

Report of the Review of Alleged Abuse or Inappropriate Behaviour Associated with Jeffrey Donaldson in Parliament Buildings

From: Director of Parliamentary Services

To: Clerk/Chief Executive

Date: 28 August 2026

Document Status: Final

Executive Summary

1. This report sets out the outcome of the Review of Alleged Abuse or Inappropriate Behaviour Associated with Jeffrey Donaldson in Parliament Buildings. The Review was commissioned by the Clerk/Chief Executive following the Speaker's request that the Assembly provide an opportunity for any Member or former Member, current or former Assembly or party staff member, or other user of Parliament Buildings to bring forward any incidents of abuse or inappropriate behaviour they directly experienced while Jeffrey Donaldson was a Member of the Assembly from 2003 to 2010, or while he was a regular visitor to Parliament Buildings as an MP.
2. The Review was conducted by the Director of Parliamentary Services, as a Senior Assembly Safeguarding Officer, and reported directly to the Clerk/Chief Executive. These arrangements were expressly designed to preserve independence from political interference, with the Speaker taking no part in the matter and the Speaker's Office having no role in the Review.
3. The Review had three principal strands:
 - i. A public and internal communications exercise to inform those within scope of the Review;
 - ii. The establishment of a dedicated contact route for reporting incidents of abuse or inappropriate behaviour; and
 - iii. An internal information search by Heads of Business across relevant record categories, including complaints, safeguarding material, correspondence, HR or management information, security and access records, third-party information and contemporaneous notes.
4. The Review was publicised through direct communications to Members, Assembly Commission staff and party support staff, through a media statement, through publication of information including the Terms of Reference for the Review on the Assembly website, and through social media posts on X and Facebook. Weekly social media posts were published over a six-week period and included a URL to allow click-throughs to the Review webpage to be monitored.

5. Support arrangements were put in place to ensure that any person who reported an incident to the Review could be supported sensitively and, where appropriate, directed to specialist external support. Assembly Commission employees involved in handling Review enquiries also received trauma-informed training.
6. The Review received no reports through the dedicated contact route for reporting incidents of abuse or inappropriate behaviour. Following the internal information search, no relevant information was identified. Accordingly, the Review has not identified any matter within scope requiring further investigation, referral to the PSNI or referral to another statutory agency.
7. That conclusion is necessarily limited, as the Review cannot determine that no incidents occurred, only that none were reported to the Review and no relevant records were identified.
8. The Review has not identified any matter requiring amendment of Assembly Commission policies or procedures. It does, however, reinforce the importance of clear reporting routes, trauma-informed handling of sensitive matters, safeguarding training and accessible support arrangements.
9. The principal recommendations include that the Clerk/Chief Executive:
 - i. Note the findings of the Review;
 - ii. Agree that no further investigation or statutory referral arises from the Review; and
 - iii. Agree that this report should be published in full, subject only to final legal, data protection, confidentiality, records management and information governance checks.

1. Purpose of this report

1.1 This report provides the outcome of the Review of Alleged Abuse or Inappropriate Behaviour Associated with Jeffrey Donaldson in Parliament Buildings. The Review was commissioned by the Clerk/Chief Executive following a request from the Speaker.

1.2 The Terms of Reference for the Review are set out at Annex A.

1.3 The Speaker's request asked that any information received should enable the Clerk/Chief Executive to determine whether further appropriate investigation was required or whether any matters should be referred to the PSNI or other statutory agencies.

1.4 The Review has now concluded. Within its defined scope, no reports were received through the Review contact route and no relevant information was identified

through the internal information search. No matter has therefore arisen requiring referral to the PSNI, another statutory agency, or further internal investigation.

2. Background

2.1 On 30 June 2026, the Speaker wrote to the Clerk/Chief Executive asking her to conduct a review to enable any Member or former Member, current or former Assembly or party staff member, or other user of Parliament Buildings to bring forward any incidents of abuse or inappropriate behaviour they directly experienced while Jeffrey Donaldson was a Member of the Assembly from 2003 to 2010, or while he was a regular visitor to Parliament Buildings as an MP. The purpose was to enable the Clerk/Chief Executive to determine whether further appropriate investigation was required or whether any matter should be referred to the PSNI or another statutory agency. The Speaker emphasised the need for a thorough and robust approach, independent from political interference, and stated that he should take no part in the matter.

2.2 The Speaker also asked that attention be given to three related issues:

- i. Safeguarding training for Members, including as part of induction after the next election;
- ii. Ensuring that welfare or other appropriate support was available for anyone reporting abuse or inappropriate behaviour; and
- iii. Handling these sensitive matters in as open and transparent a way as appropriate.

2.3 The Clerk/Chief Executive subsequently put arrangements in place for the Review to be conducted by the Director of Parliamentary Services, guided by experts in trauma-informed practices, and reported directly to the Clerk/Chief Executive.

