

# The Highlighter

8TH OF FEBRUARY, 2023 | PAGE ONE

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Welcome to Issue Three of The Highlighter!

In this issue you will find articles about:

- Northern Ireland news
- The £600 energy payment scheme
- A special report on the war in Ukraine

## WHAT IS THE HIGHLIGHTER?

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We know the news can be confusing, complicated and hard to keep up with. The news can also be overwhelming at times and can make us feel scared, stressed and worried. The Highlighter aims to help make the news feel more accessible for people, including people with learning disabilities and autism.



# Northern Ireland News

## THE NORTHERN IRELAND ASSEMBLY

The Northern Ireland Assembly has still not been restarted. This means that there is not currently a functioning Northern Irish government.

Some of the politicians in Northern Ireland disagree over the Northern Ireland Protocol and say they won't talk about restoring the Assembly until a deal is made.

### WHAT IS THE NORTHERN IRELAND PROTOCOL?

The Northern Ireland Protocol will determine how items like food are transported across borders for buying and selling.

After the U.K. left the European Union (this is also called Brexit), the rules around trade changed. As the south of Ireland stayed a part of the European Union, their rules about transporting and selling goods didn't change.

Northern Ireland and southern Ireland share a border which makes having different rules on trade difficult. To avoid this, politicians from the U.K. and the E.U. are meeting to agree on a deal. This deal is called the Northern Ireland Protocol.

### WHAT ARE TRADE RULES?

Trade rules are agreements between different countries about topics like:

- how much money businesses are taxed (charged) to bring their products into different countries
- the health of animals and plants in farms and factories and while being transported
- 'workers rights' which determine how company employees are treated, such as how many breaks they have and how long they have to work every day.

Some politicians and communities want Northern Ireland to have the same trade rules as the rest of the UK but others think we should have the same as the Republic of Ireland.

# £600 Energy Payment Scheme

The government has started to send £600 payments to people in Northern Ireland. The payments are to help with the increasing costs of energy bills and are being sent either as a voucher received in the post or directly into a bank account.

## **HOW WILL PEOPLE RECEIVE THEIR VOUCHERS?**

If you pay your heating bill using a top up card or an app, you will get the £600 voucher in the post. If your heating bill comes directly out of your bank account, you will receive the £600 payment into your bank account. People who pay for their electricity by cash, cheque or bank transfer will receive a voucher from the Post Office.

## **WHY ARE WE GETTING VOUCHERS?**

The £600 vouchers are being sent to people by the government to help with the rising cost of living, in particular the cost of heating. However, you don't have to use the money towards gas or heating costs. Every household will receive a voucher although some people who live in care homes and social housing will get money under a different scheme in the future.

## **WHEN WILL THE £600 PAYMENT VOUCHERS BE RECEIVED?**

Many people have already received their £600 payment. The vouchers will continue to be sent out throughout February. Vouchers can be used before the 31st of March.

# A special report on the war in Ukraine

You have likely heard about the war in Ukraine. This is our special news report explaining about the war and answering some common questions you might have.

If you'd like to avoid hearing about fighting, skip these pages of The Highlighter.

## WHERE IS UKRAINE?

Ukraine is a country in Eastern Europe. It shares a border with Russia. Last year, Ukraine was in the news a lot when Russia invaded the country in February after moving military forces (like army soldiers) close to the border between the two countries.

## WHY IS RUSSIA AT WAR WITH UKRAINE?

Russia and Ukraine used to be a part of the Soviet Union, a very large country that is now broken up into the countries we know today, like Ukraine. In 1991,

Ukraine became its own country. The Russian government believe they still have a claim to some areas in Ukraine and want them back.



Image shows the location of Ukraine and Russia on a map

## WHAT IS HAPPENING NOW?

You may have heard in the news that several countries voted to send tanks to Ukraine to help them defend themselves.

## WHY ISN'T EVERY COUNTRY HELPING UKRAINE?

Most of rest of the world has been in support of Ukraine, but has not felt able to help them until recently. This is because Russia is a very powerful country and it is feared that other countries getting involved could cause more conflict. Governments in other countries said that their citizens (people who live in their country) and army are not to travel to Ukraine to help in case the Russian government saw this as an attack.


If Russia is allowed to win its war against Ukraine, many people are afraid that they will then try to invade other countries. Some countries in support of Ukraine are offering aid and military supplies but are also being very careful not to anger the Russian government.

## IS THE UK HELPING UKRAINE?

The UK government has sent £2.3 billion to Ukraine, along with equipment for their army to use. They have recently sent tanks to Ukraine.

## WHAT ABOUT THE PEOPLE WHO LIVE IN UKRAINE?

Many people from both Ukraine and Russia have left their homes. Some of these people have moved to other parts of their country that are safer or to a new country. Some people from Ukraine have even moved here to Northern Ireland!



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It can be very upsetting to see and hear about violence around the world, like the war in Ukraine. It can often be difficult to understand why it is happening, and sometimes we worry about people being harmed and feel unsafe ourselves.

Just remember you can always talk to a friend, carer, or family member you can trust. Sometimes it's good to take a break from the news. You can also avoid looking at very violent or upsetting images and video on social media. Remember, it's important to look after your own emotions!

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All the articles in this issue were correct at the time of writing but remember that news can change fast! If you have enjoyed reading The Highlighter, we would love to hear from you. You can email us at:

[hello@thehighlighter.org](mailto:hello@thehighlighter.org)

You can also visit our website: [thehighlighter.org](http://thehighlighter.org)