EXPLANATORY MEMORANDUM TO

THE SOCIAL SECURITY (ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS) (AMENDMENT) ORDER (NORTHERN IRELAND) 2025

S.R. 2025 No. 129

1. Introduction

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

1.2. The Statutory Rule is made under sections 1 and 2 of the Electronic Communications Act (Northern Ireland) 2001and is subject to the negative resolution procedure.

2. Purpose

2.1. The Statutory Rule amends the Social Security (Claims and Payments) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1987 to provide for claims to employment and support allowance and industrial injuries benefit to be made electronically. The Statutory Rule also makes provision for claimants and the Department to communicate electronically in connection with awards of employment and support allowance and industrial injuries benefit.

3. Background

3.1 Currently claims to employment and support allowance can be made by paper and telephone under regulations 4 and 4F of the Social Security (Claims and Payments) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1987; claims to industrial injuries benefit can be made by paper only under regulation 4 of the same Regulations.

3.2 While there are no immediate plans to change the current service delivery for either benefit, as more and more claimants expect to be able to communicate with the Department electronically, the Department may want to facilitate this in the future. This Statutory Rule provides a legal basis for electronic communications if the necessary processes are developed.

4. Consultation

4.1. No consultation was considered necessary as the proposed legislative changes make provision to extend available options for claimants to employment and support allowance and industrial injuries benefit in the future and no one would be disadvantaged by the changes.

5. Equality Impact

5.1. In accordance with its duty under section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, the Department has conducted a screening exercise on these legislative proposals and has concluded that the proposals do not have significant implications for equality of opportunity. In light of this, the Department considers that an equality impact assessment is not necessary.

6. Regulatory Impact

6.1. This Statutory Rule does not require a Regulatory Impact Assessment as it does not impose a cost on business, charities, social enterprises or voluntary bodies.

7. Financial Implications

7.1. None for the Department.

8. Section 24 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998

8.1. The Department has considered section 24 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 and is satisfied that the Rule complies with that provision.

9. EU Implications

9.1. Not applicable.

10. Parity or Replicatory Measure

10.1. The corresponding Great Britain Regulations are the Social Security (Claims and Payments) (Amendment) Regulations 2016.

11. Additional Information

11.1. Not applicable.