3. Terms of Reference

3.1 The Terms of Reference required the Review to:

1. Establish if the Assembly Commission holds any relevant information on abuse or inappropriate behaviour while Jeffrey Donaldson was a Member of the Assembly from 2003 to 2010, or while he was a visitor to Parliament Buildings as an MP.
2. Communicate and provide an appropriate process to enable any Member or former Member, current or former Assembly or party staff, or other user of Parliament Buildings to bring forward any incidents of abuse or inappropriate behaviour they directly experienced while Jeffrey Donaldson was a Member of the Assembly from 2003 to 2010 or a visitor to Parliament Buildings as an MP.
3. Inform Members or former Members, current or former Assembly or party staff, or other user of Parliament Buildings of the support service available for anyone who reports having been subject to abuse or inappropriate behaviour by Jeffrey Donaldson.

4. Draw to the Clerk/Chief Executive's attention any matters that may require further appropriate investigation or referral to the PSNI or other statutory agencies.
5. Indicate whether any of the issues considered have implications for any Assembly Commission policies or procedures.
6. Consider the extent to which the review findings or a summary thereof can be published.

3.2 The Terms of Reference required a report to be provided to the Clerk/Chief Executive by 28 August 2026.

4. Governance arrangements

4.1 The Review was commissioned by the Clerk/Chief Executive and conducted by the Director of Parliamentary Services, a Senior Assembly Safeguarding Officer.

4.2 An Advisory Panel was established to support the Review. The Panel brought expertise in human resources and employee wellbeing, strategic communications and public engagement, and relevant areas of law. Its role was to advise on methodology, communications, information handling and the final report. The Panel did not have a decision-making or investigative role.

4.3 The governance model protected independence from political interference. The Speaker's letter to the Clerk/Chief Executive stated that the Speaker should take no part in the matter, and the public and internal communications confirmed that the Review would report directly to the Clerk/Chief Executive.

4.4 Assembly Commission Members were informed of the governance arrangements for the Review, including the Director of Parliamentary Services' responsibility for conducting the Review, direct reporting to the Clerk/Chief Executive and the exclusion of political involvement from the conduct of the Review.

4.5 The Review was therefore structured around four safeguards:

- i. Direct accountability to the Clerk/Chief Executive;
- ii. No political involvement in the conduct of the Review;
- iii. Trauma-informed support and handling arrangements; and
- iv. Defined Terms of Reference.

5. Methodology

5.1 The Review methodology had three principal elements.

5.2 The first element was a public and internal communications exercise to notify those within scope of the Review, explain its purpose, identify the reporting route, and confirm that support was available. Communications were issued to Assembly Members, Assembly Commission staff, party support staff and the media. Information was also published on the Assembly website, including the Terms of Reference for the Review.

5.3 Social media activity formed part of the Review's wider communications exercise. It was used to direct people to the Review webpage and contact information, but did not replace the direct communications issued to Members, Assembly Commission staff and party support staff or alter the Review's contact route.

5.4 The second element was the establishment of a dedicated contact route for reporting incidents of abuse or inappropriate behaviour to the Review. The website notice and communications stated that any Member or official, or other user of Parliament Buildings, past or present, who had directly experienced abuse or inappropriate behaviour by Jeffrey Donaldson should report this to either the PSNI or the Review at donaldsonreview@niassembly.gov.uk.

5.5 The third element required Heads of Business in the Assembly Commission to undertake a review of information held within their business areas and to identify and provide any relevant information. They were instructed that relevant information meant any material which, on a reasonable view, might indicate or relate to alleged abuse or inappropriate behaviour by Jeffrey Donaldson and was capable of assisting the discharge of the Review's Terms of Reference. They were also instructed that any matter indicating potential criminality or an immediate safeguarding concern must be notified without delay and not held pending the deadline.

5.6 The Review was conducted on a trauma-informed basis. Assembly Commission employees involved in handling Review enquiries received training to support sensitive and professional engagement with any person using the Review contact route.

6. Review contact route established

6.1 A dedicated email address, donaldsonreview@niassembly.gov.uk, was established as part of the Review process. Public and internal communications explained that any person within scope who had directly experienced abuse or inappropriate behaviour by Jeffrey Donaldson could bring that matter forward by contacting the Review through that email address.

6.2 The Review was publicised through the Assembly website, a media statement, direct email communications to Members, Assembly staff and party support staff, and social media posts on X and Facebook. The social media posts provided a link to the Review webpage and contact information. By the conclusion of the Review on 21 August 2026, the social media posts had recorded 30,177 views and 243 engagements across the posts.

6.3 The Review contact route remained open from 10 July to 21 August 2026. The Terms of Reference required a report to be provided to the Clerk/Chief Executive by 28 August 2026.

