



Northern Ireland  
Assembly

# Committee for The Executive Office

## Minutes of Proceedings

**Wednesday 02 July 2025**

**Meeting Location:** Room 30, Parliament Buildings

**Present:**

Ms Paula Bradshaw MLA (Chairperson)

Mr Timothy Gaston MLA

Mr Harry Harvey MLA

Mr Brian Kingston MLA

Ms Áine Murphy MLA

Ms Carál Ní Chuilín MLA

**Online:**

Mr Stewart Dickson MLA (Deputy Chairperson)

Ms Claire Sugden MLA

**Apologies:**

Ms Sinéad McLaughlin MLA

**In Attendance:** Mr Nick Mitford (Assembly Clerk)  
Ms Sarah-Anne McKinley (Assistant Assembly Clerk)  
Mr Neil Porter (Clerical Supervisor)  
Ms Andrienne Magee (Clerical Officer)

*The meeting commenced at 2.01pm in public session.*

### **1. Apologies**

As above.

### **2. Declarations of Interest**

Áine Murphy declared an standing interest as having a family member who was born in a Mother and Baby institution in relation to the Inquiry (Mother and Baby Institutions, Magdalene Laundries and Workhouses) and Redress Scheme Bill.

### **3. Chairperson's Business**

#### **3.1 PSNI Mother and Baby Institution Summary Report June 2025**

The Chairperson advised the Members that the Committee received a summary report on the PSNI's investigation into Mother and Baby Institutions, Magdalene Laundries and Workhouses, 1922-1990.

*Áine Murphy left the meeting at 2.03pm and returned at 2.46pm*

*Claire Sugden joined the meeting at 2.04pm*

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the PSNI and request the following information:

- To ask if the current report can be shared with victims and survivors
- To ask whether the finalised report can be shared with the Committee upon completion via email during summer recess

- To ask whether a list of Workhouses and corresponding dates can be included in the final report.
- To ask if the PSNI can provide an update on the current status and level of the ongoing investigations
- Clarification regarding any withholding of information in relation to potential Article 2 (right to life) and Article 8 (right to private and family life) issue
- Details of any discussions held with An Garda Síochána concerning the cross-border movement of children
- To ask whether incomplete records are having an impact on the investigation
- To request for an oral briefing on the final report as part of the Committee's forward work programme from the September to December session.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to issue a press release thanking the PSNI for their work to date on this investigation and that the Committee encourages individuals to contact the PSNI if they feel they have something they wish to report.

**Agreed:** The Committee also agreed to request that RalSe compile a briefing paper on the history and geographical spread in relation to workhouses.

### **3.2 Oral Statements**

The Chairperson advised Members that the Committee has received copies of three Oral Statements made by the First and deputy First Minister on Monday 30 June. These statements were in relation to the 43<sup>rd</sup> British-Irish Council Summit Meeting which took place on the 13 June, the North South Ministerial Council 29<sup>th</sup> Plenary Meeting which took place on the 20 June 2025 and the 2<sup>nd</sup> Meeting of the East-West Council which took place on the 12 June.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to note the three statements.

### **3.3 Equality Commission - Legal Paper and Information (Supreme Court Judgement)**

The Chairperson advised Members that the Equality Commission have now published a paper giving its views on the legal position in Northern Ireland, following a review of the Supreme Court judgment in 'For Women Scotland Ltd v The Scottish Ministers'.

The Chairperson also advised Members that they may wish to respond to the Equality Commissions consultation on the matter, which will launch in the coming weeks.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Equality Commission to request an indicative timeline of their six step roadmap and also agreed to request an oral briefing from the Equality Commission as part of the Committee's forward work programme from the September to December session.

### **3.4 Announcement of Funding to Address Racial and Social Cohesion**

The Chairperson advised Members that during Question Time yesterday to the Executive Office the First Minister announced an additional £220,000 of funding to be distributed urgently to councils across Northern Ireland to address issues around racial and social cohesion.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Department to request a detailed breakdown of how and where this funding will be distributed and targeted.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Department to request further information regarding the launch of the £1 million in funding under the Connect Fund, as outlined in the statement following the East-West Council meeting on 12 June

### **3.5 Informal meeting with Fermanagh and Omagh District Council**

The Chairperson updated Members that they and the Deputy Chair met with Fermanagh and Omagh District Council virtually yesterday to discuss the correspondence they sent to the Committee on the 28 May regarding central government policy and financial support.

A note of the informal meeting will be circulated to Members via email.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to note the update on the informal meeting.

#### **4. Draft Minutes**

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 25 June 2025.

