



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee for Justice

Minutes of Proceedings

Tuesday 13 October 2026

Room 21, Parliament Buildings, Belfast

Present:

Paul Frew MLA (Chairperson)

Emma Sheerin MLA (Deputy Chairperson)

Maurice Bradley MLA

Ciara Ferguson MLA

Brian Kingston MLA

Present by Video or Teleconference:

Doug Beattie MLA

Connie Egan MLA

Aoife Finnegan MLA

Apologies:

Patsy McGlone MLA

In Attendance:

Kathy O'Hanlon (Assembly Clerk)

Thomas McKillop (Senior Assistant Assembly Clerk)

Gareth Black (Assistant Assembly Clerk)

Danielle Saunders (Clerical Supervisor)

The meeting commenced at 9.32am in public session.

Agreed: That the oral evidence session on the Criminal Justice (Sentencing etc) Bill with Department of Justice officials will be recorded by Hansard.

1. Apologies

As above.

2. Draft Minutes

Agreed: The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 6 October 2026.

3. Criminal Justice (Sentencing etc) Bill – Department of Justice oral evidence

3.2 - Department of Justice - Response regarding sentencing and the impact on victims

The Committee noted a response from the Department of Justice to correspondence from an individual raising a number of questions regarding sentencing and the impact on victims.

Agreed: To forward the response to the individual who raised these matters.

3.3 – Commissioner Designate for Victims of Crime Northern Ireland – Additional submission

The Committee noted additional correspondence from the Commissioner Designate for Victims of Crime Northern Ireland regarding aspects of the 2025 Victim Survey report which she considered pertinent to the Committee's deliberations on the Sentencing Bill.

3.4 - Men's Alliance NI - Response following oral evidence session

3.5 - Rape Crisis NI - Response following oral evidence session

3.6 - WRDA, HERe NI, Rainbow Project - Response following oral evidence session

3.13 - Victim Support NI - Response following oral evidence session

The Committee noted responses from Men's Alliance NI, Rape Crisis NI, a joint response from WRDA, HERe NI and the Rainbow Project, and Victim Support NI providing further information requested during their respective evidence sessions on the Sentencing Bill.

The following officials joined the meeting at 9.35am:

Andrew Dawson, Director of Criminal Justice Policy and Legislation Division;
Angela Bell, Bill Manager and Policy Lead;
Alan Weir, Head of Sentencing Policy Unit;
Chris McElwee, Head of Hate Crime Branch; and
Karen McMinn, Policy Lead, Hate Crime Branch.

The officials provided oral evidence on the Criminal Justice (Sentencing etc) Bill.

The oral evidence was followed by a question-and-answer session.

Maurice Bradley joined the meeting at 9.56am.

Emma Sheerin joined the meeting at 9.56am.

Aoife Finnegan left the meeting at 10.02am.

Connie Egan left the meeting at 10.45am.

Doug Beattie left the meeting at 10.55am.

Emma Sheerin left the meeting at 10.59am.

During the session, the officials agreed to provide information on the following:

- Regarding the application of Clause 40 and reference to Article 12C of the Road Traffic (Northern Ireland) Order 1995, data on the number and proportion of offenders who were also committing a more serious driving offence and would be charged under the provisions in Clause 41 relating to Articles 9 and 14 of the Road Traffic (Northern Ireland) Act 1995; and
- An explanation why, in its response to the Committee, the Department qualified that the provisions at Clause 45 and Schedule 6 will “normally” ensure that driving disqualifications will be served post release from custody, and examples of circumstances where the provisions may not apply.

The evidence session was recorded by Hansard.

The Chairperson thanked the officials and they left the meeting at 11.18am.

4. Date, Time and Place of the next meeting

Members were advised that the next meeting will take place on Thursday 15 October at 2pm in Room 30, Parliament Buildings.

The meeting was adjourned at 11.19am.

Paul Frew MLA

Chairperson, Committee for Justice

20 October 2026