

**HEAD OF COMMAND SECRETARIAT**

Our Ref: Com Sec 6518-20

20th August 2020

Dear Christine,

DOMESTIC ABUSE AND FAMILY PROCEEDINGS BILL

Thank you for your letter of 6 July 2020. I am pleased to be able to provide further views on behalf of the Police Service of Northern Ireland and the Chief Constable as to the proposal to make legislative provision for Domestic Abuse Protection Notices and Domestic Abuse Protection Orders (DAPN/O).

Colleagues have been involved in a joint working group concerned with the Domestic Abuse and Family Proceedings Bill from an early stage. As a result, they have provided views to the Department of Justice officials that have assisted in shaping the bill, with the aim of improving how we better police domestic abuse and achieve improved criminal justice outcomes for victims of domestic abuse in Northern Ireland.

In relation to this particular matter our view remains as in our previous correspondence to the Department of Justice dated 26 January 2020 and 7 July 2020 from T/Detective Chief Superintendent Anthony McNally. Therein, he outlined that we remained concerned about the scale of benefits that Domestic Violence Protection Notices and Orders (DVPN/O's) will actually bring based on the evidence base from Great Britain. Unfortunately there are no criminal sanctions attached to these orders and the maximum time granted for a DVPO is 28 days. The current proposal in England and Wales is to replace the DVPO/N. The current legislative threshold for DVPN/O's in Northern Ireland is *"uses violence or threatens it"*, which was seen as too high a threshold in England and Wales, hence why DAPN/O's have been proposed, reducing this threshold to *"abusive"* behaviour.

We respectfully suggest that further formal consultation would be beneficial in deciding upon the most effective way ahead. This could assist with determining whether DAPN/O's should be pursued over DVPN/O's. It would be advisable given the learning from DVPN/O's in England and Wales and the fact they are to be replaced.

In conclusion, we are supportive of any measures that help provide protection for victims of domestic abuse. However, we believe it would be beneficial to have further consultation when we collectively consider the evidence base from Great Britain before further arrangements are confirmed.

Superintendent
for Chief Constable

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