

*These notes refer to the Assembly and Executive Reform (Assembly Opposition) Act (Northern Ireland) 2016 (c.10) which received Royal Assent on 23 March 2016*

# Assembly and Executive Reform (Assembly Opposition) Act (Northern Ireland) 2016

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## **EXPLANATORY NOTES**

### **KEY CONCEPTS**

5. Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs) who are not in a party which has Ministers in Government will often be described as being in opposition. This will continue to be the case but the Act will create a statutory basis for a formal Opposition, with statutory rights and entitlements, if certain conditions are met.
6. The Northern Ireland Act 1998 devolved power from Westminster to the Northern Ireland Assembly after a referendum endorsed the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement. The Act has been updated after subsequent agreements and represents what we mean by “the constitutional settlement”.
7. Standing Orders are the rules of procedure of the Assembly, which give practical effect to the high-level provisions of the Northern Ireland Act 1998.
8. Separation of powers is a term used to describe a system of checks and balances which safeguards the distinct roles of the Government, the Parliament and the Judiciary and prevents intermingling, influence on or arrogation of those roles by the others.