

## The Work of an MLA

### KEY:

N: Narrator

N: The Northern Ireland Assembly has 90 Members of the Legislative Assembly, or MLAs, and their job has three main parts.

1. First, to make 'legislation', which is another word for 'laws':

We need laws to keep people safe, make sure everyone is treated fairly, and make Northern Ireland a better place to live.

A 'bill' is an idea for a new law. Most bills are put forward by MLAs who are Ministers in charge of departments in the Executive, which is the Government of Northern Ireland – these are 'executive bills'. Other MLAs can propose bills, too – these are 'private members' bills'.

MLAs debate and vote on bills in the Assembly Chamber at Parliament Buildings.

2. The second main role of MLAs is to make sure ministers govern Northern Ireland well. They do this by asking lots of questions about ministers' decisions and plans. Sometimes they send written questions and, on Mondays and Tuesdays, there's Question Time in the Assembly Chamber.

Committees are groups of MLAs who play a special role in checking Ministers' work. They meet on Wednesdays and Thursdays, study bills, and ask people who will be affected by a law what they think. For example, if the Education Minister proposes a bill relating to schools, the Education Committee scrutinises it and finds out what pupils, teachers, principals, parents and other experts think about it. It also carries out inquiries – or investigations – into educational issues.

Individual MLAs and committees can recommend changes to a bill, called amendments, which are debated and voted on in the Chamber.

3. Third, MLAs are elected to represent the people of Northern Ireland.

Northern Ireland has 18 areas, or constituencies, and each elects five MLAs to represent the people who live there. When making laws, MLAs listen to their constituents' views and report back to the Assembly. Every MLA has an office in their constituency and likes to spend time meeting the people they represent. For example, they might help constituents sort out a housing problem or give them advice about roads and public services. Friday is always spent in the constituency. At election time, MLAs hope that people will think they have done a good job and choose to vote for them again.

Find out more about the work of an MLA at <https://education.niassembly.gov.uk/>