 1992, accounts of the Social Fund are to be prepared in such form and in such manner as the Department of Finance and Personnel may direct. The accounts are prepared on a cash basis and must properly present the receipts and payments for the financial year and the balances held at the year end.

7.2 The Department of Finance and Personnel has appointed the Chief Executive of the Social Security Agency as additional Accounting Officer for the Social Fund. His relevant responsibilities as Accounting Officer, including his responsibility for the propriety and regularity of the public finances and for the keeping of proper records, are set out in the Accounting Officers' Memorandum in "Government Accounting in Northern Ireland" issued by the Department of Finance and Personnel.



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Gerry Keenan  
Chief Executive

Northern Ireland Social Security Agency

Date *7 April 2006*

## **Statement on Internal Control**

### **1. Scope of responsibility**

As Accounting Officer for the Social Fund, I have responsibility for maintaining a sound system of internal control that supports the achievement of the Social Security Agency's policies, aims and objectives, whilst safeguarding the public funds and departmental assets for which I am personally responsible, in accordance with the responsibilities assigned to me in Government Accounting Northern Ireland.

The Social Fund is operated within the Social Security Agency (SSA) and as such operates under the same internal control environment.

The Minister and the Permanent Secretary are regularly informed on the ongoing management of key Agency risks through briefing reports and meetings. Formal assurance is provided through the current reporting arrangements in place with the Departmental Risk Register, which contains associated risks against all Ministerial targets.

The Social Security Agency is an Executive Agency of the Department for Social Development (DSD). As *Accounting Officer* for the Agency I report on a regular basis through Ministerial Quarterly Reports and meetings with the Minister and the Permanent Secretary on the Agency's performance against targets and key areas of work.

### **2. The purpose of the system of internal control**

The system of internal control is designed to manage risk to a reasonable level rather than to eliminate all risk of failure to achieve policies, aims and objectives: it can therefore provide only reasonable and not absolute assurance of effectiveness. The system of internal control is based on an ongoing process designed to identify and prioritise the risks to the achievement of Agency policies, aims and objectives, to evaluate the likelihood of those risks being realised and the impact should they be realised, and to manage them efficiently, effectively and economically. The system of internal control has been in place in the Agency for the year ended 31 March 2004 and up to the date of approval of the Annual Report and Accounts, and accords with Department of Finance and Personnel (DFP) guidance.

### **3. Capacity to handle risk**

As Accounting Officer, I have responsibility for ensuring that a robust risk management process is in place to ensure that the risks faced by the Agency are managed and that appropriate controls are in place.

Leadership is given to the Agency's risk management process, which is demonstrated through the following key principles which underpin the approach to risk management:



- Agency Management Board, chaired by the Chief Executive, has overall responsibility and ownership for risk management within the Agency;
- each risk is assigned an owner at Director level, who is responsible for ensuring that controls are in place at all levels to manage the risk; and
- progress on the management of risks is reported quarterly to Agency Management Board through the Agency's existing monitoring and reporting mechanisms.

The Risk Management Policy has been embedded across the Agency with senior managers fully trained in the risk methodology. I have assigned ownership of key risks to those with the responsibility and authority for implementing controls and assigning resources to manage key risks. The Agency has integrated risk management with all aspects of the business by supporting staff further through:

- the presentation of Risk Awareness Sessions to all Grade 7s;
- providing a Helpdesk to support managers in the implementation of risk management in their business areas; and
- publication of the Agency's Risk Management Policy on the Agency's Intranet.

The Agency's Risk Management Policy is formally reviewed by the Agency Management Board on an annual basis. This annual review assesses how the Agency's system of internal control has performed in the current year, the scope and quality of the ongoing monitoring of risks, and reports received from internal audit, all of which provide a platform to consider best practice and lessons learned.

#### **4. The risk and control framework**

Risk management within the Agency is an integral part of the annual business planning process. The Agency has implemented a risk management process which includes risk identification, assignment of ownership, risk prioritisation, mitigation and management, and an evaluation and review. The following evidence describes the key elements in the Agency's risk management strategy, and demonstrates how it is embedded within the organisation.

Agency Management Board has overall responsibility for ensuring a robust risk management process is established, and is responsible for agreeing the Agency's *Risk Management Framework* annually. The Framework sets out the key risks to the successful achievement of the Agency's strategic objectives, and identifies the risk owner and controls in place to manage each risk.