#### **5. Matters Arising**

##### **5.1 Ending Violence against Women and Girls Strategy**

The Chairperson advised Members that the Committee previously agreed at its meeting on the 26 March to write to all Statutory Committees seeking information on their respective role in relation to the Strategy given it was identified as a key priority in the Programme for Government.

The Chairperson advised Members that the Committee is due to receive a briefing from officials on the Ending Violence Against Women and Girls Strategic Framework and first Delivery Plan as part of its forward work programme for the September to December session.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Department to share the responses received from other Statutory Committees, so that these can be referenced during the scheduled oral briefing.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Department to request further information on the annual review process built into the EVAWG Strategy, as referenced during Question Time on Tuesday 1 July. The Committee also agreed to ask whether the research intended to identify evidence gaps in understanding the attitudes and behaviours of men and boys towards violence against women and girls has been commissioned, and if not, to seek an update on the expected timeline for commissioning this work.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Department to ask for further information regarding the ownership and approach of the Strategic Investment Board in the final year as part of the EVAWG Strategy.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Department of Justice to request clarification on the differences in delivery, operational responsibilities, and

procedures between the Department and the PSNI in relation to the Ending Violence Against Women and Girls strategy.

*Stewart Dickson joined the meeting at 2.30pm*

**6. Assembly Research & Information Service (RaISe) – Designing Consultations for Sensitive Policy Issues: Insights from Other Jurisdictions – Oral Briefing**

*The official joined the meeting at 2.33pm.*

Members received an oral briefing from:

- Thomas Lough, Research Officer, NIA

The official provided an update on designing consultations for sensitive policy issues and insights from other jurisdictions.

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

The Chairperson thanked the official for their attendance.

*Carál Ní Chuilín left the meeting at 2.45pm and returned at 2.49pm*

*The official left the meeting at 2.51pm.*

**7. Inquiry (Mother and Baby Institutions, Magdalene Laundries and Workhouses) and Redress Scheme Bill - Stakeholder List and Consultation Material**

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

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed the following consultation material in relation to the Bill:

- The consultation questions as drafted for the Committee's Call for Evidence;

- The suggested list of stakeholders for the Committee Stage of the Bill as prepared by RaISe including four additional organisations
- The draft press release launching the Committee Stage of the Bill with an amendment to include Committee contact details; and
- The draft Engagement and Communications Plan in relation to the Bill.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to send the Committee timetable on the Bill to the Department.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to ask the Communications team about the type of graphics that will be provided for constituency offices and whether these could be issued during the summer recess. The Committee also agreed to ask about the possibility of leaflet drops to help publicise the consultation.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed for the Clerk to liaise with the Committee for Communities Clerk regarding how they engaged with the deaf community in publishing their own Call for Evidence.

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

*The meeting was suspended at 3.32pm*

*The meeting resumed in open session at 3.41pm.*

## **8. NIA Youth Assembly – Survey Findings on Young Women’s Rights in Schools – Oral Briefing**

*The witnesses joined the meeting at 3.41pm.*

Members received an oral briefing from:

- Mr Caleb Hazley, NIA Youth Assembly
- Mr Darragh Kerr, NIA Youth Assembly
- Ms Ellie Clarke, NIA Youth Assembly
- Mr James Maginn, NIA Youth Assembly

- Ms Nadia Mackiewicz, Northern Ireland Youth Assembly
- Mr Ross MacAskill, Northern Ireland Youth Assembly
- Ms Bláthnaid Girvan, Northern Ireland Youth Assembly
- Ms Lucy McClelland, Education Officer, Northern Ireland Assembly

The witnesses provided an update on the Youth Assembly's survey findings on Young Women's Rights in Schools.

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

The Chairperson thanked the witnesses for their attendance.

*Stewart Dickson left the meeting at 3.56pm*

*Carál Ní Chuilín left the meeting at 4.13pm*

*Áine Murphy left the meeting at 4.32pm and returned at 4.36pm*

*The witnesses left the meeting at 4.44pm.*

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to forward the NIA Youth Assembly's report to the Education Authority and ask them to respond regarding reporting systems in schools.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Department for Education to ask what steps are being taken to embed EVAWG in schools.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to forward the NIA Youth Assembly's report FAO of the EVAWG directorate.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to forward the summary of responses from Statutory Committees along with details of departmental work in relation to EVAWG to the NIA Youth Assembly.

## **9. Correspondence**

- i. The Committee noted the summary of Committee correspondence.



