

FROM THE OFFICE OF THE JUSTICE MINISTER



Department of
Justice

An Roinn Dlí agus Cirt

Máinnystrie O tha Laa

www.justice-ni.gov.uk

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JCP\25\313

Kathy O'Hanlon
Clerk to the Committee for Justice
Room 242
Parliament Buildings
Ballymiscaw
Stormont
Belfast BT4 3XX

10 December 2025

Dear Kathy,

REPEAL OF VAGRANCY LEGISLATION

Thank you for your letter of 2 December 2025 asking for the Department's views on Professor Brown's suggested amendment to cover Begging causing Harassment, Obstruction or Public Order. The Minister is grateful for the careful consideration he has given to this issue.

As members will be aware, following the Department's review, in liaison with PSNI, of section 3 of the Vagrancy (Ireland) Act 1847, which criminalises begging, and the subsequent public consultation which sought views on its repeal without replacement legislation, the Minister concluded that people who are simply begging should not be criminalised and that the existing legislative framework has the necessary offences to deal with any behaviours committed by those who beg where these cross the criminal threshold.

The Department does not support Professor Brown's proposals as they would continue to criminalise people who are simply begging and marginalise some of the most vulnerable in our society. The measures proposed also raise some concerns about the

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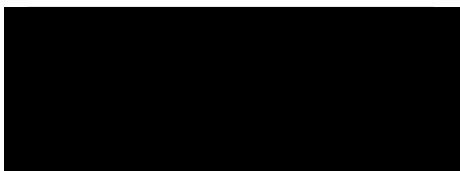
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potential for interference with Article 8 (Right to respect for private and family life) of the European Convention on Human Rights.



**CAOIMHE MCKEOWN
DALO**



**Northern Ireland Assembly
Committee for Justice**

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2 December 2025

Dear Caoimhe

Repeal of Vagrancy Legislation

At its meeting on 27 November 2025, the Committee for Justice considered the Department's response to the Committee's questions arising from the oral evidence from Professor Kevin Brown (your ref JCP\25\284).

The response advised that Professor Brown's suggested amendment to cover Begging causing Harassment, Obstruction or Public Order Concerns had been forwarded to the Minister and to the relevant policy leads. The Committee agreed to ask the Department for an indication of when the Department will provide the Committee with its views on the suggested amendment.

I would appreciate a response at the earliest opportunity. Given that Departmental officials are scheduled to discuss the planned Departmental amendment on the Repeal of Vagrancy Legislation at the Committee meeting on 11 December, it would be helpful if the response could be provided in advance of that meeting.

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E-mail: committee.justice@niassembly.gov.uk

Yours sincerely

Kathy O'Hanlon

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