



Justice (Northern Ireland) Act 2002

2002 CHAPTER 26

PART 2

LAW OFFICERS AND PUBLIC PROSECUTION SERVICE

Public Prosecution Service

29 Public Prosecution Service

- (1) There is to be a prosecuting service for Northern Ireland known as the Public Prosecution Service for Northern Ireland.
- (2) The Service is to consist of—
 - (a) the Director of Public Prosecutions for Northern Ireland,
 - (b) the Deputy Director of Public Prosecutions for Northern Ireland, and
 - (c) the members of staff of the service appointed under subsection (4).
- (3) The Service is to be funded [^{F1}out of money appropriated for that purpose by Act of the Northern Ireland Assembly].
- (4) The Director may appoint staff of the Service, but subject to the approval of the [^{F2}Department of Finance and Personnel] as to—
 - (a) numbers,
 - (b) salary, and
 - (c) other conditions of service.
- (5) The Director may designate any member of staff of the Service who is—
 - (a) a member of the Bar of Northern Ireland, or
 - (b) a solicitor of the [^{F3}Court of Judicature];and any person designated under this subsection is to be known as a Public Prosecutor.
- (6) The Director is head of the Service; and the Deputy Director and the Public Prosecutors and the other members of staff of the Service are subject to his direction and control.

Changes to legislation: Justice (Northern Ireland) Act 2002, Cross Heading: Public Prosecution Service is up to date with all changes known to be in force on or before 19 April 2024. There are changes that may be brought into force at a future date. Changes that have been made appear in the content and are referenced with annotations. (See end of Document for details) View outstanding changes

- (7) The Director and Deputy Director (if barristers) and Public Prosecutors designated under subsection (5)(a) are not prevented from—
- (a) conducting any criminal proceedings, or
 - (b) exercising a right of audience in any criminal proceedings,
- by not having been instructed by a solicitor.
- (8) The Director may set up and maintain such offices, in such places in Northern Ireland, as he considers appropriate for the exercise of his functions.

Textual Amendments

- F1** Words in s. 29(3) substituted (12.4.2010) by [The Northern Ireland Act 1998 \(Devolution of Policing and Justice Functions\) Order 2010 \(S.I. 2010/976\)](#), art. 1(2), [Sch. 13 para. 2\(a\)](#) (with arts. 28-31)
- F2** Words in s. 29(4) substituted (12.4.2010) by [The Northern Ireland Act 1998 \(Devolution of Policing and Justice Functions\) Order 2010 \(S.I. 2010/976\)](#), art. 1(2), [Sch. 13 para. 2\(b\)](#) (with arts. 28-31)
- F3** Words in s. 29 substituted (1.10.2009) by [Constitutional Reform Act 2005 \(c. 4\)](#), ss. 59, 148, [Sch. 11 para. 6](#); [S.I. 2009/1604](#), [art. 2](#)

30 Director of Public Prosecutions

- (1) The Attorney General for Northern Ireland must—
- (a) appoint a person to be Director of Public Prosecutions for Northern Ireland, and
 - (b) appoint a person to be Deputy Director of Public Prosecutions for Northern Ireland.
- (2) A person is not qualified for appointment as Director unless he is—
- (a) a member of the Bar of Northern Ireland of at least ten years' standing, or
 - (b) a solicitor of the [^{F4}Court of Judicature] of at least ten years' standing.
- (3) A person is not qualified for appointment as Deputy Director unless he is—
- (a) a member of the Bar of Northern Ireland of at least seven years' standing, or
 - (b) a solicitor of the [^{F4}Court of Judicature] of at least seven years' standing.
- (4) The Deputy Director has all the powers of the Director but must exercise them subject to his direction and control.
- (5) A person appointed as Director or Deputy Director holds office until the end of the year of service in which he attains the age of 65 or such later time as the Attorney General for Northern Ireland may specify.
- (6) But the Director and Deputy Director—
- (a) may resign by notice in writing to the Attorney General for Northern Ireland, and
 - (b) may be removed from office in accordance with section 40(3) or 43.
- (7) If the office of Director is vacant or the Director is not available to exercise his functions, the Deputy Director has all the functions of the Director.
- (8) If the office of Deputy Director becomes vacant, the Attorney General for Northern Ireland may appoint a member of staff of the Service to act as Deputy Director, on such

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terms as to tenure as the Attorney General for Northern Ireland determines, pending a new appointment.

