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The Rt Hon George Howarth MP
House of Commons
London
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Ref

15 September 2015

Dear George

Thank you for your letter dated 17 July raising the concerns of your constituent, in relation to the individual who has been charged for purchasing abortion medication on behalf of her daughter in Northern Ireland.

I appreciate that this is a distressing case and one which would not have happened if abortion law in Northern Ireland was the same as in the rest of the UK.

This is a devolved issue and one over which neither I nor the UK Government has jurisdiction. It is therefore up to the people of Northern Ireland and their elected representatives in Stormont to address the need for change.

The Public Prosecution Service (PPS) in Northern Ireland decides whether or not to prosecute people for committing criminal offences. The PPS is independent of Government and the Police Service in Northern Ireland when carrying out its functions. No one can make the PPS prosecute a particular case nor stop it from doing so.

I am afraid that political interference in decisions on prosecutions would have a range of damaging consequences.

Thank you again for taking the time to contact me. I am sorry that I am not able to give you the assurance that you seek. My own views on abortion are clear and I am on record as supporting the laws which apply in Great Britain. I have no power to intervene in the Northern Ireland criminal justice system, nor to impose a change in the law on abortion there.

Regards

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Theresa'.

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