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Jo Swinson MP
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Our Ref: MC/19/209

Dear Jo,

28 March 2019

Thank you for your email dated 27 March 2019 to the Secretary of State about abortion law in Northern Ireland. I am responding on her behalf.

As I'm sure you will already know, abortion is devolved in Northern Ireland, so any question of reform to law or policy is rightly one for a devolved Executive and Assembly in Northern Ireland to consider. Given the finely balanced sensitivities of Northern Ireland politics, and the importance of devolved government at Stormont in maintaining that balance, I hope you will understand why we are reluctant to dislodge that principle at this time.

We will keep this position under review and, in the meantime, the key priority must be the ongoing discussions with the Northern Ireland parties on restoring devolved government at the earliest opportunity, so that decisions on sensitive devolved issues like this can be taken by locally elected representatives.

Yours ever
John

**JOHN PENROSE MP
MINISTER OF STATE
NORTHERN IRELAND OFFICE**