



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee for The Executive Office

Minutes of Proceedings

Wednesday 18 June 2025

Meeting Location: Room 30, Parliament Buildings

Present:

Ms Paula Bradshaw MLA (Chairperson)

Mr Stewart Dickson MLA (Deputy Chairperson)

Mr Timothy Gaston MLA

Mr Harry Harvey MLA

Mr Brian Kingston MLA

Online:

Ms Sinéad McLaughlin MLA

Ms Carál Ní Chuilín MLA

Ms Claire Sugden MLA

Apologies:

Ms Áine Murphy MLA

In Attendance: Mrs Kathy O'Hanlon (Assembly Clerk)
Ms Sarah-Anne McKinley (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Mr Neil Porter (Clerical Supervisor)
Ms Andrienne Magee (Clerical Officer)

The meeting commenced at 2.02pm in public session.

1. Apologies

As above.

2. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

3. Chairperson's Business

Informal Meeting with First and deputy First Minister

The Chairperson updated Members on the informal meeting the Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson had with the First Minister and deputy First Minister on the 16 June regarding the Inquiry (Mother and Baby Institutions, Magdalene Laundries and Workhouses) and Redress Scheme Bill prior to its Introduction.

The Committee noted the informal meeting note.

Interparliamentary Forum

The Chairperson updated Members on the Interparliamentary Forum that took place in the House of Commons on 12 June. The Forum heard updates from each legislature and discussed issues of common interest, including intergovernmental relations, the nature of devolution and the legislative consent process.

Media Queries - the Inquiry (Mother and Baby Institutions, Magdalene Laundries and Workhouses) and Redress Scheme Bill

The Chairperson advised Members that, following the Introduction of the Inquiry (Mother and Baby Institutions, Magdalene Laundries and Workhouses) and Redress Scheme Bill on Monday, there have been a number of media queries in relation to the Bill. The Chair approved a number of lines to take on the morning of Wednesday 17 June, which were tabled in hard copy for Members' information.

The Chairperson advised that the Committee team are working with Assembly colleagues in the Engagement and Communications Offices to prepare a plan for the Committee Stage which will be brought to the Committee for consideration and approval at its meeting on the 2 July.

4. Draft Minutes

Agreed: The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 11 June 2025.

5. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

6. Departmental Officials: Inquiry (Mother and Baby Institutions, Magdalene Laundries and Workhouses) and Redress Scheme Bill - Explanatory and Financial Memorandum – Oral Evidence

Agreed: The Committee agreed for Hansard to record the oral evidence session.

The witnesses joined the meeting at 2.06pm.

Claire Sugden joined the meeting online at 2.13pm

Members received oral evidence from:

- Elaine Allen, Head of Redress team, The Executive Office (TEO)
- Martin Carey, Truth Recovery Programme Director, TEO

- Michaela Jordan, Head of Programme team, TEO
- Francesca Murray, Head of Inquiry team, TEO

The witnesses provided an update on the Inquiry (Mother and Baby Institutions, Magdalene Laundries and Workhouses) and Redress Scheme Bill provisions and Explanatory and Financial Memorandum.

The oral briefing session was followed by a question and answer session.

The Chairperson thanked the witnesses for their attendance.

The witnesses left the meeting at 3.52pm.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department to request further information on the following matters:

- Inquiry Expenses – Further detail on the expenses that individuals called to Inquiry will be eligible to claim. This should include a breakdown of the types of expenses that can be reimbursed and the methodology used to determine what is considered reasonable or appropriate.
- Posthumous date of 29 September 2011 – Clarification on how cases falling close to the cut-off date will be treated and the reasoning behind the selection of this date.
- Access to Public Records – Information on what measures will be put in place to protect the rights of victims and survivors in the event that records the Inquiry will have access to are withheld from individuals. The Committee notes that further legislation may be necessary depending on the findings of the forthcoming Truth Recovery Design Panel report.
- Statements from Religious Orders – Whether an up-to-date statement from the relevant religious orders should form part of the official acknowledgment process for victims and survivors.
- Formal Engagement with Religious Orders – Confirmation that the Department will move towards a more formalised engagement process with religious institutions.