The Risk Management Framework is supported by a *Corporate Risk Register*. The Risk Register records the status of each risk, actions taken to manage the risk and contingency plans if applicable.

The Risk Management approach includes:

- a *risk identification* process which helps develop a clear and common understanding amongst senior managers of the risks facing the Agency's business;
- *ownership* of key risks assigned at Director level with the responsibility and authority for implementing controls and assigning resources to manage them;
- a *risk evaluation* criteria to determine the impact and confidence in controlling key risks; and
- *risk assurance* through the Agency's monitoring and reporting mechanism, Agency Annual Review and Internal Audit annual reviews.

At Directorate and Unit levels, Risk Managers are assigned to implement the Agency's Risk Management Policy and procedures on internal controls, and are responsible for:

- encouraging relevant staff to actively consider and manage risk;
- communicating progress, identifying control weaknesses and recommending remedial actions for their assigned risks to Agency Management Board; and
- ensuring that a suitable system of internal control operates in their area of responsibility.

## 5. Review of effectiveness

As Accounting Officer, I have responsibility for reviewing the effectiveness of the system of internal control. My review of the effectiveness of the system of internal control is informed by the work of the internal auditors and the executive managers within the Agency who have responsibility for the development and maintenance of the internal control framework, and comments made by the external auditors in their management letter and other reports. I have been advised on the implications of the result of my review of the effectiveness of the system of internal control by the Board and the Audit Committee, and a plan to address weakness and ensure continuous improvement of the system is in place.

The Board has:

- reviewed how the Agency's system of internal control has performed, taking into consideration the changes in the nature and extent of significant risks since the last annual assessment;
- identified the significant risks that face the Agency for the year 2004/05 and agreed the management of controls; and
- signed off the Agency Risk Management Policy and Framework for the incoming business year.

An Audit Committee has been established to support me as Accounting Officer in my responsibilities for issues of risk, control and governance and associated assurance. The Audit Committee:

- meets four times a year, with the option to convene additional meetings as it deems necessary;
- is attended by the Head of Internal Audit, and representatives from the Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO);
- provides assurances relating to the corporate governance requirements for the organisation; and
- advises on the adequacy of management responses to issues identified by audit activity.

The DSD Internal Audit Unit provides an independent opinion on the adequacy and effectiveness of the Agency's system of internal control, together with recommendations for improvement. Internal Audit operates to standards set out in the Government Internal Audit Manual and provides me with:

- an annual audit plan based on the risk register;
- regular internal audit reports on individual business areas; and
- an overall annual audit assurance report.

As Accounting Officer my review of the effectiveness of the system of internal control also drew on the following evidence:

- a Business Plan for 2004/05 that will deliver Public Service Agreement (PSA) objectives;
- a structured approach to setting business plan objectives and planned initiatives;
- the setting of targets and the cascading of these to management and staff through the Agency's Balanced Scorecard;
- quarterly monitoring of progress against 2003/04 Service Delivery Targets, Performance Measures and Customer Service Standards;
- an Agency Management Board which meets monthly to consider the plans, performance and strategic direction of the Agency;
- a Standards Committee, which provides me with independent advice on the quality of the Agency's decision making; and
- compliance with specific regulations and procedures laid down either externally or centrally, including security, health and safety, data protection, government accounting and legal requirements.

## **6. Significant internal control problems**

My review of the effectiveness of the system of internal control is informed by the work of the internal auditors and the executive managers within the Agency who have responsibility for the development and maintenance of the internal control framework, and comments made by the external auditors in their management letter and reports.

The overall Internal Audit assurance rating of the administration of the Social Fund is 'limited assurance', which means that "weaknesses in the system of control are such as to put the system objectives at risk". This is due to, *inter alia*, inherent weaknesses within the Social Fund Computer System.



**Gerry Keenan**  
**Chief Executive**

7 April 2006

## **NORTHERN IRELAND SOCIAL SECURITY AGENCY: SOCIAL FUND ACCOUNT 2003-04**

### **The Certificate of the Comptroller and Auditor General to the House of Commons and the Northern Ireland Assembly**

I certify that I have audited the financial statements on pages 12 to 16 under Section 146 (4) of the Social Security Administration (Northern Ireland) Act 1992.

