

# The Official Report of what happens in the Assembly

## KEY:

N: Narrator  
SB: Simon Burrowes  
B: Boy  
G: Girl  
M: Male Speaker  
F: Female Speaker

- N: Assembly debates are about important issues which affect us all. Debates can be long, detailed and complex so an accurate record of who said what and when is vital. This information is recorded in a document called the Official Report, which is also known as Hansard, named after the first printer of the report. To find out more about what it is and how it's done, we caught up with Hansard Editor, Simon Burrowes.
- SB: Hansard is the only full and complete record of the proceedings of the Northern Ireland Assembly. We report everything that is said by everybody. We would remove repetition and redundancies; we ensure that the reader will be able to understand what the member was saying and what the House understood the member to say.
- N: In the last mandate alone, Hansard transcribed more than six million words, which is the same as producing a novel each time the Assembly meets. But why is it produced and who uses it?
- SB: The Hansard Report allows the public to hold its MLAs to account. It allows the MLAs to hold the government to account, and it allows the Committees in the Assembly to hold the government departments, quangos, whatever, to account. It's essential for citizens to be able to know exactly what their representatives have said, why they have made their decisions, how they have made their decisions.
- N: So how is the official report produced? We follow the production process that takes us from the Assembly Chamber... (WHOOSH) ... to the Assembly website.
- SB: During the course of a normal day, we split what might be anything between four and even ten or twelve hours' business in the Assembly. We split that into five minute sections of sound.
- N: For each of those five minute sections, a Hansard reporter sits in the Chamber and makes a log of what is being said. The log identifies members who speak and contains brief details of what they say. The reporter then goes back to their desk and, using their log and a digital recording, produces an edited transcript of proceedings. This is then sent to an Assistant Editor for checking and this whole process continues throughout the day, until the end of Assembly business. During the day, all the transcripts are assembled and a 1st edition of the report is uploaded to the Assembly website, which is then replaced by a revised edition the following day.

- SB: At the end of the day, we pull together all the five minute segments of the report into one overall document.
- N: Hansard also provides an official record of evidence sessions at Committee meetings, although these reports can take slightly longer to publish. These are also uploaded to the Assembly website.
- SB: What we have in Hansard is a record for the future so that future generations will be able to see how and why we made the decisions we did and hopefully learn from them.
- N: You can browse or search all the official reports on the Assembly website.