

The people of Northern Ireland are beginning to grasp the enormity of these proposals and their potential impact. Surely fairness demands the Health Department do more than already done to bring this to people's attention.

Unquestionably, they can saturate us with any message they want. The fact that they have not done so, along with these proposals being novel and complex, should mean this consultation is extended, at the very least, until the end of the year. If it proves too difficult for people to express meaningful views, because of these factors, it might be wise to scrap the process altogether and develop outreach and learning leading to something more akin to a referendum.

The desire to have new permanent powers to restrict and intervene in our lives keeping us safe, labelling us vulnerable, seems something more than a natural follow on to updating old laws, it seems strange this was not picked up on from July by virtually all MLA's. Because these proposals will fundamentally change the relationship of the government with its people from 'governing with to being ruled over' it seems vital people instruct their representatives to sound the alarm bells objecting to the current process and that continuing in this manner will not be tolerated.

At their very heart it should be apparent these are as important a level as constitutional issues, undoubtedly, they will determine how the ordinary day lives of people are ruled even when there is not an emergency. The last time this happened we were given a referendum under the Good Friday Agreement; the necessity to demand that right anew seems to have arrived as there is nothing on the horizon to suggest we are going to given it.