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Date 10 November 2011

Dear Consultee

DRAFT STATUTORY GUIDANCE REGARDING THE FORCED MARRIAGE (CIVIL PROTECTION) ACT 2007

The Department of Finance and Personnel is seeking views on the attached draft statutory guidance "The Right to Choose: Statutory guidance for dealing with forced marriage"

The draft guidance is issued under paragraph 13 of Schedule 1 of the Forced Marriage (Civil Protection) Act 2007 and provides guidance to persons and bodies in Northern Ireland as to the operation of the Act and other matters relating to forced marriage.

It is widely recognised that forced marriage is an abuse of human rights and a form of domestic abuse. Following on from an investigation into the scale and extent of forced marriage across the United Kingdom, the previous UK Government decided to introduce specific legislation to address the issue. The 2007 Act allows a Court to make a Forced Marriage Protection Order to prevent a forced marriage from occurring or to offer protective measures when a forced marriage has already taken place. The Court's powers are wide and the Orders may contain prohibitions, restrictions, requirements or such other terms as the Court thinks appropriate to stop or change the behaviour or conduct of those who are trying to force the marriage through.

On 11 June 2007 the Assembly passed a legislative consent motion which endorsed the extension of the legislation to Northern Ireland. Accordingly, Schedule 1 to the 2007 Act extends the new legislative regime to this jurisdiction.

The draft guidance is designed to assist in the operation of the Act in Northern Ireland.

The Department of Finance and Personnel welcomes comments on the issues raised in the Consultation document by 22 December 2011. Comments should be addressed to www.jim.strain@dfpni.gov.uk at the above address.

Yours sincerely

JAMES STRAIN