

**EXPLANATORY MEMORANDUM TO THE HEALTHY START SCHEME AND
DAY CARE FOOD SCHEME (AMENDMENT) REGULATIONS (NORTHERN
IRELAND) 2017**

2017 No. 200

1. Introduction

1.1 This explanatory memorandum has been prepared by the Department of Health.

2. Purpose of Regulation

2.1 These Regulations add Universal Credit into the Healthy Start Scheme's qualifying criteria. The Regulations also introduce an earnings threshold for Universal Credit claimants to qualify for Healthy Start and introduce an 8-week voucher entitlement run-on period for Universal Credit recipients whose earnings exceed the threshold.

2.2 The Regulations are subject to negative resolution procedure before the Assembly.

3. Legislative Background

3.1 These Regulations amend the Healthy Start Scheme and Day Care Food Scheme Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2006 (S.R. 2006 No. 478) ("the principal Regulations").

4. Extent

4.1 These Regulations apply to Northern Ireland.

5. European Convention on Human Rights

5.1 As the Regulation is subject to negative resolution procedure and does not amend primary legislation, no statement is required.

6. Policy Background

6.1 The Healthy Start Scheme provides a nutritional safety net to low-income families supporting around 14,000 households in Northern Ireland. Eligibility to Healthy Start vouchers is means tested and therefore eligibility to a qualifying benefit needs to be verified. An Memorandum of Understanding between the Department of Health (London), Department of Health (Northern Ireland), HMRC, DWP, NI Social Security Agency, NHS Business Services Authority and HSC Business Services Organisation sets out the procedures for data sharing to enable the administration and distribution of Healthy Start vouchers. The information is provided directly to the Healthy Start Issuing

Unit which is contracted by DH (L) for the issue of vouchers to the whole of the UK.

- 6.2 The aim of these changes to the principal Regulations is to add Universal Credit as a qualifying benefit to receive Healthy Start, to introduce an earnings threshold of £408 per month for Universal Credit claimants who meet the other Healthy Start qualifying criteria; and to introduce an 8 week voucher entitlement run-on period for Universal Credit recipients whose earnings exceed the threshold

7. Contact

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