EXPLANATORY MEMORANDUM TO

The Travel Agents (Coronavirus, Financial Assistance) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021

SR 2021 No. 68

1. Introduction

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

1.2. The Statutory Rule is made under the powers conferred by sections 1(2), 3 and 4 of the Financial Assistance Act (Northern Ireland) 2009, following a determination made under section 1(1) of the Financial Assistance Act (Northern Ireland) 2009 by the First Minister and deputy First Minister, acting jointly, and is subject to the negative resolution procedure.

2. Purpose

2.1. The purpose of the Regulations is to provide for the setting up of a Scheme under which the Executive Office may make financial assistance payments to eligible travel agents who have suffered because of the exceptional circumstances referred to in the determination made by the First Minister and deputy First Minister.

3. Background

3.1. Given the limitations on travel and restrictions here and across the world, there has been an impact on the travel industry, including travel agents. Ministers considered that this impact warrants a specific scheme for the travel agents sector. The Scheme is to help travel agents through financial difficulties as a result of the coronavirus pandemic. The funding provided will help vulnerable but viable travel agents, including self-employed travel agents working from home, with the cost of re-opening or keeping a business operational; with the cost of re-connecting with employees and customers and adapting customer marketing; and the cost of financial planning.

4. Consultation

4.1. Given the urgent timeframe to introduce a scheme to make grant payments to Travel Agents, we have been unable to carry out consultation with the sector. However Officials have engaged with ABTA who represent over 80% of Travel Agents with premises in NI.

5. Equality Impact

5.1. Given the urgent timeframe to introduce a scheme to make grant payments to Travel Agents, we have been unable to undertake an equality screening exercise. The purpose of the scheme is to provide financial assistance to travel agents.

6. Regulatory Impact

6.1. Given the urgent timeframe to introduce a scheme to make grant payments to Travel Agents, we have been unable to undertake a Regulatory Impact Assessment. The purpose of the scheme is to provide financial assistance to travel agents.

7. Financial Implications

7.1. The cost of the scheme is estimated at £1.2m.

8. Section 24 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998

8.1. The Department is content that the rule complies with section 24 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

9. EU Implications

9.1. Not applicable.

10. Parity or Replicatory Measure

10.1. Not applicable.

11. Additional Information

11.1. Not applicable.