

*These notes refer to the Protection from Stalking Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 (c.17) which received Royal Assent on 26 April 2022*

# Protection from Stalking Act (Northern Ireland) 2022

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## **EXPLANATORY NOTES**

### **BACKGROUND AND POLICY OBJECTIVES**

3. In 2016, following the reporting of a number of high profile cases of stalking in the media, the then Minister of Justice commissioned a review of the current law relating to stalking in Northern Ireland. The Northern Ireland Assembly subsequently debated a motion on stalking, in September 2016, and shortly thereafter the Committee for Justice initiated its own review of the law to determine whether specific stalking offences should be created.
4. The Department of Justice supported the Committee's work through the provision of advice and research and by engaging with policy officials in other jurisdictions. The Committee was due to conclude its review in April 2017 and publish its findings. However, with the Assembly in suspension, its review was not completed. The Department's review team built on the initial work of the Justice Committee and went on to review the existing legislative framework; engage with other jurisdictions on their stalking policies and practices; and develop proposals, drawing on the consultation responses submitted to the Committee for Justice.
5. A Stalking Reference Group of key stakeholders was established and contributed to the review by considering the types of stalking behaviours being displayed and their impact on victims; highlighting the experience of victims under the current law, including how cases were handled by the criminal justice system, and suggesting where improvements could be made; identifying key aspects of the law that may need to be reviewed or changed; and ensuring that a broad spectrum of policy options were identified and considered.