
From: Kathy O'Hanlon, Clerk to the Committee for Justice
Date: 16 March 2026
To: Keith McBride, Clerk to the Committee for Health
Subject: Adult Protection Bill

Dear Keith,

Further to my correspondence of 16 January 2026 and 19 February 2026 in response to seeking the views of Justice partners regarding the provisions in the Adult Protection Bill that may impact their organisations, please see the attached responses from the Police Service of Northern Ireland and the Northern Ireland Policing Board.

I would be grateful if you could bring this to the attention of your Committee.

Regards,



Kathy O'Hanlon
Clerk to the Justice Committee

Enc. 2



Police Service of Northern Ireland

Office of the Chief Constable
Police Headquarters
65 Knock Road
Belfast BT5 6LE

Email: [REDACTED]@psni.police.uk
Tel: 028 90 700005

Our Ref: EST 8083-25

Kathy O'Hanlon
Clerk to the Committee for Justice
Room 345, Parliament Buildings
Ballymiscaw, Stormont
Belfast
BT4 3XX
(Via email: committee.justice@niassembly.gov.uk)

06 March 2026

Dear Kathy,

RE: Impact of the Adult Protection Bill on Policing in Northern Ireland

Thank you for your correspondence dated 20 January requesting views on the Adult Protection Bill (APB) and the potential impact on the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI).

The Adult Protection Bill introduces a significantly strengthened statutory framework for safeguarding adults at risk of harm in Northern Ireland. It establishes a statutory Adult Protection Board, places defined duties on relevant bodies (including the PSNI) to cooperate, share information and report concerns, creates new powers and protection orders (assessment, removal and banning orders), and introduces new criminal offences of ill-treatment and wilful neglect for both individual care workers and care providers. The Bill also provides for the regulation of CCTV in care settings.

Taken together, these provisions formalise and extend PSNI's existing safeguarding responsibilities. Under the new framework, the PSNI will continue to respond to and investigate criminal offences against adults at risk, but will also have an enhanced role in multi-agency risk assessment and planning, in applying for and enforcing protection orders where appropriate, and in supporting the work of the Adult Protection Board and its sub-groups, particularly around data, performance and learning from serious cases.



Police Service of Northern Ireland

The Bill presents clear opportunities to improve outcomes for adults at risk. It should deliver a more coherent and consistent multi-agency safeguarding system, clearer governance and accountability, and better use of data to understand risk and demand. It aligns Northern Ireland more closely with the approaches taken in England, Wales and Scotland, while incorporating local learning from Dunmurry Manor, Muckamore Abbey and other reviews.

However, the Bill also has significant implications for policing demand, capacity and risk. We anticipate:

- Increased referrals and notifications from Health and Social Care Trusts, the RQIA and other partners, and more frequent requests for police participation in multi-agency meetings, strategy discussions and reviews.
- Additional operational responsibilities in relation to assessment, removal and banning orders, including clarification of when police will be required to facilitate access, enforce orders and manage potential breaches.
- New and more complex investigations into offences involving care workers and care providers, with greater engagement with regulators and the Public Prosecution Service on evidential standards and public interest.
- Growth in the volume and complexity of CCTV and other digital evidence from regulated settings, with consequential impacts on storage, retrieval, disclosure and information governance.

These changes will affect Local Policing, Public Protection Branch, CID and Digital Forensics, and will require structured training, system changes and robust internal governance. At present, no dedicated funding has been identified for these additional obligations; a realistic assessment of resource requirements will be essential as guidance and commencement plans are finalised.

For the PSNI, a number of risks will need to be actively managed. Without clear, consistent statutory guidance, there is a risk of over-referral or a “default to police” approach in situations where criminality is not indicated or another agency is better placed to lead. Variability in how key definitions (such as “adult at risk”) and orders are interpreted across Trusts and courts could create inequity of service and legal uncertainty. Misunderstandings around the lawful use and sharing of CCTV and safeguarding information could expose agencies to data protection and human-rights challenges. Finally, the increased exposure of officers and staff to complex and



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distressing adult protection cases underlines the importance of supervision, debrief and wellbeing support.

In light of these considerations, PSNI strongly supports the intent of the Adult Protection Bill, subject to the following key conditions for safe and effective implementation:

1. **Clear guidance and thresholds** – Statutory and practice guidance, agreed via the Adult Protection Board, which provides consistent definitions of “adult at risk”, articulates thresholds for police involvement, and clarifies roles and responsibilities across all agencies. Police involvement should be proportionate and focused on the highest-risk harm, not the default response in all cases.
2. **Adequate resourcing and capacity** – A joint Department of Health/Department of Justice assessment of the additional demand on policing, with appropriate funding and resourcing to support Local Policing, specialist Public Protection functions, investigations, digital forensics and participation in multi-agency processes.
3. **Systems, data and information-sharing** – Investment in PSNI and partner IT systems to enable appropriate flagging of adults at risk, linkage of incidents and safeguarding activity, and the capture of agreed minimum datasets for Adult Protection Board reporting. This should be underpinned by standardised data definitions, updated information-sharing agreements and clear guidance on the use, storage and disclosure of CCTV and other digital material.
4. **Phased, multi-agency implementation** – A phased commencement of the Bill’s provisions that is aligned with policy development, system changes, training and evaluation. PSNI is particularly supportive of a coordinated multi-agency training offer to ensure consistent practice across Health and Social Care Trusts, RQIA, PSNI and other partners.
5. **Support for staff** – Integration of adult protection considerations into existing supervision, debrief and wellbeing arrangements, to support officers and staff who are dealing with complex adult protection cases and to maintain high-quality decision-making.

