

From: The DALO

Ms Emer Boyle
Communities Committee Clerk
Room 410
Parliament Buildings
Ballymiscaw
Stormont
Belfast
BT4 3XX

Dear Emer

SL1 - The Universal Credit, Personal Independence Payment, Jobseeker's Allowance and Employment and Support Allowance (Claims and Payments) (Amendment) (No. 2) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2026

The Department for Communities proposes to make the above Statutory Rule ('the Statutory Rule') under powers conferred by Sections 1(1) and 165(1), (4) and (6) of the Social Security Administration (Northern Ireland) Act 1992.

Purpose of the Statutory Rule

The Statutory Rule amends the Universal Credit, Personal Independence Payment, Jobseeker's Allowance and Employment and Support Allowance (Claims and Payments) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2016 ("the 2016 Regulations").

Regulation 31A, of the 2016 Regulations, allows a person to be treated as claiming Universal Credit for up to five months after the assessment period in which their earnings cause them to lose entitlement. The Statutory Rule will extend that period while the claimant, or either of joint claimants, is participating in a funded employment

scheme. This will allow them to be automatically re-awarded Universal Credit if their earnings from the scheme have ceased. The maximum additional period resulting from this amendment is one month.

This policy change was introduced by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) as they are currently operating the Jobs Guarantee Scheme which is designed to offer a direct route into work for all 18–24-year-olds who have been claiming Universal Credit and looking for work for 18 months. The national roll-out of the scheme in GB commenced in August 2026.

This practical effect of the change is that individuals who complete a funded employment scheme, and do not continue in employment, will not need to reclaim Universal Credit as their claim will automatically go back into payment if their income drops.

As Northern Ireland does not currently have an equivalent scheme, the proposed amendment will future-proof DfC Universal Credit legislation and provide for funded employment schemes going forward.

Previous Engagement with the Committee

There has been no prior engagement with the Committee in relation to this Rule.

Financial Implications

Any system changes resulting from these proposals will be undertaken by DWP and therefore will incur no additional costs for Northern Ireland.

Compliance with Section 24 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998

It has been determined that this policy and associated Statutory Rule is compliant with section 24 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, the impact assessment has also concluded that the policy and Rule are compatible with Article 2(1) of the Windsor Framework.

Equality Impact

In accordance with its duty under section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, the Department has conducted a screening exercise on the proposals and has concluded that they do not have significant adverse implications for equality of opportunity.

The Statutory Rule will have a positive impact as it will allow for claimants undertaking a funded employment scheme to be re-awarded Universal Credit without the need to reclaim and incur the waiting period of up to five weeks.

In light of this, the Department considers that an Equality Impact Assessment is not necessary.

Regulatory Impact

The proposed Statutory Rule does not require a Regulatory Impact Assessment as it does not impose any new costs on businesses, charities, or voluntary bodies.

Rural Needs Impact

The Department is satisfied that the Statutory Rule does not have a significant or differential impact on people living in rural areas. No specific barriers or adverse impacts for rural communities have been identified, and the policy is expected to deliver consistent benefits across both rural and urban settings.

Data Protection Impact

The Department has considered the data protection implications of the Statutory Rule and is satisfied that there is no new processing of data.

Child Rights Impact

The Department has considered the potential impact of the Statutory Rule on children and young people. The measure does not introduce any adverse impacts on child rights. Therefore, the Department is satisfied that the Statutory Rule is compatible with children's rights and does not negatively impact them.

Position in Great Britain

The corresponding GB Statutory Instrument was laid on 1 September 2026, and it came into force on 22 September 2026.

Any other information

None

Proposed timing of consideration of the SL1

This is a parity social security measure, which will mirror an equivalent Statutory Instrument (SI) made by DWP. The department normally aims to maintain parity of timing with DWP legislation. However, as there are currently no relevant funded employment schemes in Northern Ireland it was determined that a short delay in making the equivalent Statutory Rule was not have a detrimental effect on Universal Credit claimants here.

This short delay, compared to the DWP coming into force date, allows sufficient time for the department to adhere to the normal processes and timeframes set out in the Guidance for Departments on Delegated Legislation.

Proposed Operational Date

It is proposed that the Statutory Rule will come into operation on 30 November 2026.

A draft of the proposed Statutory Rule and Explanatory Memorandum are attached. I would be obliged if you would bring this matter to the attention of the Committee for Communities.

Yours sincerely



Laura Coffey

Departmental Assembly Liaison Officer

Private Office

cc: Human Rights Commission
Equality Commission