



## **Update 15.01.2021 Department for Communities: Covid-19 Support**

The Department for Communities (DfC) has provided a range of support and services available for people impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Outlined below are the various supports and services available:

### **COVID-19 Heating Payment**

The Department for Communities has put in place a one-off heating payment for those people who are in receipt of Pension Credit or are in receipt of certain disability benefits (at the higher rates) in recognition of additional costs arising from the Covid-19 pandemic.

Eligibility criteria does apply and the full details are available on nidirect. For those who are eligible, the Covid-19 Heating Payment will be a one-off payment of £200 paid automatically into the same account to which they receive their usual benefit payments. The Covid-19 Heating Payment is in addition to any other payments, including the Winter Fuel Payment and will be paid at the end of January 2021. People do not need to apply for this payment. For more information click [here](#)

Another avenue of support may be through Discretionary Support. This is support to help those in a crisis situation and who need emergency help or support with living expenses. Eligibility criteria applies, and more details can be found in indirect. Click [here](#) to find out further information.

If you have been advised that you are not eligible for Discretionary Support or any other support including the [COVID-19 Heating Payment](#) you should contact the COVID-19 Community Helpline. You will be asked to demonstrate that the need for assistance has arisen as a direct result of the COVID-19 pandemic and provide evidence that you are struggling to afford heating/fuel costs.

### **Warm Well Connected**

In December DfC launched the 'Warm Well Connected' Programme. The Warm element aims to provide help and support to those whose wellbeing has been impacted by cold conditions and those in the most extreme need. In some cases help with essential white goods may be available.



Under this programme help is only available for those who have not been able to get help anywhere else and whose finances have been directly impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic. This is not monetary nor will vouchers be provided. Support will be small in value and only for those in extreme need who are unable to heat their homes by any other means.

### **Cold Weather Payments**

In recognition of the cold weather and increased costs associated with heating a home DfC also has in place its Cold Weather Payment. This payment is triggered as a result of Cold Weather and is paid automatically to those who are in receipt of a qualifying benefit and live in a postcode area where the temperature is, or forecast to be, zero degrees or below for seven consecutive days.

People can find out more and check if their postcode is in an area due to receive payments triggered by cold weather by clicking [here](#)

### **Annual Winter Fuel Payments**

In addition to this support you will already be aware of the Annual Winter Fuel Payments made to those people over the age of 65 and these have been and continue to be issued in the normal way. These payments are non-Covid-19 related payments. For further information on Winter Fuel Payments click [here](#)

### **COVID-19 Community Helpline**

DfC continues to operate the COVID-19 Community Helpline and advisers are on hand to connect people to local support networks who can assist with accessing not only fuel but food, medicines and psychological support services. Advice is also available to help tackle underlying issues such as employment, debt, and access to social security support. The helpline has had a significant increase in call volume and emails in recent days many of which are related to fuel, and people are advised to visit the nidirect website in the first instance to check out what help and support is available before contact the helpline.

**For further information please click the following link:**

<https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/campaigns/coronavirus-covid-19>