- Mid-Term Review of the Redress Scheme – Assurance that the scheme will include flexibility through a formal mid-term review mechanism to evaluate its implementation and effectiveness.
- Public Interest Immunity – If it is appropriate that Public Interest Immunity or other privileged information protections will apply to the Inquiry, and the implications this may have for transparency and victim and survivor confidence.
- Basis of Historical Institutional Abuse (HIA) payments - An explanation of the criteria and calculations used to determine redress payments under the HIA Redress scheme.
- Comparison with the Republic of Ireland's Redress Scheme - In relation to payment levels and eligibility.
- Cost of Processing Redress Applications - Details on the estimated cost of applications.
- Entitlement to a payment - A written briefing on the proposed eligibility of relatives of deceased victims under the Redress scheme.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to take a short comfort break and suspend the meeting.

The meeting was suspended at 3.52pm.

The meeting resumed in open session at 4.00pm with the following Members present:

Ms Paula Bradshaw MLA (Chairperson)

Mr Stewart Dickson MLA (Deputy Chairperson)

Mr Timothy Gaston MLA

Mr Harry Harvey MLA

Mr Brian Kingston MLA

Ms Sinéad McLaughlin MLA

Ms Claire Sugden MLA

Ms Carál Ní Chuilín MLA

7. Commissioner for Older People - Oral Evidence

The witness joined the meeting at 4.00pm.

Members received oral evidence from:

- Siobhan Casey, Commissioner for Older People for Northern Ireland
- Evelyn Hoy, Chief Executive, Commissioner for Older People for Northern Ireland

The witness provided an update on the work of the Commissioner for Older People.

The oral briefing session was followed by a question and answer session.

The Chairperson thanked the witnesses for their attendance.

Timothy Gaston left the meeting at 4.40pm.

The witness left the meeting at 4.51pm.

Brian Kingston left the meeting at 4.53pm.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to COPNI for clarification on notice periods required for residents in nursing homes across Northern Ireland.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to move into closed session for the next item of business.

8. Assembly Legal Services: Advice on publication of Assembly Legal Advice – Oral Briefing

The oral briefing began in closed session at 4.53pm

The official joined the meeting at 4.53pm.

Members discussed the legal advice provided the publication of Assembly Legal Advice.

The official left the meeting at 5.07pm.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to move into public session.

The Chair proposed that the Committee should not publish the legal advice the Committee received on the Court judgment *For Women Scotland Limited v The Scottish Ministers* at last week's meeting.

The proposal was seconded by Ms Ní Chuilín.

The Chair then put the question to the Committee that the proposal be agreed.

There were no dissenting voices so the Committee did not divide.

The proposal was carried.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to not publish the legal advice on the Supreme Court judgment in *For Women Scotland Limited v The Scottish Ministers*.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to move to closed session for the next item of business.

9. Inquiry into Gaps in Equality Legislation - Draft Final Report

The oral briefing began in closed session at 5.08pm

The official joined the meeting at 5.08pm.

The Committee discussed version three of the Inquiry into Gaps in Equality Legislation Draft Final Report.

The official left the meeting at 5.21pm.

The meeting moved to public session at 5.21pm.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that parties would review and provide updated submissions by Wednesday 2 July.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that party submissions should be added to the appendices of the Draft Final Report.

Agreed: That, following the summer recess, the Committee will consider whether a minority report should be included.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that Members could consider options in respect of issues where there is not broad consensus and propose these for consideration by the Committee after the summer recess period.

Agreed: The Committee agreed for the Assistant Clerk to email the latest version of Draft Final Report to Members.

Agreed: The Committee agreed for the Committee team to provide an updated template for Members to respond to each section of the report.

10. Correspondence

- i. The Committee noted the summary of Committee correspondence.
- ii. The Committee noted a response from the South Eastern Trust to the Committee's correspondence of 23 May 2025 requesting information on the forthcoming Inquiry (Mother and Baby Institutions, Magdalene Laundries and Workhouses) and Redress Scheme Bill and access to records.
- iii. The Committee noted a response from the Southern Trust to the Committee's correspondence of 23 May 2025 requesting information on the forthcoming Bill and access to records.
- iv. The Committee noted a response from the Western Trust to the Committee's correspondence of 23 May requesting information on the forthcoming Bill and access to records.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to Members to note and consider further action when responses have been received from all Trusts.

