



**Fourth Report
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INDEPENDENT REPORTING COMMISSION

FOURTH REPORT

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This is the Fourth Report of the Independent Reporting Commission. We were established following the Fresh Start Agreement (2015) to report on progress towards ending paramilitary activity connected with Northern Ireland, and to report on and inform the implementation of the Executive's Action Plan for Tackling Paramilitary Activity, Criminality and Organised Crime.

In Section A of the Report we give an overview of the situation and ongoing work. We present various sets of publicly available data and research about the level and impact of paramilitary activity over the last year in Section B. In Section C, we offer our commentary on each of the Actions that the Executive committed to in 2016. We outline progress against our recent Recommendations and summarise new Recommendations from this Report in Section D.

It has been a mixed and challenging year. Reaction to Brexit, including the Protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland, has led to new complexities and increasing prominence around paramilitarism. Disorder on the streets in the Spring and Autumn have led to speculation about the potential for a resurgence of paramilitary activity. Overall, we remain concerned about the risks posed to society by the continuing existence of paramilitary structures which can be harnessed for the purposes of violence or the threat of violence. We stated in our last Report and we repeat now: paramilitarism remains a clear and present danger.

Our Report provides an overview of the complex landscape of paramilitarism. Those involved range from individuals and groups who use paramilitarism as a cloak for overt criminality (ranging from extortion, drug dealing, threats, trade in counterfeit goods, money laundering, illegal money lending, sexual exploitation and other illegal activities), to others who get caught up in it for reasons to do with socio-economic disadvantage. Some of this is related to the lack of an alternative pathway, to poor educational and employment opportunities, challenges to do with drugs, as well as addiction and mental health, and peer pressure. There are also "dormant" members who retain some form of affiliation with a group (perhaps willingly, or perhaps because there is not a means to exit the group), who may pay a membership fee, and whilst not presently active in the organisations could be asked to play a role in the future. We consider that there is a further category of those who remain involved in paramilitarism for political and identity reasons which reach back to the Troubles. There is also a group of people, including at leadership level in some of the groups, who appear to have a positive wish to see paramilitarism ended, but cite a range of reasons why they believe they cannot do so currently. This complex landscape necessitates a multi-faceted approach.

We highlight good practice from the Executive Programme for Tackling Paramilitary Activity, Criminality and Organised Crime – including a multi-agency hub project, the

Communities in Transition project and work with vulnerable young people – and from criminal justice partners. We also welcome the new focus on benefits realisation (including measuring how the various actions influence positive change) in the second Phase of the Programme, which began in April 2021. We see this Whole of Government approach as vital to success in all work to tackle paramilitarism.

There are, however, aspects of the Executive Action Plan on which we would like to see further and faster action, including the establishment of a Centre for Restorative Excellence, removing avoidable delay from the criminal justice system, the introduction and rollout of organised crime legislation, and work to re-integrate ex-prisoners. Leadership across all these issues is vital and we welcome the priority pledged by the new Head of the Civil Service to this work, and the ongoing work of the Programme’s Political Advisory Group. The goal of tackling paramilitarism must be assigned a high priority in any new Programme for Government for a new Executive. Furthermore, the challenges being addressed require a sustained, joined-up and well-resourced approach with a long-term commitment of resources, and we urge the UK Government and the Northern Ireland Executive to ensure that work to tackle paramilitarism is given high priority in the current challenging fiscal climate.

Fresh Start, and its resultant initiatives, all make clear that while policing and justice measures are essential in bringing paramilitarism to an end, they are not enough in themselves and need to be situated inside a wider, more holistic approach that includes tackling the deep and systemic socio-economic issues facing communities, and in particular those communities where paramilitary control is strongest. This “twin track” approach is crucial to sustainably and comprehensively tackling paramilitarism.

Finally, in this Report we develop our analysis that an additional dimension is also required. The disbandment of paramilitary organisations has to involve voluntary action by the Groups and therefore their co-operation, and so we believe that a dedicated, formal process of engagement with an end goal of disbandment is required. Just as a process of political engagement – ultimately leading to the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement – was needed to bring the Troubles to an end, a similar process is now necessary to definitively end paramilitarism. We outline our thinking on what steps could be involved in a Group Transition process, and urge further consideration of it by the two Governments, the Executive and civic society.

We are acutely aware of the harm caused by paramilitary activity, including the impact of coercive control on communities, and society as a whole. In all of this work, we must never lose sight of that harm and the impetus it provides to bringing about the ending of paramilitarism once and for all. Political leadership will be key.

SECTION A: OVERVIEW

Introduction

- 1.1 This is the Fourth Report of the Independent Reporting Commission (IRC), which was established to report on progress towards ending paramilitary activity connected with Northern Ireland by an international treaty¹ between the UK and Irish Governments, under the terms of the Fresh Start Agreement² concluded by the two Governments and the Northern Ireland (NI) parties in November 2015. The Fresh Start Agreement was the result of intensive discussions in response to continued paramilitary activity in Northern Ireland, with the Governments and the NI parties reiterating “the primacy and centrality of peace and the political process to the continued transformation of our society”. The Agreement also identified a key goal: the ending of paramilitarism “once and for all.” The IRC was tasked with reporting on progress towards that goal.
- 1.2 The IRC was formally established in August 2017. Its members are John McBurney and Monica McWilliams (nominated by the Northern Ireland Executive), Tim O’Connor (nominated by the Irish Government) and Mitchell B. Reiss (nominated by the UK Government). We report annually³.

Our Mandate

- 1.3 We want to say a few words at the outset about our mandate. As we have made clear in all of our Reports to date, we are not an operational body and do not provide detailed security or threat or status assessments of the various paramilitary groupings. That is a matter for the police and security services. This has led to some confusion in the public domain, with some commentators holding the view that we are – or should be – a direct successor body to the Independent Monitoring Commission (IMC, 2004–2011), whose primary role was to “monitor any continuing activity by paramilitary groups” and “assess whether leaderships of such organisations are directing such incidents.”
- 1.4 Our mandate at the IRC was set in a different context, that of the Fresh Start Agreement of November 2015, followed by the Report of the Fresh Start Panel on the Disbandment of Paramilitary Groups in NI of May 2016⁴ and the adoption by the Executive of the Recommendations of the Panel in an Action Plan (the “Executive Action Plan”) in July 2016⁵, leading to the establishment of the Tackling Paramilitary

¹ <https://www.ircommission.org/publications/irc-treaty-0>

² Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/479116/A_Fresh_Start_-_The_Stormont_Agreement_and_Implementation_Plan_-_Final_Version_20_Nov_2015_for_PDF.pdf

³ Our [First Report](#) was published in October 2018, our [Second](#) in November 2019 and our [Third](#) in November 2020. They are all available on our website: www.ircommission.org

⁴ <https://www.northernireland.gov.uk/publications/fresh-start-panel-report-disbandment-paramilitary-groups-northern-ireland>

⁵ <https://www.northernireland.gov.uk/publications/tackling-paramilitary-activity-criminality-and-organised-crime-executive-action-plan>

Activity, Criminality and Organised Crime Programme⁶. In these initiatives, a wider, more comprehensive approach was decided upon for tackling paramilitarism, one which combined policing and justice responses with a large and diverse range of measures aimed at addressing the systemic socio-economic challenges besetting communities where the paramilitaries mainly operate. This wider role is reflected in the composition of the IRC itself, with none of the Commissioners coming from a specialist security background, unlike those appointed to the IMC.

- 1.5 In carrying out our mandate as the IRC, we are required to take account in broad terms of the security situation relating to paramilitarism and we receive regular briefings from the PSNI, the UK Security Service and An Garda Síochána. In our reporting, therefore, we provide an overview of the security situation based on these briefings, without going into specific detail on the status of individual paramilitary groupings. We also comment on the measures being taken in the criminal justice field on the issue and make recommendations as part of our comprehensive remit. However, it is not within the IRC's mandate to interpret or comment on the security briefings. Any public commentary on the detail of the security situation is a matter for each policing/security service itself, within the terms of their own responsibilities for public accountability.
- 1.6 In summary, our mandate at the IRC is as follows: **to provide a comprehensive analysis of overall efforts to tackle paramilitarism in Northern Ireland; to report on the specific measures currently underway under the Executive Action Plan and the Tackling Paramilitary Activity, Criminality and Organised Crime Programme; and, finally, to make recommendations on further actions needed so that the overall goal of ending paramilitarism can be achieved, in the words of the Fresh Start Agreement, "once and for all."**
- 1.7 In this Report we give our updated analysis on where matters stand in regard to all elements of our mandate, together with some new Recommendations on how progress can be accelerated.

The Format of our Report

- 1.8 Our Report comprises four Sections. Section A (this Section) provides an Overview of our mission and role, and a summary of our key observations and findings based on our work over the last year. Section B sets out data, drawn from open-source police statistics, Department for Communities information and other published research on paramilitarism, which illustrate the level and impact of paramilitary activity over the last year, building on the baselines we set out in our First and Second Reports. Section C, Implementation of Measures, contains a detailed report on progress in implementing the Plan and the Programme, including some specific examples of success. And finally, in Section D, we report on how the Recommendations we made

⁶ <https://www.justice-ni.gov.uk/articles/executive-programme-tackling-paramilitary-activity-and-organised-crime>

in our earlier Reports are being addressed, and make further Recommendations for the way forward.

Our Analysis

- 1.9 It has been our view from the outset of our work as the IRC in 2017 that what makes the Fresh Start Agreement approach to ending paramilitarism, and the initiatives that stemmed from it, different to previous attempts is its comprehensive nature. Fresh Start, and its resultant initiatives, all make clear that while policing and justice measures are essential in bringing paramilitarism to an end, they are not enough in themselves and need to be situated inside a wider, more holistic approach that includes tackling the deep and systemic socio-economic issues facing communities, and in particular those communities where paramilitary control is strongest.
- 1.10 What lies beneath this holistic approach is the nature of the paramilitarism issue in Northern Ireland today. We have set out in our previous Reports how paramilitarism involves a complex landscape comprising different categories of people. These range from individuals and groups who use paramilitarism as a cloak for overt criminality (ranging from extortion, drug dealing, threats, trade in counterfeit goods, money laundering, illegal money lending, sexual exploitation and other illegal activities), to others who get caught up in it for reasons to do with socio-economic disadvantage. Some of this is related to the lack of an alternative pathway, to poor educational and employment opportunities, challenges to do with drugs, as well as addiction and mental health, and peer pressure. There are also “dormant” members who retain some form of affiliation with a group (perhaps willingly, or perhaps because there is not a means to exit the group), who may pay a membership fee, and whilst not presently active in the organisations could be asked to play a role in the future. We consider that there is a further category of those who remain involved in paramilitarism for political and identity reasons which reach back to the Troubles. There is also a group of people, including at leadership level in some of the groups, who appear to have a positive wish to see paramilitarism ended, but cite a range of reasons why they believe they cannot do so currently.
- 1.11 Another dimension of the “complex landscape” is the fractured nature of politics in the years since the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement. Much of the 23-year period since the Agreement has been characterised by turmoil and turbulence in political life, with several suspensions of the Executive and Assembly, thereby prolonging instability and mitigating against the kind of sustained, cross-party policy interventions and approaches that are needed to address the range of factors involved in continued paramilitarism. That is why the more comprehensive and holistic approach heralded by the Fresh Start Agreement is so important. The years since that Agreement in November 2015 have themselves been characterised by turbulence and instability at the political level, something which has undoubtedly affected the pace of implementation. Despite that, the new approach, if fully implemented, constitutes a “Fresh Start” in terms of tackling and ending paramilitarism.

- 1.12 In our analysis we continue to characterise the strategy as a Twin Track approach in the tackling and ending of paramilitarism which means that the policing/justice responses are placed in Track One and the measures to tackle the socio-economic issues are in Track Two.
- 1.13 In our Second and Third Reports we gave prominence to our view that to those two Tracks should be added a further dimension, namely that to end paramilitarism we also need an agreed formal process of Group Transition, involving direct engagement with the Paramilitary Groups themselves. The end goal of that process of engagement would be disbandment of the Groups. Their continued presence constitutes a live and unacceptable risk, and holds entire communities back, as paramilitary groups can be a bar to the transformational change needed in the communities in which they mainly operate. It is our view that a policing/justice approach alone is not sufficient – law enforcement is an important part of tackling paramilitarism, but is not enough on its own. It is not feasible to arrest everyone suspected of involvement in paramilitarism – as others have said, agreeing with this analysis: you cannot arrest your way out of this problem. Consequently, the disbandment of paramilitary organisations has to involve voluntary action by the Groups and therefore their co-operation. There is also the reality that continued paramilitarism is connected to the wider context of the Troubles, and therefore just as a process of political engagement – ultimately leading to the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement – was needed to bring the Troubles to an end, a similar process is now necessary to definitively end paramilitarism. We see Group Transition as a necessary addition to, and working in parallel with, the Twin Tracks of Policing/Criminal Justice and addressing the socio-economic challenges of the communities concerned.
- 1.14 We set out in this Report how all these issues have evolved since our last Report in November 2020. We also make observations, findings and Recommendations for further action on various dimensions of the paramilitarism issue.

Observation and Findings

Broad Picture

- 1.15 **2021 has been a challenging and mixed year in respect of efforts to bring paramilitarism to an end. Some of the metrics around paramilitary activity showed reductions during the year and there has been good progress in several of the initiatives being developed by the Tackling Paramilitary Activity, Criminality and Organised Crime Programme. On the other hand, reaction to Brexit, including the Protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland, has led to new complexities and increasing prominence around paramilitarism. Disorder on the streets in the Spring and Autumn have led to speculation about the potential for a resurgence of paramilitary activity. Overall, we remain deeply worried about the risks posed to society by the continuing existence of paramilitary structures which can be harnessed for the purposes of violence or the threat of**

violence. We stated in our last Report and we repeat now: paramilitarism remains a clear and present danger.

The Positive Side...

- 1.16 The positive news is that over the six years since the Fresh Start Agreement, a whole new infrastructure has been put in place to tackle paramilitarism, involving a wide range of measures and initiatives which are now beginning to gain real traction. While we share the impatience of many to see more progress more quickly, putting in place effective steps to deal with the myriad, complex issues involved takes time. Some of these measures and initiatives have now bedded down and are starting to make a real impact in the communities where the paramilitaries mainly operate. In Section C of our Report, we set out some specific examples in that regard and the progress achieved to date.
- 1.17 In particular, we welcome the commencement of Phase Two of the Tackling Paramilitary Activity, Criminality and Organised Crime Programme and the increasing emphasis on a Whole of Government approach to tackling paramilitarism. As we outline above, the complex nature of the problem of paramilitarism requires a multi-faceted approach to its resolution. That approach involves joined-up and integrated effort across a whole range of public bodies, collaborating closely with the community and voluntary sector and others. We are pleased that this approach is very much at the heart of the Tackling Paramilitary Activity, Criminality and Organised Crime Programme and has been significantly enhanced in Phase Two. We are especially pleased to see the increased development of multi-agency hubs, involving practical programmes of assistance between public service bodies, including the PSNI, and community and voluntary groups. We note with satisfaction as well the good work emerging through the Communities in Transition project which is seeking to build capacity and resilience in eight geographic areas where residual paramilitary activity and associated criminality continue to have a negative impact. We particularly welcome the focus in Phase Two of the Programme on benefits realisation (including measuring how they influence positive change) and in particular the impact of the more joined-up, inter-agency approach. We outline that approach more fully later in this Section and in Section C of our Report.
- 1.18 According to data from the PSNI about the security situation, in the period 1 November 2020 to 31 October 2021 there were eight bombing incidents, compared to 22 in the previous 12 months, and 32 shooting incidents, compared to 40 the previous year.⁷ For further relevant data from the PSNI, see Section B of this Report. We should add a note of caution about over-interpreting one year's statistics, including in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. Furthermore, we are very aware of the difficulties in measuring the harm caused by paramilitaries, particularly as some crime is

⁷ <https://www.psni.police.uk/globalassets/inside-the-psni/our-statistics/security-situation-statistics/2021/october/security-situation-statistics-to-october-2021.pdf>

underreported. Nonetheless, the available statistics do constitute an important snapshot in terms of monitoring paramilitarism.

