



Ms Stella McArdle
 Clerk, Committee for Health, Social
 Services and Public Safety
 Room 416 Parliament Buildings
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COURT
 SERVICE

Stamp: 26 MAR 2010

26 March 2010

Dear Ms McArdle,

PROPOSED SAFEGUARDING BOARD

Thank you for your letter of 5th March. I apologise for the delay in replying.

We have been considering the issue which the Committee has raised in consultation with the Office of the Lord Chief Justice. We are grateful to the Committee for considering our potential interest in this area and for giving us the opportunity to comment.

While the Lord Chief Justice does not consider there a case has been made for the judiciary to be represented on the proposed Safeguarding Board he is content that the Board should approach his office if it considers there are particular matters on which a judicial input would be useful. It is, I think, difficult to speak on what those issues might be at this stage but no doubt the Board will reach its own view and can approach the office of the Lord Chief Justice as the need arises.

In relation to the Northern Ireland Court Service, our primary role is to provide administrative support to the courts and to a number of tribunals. We also however have a role in relation to the implementation of a number of International Conventions in respect of child protection. Principally this involves acting as the first or central point of contact for those seeking the return of a child brought to or removed from Northern Ireland (usually by one parent). We would therefore expect to interact with the Safeguarding Board in that regard. We also welcome the

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NI ASSEMBLY



proposed role of the Safeguarding Board in promoting inter Agency co-operation on child protection issues.

I should also indicate that on 12 April the Northern Ireland Court Service will transfer to the new Department of Justice where we will continue to carry out most of our existing functions (including those mentioned above) as an Agency of the Department.

I hope this is helpful. If you require any more detailed information please let me know.

Yours sincerely

Laurene McAlpine

LAURENE McALPINE