

KEY NOTE: 29 MAY 2026

LONDONDERRY/DERRY GUILDHALL

## JADES LAW EQUIVALENT IN THE NORTH OF IRELAND/NORTHERN IRELAND

Thank you for joining us for this peaceful gathering. Before I continue, I would like to thank the Mayor and his staff for permitting us to gather here outside this historic building for peaceful reflection and acknowledgement of the many victims of domestic violence, not only here in Northern Ireland, but across the whole Island of Ireland and across the United Kingdom.

Nearly five years ago, on a warm August night in North Wales, Jade Ward, just 27 years old, a mother of four boys, was brutally murdered by her husband. I will not mention his name as it's not worthy of mention. Jade was murdered by someone who claimed to love her, cherish her, and ultimately care for her. His actions did not demonstrate in any sense of the word.

Jade was a lovely person, both inside and out. She truly loved everyone around her. She loved

animals, especially elephants, but she was fond of even a fly, and many noted that she would go absolutely crazy if anyone even so much as swatted one in her presence.

She was always eager to talk with everyone.

I knew her as a lovely person; whenever we came into contact, she gave me time, we laughed, joked, and spoke about things that were happening around us. I always felt happier after our meeting, which would happen at the most opportune moments, be it crossing paths on the street or in the local supermarket; it was always a pleasure to have spoken with her, to be in her company, even for a fleeting moment, was a privilege.

In the months after her murder, and during the trial of her then accused killer, and even after her killer had been found guilty of her murder, this individual had and continued to frustrate those left to look after Jade's children by demanding reports on, for instance, who was looking after them, where they were being schooled, refusing to sign passport applications, and all other ancillary elements of their care.

Even before the family approached me to embark on what was to be Jade's Law, I was already researching ways to prevent Jade's murderer from, shall we say, frustrating things from his prison cell.

When Jade's mother, Karen, gave me the "green light" to start a campaign which would provide some type of legacy for Jade, I knew exactly what to campaign for.

I am not going to detail everything that happened throughout the next 18 months, but it concluded with the inclusion of Jade's Law sitting within the Victims and Prisoners Act 2024, which would see my initial framework and suggestions to automatically suspend parental responsibility from those who murdered their partner placed into a legal framework.

Fast forward to November 2025, during attendance at a conference in London, which concentrated on Children with a parent in prison, a member of the panel exclaimed that she wished that Jade's Law was available to her family because she and her family were having to go

through the court process to remove Parentale Responsibility from the murderer of the mother of the children they were now left to care for.

There I was sitting amongst a crowd of people, thinking, what the hell? I thought that this law was “live”. Only to find that it was still to be enacted! I then embarked on getting the Ministry of Justice to “sort themselves out”, by basically embarrassing them into action. I attended a meeting with the supposed team who were responsible for getting Jade’s Law enacted, and before leaving the meeting let them know that they need to sort themselves out and sort it out. It worked as the due date for enactment was brought forward from mid 2027 to December 2026.

Now we come to why we are here today. About six weeks ago, I was contacted by a few people here in Derry, who were asking a very important question. That question was, why didn't people in Northern Ireland have the same protections which Jade’s Law provided in England and Wales?

Now this was a complete surprise to me. During the initial campaign, which was a national

campaign, UK-wide, I was under the impression that the law extended throughout the UK, which includes Northern Ireland.

Due to devolved governance, I was dismayed to find that the protections I thought were throughout the UK were not as I had thought.

After a few phone calls and many emails, I knew we had to start a campaign to rectify this gap in legislation. With the help of many here in Derry, we formed what is now the campaign for a Jade's Law Equivalent in Northern Ireland.

Since the launch, which was held here on 16th April, the campaign has gone from strength to strength. The petition reached approximately 13000 signatures, which proportionally exceeds the national petition numbers reached in the initial UK-wide petition.

I have been encouraged over the past few weeks by the overall support from MLAs from across the political spectrum who have given support to this campaign, and I was especially moved by the fact that the first minister, Michelle O'Neill, made a

statement on social media giving her support. I must say at this juncture, I sincerely do not feel that this was in any way a political statement on her part; I think it was a genuine statement on behalf of her commitment to women's rights.

Now we come to the meeting we had as a group in the last couple of weeks. I can now officially say to you all today that a Jade's Law Equivalent will be introduced in Northern Ireland Legislation as soon as next year. There is cross-party support, and I must say to you all here today that the suggestions are that it will surpass the existing legislation that exists in England and Wales.

Jade Ward, 27 years old when she was taken from us in August 2021, was an absolutely abhorrent event. Such an incident, one would think, is unusual; unfortunately, it is not!

In the five years since her death, in Northern Ireland alone, 30 women have been killed with similar circumstances surrounding them.

Now we remember them by naming them here today and lighting a candle for each and every one of them:

### CANDLE LIGHTING CEREMONY:

Elizabeth Dobbin	Aged 82	Died 30 March 2020
Natasha Melendez	Aged 32	Died 1 April 2020
Emma Jane McParland	Aged 39	Died 22 April 2020
Patrycja Wyrebek	Aged 20	Died 2 August 2020
Katie Simpson	Aged 21	Died 9th August 2020
Susan Baird	Aged 60	Died 16 August 2020
Karen McClean	Aged 50	Died 19 March 2021
Stacey Knell	Aged 30	Died 19 March 2021

Ludmila Poletelova	Aged 61	Died 20 April 2021
Kathleen 'Katie' Brankin	Aged 37	Died 12 July 2021
Katrina Rainey	Aged 53	Died 12 October 2021
Caoimhe Morgan	Aged 30	Died 18 December 2021
Alyson Nelson	Aged 64	Died 16 April 2022
Margaret Una Noone	Aged 77	Died 17 June 2022
Hollie Thomson	Aged 28	Died 11 September 2022
Natalie McNally	Aged 32	Died 18 December 2022
Alesia Nazarova	Aged 37	Died 21 March 2023
Chloe Mitchell	Aged 21	Remains found 11 June 2023
Kathryn 'Kat' Parton	Aged 34	Body found 9 May 2024

Patricia 'Patsy' Aust	Aged 81	Died 2 June 2024
Sophie Watson	Aged 57	Died 18 August 2024
Montserrat Elias	Aged 66	Died 24 August 2024
Rachel Simpson	Aged 43	Died 13 September 2024
Mary Ward	Aged 22	Body found 1 October 2024
Karen Cummings	Aged 40	Died 14 December 2024
Marie Green	Aged 71	Died 3 June 2025
Sarah Montgomery	Aged 27	Died 28 June 2025
Vanessa Whyte	Aged 45	Died 23 July 2025
Ellie Flanagan	Aged 23	Died 7 March 2026
Amy Doherty	Aged 28	Died 21 March 2026

And finally, we light a candle for all those who have been killed in the South of Ireland.

I want to conclude with the following message:

Everyone we remember today once had dreams, laughter, and love — but their voices were silenced too soon.

Today, through us, they speak again. They speak through me, they speak through you.

Through our words, our actions, and our courage, they live on.

We are now their voice, and their story continues through every one of us.

The creation of a Jade's Law Equivalent is a milestone, but it is not the destination.

It is the first step on a long road toward justice, compassion, and protection for every child and family.

Our work does not end here; it begins anew today.

So let us carry this message beyond these walls of Derry.

Let it echo in classrooms, in homes, in parliaments, and in hearts.

Let it rise above indifference and be heard in every corner of our nation, a cry that says *enough is enough*.

We will be the instruments of change, the guardians of hope, and the voice for those who cannot speak.

And that...

**TOGETHER WE CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE!**

Thank you.