EXPLANATORY MEMORANDUM TO

THE MOTOR VEHICLES (DRIVING LICENCES) (AMENDMENT) REGULATIONS (NORTHERN IRELAND) 2026

S.R. 2026 No. 118

1. Introduction

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

1.2. The Statutory Rule is made under Articles 9(2) and (4)(b) and 218(1) of the Road Traffic (Northern Ireland) Order 1981 and is subject to the negative resolution procedure.

2. Purpose

2.1. The purpose of the Regulations covered by this Memorandum is to amend the Motor Vehicles (Driving Licences) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1996 ("the 1996 Regulations") to allow applicants for and holders of Group 2 licences (bus and lorry drivers) with diabetes to monitor their glucose levels by using more advanced technology, instead of blood glucose testing, which was previously mandated as the only accepted method of glucose monitoring. All other requirements for Group 2 licence holders remain in place.

3. Background

3.1. Diabetes mellitus is a medical condition that causes fluctuations in glucose levels, which can become dangerously low or high. Regular monitoring is essential to prevent hypoglycaemia, which can result in symptoms such as dizziness, hunger, sweating and possible loss of consciousness, posing a serious risk to all road users. If not properly managed, diabetes can result in long-term health conditions, including vision impairment, kidney damage or heart disease. As of 2024, 4.6 million people were diagnosed with diabetes in the UK.

3.2. Continuous Glucose Monitoring Systems provide real time glucose data replacing the need for regular checks every two hours. This enables drivers to respond promptly to prevent hypoglycaemic episodes, reducing the risk of sudden incapacitation while driving. This is expected to support better compliance with the required medical standards for driving, a reduction in hypoglycaemia-related road incidents and boost confidence among drivers, the public and the Driver and Vehicle Agency in the safe management of diabetes.

3.3. While strict medical fitness to drive standards already exist, this amendment addresses the limitations of current self-monitoring practices by enabling the use of more advanced and reliable technology. The aim is to reduce the safety risks associated with hypoglycaemia in lorry and bus drivers who use medications that may induce low blood sugar.

3.4. These Regulations amend regulation 51 of the 1996 Regulations to allow for appropriate monitoring to assess glucose levels and the risk of hypoglycaemia using an appropriate device that measures and records glucose levels as an alternative to the current requirements for the monitoring and recording of blood glucose levels.

4. Consultation

4.1. Responses to a targeted consultation on the proposals in Great Britain ("GB") attracted broad support. Given the non-contentious nature of the proposals and the fact that they reduce legislative disparity between NI and GB a further consultation exercise was not deemed necessary.

5. Equality Impact

5.1. In accordance with its duty under section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, the Department conducted a screening exercise on the proposals and concluded that an Equality Impacy Assessment was not necessary as there are no impacts on any Section 75 group.

6. Regulatory Impact

6.1. A Regulatory Impact Assessment was not considered necessary as the proposals do not result in any costs or savings for businesses, charities or voluntary bodies.

7. Financial Implications

7.1 There are no financial implications associated with the Regulations.

8. Section 24 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998

8.1. The Department is satisfied that the Regulations are compatible with section 24 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

9. European Union Withdrawal and Windsor Framework Implications

9.1. There are no implications in respect of the withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the European Union and the Regulations do not engage the Windsor Framework.

10. Parity or replicatory measure

10.1 The Regulations replicate provisions contained in SI 2025 No. 1085 and maintain legislative parity with GB.

11. Additional information

11.1. Not applicable.