



**Northern Ireland
Assembly**

Committee for Communities

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From: Emer Boyle, Clerk to the Committee for Communities

To: Kathy O'Hanlon, Clerk to the Committee for Justice

Date: Monday 21 September 2026

Subject: Victims and Witnesses of Crime Bill: Nil Return

Dear Kathy,

1. Thank you for your memo of 8 July 2026 seeking the views of Statutory Committees on the Victims and Witnesses of Crime Bill, which was introduced by the Minister of Justice on 22 June 2026 and which completed its Second Stage on 30 June 2026.
2. The Committee for Communities has considered the matter, having reviewed the Bill as introduced, the accompanying Explanatory and Financial Memorandum (EFM) and the Official Report of the Bill's Second Stage debate on 30 June 2026. The Committee confirms that it returns a Nil Response. A brief explanation of the basis on which the Committee has reached that position is set out below for the assistance of the Committee for Justice.
3. The Committee has considered whether any aspect of the Bill engages the statutory responsibilities of the Department for Communities (DfC) and is satisfied that it does not. The Bill does not confer any function on, or alter any function of, the Department for Communities or any of its arm's-length bodies, and it does not engage the DfC remit in respect of housing and the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, the administration of welfare benefits, the Northern Ireland Executive's Anti-Poverty Strategy 2025–2035, charity regulation, or the voluntary and community sector funded by the Department. The

Committee notes that the EFM records that the Bill will primarily be delivered within existing resources, that all constituent parts were screened as having no adverse impact on the Section 75 categories, that the Department of Justice considers there to be no impact on the private or voluntary sectors, and that no rural needs impacts were identified.

4. The Committee recognises that victims of crime may, in the course of or following criminal proceedings, engage services for which the Department for Communities is responsible. The Bill does not alter the provision of those services, and the Committee is content that the matters it addresses fall properly to be scrutinised by the Committee for Justice, which has undertaken pre-legislative scrutiny of the Bill and has signalled a detailed Committee Stage.
5. The Committee for Communities trusts that this Nil Return, and the reasoning supporting it, is of assistance to the Committee for Justice in its scrutiny of the Bill. If further engagement would be of assistance, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,

Emer Boyle

Clerk to the Committee for Communities