

News story: Statement by Secretary of State for Northern Ireland James Brokenshire ahead of the 29 June deadline to restore devolved government in NI

The coming hours will be critical to form a functioning executive in Northern Ireland.

Discussions between the parties took place last night. Further intensive discussions are taking place today and I expect they will continue into this evening.

Northern Ireland needs strong devolved government to provide leadership, direction and a voice for Northern Ireland. This is vital during the critical period ahead as the UK prepares to leave the EU.

This is also a moment of outstanding opportunity for Northern Ireland. The package of UK Government financial support announced yesterday will make a tangible difference to the lives of everyone living here.

Discussions today are focused on Irish language and equality issues because they are the most critical areas to resolve to enable an Executive to be formed on Thursday.

I have urged the parties to find a way to overcome their outstanding differences in the hours ahead.

With political will – and some courage – effective government in Northern Ireland can be restored by the end of the week. If the parties focus on this common sense of purpose, for the benefit of all communities, this can be achieved.

I know that is what the vast majority of people here voted for and what they are hoping their political representatives can deliver.