Northern Ireland Assembly

Committee for Finance
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To: **Kathy O'Hanlon, Clerk to the Committee for Justice**

Keith McBride, Clerk to the Committee for Health

From: **Peter Hall, Clerk to the Finance Committee**

Date: **8th October 2026**

Subject: **Jade's law**

Dear Kathy and Keith,

The Finance Committee had previously sought further information on 'Jade's Law' from the Department of Finance. At its meeting of 7th October Members considered a response from the Department providing information on work to date, anticipated consultation and timescale for legislation. The Department also highlights differences which will shape the legislation.

As your committees will also have an interest in this matter, the Committee agreed to copy the Minister's correspondence to you both.

You will wish to bring this to the attention of your committees.

Regards,

Peter Hall
Clerk to the Committee for Finance

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REQUEST FROM: FINANCE COMMITTEE – DALO READOUT - MEETING WEDNESDAY 6 May 2026

Point 1 – Jade's Law – Timescale for the associated consultation , drafting and anticipated date of introduction for the legislation together with an assessment of how difficult if will be to craft legislation for NI based on the complexities of the GB legislation.

Response –

- Work has commenced on the first aspect of proposed legislation, provisions to cater for Jade's Law. Officials have met with MOJ counterparts to assess the issues and complexities involved. Further meetings with colleagues from DOJ and DOH who will have interest in this particular issue will take place in the coming weeks. Meanwhile, initial scoping on other areas of parental responsibility reform has started.

- This early work is planned to be brought together by way of the preparation of a consultation paper. It is anticipated that stakeholder engagement will take place during 2026, and drafting will commence in early 2027. The aim is to introduce a Bill in the early part of the new mandate; timings will be clearer once the final shape of the Bill – that will include Jade's Law along with other parental responsibility and family law reform matters – is understood and agreed.

- The GB legislation relating to Jade's Law and potentially relating to other areas of parental responsibility reform, will serve as a helpful guideline for reform here. However, given the differences in court structures, both on the criminal law and family law side, and differences in how our public family law processes are set up, careful policy development and engagement with DOJ/the courts and others will be required to ensure legislation is legally coherent and effective. The aim will be to ensure that any subsequent legislation can be brought into operation without the type of delays being experienced in England and Wales, where commencement of Jade's Law has yet to occur.
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