

From: The Minister

Colm Gildernew MLA
Chairperson, Committee for Communities
Room 430
Parliament Buildings
Belfast
BT4 3XX

**The Occupational Pension Schemes (Collective Money Purchase Schemes)
(Extension to Unconnected Multiple Employer Schemes and Miscellaneous
Provisions) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2026**

**The Occupational Pension Schemes (Preservation of Benefit) (Amendment)
Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2026**

Dear Colm

I am writing to you in accordance with paragraphs 19 and 20 of the Guidance for Departments on Delegated Legislation (SL1 Pre-Introductory Stage) (November 2025) ('the Guidance') to request that the Committee consider the SL1s for these Regulations in a shortened timeframe.

As legal checks are still ongoing by Departmental Solicitors Office (DSO) and Office of the Legislative Counsel (OLC) it is also not possible to share drafts of the NI Statutory Rules (SRs) and Explanatory Memorandums (EM) with the Committee alongside the SL1s as envisaged under the Guidance, given that they may be subject to change. The Department will share them with the Committee once they receive relevant legal clearances.

Both SRs are technical parity pensions legislation. To align with the timescale for the corresponding Regulations being brought into force by DWP on 31 July 2026, the normal timelines and processes under the Guidance cannot be met.

My officials are working at pace to finalise the SRs. The Occupational Pension Schemes (Collective Money Purchase Schemes) (Extension to Unconnected Multiple Employer Schemes and Miscellaneous Provisions) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2026 have been technically complex to draft, requiring additional advice to be sought for certain provisions. They also run to 87 pages and still require final legal clearances from both DSO and OLC (as they amend primary legislation).

The proposals for the Occupational Pension Schemes (Preservation of Benefit) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2026 were not received until mid-May from DWP and the draft SR has only recently been submitted for DSO scrutiny. As the change in this SR is consequential on the revised framework put in place by the first set mentioned above, officials had to consider the potential impacts on the content of the first SR.

These factors have impacted the Department's ability to share the proposals for Committee consideration at an earlier stage.

In order to maintain parity with DWP the SRs need to be brought into operation on 31 July 2026. Given the circumstances outlined above it is only possible now to submit the proposals for both sets of Regulations to the Committee. It would be helpful if Committee agreement to the SRs was received by the last meeting before summer recess (2 July).

At this stage it is not anticipated that the final SRs will diverge from the policy proposals as detailed in the SL1s. However, should there be any significant last-minute changes, revised SL1s will be provided to the Committee.

I am satisfied that ensuring the orderly making of this parity pensions legislation in line with DWP operational timeframes gives rise to exceptional circumstances which require deviation from the normal process and timeframes set out in the Guidance.

I would be grateful if the Committee would agree to approve the two SL1s in the requested shortened timeframe in light of these exceptional circumstances.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Gordon Lyons', written in a cursive style.

Gordon Lyons MLA
Minister for Communities