

FROM: [REDACTED]
DALO
Department of Finance

DATE: **29 APRIL 2026**

TO: **KATHY O'HANLON**
Clerk to the Committee for Justice

JADE'S LAW

Thank you for your letter of 24 April 2026 to the Department of Finance regarding proposals commonly referred to as *Jade's Law*, and the issues raised in correspondence following the tragic death of Amy Doherty. I am responding on behalf of the Minister of Finance.

The Minister and the Department are aware of the concerns that have been raised in relation to the existing legal and safeguarding arrangements for children in cases involving domestic abuse and homicide. The Minister recognises the devastating impact that serious violent crime has on families, and in particular the long-term effects on children.

The Minister acknowledges that while the courts have a range of orders available to them which can, in appropriate cases, effectively suspend parental responsibility, the current process generally places the onus on the family of the victim or on a statutory agency to make an application to the court. In light of this, he believes that legislative reform is required and officials have commenced work to progress this issue further.

While he would ideally like to legislate within the current Assembly mandate, after careful consideration the Minister has tasked officials to commence detailed policy development now, with the clear intention of bringing forward legislation early in the next mandate. This work will be taken forward as part of a potentially wider programme of family law reform. The Minister considers it important to take account of learning from the implementation of comparable provisions in England and Wales, where *Jade's Law* although enacted in 2024 has yet to be implemented due to significant legal and operational complexities involved across criminal, family and safeguarding systems.

Given the implications that any reform in this area would have for both the criminal justice system and the family courts, the Minister has asked that officials engage closely with colleagues in the Department of Justice as this work progresses, to ensure a coordinated and workable approach across departments and jurisdictions.

I hope this response is helpful to the Committee.

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DALO

Yours sincerely

Kathy O'Hanlon

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