[^{F5}(9) There is to be paid (out of money appropriated as mentioned in section 29(3)) to or in respect of the Director, the Deputy Director and any person appointed to act as Deputy Director any such—

- (a) salary,
- (b) allowances, or
- (c) sums for the provision of pensions,

as the Department of Finance and Personnel may determine.]

(10) The Director is not required to give security with respect to any proceedings; and no order may be made by any court requiring security to be given to the Director with respect to any proceedings.

(11) The Director (and the Deputy Director and members of staff of the Service) may not be required in any proceedings of the Assembly to answer any question or produce any document relating to a matter other than the finances and administration of the Service.

Textual Amendments

F4 Words in s. 30 substituted (1.10.2009) by [Constitutional Reform Act 2005 \(c. 4\), ss. 59, 148, Sch. 11 para. 6](#); [S.I. 2009/1604, art. 2](#)

F5 S. 30(9) substituted (12.4.2010) by [The Northern Ireland Act 1998 \(Devolution of Policing and Justice Functions\) Order 2010 \(S.I. 2010/976\), art. 1\(2\), Sch. 13 para. 3](#) (with arts. 28-31)

Commencement Information

I1 S. 30 partly in force, s. 30 not in force at Royal Assent, see s. 87; s. 30(1)-(10) in force at 13.6.2005 by [S.R. 2005/281, art. 2, Sch. 1](#)

I2 S. 30(11) in force at 12.4.2010 by [S.R. 2010/113, art. 2, Sch. para. 10](#)

[^{F6}30A Corporation sole etc

- (1) The Director of Public Prosecutions for Northern Ireland is a corporation sole.
- (2) The Director may do anything, apart from borrowing money, which is calculated to facilitate the exercise of the Director's functions or which is incidental or conducive to the exercise of those functions.
- (3) An instrument or other document purporting to be signed or otherwise executed by or on behalf of the Director is to be received in evidence and is, unless the contrary is proved, to be taken to be so signed or executed.]

Textual Amendments

F6 S. 30A inserted (12.3.2009) by [Northern Ireland Act 2009 \(c. 3\), ss. 3\(2\), 5](#)

31 Conduct of prosecutions

- (1) The Director must take over the conduct of all criminal proceedings which are instituted in Northern Ireland on behalf of any police force (whether by a member of that force or any other person).

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- (2) The Director may institute, and have the conduct of, criminal proceedings in any other case where it appears appropriate for him to do so.
- (3) This section does not preclude any person other than the Director from—
 - (a) instituting any criminal proceedings, or
 - (b) conducting any criminal proceedings to which the Director’s duty to conduct proceedings does not apply.
- (4) The Director may at any stage take over the conduct of any criminal proceedings which are instituted in circumstances in which he is not under a duty to take over their conduct, other than any proceedings of which the Director of the Serious Fraud Office has conduct.
- (5) The Director must give to police forces such advice as appears to him appropriate on matters relating to the prosecution of offences.
- (6) “Police force” means—
 - (a) the Police Service of Northern Ireland or the Police Service of Northern Ireland Reserve,
 - (b) the Ministry of Defence Police,
 - (c) any body of constables appointed under Article 19 of the Airports (Northern Ireland) Order 1994 (S.I. 1994/426 (N.I. 1)), or
 - (d) any body of special constables appointed in Northern Ireland under section 79 of the Harbours, Docks, and Piers Clauses Act 1847 (c. 27) or section 57 of the Civil Aviation Act 1982 (c. 16).

[^{F7}31A Conduct of extradition proceedings

- (1) The Director may have the conduct of any extradition proceedings in Northern Ireland.
- (2) The Director may give to such persons as appear to him appropriate such advice as appears to him appropriate on matters relating to extradition proceedings, or proposed extradition proceedings, in Northern Ireland.]