With these safeguards in place, PSNI believes that the Adult Protection Bill can deliver a more coherent, rights-based and trauma-informed response to adults at risk of harm in Northern Ireland, while ensuring that the policing role remains proportionate, legally robust and directed towards the highest-risk situations.

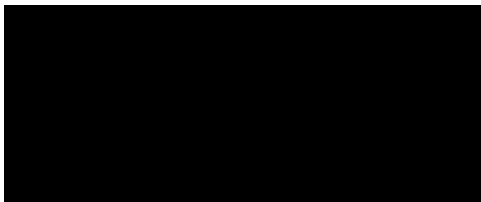


Police Service of Northern Ireland

We remain committed to working closely with the Department of Health, the Department of Justice, Health and Social Care Trusts, RQIA, the Courts and the Adult Protection Board to support the implementation of this important legislation and to ensure that it results in meaningful improvements in protection and outcomes for adults at risk.

I trust this is of assistance. Please don't hesitate to contact me if you need anything further.

Yours sincerely,



Chief Superintendent



**Northern Ireland Assembly
Committee for Justice**

████████████████████
PSNI Headquarters
65 Knock Road
Belfast
BT5 6LEXX
Email: ██████████ psni.police.uk
████████████████████ [@psni.police.uk](mailto:psni.police.uk)

20 January 2026

Adult Protection Bill

Dear ██████████

At its meeting on 15 January 2026, the Committee for Justice considered correspondence from the Department of Justice regarding the Adult Protection Bill, which is currently being considered by the Committee for Health.

The Committee had sought the view of the Department of Justice on the provisions in the Bill which the Committee for Health had drawn attention to as being potentially relevant to the Department of Justice.

In their response, the Department indicated that “some of the provisions within the Bill impact those operationally independent of the Department” and recommended the Committee seek views from these organisations.

The Committee therefore agreed to copy the correspondence from the Committee for Health and the response from the Department of Justice to the PSNI to seek your views on the Adult Protection Bill and the potential impact on your organisation.

I should be grateful for a response by 6 February 2026.

Yours sincerely



Kathy O'Hanlon
Clerk to the Committee for Justice

Enc: Letter from the Committee for Health to the Committee for Justice

Response from the Department of Justice

Room 345, Parliament Buildings, Ballymiscaw, Stormont, Belfast, BT4 3XX
Telephone: (028) 905 21033

E-mail: committee.justice@niassembly.gov.uk

Chair

Date: 6 March 2026

Ms Kathy O’Hanlon
Clerk to the Committee for Justice
NI Assembly
Room 345, Parliament Buildings
Stormont
Belfast
BT4 3XX

ADULT PROTECTION BILL

The Northern Ireland Policing Board welcomes the opportunity to provide views to the Committee for Justice on the draft Adult Protection Bill, following the Committee’s correspondence of 20 January 2026, recognising that several provisions in the Bill have implications for bodies that operate independently of the Department, including the PSNI and the Policing Board.

The Policing Board supports the intention behind the Adult Protection Bill to support improved practice to protect adults at risk and the strengthening of multi-agency safeguarding arrangements, however the Board seeks clarification on a number of areas and would welcome further discussion on these.

The Bill proposes the establishment of an Adult Protection Board with responsibility for overseeing how agencies, including the PSNI, fulfil their duties to protect adults at risk. This includes monitoring, reviewing, and holding to account those represented on the Adult Protection Board for the purposes of protecting adults at risk. The Policing Board, as the primary oversight mechanism for policing, would welcome early engagement with relevant Departments and seeks further information to understand the impact of this on the Policing Board and to ensure that this does not create parallel or conflicting accountability structures.

The Policing Board supports PSNI’s call for the supporting statutory guidance to address a number of areas to understand the impact of the proposals on the operational demands of policing. As you are aware “Right Care Right Person” is a national approach designed to ensure that individuals receive support from the most appropriate agency.

Northern Ireland Policing Board

James House, Block D, 2-4 Cromac Avenue, The Gasworks, Belfast BT7 2JA

 028 9040 8500  information@nipolicingboard.org.uk

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In NI this collaborative approach between PSNI and Health and Social Care organisations is currently being implemented, and we would welcome clarity on how the Bill supports this. The Board would welcome assurance from the PSNI and relevant partners that implementation of the Bill aligns with the Right Care, Right Person approach and does not create duplication or unintended consequences.

The Policing Board looks forward to collaborating with the appropriate departments to address these issues and enhance practices that safeguard and protect adults at risk.

Yours sincerely



Chair

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Northern Ireland Policing Board

James House, Block D, 2-4 Cromac Avenue, The Gasworks, Belfast BT7 2JA

 028 9040 8500

 information@nipolicingboard.org.uk

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**Northern Ireland Assembly
Committee for Justice**

██████████
Chief Executive
Northern Ireland Policing Board
James House, Block D
2-4 Cromac Avenue
The Gasworks
BELFAST, BT7 2JA
Email: ██████████ [@nipolicingboard.org.uk](mailto:██████████@nipolicingboard.org.uk)

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Yours sincerely



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Response from the Department of Justice