

From: The Minister

**Level 9
Causeway Exchange
1-7 Bedford Street
Belfast
BT2 7EG**

Telephone: 028 9082 2114
Mobile: 078 1268 2767
e-mail: assembly.section@communities-ni.gov.uk
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Colm Gildernew MLA
Chairperson, Committee for Communities
Room 430
Parliament Buildings
Belfast
BT4 3XX

THE HOUSING BENEFIT (EARNED INCOME DISREGARDS) (AMENDMENT) REGULATIONS (NORTHERN IRELAND) 2026

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 SL1 for this Statutory Rule in advance of the summer recess and again at its meeting scheduled for 10 September 2026.

Although the Department anticipates that the final draft of the Statutory Rule will be available on or soon after 6 July 2026, the timing means that the Committee is being

asked to consider the SL1 in a shortened timeframe when it returns from summer recess.

As DWP has not yet finalised their Statutory Instrument, it is not possible to share a draft of the Statutory Rule and Explanatory Memorandum with the Committee alongside the SL1 for consideration at their meeting on 2 July 2026 as envisaged under the Guidance.

The Statutory Rule is a parity social security measure. To align with the timescale for the corresponding Statutory Instrument being brought forward by DWP in Great Britain, the normal timelines and processes under the Guidance cannot be applied.

The Statutory Rule will amend the Housing Benefit Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2006 to introduce five new earned income disregards for working-age claimants residing in Supported Housing and Temporary Accommodation. These changes are intended to reduce the financial 'cliff edge' that can arise when claimants enter work or increase their earnings and will support improved work incentives by enabling individuals to retain more of their earnings before the taper is applied.

The most recent information from DWP indicates that they intend to lay the corresponding Statutory Instrument on 6 July 2026, with a planned coming into force date of 5 October 2026.

My officials are progressing development of the Statutory Rule, informed by DWPs drafting of the corresponding legislation. It is not anticipated that the final draft Statutory Rule will diverge from the policy proposals set out in the SL1. However, should any significant changes arise, a revised SL1 will be provided to the Committee.

I am satisfied that ensuring the orderly making of this parity social security legislation in line with DWP 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 consider/note the SL1 at their meeting on 2 July 2026 and that they would agree to approve it in the requested shortened timeframe at their meeting on 10 September 2026 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