- 1.19 On the policing side, the Paramilitary Crime Task Force established in response to a recommendation of the Fresh Start Panel Report continues to have an impact on paramilitary criminality. We note the increased co-operation taking place between the PSNI and others involved in the Tackling Paramilitary Activity, Criminality and Organised Crime Programme as part of a more joined-up approach. On the criminal justice side, we welcome the progress being made on a number of recommendations from our previous Reports, including measures to speed up the criminal justice system, and legislation and other work in relation to sentencing. We have further comments to make in that regard later in this Section.

But Many Challenges Remain...

- 1.20 **While we welcome these encouraging developments, there remains much to be concerned about, and much to be done in ending paramilitarism definitively.** As mentioned above, 2021 saw a worrying return of some street disorder – in the Spring and again in November. According to the PSNI, paramilitary involvement is suspected in several incidents, particularly certain incidents in November. There were also several incidents during the year relating to Dissident republican groups, and the threat posed by them continues to be a source of serious concern. **All such activity is unacceptable.** We provide data in Section B on the various types of paramilitary activity, based on police and other published statistics.
- 1.21 All of that said, it is important to recall the point we make in paragraph 1.10 above about the complex nature of the paramilitary landscape and the same observation holds true in analysing events in 2021. In the Spring disorder, for instance, there were reports of people known locally as paramilitaries supporting and encouraging young people in violent behaviour, but there were also accounts of individuals with alleged links to paramilitary groups, together with local groups, residents, ex-prisoners, political leaders, playing a constructive role in discouraging further violence. Encouragingly also, youth workers, including those working with the Tackling Paramilitary Activity, Criminality and Organised Crime Programme, were able to help in diverting young people from taking part and urging others not to get involved, thus preventing a possible snowball effect.
- 1.22 We focus in the coming paragraphs on those areas where more is required in tackling and ending paramilitarism. We outline some tangible ways in which progress can be enhanced and accelerated across both Tracks and in regard to the additional dimension we have suggested is necessary to end paramilitarism, Group Transition.

Track One – Policing/Justice Responses

Policing

- 1.23 Policing is a vital aspect of this work. The PSNI works at various levels to address harm caused to individuals and communities, by paramilitaries, dissident republican groups, terrorists, organised crime groups and others. This involves many different parts of the organisation, including the dedicated Paramilitary Crime Task Force (which also includes National Crime Agency and Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs specialists) and broader Organised Crime Unit, the Terrorism Investigation Unit, neighbourhood teams out working in communities, community safety and engagement teams, District police, and others, as well as close co-operation with relevant partners. The police have an important role to play and we welcome the recent focus on investigating leadership figures, seizures, searches and arrests made, and other work that they are doing. But law enforcement agencies alone cannot address this problem.
- 1.24 We recommended in our Third Report that there should be better linkage between the twin tracks at a strategic level. We are encouraged by reports of join-up between various projects and the police (for example supporting projects with young people), the PSNI's strategic engagement with the Programme and wider initiatives such as the Community Safety Board, and their continuing efforts to ensure that the law enforcement response is as effective as possible. Connections and relationships must continue to be built upon, and structures continually improved, as it is only with everyone playing their part that we can effectively tackle paramilitarism once and for all.
- 1.25 An expansion and deepening of the locality approach that is currently being piloted by the Tackling Paramilitary Activity, Criminality and Organised Crime Programme in three locations can form part of a more integrated approach. The approach involves the PSNI, statutory and other local delivery partners of the Programme working closer together in certain areas; it is in its early stages and we will watch its development with interest.
- 1.26 We welcome the endeavours by the Programme Team and project leads to establish a new governance framework which focuses on realising benefits – ensuring that common goals and goods are being pursued by various projects, furthering collaboration, identifying interlinkages, and identifying interdependencies and needs. We believe that a public health approach – which treats violence like a disease, seeks to understand its causes, brings expertise and experience to bear from a wide range of relevant disciplines, develops innovative practice to prevent it, evaluates that practice and rolls out learnings elsewhere – is a useful approach for this work. Tackling paramilitarism requires everyone to play their part. We note with interest that in England and Wales a Serious Violence Duty is being legislated for which will require local authorities, the police, fire and rescue authorities, specified criminal justice agencies and health authorities to work together to formulate an evidence-based analysis of the problems associated with serious violence in a local area, and then

produce and implement a strategy responding to those particular issues. We encourage the Executive to consider this model and as it is implemented to see what lessons might be learnt. Furthermore, we see the benefits of the “One Team” approach taken by the Programme but continue to see real potential in a co-located hub for those working across the Programme, as modelled in other similar projects.

Speeding up Justice/Sentencing/Restorative Justice

- 1.27 We noted above that progress is being made on a range of measures in relation to the criminal justice system, which is a key factor in terms of tackling paramilitarism. **But more is required, and in particular the scale and pace of some reforms need to be increased significantly.** While we welcome the focus now being placed on **Committal Reform**, we urge that momentum delivering those reforms be maintained and accelerated (further details on pages 72-73). We share the view of the former Lord Chief Justice, Sir Declan Morgan, that Committal Reform and COVID-recovery offer an opportunity to modernise and speed up reform of the justice system. We welcome the work being done in drafting new **Organised Crime Legislation** and in the same vein recommend added urgency (further details on page 98). We also welcome the **Review of Sentencing Policy** undertaken by the Department of Justice and encourage a speedy implementation of the response to its findings, as appropriate sentencing is a key element of the overall effort to end paramilitarism and in ensuring and maintaining public confidence in the criminal justice system (further details on page 78). We also welcome the roll-out and increasing use of **Indictable Case principles** in relevant cases, which should help improve case processing times (further details on page 74). A significant development before the summer was the commencement of **Unexplained Wealth Orders and Account Freezing Orders**, which gives law enforcement additional powers to tackle paramilitary-related crime which they could not previously access – it is vital that law enforcement now make full use of these powers to show that crime does not pay and to disrupt and frustrate the activities of paramilitary and organised crime groups (further details on page 79).
- 1.28 While we welcome ongoing work in the Department of Justice on **Restorative Justice**, we are disappointed that work has not progressed at sufficient pace to establish a Centre of Excellence, as recommended five years ago in the Fresh Start Panel Report in 2016. **We renew our call for this Centre to be prioritised.** We base that on evidence received to date that Restorative Justice makes an important contribution to tackling paramilitarism within local communities.

Track Two – addressing systemic socio-economic issues in communities

- 1.29 We are encouraged by the progress now being made in this Track as the initiatives brought into being through the Executive Action Plan and the Tackling Paramilitary Activity, Criminality and Organised Crime Programme begin to bear tangible fruit in the communities involved. At the same time, the need continues to be great. The challenges facing many of these communities were generations in the making, pre-dating the Troubles. As a consequence, addressing them requires a sustained, joined-

up and well-resourced approach with a long-term commitment. We welcome the intent of the Programme to ensure its initiatives become part of wider, long-term public policies. This linking with existing structures and policy is critical in ensuring sustainability in dealing with such issues over the longer term. That is another reason why we think it essential that tackling paramilitarism becomes a dedicated outcome in the Programme for Government, becomes part of the business as usual of all relevant departments and agencies, and that linked socio-economic issues are progressed through an ambitious Programme for Government at the same time. We note the work underway in drafting a new Programme for Government by the Executive and encourage the Executive to ensure that tackling paramilitarism is assigned the priority it deserves.

- 1.30 We consider leadership and collaboration at every level to be vital to tackling paramilitarism once and for all. From our engagements, that is how progress is best delivered on the ground. The Programme Board (chaired by the Head of the Civil Service and convening senior leaders from relevant authorities) provides strategic leadership to all of these endeavours. **We recommend that the Programme Board consider adding other senior figures to its core membership, including the Northern Ireland Housing Executive which is involved in relevant activity at project level and through its everyday work.** We welcome the commitment to giving priority to tackling paramilitarism made by the new Head of the Civil Service – we wish her well in this important work, and know that she will work closely with senior leaders across relevant Departments, agencies, other bodies and civic leaders to drive and progress it.
- 1.31 Everyone playing their part, in a Whole of Government response, is a key factor for success of this work. We were therefore concerned by the finding of the Northern Ireland Commission for Children and Young People that “the consistent and active presence of safeguarding agencies and children’s social care (identified as having a key role in partnership working elsewhere) is less clear” in work to protect children from harm including abuse, violence, coercion and exploitation by organised gangs and groups⁸. We join her in calling for further action by those responsible for safeguarding measures.
- 1.32 We welcome the findings of the **Report of the Expert Panel on Educational Underachievement** published earlier this year: *A Fair Start*⁹. This was an important initiative of the Northern Ireland Executive and we believe that the focus that the Panel has brought to bear, and their insightful recommendations, have a critical contribution to make to an issue that we have always regarded as essential to the sustainable ending of paramilitarism. We met with the Expert Panel as part of its round of consultations and emphasised the inter-connection between paramilitarism and

⁸ <https://www.niccy.org/publications/2021/july/30/advice-to-government-child-criminal-exploitation-safeguarding-children-and-young-people-from-abuse-and-exploitation/>

⁹ <https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/publications/fair-start-final-report-action-plan>

educational underachievement in the communities where the paramilitaries mainly operate. We noted with interest that the Executive announced in September a fundamental review of Education more broadly in Northern Ireland¹⁰. We hope that both of these important policy initiatives will lead to tangible actions on the ground, ensuring the sustained tackling of educational underachievement as a key underlying factor in the persistence of paramilitarism, and that implementation of findings will take place in a timely manner.

- 1.33 We are also encouraged by the progress being made by the Communities in Transition project of the Tackling Paramilitary Activity, Criminality and Organised Crime Programme, which is run by the Executive Office. The project was slow to begin but we have seen the emerging evidence in 2021 that it is working well across the eight areas where it operates, and that initial time invested in participatory design has paid dividends in terms of buy-in. **We encourage the NI Executive and the UK Government to maintain the level of resourcing it needs, as we do across the whole Programme (see para 1.49).**

The Additional Dimension – Group Transition

- 1.34 As indicated in the Analysis Section above, in addition to the two Tracks of policing/criminal justice responses and measures to address socio-economic challenges facing communities, it is our view that a further dimension is needed if paramilitarism is to be ended, namely, a process of engagement with the paramilitary groups to bring about Group Transition and, ultimately, disbandment. We set out in paragraph 1.13 above why we believe this to be the case.
- 1.35 As part of our own consideration of Group Transition over the last year, we have held discussions on the concept with the two Governments at political and official levels, leaders and representatives of political parties, relevant officials of Executive Departments, a range of academics and other stakeholders. We have found these discussions very helpful in advancing our consideration of the issue. In particular, we welcome the initiative of the Justice Minister to have it examined in the Political Advisory Group of the Tackling Paramilitary Activity, Criminality and Organised Crime Programme, which she chairs.
- 1.36 We appreciate that there are many complexities and sensitivities surrounding the concept of Group Transition and a wide range of views about the challenges these represent in taking forward the concept. Indeed, some believe that a process of engagement to bring about Group Transition is no longer appropriate or feasible, and that disbandment is a matter purely for the police and justice systems. Our analysis leads us to a different view. We recall that the Peace Process required a decision to engage directly with those previously involved in campaigns of violence. We believe that ending paramilitarism now will require a comparable process of engagement with

¹⁰ <https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/news/panel-undertake-independent-review-education-announced>

those directly involved. This will involve engagement with the paramilitary groups, as individual transition will not involve the critical mass required in terms of ending paramilitarism.

1.37 Many people have asked us what exactly such a process of engagement might look like. We set out in the following paragraphs some initial thoughts in that regard, based on our own thinking and on the conversations we have held with various stakeholders including academics. We are also conscious of the perspectives of victims and their families. To be clear, these are preliminary ideas and are not prescriptive. They are intended to stimulate debate. If a process of engagement aimed at Group Transition of paramilitaries were to be adopted, much ground work would be needed to prepare the way, starting with developing definitions of the various elements of the issue, including the very concept of transition itself, as we found that there are many variations of what the term means in today's context.

Possible Elements of a Group Transition Process

1.38 A critical question that emerged in our discussion is "Who would own the process?" Our answer is the two Governments and the Executive, acting on a co-ordinated, collective basis, as happened for the Fresh Start Agreement. Only the Governments and the Executive have the mandate and authority to design and implement what is needed.

1.39 We envision that the overall process would be overseen by a formal body established for that purpose by the two Governments, in consultation with the Executive (along the lines, for instance, of the Independent Commission for the Location of Victims' Remains). In terms of the various milestones that would mark the process of engagement with the Paramilitary Groups, we envision them committing, among others, to the following:

- Ending recruitment to paramilitary groups;
- Giving up paramilitary structures and activity;
- Ceasing mobilisation of members;
- Ceasing to exercise coercive power and control in communities;
- Ending of all paramilitary style attacks and all other forms of violence, threat of violence or intimidation;
- Disposal of any remaining weaponry and materiel;
- Allowing people to exit from paramilitarism without cost or consequence;
- Publicly supporting the PSNI and criminal justice system in tackling criminality and committing to democracy and the rule of law; and
- Engaging with Legacy Bodies (see paragraphs 1.45-1.46 below).

1.40 The primary goal of the process should be disbandment of the Groups rather than their continuation in any form, but we recognise that this is one of the issues for consideration. Achieving each step in itself would be valuable progress.

- 1.41 We acknowledge that this process would involve significant work on what would happen on the other side of Group Transition – in other words, reintegration. This is a major question in its own right and would need to be considered in any comprehensive process of Group Transition.
- 1.42 One further factor that would need to be considered is whether there would be any role in the process of Group Transition for Deproscription of the paramilitary organisations (i.e. removing them from the list of prohibited terrorist groups under UK Counterterrorism Legislation). As we have stated in previous Reports, we acknowledge that Deproscription is a highly sensitive issue. We are not taking a view on its merits one way or another at this point, but merely pointing out again that it remains on the Statute Books and would be one of the factors considered in any comprehensive process of Group Transition.
- 1.43 We reiterate our appreciation of the major sensitivities and challenges which surround the issue of Group Transition. But after nearly five years working together in the IRC, we see no means by which the Fresh Start goal of ending paramilitarism once and for all can be achieved without a comprehensive process of Group Transition. Events this year have shown how problematic the continuation of paramilitarism is for society. Our concern is that the situation will deteriorate further if action of the kind we describe is not taken now. Our view is that the two Governments and the parties signed up to the goal of ending paramilitarism in 2015 and there is a real onus on them now to ensure that it is delivered. We also note that all Ministers and MLAs are required to make six specific commitments around ending paramilitarism in the Ministerial Pledge of Office and the undertaking given by Members of the Legislative Assembly. Working together towards a process of Group Transition is, in our view, a key element of delivering on those commitments.
- 1.44 That is why we have returned to this issue in our Fourth Report. We plan to resume our discussions with the Governments and the parties on this topic after the publication of the Report. We also believe there is an important role for civic society in the debate and look forward to undertaking conversations with various interested stakeholders on the matter in the months ahead. **Our call, therefore, is to the two Governments, the parties and civic society to give urgent consideration to a comprehensive process of Group Transition.**

Legacy of the Past

- 1.45 There is one further issue that will be key to any process of Group Transition, and that is the measures adopted in regard to dealing with the legacy of the past. While legacy is not directly part of our mandate at the IRC, it is a key part of the wider context in which we undertake our work. We have been following developments on the issue closely. We note the policy direction favoured by the UK Government in the proposal announced in July by the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland of a proposed Statute of Limitations on all Troubles-related criminal investigations and prosecutions, and a

bar on inquests and civil actions. We also note the strong opposition to this proposal by the Northern Ireland parties, the Irish Government, victims groups and many in civic society.

