



Northern  
Ireland  
Office

Secretary of State for Northern Ireland  
1 Horse Guards Road  
London  
SW1A 2HQ  
T 0207 210 6464

Stormont House  
Belfast  
BT4 3SH

T 02890 527021  
E [sos@nio.x.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:sos@nio.x.gsi.gov.uk)  
[www.gov.uk/nio](http://www.gov.uk/nio)  
@niopressoffice

Laurence Robertson MP  
House of Commons  
London SW1A 0AA

[robertsonl@parliament.uk](mailto:robertsonl@parliament.uk)

18 November 2015

Dear Laurence

### **Northern Ireland (Welfare Reform) Bill**

Yesterday we published the Stormont Agreement and Implementation Plan, which set out the agreements reached in the recent cross-party talks on a range of issues. Detail of the agreement is set out at [www.gov.uk/government/news/a-fresh-start-for-northern-ireland](http://www.gov.uk/government/news/a-fresh-start-for-northern-ireland).

One of the key agreements reached by the parties in Northern Ireland was for the UK Government to legislate for welfare reform in Northern Ireland and a Bill to be introduced into Westminster as a matter of urgency. Delivering changes to the welfare system in Northern Ireland is essential if the devolved Executive is to have a sustainable budget. So implementing this aspect of yesterday's agreement is a critical step in securing political stability in Northern Ireland, settling the budget dispute between the NI parties and averting the risk of collapse of devolution.

I intend to introduce a Bill into the House of Commons tomorrow to give UK Ministers a power to legislate for welfare reform in Northern Ireland via an Order in Council. This Order in Council will set out the detail of welfare reform to be implemented in Stormont and will provide the Secretary of State or a Northern Ireland Department, with the power to make regulations.

The Bill does not alter the legislative competence of the Northern Ireland Assembly - welfare is a transferred matter in respect of Northern Ireland. The consent of the Northern Ireland Assembly will be sought for this legislation, in line with the convention that the UK Parliament will not normally legislate on a devolved matter except with the agreement of the devolved legislature. The Assembly have indicated that they expect to consider and debate a consent motion today, Wednesday 18 November.

In order to support this debate in the Assembly I am today publishing both the Bill and the Order in Council in draft. I attach copies of these documents for your information. I will place copies of the draft Bill and draft Order in Council in the Libraries of both Houses and the Vote Office and they will also be published on the gov.uk website later today. I will do the same with the supporting explanatory memorandum in the coming days.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Theresa', written in a cursive style.

**RT HON THERESA VILLIERS MP  
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR NORTHERN IRELAND**