Textual Amendments

F7 S. 31A inserted (1.1.2004) by [Extradition Act 2003 \(c. 41\)](#), **ss. 192(6)**, 221; S.I. 2003/3103, **art. 2** (subject to savings in Order (as amended by S.I. 2003/3258 and S.I. 2003/3312))

32 Discontinuance of proceedings before court appearance

- (1) Where the Director has the conduct of proceedings in relation to an offence against a person, he may discontinue the proceedings (without the leave of any court) at any time before the person has appeared or been brought before a court in connection with the offence.
- (2) Where proceedings against a person in relation to an offence are discontinued under subsection (1), the Director must inform—
 - (a) the person, and
 - (b) any court before which the person has been required to appear in connection with the offence,

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that the proceedings have been discontinued.

- (3) Where proceedings against a person in relation to an offence are discontinued under subsection (1)—
 - (a) if he is in detention in connection with the offence, he must be released unless his detention is justified otherwise than by reason of the offence, and
 - (b) if he is subject to a requirement to appear before a court, or attend at a police station, in connection with the offence, the requirement ceases to have effect.
- (4) The discontinuance under subsection (1) of proceedings against a person in relation to an offence does not prevent the subsequent institution of proceedings against him in relation to the offence (or any other offence).

[^{F8}32A Influencing a prosecutor

- (1) A person commits an offence if, with the intention of perverting the course of justice, he seeks to influence the Director, the Deputy Director or a Public Prosecutor in any decision as to whether to institute or continue criminal proceedings.
- (2) A person commits an offence if, with the intention of perverting the course of justice, he seeks to influence a barrister or solicitor to whom the Director has under section 36(2) assigned the institution or conduct of any criminal proceedings in any decision as to whether to institute or continue those proceedings.
- (3) A person guilty of an offence under this section is liable—
 - (a) on summary conviction, to a fine not exceeding the statutory maximum or to imprisonment for a term not exceeding six months, or to both, and
 - (b) on conviction on indictment, to imprisonment for a term not exceeding five years or to a fine, or to both.
- (4) Proceedings for an offence under this section shall not be instituted without the consent of the Director.]

Textual Amendments

F8 S. 32A inserted (13.6.2005) by Justice (Northern Ireland) Act 2004 (c. 4), ss. 7, 19(1); S.R. 2005/282, art. 2

33 Consents to prosecutions

- (1) This section has effect in relation to every provision requiring the giving of consent by the Director (whether or not as an alternative to the consent of any other person) to the institution or conduct of criminal proceedings (“a consent provision”).
- (2) A consent provision is deemed to be complied with if the consent is produced to the court—
 - (a) in the case of an indictable offence, at any time before the indictment is presented, or
 - (b) in the case of an offence to be tried summarily, at any time before the plea of the accused person is taken.
- (3) For the purposes of a consent provision it is sufficient—
 - (a) to describe the offence to which the consent relates in general terms,

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- (b) to describe in ordinary language any property or place to which reference is made in the consent so as to identify with reasonable clarity that property or place in relation to the offence, and
 - (c) to describe the accused person or any other person to whom reference is made in the consent in terms which are reasonably sufficient to enable him to be identified in relation to the offence, without necessarily stating his correct name, or his address or occupation.
- (4) A consent required by a consent provision may be amended at any time before the arraignment of the accused person, or before his plea is taken.
- (5) And if at any subsequent stage of a trial it appears to the court that the consent is defective, the court may afford the person giving the consent the opportunity of making such amendments as the court may think necessary if the court is satisfied that such amendments can be made without injustice to the accused person.
- (6) Any document purporting—
- (a) to be the consent of the Director or the Deputy Director to the institution or conduct of criminal proceedings, or criminal proceedings in any particular form, and
 - (b) to be signed by the Director or Deputy Director,
- is admissible as prima facie evidence without further proof.

