

Ms Christine Darragh
Clerk, Committee for Justice,
Northern Ireland Assembly
Room 242, Parliament Buildings
Ballymiscaw
Stormont
BELFAST BT4 3XX

14 October 2013

Dear *Christine*

Human Trafficking and Exploitation (Further Provisions and Support for Victims) Bill

I am writing to acknowledge receipt of your letter dated 3 October 2013 in which you sought the Commission's views/comments on the contents of the Bill.

I can confirm the Commission has no contrary views or comments on the specific clauses of the Bill. The Commission would, however, expect that a Legal Aid Impact Assessment would be completed prior to the implementation of the Bill.

The Committee will be aware of the funding pressures on the Legal Aid Fund ("the Fund"). Legislative developments which have not been factored into the Commission's forecast or budget can have a huge detrimental effect on the funding available for the Commission to discharge its statutory duties.

The Legal Aid Impact test is a mechanism whereby those involved with developing policy can assess if there will be an impact on the work of the Commission, both in terms of resources and funding. The Bill, when enacted, will create new offences for which criminal Legal Aid may be granted by the Courts. The creation of new offences could have an impact on the Fund.

The Commission is tasked with managing the Fund and forecasting future expenditure. To assist with this process, the Impact Test would provide an estimation of the number of cases which might be prosecuted through the courts, the court tier in which these will be tried and an estimation of when prosecutions are anticipated to take place.

The Commission understands that completing this test is not a simple process, but the information collated is vital to enable the Commission to arrive at an estimation of future expenditure and a time frame for this expenditure to become a liability on the Fund.

I trust this reply will be of assistance to the Committee.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Paul Andrews". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Paul Andrews
Chief Executive