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A GUIDE TO LEGAL RESOURCES FOR  
NORTHERN IRELAND

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## LEGAL SYSTEM

Northern Ireland came into being as a political entity in 1921; its jurisdiction was established by the Government of Ireland Act 1920 which transferred most domestic matters to the legislative competence of the new NI Parliament while reserving others for Westminster. This new governance over Northern Ireland was modelled on Westminster with a Prime Minister and a bicameral Parliament based at Stormont, which comprised a House of Commons and a Senate, but all were suspended in March 1972 after increasing civil unrest.

Between 1972 and 1999, despite various attempts at devolution in 1974 and 1982, there was direct rule from Westminster and the majority of primary legislation was made by means of Orders in Council issued through the Privy Council. Then the Northern Ireland Act 1998, which resulted from the Belfast 'Good Friday' Agreement of April 1998, transferred matters to the legislative competence of a Northern Ireland Assembly with other matters such as foreign policy being reserved for Westminster. The NI Assembly was suspended again on 14th October 2002 and the country was returned to direct rule from Westminster. Although elections were held in 2003, the Assembly did not convene. The St Andrews Agreement in 2006 led to further elections in March 2007, and a new power-sharing executive took control on 8th May 2007. Security, foreign policy and criminal justice remain under the auspices of the Northern Ireland Office under the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

Like England, Northern Ireland has a common law legal system. The court structure in Northern Ireland was significantly altered by the Judicature (NI) Act 1978 so today the Supreme Court of Judicature of Northern Ireland comprises the High Court (Queen's Bench Division; Family Division, added in 1978; Chancery Division), the Court of Appeal (with a Court of Criminal Appeal created in 1930 and merged in 1978) and the Crown Court (which replaced the old system of assizes in 1978). The ultimate court of appeal for Northern Ireland is the House of Lords in London.

## PRIMARY SOURCES

### LEGISLATION

<i>Acts of the Northern Ireland Assembly</i> (2000 - )	Cw UK NI 010
<i>Northern Ireland Statutes and Orders in Council</i> (1924 - )	Cw UK NI 011
<i>Draft Statutory Instruments</i> (1976 - )	Cw UK NI 015
<i>Northern Ireland Statutes Revised</i> (1956 and 1981)	Cw UK NI 020
<i>Chronological Table of the Statutes, Northern Ireland</i> (1922- )	Cw UK NI 081
<i>Statutory Rules and Orders</i> (1922 - )	Cw UK NI 090
<i>Index to the Statutory Rules and Orders, Northern Ireland</i> (1964 - )	Cw UK NI 095

### LAW REPORTS, JUDGMENTS, DIGESTS

<i>Northern Ireland Judgments Bulletin</i> (1970 - )	Cw UK NI 100*
<i>Northern Ireland Law Reports</i> (1925 - ) <i>and via Lexis</i>	Cw UK NI 100
<i>Digest of Northern Ireland Law</i> (2nd, 1995 being replaced by 3rd, 2006- )	Cw UK NI 510 D572a3

### OTHER IMPORTANT GOVERNMENT DOCUMENTS

<i>Official Report (Hansard) of the Northern Ireland Assembly</i> (1999 - )	Cw UK NI 001
<i>Research Reports by the Criminal Justice Review Group</i>	Cw UK NI 510C930c
<i>Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission publications</i>	Cw UK NI 510 H918

Law Reform Advisory Committee for Northern Ireland publications Cw UK NI 510 L415

Northern Ireland Office, Great Britain publications Cw UK NI 510 N874

## JOURNALS

Bulletin of Northern Ireland Law (1981 - ) Cw UK NI 300 B60

Child and Family Law Update (1998 - ) Cw UK NI 300 C50

Frontline (2003 - ) Cw UK NI 300 F50

Northern Ireland Legal Quarterly (1936 - ) Cw UK NI 300 N20

## KEY TEXTS

Allen, M & McAleenan, F *Sentencing Law and Practice in Northern Ireland* (3rd, 1998) Cw UK NI 510 A427b3

Capper, D *The Enforcement of Judgments in Northern Ireland* Cw UK NI 510 C248a

Dickson, B *The Legal System of Northern Ireland* (5th, 2005) Cw UK NI 510 D554a5

Doran, S *The Criminal Evidence (NI) Order 1999: an Introductory Guide* Cw UK NI 510 D693a

Gillen, J *Recent Developments in Family Law* Cw UK NI 510 G476a

Grattan, S *The Trustee Act (NI) 2001* Cw UK NI 510 G773c

Greer, D *A Commentary on the Civil Evidence (NI) Order 1997* Cw UK NI 510 G816l

Greer, D *Some Recent Developments in the Law of Torts* Cw UK NI 510 G816k

Hadfield, B *The Constitution of Northern Ireland* Cw UK NI 510 H129c

Hayes, J & O'Higgins, P *Lessons from Northern Ireland* Cw UK NI 510 H417a

Joint Bar Conference *Legislative Change and the Belfast Agreement* Cw UK NI 510 J74a

Lundy, L *Education: Law, Policy and Practice in Northern Ireland* Cw UK NI 510 L962a

Stannard, J *Northern Ireland Criminal Procedure* Cw UK NI 510 S789c

Turner, S *The Implementation of EC Environmental Law in Northern Ireland* Cw UK NI 510 T952b

Valentine, B *Civil Proceedings: the Supreme Court* Cw UK NI 510 V157c

## ONLINE RESOURCES – INTERNET

### British and Irish Legal Information Institute

Court of Appeal, High Court & Tribunal decisions; Statutes, Orders in Council & Statutory Rules  
[www.bailii.org](http://www.bailii.org)

### Office of Public Sector Information

Acts with explanatory notes, Statutory Rules & links to Orders in Council and UK legislation that exclusively/primarily applies to Northern Ireland  
[www.opsi.gov.uk/legislation/northernireland/ni\\_legislation.htm](http://www.opsi.gov.uk/legislation/northernireland/ni_legislation.htm)

### Northern Ireland Assembly

Including Official Reports (Hansard) updated daily  
<http://www.niassembly.gov.uk>

### Northern Ireland Office

Directory of NI Departments and useful links, news & archived publications  
[www.nio.gov.uk](http://www.nio.gov.uk)

### **Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission**

Publications and news

[www.nihrc.org](http://www.nihrc.org)

### **Northern Ireland Criminal Justice System**

Publications, links to court statistics and decisions

[www.cjsni.gov.uk](http://www.cjsni.gov.uk)

### **Government Legal Service for Northern Ireland**

(replacing the Northern Ireland Office of Law Reform)

<http://www.dfpni.gov.uk/index/law-and-regulation/government-legal-service-for-ni.htm>

### **Belfast Gazette**

Official Newspaper

<http://www.gazettes-online.co.uk/home.aspx?geotype=Belfast>

### **Parliamentary factsheet L8**

Outline of the legislative procedure in Northern Ireland

<http://www.parliament.uk/documents/upload/l08.pdf>

## **ONLINE RESOURCES – DATABASES**

### **UK Official Publications**

Official publications since 1980, from over 2,000 UK public bodies

[www.ukop.co.uk](http://www.ukop.co.uk)

### **LexisNexis Butterworths (Athens password)**

Northern Ireland Law Reports & Unreported Judgements (2001 - )

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## NOTES

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