

*These notes refer to the Justice (Sexual Offences and Trafficking Victims) Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 (c.19) which received Royal Assent on 27 April 2022*

# Justice (Sexual Offences and Trafficking Victims) Act (Northern Ireland) 2022

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## EXPLANATORY NOTES

### COMMENTARY ON SECTIONS

#### **Part 2: Trafficking and exploitation**

##### ***Section 21: Support for victims of trafficking etc.***

This section has the effect of extending the statutory assistance and support provided under section 18 of the 2015 Act to adult potential victims of slavery, servitude or forced or compulsory labour where there is no element of trafficking.

The section will have the effect of extending this support for an adult who has been given a reasonable grounds decision beyond the 45 days cited in the 2015 Act based on the needs of the individual.

Section 21 will also provide for support to a victim of slavery or trafficking after a positive conclusive grounds decision to be continued for a period of up to 12 months, or more than 12 months for such period as the Department may determine.

##### ***Section 22: Defence for slavery and trafficking victims***

Section 22 amends Section 22(9) of the 2015 Act to include Class A drugs in the statutory defence provisions for a person over the age of 21 who has been compelled to commit the offence by reason of compulsion or exploitation

##### ***Section 23: Reports on slavery and trafficking offences***

This section removes the requirement to publish an annual strategy on offences under section 1 and 2 of the Act and replaces it with a requirement to publish such strategy at least once every 3 years.

##### ***Section 24: Protective measures for victims of slavery or trafficking***

Section 24 enables the Department to introduce steps or measures to protect a person from slavery or trafficking within 24 months of the date of Royal Assent. This will enable the Department to introduce measures such as Slavery and Trafficking Risk Orders (STROs), or activate the Duty to Notify provisions set

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out in the 2015 Act, if these are considered necessary, following an appropriate consultation process.

Any steps or measures will be introduced by regulations laid before and approved by the Assembly.