Commencement Information
I3 S. 33 in force at 12.4.2010 by S.R. 2010/113, art. 2, Sch. para. 11

34 Police complaints

- (1) Part 7 of the Police (Northern Ireland) Act 1998 (c. 32) (Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland) is amended as follows.
- (2) In section 50(1) (interpretation), after the definition of “complainant” insert—
- ““the Director” means the Director of Public Prosecutions for Northern Ireland;”.
- (3) In section 52 (complaints: receipt and initial classification), in subsections (1)(b), (6) and (7), after “Board” insert “, the Director ”.
- ^{F9}(4)

Textual Amendments
F9 S. 34(4) repealed (12.4.2010) by Justice (Northern Ireland) Act 2004 (c. 4), s. 19(1), Sch. 4; S.R. 2010/114, art. 2(c)

35 Information for Director

- (1) Where a person is committed for trial, the clerk of the court to which he is committed must send, or cause to be sent, to the Director without delay—

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- (a) a copy of every complaint, deposition, examination, statement and recognisance connected with the charge, and
 - (b) a copy of all other documents in his custody which are connected with the charge or, if it is not reasonably practicable to copy any of them, particulars of the documents which it is not reasonably practicable to copy.
- (2) Where a complaint has been made before a resident magistrate, a lay magistrate or a clerk of petty sessions, he must (whether or not proceedings have been taken on it) cause to be sent to the Director, on being requested by the Director to do so, copies of all documents in his custody which are connected with the complaint.
- (3) Where the circumstances of any death which has been, or is being, investigated by a coroner appear to the coroner to disclose that an offence may have been committed against the law of Northern Ireland or the law of any other country or territory, the coroner must as soon as practicable send to the Director a written report of the circumstances.
- (4) The Chief Constable of the Police Service of Northern Ireland must give to the Director information about offences alleged to have been committed against the law of Northern Ireland which are of any description specified by the Director.
- (5) The Chief Constable of the Police Service of Northern Ireland must, at the request of the Director, ascertain and give to the Director—
 - (a) information about any matter appearing to the Director to need investigation on the ground that it may involve an offence committed against the law of Northern Ireland, and
 - (b) information appearing to the Director to be necessary for the exercise of his functions.

36 Exercise of functions by and on behalf of Service

- (1) The Director may delegate any of his powers (to such extent as he determines) to—
 - (a) any Public Prosecutor, or
 - (b) any other member of staff of the Public Prosecution Service for Northern Ireland.
- (2) The Director may at any time appoint a person who is not a member of staff of the Service but who is a barrister or solicitor in Northern Ireland to institute or take over the conduct of criminal proceedings [^{F10}or extradition proceedings] assigned to him by the Director.
- (3) A person conducting proceedings assigned to him under subsection (2) has all the powers of a Public Prosecutor but must exercise them subject to any instructions given to him by a Public Prosecutor.

Textual Amendments

F10 Words in s. 36(2) inserted (1.1.2004) by Extradition Act 2003 (c. 41), ss. 192(7), 221; S.I. 2003/3103, art. 2 (subject to savings in Order (as amended by S.I. 2003/3258 and S.I. 2003/3312))

Modifications etc. (not altering text)

C1 S. 36 excluded (1.7.2011) by Bribery Act 2010 (c. 23), ss. 10(10), 19(1) (with ss. 16, 19(5)); S.I. 2011/1418, art. 2

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- C2** S. 36 restricted (1.7.2011) by Bribery Act 2010 (c. 23), **ss. 10(8)**, 19(1) (with ss. 16, 19(5)); S.I. 2011/1418, art. 2
- C3** S. 36 excluded (27.4.2017 for specified purposes, 30.9.2017 in so far as not already in force) by Criminal Finances Act 2017 (c. 22), **ss. 49(6)**, 58(5)(6); S.I. 2017/739, reg. 3

37 Code for Prosecutors

- (1) The Director must prepare a code of practice for—
 - (a) Public Prosecutors, and
 - (b) barristers and solicitors to whom the Director assigns the institution or conduct of criminal proceedings.
 - (2) The code must include a code of ethics laying down standards of conduct and practice.
 - (3) The code must also give guidance on general principles to be applied—
 - (a) in determining, in any case, whether criminal proceedings should be instituted or, where criminal proceedings have been instituted, whether they should be discontinued, and
 - (b) in determining, in any case, what charges should be preferred.
 - (4) The Director may from time to time prepare a new code or make alterations to a code.
 - (5) In preparing or making alterations to a code the Director must be guided by the general principles of the Guidelines on the Role of Prosecutors adopted at the Eighth United Nations Congress on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders held at Havana between 27th August and 7th September 1990.
- [^{F11}(5A) In preparing or making alterations to a code the Director must also have regard to any guidance for the time being in operation under section 8 of the Justice (Northern Ireland) Act 2004.]
- (6) The Director must publish each code prepared by him and any alterations which he makes to a code (or the code as altered).