- ii. The Committee considered correspondence from the Committee for Finance regarding the Northern Ireland Fiscal Council Bill.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Department to ask whether the Department has any views or comments on the Bill, and whether there are any implications, or any role, for the Executive Office arising from the Bill.

- iii. The Committee considered correspondence from the Committee for Finance in relation to the Administrative and Financial Provisions Bill.

As there are clauses of the Bill that are specific to Committee for the Executive, the Finance Committee has requested that this Committee takes responsibility for considering these clauses and report findings back to the Finance Committee in due course. Responses regarding Clauses 1, 6 to 10 and 14 should be sent back to the Finance Committee by noon on Thursday 30 October 2025.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Department to request in the first instance a written briefing on the clauses highlighted that need to be considered and what, if any impact they will have on the Department.

- iv. The Committee considered correspondence from Advice NI regarding the development of a system for reciprocal application of disregards for victims awarded compensation payments.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to forward Advice NI's correspondence to the Department and ask for an update in terms of next steps following the discussion that took place at the NSMC regarding reciprocal disregard process between the two jurisdictions highlighting Advice NI's concerns.

- v. The Committee noted a statement from Truth Recovery NI's (TRNI) Steering Group in relation to the Inquiry (Mother and Baby Institutions, Magdalene Laundries and Workhouses) and Redress Bill.

The Chairperson advised Members that TRNI have been informed of the correct process for comments regarding the Bill via Citizen Space and have been encouraged to complete the consultation when live. TRNI are also on the agreed stakeholder list for the Committee.

- vi. The Committee noted correspondence from an individual also in relation to the Inquiry (Mother and Baby Institutions, Magdalene Laundries and Workhouses) and Redress Bill.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to note these items of correspondence and agreed for the Committee team to respond to any queries regarding the consultation over the summer recess period signposting individuals on how to complete the consultation.

- vii. The Committee considered correspondence from the Women's Rights Network Northern Ireland in relation to queries following oral evidence session on the 12 February 2025.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed that the response should be updated in the Committee's draft final report over the summer recess period.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed that the correspondence should also be shared with the Assembly Commission.

- viii. The Committee noted a Hansard Report - Inquiry (Mother and Baby Institutions, Magdalene Laundries and Workhouses) and Redress Scheme Bill from its meeting on the 18 June.

- ix. The Committee noted a TEO Press Release - No place for violence say First Minister and deputy First Minister condemning the recent attack on the Islamic Centre.

- x. The Committee noted correspondence from the Department of Finance regarding the power to Appoint the External Auditor of the NIAO.

- xi. The Committee noted a report from Pivotal titled 'Policy delivery in Northern Ireland.'

- xii. The Committee noted correspondence from the TUV regarding the Gaps in Equality Legislation Inquiry.

- xiii. The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for Communities regarding the Irish Language Strategy.
- xiv. The Committee noted a response from Northern Health and Social Care Trust to the Committee's correspondence of 23 May 2025 regarding access to records. One response outstanding from Belfast Health Trust.
- xv. The Committee noted a response from Newry and Mourne District Council to the Committee's correspondence 8 May in relation to the Local Change Fund. Only response now outstanding is from Belfast City Council.
- xvi. The Committee noted a response to the Committee's correspondence regarding queries from the Permanent Secretary's oral evidence session on 28 May.
- xvii. The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for Finance regarding an analysis of 2025-2026 Outturn and Forecast Outturn for the month of May.
- xviii. The Committee noted Correspondence from Head of the NI Civil Service (HOCS) to Committee for Communities regarding Housing, Wastewater Infrastructure and Anti-Poverty Strategies.

## **10. Forward Work Programme**

The Committee considered the draft forward work programme.

The Committee noted an update from the Assistant Clerk in relation to briefings for the forward work programme regarding the Bill which will now be organised over the summer recess period.

The Committee also noted an update from the Assistant Clerk regarding item 3.1 and how the PSNI will produce a final report at the conclusion of their investigation that can be shared with victims and survivors and the wider public.

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

### **11. Any Other Business**

The Chairperson advised members that it is standard practice to delegate authority to the Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson, during periods of recess, to submit views on the releasing or withholding of information in any non-routine or contentious Freedom of Information requests received by the Committee; and that any such views expressed would be brought to the attention of the Committee at the first meeting after summer recess.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to delegate authority to the Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson in relation to FOI's should this be necessary.

### **12. Date and Time of Next Meeting**

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday 10 September at 2.00pm in Room 21, Parliament Buildings.

*The meeting was adjourned at 4.54pm.*

**Paula Bradshaw MLA**

**Chairperson, Committee for the Executive Office**

**Wednesday 02 July 2025**