## EXPLANATORY NOTE

*(This note is not part of the Regulations.)*

These Regulations further amend the Optical Charges and Payments Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1997 ("the 1997 Regulations") which provide for payments to be made, by means of a voucher system, in respect of costs incurred by certain categories of persons in connection with the supply, replacement and repair of optical appliances. The Regulations also amend the General Ophthalmic Services Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1986 ("the 1986 Regulations") which provide for the arrangements under which ophthalmic medical practitioners and ophthalmic opticians provide General Ophthalmic

Services.

Regulation 2 inserts a definition of "child", and amends the definition of "health service sight test fee" in regulation 1(2) of the 1997 Regulations (citation, commencement and interpretation) to increase two levels of fees for such tests.

Regulation 3 provides for an increase in the charges for glasses and contact lenses supplied by an HSS trust.

Regulations 4 and 5 make minor amendments to the 1997 Regulations.

Regulation 6 amends regulation 19 of the 1997 Regulations (redemption value of voucher for replacement or repair) to increase the redemption value of two categories of vouchers, namely, vouchers for replacement and vouchers for repair.

Regulation 7(1) amends Schedule 1 to the 1997 Regulations to increase the value of vouchers issued towards the cost of the supply and replacement of glasses and contact lenses.

Regulation 7 (2) amends Schedule 2 to the 1997 Regulations by increasing the additional values for vouchers in respect of prisms, tints, and special categories of appliances.

Regulations 7(3) and the Schedule substitute a new Schedule 3 in the 1997 Regulations to increase the value of vouchers issued towards the cost of the repair and replacement of optical appliances.

The rate of increase is, on average, approximately 2%.

Regulation 8 amends paragraphs 4(2) and 6(2) of Schedule 1 to the 1986 Regulations (terms of service) to permit an authorised officer of a Health and Social Services Board to inspect a practitioner's premises and equipment or to inspect records held by a practitioner.