

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 24 June 2026 15:57
To: +Comm Justice Public Email <committee.justice@niassembly.gov.uk>
Subject: Request for Inquiry into Domestic Abuse-Related Suicide in Northern Ireland

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Dear Committee Members,

I am writing as the founder of the Domestic Abuse Suicide Law Campaign.

My campaign was established following the loss of my sister and seeks recognition of the potential link between domestic abuse, coercive control and suicide.

Northern Ireland records domestic abuse incidents, domestic abuse crimes and domestic abuse homicides. However, there appears to be no publicly available data regarding domestic abuse-related suicides.

I would be grateful if the Committee would consider:

- Examining whether domestic abuse-related suicides are currently identified or recorded.
- Investigating whether victims who die by suicide following domestic abuse are included within existing review processes.
- Considering whether legislative or policy changes are required to improve recognition, data collection and prevention.

I believe understanding the scale of this issue is essential if we are to learn from these deaths and prevent future tragedies.

I would welcome the opportunity to meet with the Committee or provide evidence regarding the campaign.

Kind regards,

[REDACTED]
Domestic Abuse Suicide Law Campaign

[REDACTED]

FROM THE OFFICE OF THE JUSTICE MINISTER

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Our Ref: [REDACTED]

Ms [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

3 April 2026

Dear [REDACTED]

Thank you for your further email and for your thoughtful response to my previous correspondence.

I very much appreciate the clarification you have provided on the purpose of your campaign. I understand that your focus is on the wider system and on ensuring that deaths where domestic abuse may have been a contributing factor are properly recognised, understood and that learning is derived. I also recognise the strength and determination it takes to continue to raise these issues, particularly in the context of your family's loss.

You have highlighted concerns about the absence of formal recognition and recording of suicides linked to domestic abuse. At present, as acknowledged, there is no single mechanism within the legal system to identify or record suicides in this way. As you will appreciate, determining whether domestic abuse was a contributing factor in a person's death can be difficult and may involve a range of evidential, medical and personal factors.

You also raise the question of whether current laws and systems go far enough. As outlined previously, Northern Ireland law already contains provisions which may apply in cases where there is evidence that an individual has encouraged or assisted another person to take their own life, including through coercive or controlling behaviour. However, I recognise that cases of this nature are complex, particularly in establishing a clear causal link to the criminal standard required.

In relation to Domestic Homicide Reviews, I welcome your recognition that this is an area under consideration. I remain committed to exploring whether the current model could, in future, be widened to include deaths by suicide where domestic abuse may have been a contributing factor: however, this will require careful consideration; extensive consultation across a range of stakeholders; operational planning; assurances that adequate resources and specialist expertise can be provided; and, finally, we must be satisfied that the existing review system is operating effectively and delivering the outcomes needed.

I also note your proposal for [REDACTED] and the principles underpinning it, particularly in relation to recognition, consistency and learning. These are important considerations and ones which align with the broader work being taken forward through the Domestic and Sexual Abuse Strategy to strengthen how we respond to domestic abuse across the system.

My officials will continue to monitor developments in other jurisdictions and consider emerging evidence and practice in this area. While I appreciate that progress in this area may not move as quickly as either you or I would wish, I want to assure you that the issues you have raised are being carefully considered to ensure that we make the right decisions and deliver better outcomes for those impacted.

FROM THE OFFICE OF THE JUSTICE MINISTER



Department of
Justice

An Roinn Dlí agus Cirt

Mánnystrie O tha Laa

www.justice-ni.gov.uk

Thank you again for taking the time to write and for continuing to advocate for change in this area.

Yours sincerely,

NAOMI LONG MLA
Minister of Justice

Please ensure that you quote our reference number in any future related correspondence.

FROM THE OFFICE OF THE JUSTICE MINISTER

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Our Ref: [REDACTED]

MsCourtneyMcAdorey
[REDACTED]

23 March 2026

Dear Ms McAdorey,

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] I want to assure you that I have carefully considered the issues you have raised in your letter.

You are right to highlight the devastating impact that domestic abuse can have on individuals and families. Abuse, including coercive and controlling behaviour, can cause profound harm and its effects can extend far beyond the immediate circumstances of the abuse itself. The justice system must always take such behaviour seriously and ensure that victims are protected and perpetrators are held accountable where the law allows.

You asked about criminal accountability where abuse may contribute to suicide. While there is currently no specific offence of “domestic abuse-related suicide”, Northern Ireland law does contain provisions that may apply where appropriate. In particular, sections 13 of the Criminal Justice Act (Northern Ireland) 1966 make it an offence to encourage or assist another person to take, or attempt to take, their own life. These provisions include situations where a person pressures, threatens or coerces another person into suicide.

In addition, the Domestic Abuse and Civil Proceedings Act (Northern Ireland) 2021 which I introduced, significantly strengthened protections for victims by creating a specific offence of domestic abuse which recognises patterns of coercive and controlling behaviour within relationships. The Act also provides for a domestic abuse aggravator which requires courts to treat offences as more serious where committed in a domestic abuse context. Taken together, these provisions provide mechanisms through which abusive behaviour contributing to a victim’s suicide may be considered within the criminal justice system, where the evidential threshold for prosecution is met.

Domestic Homicide Reviews were introduced in Northern Ireland in December 2020. These reviews are carried out when a person aged 16 or over dies and abuse by a partner, former partner or family member is known or suspected. Their purpose is to bring agencies together to identify learning that may help improve responses to domestic abuse and prevent future tragedies.

You have asked about the impact of completed Domestic Homicide Reviews. Of the 28 Reviews that have been commissioned to date, 7 are completed and published on the Department of Justice website. Learning from these reviews has driven significant improvements across agencies. In response to identified learning, my Department has delivered a public awareness campaign on nonfatal strangulation, aligned with the commencement of the new offence, there has been an increased emphasis on promoting the Domestic Violence and Abuse Disclosure Scheme (DVADS), and the Department has increased awareness of how domestic abuse manifests, including the 8

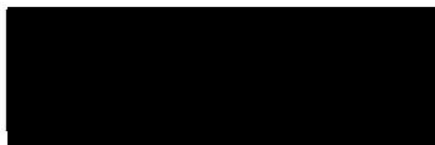
stage homicide timeline, through updates to online training and wider awareness activity. In response to recommendations, work is well advanced in relation to replacing the Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference arrangements. There is a programme of work underway with a wide range of agencies to make more progress on multi-sector recommendations.

I remain firmly committed to exploring whether the scope of the current Domestic Homicide Review model could in future be widened to include deaths by suicide linked to domestic abuse. However, any expansion would require careful consideration by all relevant departments and organisations, to ensure that the system is properly resourced and capable of delivering meaningful learning across the agencies involved. Your letter also refers to developments elsewhere in the UK. My officials continue to maintain contact with colleagues in other jurisdictions and to monitor developments in this area to consider whether there may be lessons for Northern Ireland.

Domestic abuse remains a priority for me as Minister of Justice. Through the Domestic and Sexual Abuse Strategy 2024–2031, my Department is working closely with partners across government, the justice system and the voluntary and community sector to strengthen prevention, protection and support for those affected by abuse.

I want to thank you again for taking the time to write and for speaking up about an issue that is clearly deeply important to you and your family. I hope that the information provided is helpful.

Yours sincerely,



NAOMI LONG MLA
Minister of Justice

Please ensure that you quote our reference number in any future related correspondence.