1.46 It is not for us to offer a view on what is a hugely difficult, complex and sensitive issue for which there are no easy answers. But we do believe that legacy legislation will have major ramifications for the ending of paramilitarism. If, for instance, the intention of the UK Government as articulated by Secretary of State for Northern Ireland was enacted in legislation, then the Statute of Limitations involved could have a material impact on the timing of the disbandment of the Paramilitary Groups. Given the events of the last few months and the pace at which the Legacy issue is now moving, this dimension is likely to become more prominent in the period ahead.

Coercive Control of Communities

1.47 We also wish to comment more fully in this Report on coercive control, an often underappreciated dimension of paramilitary influence. For people living in communities where the paramilitary grip is strongest, the harm caused by paramilitaries is often ever-present. People live with daily reminders of that reality. We have heard from several organisations and individuals who have had direct experience of impact of coercive control, and official statistics show that 236 households presented to the Housing Executive as homeless due to paramilitary intimidation in the last financial year alone. Coercive control can take many forms, including intimidation, financial extortion, creating an environment where people are afraid to speak out, sexual abuse, stifling alternative voices and leaderships, and other forms of social control. Physical manifestations of that control include what are sometimes termed “paramilitary style assaults”; that is to say assaults causing actual or grievous bodily harm. Drugs and drug debts are frequently key elements. Coercive control goes beyond the effect on the individual and serves to keep entire communities living in perpetual fear. The coercive control by paramilitary groups needs to end.

1.48 There is also a gender dimension to this which we examine in Section B.

Financial commitments

1.49 It is clear that the task of ending paramilitarism once and for all requires a comprehensive focus, including multi-year financial commitments to reflect the need for sustained investment. Financial support for the programmes and initiatives involved should be maintained to the full by the UK Government and the Northern Ireland Executive. **The funding secured for the Fresh Start initiatives on tackling paramilitarism should be maintained by both the UK Government and the Executive, and be given a high priority in the present challenging fiscal climate. In addition, the UK Government must ensure that its levelling up work gives sufficient priority to tackling paramilitarism and associated socio-economic challenges.**

COVID-19

- 1.50 The COVID-19 pandemic has dominated all aspects of life in Northern Ireland over the recent period, just as it has around the world. As society emerges from the pandemic, the challenges around paramilitarism remain as significant as ever, and even more so for the reasons we have set out in this Report. Many of the communities hardest hit by COVID-19 are communities where socio-economic challenges are at their sharpest; it is also often the case that these communities are where the paramilitary presence is at its strongest, for reasons we have set out in this Report. Our recommendation is that the Executive give special consideration to those particular needs as they plan and implement policies for Northern Ireland's recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Memorialisation

- 1.51 In our last Report, we raised the issue of commemorations of the past that have a paramilitary dimension: memorialisation specifically relating to paramilitary events and figures. We suggested that given the sensitivities around these and their capacity to impact negatively on the present, including in terms of continuing to promote peace-building and reconciliation, an express focus should be brought to bear on Memorialisation, including particular arrangements and approaches. There have been further examples over the past year of the challenges and difficulties which these events give rise to. We are disappointed that the Report of the Commission on Flags, Identity, Culture and Tradition (FICT), which should be relevant to many of these issues (and others), has only just been published. **We renew our call in this Report for a special focus on Memorialisation of past events and figures connected to paramilitarism to ensure that it is undertaken on the most sensitive basis possible. We recommend that a piece of work be commissioned to explore options for further developing approaches to memorialisation, building on learning from the approach to the Decade of Centenaries.**

Shared Housing and Integrated Education

- 1.52 Among the contextual factors that are in play in terms of tackling paramilitarism on a long-term, sustainable basis are the current approaches to housing and education in Northern Ireland. Integrated post-primary schools are oversubscribed, and recent polling suggests that most parents in Northern Ireland agree that all schools should have a religious and cultural mix. Fewer than 8% of children in Northern Ireland go to integrated schools¹¹. Integrated education breaks down barriers, builds good relations amongst young people from an early age and some with whom we have met argue plays an underappreciated role in tackling paramilitarism.
- 1.53 A low proportion of new build housing by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive is shared housing. There are clear advantages to greater integration, increasing awareness and understanding of different traditions and backgrounds in housing as

¹¹ Integrated Education Fund Lucid Talk Attitudinal Poll results: <https://www.ief.org.uk/lucid-talk-poll-questions>

well as education. As the Executive recognised in Together: Building a United Community (T:BUC) Strategy: “The segregation in housing and our education system, physical divisions and invisible lines of separation that exist in both urban and rural settings can all act as barriers to meaningful sharing experiences amongst our children and young people”¹². **We recommend that the Executive should build significantly on the ambition set out in T:BUC and increase the number of shared housing units built as a proportion of the entire social housing stock.** In addition, the Executive, including the Department of Justice, should continue to work to address the issues which mean that some interface barriers have not yet been removed, as it seeks to move Northern Ireland towards a more shared, reconciled and united community.

Methodology

- 1.54 We met on a confidential basis with a wide range of groups and individuals, both those working within the statutory sector and those living in, and working with, communities on the ground¹³. We wish to thank all those who have contributed to our deliberations over the past year. We are also grateful to those who wrote to us during the year and invite others to do the same if there are issues they wish to draw to our attention¹⁴; and we thank those victims of violence who shared their experiences with us in writing and in person. It is they who have been most impacted by paramilitaries and we will continue to engage with them as we take forward our work. We also express special thanks to those we have termed in previous Reports “critical friends” – individuals and groups working behind the scenes to advance movement on ending paramilitarism, often on a very challenging basis personally. Their work makes a very important contribution and we urge them to continue it.
- 1.55 We are grateful to both Governments and to the various Departments and agencies who met with us and shared relevant information over the last year, including Departmental project leads, senior officials, those working in the criminal justice system, the PSNI, Education Authority and others. Our particular thanks to the Tackling Paramilitary Activity, Criminality and Organised Crime Programme Team which co-ordinates the Programme, and its Programme Board. We commend the important contributions being made by the Political Advisory Group, chaired by the Justice Minister Naomi Long, which advises the Programme. We also wish to thank the representatives of relevant Departments of the Irish Government with whom we met during the year, and An Garda Síochána, recognising the importance of the cross-border element of this work. And to thank those community organisations and others who have shared their experiences of working on the ground. We also thank our

¹² <https://www.executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk/publications/together-building-united-community-strategy>

¹³ The IRC’s official archives and premises have the same inviolability as that afforded to official archives and premises of a diplomatic mission. IRC meetings with groups and individuals are not reported.

¹⁴ Our postal address is PO Box 2205, Belfast BT4 9EL. Our e-mail address is enquiries@IRCommission.org

colleagues in our Joint Secretariat for their dedication, professionalism and hard work in support of our deliberations.

Conclusion

- 1.56 We have sought in this Report to summarise the key factors involved in tackling and ending paramilitarism, progress being made and the gaps still to be addressed. Our overall view continues to be that paramilitarism remains a clear and present danger. New structures have been put in place to tackle paramilitarism, relationships established within which to do that, and new approaches tested. But more needs to be done, across all relevant agencies and Departments, and in and with communities. Furthermore, a comprehensive and credible pathway to ending paramilitarism is now needed and hence we recommend that a process be put in place to assess the potential for Group Transition.

- 1.57 There is one particular lesson from the response to the COVID-19 pandemic that bears directly on our work: that a holistic, consistent, multi-faceted approach was needed to address this disease. That is precisely the case in regard to paramilitarism. Our recommendation is that a societal debate is essential and needs to address all the dimensions of the issue, together with a Whole of Government approach to this work. Of course, political leadership will also be required for Northern Ireland to end paramilitarism once and for all. For the promise of the Fresh Start Agreement of ending paramilitarism once and for all to be realised, the same comprehensive, collective spirit must be brought to bear on the challenges involved.

SECTION B: CURRENT LANDSCAPE: DATA AND INDICATORS FROM NORTHERN IRELAND

- 2.1 In this Section of the Report, we set out data from statutory agencies and Departments that are relevant when considering trends in reported paramilitary activity. We also consider other relevant official data, which are linked to the twin track analysis of what is required to end paramilitarism once and for all; and summarise some recent research about the level and impact of paramilitary activity.

Security statistics

- 2.2 The PSNI publishes statistics relating to the security situation in Northern Ireland on a monthly basis¹⁵. In this section we reproduce the statistics and trends up to March 2021 (i.e. the end of the last Financial Year).

Overview

- 2.3 In general, there has been a downward trend in security-related incidents over the past ten years, with the exception of paramilitary style assaults, which have generally increased. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic may have influenced trends in the last two financial years.

Security Situation Deaths

- 2.4 Table 1 shows deaths related to the security situation in the past ten years. The PSNI defines security related deaths as “those which are considered at the time of the incident to be directly attributed to terrorism, where the cause has a direct or proximate link to subversive / sectarian strife or where the death is attributable to security force activity”.

Table 1: Security Situation Deaths

11/12	12/13	13/14	14/15	15/16	16/17	17/18	18/19	19/20	20/21
1	2	1	3	3	5	2	2	1	3

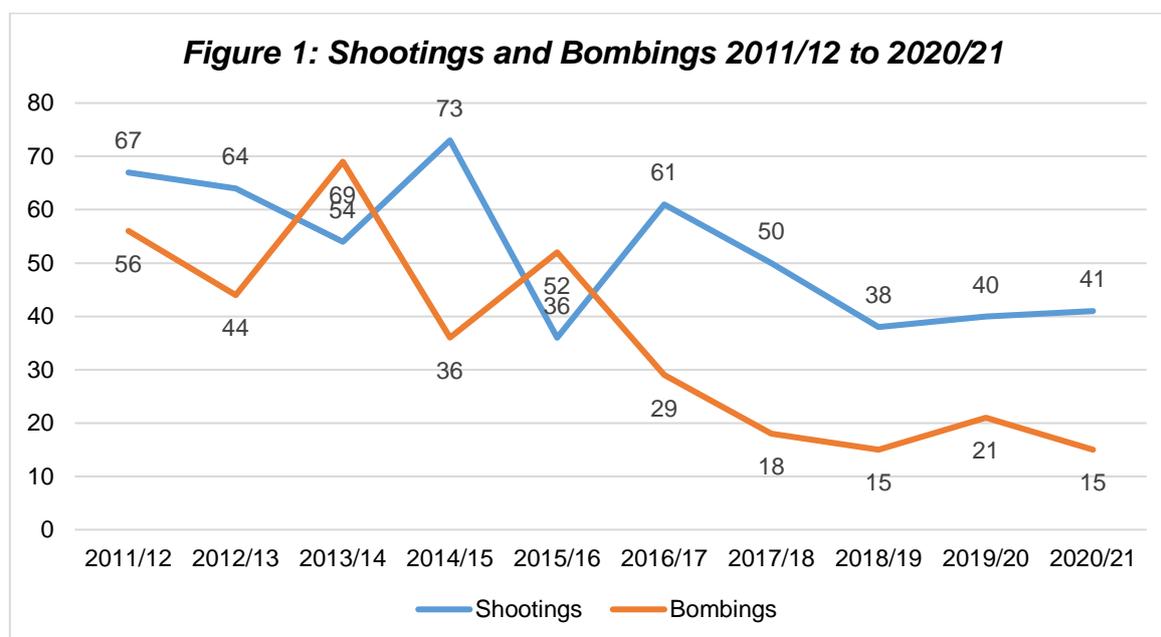
Source: PSNI

- 2.5 After a peak at five in 2016/17, deaths declined to one in 2019/20, but have increased again to three in 2020/21. These deaths were all in Belfast: in May and June 2020, and February 2021. Over the last ten years there has been no year in which there have been no security-related deaths.

¹⁵ <https://www.psni.police.uk/inside-psni/Statistics/security-situation-statistics/>

Shootings and Bombings

2.6 Figure 1 shows shootings and bombings recorded in the past ten years¹⁶. After a reduction in the frequency of shootings since 2016/17 and bombings since 2015/16, there was a slight upturn in both kinds of incident in 2019/20. That trend continues in relation to shootings in 2020/21, but not in the case of bombings. The overall trend in the past decade has been downwards.



Source: PSNI

Table 2: Number of bombing incidents related to the security situation in Northern Ireland

Financial Year	Attribution ¹⁷			Total
	Loyalist	Republican	Unknown	
2018/2019	6	6	3	15
2019/2020	8	13	0	21
2020/2021	11	3	1	15
Total	25	22	4	51

Source: PSNI

2.7 The number of bombing incidents attributed to loyalists increased from eight to 11 between 2019/20 and 2020/21; the number of bombing incidents attributed to

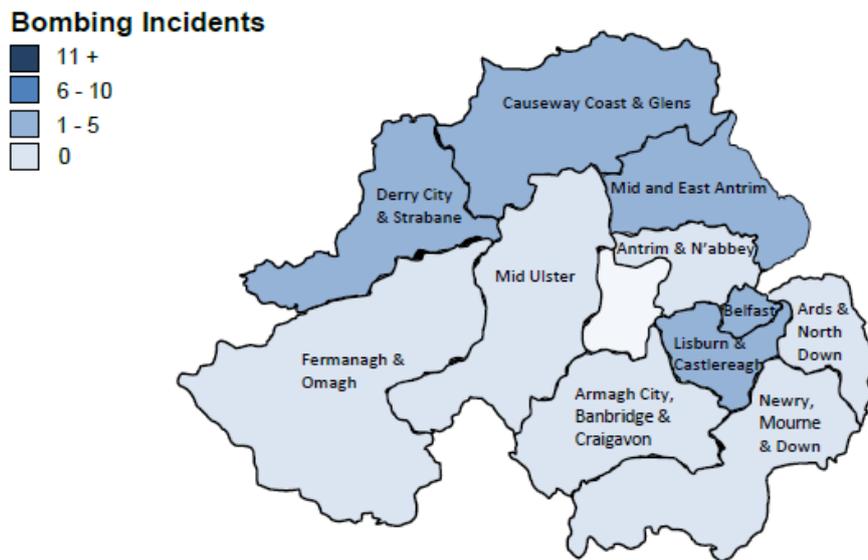
¹⁶ These PSNI figures for shootings include any shooting incident relating to the security situation and include shots fired by terrorists, shots fired by the security forces, paramilitary style attacks involving shootings and shots heard (and later confirmed by other sources). PSNI's bombing statistics include all incidents where a bombing device explodes or is defused. If a device is found that is not complete or armed, then it is recorded as a 'find' and not as a bombing. Petrol bombings or incendiaries are also excluded.

