

*These notes refer to the Welfare Reform Act (Northern Ireland)
2010 (c.13) which received Royal Assent on 13 August 2010*

Welfare Reform Act (Northern Ireland) 2010

EXPLANATORY NOTES

BACKGROUND AND POLICY OBJECTIVES

Part 1 - Social security

Community care grants

18. This Part of the Act also includes measures to reform the Social Fund. The discretionary Social Fund is a cash-limited system of one-off payments, mainly to people receiving pension credit, income support, income-related employment and support allowance or income-based jobseeker's allowance - although crisis loans are available to anyone, whether on benefit or not, who are without resources to meet their immediate, urgent needs.
19. Under the existing law, successful applicants for community care grants may be provided with cash to obtain goods or services that the award covers. At the discretion of the appropriate officer, a payment may be made to a third party to provide goods or services. The reforms enable the Department to require that, where the goods or services are covered by arrangements the Department has made with a supplier, the award made must relate to specified goods or services and the payment would be made to the supplier.
20. Every year thousands of people make a social fund application because they are without funds but are awaiting the award or payment of benefit. This Part includes a provision which extends the existing provisions for making and recovering a payment of benefit on account. This will replace the need for people to apply for social fund crisis loans on the grounds that their health or safety is at risk.