

Charlotte's Law Consultation Team
Criminal Justice Policy and Legislation Division
Department of Justice
Massey House
Stormont Estate
Belfast, BT4 3S

10 February 2022

To: Charlotte's Law Consultation Team

The public consultation relating to the proposed *Charlotte's Law* regarding possible changes to the law in murder cases in Northern Ireland where killers conceal the location of victims' bodies has been recently brought to the attention of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland (PCI) through the Irish Council of Churches, of which it is a member.

PCI recognises the huge distress caused to families mourning the loss of a loved one in deeply tragic circumstances, often compounded in cases where the location of the body of a loved one remains undisclosed.

PCI is supportive of efforts which would encourage early disclosure of a victim's remains, which in turn would offer families an opportunity to lay their loved one to rest in a respectful and dignified way. Recovery of a victim's body may also help to create the circumstances whereby families can begin a journey of healing from their trauma.

PCI cautions against the creation of a perverse incentive whereby a perpetrator may initially and deliberately withhold information about the location of a victim's body, under the mistaken perception that disclosure at some future date would in turn lead to a reduction in length of time served.

Even in these most difficult of circumstances PCI welcomes the focus on the rehabilitation and restoration of offenders as the environment in which opportunities for disclosure of relevant and accurate information can be facilitated. Where it is appropriate, chaplaincy services may have a part to play in this multi-disciplinary approach.

Yours faithfully,



Rt Rev Dr David Bruce
Moderator of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland