Thank you for your letter of 19th March concerning the progress of the Historical Institutional Abuse Inquiry.

I agree that action needs to be taken to ensure that victims and survivors get the redress they deserve. They have suffered for too long.

I want to provide some reassurance that the Head of the Northern Ireland Civil Service, David Sterling, is also aware of the frustration and disappointment of victims and survivors at the continuing political impasse. As a result, he is proceeding with preparatory work around those recommendations from the HIA Report that require legislation.

The Executive Office (TEO) prepared three pieces of draft legislation which relate to the establishment of a Redress Board, a Compensation Scheme, and the establishment of a Commissioner.

The consultation, which was extended at the request of victim support groups, closed on 10 March. TEO is currently analysing responses in order to prepare a written report on the outcomes for Ministerial consideration.

I understand that the aim is to have this work completed by late April/early May 2019. I empathise with your frustration with regard to timing, but I hope you can understand that it is vital that we take into account the views of all victims so that a redress scheme can be implemented thoroughly and properly.

In the meantime, David Sterling intends to appoint an Interim Advocate for victims and survivors of historical institutional abuse. The Interim Advocate will provide support and assistance to victims and survivors until a statutory Commissioner can be appointed.
If there is not a restored NI government by the time the consultation analysis and report are finalised, I will indeed consider the urgent next steps in the absence of NI Executive Ministers.

KAREN BRADLEY MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR NORTHERN IRELAND