¹⁷ Attribution is as perceived by the PSNI based on the information available at the time of the incident and does not necessarily indicate the involvement of a paramilitary organisation.

Republicans decreased from 13 to three in the same period.

- 2.8 The number of bombing incidents more than halved in Belfast compared to the previous year (from nine to four) but the number in Causeway Coast and Glens increased from zero to four. There were three bombings in Derry City and Strabane, and a further three in Mid and East Antrim; there was one in Lisburn and Castlereagh District.

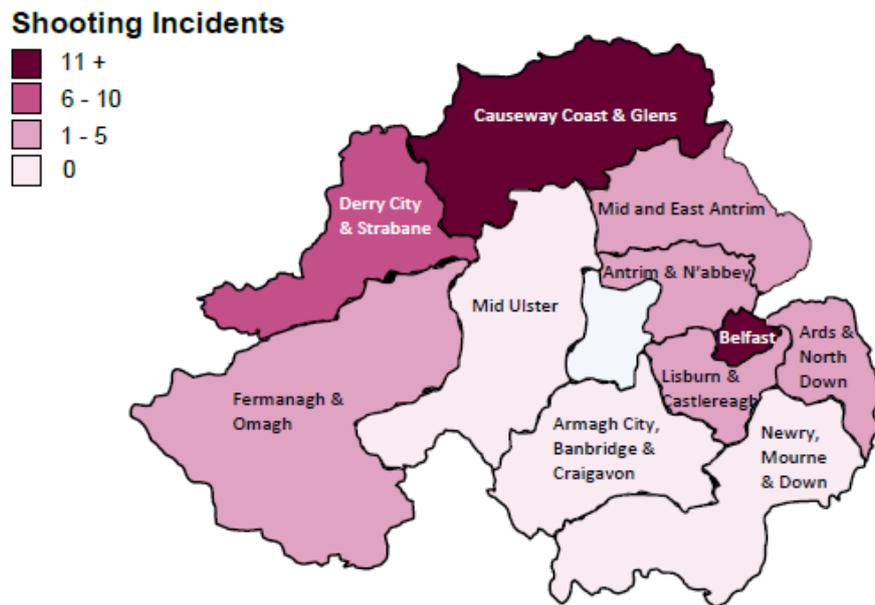
Figure 2: Number of bombing incidents 2020/21 broken down by Policing District



Source: PSNI

- 2.9 Almost three quarters of all shootings took place in either Belfast or Causeway Coast and Glens (17 and 12 respectively). The number of shootings compared to last year doubled in Causeway Coast and Glens (from five to 12) and halved for Derry City and Strabane (from 12 to six).

Figure 3: Number of shooting incidents 2020/21 broken down by Policing District

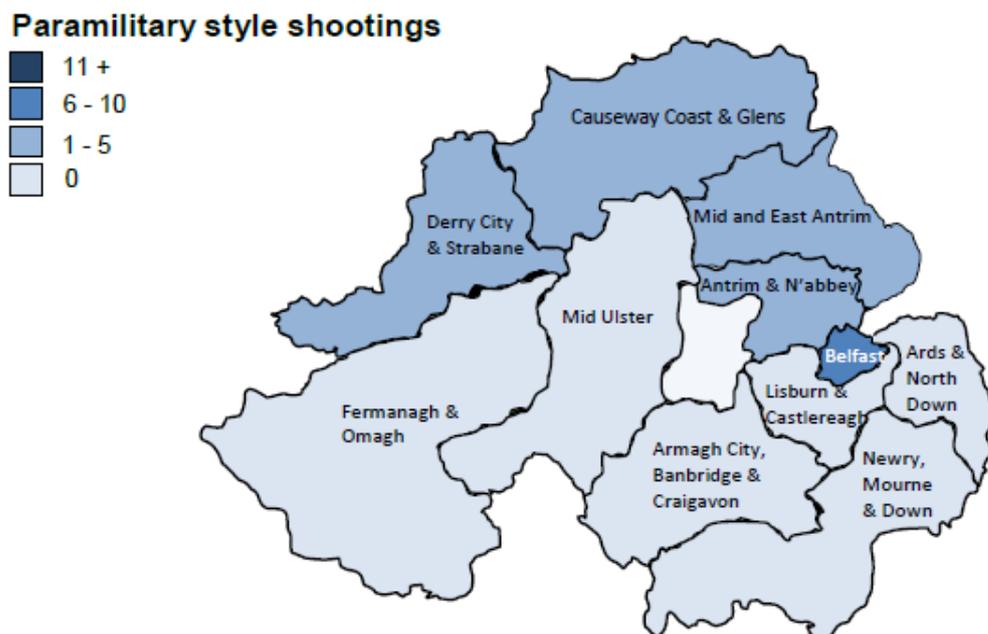


Source: PSNI

Paramilitary Style Attacks

2.10 Nine paramilitary style shootings in the past year were carried out in Belfast, five took place in Derry City and Strabane, two in Causeway Coast and Glens, one in Mid and East Antrim and one in Antrim and Newtownabbey District. Figure 4 below shows the breakdown by Policing District.

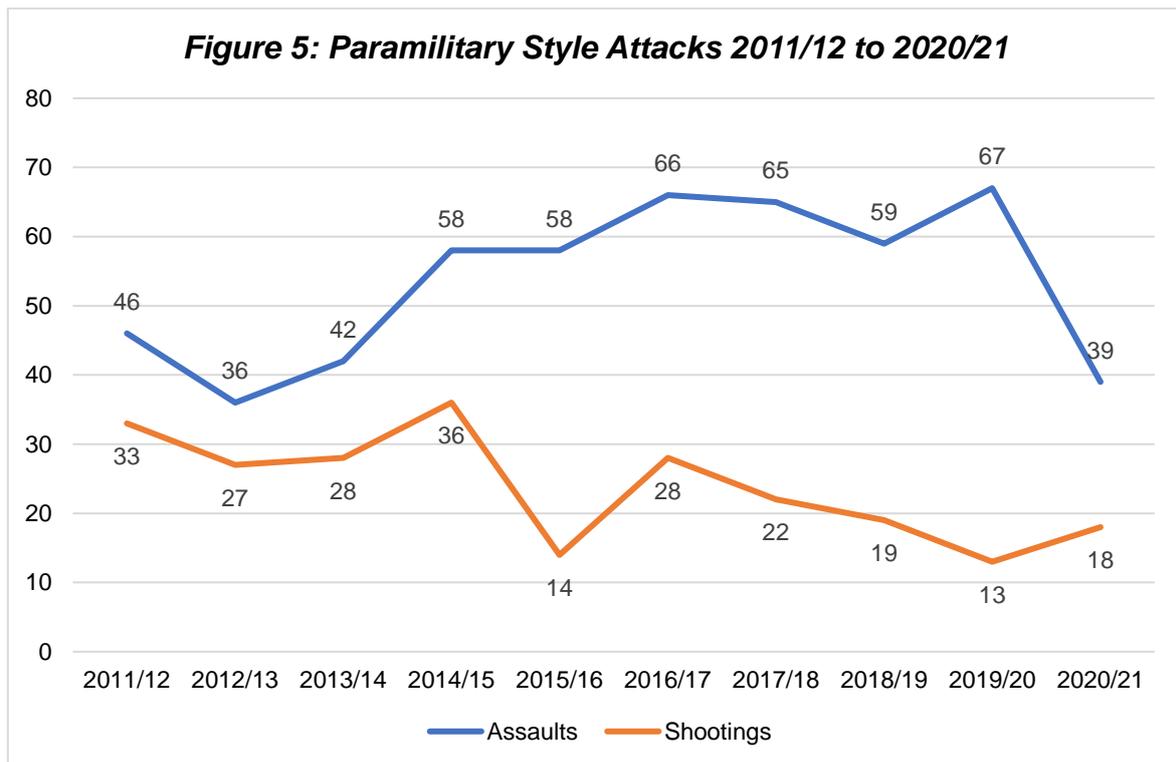
Figure 4: Number of paramilitary style shootings in 2020/21 broken down by Policing District



Source: PSNI

2.11 Figure 5 shows reported paramilitary style assaults and shootings in the past ten years. Over the past decade, the general trend for paramilitary style assaults has been upward; the general trend in that same period for paramilitary shootings has been downward.

2.12 However, the number of paramilitary assaults declined from 67 in 2019/20 to 39 in 2020/21; and there was an increase in shootings from 13 to 18 in the same period.



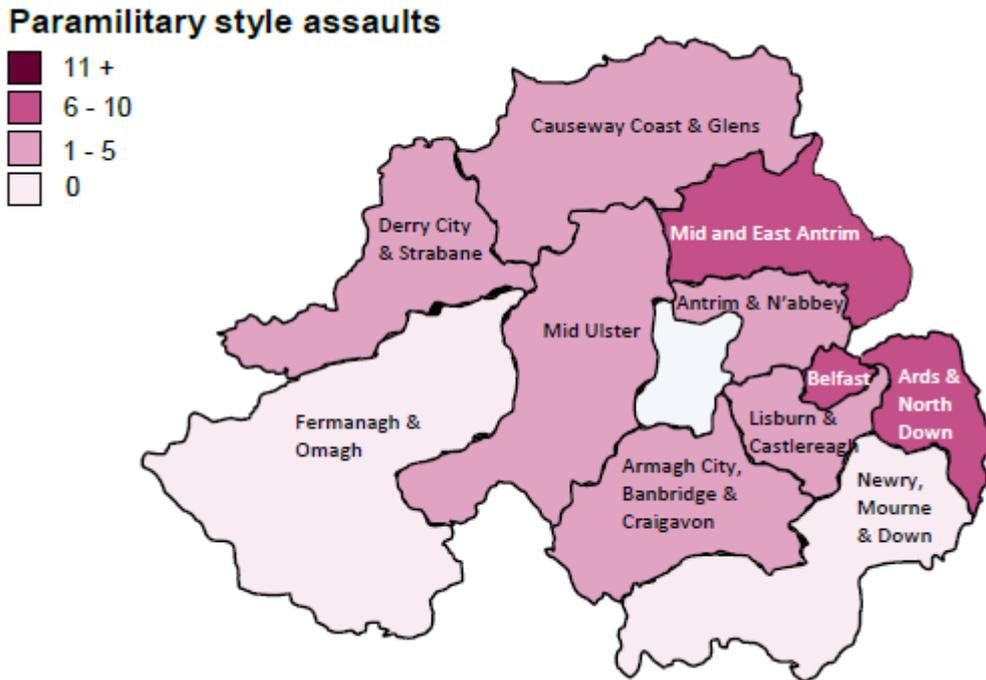
Source: PSNI

2.13 The majority of paramilitary style assaults continue to be attributed to Loyalists by the PSNI. In 2020/21, over three-quarters (79%) of assaults were attributed to Loyalists (in 2019/21 it was 72%), with the remainder attributed to Republicans.

2.14 The majority of paramilitary style shootings continue to be attributed to Republicans. In 2020/21, 14 of the 18 shootings were attributed to Republicans, while four were attributed to Loyalists (in 2019/20 it was 11:2).

2.15 The greatest number of assaults were in Belfast (nine casualties), followed by Ards and North Down and Mid and East Antrim (eight in each of these Districts). Figure 6 (overleaf) shows the breakdown of paramilitary style assaults by District.

Figure 6: Number of paramilitary style assaults in 2020/21 broken down by Policing District

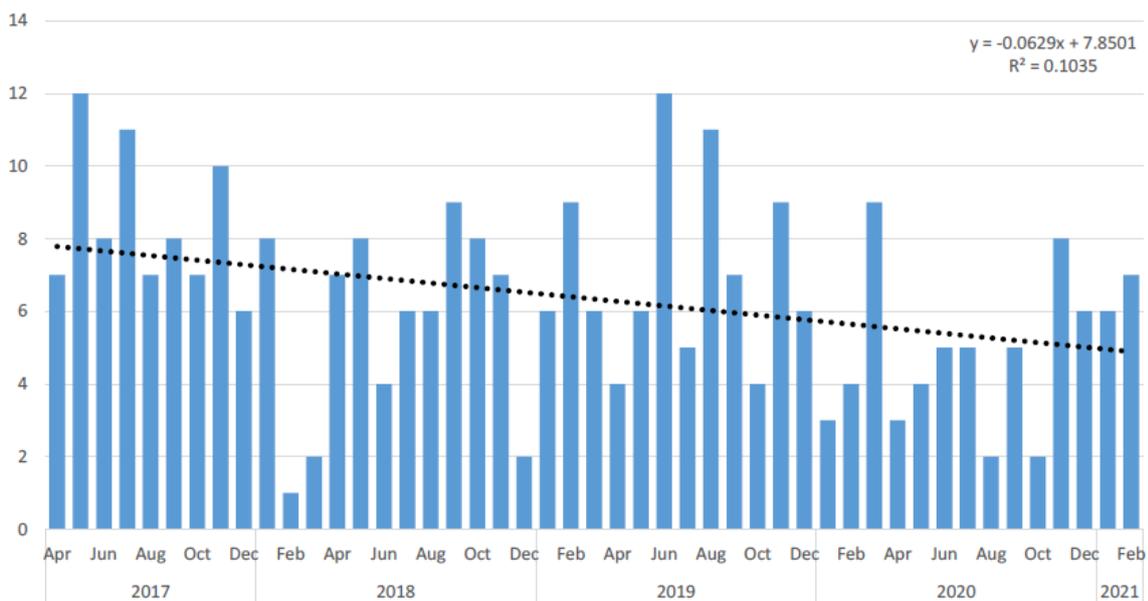


Source: PSNI

Paramilitary Style Attacks 1 April 2017 – 28 February 2021

2.16 The PSNI undertook detailed analysis of reported paramilitary style attacks for the IRC covering the period 1 April 2017 – 28 February 2021. This identified a number of notable trends. The number of incidents has shown an overall downward trend over the study period.

