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Christine Darrah
Clerk to the Committee for Justice
Room 242
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6 September 2021

Dear Christine,

PROTECTION FROM STALKING BILL

Thank you for your letter of 14 July.

We note that the Committee has asked for clarification of the Department's decision to resile from the commitment to lay guidance for information purposes, following legal advice from the Departmental Solicitor.

As previously outlined, the Delegated Powers Memorandum (DPM) had stated that the guidance '*will be laid in the Northern Ireland Assembly for information purposes.*' We took this approach as we considered this to be helpful and it followed the format of the Domestic Abuse and Civil Proceedings Bill DPM, which didn't generate any response from the Examiner. We also noted that the Domestic Abuse and Civil Proceedings Act 2021 didn't contain a provision to lay guidance at the Assembly rather it states that *the Department must issue and publish guidance.*

Following recognised best practice, the Department always seeks to maintain a consistent approach when making arrangements for the provision of guidance. The proposed approach, as noted above, was wholly in line with the Domestic Abuse Bill, with which the Committee and Examiner had no issue. However, we are happy to be guided by the Committee; if members prefer, an amendment will be brought forward in relation to the Examiner's proposal.

I trust the Committee finds this helpful.

CLAIRE MCCORMICK DALO