Northern Ireland Assembly

Committee for the Executive Office

End of Session Report September 2025 to July 2026

Ordered by Committee for the Executive Office to be published x September 2026.

Contents

Powers and Membership..... 3

List of Abbreviations and Acronyms used in this Report 5

Introduction 6

Primary Legislation..... 7

Subordinate Legislation..... 8

Inquiries..... 9

EU Scrutiny 10

Budget Scrutiny..... 10

Policy Scrutiny..... 10

Engagement - Informal meetings/events..... 11

Likely priorities for the next session 11

Expenditure for the period 9 September 2025 – 31 August 2026 –..... 12

Powers and Membership

Powers

The Committee for the Executive Office is a Statutory Departmental Committee established in accordance with paragraphs 8 and 9 of Strand One of the Belfast Agreement and under Assembly Standing Order No 48. The Committee has a scrutiny, policy development and consultation role with respect to the Executive Office and has a role in the initiation of legislation. The Committee has nine members, including a Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson, and a quorum of five.

The Committee has power to:

- consider and advise on Departmental budgets and Annual Plans in the context of the overall budget allocation;
- approve relevant secondary legislation and take the Committee Stage of relevant primary legislation;
- call for persons and papers;
- initiate enquiries and make reports; and
- consider and advise on matters brought to the Committee by the First Minister, deputy First Minister or junior Ministers.

Membership

The Committee has 9 members, including a Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson, and a quorum of five members. The membership of the Committee is as follows:

- Ms Paula Bradshaw MLA (Chairperson)
- Mr Stewart Dickson MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
- Mr Philip Brett MLA
- Mrs Deborah Erskine MLA
- Mr Timothy Gaston MLA
- Ms Sinéad McLaughlin MLA
- Ms Carál Ní Chuilín MLA

- Ms Aíne Murphy MLA
- Ms Claire Sugden MLA

1 With effect from 23 September 2025 Mrs Pam Cameron replaced Mr Harry Harvey.

2 With effect from 23 September 2025 Mr Phillip Brett replaced Mr Brian Kingston.

3 With effect from 26 May 2026 Mrs Deborah Eskine replaced Mrs Pam Cameron.

List of Abbreviations and Acronyms used in this Report

Public Record Office for Northern Ireland (PRONI)

The Executive Office (TEO)

UK (United Kingdom)

Introduction

1. The Committee held a total of thirty-eight meetings between September 2025 and July 2026. Thirty of these meetings comprised a combination of both open and closed sessions. Two additional meetings were held on 20 April 2025 and 12 May 2025 to consider amendments to the Inquiry (Mother and Baby Institutions, Magdalene Laundries and Workhouses) and Redress Scheme Bill. In addition, six meetings were held in closed session to discuss Bill deliberations, further deliberations, informal clause by clause and consideration of the Committee Stage report. These meetings took place on 3 December 2025, 10 December 2025, 6 January 2026, 14 January 2026, 19 January 2026, and 21 January 2026.

2. The Committee held two visits during this period, the first to the Maze Long Kesh Development Co-operation on 5 November 2025, and the second to the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland (PRONI) on 15 April 2026.

Primary Legislation

The Inquiry (Mother and Baby Institutions, Magdalene Laundries and Workhouses) and Redress Scheme Bill

3. The Committee continued its consideration of one piece of primary legislation during this session, which was the Inquiry (Mother and Baby Institutions, Magdalene Laundries and Workhouses) and Redress Scheme Bill.

4. The purpose of the Bill is to set up a Statutory Public Inquiry to establish the facts about these institutions between 1922 and 1995. It further includes provision for The Executive Office (TEO) to establish a Redress Service to administer a statutory financial redress scheme.

5. The Committee has previously agreed to extend the Committee stage of Bill until 30 January 2026 and the this formally commenced at the end of the previous session, on Wednesday 25 June 2025.

6. The Committee launched its Call for Evidence on Monday 7 July 2025 and the consultation was live for twelve weeks until Monday 29 September.

7. A well as a session in Parliament Buildings in July 2025, the Committee also held two further Familiarisation Sessions on Tuesday 9 September at WAVE Trauma Centre Belfast and online on Thursday 11 September. The purpose of these sessions was to outline that during the Committee Stage of the Bill, the focus shifts to a detailed examination of its provisions.. The familiarisation session aimed to explain this, helping stakeholders to understand the legislative process of the Bill, and in particularly the Committee Stage.

8. The Inquiry (Mother and Baby Institutions, Magdalene Laundries and Workhouses) and Redress Scheme Bill took priority in the Committee's forward work programme during the September to July 2026 session.

9. The Bill passed its final stage on 30 June 2026 and is currently waiting Royal Assent.

Subordinate Legislation

10. The Committee considered one Statutory Rule subject to negative resolution. The Salaries (Public Services Ombudsman) Order (Northern Ireland) 2026 gives effect to the Assembly Commission's statutory duty under the Public Services Ombudsman Act (Northern Ireland) 2016 to determine the salary payable to the Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman.

11. The Committee initially considered the proposed Statutory Rule at its meeting on 10 June 2026, at which time it agreed to issue a public call for views via the Assembly website. The consultation period closed on 23 June 2026, and no responses were received. The Committee gave further consideration to the proposal at its meeting on 1 July 2026. At this meeting, the Question was put that The Salaries (Public Services Ombudsman) Order (Northern Ireland) 2026 be approved by the Assembly. The Committee agreed, without division.