#### **Respective responsibilities of the Chief Executive and Auditor**

As described on page 4 the Social Security Agency and Chief Executive are responsible for the preparation of the financial statements in accordance with Section 146 (4) of the Social Security Administration (Northern Ireland) Act 1992 and for ensuring the regularity of financial transactions. The Social Security Agency and Chief Executive are also responsible for the preparation of the Foreword. My responsibilities, as independent auditor, are established by statute and I have regard to the standards and guidance issued by the Auditing Practices Board and the ethical guidance applicable to the auditing profession.

I report my opinion as to whether the financial statements properly present the receipts and payments of the Social Fund and are properly prepared in accordance with Section 146 (4) of the Social Security Administration (Northern Ireland) Act 1992 and directions made thereunder by the Department of Finance and Personnel, and whether in all material respects the receipts and payments have been applied to the purposes intended by Parliament and conform to the authorities which govern them. I also report if, in my opinion, the Foreword is not consistent with the financial statements, if the Agency has not kept proper accounting records, or if I have not received all the information and explanations I require for my audit.

I read the other information contained in the Annual Report and consider whether it is consistent with the audited financial statements. I consider the implications for my certificate if I become aware of any apparent misstatements or material inconsistencies with the financial statements.

I review whether the statement on pages 5 to 9 reflects the Agency's compliance with the Department of Finance and Personnel's guidance on the Statement on Internal Control. I report if it does not meet the requirements specified by the Department of Finance and Personnel, or if the statement is misleading or inconsistent with other information I am aware of from my audit of the financial statements. I am not required to consider, nor have I considered whether the Chief Executive's Statement on Internal Control covers all risks and controls. I am also not required to form an opinion on the effectiveness of the Agency's corporate governance procedures or its risk and control procedures.

#### **Basis of audit opinion**

I conducted my audit in accordance with United Kingdom Auditing Standards issued by the Auditing Practices Board. An audit includes examination, on a test basis, of evidence relevant to the amounts, disclosures and regularity of financial transactions included in the

financial statements. It also includes an assessment of the judgements made by the Social Security Agency and Chief Executive in the preparation of the financial statements.

I planned and performed my audit so as to obtain all the information and explanations which I considered necessary in order to provide me with sufficient evidence to give reasonable assurance that the financial statements are free from material misstatement, whether caused by error, or by fraud or other irregularity and that, in all material respects, the receipts and payments have been applied to the purposes intended by Parliament and conform to the authorities which govern them. In forming my opinion I have also evaluated the overall adequacy of the presentation of information in the financial statements.

### **Opinion**

In my opinion:

- the financial statements properly present the receipts and payments of the Northern Ireland Social Fund for the year ended 31 March 2004 and the balances held at that date and have been properly prepared in accordance with Section 146 (4) of the Social Security Administration (Northern Ireland) Act 1992 and directions made thereunder by the Department of Finance and Personnel; and
- in all material respects the receipts and payments have been applied to the purposes intended by Parliament and conform to the authorities which govern them.

I have no observations to make on these financial statements.



**J M Dowdall CB**  
**Comptroller and Auditor General**  
**14 April 2006**

**Northern Ireland Audit Office**  
**106 University Street**  
**Belfast BT7 1EU**

**RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS ACCOUNT  
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2004**

	<b>2003/04</b>	2002/03
	<b>£'000</b>	£'000
<b>RECEIPTS</b>		
Receipts from DSD Vote RfR A	<b>69,099</b>	60,157
Repayments of funeral payments	<b>85</b>	93
Repayments of budgeting loans	<b>35,038</b>	33,562
Repayments of crisis loans	<b>6,317</b>	5,610
Other receipts	<b>13</b>	18
	<hr/>	<hr/>
Total	<b>110,552</b>	99,440
	<hr/>	<hr/>
<i>Less</i>		
<b>PAYMENTS</b>		
Maternity expenses	<b>4,699</b>	4,331
Funeral expenses	<b>2,544</b>	2,437
Cold weather payments	<b>611</b>	255
Budgeting loans	<b>36,491</b>	34,691
Crisis loans	<b>8,138</b>	7,517
Community care grants	<b>11,881</b>	10,932
Winter fuel payments	<b>47,821</b>	42,505
	<hr/>	<hr/>
Total	<b>112,185</b>	102,668
	<hr/>	<hr/>
Excess of payments over receipts	<b>(1,633)</b>	(3,228)
	<hr/>	<hr/>

**STATEMENT OF BALANCES**

	<b>£'000</b>	£'000
Opening Balance	<b>1,809</b>	5,037
<i>less</i>		
(Excess of payments over receipts)	<b>(1,633)</b>	(3,228)
	<hr/>	<hr/>
Closing Balance	<b>176</b>	1,809
	<hr/>	<hr/>

The Notes on pages 13 to 16 form part of the Account.



