



Department of
Justice
An Roinn Dlí agus Cirt
Máinnystrie O tha Laa
www.justice-ni.gov.uk

Department of Justice
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11 July 2023

REFERENCE: FOI\23\38

Dear Sir,

Thank you for your request of 13 June 2023 under the Freedom of Information Act as follows.

Please disclose the following for the period since the collapse of the Executive last October:

- 1. The number of reports due for publication that the department is withholding because there are no ministers in post to approve their release.*
- 2. A list of the names of the above reports and for each, a brief description of them; and the date they were completed.*
- 3. A list of policies or reports ready for a minister to make a decision on, but which are not being progressed in the absence of a minister.*
- 4. A list summarising the policies or reports in Q3.*

The Freedom of Information Act 2000 gives you two rights of access when you write to us asking for information. You have the right to know whether we hold recorded information in scope of your request, and you have the right to have that recorded information given to you. These rights may only be overridden if the information you are looking for is covered by an exemption in the Act.

Please be advised of the following responses to your request:

Questions 1 & 2: There are no reports due for publication that the Department is withholding because a Minister is not in post to approve their release.

Questions 3 & 4: There are two policy matters which are ready for a Ministerial decision as follows:



- (i) **Coronial investigations into deaths abroad** - A Ministerial decision is required as to whether or not legislative change should be progressed which would provide coroners with the legislative power to undertake investigations into the death of Northern Ireland citizens in other jurisdictions.
- (ii) **Domestic Abuse and Civil Proceedings Act (Northern Ireland) 2021** - Section 29 of the Domestic Abuse and Civil Proceedings Act (Northern Ireland) 2021 requires the Department to lay a report to the Northern Ireland Assembly setting out the Department's proposals for: (a) making regulations under the Access to Justice (Northern Ireland) Order 2003 for the prescribed purpose, or (b) taking some different course of action for the prescribed purpose.

Ministerial approval will be sought on draft proposals to reduce the cost for a victim of defending proceedings brought against them by an abusive partner, and for making it more difficult for abusers to access civil legal services to bring vexatious applications and to perpetuate their abuse through the courts. That is in advance of public consultation and publication of the report to the Northern Ireland Assembly.

If you are unhappy with the result of your request for information, you may request an internal review within two calendar months of the date of this letter. If you request an internal review please do so in writing stating the reasons to the address above.

If following an internal review you were to remain dissatisfied you may make a complaint to the Information Commissioner and ask the Commissioner to investigate whether the DOJ has complied with the terms of the FOIA. You can write to the Information Commissioner at:

Information Commissioner
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire
SK9 5AF

The Commissioner will not investigate a complaint unless an internal review procedure has been carried out.



Further details on the role of the Information Commissioner and the handling of appeals can be found at: www.informationcommissioner.gov.uk

Yours sincerely

Freedom of Information Manager

