

ANNEX B

NICS EXERCISE UNDERWAY FOLLOWING CONVICTION OF JEFFREY DONALDSON – A MESSAGE FROM HOCS

Please note: This communication contains references to sexual abuse and safeguarding concerns and may be distressing for some colleagues. Information on available support is included below.

Colleagues

Following the conviction of Jeffrey Donaldson for rape, indecent assault and gross indecency against two women when they were children, I commissioned a scoping exercise to establish whether any current or former member of NICS staff may have experienced abuse or inappropriate behaviour during the period he served as a Junior Minister in the former Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister (OFMdFM) between February 2008 and July 2009.

I want colleagues to be aware of the arrangements that have been put in place so that anyone who wishes to share information can do so safely, confidentially and with appropriate support.

The terms of reference for the exercise have now been agreed and are available in the attached document. The exercise will be conducted by a small number of senior HR and legal officials and will take a trauma-informed approach throughout. Its findings will be reported directly to me, and it is expected to conclude within the next six to eight weeks.

The purpose of the exercise is to provide an opportunity for any current or former members of staff who may have experienced abuse or inappropriate behaviour while Jeffrey Donaldson was serving as a Junior Minister to share information in a safe, confidential and supported manner.

To support this, a dedicated confidential telephone line and mailbox have been established for current and former staff who wish to provide information relevant to the exercise. The telephone line and mailbox are available Monday to Friday, from 9am to 5pm.

Staff can phone: **028 9027 7662** or email: nicshrconfidentialreporting@finance-ni.gov.uk.

Contacts will be managed by a small number of appropriately briefed HR managers, who will respond sensitively and consistently and explain the options available. Any contact made through this route will be handled with care, sensitivity and respect.

Current or former members of staff who believe they may have information relevant to the exercise are encouraged to use the confidential arrangements outlined above. Current or former members of staff who wish to do so may also report concerns or information directly to the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI).

All information received as part of the exercise will be handled sensitively, securely and on a need-to-know basis, in accordance with the NICS's legal obligations relating to data protection, confidentiality, records management and information governance. Information will only be shared with the PSNI or another appropriate authority where this is required by legal, safeguarding or other statutory obligations.

I recognise that the subject matter of this communication may be difficult and distressing for some colleagues, particularly those who have experienced abuse, inappropriate behaviour or trauma at any stage in their lives.

Support is available to any colleague affected by the issues raised in this communication, whether or not they have information to provide as part of the exercise.

The arrangements outlined above relate to this specific exercise. However, support is also available to any colleague who may be affected by the issues raised in this communication, regardless of whether they have information relevant to the exercise. Colleagues may wish to speak to their line manager, NICS HR, a Safe Place Advocate, their Trade Union representative, access the Employee Assistance Programme, or use any of the other support services available through the NICS, depending on what feels most appropriate for them. Further information, including details of relevant policies and sources of support, is available here:

- [Sources of support for colleagues who have experienced abuse](#)

If you need support, or wish to raise a concern or share information, I encourage you to use whichever route feels most appropriate for you.

Jayne Brady

Head of the Civil Service