

FROM THE OFFICE OF THE JUSTICE MINISTER



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S. 40(2)
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S. 40(2)

Thank you for your letter of 29 June. I apologise for the delay in replying. I know that you have already received a response from the Health Minister.

I too would like to acknowledge the important role played by the FPA in the provision of sexual health services.

You asked about the working group on fatal fetal abnormality which was established last month to consider the health care provision for such cases, including the potential for legislative change. My Department's role will be to contribute to the work of the group on issues relating to the criminal law on abortion, drawing on previous work informed by the comprehensive public consultation exercise in 2014/15. The group will then make recommendations to both Health and Justice Ministers on proposals to submit to the Executive. The membership of the group has been published and the terms of reference illustrate who the group will engage with, where it is considered necessary over and above the previous consultation.

You also refer to the law on abortion for sexual crime. This is not part of the current working group's remit. The Department's consultation response document last year outlined the difficulties involved in legislating in this field and highlighted many problems

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which would not allow for early or easy resolution. The primary aim at this juncture is to address issues in relation to women facing a diagnosis involving a fatal fetal abnormality.

I hope this answers your questions.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Claire Sugden".

CLAIRE SUGDEN MLA
Minister of Justice