

These notes refer to the Animal Welfare (Service Animals) Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 (c.9) which received Royal Assent on 30 March 2022

Animal Welfare (Service Animals) Act (Northern Ireland) 2022

EXPLANATORY NOTES

BACKGROUND AND POLICY OBJECTIVES

3. The Act provides for increased protection for service animals in Northern Ireland. In doing so, it aims to ensure that these animals are afforded the same level of protection as they are already provided with in other parts of the United Kingdom.
4. [Section 4\(1\)](#) of the Welfare of Animals Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 ('the 2011 Act') provides that it is an offence to cause unnecessary suffering to an animal in Northern Ireland. In deciding whether the suffering caused to an animal is unnecessary, the 2011 Act provides that there are a number of factors which can be considered. Those factors include whether the suffering was caused for the purpose of protecting a person, property or another animal. The Act provides that, as is the case in other parts of the United Kingdom, whether someone causing harm to a service dog was for the purpose of protecting a person, property or another animal is not a relevant factor when considering whether or not the harm was unnecessary.