Gerry Keenan  
Chief Executive

Northern Ireland Social Security Agency

Date *7 April 2006*

## NOTES

### 1. GENERAL

The Account is prepared in accordance with Section 146 (4) of the Social Security Administration (Northern Ireland) Act 1992. It has been prepared on a cash basis with no provision for accruals and in a form directed by the Department of Finance and Personnel, shown as an appendix to this account. The figures for 2002/03 are given for comparison and are taken from the Account for that year.

### 2. STATEMENT OF LOANS

	Budgeting Loans £'000	Crisis Loans £'000	Total £'000
Amount at 1 April 2003	30,439	11,219	41,658
Amount loaned	36,491	8,138	44,629
Amount recovered	(35,038)	(6,317)	(41,355)
Amount written off	<u>(193)</u>	<u>(33)</u>	<u>(226)</u>
Amount outstanding at 31 March 2004	31,699	13,007	44,706
Amount of adjustment	<u>(18)</u>	<u>(90)</u>	<u>(108)</u>
Amount outstanding at 31 March 2004 restated	<u>31,681</u>	<u>12,917</u>	<u>44,598</u>

The amount for loans outstanding at 31 March 2004 shown in this note is based on cumulative loans and repayments disclosed in the receipts and payments account, adjusted for amounts written-off and the net adjustment resulting from the further investigation of discrepancies identified between the loans balances as recorded in the Social Fund Accounts and those recorded in the Social Fund computer system. The composition of the latter adjustment is described in more detail below.

The net adjustment of £108k to the closing balance is to take account mainly of adjustments to loans issued, the review of Crisis Loans to Community Care Grants and to record the net effect on loan balances of customers who had moved between Northern Ireland and Great Britain.



### 3. AGE OF LOANS ANALYSIS

Between April 1988, when the Social Fund loans scheme was introduced, and March 2004, loans of some £417m have been paid. Over this period, £370m of these loans have been recovered and £2.4m written-off or adjusted, leaving a balance of some £45m outstanding at 31 March 2004. Loans are normally recovered by deduction from social security benefits and, where this is not possible, by cash instalments. Where a customer has more than one loan, the earliest loan is normally redeemed first, with recovery of later loans following automatically. A minority of loans take several years to recover fully. This may be due to the customer losing entitlement to benefit and recovery being deferred until a further claim is made.

An analysis of the age of loans outstanding at 31 March 2004 is summarised below:

Age/Type of loan	Budgeting Loans £'000	Crisis Loans £'000	Total £'000
5 years and more	1,047	555	1,602
Between 1 year and less than 5 years	8,020	5,575	13,595
Less than 1 year	<u>22,614</u>	<u>6,787</u>	<u>29,401</u>
	<u>31,681</u>	<u>12,917</u>	<u>44,598</u>

### 4. STATEMENT OF FUNERAL PAYMENTS OUTSTANDING

	£'000
Amount outstanding at 1 April 2003	3,960
Payments made	2,544
Amount recovered	(85)
Amount deemed as irrecoverable	<u>(2,114)</u>
Amount outstanding at 31 March 2004	4,305
Amount of Adjustment	<u>11</u>
Revised Amount Outstanding at 31 March 2004	<u>4,316</u>

The amount for Funeral Payments outstanding at 31 March 2004 shown in this note is based on cumulative payments and repayments disclosed in the receipts and payments account, adjusted for amounts deemed as irrecoverable. The adjustment records the net effect of Funeral Payments transferred to Great Britain.

Funeral Payments are recoverable only from the estate of the deceased, but in the majority of cases the estate is insufficient for the funeral payment to be recovered.

Accordingly the amount shown above as outstanding does not reflect the amount which may be recovered.

