

## Response ID ANON-6R8G-6D7H-Z

Submitted to Victims and Witnesses of Crime Bill

Submitted on 2026-07-17 16:28:42

### Introduction

Confirmation of having read the Northern Ireland Assembly Committee's Privacy Notice.

I confirm that I have read the privacy notice.:

Yes

What is your name?

Name:

[REDACTED]

What is your email address?

Email:

[REDACTED]

If you are providing a submission on behalf of an organisation or business, please state its name.

Organisation:

The Committee for Justice has agreed to publish all responses as part of the survey results. If you would like to have your survey results anonymised and for us not to publish your name or organisation, please indicate so here.

I would like my views to be anonymous and understand that my name and organisation details will be withheld, along with any identifiers in the response, but my views will still be published.

### Clauses 1 and 2 - The Commissioner

Clause 1 establishes the Commissioner for Victims and Witnesses of Crime for Northern Ireland, who will be appointed by the Department of Justice. It introduces Schedule 1 which relates to the constitution and operation of the Commissioner and the office. Do you agree with Clause 1 and Schedule 1 of the Bill?

Yes

Please provide information to support your answer here::

Victims need an independent body who will improve their rights and their treatment within the judicial system.

Clause 2 provides that the principal aim of the Commissioner is to promote the interests of victims and witnesses. Do you agree with Clause 2 of the Bill?

Yes

Please provide information to support your answer here::

I agree as it would ensure that victims are treated with dignity, respect and compassion on their journey through the system. It would also hold public bodies accountable.

Advising government on new laws and policies that affect victims of crime is paramount. This can be achieved through consulting with victims to ensure their experiences help shape policies.

By raising awareness, promoting awareness, improving support systems, working with agencies and charities will assist to promote the interests of victims and witnesses.

Do you have anything further to add on Clause 1 or 2 or Schedule 1 of the Bill?

No

Please provide any further information relating to Clause 1 here::

### Clauses 3 to 8 - Functions of the Commissioner

Clause 3 provides that the Commissioner must: promote an understanding of the rights of victims and witnesses and an awareness of matters relating to their interest; keep the law and practice relating to victims and witnesses under review to ensure adequacy and effectiveness; advise the Northern Ireland Executive or Departments on issues concerning victims and witnesses; and must take steps to raise awareness of the role and functions of the Commissioner, encourage victims and witnesses to engage with their office and seek the views of victims and witnesses regarding the exercise of the Commissioner's functions. Do you agree with these as suitable for the general duties for the role of Commissioner?

Yes

Please provide information to support your answer here::

I feel that the remit of the commissioner could also include ensuring that the specific needs of victims during legacy investigations, paramilitary-related crime etc are properly represented.

Clause 4 provides the general powers of the Commissioner including the power to conduct, fund or support research or education activities; to compile information; provide advice and information; publish any matter concerning the interests of victims or witnesses of crime; and to make representations and recommendations to any body or person concerning the interest of victims or witnesses. Do you agree with the general powers as outlined in Clause 4?

Yes

Please provide information to support your answer here::

The publication and recommendations highlighting issues and proposed solutions are essential as the work of the commission must be transparent.

Are there any other powers that you believe the Commissioner should have?

Yes

If yes, what should they be?:

The overseeing of charities that work with and support victims of all crimes.

Clause 5 stipulates that the Commissioner must review the operation and the effectiveness of the Victim and the Witness Charters at least every 3 years or as directed by the Department; prepare a report and, in doing so, consulting the Department and any other person the Commissioner considers appropriate; and publish a report. . Do you agree with the provisions at Clause 5?

Yes

Please provide information to support your answer here::

As I stated before the work must be transparent and everything positive and negative should be reported upon.

Clause 6 provides that the Commissioner may issue guidance on best practice in relation to any matter concerning the interests of victims and witnesses and that this must be taken into regard by persons exercising public functions; and makes provision in respect of revision, consultation and publication of the guidance. It also prohibits the Commissioner from issuing guidance to a court or tribunal. Do you agree with Clause 6 of the Bill?