6.4 No reports of incidents of abuse or inappropriate behaviour were received through the Review contact route.

7. Records searched

7.1 Heads of Business were asked to search the records held within their respective business areas. The search request specified the following categories of potentially relevant material:

- a. Complaints or concerns, whether formal or informal, including verbal concerns subsequently recorded;
- b. Safeguarding material, including records indicating potential risk, vulnerability or safeguarding considerations;
- c. Correspondence, including emails, letters, messages or notes referencing behaviour, concerns or incidents;
- d. HR or management information, including disciplinary matters, grievances, informal notes or staff welfare discussions;
- e. Security or access records, including incident reports, logs or records held by Security and Usher Services and by Facilities Management;
- f. Third-party information, including material received from external bodies, such as police or other organisations; and
- g. Contemporaneous notes, including diaries, notebooks or other informal records.

7.2 No relevant information was identified as a result of the search.

8. Support arrangements

8.1 The Review arrangements were designed to ensure that any person who contacted the Review would be responded to sensitively, appropriately and on a trauma-informed basis.

8.2 Specialist support arrangements were put in place so that any person who reported incidents to the Review could, where appropriate, be directed to external support.

8.3 Assembly Commission employees involved in receiving or responding to Review enquiries received safeguarding and trauma-informed training. The training covered the handling of sensitive matters, effective listening, confidentiality, professional boundaries, objective record-keeping and the personal impact of dealing with distressing information.

8.4 These arrangements ensured that the Review contact route was supported by appropriate safeguarding and trauma-informed measures, and was not simply an administrative mechanism.

9. Information handling

9.1 All communications made clear that information received in the course of the Review would be processed in accordance with the Assembly Commission's legal obligations relating to data protection, confidentiality, records management and information governance. The Q&A document published on the Assembly website added that information shared with the Review would be handled securely and confidentially, and that access would be strictly restricted to those directly involved in the Review process.

9.2 The Heads of Business search instruction similarly required all information to be handled with strict sensitivity and confidentiality, shared only with those who needed to know, and transmitted by secure channels in accordance with the Assembly Commission's data protection and information governance obligations.

10. Scope and limitations of the Review

10.1 The Review concerned incidents of abuse or inappropriate behaviour directly experienced while Jeffrey Donaldson was a Member of the Assembly from 2003 to 2010, or while he was a visitor to Parliament Buildings as an MP. It was not a criminal investigation and did not seek to determine criminal or civil liability. Its role was to identify whether any matter arose within scope requiring further appropriate investigation or referral.

10.2 The Review was dependent on:

- Individuals choosing to report incidents of abuse or inappropriate behaviour they directly experienced;
- The accuracy and completeness of searches undertaken within Assembly Commission business areas; and
- The continuing availability and retrievability of records relating to historic periods, in particular 2003 to 2010.

10.3 The absence of relevant records does not prove that no incidents occurred. It establishes only that, within the methodology and scope of this Review, no reports were received and no relevant information was identified.

10.4 The Review was limited to matters connected to Parliament Buildings or Assembly business within the defined scope. The Speaker's letter to the Clerk/Chief Executive recognised that Jeffrey Donaldson had held office in other institutional contexts and indicated that the Speaker would separately ask the Head of the Civil Service and the Speaker of the House of Commons to consider whether similar exercises were required.

10.5 The Review did not seek to identify or contact potential individuals directly, other than through the public and internal communications exercise, because its purpose was to provide a safe, supported and voluntary route for those within scope to report any incidents of abuse or inappropriate behaviour they directly experienced.

11. Findings within the scope of the Review

Finding 1: The Clerk/Chief Executive put in place a Review process consistent with the Terms of Reference. The Review was publicised internally and externally; a dedicated Review contact route was established; support arrangements were put in place; and Heads of Business were instructed to undertake searches for relevant information.

Finding 2: No reports were received through the Review contact route from any person within the defined scope of the Review.

Finding 3: Heads of Business completed the requested searches and no relevant information was identified.

Finding 4: No matter has arisen within the scope of the Review requiring further investigation, referral to the PSNI, or referral to another statutory agency.

Finding 5: The Review has not identified any matter requiring amendment of Assembly Commission policies or procedures. It does, however, reinforce the importance of clear reporting routes, trauma-informed handling of sensitive matters, safeguarding training, and accessible support arrangements.

Finding 6: Subject to final legal, data protection, confidentiality, records management and information governance checks, publication of this report in full would support appropriate openness, transparency and public confidence in the Assembly Commission's handling of the matter.

12. Recommendations

Recommendation 1: That the Clerk/Chief Executive note the findings of the Review.

Recommendation 2: That the Clerk/Chief Executive conclude that there is no matter arising from this Review which requires further investigation, referral to the PSNI, or referral to another statutory agency.

