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Christine Darrah
Clerk to the Committee for Justice
Room 242
Parliament Buildings
Stormont
Belfast
BT4 2XX

28 May 2020

Dear Christine

DOMESTIC ABUSE AND PROCEEDINGS BILL

Thank you for your letter of 7 May 2020 inviting comments on the Domestic Abuse and Proceedings Bill

The Department of Finance has an interest in the Bill generally. As you will know, the Department was responsible for the Family Homes and Domestic Violence (NI) Order 1998, legislation that provided for, inter alia, civil law remedies such as non-molestation orders and occupation orders, and which was broadly welcomed at that time.

I believe that those civil remedies provided in that Order have worked well and stood the test of time, but it is right and proper that the emphasis in relation to domestic violence is now weighted towards the criminal aspects of the actions of perpetrators, and I welcome the introduction of the Bill. I do not have any specific comments on the provisions, understanding that officials within the Department have liaised with their counterparts in the Department of Justice in relation to some of the detail around the Bill.

I believe it will be important going forward that those impacted by domestic violence and abuse understand and can avail of all of the remedies available to them, both criminal and civil. The existing civil remedies of the 1998 Order will continue to be available and it will be important that this is properly communicated and understood by all victims or potential victims. Officials in the Department will continue to provide any support necessary during the passage of this important Bill and I look forward to seeing the provisions implemented and operative in due course.

Yours sincerely

SUE GRAY