

Huntington's Disease Association

I include some comments below for you to bring to the attention of the committee in their next consideration of the Domestic Abuse Bill.

Dear members

Firstly apologies as I've not had a chance to read the Bill in full but wondered if any provision has made for the protection of victims from contact by the defendant post-reporting/post-conviction/release?

I've discovered serious gaps in protection in the Republic of Ireland and it seems opportune to raise the issue with the committee so that such acts might be legislated against in future.

The example I am dealing with at the minute is in relation to online harassment direct and indirect by a convicted abuser against the victim. This online activity includes the publication of photos, name, medical info and personal material which would only have been disclosed to the defence and his legal team as evidence. It seems that there is a huge burden on the victim to navigate social media platforms and seek a civil injunction at their own expense as the law on harassment really isn't fit for purpose.

Any opportunities for new legislation to take into account future proof victim protection should be considered in the public interest.

A lot of these decisions about legislative content, as you know, are considering a balance of rights between victim/public and perpetrator/accused.

There should be no reason why it shouldn't be standard practice that upon taking a case an alleged perpetrator is placed under order from the PSNI/court that they are prohibited indefinitely from contacting/attempting to contact/being within a certain distance of the victim/their family/place of work or study. Also take into account the use of correspondence, publications, social media of naming, publishing images or personal information relating to the victim or their family. It should take an application to the court for such an order to be revoked if the applicant/defendant can demonstrate good reason and the victim consents (for example if they reconciled)

I hope these comments are worthy of your consideration

Kind Regards

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Chief Executive

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