

FROM THE OFFICE OF THE JUSTICE MINISTER



Department of
Justice

An Roinn Dlí agus Cirt

Máinnystrie O tha Laa

www.justice-ni.gov.uk

Minister's Office Block B,
Castle Buildings
Stormont Estate
Ballymiscaw
Belfast
BT4 3SG

Mervyn Storey
Chairman, Committee for Justice
Room 242
Parliament Buildings
Ballymiscaw
Stormont Belfast
BT4 3XX

30 June 2021

Dear Mervyn,

INTRODUCTION OF THE JUSTICE (SEXUAL OFFENCES AND TRAFFICKING VICTIMS) BILL

Further to my 25 June letter, which covered an advance copy of the re-scoped Justice (Sexual Offences and Trafficking Victims) Bill, I am pleased to advise that the Assembly Business Committee has scheduled First Stage of the Bill for Tuesday 6 July at 11:30 hours.

I understand that, following conversations between the Committee Clerk and my Departmental Assembly Liaison Officer, my officials will attend and provide an oral briefing on the aims and principles of the Bill at the Committee meeting on Thursday 9 September.

While this is positive news, I am concerned that the previous problems in progressing the Bill at the Executive, with an associated 8 week delay in securing approval for introduction, will impact on the normal timetable for the Committee's call for evidence on the Bill.

FROM THE OFFICE OF THE JUSTICE MINISTER



Department of
Justice

An Roinn Dlí agus Cirt

Máinnystrie O tha Laa

www.justice-ni.gov.uk

Ordinarily, this call for evidence would not launch
Second Stage has been

until

completed and Committee Stage has formally commenced. I am, however, aware of previous instances where the Committee has launched its call for evidence after Introduction and ahead of Second Stage.

With the current mandate due effectively to conclude in March 2022, I am sure you will appreciate that a wait until the autumn for the call for evidence for the re-scoped Bill to launch would leave the Committee with little time to give the Bill proper scrutiny.

I am therefore writing to ask you to consider commencing your call for written evidence over the summer period, to maximise the opportunity for public interaction and comment and subsequent consideration by the Committee.

I appreciate that the delay to the Bill was in no way of the Committee's making and that we have a shared interest in passing good and effective legislation.

For the Committee to progress the call for evidence during the summer months would largely bring the timetable for the Bill back onto its original schedule, and maximise the time available in the autumn for the Committee's detailed scrutiny of the provisions contained in the Bill.

I trust that you will consider my correspondence helpful and both I and my officials look forward to working with the Committee as the Bill progresses through the Assembly.

NAOMI LONG MLA MINISTER OF JUSTICE