



Sent via email: committee.justice@niassembly.gov.uk

Dear Committee Clerk and Chair,

5th June 2026

We hope this letter finds you well. We are writing jointly to request to give oral evidence to the Justice Committee on the Criminal Justice (Sentencing, etc.) Bill, with a particular focus on the 'aggravation by hostility' section of the Bill.

Since 1994, The Rainbow Project has worked for a better Northern Ireland for LGBTQIA+ people and their families. We change lives through our service provision which mitigates the impact of discrimination, and we change society through our training, campaigning and policy work, which seeks to eliminate the root causes of that discrimination and deliver full social and legal equality for LGBTQIA+ people.

The Women's Resource and Development Agency (WRDA) works to create a fair and equal society where women are empowered and are a visible force for change and influence in all areas of life. Since its founding in 1983 as the Women's Education Project, it has provided support, education, and empowerment for women across all communities in Northern Ireland, and supports its 186 member-organisations to use their voice to drive forward women's rights and equality.

We both submitted evidence on the Criminal Justice (Sentencing, etc.) Bill in response to this Committee's call for evidence. In these, we addressed key elements of the Bill for women and LGBTQIA+ communities respectively, recognising that there is overlap between the issues affecting these groups.

We support efforts to update and modernise legislation relating to hate crimes (crimes aggravated by hostility towards a particular protected group), however we feel that the legislation as currently drafted misses an opportunity to ensure this applies to all those who may be at heightened risk.

Violence against women and girls in Northern Ireland is at unconscionable levels. It has been widely recognised that this region is one of the worst places in western Europe for gender-based violence, and while there have been positive steps taken in the adoption of the Ending Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy, there is much more to do. We believe that the Criminal Justice (Sentencing, etc.) Bill provides a prime opportunity to tackle misogynistic crime, and support the adoption of a 'misogyny aggravator' as a key piece of that puzzle.

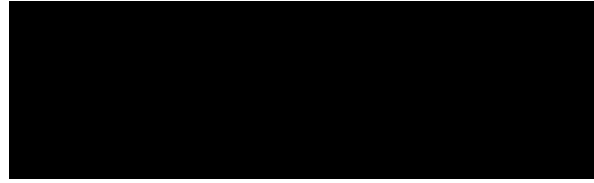
We have also seen rising hostility and violence targeting transgender individuals and communities in Northern Ireland. Since the PSNI began collecting data in 2009/10, recorded hate crimes and incidents targeting transgender people – who make up less than 1% of the population – have risen from a floor of 4 crimes and 14 incidents to around 30-40 crimes and 70 incidents per year. It is worth noting that in our 'State of the Community' survey in 2021, over 50% of respondents who had experienced a hate crime or incident did not report this to the PSNI, feeling that they may not be taken seriously, that the PSNI could not do anything about it, or due to a fear of repercussions.

Both of our organisations are eager to inform the deliberations of the Committee as it scrutinises this important legislation. To that end, we would appreciate the opportunity to present oral evidence on these issues, and answer any further questions Committee members may have.

Kind regards,



The Rainbow Project



Women's Resource and Development Agency