EXPLANATORY MEMORANDUM TO

The Financial Assistance (Coronavirus) (Soft Play Businesses) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021

S.R. 2021 No. 89

1. Introduction

1.1. This Explanatory Memorandum has been prepared by the Department of Finance to accompany the Statutory Rule (details above) which is laid before the Northern Ireland Assembly.

1.2. The Statutory Rule is made under powers conferred by sections 1(2) and 3 of the Financial Assistance Act (Northern Ireland) 2009 and is subject to the negative resolution procedure.

1.3. The Department of Finance has been designated as a relevant Department under section 1(3)(a) of the Financial Assistance Act (Northern Ireland) 2009 and the Rule is made with the approval of the Executive Office.

2. Purpose

2.1. These Regulations provide for a scheme of financial assistance to be awarded to soft play businesses affected by the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic. The targeted measure implemented by this scheme apply in respect of the 2020/21 financial year.

2.2. Regulation 1 contains the citation and commencement provisions.

2.3. Regulation 2 provides for the Financial Assistance scheme to be set out in the Schedule.

2.4. The Schedule to the Regulations lays out the Financial Assistance scheme that will provide support to soft play businesses.

3. Background

3.1. This is an emergency Statutory Rule made in tandem with the Executive's wider response to COVID-19.

3.2. The scheme provided for by the Rule comes in light of the Finance Minister's statement of 25 February 2021 to provide retrospective support covering the period that businesses were without support from July to September last year.

4. Consultation

4.1. This measure is implemented as part of the Executive's emergency response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

5. Equality Impact

5.1. This is an emergency Statutory Rule made as part of the Executive's wider response to COVID-19.

6. Regulatory Impact

6.1. None associated with this Rule.

7. Financial Implications

7.1. The estimated cost of the scheme is in the region of £500,000.

8. Section 24 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998

8.1. It is the view of the Department that this Rule is compatible with section 24 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

9. EU Implications

9.1. This Rule is deemed by the Department to be compatible with obligations following EU Exit and the terms of EU-UK Trade and Cooperation Agreement.

10. Parity or Replicatory Measure

10.1. A range of measures has been put in place across GB to reflect the circumstances facing both government and businesses as a result of the COVID-19 outbreak. Each administration has put in place measures in line with budgetary capacity and specific policy requirements.

11. Additional Information

11.1. Not applicable.