

Christine Darrah  
Committee Clerk  
Justice Committee  
Room 242  
Parliament Buildings  
Ballymiscaw  
Stormont  
Belfast  
BT4 3XX

20 January 2022

Dear Christine,

Many thanks to you and the Committee for sharing the Committee's draft amendment to the Department of Justice's amendment on positions of trust with NSPCC. We are extremely grateful to the Committee for bringing forward this amendment and aiming to create more inclusive abuse of trust offences in Northern Ireland which will extend beyond the areas of religion and sport. NSPCC welcomes the intent of the Committee's amendment and is in full support of it.

With regard to the wording of the amendment, I must caveat my comments in the knowledge that legal drafting is a specific area of expertise which involves a great deal of skill, and I am by no means an expert in this area. I appreciate that there are likely to be extremely good reasons why the amendment has been drafted as it currently reads which I have not been privy to.

The additional clause c) in the Committee's proposed amendment appears to broadly reflect the Sarah Champion MP, amendment in England and Wales, as raised in my most recent submission to the Committee on 21<sup>st</sup> December 2021. My understanding of this amendment is that it was to be introduced instead of the clauses relating to religion and sport, rather than as well as them. I appreciate that there may be a wealth of difficulties with redrafting the amendment in its entirety and the removal of the clauses relating to religion and sport, however I wanted to raise this as both sporting and religious activities would presumably be covered by clause c) without need for specific reference to these activities.

As referenced in our evidence to the Committee to date, NSPCC would suggest that there will need to be statutory Guidance developed to aid the operation of the new offences and we

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would be very keen to be involved in this. In addition, I wish to offer my full support to the Bill Clerk in the drafting of the amendment and I would be willing to meet with the Clerk or have a telephone conversation to outline NSPCC's work in this area to date and assist in any way that would be helpful.

I understand that this is the first stage in the process of drafting the amendment and there will be a number of other stages before the amendment is finalised. If I can be of assistance to you, the Bill Clerk or the Committee at any stage in this work please do not hesitate to get in touch.

Sincere thanks to you and the Committee again.

Yours sincerely,

Natalie Whelehan

Policy and Public Affairs Manager  
**NSPCC Northern Ireland**