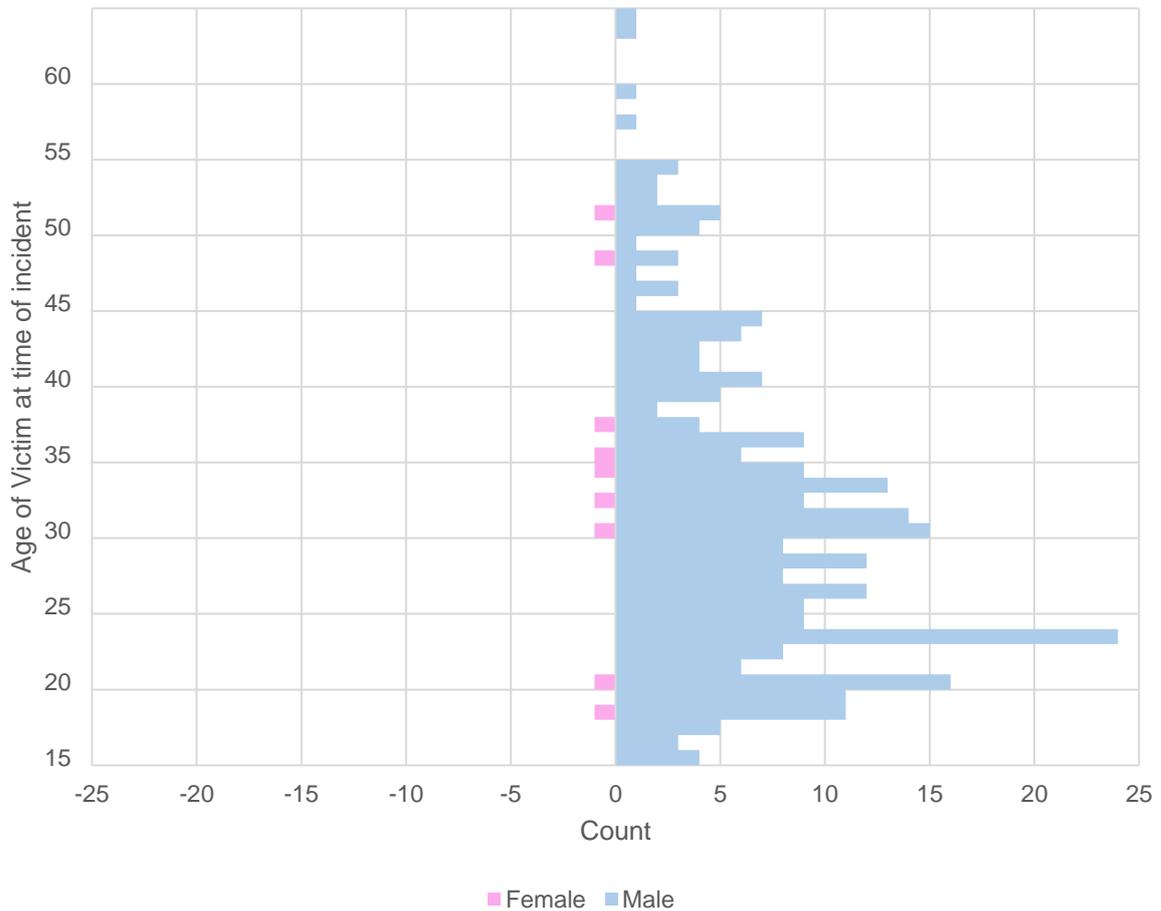
Figure 7: Number of Paramilitary Style Attacks per month



Source: PSNI

2.17 Figure 8 below shows the age and gender of victims of PSAs in this same period. The data show that victims are predominantly male, and the majority are aged 18 to 35.

Figure 8: Population pyramid for PSA victims



Source: PSNI

2.18 The most commonly used weapons were blunt objects - baseball bats, hammers, crowbars featured most regularly.

Table 3: Class of weapon used in PSAs

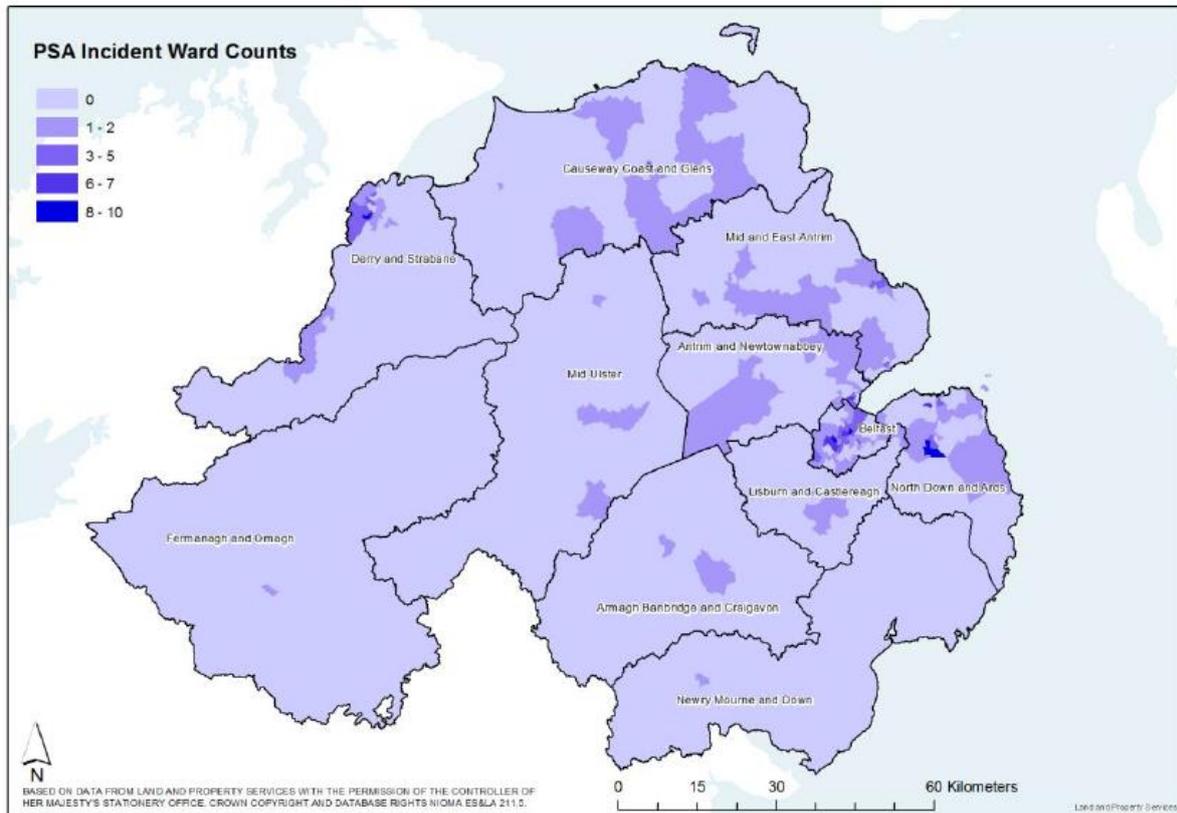
Class of weapon	%
Unknown	19.13%
Fists/Feet	4.03%
Blunt Objects	51.68%
Bladed Article	1.01%
Firearm	24.16%

Source: PSNI

2.19 During the period, the repeat victimisation rate was 4.6%. Of the 13 victims who were subject to more than one attack, 11 were attacked twice and two were attacked three times.

2.20 The PSNI's analysis confirmed previous findings: that PSA hotspots are highly concentrated and persistent. 70% of the 462 electoral wards in Northern Ireland recorded no incidents over the study period. 7.5% (35) of electoral wards had three or more incidents and accounted for nearly 60% of all PSAs.

Figure 9: PSA incidents by ward



Source: PSNI

2.21 The wards with the greatest number of PSAs in the period 1 April 2017 – 28 February 2021 were: Ards and North Down – West Winds, Belfast City – Ballymurphy, Derry City and Strabane – Creggan South, Antrim & Newtownabbey – O'Neill, Belfast City – New Lodge, Antrim & Newtownabbey – Rathcoole, Ards and North Down – Kilcooley, and Belfast City – Shankill.

NI terrorism legislation statistics

2.22 Reproduced below are some key statistics from the latest *Northern Ireland Terrorism legislation: annual statistics* bulletin¹⁸.

Outcomes of charges for terrorism-related offences under terrorism and non-terrorism legislation in Northern Ireland, by year of arrest

2.23 In 2020/21, 20 persons were charged after being detained in Northern Ireland under section 41 of the Terrorism Act 2000, which provides that a constable may arrest without a warrant a person whom he reasonably suspects to be a terrorist.

	13/14	14/15	15/16	16/17	17/18	18/19	19/20	20/21	Total
Charged	32	35	18	19	13	16	17	20	170
Not proceeded	13	2	4	1	0	1	2	0	23
Awaiting prosecution	4	0	3	5	1	6	10	20	49
Prosecuted	15	33	11	13	12	9	5	0	98
Found not guilty	4	7	1	3	2	4	2	0	23
Other	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Convicted	11	25	10	10	10	5	3	0	74
TACT offences	1	7	2	3	1	0	0	0	14
Schedule 7 TACT	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Other legislation	10	18	7	6	8	4	3	0	56
Other legislation	0	0	1	1	1	1	0	0	4

2.24 In 2020/21, 60 charges were brought against persons detained in Northern Ireland under section 41 of the Terrorism Act 2000. This included 18 charges of preparation of terrorist acts, nine for directing terrorist organisations, nine for membership and seven charges of explosive offences. This brings the total number of charges brought against persons detained under section 41 since 19 February 2001 to 2,037.

2.25 In 2020/21, 12 persons detained under section 41 of the Terrorism Act 2000 were charged with a total of 21 offences under the same legislation. Nine of these charges related to membership, nine related to directing a terrorist organisation, two related to possession for terrorist purposes, and the remaining charge related to uniform and publication of images.

Source: *Northern Ireland Terrorism legislation: annual statistics* bulletin

¹⁸ <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/northern-ireland-terrorism-legislation-annual-statistics-202021>

Premises searched under warrant under Schedule 5 of the Terrorism Act 2000

2.26 137 premises were searched in 2020/21 under warrant under section 37, Schedule 5 of the Terrorism Act 2000.

2011/12	118
2012/13	137
2013/14	107
2014/15	162
2015/16	145
2016/17	164
2017/18	189
2018/19	169
2019/20	179
2020/21	137
<i>2020/21 broken down by quarter</i>	
<i>Apr - Jun</i>	17
<i>Jul - Sep</i>	49
<i>Oct - Dec</i>	36
<i>Jan - Mar</i>	35

Persons detained in Northern Ireland under Section 41 of the Terrorism Act 2000

2.27 In 2020/21, a total of 105 persons were detained in Northern Ireland under section 41 of the Terrorism Act 2000.

2011/12	159
2012/13	157
2013/14	168
2014/15	227
2015/16	149
2016/17	137
2017/18	176
2018/19	146
2019/20	128
2020/21	105
<i>2020/21 broken down by quarter</i>	
<i>Apr - Jun</i>	13
<i>Jul - Sep</i>	28
<i>Oct - Dec</i>	24
<i>Jan - Mar</i>	40

Source: Northern Ireland Terrorism legislation: annual statistics bulletin

Persons convicted in Northern Ireland of an offence under Terrorism Legislation

2.28 In 2020/21, 14 persons were convicted in NI of an offence under the Terrorism Act 2000, the Terrorism Act 2006 or the Counter-Terrorism Act 2008.

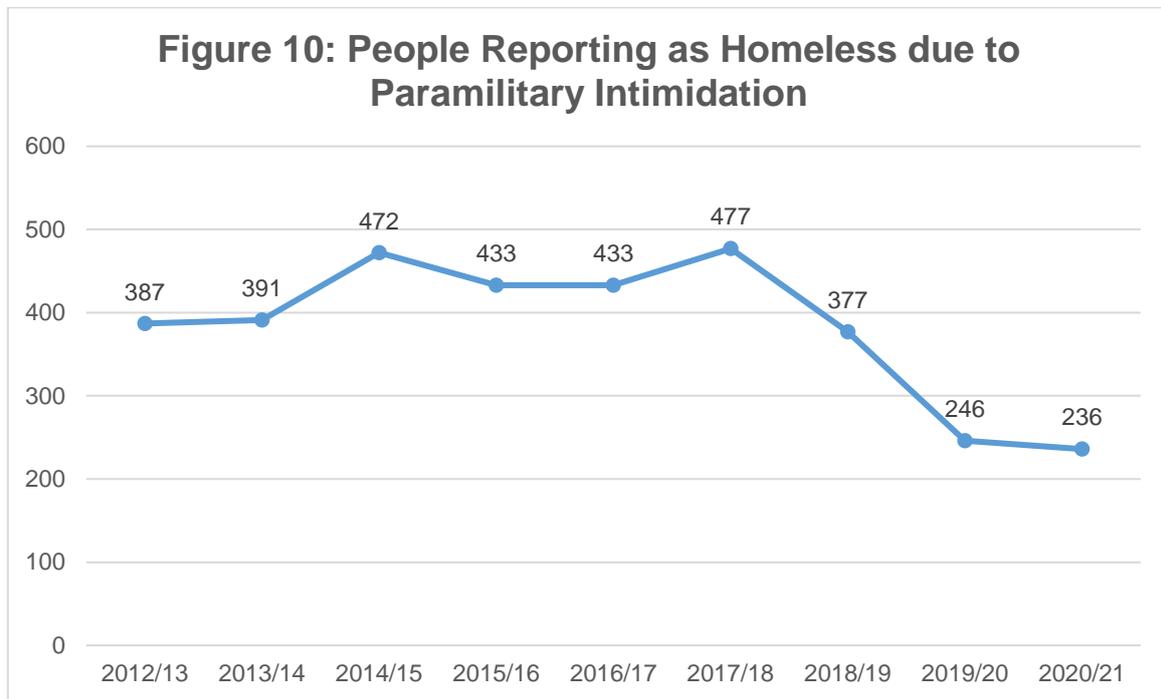
Year	Crown Court	Magistrates' Court	Total
2011/12	3	4	7
2012/13	7	3	10
2013/14	17	1	18
2014/15	11	4	15
2015/16	4	0	4
2016/17	5	0	5
2017/18	5	9	14
2018/19	6	12	18
2019/20	2	12	14
2020/21	10	4	14
<i>2020/21¹⁹ broken down by quarter</i>			
<i>Apr - Jun</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>
<i>Jul - Sep</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>Oct - Dec</i>	<i>8</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>9</i>
<i>Jan - Mar</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>14</i>

Source: Northern Ireland Terrorism legislation: annual statistics bulletin

¹⁹ Figures for 2020/21 are provisional.

Homelessness due to Paramilitary Intimidation

2.29 Figure 10 shows numbers of people presenting as homeless due to intimidation by paramilitaries²⁰ over the past nine years²¹.



Source: Department for Communities

2.30 After an increase in numbers of people presenting as homeless due to paramilitary intimidation in 2016/17 to 2017/18, there has been a decline in the years 2017/18 to 2020/21, with 236 in the last financial year.

²⁰ In 2018/19 297 of 377 (79%) households presenting as homeless for this reason were accepted; in 2019/20 212 of 246 (86%); and in 2020/21 230 of 236 (97%). <https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/publications/northern-ireland-housing-bulletin-january-march-2021>

²¹ Comparable figures are only available from 2012/13 due a change in data collection methodology.

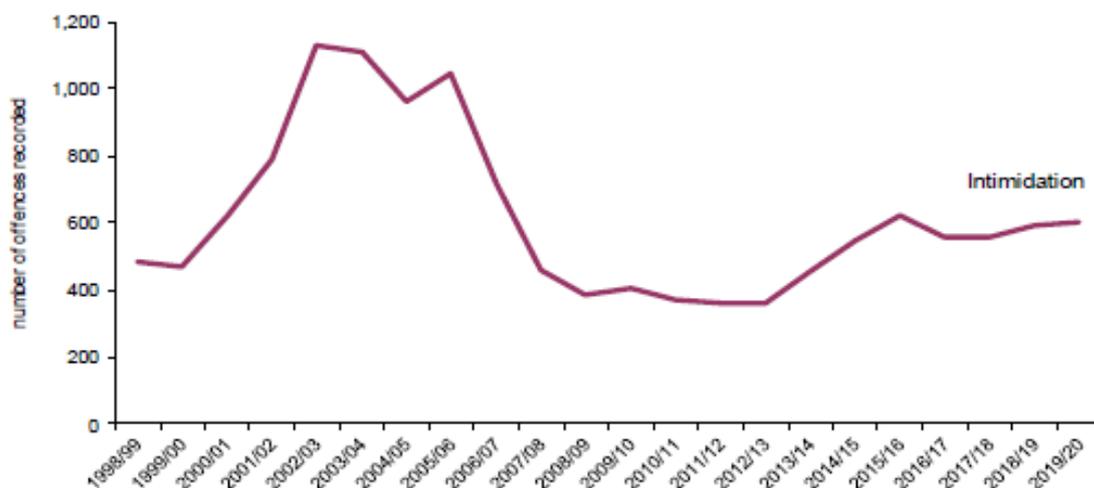
Other criminal justice trends and metrics

2.31 In the Section above we considered security situation-specific and terrorism legislation statistics. In the following Section we consider general trends in crime data from the PSNI, specifically intimidation and sectarian crimes and incidents, and the average time taken from a crime being reported to disposal at court, published by the NI Courts and Tribunals Service.

