

Geraldine McGahey
Email: **NR**@equalityni.org

Our Ref CORR: 1404:2020
17 September 2020

Dear Geraldine

Thank you for your letter dated 29th April expressing the need to protect vulnerable people during the current covid-19 crisis.

We are indeed living in unprecedented times and responding to a crisis on a scale which no-one could have foreseen. The Executive is reacting to the emerging issues on a daily basis and doing everything in its power to minimise the risks to all members of our society.

We acknowledge the differential impact that COVID19 may have on different groups across our society in both the immediate and longer term and we appreciate the importance of continuing to comply with equality principles in all decision making processes. There is a particular focus on older people at present as they are one of the categories at greatest risk but we must ensure that our work continues to help everyone without discrimination.

As you have stated, during 2015 we conducted a 14 week public consultation on proposals to extend age discrimination legislation to include the provision of goods, facilities and services. The consultation attracted significant interest and while many people welcomed the proposals, the responses also presented a number of fundamental challenges regarding the scope of the proposed legislation. Further work is required to finalise the policy content of the proposed legislation, and of course there is a commitment in the New Decade, New Approach document to consider bringing forward an Age Goods Facilities and Services Bill as part of the next Programme for Government.

With regard to your concerns regarding race equality laws, there has been significant work undertaken by our officials to review the Race Relations Order (NI) 1997, ECNI's recommendation will be considered as part of this review. Also, in respect of the minority ethnic community we have decided to extend the Minority Ethnic and Development Fund for a further year. This will help provide stability and assurance to the sector in these uncertain times and enable organisations to continue to support vulnerable minority ethnic people at a time when they need it most.

Thank you for raising the Commission's concerns, hopefully this information will provide some reassurance of the actions being taken by the Executive to address them.

Yours Sincerely,

Personal Data

**THE RT HON ARLENE FOSTER MLA
FIRST MINISTER**

Personal Data

**MICHELLE O'NEILL MLA
DEPUTY FIRST MINISTER**

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