

How a Law is Made Transcript

KEY:

N: Narrator

N: Have you ever wondered how laws are made, where you live?

This is the story of how some ideas get turned into bills and some bills become laws at the Northern Ireland Assembly, the place where rules are created to help keep things fair and safe for everyone.

Step one, an Idea is Born.

Anyone can have an idea for a new law or want to improve an old one, but the only people who can turn an idea into a law in Northern Ireland are politicians called Members of the Legislative Assembly or MLAs for short.

Step Two, Developing the Idea.

First, an idea must be developed into a written proposal by a minister, another MLA, or a group of MLAs called a committee. It is now called a bill. Most bills come from MLAs who are also ministers like the Health Minister or the Education Minister. For example, the Education Minister in charge of schools might develop a bill to help schools deal with bullying or to make uniforms more affordable.

Step three, Introducing the Bill.

Next, the minister, committee or MLA brings the bill to the Assembly Chamber. This is called Introducing the Bill so that all the MLAs can start to decide if it's a good idea for a law. Once they've had time to read the bill MLAs meet to debate, and then vote on it to decide if it's something they want to look at further. If most MLAs say no, the bill won't become a law. Its short journey is over. But if most vote yes, it goes on to the next stage.

Step Four, Examining the Detail.

A committee of MLAs examine the detail of the bill section by section and think about how it would work as a law. They ask experts and the general public for their views. Every single word matters.

For example, 'pupils should wear a uniform' is quite different from 'pupils must wear a uniform.' After all this checking, there are more debates and votes in the assembly chamber. The MLA's vote on all the different parts of the bill and on any changes that are suggested until there is just one final vote to go.

Step Five, The Bill Becomes an Act.

If a bill passes its final vote in the Assembly Chamber, it goes to Northern Ireland's most senior lawyer for final checks. Then it gets sent to London for agreement by the Monarch known as Royal Assent. After that, success, the idea that became a bill has now turned into an Act of the Northern Ireland Assembly and is the law.