2.32 *Relevance:* Understanding the prevalence of violence in an area is understood to be important to understanding the various factors that may lead to a sense of ‘social acceptability’ or tolerance of violence, to vulnerability to recruitment and/or exploitation by paramilitaries, and the need for further work to establish a culture of lawfulness.

Intimidation

2.33 Offences of intimidation were at their highest level between 2002/03 and 2005/06, before falling to the lowest level recorded in 2012/13. While the number of offences has risen since, the figure for 2019/20 is just over half of the level recorded in 2002/03.

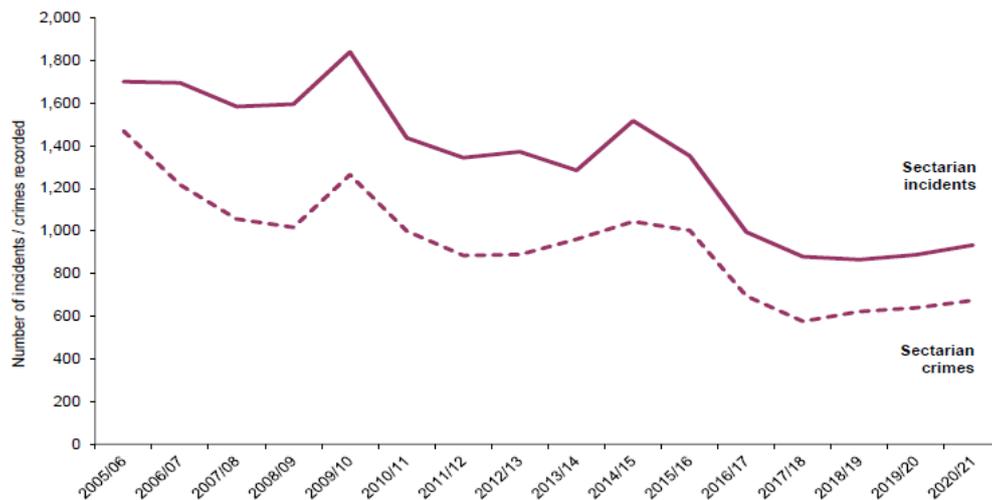


Source: PSNI Crime Statistics²²

Sectarian incidents and crimes recorded by PSNI

2.34 There were 934 sectarian incidents recorded by the police in Northern Ireland in 2020/21, a rise of 46 when compared with the previous 12 months. The number of sectarian crimes recorded by the police rose to 674, an increase of 35 on the previous 12 months. In April this year the PSNI reported a rise in sectarian incidents. This may have been linked to disorder across a number of towns and cities in Northern Ireland.

²² <https://www.psni.police.uk/globalassets/inside-the-psni/our-statistics/police-recorded-crime-statistics/documents/police-recorded-crime-in-northern-ireland-1998-99-to-2019-20.pdf>

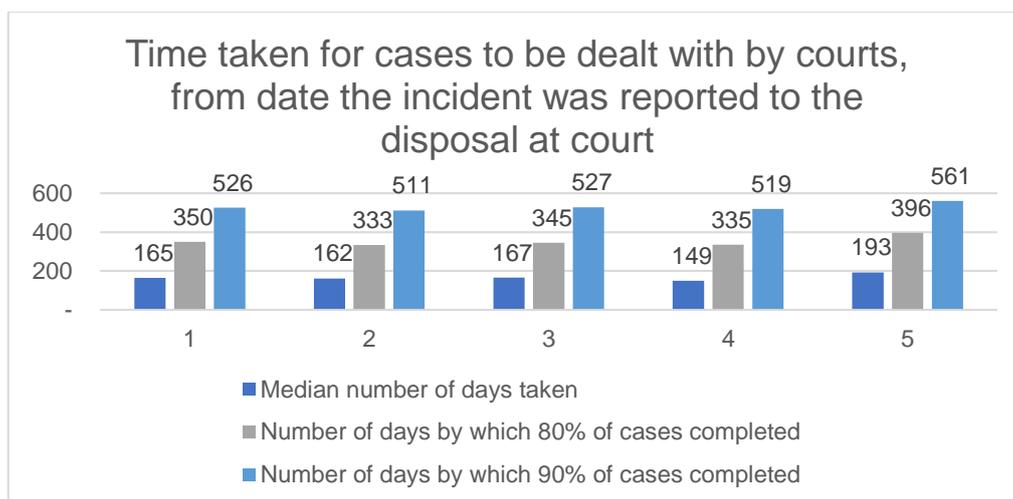


Source: PSNI Bulletin: Incidents and Crimes with a Hate Motivation Recorded by the Police in Northern Ireland²³

Court statistics

2.35 *Source:* The graphs below show data from the NI Courts and Tribunal Service²⁴ about the time taken for cases to be dealt with at courts, from the date an offence was reported to the court disposal date. Whilst the data below is not limited to paramilitary and terrorist cases only, they do include such cases.

2.36 *Relevance:* We comment on the impact of delays further in Section C of our Report; speed of justice is critically linked to trust and confidence in policing and the criminal justice system. It is vital that this is improved as part of the transformation required in Northern Ireland to end paramilitarism.



2.37 The median number of days taken was improving, until the COVID-19 pandemic, but was 193 days in 2021/21, compared to 149 days in 2019/20.

²³ <https://www.psni.police.uk/globalassets/inside-the-psni/our-statistics/hate-motivation-statistics/2020-21/q4/hate-motivations-bulletin-mar-21.pdf>

²⁴ <https://www.justice-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/justice/case%20processing%20times%20202021.pdf>

Population level trends in socio-economic indicators which may be relevant to the continuing existence and activities of paramilitaries

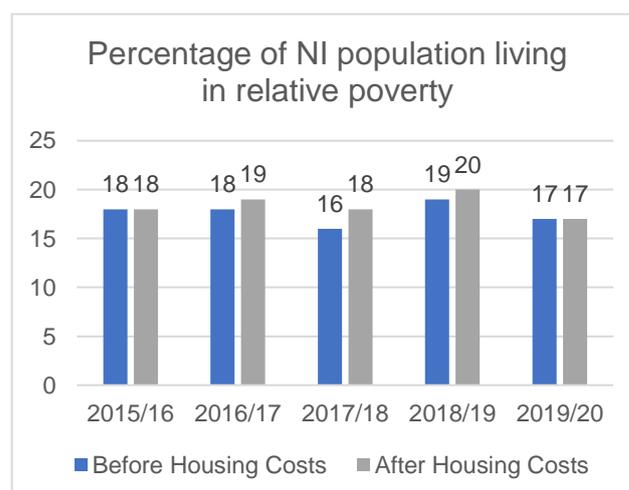
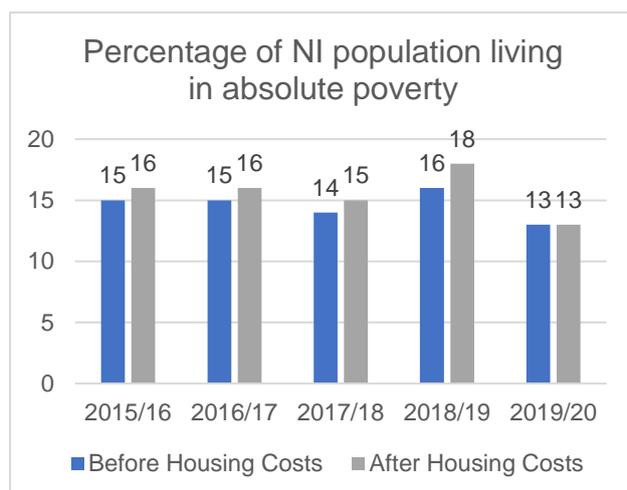
2.38 In our First and Second Reports, we considered links between vulnerability to paramilitary activity and deprivation, mapping Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measures (NIMDM) against indicators of paramilitary activity. Updated NIMDM data are not yet available, but we hope that it will be possible for the Commission to make updated comparisons next year. In the meantime, we have considered population-level trends and developments in broader socio-economic indicators which might be considered relevant to the continuing existence and activities of paramilitaries.

Poverty and living conditions

2.39 *Source:* Each year, 2,000 Northern Ireland households provide responses to the NI Family Resources Survey. Findings are published in an annual poverty bulletin and Households Below Average Income report which is the primary source used by the public sector for measuring poverty, household income and inequality in NI.²⁵

2.40 *Relevance:* Links between poverty, deprivation, disadvantage, lack of aspiration and vulnerability are well established in research and literature about violence. Our twin-track analysis emphasises the importance of addressing broader socio-economic issues, including these factors, as critical to the success of work to tackle paramilitarism. Given the continuing levels of poverty in Northern Ireland, further work is required to address this important area.

2.41 In 2019/20 the proportion of individuals estimated to be living in relative poverty was 17% (313,000) and 13% (241,000) were estimated to be living in absolute poverty (both figures are after housing costs). The tables below show the five year trends.²⁶



²⁵ <http://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/publications/northern-ireland-poverty-bulletin-2019-20>

²⁶ An individual is considered to be in relative poverty if they are living in a household with an equivalised income below 60% of UK median income in the year in question. An individual is considered to be in absolute poverty if they are living in a household with an equivalised income below 60% of the (inflation adjusted) UK median income in 2010/11.

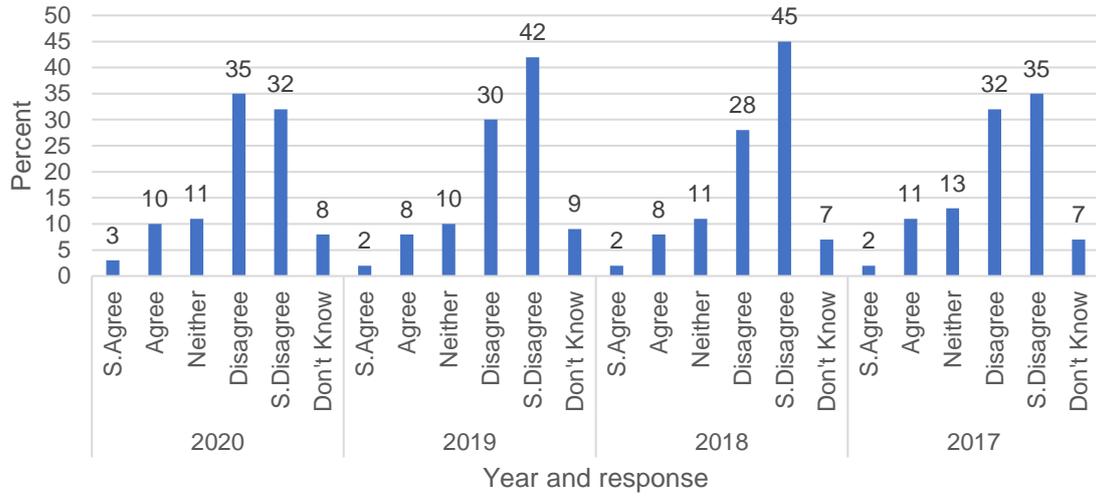
Community views on paramilitary influence and community safety

Views about paramilitaries

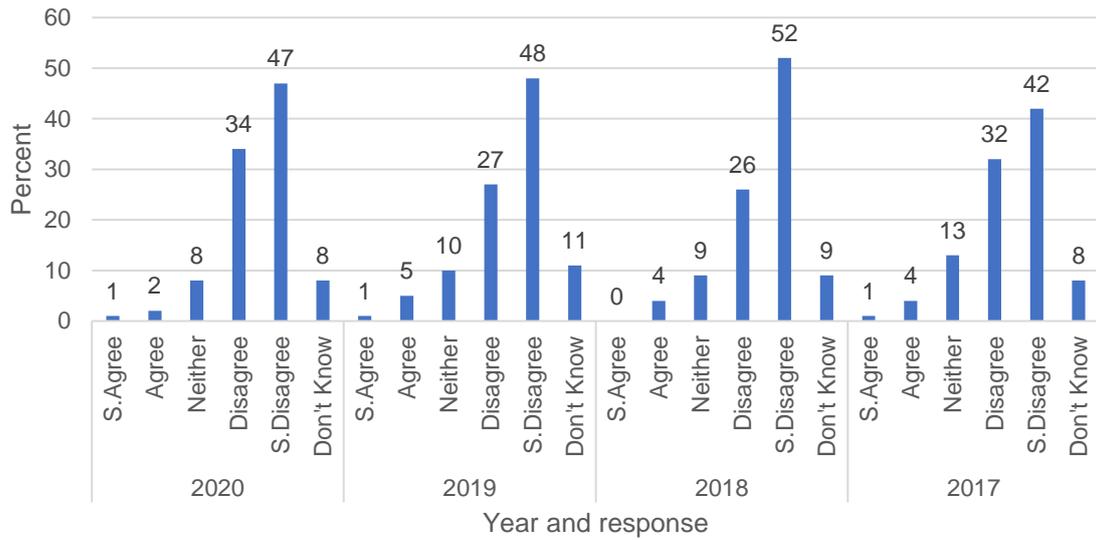
- 2.42 *Source:* The Northern Ireland Life and Times survey is run each year to record the attitudes, values and beliefs of the people in Northern Ireland on a wide range of social policy issues.²⁷
- 2.43 *Relevance:* Understanding how communities perceive paramilitaries, control paramilitaries may exercise, and any community role that they might be seen by some to play, are vital to understanding how society sees paramilitaries and therefore tackling paramilitarism. Deepening that understanding can shape further work required to explain the harm that they cause, to understand what (if any) 'void' they may be filling and/or exploiting in local communities so that this can be addressed, to support work to challenge the normalisation of their existence and activities, and to demonstrate the risk that their continuing existence represents.
- 2.44 Responses to the question whether paramilitary groups have controlling influence over an area have remained largely consistent over the period 2017-2020. In 2020, 3 % strongly agreed and 10% agreed; 32% strongly disagreed and 35% disagreed. This compares with 2%, 11%, 35% and 3% of those who answered this question in 2017.
- 2.45 People agreeing that paramilitary groups keep their area safe has fallen to its lowest level in 2020. 1% strongly agreed that they did and 2% agreed; 47% strongly disagreed and 34% disagreed. In 2017 the split was 1%, 4%, 42%, 32%.
- 2.46 4% of respondents strongly agreed that paramilitary groups create fear and intimidation in their area in 2020; 10% agreed; 32% strongly disagreed and 29% agreed. In 2017, these figures were 3%, 11%, 34% and 30%.
- 2.47 People agreeing or strongly agreeing that paramilitary groups contribute to crime, drugs and anti-social behaviour in their area has risen 4% since 2017. In 2020, 8% strongly agreed and 15% agreed; 25% strongly disagreed and 23 % disagreed. This compares with 4%, 15%, 30% and 35% of those who answered this question in 2017.

