



Department for

**Communities**

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**Commonities**

[www.communities-ni.gov.uk](http://www.communities-ni.gov.uk)

Voluntary & Community Division

Department for Communities

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Sara Steele  
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Your ref: SS 09.02/.2221

Our ref: CORR-0537-2021

19 March 2021

Dear Ms Steele

Thank you for your correspondence of 10<sup>th</sup> March 2021 to Minister Hargey expressing the Committee's concern in relation to future funding for advice services. As the senior officer with responsibility for independent advice services I have been asked to respond.

To give you a sense of levels of investment, the Department allocates more than £6.4m annually to support Advice services, including debt advice and help with benefit appeals. Most of this funding is allocated to Councils through the Community Support Fund.

It is clear that the draft 2021/22 budget presents very significant challenges for the Executive and across departments. However, your members may take comfort from the Minister's very clear public commitment to the work of the independent advice sector and the need to continue these services, particularly for those who are going through welfare changes.

The Minister has advised the Assembly that she will find the required funding in the budget as we come into the new financial year.

I hope that you find this response helpful.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Sharon Russell".

SHARRON RUSSELL  
Director, Voluntary & Community Division