

FROM THE OFFICE OF THE JUSTICE MINISTER



Department of
Justice

An Roinn Dlí agus Cirt

Máinnystrie O tha Laa

www.justice-ni.gov.uk

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Our Ref: JCP\25\181

Kathy O'Hanlon
Clerk to the Justice Committee
Northern Ireland Assembly
Parliament Buildings
Stormont
Belfast BT4 3XX

02 September 2025

Dear Kathy

JUSTICE BILL – PROPOSED RESTORATIVE JUSTICE AMENDMENTS

Thank you for your letter of 7 July in which Committee Members requested further information on a number of matters relating to the proposed Restorative Justice amendments in the Justice Bill, and wider aspects of the work. The information below addresses the points raised in your letter.

How will it be determined which organisation(s) a person will be referred to?

The allocation of cases will be handled by an Independent Referral Body (IRB), namely the Probation Board for Northern Ireland (PBNI). A range of factors will be considered in the allocation of cases, including but not limited to:

- practitioner expertise (level of accreditation);
- case complexity;
- specific needs or vulnerabilities of participants;
- capacity and availability of practitioners; and
- geographical location.

Training for organisations and funding

The Department has sourced and funded a range of restorative justice training courses that have been delivered across statutory organisations this year (PBNI, NIPS, YJA). However, it is not the responsibility of the Department to provide training to those seeking accreditation. Those applying for accreditation are expected to have undertaken an appropriate level of training based on the level of accreditation they are applying for.

The Department is, however, considering the further provision of comprehensive training to those that become accredited and are undertaking criminal justice cases, specifically on the restorative justice conferencing process. This will be fundamental to their work going forward.

Timeline for the launch of the Practice Standards and Accreditation Framework

The Department intends to officially launch the new Practice Standards and Accreditation Framework, together with a call for applications to become accredited, in the autumn.

The application window will remain open for 6 weeks. This will allow for applications to be considered by the Independent Protocol Lead, an independent suitability panel and the Minister, in line with the 2023 Protocol, with providers in place for the turn of the 2026/27 financial year. The application window will likely open again once or twice per year.

CJINI Inspection

The consideration of future inclusion of accredited restorative justice organisations in an Inspection Programme would form part of the Chief Inspector's annual consultation with stakeholders, a risk-based approach to inspection inclusion, annually recurring or other Reviews and the availability of CJI resources.

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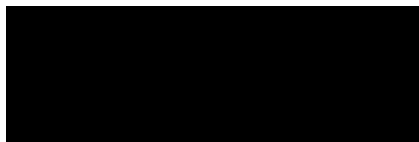
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The Inspection Programme content is developed in the context of CJI's statutory remit and National Preventive Mechanism member responsibilities and is approved by the Minister of Justice. CJI does not currently have the resources to inspect every current and anticipated expansion of accredited restorative justice organisations within their accredited period. If required, CJI would need to discuss this with relevant senior DoJ officials and additional annually recurring resources provided.

I trust this addresses all the queries raised in your July 7 letter. Officials will be happy to provide any further clarification required.

Yours sincerely,



**DAVID GRAHAM
DALO**



**Northern Ireland Assembly
Committee for Justice**

David Graham
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7 July 2025

Justice Bill – Proposed Restorative Justice Amendments

Dear David

At its meeting on 26 June 2025, the Committee for Justice considered the Department's response (DoJ Ref: JCP\25\149) to questions that it had asked about the proposed restorative justice amendments to the Justice Bill. The Committee agreed to ask the Department for further information on a number of matters, as outlined below:

- How will it be determined which organisation(s) a person will be referred to.
- Further information about training for organisations and, should funding not be available, how the accreditation process will work in the absence of training .
- Clarification of the timeline for the launch of the new Practice Standards and Accreditation Framework.
- Whether it is anticipated that every organisation accredited to deliver restorative justice programmes will be subject to review by Criminal Justice Inspection Northern Ireland within the accreditation period.

I should appreciate a response by 22 August 2025.

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Yours sincerely

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