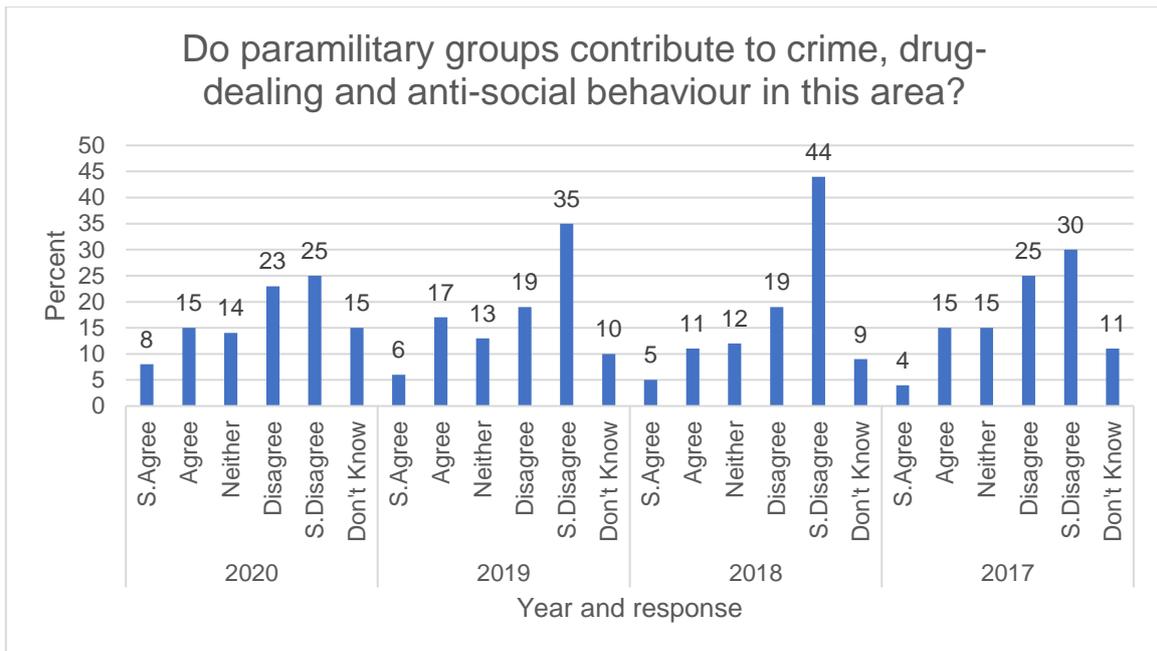
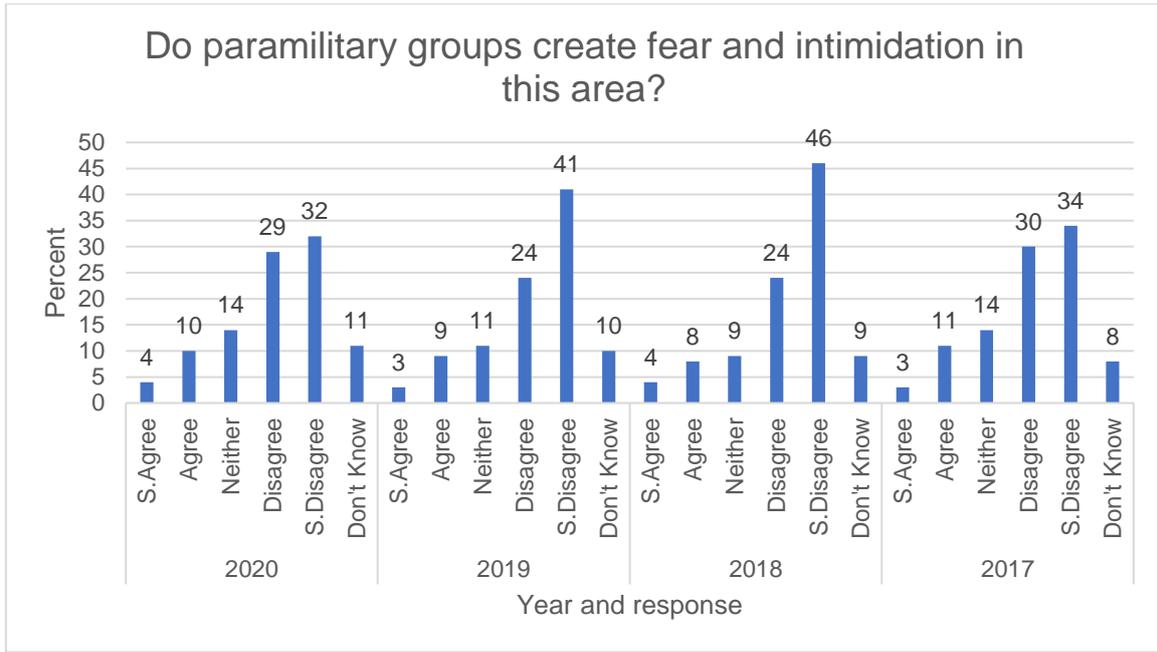
²⁷ <https://www.ark.ac.uk/nilt/results/>

Do paramilitary groups have a controlling influence in this area?



Do paramilitary groups help keep this area safe?



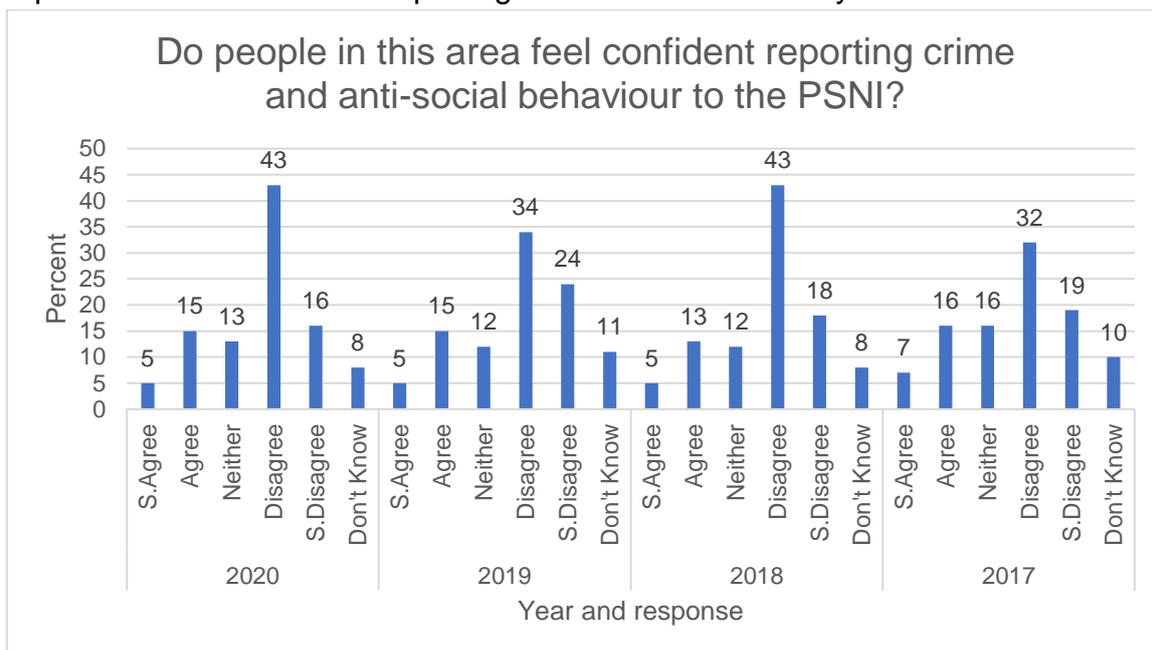


*In the above tables, S stands for “strongly”.

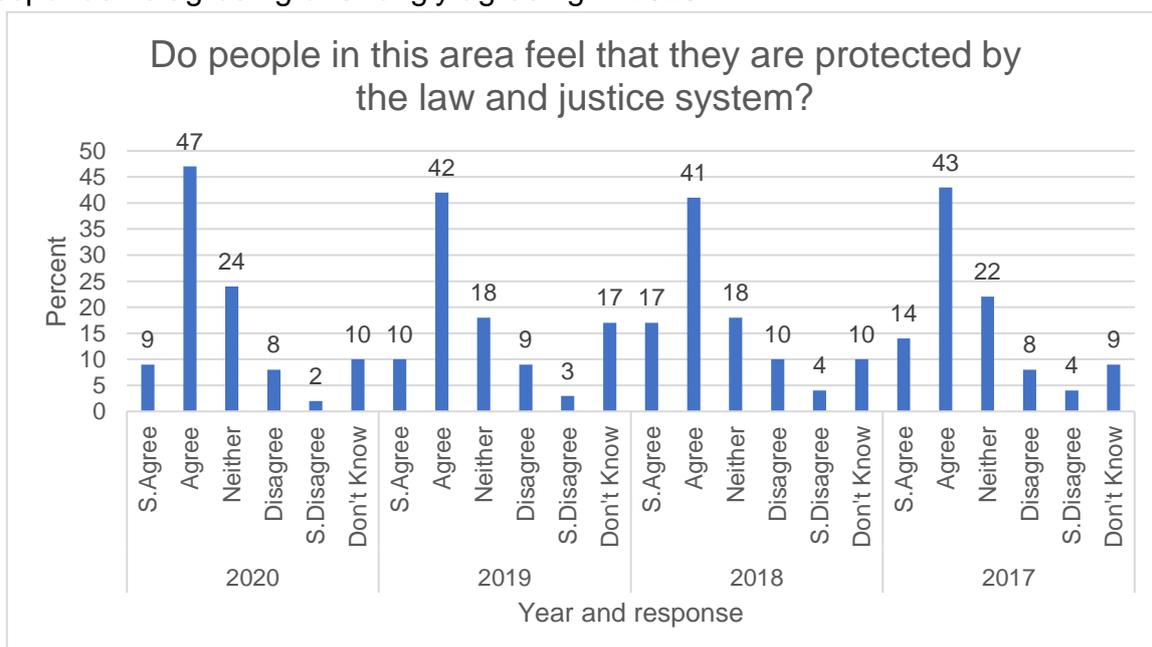
Views about the police and criminal justice system

2.48 *Relevance:* Trust and confidence in the police and criminal justice system is a key element in understanding confidence in the institutions of the state and a culture of lawfulness. Understanding trends and developments in this area helps shape activity and work accordingly. *Source:* NILT.

2.49 People were asked how much they agreed or disagreed with the following statement: ‘People in this area don’t feel confident reporting crime and anti-social behaviour to the PSNI’. The numbers of respondents disagreeing and strongly disagreeing that people do not feel confident reporting crime has increased by 8% from 2017 to 2020.



2.50 Trends in responses to questions about feelings of protection by the law and justice system have remained fairly consistent over the last four years, with 56% of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing in 2020.



Other recent research concerning the impact of paramilitaries in NI

Beyond the 'Spark': Young People's Perspectives on the 2021 Northern Ireland Riots

This research, undertaken by Dr. Colm Walsh, was supported by the Tackling Paramilitary Activity, Criminality and Organised Crime Programme. Colm Walsh's study sought to "capture the voices of those closest to the riots" (p.29) and to understand the causes of the April disorder. Many of the issues that we have been reporting on since 2017 were captured in this study, such as the threat that paramilitaries continue to pose to communities – to young people in particular – and the complex social issues that affect the communities within which paramilitaries mainly operate.

Young people described significant and complex social issues that affect them and issues that affect their sense of safety. 'Beyond the Spark' identifies the biggest threat to young people as linked with paramilitarism. However, "despite the apparent pervasiveness, most were unwilling to talk about their direct experiences of paramilitarism in any detail. This culture of coercive control was evident throughout the interviews and appeared to have the routine effect of silencing of the community. Even those who had been direct victims appeared unwilling (or unable) to discuss their experiences" (p.14).

Many saw paramilitary activity as a routine part of life:

"Aye and I was walking up and, me and my mates, they jumped out of a care (sic) with baseball bats and masks" (p.14).

The study highlights psychological trauma as a related issue: "a number of young people began to describe the long arm of the paramilitary presence in their local areas. Several described (but did not name) psychological trauma. This trauma manifested itself in particular ways that we know to include hyperarousal and avoidance. Hyperaroused to the ever present threat of danger and avoidance of people and places that could exacerbate risk further" (p.16).

Some young people were quoted as follows in the report:

"It affected who I went out with and stuff, because I didn't want to go out in large crowds".

"Like I know friends that after it didn't come back out at all and didn't socialise with anybody really".

"You just know that they're up to stuff because you see, you can actually see them walking about just trying to watch you" (p.16).

During the riots in April young people cited in the report said they saw adults “verbally encouraging young people to take part and even supplying them with petrol bombs and glass bottles” (p.18). The study notes: “some of these adults were known to the young people as paramilitaries” (p.18).

“...the paramilitaries were actually leading the kids on...So they’re letting the kids go out and do their dirty work...” (p.19).

Most of the interviewees were adamant that there was “no direct, coherent political motivation for the rioting”:

“Like see if you were to ask any of the actual kids, like what is it they’re doing any of this here for, they wouldn’t have a f**g [clue]” (p.22).***

Ultimately, the report notes that “few young people believed that the riots served any material purpose” (p.25). Several young people had been arrested. One individual “described this experience as “deeply distressing”” (p.25).

‘Beyond the Spark’ finds that the normalisation of violence appears to be “driven in part by how young men expect that they should behave in certain circumstances ... if they believe that they or those closest to them are at risk, it is their responsibility to do something that will either reduce those risks or achieve retribution;” or they risk being perceived as weak (p.31). The study found “significant evidence that these norms facilitated young people’s engagement in the riot” (p.31). It also found that “those who were actively involved in the riots had been victims of serious violence,” and for them violence was “highly normalised” (p.31). It notes how vulnerability is heightened among those who feel disconnected from community structures, and so they feel less able to access social supports. The study points to other factors as well, finding various “local sparks” – the significant social strain of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Bobby Storey funeral, the Brexit deal and others – to be relevant to the disorder, rather than its causes (p.29).

‘Beyond the Spark’ also found that those most actively involved in the violence were significantly less likely to be able to “articulate ambition, to discuss what motivated them, to indicate that they were hopeful for their futures and were also more likely to advise that they did not believe that the challenges that their communities experienced would be, or could be addressed. These young people generally lacked any sense of optimism for themselves or others” (p.32). The study makes various recommendations for action.

