# Prosecutions for illegal gaming in Northern Ireland remain rare as couple denies charges



Lawyers representing a couple accused of organising illegal gaming in Northern Ireland have highlighted the rarity of prosecutions for such offences during a recent court hearing. Connor McAreavey, 35, and Sarah Sullivan, 34, from Leeson Street off the Grosvenor Road, appeared at Belfast Crown Court for a preliminary arraignment, where they pleaded not guilty to several charges related to prohibited gaming activities spanning from January 1, 2020, to December 31, 2022.

McAreavey faces accusations of managing illegal gaming as well as multiple counts of converting and possessing criminal property, with the alleged figures exceeding £63,000 and €2,065. Sullivan, too, denied similar charges, including one alleging the conversion of £93,000, purportedly used for purchasing a caravan, and possessing a sum of £6,887.79 and €2,065.

Defence barrister Sean Devine informed the court that his team had submitted Freedom of Information requests to relevant statutory bodies regarding prosecutions under the Betting Gaming Lotteries and Amusement (Northern Ireland) Order 1985. Mr. Devine noted that there have been only a few prosecutions under this legislation, reflecting a particular leniency historically applied. He expressed concerns regarding the potential for criminalising behaviours that often result in warnings rather than formal charges.

The current legal framework surrounding gambling in Northern Ireland, notably the Betting, Gaming, Lotteries and Amusements (NI) Order 1985, governs various gambling activities. This legislation has seen few substantial prosecutions in recent years, as indicated by statistical reports from the Public Prosecution Service (PPS). These reports reveal a broader trend where, in many instances, parties involved in minor infractions are issued warnings rather than facing charges.

In light of this, ongoing discussions are reportedly taking place between the defence and prosecution to negotiate a compromise acceptable to both sides. Judge Philip Gilpin has scheduled the trial for October 6, while McAreavey and Sullivan have been released on continuing bail, indicating that the court remains open to alternative resolutions.

Such leniency in prosecuting cases related to illegal gaming raises questions about the efficacy of existing gambling regulations in Northern Ireland. Recent amendments to the original legislation, which came into effect on October 1, 2023, introduce new offences concerning underage gaming and cheating, reflecting a growing concern over irresponsible gambling practices. The statistics from the 2023/24 financial year suggest that the PPS is focusing not only on prosecution rates but also on enhancing the overall regulatory framework to better manage gambling activities.

As this trial progresses, it underscores the evolving narrative surrounding gambling legislation in Northern Ireland and the ongoing balancing act between regulation and enforcement. With the legal system adapting to contemporary challenges, future cases may increasingly reflect the tension between public safety and personal liberties in the realm of gaming.

### Reference Map

1. Paragraphs 1-3: Source [[1]](https://www.irishnews.com/news/northern-ireland/lawyer-tells-court-prosecutions-for-illegal-gaming-rare-as-couple-sent-for-trial-BSN26HV3GZAP5AF6OYRIRPHEPM/)
2. Paragraphs 4-5: Sources [[2]](https://www.justice-ni.gov.uk/publications/court-prosecutions-convictions-and-out-court-disposals-statistics-northern-ireland-2023), [[3]](https://www.ppsni.gov.uk/news/pps-publishes-annual-statistical-bulletin-2023-24), [[5]](https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/topics/law-and-legislation/betting-gaming-lotteries-and-amusements)
3. Paragraphs 6-7: Source [[6]](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/nisr/2023/74/data.html)
4. Paragraph 8: Sources [[4]](https://www.ppsni.gov.uk/publications/pps-statistical-bulletin-2023-24), [[7]](https://www.northernireland.gov.uk/publications/court-prosecutions-convictions-and-out-court-disposals-statistics-northern-ireland-2022)

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

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.irishnews.com/news/northern-ireland/lawyer-tells-court-prosecutions-for-illegal-gaming-rare-as-couple-sent-for-trial-BSN26HV3GZAP5AF6OYRIRPHEPM/> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.justice-ni.gov.uk/publications/court-prosecutions-convictions-and-out-court-disposals-statistics-northern-ireland-2023> - This publication provides detailed statistics on court prosecutions, convictions, and out-of-court disposals in Northern Ireland for the year 2023. It includes data on various offence categories, court types, and demographic breakdowns, offering insights into the criminal justice system's operations during that period.
3. <https://www.ppsni.gov.uk/news/pps-publishes-annual-statistical-bulletin-2023-24> - The Public Prosecution Service (PPS) released its Statistical Bulletin for the 2023/24 financial year, detailing key statistics on files received, prosecutorial decisions, and case outcomes. The bulletin highlights trends in prosecution rates and provides a comprehensive overview of the PPS's activities during this period.
4. <https://www.ppsni.gov.uk/publications/pps-statistical-bulletin-2023-24> - This statistical bulletin from the PPS presents data on files received, prosecutorial decisions, and case outcomes for the 2023/24 financial year. It offers insights into the types of offences prosecuted and the efficiency of the prosecution process in Northern Ireland.
5. <https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/topics/law-and-legislation/betting-gaming-lotteries-and-amusements> - The Department for Communities provides an overview of gambling legislation in Northern Ireland, detailing the Betting, Gaming, Lotteries and Amusements (NI) Order 1985 and its amendments. This resource outlines the regulatory framework governing various gambling activities in the region.
6. <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/nisr/2023/74/data.html> - This document outlines the commencement order for the Betting, Gaming, Lotteries and Amusements (Amendment) (2022 Act) in Northern Ireland, detailing the provisions that came into effect on 1st October 2023, including new offences related to underage gaming and cheating.
7. <https://www.northernireland.gov.uk/publications/court-prosecutions-convictions-and-out-court-disposals-statistics-northern-ireland-2022> - This publication presents data on court prosecutions, convictions, and out-of-court disposals in Northern Ireland for the year 2022. It includes statistics on various offence categories, court types, and demographic breakdowns, providing insights into the criminal justice system's operations during that period.