Recommendation 3: That this report be published in full, subject only to final legal, data protection, confidentiality, records management and information governance checks. Full publication is considered appropriate as the best means of meeting the transparency objective identified by the Speaker while maintaining public confidence in the Assembly Commission's handling of the matter.

Recommendation 4: That the Review contact route be closed following publication of this report, but that any subsequent approach received after closure be handled under the Assembly Commission's ordinary safeguarding, HR, complaints, security, data protection and information governance arrangements, with urgent referral to the PSNI or another statutory agency where appropriate.

Recommendation 5: That the Assembly Commission retain a secure Review record comprising the Terms of Reference, communications issued, support arrangements and this report, in accordance with approved retention and disposal arrangements.

Recommendation 6: That the Assembly Commission incorporates safeguarding awareness training into Member induction after the next election, consistent with the Speaker's request.

Recommendation 7: That the Assembly Commission continue to ensure that the availability of support routes, including the Employee Assistance Programme and any specialist trauma-informed support arrangements, remains clearly signposted to Members, Assembly Commission staff, party support staff and others who work in or use Parliament Buildings, as appropriate.

13. Decision required from the Clerk/Chief Executive

13.1 The Clerk/Chief Executive is asked to note the findings and approve the recommendations in this report.

13.2 In particular, the Clerk/Chief Executive is asked to agree that no matter arising from the Review requires further investigation, referral to the PSNI, or referral to another statutory agency, and that the report should be published in full, subject to final legal, data protection, confidentiality, records management and information governance checks.

14. Proposed conclusion of the Review

14.1 The Review was established promptly, publicised appropriately, supported by trauma-informed arrangements, and conducted independently of political involvement. It provided a safe route for individuals within scope to come forward and required internal business areas to search for relevant information.

14.2 On the basis that no reports were received and no relevant information was identified, the Review has not identified any matter requiring further investigation, referral to the PSNI, or referral to another statutory agency. The appropriate institutional response is to publish this report in full, retain the Review record securely, and incorporate safeguarding awareness training into Member induction after the next election.

Annex A – Terms of Reference

Review of Alleged Abuse or Inappropriate Behaviour Associated with Jeffrey Donaldson in Parliament Buildings

Following the conviction of Jeffrey Donaldson with rape, indecent assault and gross indecency against two women when they were children, and the fact that Jeffrey Donaldson was a Member of the Assembly from 2003 to 2010 and a visitor to Parliament Buildings as an MP, the Speaker has asked me to conduct a Review.

The purpose of the Review is to enable any Member or former Member, current or former Assembly or party staff, or other user of Parliament Buildings to bring forward, in a safe and supported manner, any incidents of abuse or inappropriate behaviour they experienced while Jeffrey Donaldson was a Member or visitor to Parliament Buildings. This will allow me to determine whether further appropriate investigation is required or whether it is necessary to refer any matters to the PSNI or other statutory agencies.

The Speaker has asked me to give attention to three further issues in my consideration of these matters. Firstly, the importance of safeguarding training for Members, including as part of induction for Members after the next election. Secondly, that a welfare, or other appropriate, support service, is available for anyone who does report having been subject to abuse or inappropriate behaviour by Jeffrey Donaldson while he was a Member of the Assembly or visitor to Parliament Buildings. Thirdly, while these are sensitive matters which may involve the experiences of individuals, that they are handled in as open and transparent a way as appropriate.

All information received in the course of this Review will be processed in accordance with the Assembly Commission's legal obligations relating to data protection, confidentiality, records management and information governance.

The Speaker has emphasised the need for independence from political interference and made it clear that he will take no part in this matter.

Terms of Reference

The review should:

1. Establish if the Assembly Commission holds any relevant information on abuse or inappropriate behaviour while Jeffrey Donaldson was a Member of the Assembly from 2003 to 2010, or while he was a visitor to Parliament Buildings as an MP.
2. Communicate and provide an appropriate process to enable any Member or former Member, current or former Assembly or party staff, or other user of Parliament Buildings to bring forward any incidents of abuse or inappropriate

behaviour they directly experienced while Jeffrey Donaldson was a Member of the Assembly from 2003 to 2010 or a visitor to Parliament Buildings as an MP.

3. Inform Members or former Members, current or former Assembly or party staff, or other user of Parliament Buildings of the support service available for anyone who reports having been subject to abuse or inappropriate behaviour by Jeffrey Donaldson.
4. Draw to my attention any matters that may require further appropriate investigation or referral to the PSNI or other statutory agencies.
5. Indicate whether any of the issues considered have implications for any Assembly Commission policies or procedures.
6. Consider the extent to which the review findings or a summary thereof can be published.

A report should be provided to me by 28 August 2026.

Lesley Hogg
Clerk/Chief Executive
10 July 2026