# Antrim woman’s suspended sentence highlights mental health challenges in Northern Ireland arson cases



An Antrim woman, Crystal Slavin, received a suspended jail sentence after setting fire to her home while her daughter and aunt were present. Judge Fiona Bagnall imposed a 25-month sentence but acknowledged the exceptional circumstances surrounding the case, including Slavin's fragile mental health and her progress while on bail. The judge noted that, despite the serious nature of the crime, these factors warranted a more lenient approach.

This incident reflects broader issues concerning arson in Northern Ireland, where several similar cases have emerged, often intertwined with personal struggles and mental health challenges. For instance, Aine Kennedy, a mother from County Antrim, pled guilty in 2013 to setting fire to her home, placing her two children in considerable danger. Neighbours intervened, rescuing the family, which underscored the potentially devastating consequences of such reckless behaviours. The court heard of Kennedy's history of solvent abuse and depression, and although she was spared prison due to her genuine remorse, the case highlights the serious consequences of arson and the importance of addressing underlying issues like substance abuse.

Further down the line, incidents of arson such as that of Alison Greer, who was jailed for deliberately setting fire to a house belonging to a man she had met online, illustrate the varying motivations behind these crimes. Greer's act, which caused significant damage but fortunately did not endanger lives, was described as premeditated, showcasing how personal grievances can escalate into dangerous actions.

Similarly, the case of Michael Ward, a 22-year-old man who was sentenced to three and a half years for arson with intent to endanger life, adds a layer of complexity. Ward's impulsive action stemmed from threats rather than a personal vendetta and had the potential to inflict harm on multiple lives, as emergency services were involved in combating the aftermath.

With arson remaining a critical concern, the Police Service of Northern Ireland has responded to multiple incidents that threaten lives and property. A recent case from January 2025 involved an arson attack that left a woman in her 70s in hospital with burns and smoke inhalation, illustrating not only the immediate dangers but also the longer-term community impacts of such reckless behaviour.

These incidents emphasise the need for continued community vigilance and support systems to safeguard vulnerable individuals while addressing the psychological and social elements that may lead to such severe actions. The path forward will necessitate not only punitive measures but also meaningful interventions that tackle the root causes of distress and impulsive behaviour, aiming to prevent future incidents of arson and ensure safety for all.

### Reference Map

1. Paragraph 1: Source (1)
2. Paragraph 2: Sources (2), (3)
3. Paragraph 3: Source (4)
4. Paragraph 4: Source (5)
5. Paragraph 5: Source (6)
6. Paragraph 6: Source (7)

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://m.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/courts/antrim-woman-receives-suspended-jail-term-for-setting-fire-to-own-home-while-daughter-and-aunt-were-inside/a1330493181.html> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-28938865> - A County Antrim woman, Aine Kennedy, admitted to setting fire to her home while she and her two children were inside. The incident occurred in April 2013, with a neighbor rescuing the family after hearing a smoke alarm and shouts for help. Kennedy had a history of solvent abuse and alcohol consumption. She pleaded guilty to arson with intent to endanger life or being reckless as to whether the lives of her sons would be endangered. The court was informed that she had no recollection of events after 9.30pm that night. Investigators found 34 butane gas canisters in the house during a search. The case highlights the serious consequences of arson and the importance of addressing underlying issues such as substance abuse.
3. <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-northern-ireland-28972730> - Aine Kennedy, a County Antrim mother, was spared a prison sentence after admitting to setting fire to her home with her two children inside. The judge at Craigavon Crown Court considered her 'genuine remorse' and released her on probation. The court heard that a neighbor rescued the defendant and her sons, aged 10 and 8, after hearing a smoke alarm and her shouts for help in April 2013. Kennedy had a history of depression and solvent abuse. The judge emphasized that arson is an extremely serious crime but acknowledged the exceptional circumstances of the case, including her children no longer being in her care.
4. <https://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/northern-ireland/antrim-woman-who-set-fire-to-home-of-man-she-met-on-dating-site-is-jailed/34622134.html> - Alison Greer, a 42-year-old mother from Newtownabbey, Co Antrim, was jailed for setting fire to the house of a man she met online. The arson attack occurred in the early hours of July 10, 2014, when an accelerant was poured through the letterbox and set alight, causing around £2,000 worth of damage. The male occupant, who was in the process of moving in, was not present at the time. Greer was found guilty of arson with intent to endanger life. During sentencing, Judge Gordon Kerr QC revealed that Greer had admitted her guilt and claimed she acted out of a wish for revenge for an alleged incident involving their children. The judge noted that the arson was well-planned and required obtaining items necessary to set fire to the house.
5. <https://www.psni.police.uk/latest-news/man-22-sentenced-court-after-setting-fire-house-antrim> - Michael Ward, a 22-year-old man from Antrim, was sentenced to three and a half years in prison after pleading guilty to arson with intent to endanger life. The incident occurred on January 27, 2024, when Ward made threats to burn down a house on Queens Road. Upon police arrival, visible smoke was coming from the property, and Ward was still inside. He was removed from the property with non-serious injuries and arrested. The Northern Ireland Fire & Rescue Service extinguished the fire, which caused extensive smoke damage to neighboring properties. Thankfully, there were no serious injuries. Detective Inspector Lenaghan described the act as reckless, emphasizing the potential risk to many lives.
6. <https://www.thejournal.ie/man-arrested-arson-attack-antrim-woman-hospitalised-6608128-Jan2025/> - A man was arrested in connection with an arson attack on a home in Antrim town that left multiple people injured. The incident occurred on January 21, 2025, at a property in the Rathglynn area. A woman in her 70s was inside the house at the time and was taken to hospital for treatment of burns and smoke inhalation. Two others, a woman in her 40s and a man in his 40s, were also treated for smoke inhalation and injuries sustained while attempting to assist the woman. The Northern Ireland Fire & Rescue Service managed to extinguish the fire, but the property was significantly damaged. The Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) treated the incident as arson with intent. The arrested man was released without charge, and police inquiries continued to establish the circumstances surrounding the incident.
7. <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c5y7p210rd3o> - A 30-year-old man was arrested in connection with an arson attack at a house in Antrim but was released on bail. The incident occurred on January 22, 2025, at a property in the Rathglynn area. A 72-year-old woman, who was deaf, was inside the house at the time and remains in hospital in a critical but stable condition. The Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) is continuing to appeal for information regarding the incident. The case highlights the serious consequences of arson and the importance of community vigilance and support for vulnerable individuals.