

NORTHERN IRELAND ASSEMBLY

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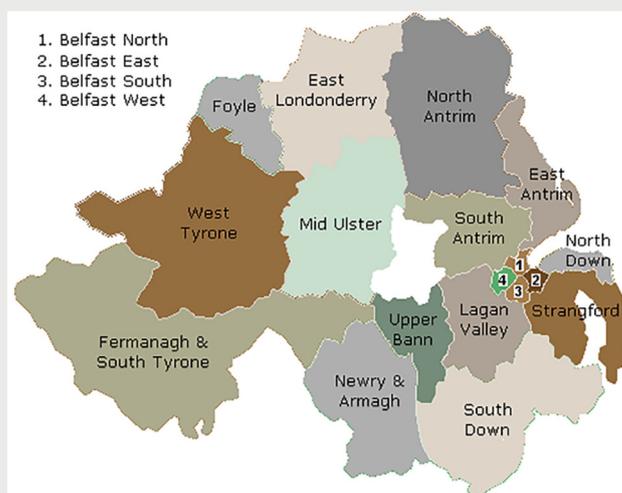
FACTSHEET

Background to the Northern Ireland Assembly

- 10 April 1999- Established under the Belfast/ Good Friday Agreement
- 25 June 1999 - First election to the Assembly
- 2 December 1999 - Power was first handed over
- 14 October 2002 - The Assembly was suspended
- 26 Nov 2003 - Second elections to the Assembly
- 13 October 2006 - St Andrews Agreement
- 7 March 2007 -Third election
- 8 May 2007 - Powers were restored
- 25 March 2011 - End of first full mandate since devolution
- May 2011 - Last election and 108 Members of the Legislative Assembly elected



Constituency Map for NI



Devolution

The Northern Ireland Assembly is a de-voled institution and is the prime source of authority for all devolved responsibilities. It is the cornerstone of the devolved Northern Ireland government and is where political representatives meet, debate and pass laws which effect the population of Northern Ireland.

Devolution means that powers have been transferred from the UK Parliament at Westminster to the NI Assembly which meets at Stormont.

So what's the point?

This means that locally elected representatives make decisions that affect local people and can be held accountable for those decisions – this should mean more responsive, representative and immediate government.

However...Westminster retains power over certain areas (called reserved and excepted matters).

Northern Ireland continues to elect MPs to House of Commons. Currently there are 18 MPs. The Secretary of State continues to represent Northern Ireland's interests in the Cabinet.

Executive power is the power of government. The Assembly appoints the Executive to discharge Executive authority (power) on its behalf with Ministers taking charge of the various responsibilities of government.

Ministers are appointed using a system basing representation on party size.

This is known as the d'Hondt system.

Alongside the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister there are 11 Executive Departments.

Find out who the Ministers are at <http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/Your-MLAs/Ministers-and-their-Departments/>.

2013 Party Representation

DUP	38
Sinn Fein	29
UUP	13
SDLP	14
Alliance	8
UKIP	1
Green Party	1
TUV	1
NI21	1
Independent	2

For a full list of the membership of the NI Assembly on www.niassembly.gov.uk/Your-MLAs/

Governance of Northern Ireland

Northern Ireland Assembly
108 MLAs Including Speaker
3 Deputy Speakers ▼

The Committee System

Executive Committee

First Minister and deputy First Minister

11 Executive Department Ministers

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The Speaker

Mitchel McLaughlin was elected Speaker of the Northern Ireland Assembly on January 12, 2015, the first Nationalist to take up the position. He is assisted by Principal Deputy Speaker Robin Newton (DUP), Deputy Speaker John Dallat (SDLP) and Deputy Speaker Roy Beggs (UUP).

The Role of Speaker

Maintains a politically neutral stance – has no vote. Ensures that procedures are followed and order is maintained in the Chamber.

The Committees

Committees are very important in the Northern Ireland Assembly. As the 5 main parties are in the Government Executive there is no 'official opposition'. This main opposition role has been given to Committees. This is a very different system than under Direct Rule, when local politicians had no say in Department decision making.

Under devolution Committees can keep a very close eye on the work of Departments and influence policy.

They scrutinise the Ministers and their Departments and try to ensure that they do a good job. It is where most of the day-to-day business is done, as MLAs have a chance to get together in smaller groups and focus on specific issues.

- Membership of Committees broadly reflects party strength in the Assembly (d'Hondt).
- Most Committees have 11 members.
- Meetings are usually held weekly and last 2 – 3 hours.
- There are 4 types of committees: Statutory Committees, Standing Committees, Joint Committees and Ad Hoc Committees.

Committee meetings are usually held in Parliament Buildings but external venues are also used.

Each Committee has a Clerk who deals with the Committee business.

The Health Committee

The Committee was established to advise and assist the Minister for Health, Social Services and Public Safety. The current Minister for Health is Jim Wells MLA (DUP). The Committee undertakes a scrutiny, policy development and consultation role with respect to the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety and plays a key role in the consideration and development of legislation. The Committee Chair is Ms Maeve McLaughlin (SF) and the Deputy Chair is Ms Paula Bradley (DUP).

The Health Committee Clerk can be contacted committee.hssps@niassembly.gov.uk

For further information on the Health Committee please see www.niassembly.gov.uk/Assembly-Business

About MLA'S

What does MLA stand for?

Member of the Legislative Assembly.

MLAs are elected by the people, not by Ministers.

MLAs have considerable power and the Assembly must ensure that it is exercised in the interests of the people. It does this through work in Committees where they shadow and check the work of the Executive Departments, through their questioning of Ministers and participation in debates in the Chamber.

MLAs must represent their constituency, listen to the views of the people who elected them and ensure that these views are taken into account when decisions are being made. MLAs have offices in their constituencies where they can meet with constituents. It is essential that local people have access to their representatives.

The Concordat

A Concordat was made in 2011 between the Government and Community & Voluntary Sector. This Agreement acknowledges a shared vision of Government and the Community and Voluntary sector working together as social partners to build a participative, peaceful, equitable and inclusive community in Northern Ireland.

The Government recognises the nature, diversity, and value of the contribution which the Voluntary and Community Sector makes to the social, economic, environmental, political and cultural life in NI.

The Concordat lays the foundation for a partnership based on mutual trust and respect and will open up opportunities for more active participation by the Community and Voluntary sector in developing public policy. The concordat is an agreement based on 8 shared values.

- Accountability
- Active citizenship
- Community
- Democracy
- Equality and Good Relations
- Partnership
- Pluralism
- Social Justice

For more information on the concordat www.dsdni.gov.uk

Contact NI Assembly Information Office
www.niassembly.gov.uk

Community Outreach Team 028 9052 1195
outreach@niassembly.gov.uk