

# Closing the Gap: Why Northern Ireland Needs Jade's Law Now

When we successfully campaigned to get **Jade's Law** onto the statute books in England and Wales through the **Victims and Prisoners Act 2024**, it was a landmark moment for justice. It sent a clear message: **Parental responsibility is a duty of care, not an absolute right that survives the intentional killing of a child's other parent.**

However, as of March 2026, a painful legal disparity remains. While families in England and Wales will now be protected from the secondary trauma of facing a killer in court, families in Northern Ireland are still being left behind.

## The Devolution Gap

Because family law is a devolved matter, the protections we fought so hard for did not automatically extend to Northern Ireland. This has created a "postcode lottery" of safety and common sense.

Currently, in Northern Ireland:

- A parent who kills their partner **retains legal rights** over their children from behind bars.
- Grieving guardians must **seek permission** from the killer for routine decisions like school trips, passport applications, or medical care.
- Families are forced into **traumatic and expensive legal battles** to strip responsibility from a convicted murderer.

## Families Are Reaching Out

Since Jade's Law became law in England and Wales, I have been approached by a number of families and support organisations in Northern Ireland. Their stories are a reminder of why this work isn't finished.

**They are asking for the same protection. They are asking for Jade's Law.**

## A Vital Opportunity: The Sentencing Bill

The good news is that we have a vehicle for change.

The Northern Ireland Assembly is currently debating the **Criminal Justice (Sentencing etc.) Bill**.

This Bill is the perfect place to insert a mirrored version of Jade's Law. By including provisions for the **automatic suspension of parental responsibility upon sentencing**, the Assembly can move from a system that reacts to trauma to one that proactively prevents it.

## My Commitment to the Entire UK

I did not design Jade's Law to be a regional privilege; I designed it to be a fundamental standard of decency and child protection.

**I am fully committed to ensuring that families throughout the entire United Kingdom have the protections that Jade's Law provides.** Geography should never dictate whether a child is protected from the influence of a person who killed their parent. I am currently working closely with Northern Irish advocates, and will provide technical briefings and legislative blueprints to ensure the Assembly has everything they need to do the right thing.

## How You Can Help

We cannot let this opportunity pass. If you are in Northern Ireland, your voice matters:

1. **Contact your local MLA:** Ask them to support the inclusion of "Jade's Law" provisions in the Criminal Justice (Sentencing etc.) Bill.
2. **Share the message:** We need to raise awareness that this gap exists and that the solution is already written.
3. **Justice shouldn't stop at the border. Let's bring Jade's Law to Northern Ireland.**

Edwin Duggan LLB(Hons)  
info@edwinduggan.co.uk