Yes

Please provide information to support your answer here::

Clause 7 grants the Commissioner the power to establish advisory groups to provide support and information to the Commissioner on matters related to the Commissioners functions . The Commissioner will determine membership of the group(s) and how expenses will be reimbursed. The Commissioner may also determine the procedure of any advisory group. Do you agree that the Commissioner should have the power to establish advisory groups?

Yes

Please provide information to support your answer here::

This is an important area to include those groups and individuals who hold crucial knowledge of the needs of victims and the judicial system

Do you agree that the Commissioner should have the power to determine the membership of advisory groups?

No

Please provide information to support your answer here::

The group should be completely independent and not be known to the commissioner.

Clause 8 provides that the Commissioner cannot become involved in an individual case or intervene in criminal or related proceedings. Do you support the restriction proposed in Clause 8?

No

Please provide information to support your answer here::

If the case is wrong and harmful or unlawful the commissioner should intervene

Do you have anything further to add in relation to Clauses 3 to 8 of the Bill?

No

Please provide information to support your answer here::

### Clauses 9 to 15 - Charter service providers

Clause 9 lists the criminal justice agencies which are specified as "charter service providers". Do you agree with the list of bodies specified in Clause 9?

Yes

Please provide information to support your answer here::

Do you believe that there are any other criminal justice agencies that should be added to the list?

No

Please provide information to support your answer here::

Do you believe that any of the agencies listed should be removed from the list?

Not Answered

Please provide information to support your answer here::

Clause 10 requires the Commissioner to monitor compliance with the Victim Charter and enables the Commissioner to request information from a charter service provider. It requires charter service providers to comply with such a request as far as is practical. Do you agree with the purpose stated for Clause 10?

Yes

Please provide information to support your answer here::

Clause 11 provides that charter service providers must collect and retain data in relation to the provision of services set out in the Victims Charter and to provide statistical information to the Commissioner. The Department must make regulations setting out how the particular statistics, or category of statistics to be provided to the Commissioner are to be determined. The Department must consult with the Commissioner and charter services providers it considers appropriate before making regulations, which will be subject to the draft affirmative procedure. Do you agree with the intent behind Clause 11?

Yes

Please provide information to support your answer here::

Clause 12 allows the Department to extend the provisions regarding the Victim Charter at Clauses 10 and 11 to the Witness Charter. Are you content with Clause 12?

Not Answered

Please provide information to support your answer here::

Clause 13 relates to co-operation with the Commissioner and states a charter service provider must comply or provide the reasons for non-compliance. Do you have any comments on Clause 13?

No

Please provide information to support your answer here::

Clause 14 relates to the duty to record and report on complaints received in each financial year that relate to alleged breaches of Victim or Witness Charter entitlements and the outcome of each complaint. Do you agree with Clause 14 of the Bill?

Yes

Please provide information to support your answer here::

The recording of breaches of Victim and Witnesses Charter complaints is paramount to enable the commissioner to see the flaws in the systems. This can then be addressed to ensure that operations and services to Victims and Witnesses are at the forefront of the the charter.

Clause 15 relates to the disclosure of information between charter service providers and the Commissioner if the information would assist or enable the Commissioner to carry out their functions. These disclosure powers are subject to restrictions set out in subsections (3) to (5) – namely, they do not override patient confidentiality, data protection legislation or prohibitions on disclosure in the Investigatory Powers Act 2016. The sharing of information does not affect any other power that exists to disclose information. Do you support the intention behind Clause 15?

Yes

Please provide information to support your answer here::

Do you believe that there should be other restrictions to the disclosure of information other than those set out in subsections (3) to (5)?

No

If yes, what other restrictions should be placed on the disclosure of information between charter service providers and the Commissioner?

Please provide information to support your answer here::

Do you have anything further to add in relation to Clauses 9 to 15 of the Bill?

No

Please provide information to support your answer here::