An analysis of the age of Funeral Payments outstanding is summarised below:

Year of Funeral Payment	£'000
1993/94	2
1994/95	2
1995/96	2
1996/97	2
1997/98	7
1998/99	13
1999/00	20
2000/01	84
2001/02	345
2002/03	1,382
2003/04	<u>2,457</u>
	<u>4,316</u>

## 5. LOSSES

	2003/04 £'000	2002/03 £'000
Claims for recoverable funeral payments abandoned mainly due to insufficient estates: 2,771 cases (2002/03: 2703 cases)	<b>2,114</b>	2,038
Recoverable loans abandoned or impracticable to pursue: 1232 cases (2002/03: 970 cases)	<b>226</b>	188
Other Social Fund: 96 cases (2002/03: 34 cases)	<u><b>24</b></u>	<u>8</u>
	<u><b>2,364</b></u>	<u>2,234</u>

## 6. BENEFIT FRAUD

All benefit branches have agreed Programme Protection plans for 2003/04 and these are also in place for 2004/05 to improve accuracy, and identify areas for action to reduce levels of fraud and customer error. Performance against these plans is monitored on a monthly basis by the Agency Management Board.

As Social Fund payments during 2003/04 were in the main made to persons receiving Income Support as a qualifying benefit, the level of fraudulent claims for this benefit may impact on the payments made from the Social Fund. However, as the bulk of payments are made by way of recoverable loans and are subject to additional qualifying conditions the scope for losses from fraud is substantially reduced. The Social Security Agency therefore considers that the overall risk of material loss of public funds is low.

**7. STANDING BALANCES**

The closing balance within the Fund will vary from year to year but the intention is to maintain a standing balance of £1.3m.



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Gerry Keenan  
Chief Executive

Northern Ireland Social Security Agency

Date *7 April 2006*

**SOCIAL FUND**

NORTHERN IRELAND SOCIAL SECURITY AGENCY

ACCOUNTS DIRECTION GIVEN BY THE DEPARTMENT OF FINANCE AND PERSONNEL

1. The Department of Finance and Personnel (DFP) in accordance with Section 146 (4) of the Social Security Administration (Northern Ireland) Act 1992 hereby gives the following Direction.
2. The statement of account which it is the duty of the Northern Ireland Social Security Agency to prepare in respect of the transactions of the Social Fund for the financial year ending 31 March 1995 and for any subsequent years, shall comprise:
  - a) a foreword;
  - b) an account of receipts and payments;
  - c) a statement of balances:and shall include any such notes as may be necessary for the purposes referred to in the attached schedule.
3. The Accounting Officer shall observe all relevant accounting and disclosure requirements in "Government Accounting Northern Ireland" and any other guidance issued by DFP, as amended or augmented from time to time.
4. The format of the statement of account and the disclosure requirements are in the attached schedule.
5. The foreword and account shall be signed by the Accounting Officer.
6. The Accounts Direction shall be reproduced as an annex to the accounts.

Signed S. QUINN

TREASURY OFFICER OF ACCOUNTS

Dated 11 SEPTEMBER 1996

## SCHEDULE

### FORMAT OF ACCOUNT AND DISCLOSURE REQUIREMENT

1. The foreword shall state that the account has been prepared in accordance with a direction issued by DFP in pursuance of Section 146 (4) of the Social Security Administration (Northern Ireland) Act 1992. The foreword will also include details of the following:
  - (a) a brief history of the Social Fund and its statutory background;
  - (b) categories of payment;
  - (c) financial basis of the fund;
  - (d) the publication of the Department for Social Development – Annual Report on the Social Fund;
  - (e) audit arrangements;
  - (f) responsibilities of the Accounting Officer.
2. The receipts and payments account and statement of balances shall conform to the formats shown in the Annex, although minor variations may be made.
3. The notes shall include:
  - (a) a statement of loans including an age analysis of loans outstanding;
  - (b) a statement of losses;
  - (c) the policy on maintaining a standing balance.

**RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS ACCOUNT  
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 199X**

	199X/X £'000	199X/X £'000
<b>RECEIPTS</b>		
Receipts from DSD Vote RfR A		
Repayments of funeral payments		
Repayments of budgeting loans		
Repayments of crisis loans		
Other receipts		
total		
<i>Less</i>		
<b>PAYMENTS</b>		
Maternity expenses		
Funeral expenses		
Cold weather payments		
Budgeting loans		
Crisis loans		
Community care grants		
Winter Fuel Payments		
total		
Excess of receipts over payments / (Excess of payments over receipts)		

**STATEMENT OF BALANCES**

	£'000	£'000
Opening Balance		
<i>Plus</i>		
Excess of receipts over payments		
<i>Less</i>		
(Excess of payments over receipts)		
Closing Balance		

The Notes on pages [ ] and [ ] form part of the Account.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Chief Executive

Northern Ireland Social Security Agency

Date



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