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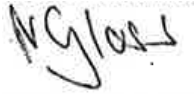
Dear Chief Executive/Finance Officer

ACCOUNTS DIRECTION 2025/26 – INTEGRATED ADVICE PARTNERSHIP FUND

1. In exercise of its powers under Article 24(2) of the Local Government (Northern Ireland) Order 2005 and Regulation 7 of the Local Government (Accounts and Audit) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 (the Regulations), the Department hereby directs that the accounts for the year ended 31 March 2026 should comply with this direction.
2. Councils were allocated £855,800 in 2024/25 and £890,013 in 2025/26 for an Integrated Advice Partnership fund. The purpose of this fund is to increase the reach of debt advice, focusing on funding proposals which enable better integration of debt advice funding and services, collaboration for early intervention and prevention to increase the reach of debt advice. This approach is grounded in joint advice partnerships; connecting services to improve the uptake of debt advice reach via an integrated approach.
3. Collaborative and integrated advice delivery can involve a range of options which could be to test new innovations or to maximise existing services and networks, for example: pro-active information and awareness raising activities, providing advice in accessible settings such as social supermarkets, food banks, doctors surgeries, faith-based groups and other less traditional advice locations including partnering with organisations such as Christians Against Poverty, Trussell Trust and others who work in local communities.
4. All unused funding should be transferred to a usable reserve in 2025/26 and ring-fenced for the purposes allocated, and this funding should be used within the 2026/27 financial year. A separate disclosure should be made to identify any unspent funding within the accounts.

5. Should you require clarification on any of the above matters, please contact Barry Leighton on 028 90 515256 or AdviceServices.Team@communities-ni.gov.uk.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "J Glass". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "J" and "G".

Jeff Glass
Head of Finance