Textual Amendments

- F11** S. 37(5A) inserted (1.2.2006) by Justice (Northern Ireland) Act 2004 (c. 4), **ss. 8(7)**, 19(1) (with s. 8(8)); S.R. 2005/282, **art. 5**

Modifications etc. (not altering text)

- C4** S. 37(4) modified (1.3.2008) by Serious Crime Act 2007 (c. 27), ss. 37, 94, **Sch. 2 para. 18**; S.I. 2008/219, **art. 3**

38 Equality and non-discrimination

- (1) Section 75 (duty on public authorities to have regard to need to promote equality of opportunity and good relations between different groups) and section 76 (discrimination by public authorities) of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 (c. 47) are amended as follows.
- (2) In subsection (3) of section 75, after paragraph (cc) insert—

“(cd) the Director of Public Prosecutions for Northern Ireland;”.

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(3) After subsection (4) of that section insert—

“(4A) The references in subsections (1) and (2) and Schedule 9 to the functions of the Director of Public Prosecutions for Northern Ireland do not include any of his functions relating to the prosecution of offences.”

(4) In subsection (7) of section 76, after paragraph (e) insert—

“(ea) the Director of Public Prosecutions for Northern Ireland;”.

(5) After that subsection insert—

“(8) This section does not apply to a decision of the Director of Public Prosecutions for Northern Ireland not to institute, or to discontinue, criminal proceedings or, where such a decision has been made, to any act done for the purpose of enabling the decision whether to institute or continue the proceedings to be made or for securing that the proceedings are discontinued.

(9) No injunction may be granted in respect of a contravention of this section by the Director of Public Prosecutions for Northern Ireland unless the court is satisfied that it would not prejudice any decision to institute criminal proceedings or any criminal proceedings.

(10) Where a party to proceedings for a contravention of this section applies for a stay of those proceedings on the ground of prejudice to a decision to institute criminal proceedings, or of prejudice to particular criminal proceedings, the court must grant the stay unless it is satisfied that continuance of the proceedings for the contravention would not result in the prejudice alleged.”

39 Reports by Director

(1) The Director must, as soon as possible after the end of each financial year, prepare a report (an “annual report”) on how he has exercised his functions during the financial year.

(2) The provisions of a code of practice for Public Prosecutors must be set out in the Director’s annual report for the financial year in which the code is issued; and any alterations to the code must be set out in his annual report for the financial year in which the alterations are made.

(3) The Attorney General for Northern Ireland must arrange for each annual report of the Director to be published.

(4) But the Attorney General for Northern Ireland may exclude a part of an annual report from the copy to be published if, in his opinion, the publication of the part—

- (a) would be against the public interest, or
- (b) might jeopardise the safety of any person.

(5) If the Attorney General for Northern Ireland excludes a part of an annual report from publication, he must publish with the annual report a statement that it has been excluded.

(6) “Financial year” means—

- (a) the period beginning with the day on which section 29 comes into force and ending with the first 31st March which falls at least six months after that day, and

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(b) each subsequent period of twelve months beginning with 1st April.

Modifications etc. (not altering text)

C5 S. 39(2) modified (1.3.2008) by [Serious Crime Act 2007 \(c. 27\)](#), ss. 37, 94, [Sch. 2 para. 18](#); S.I. 2008/219, [art. 3](#)

Changes to legislation:

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Changes and effects yet to be applied to the whole Act associated Parts and Chapters:

Whole provisions yet to be inserted into this Act (including any effects on those provisions):

- s. 31(1A) inserted by [2023 c. 41 Sch. 13 para. 5\(2\)](#)
- s. 31(7) inserted by [2023 c. 41 Sch. 13 para. 5\(4\)](#)