

To whom it concerns,

The Public Consultation on Judicial Resources is welcome and I want to put forward a number of issues on my own behalf and on behalf of people who have contacted me.

In the first instance I have been contacted by Dr. Jacinta Nolan, a clinical psychologist who regularly attends courts, particularly in the context of childcare hearings. Dr. Nolan has told me that there are significant delays in hearings for full-care orders or other childcare matters due to a lack of judges, particularly at Circuit Court level. This difficulty manifests itself acutely outside Dublin where there is usually only one sitting per county with the result that the delays in childcare hearings are exacerbated by the lack of judges.

Dr. Nolan has further told me that the condition of courthouses, including the Bridewell Courthouse in Dublin, leaves a great deal to be desired in terms of providing adequate facilities for parents and children who are unfortunate enough to have to go through childcare proceedings.

Additionally she identifies courthouses such as those in Kerry, where there are no resources or rooms provided for the persons who are before the court, to allow them to have private consultations or to wait with any privacy before court hearings commence. Thurles Courthouse, which was recently refurbished, has no fax machine or video facilities despite recent works.

Dr. Nolan points out that in many courthouses around the country, particularly during Covid, there is no privacy for persons who are attending court for the purposes of childcare hearings or other sensitive matters. Frequently parties are required to wait outside the courtroom, or outside the courthouse, where they can be observed by the general public.

I am sure everyone appreciates the sensitivity of certain matters that are before the court and it seems very unfair and unreasonable that parties to sensitive matters like childcare, family law or other matters, would be required to essentially be visibly entering the courthouse.

Your faithfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Barry', with a stylized flourish extending to the right.

**Senator Barry Ward**

Fine Gael – Dún Laoghaire

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