12. In the next session, the Committee is expected to consider the Period Products (The Executive Office Specified Public Service Bodies) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2026, which is subject to the draft affirmative resolution procedure.

13. The Committee will also consider delegated legislation arising from the Inquiry into Mother and Baby Institutions, Magdalene Laundries and Workhouses and Redress Scheme Bill, as well as any other delegated legislation that may be brought forward separately from the Bill.

14. The first such delegated legislation will be the Inquiry Rules and Regulations arising from the Bill, which the Committee expects to consider before the end of the current year.

Inquiries

15. The Committee continued deliberations on its Inquiry on differences in equality legislation between the regions of the UK and the Republic of Ireland. The purpose of this Inquiry is to find out where equality legislation is different in Northern Ireland to other jurisdictions and to understand the impacts this has. This is especially important since the UK has left the European Union, where equality legislation may have diverged.

16. Ongoing legal processes have delayed the conclusion of the Inquiry.

17. At a High Court review hearing on 1 June 2026, Mr. Justice McAlinden presiding, ordered that the hearing of the Leave stage of this application be scheduled for a period of up to two weeks beginning 30 November 2026. A further review hearing has been scheduled for 7 September 2026.

18. At its meeting on 24 June 2026, the Committee agreed to defer consideration of the Committee's Inquiry until January 2027, following the Leave Stage hearing.

19. The Committee will then consider a further draft of the report in early 2027.

EU Scrutiny

20. The Committee held various discussion with departmental officials (as part of its routine scrutiny) on the impact of departmental delivery and policy in relation to interactions with the EU. The Committee also received two updates from TEO's three overseas bureaux's in Beijing, Washington, and Brussels during this session.

21. The Committee also held three meetings specifically on EU matters, including updates on the Common Frameworks.

Budget Scrutiny

22. The Committee continued its ongoing examination of the departmental budget and the value for money of public funding

Policy Scrutiny

23. The Committee examined the progress to date on the Programme for Government (PfG) as well as the work of the PfG Delivery Unit.

24. The Committee examined the work of the Civil Contingencies Unit, including the Covid 19 Inquiry Module 2 report: Core decision-making and political governance during the pandemic.

25. The Committee examined the progress to date on the Victims and Survivors of the Troubles/Conflict 2024-2034.

26. The Committee examined the work and delivery to date on the Ending Violence Against Women and Girls Strategic Framework and Delivery Plans.

27. The Committee examined the Race Relations and Refugee Strategy and associated Delivery Framework.

Engagement - Informal meetings/events

28. The Committee held three roundtable stakeholder events in relation to the Inquiry (Mother and Baby Institutions, Magdalene Laundries and Workhouses) and Redress Scheme Bill on 15 October 2025 in the Hill of The O'Neill in Dungannon and the Silverbirch Hotel & Business Centre in Omagh. Then a third session in the Europa Hotel Belfast and online via Microsoft Team's on 22 October 2025.

29. The roundtable discussions provided an opportunity for Members to hear individual views, including those from people not affiliated with any advocacy group, as well as any concerns regarding the impact of the Bill.

Likely priorities for the next session

30. The Committee is due to consider a Member's Bill from Claire Sugden MLA, entitled Age Discrimination (Goods, Facilities and Services) Bill (subject to the Second Stage debate being passed).

31. The Committee will consider a number of items of delegated legislation arising from the into Inquiry (Mother and Baby Institutions, Magdalene Laundries and Workhouses) and Redress Scheme Act.

32. The Committee will consider the Historical Clerical Childhood Abuse reports published by TEO and the recommendations to be taken forward.

33. The Committee will continue its ongoing examination of the delivery of the Programme for Government and the budget.

34. The Committee will consider the proposed evolved Framework for Good Relations and the draft AI Strategy for Northern Ireland.

Expenditure for the period 9 September 2025 – 31 August 2026 –

Budget area	Details	Expenditure
Committee Travel - committee members and staff travel and subsistence in relation to visits and meetings outside Parliament Buildings	Includes the cost of committee visits to: Interparliamentary forum meeting in Cardiff	£409.98
Advertising – the cost of public notices relating to committee inquiries, the committee stage of Bills and meetings held outside Parliament Buildings	Includes the cost of public notices in relation to: • The Inquiry (Mother and Baby Institutions, Magdalene Laundries and Workhouses) and Redress Scheme Bill	£1027.01
Refreshments & Hospitality	Includes the cost of all refreshments and hospitality provided by the committee; to include meetings, working lunches, seminars and any other such expenditure.	£ 1,576.27
General expenses	Includes all other costs for The Inquiry (Mother and Baby Institutions, Magdalene Laundries and Workhouses) and Redress Scheme Bill, including Committee stage activity such as external stakeholder events and session.	£5,203.14
Total Expenditure		**£8,216.40**

You may re-use this publication (not including images or logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Northern Ireland Assembly Licence.

Find out more about the Open Northern Ireland Assembly Licence.

This Report can be made available in a range of formats including large print, Braille etc. For more information please contact:

Committee for The Executive Office
Nick Mitford, Clerk
Northern Ireland Assembly
Parliament Buildings
Ballymiscaw
Stormont
Belfast BT4 3XX

Telephone: 028 90 21989
Email: committee.executive@niassembly.gov.uk