

Support fund for families and children this winter

The Scottish Government have announced funding to help Scots pay for food, heating, warm clothing and shelter during the winter, all part of a new £100m support package.

The fund will help those on low incomes, children and people at risk of homelessness or social isolation cope with winter weather and the economic impact of Covid-19 and Brexit.

The Winter Plan for Social Protection, announced by the First Minister Nicola Sturgeon, will also address domestic abuse and digital exclusion.

The pandemic has had a significant negative effect on Scotland's economy hitting jobs and living standards hard – and the government says that Brexit will only make the situation worse.

With winter approaching, some of Scotland's most at risk communities are facing rising costs for food, fuel and other essentials. Key elements of the plan include:

- £22m for low income families including
- £16m to give the low income families of an estimated 156,000 children in receipt of free school meals a one-off £100 payment by Christmas
- £23.5m to help vulnerable children through additional support for residential and care homes, social work, and

the Children's Hearing system

- £15m for the Communities and Third Sector Recovery Programme to support the work of local organisations
- £5.9m to promote digital inclusion for older people, support social isolation and loneliness and to promote equality
- £7m to help people who are struggling to pay fuel bills
- £5m to help those at risk of homelessness find a settled home
- The Winter Plan for Social Protection also includes £15m of flexible funding for local authorities entering Covid-19 protection Level 4 – announced by the First Minister earlier this month – which can be used to pay for food and essentials.
- The First Minister said: “We will shortly become the only part of the UK to give low income families an extra £10 per week for every child – initially for children up to age 6 and then for every child up to age 16.
- “This has been described as a game changer in the fight to end child poverty. The first payments will be made in February, but I know that for families struggling now, February is still a long way off.
- “So I am announcing today a £100 million package to bridge that gap, and help others struggling most with the impact of Covid over the winter months.
- “It will include money to help people pay their fuel bills and make sure children don't go hungry. It will offer additional help for the homeless, and fund an initiative to get older people online and connected. And it will provide a cash grant of £100 for every family with children in receipt of free school meals.
- “The money will be paid before Christmas and families can use it for whatever will help them through the winter.
- “That could be food, new shoes or a winter coat for the kids. Families will know best what they need – that's not for government to decide.

- “Initiatives like this are not just about providing practical help to those who need it most – they are an expression of our values and of the kind of country we are seeking to build.”