- v. The Committee noted a response from Survivors Together to the Committee's correspondence of the 2 June date requesting information on the difficulties faced by victims and survivors when applying for social housing.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department for Communities describing the difficulties faced as outlined by Survivors Together when applying for social housing.

vi. The Committee noted a response from Fermanagh & Omagh District Council to Committee's correspondence of the 7 May and its request for details on allocation of the Local Change Fund in relation to Ending Violence Against Women and Girls.

vii. The Committee noted a response from Derry City & Strabane District Council to Committee's correspondence of the 7 May and its request for details on allocation of the Local Change Fund in relation to Ending Violence Against Women and Girls.

viii. The Committee noted a response from Causeway Coast & Glens District Council to Committee's correspondence of the 7 May and its request for details on allocation of the Local Change Fund in relation to Ending Violence Against Women and Girls.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note and to consider further action when all responses have been received from local council areas.

ix. The Committee considered correspondence from an individual advising of their concerns at the inconsistent bus service in Ballymena.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the individual informing them that this issue does not fall within the remit of TEO and, with their permission, the Committee will forward their correspondence to the Committee for Infrastructure.

x. The Committee noted a correspondence from the Northern Ireland Judicial Appointments Commission (NIJAC) regarding a potential engagement session with the Committee and the Committee for Justice.

Agreed: The Committee agreed for the Committee team to liaise with NIJAC and the Committee for Justice to arrange a suitable date for the session.

- xi. The Committee noted a report on the PSNI Race and Ethnicity Action Plan and an invitation and to the Plan launch on Thursday, 7th August 2025 at Ulster University, Belfast.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note the report and the invitation. If any member wishes to attend they can register via the link in the invite.

- xii. The Committee noted a response from the South East Fermanagh Foundation (SEFF) to Committees correspondence of the 2 June requesting information on what SEFF would like to see in a communications strategy for the Troubles Permanent Disablement Payment Scheme.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note the response and consider further when responses have been received from all five groups.

- xiii. The Committee noted a correspondence from the Examiner of Statutory Rules regarding the forty-first report of the Examiner of Statutory Rules. There were no rules for the attention of the Committee.

- xiv. The Committee noted a news release from TEO regarding the recent disorder across Northern Ireland. This was also emailed to Members on the 11 June.

- xv. The Committee noted a response from the Department for the Communities to the Committee's correspondence of the 30 May requesting information on HIA victims and Complex Needs Points.

- xvi. The Committee noted a News Release from TEO: New AI and Digital Office will drive innovation and transform services.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department to seek an update on the work of this new office.

- xvii. The Committee noted a response from TEO to the Committee's correspondence of 7 May 2025 regarding TEO budget allocation for Ending Violence against Women and Girls and the Strategic Investment Board.

11. Forward Work Programme

The Committee considered the draft forward work programme.

The Committee noted an update from the Assistant Clerk in relation to the Programme for Government oral briefing which has been re-arranged to the 10 September meeting.

The Committee noted an update from the Assistant Clerk in relation to the oral briefing with the First and deputy First Minister and junior Ministers which will be the second oral briefing at next week's meeting due to diary commitments.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to proceed with the remaining briefings as set out in the forward work programme.

Agreed: Members agreed to meet next week at 1:45pm to discuss potential themes of questioning prior to the formal Committee meeting starting at 2.00pm.

12. Any Other Business

Claire Sugden raised further actions for the Committee to consider following the briefing from the Commissioner for Older People.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department to request an update on what work has been progressed in relation to an ageing population strategy, including the establishment of a working group to examine this policy area and any cross-departmental mapping exercises that have been undertaken or considered.

13. Date and Time of Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday 25 June at 2.00pm in Room 30, Parliament Buildings.

The meeting was adjourned at 5.33pm.

Paula Bradshaw MLA

Chairperson, Committee for the Executive Office

Wednesday 18 June 2025