Link to the full Report: <https://www.justice-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/justice/beyond%20the%20spark.pdf>

'It Didn't End in 1998' Examining The Impacts Of Conflict Legacy Across Generations, Siobhan McAlister, Mary-Louise Corr, Clare Dwyer, Orla Drummond, School of Social Sciences, Education and Social Work, School of Law, Queen's University Belfast

In November 2021, the Commission for Victims and Survivors and researchers at Queen's University Belfast published *'It Didn't End in 1998': Examining The Impacts Of Conflict Legacy Across Generations*, research funded by the EU Peace IV Programme. One chapter of their Report seeks to give "voice to the knowledge, experiences and attitudes of young people and parents, demonstrating how the threat of paramilitary-style violence remains a daily reality for many" (p.255). The following extracts are part of their conclusions²⁸:

- "Knowledge of the existence and actions of so-called paramilitary-style groups was pervasive, and 'paramilitary talk' among young people within some communities was commonplace. The presence of paramilitaries meant the potential for violence was ever present. Recent events – the shooting of Lyra McKee, the implications of Brexit, the charging of Solider F – demonstrated to young people that violence could erupt at any time, and threats to perceived culture and identity were still used to politicise and recruit. The sense of insecurity and undercurrent of suspicion expressed by some young people was reminiscent of reflections of parents growing up in Conflict-affected communities 30-40 years ago" (p.24).
- "This research demonstrates that the intimidation, abuse and exploitation of children by paramilitary-style groups remains a reality. Vivid accounts of abuses against children, young people, and their families were shared. The volume and scope of these demonstrates the myriad of ways in which children, young people, families and communities continue to experience coercive control" (pp.24-25).
- "Reflective of the relative invisibility of the impacts of violence on women and girls during the Troubles/Conflict, little is known today about how young women experience violence related to Conflict legacy. Research by McAlister et al. (2021) confirms this, identifying the processes by which young women's experiences of paramilitary-style violence are 'silently silenced'" (p.25).
- "Conflict-related violence has far-reaching effects on individuals, families and communities, and its impacts can be felt by future generations. Experiences within some of the communities involved in this research (and others not included), suggest that a new generation of victims is being created. Abuses on individuals, be it children, parents or siblings, rarely have isolated effects, and this research demonstrates the need for whole-family and whole-community responses. While

²⁸ The Report authors noted: "We are mindful of debates regarding the validity of concepts such as 'paramilitaries' and 'paramilitarism', however these terms are included throughout the report as they were frequently used by research participants when referencing the ongoing violence, and threat of violence, carried out by organised groups across the island of Ireland".

some young people alluded to the impact of paramilitary presence and violence on their mental health, more often this manifested in fear, insecurity, paranoia and coping mechanisms employed to preserve psychological and physical well-being (e.g. mental and physical avoidance). Parents, youth and community workers could identify more vividly the impacts – bed-wetting; anxiety; evidence of trauma; substance use as a coping mechanism; destructive behaviours” (p.25).

- “Concern was also expressed that living in violent environments created a culture of violence. There was clear evidence from young people’s accounts that violence was normalised, but not that it was an accepted cultural norm. Normalising enables coping, managing and surviving in the context of conflict (see Cairns, 1987). Violence continues because it serves a purpose. It maintains power for some and is reproductive in the context of limited opportunities. The pathways and drivers into these groups for young people attest to this – it is not the pull of violence but the search for identity, belonging, status or safety that is significant (see also McAlister et al., 2018). That these groups provide one of the only means through which some young people feel they can achieve this, is an indictment of the post-conflict narrative” (p.25).
- “Despite recent public awareness campaigns and evolving programmes of work to tackle paramilitarism (since 2017), the political silence post-Good Friday/Belfast Agreement, failure to define acts against children as child abuse, and invest in and support communities in the transition from conflict, has caused what Smyth (2017) refers to as a ‘societal shrug’. Ignoring the issue, rationalising it or locating responsibility for dealing with it elsewhere. It is unsurprising, therefore, that within families and communities silence is deeply embedded. Paramilitary violence is silenced through fear and coercion, cultures that stigmatise ‘touting’, and lack of police legitimacy but also through normalisation, denial or avoidance (McAlister et al., 2021). Normalisation and avoidance appeared ways of coping with and managing a threat that while ever present, would ‘not come for you’ if you kept your head down. It was employed by parents in the current context as well as young people, again implying learned behaviours. These techniques are similar to those identified as coping strategies among adults and children *during* the Conflict (Cairns, 1987). This would point to transgenerational patterns, and a learned cultural response among this generation, and within the ‘new Northern Ireland’” (p.26).
- “As demonstrated consistently, silence and avoidance have negative implications personally, and within families (e.g. McNally, 2014; Smyth et al., 2004). This extends to communities and wider society. Lack of reporting of paramilitary abuse within communities, the media, by political representatives, and downplaying or sidelining the effects on individuals, communities and society, can impact attitudes and responses. If the extent of the issue and its impact is unknown, the case for

community resources and specialised services is weakened. One of the consequences, as identified in this research, is that the burden to respond falls on individuals and services within the very communities most affected. Meanwhile, it is not perceived as a societal issue, but one of certain individuals in certain areas – a problem of and for ‘these communities’” (p. 26).

- “While this research demonstrates that many are still impacted by the *legacies* of violence, it also points to Conflict-related violence as a feature of many communities *today*. Some families are dealing with the pains of past violence (experienced during the Conflict) in combination with the fear, threat and/or experience of current violence. In this context, the concepts of ‘Conflict legacy’ and ‘post conflict society’ were felt to overshadow the reality that victims are still being created” (p. 296).

Link to the full Report: <https://www.cvsni.org/media/2142/cvs-final-full-report-final-version-1021.pdf>

Other data

2.51 As we have set out in our Reports to date, addressing endemic issues is a key element of the community transformation required to support those communities where paramilitaries mainly operate and where individuals are most vulnerable to them. Whilst the interplay between some issues such as the prevalence of drugs, poor mental health and paramilitary influence is not straightforward, evidence from elsewhere shows that these issues are also linked.

Concluding comments

2.52 The security situation statistics remain stark, and show that there is further work to do to end paramilitary activity once and for all. The crime, justice and socio-economic statistics are not all conclusively linked to the prevalence of paramilitarism. However, many of the factors considered by many to be relevant to the socio-economic conditions in Northern Ireland which are linked to the continuing existence of paramilitaries and serve to underline the need to address all of these issues through a Whole of Government approach.

2.53 The continuing challenges around many of these issues need to be addressed as part of work the NI Executive is already doing work to improve availability and quality of data to measure outcomes and relevant metrics related to this work, and outcomes from the Programme for Government. Ongoing work to build a data-informed approach remains important.

SECTION C: IMPLEMENTATION OF MEASURES

Phase Two of the Programme

- 3.1 Phase One of the five-year Tackling Paramilitary Activity, Criminality and Organised Crime Programme ended in March and we comment in detail on progress made under the section on Phase One below. We welcome the approval and roll out of Phase Two of the Programme (2021-2024). We know that the work to end paramilitarism is a long-term goal and see the approval of Phase Two (along with funding of £13m for 2021-22 and £10m over three years for the Communities in Transition project) as a recognition of this.
- 3.2 Phase Two of this work is vital: it is an opportunity to continue what has been working well, to do further work to embed the mission of ending paramilitarism in all relevant departments, agencies and the community, and to move one step closer as a society to the ultimate goal of ending paramilitarism once and for all.
- 3.3 As Phase Two is in its early stages, having commenced in April 2021, we cannot yet report fully on its impact. However, we can provide broad comment on the direction of travel and welcome the start made.
- 3.4 The Programme's overall outcome is "safer communities, resilient to paramilitarism, criminality and coercive control". Phase Two consists of two workstreams: 1) People and communities are safe from the harm caused by paramilitarism, and 2) People and communities are more resilient to paramilitary influence and involvement in paramilitarism, criminality and organised crime. The specific projects are outlined in the tables below.
- 3.5 Many of the projects that have been shown to be effective in Phase One have been incorporated into Phase Two. We welcome that new projects have been added to fill identified gaps.
- 3.6 We welcome the new initiatives that focus on supporting victims of paramilitary groups and providing support for those who are acutely vulnerable to paramilitary groups. One such initiative is the Connect Programme (based on the Scottish Violence Reduction Unit's Navigator Programme) in which youth workers based in Altnagelvin Hospital Emergency Department engage with young victims of violence and perpetrators of violence and provide follow-up support, building a wrap-around them including work with their wider family. We have heard encouraging reports about the work of the Connect Programme and look forward to seeing this model rolled out in other hospitals, knowing how effective it has been in Scotland and elsewhere. At times of extreme vulnerability, navigating a complex system can be even more challenging – signposting and support like that provided through Connect is critical to support those living under extreme pressure. It should also help identify the further work

required to make relevant public service support more accessible, understandable and navigable to the public.

- 3.7 The Mid and East Antrim Support Hub is also making progress in addressing the needs of young people at risk from paramilitary groups. This and other Phase Two actions are important initiatives and we have heard reports of good early progress but it is too early to judge the efficacy of Phase Two actions. We also welcome the focus on understanding of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and trauma-informed thinking through the Trauma-Informed Practice Project, and work to make the whole Programme trauma-informed.
- 3.8 It is vital that Actions from the Executive Action Plan which are not funded projects in Phase Two, but are linked to the Programme's success, continue to be tracked and monitored. In previous reports the IRC has called for changes in governance structures and for the need to institute a Whole of Government approach. In Phase Two we are pleased to see the development of the Benefits Realisation Framework in which benefits realisation groups have been established requiring delivery partners to communicate and measure how their projects contribute to a range of broader outcomes. There are four groups which structure that work: keeping people safe, attitudinal change, increasing protective factors for vulnerable people and increasing community resilience. We will follow its development and roll out with interest. Although in the early stages of development, we see this as ensuring that responsibility for the Programme is shared across the Executive and beyond and, if implemented effectively, can support a Whole of Government approach.
- 3.9 More needs to be done to join the work of the Tackling Paramilitary Activity, Criminality and Organised Crime Programme with that of the Programme for Government to address the systemic socio-economic factors that can be exploited by paramilitary groups. Dealing with these issues requires a concerted long-term Whole of Government approach, with all relevant agencies and departments playing their part. The Programme cannot by itself address systemic issues which is why it needs to be sufficiently linked to and buttressed by an ambitious, wider Programme for Government. The current draft Programme for Government does not give tackling paramilitarism a sufficiently high priority, and we have written to the Executive about our concerns. Indeed, as currently drafted it expresses tackling paramilitarism as a narrow subset of a tackling sectarianism outcome which fails to capture the breadth of other non-justice transformational outcomes that are required to deal with paramilitarism.
- 3.10 The Programme alone cannot achieve the goal of ending paramilitarism once for all – a Whole of Government and whole of society effort is needed – but it can provide models and examples for how we get there: collaborating and partnering, decisively focusing on this issue, and evolving the approach to ensure the best results possible.

Workstream One: People and communities are safe from the harm caused by Paramilitarism

Project	Paramilitary Crime Task Force
Description	A Paramilitary Crime Task Force (PCTF) incorporating the PSNI, HMRC and National Crime Agency (NCA).
Objective	To provide a dedicated and robust law enforcement response to the threat from serious organised crime linked to paramilitary groups.
Outputs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A dedicated resource to provide long term and consistent focus to organised criminality linked to paramilitary groups. • A more bespoke and effective law enforcement response against specific groups or individuals.
Benefits	Increased arrests Increased charges Increased seizures of drugs Increased seizures of materiel Increased seizures of money
Funding	£5,721,000

Project	Mid and East Antrim Youth Support Hub
Description	The creation of a multi-agency youth stream of the Mid and East Antrim Support Hub to support young people who are at risk of being involved with, influenced by or exploited by paramilitary groupings.
Objective	To identify vulnerable young persons and ensure a collaborative response to support, protect and divert them away from the command and control of paramilitary groupings.
Outputs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delivery of an effective wrap-around service which provides support to vulnerable young people.
Benefits	Reduction in threat to life warnings Improvement in relations between the PSNI and communities Reduction in community vulnerability Victims receive effective help Improvement in individual protective factors Improvement in availability and visibility of exit routes
Funding	£106,979

Project	Belfast City Council support project for people under threat
Description	Develop, support and implement the multiagency arrangements to address the associated issues attached to victims of paramilitary groups and those under threat throughout West and North Belfast and will contribute to a reduction in the prevalence rates of paramilitary-related incidents in these areas.

Objective	This project will deliver a targeted, co-ordinated piece of work in West and North Belfast to address the needs of those under or at risk of threat from paramilitary groups with a particular focus on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • improving communication, co-ordination amongst service providers; and • gather the required data and statistics to demonstrate the impact.
Outputs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessment of need for those under threat. • Increased awareness of local support available. • Proactive case management system to support, protect and prevent PSAs within West and North Belfast.
Benefits	Improvement in how issues relating to paramilitarism are discussed and addressed Reduction in individual risk factors Reduction in threat to life warnings
Funding	£95,000

Project	Committal Reform Programme
Description	Resource requirements to support planning, implementation and evaluation of the Committal Reform Programme.
Objective	To ensure effective delivery of the Committal Reform Programme within anticipated timeframes.
Outputs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintenance of a collaborative approach at all levels to oversee the transformational change to the criminal justice system by the reform of the committal process.
Benefits	Victims receive effective help
Funding	£214,801

Project	Monitoring of Terrorist Related Offenders
Description	Developing and delivering a new model to assess and manage the risk posed by terrorist-related offenders in Northern Ireland.
Objective	Creating a bespoke offender management model for Terrorist Related Offenders in Northern Ireland will support the protection of public from the existing threat from terrorism, and any further threats that may emerge
Outputs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delivery of the project, develop the project plan, to establish reporting arrangements and setup project subgroups. • Establish reporting arrangements, identify critical milestones and resources, and create interfaces between Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service and the Department of Justice. • Develop a robust the Service Level Agreement. • Gateway review.
Benefits	Increase in protective factors

	Reduction in recidivism
Funding	£65,000

Project	Support for victims
Description	A support service for victims of paramilitary activity and harm
Objective	To put in place a programme to support victims of paramilitary activity and harm. To provide support to these victims. To build capacity among service providers to work with these victims. To learn about effective approaches and inform work on tackling paramilitary activity and harm more generally.
Outputs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identification of victims and outreach. • Mentoring support. • Signposting to support services. • Trauma support.
Benefits	This project will provide dedicated, community-based support to victims of paramilitary activity and harm.
Funding	£100,000

Workstream Two: People and communities are more resilient to paramilitary influence and involvement in paramilitarism, criminality and organised crime

Project	Fresh Start through Sport and Community pilots
Description	Fresh Start through Sport, Conflict Resolution, Community Capacity Building and scoping work on illegal money lending.
Objective	To reach young people who are the most vulnerable to paramilitary influence and provide them with the skills and mind-set required to make better life choices.
Outputs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased opportunities for disaffected young people. • Reduction in overall recorded crime rate. • Clear pathways to available support services.
Benefits	Reduction in individual risk factors Improvement in individual protective factors Improvement in availability and visibility of exit routes Reduction in social opportunities for paramilitaries
Funding	£606,000

Project	WRAP project to improve educational achievement
Description	A programme to provide wrap-around education services through flexible interventions to children and young people facing significant challenges.
Objective	To provide a range of needs-based education-in-the-community interventions enabling children and young people.

	To provide emotional health and well-being support; helping children and young people to be ready to learn. To support children and young people through effective collaboration.
Outputs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Through the programme participants are able to reach their full potential in core skills of literacy, numeracy, digital skills and the broader areas of the curriculum. • Participants gain improved emotional self-regulation, improved behaviour and positive attitudes to education.
Benefits	Reduction in individual risk factors Improvement in individual protective factors
Funding	£567,000

Project	Aspire project to support young men (16-30) vulnerable to paramilitarism, criminality, and organised crime
Description	A project targeting marginalised men who are most at risk of becoming involved in paramilitary or criminal activity.
Objective	To work with men most susceptible to paramilitary / criminal influence to help them develop alternate coping mechanisms, increase resilience and increase pro social activities.
Outputs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To provide intensive additional and innovative interventions to approximately 3,000 men (over the three year cycle) to enable them to access alternative pro social pathways.
Benefits	Reduction in individual risk factors Improvement in individual protective factors Reduction in recidivism Increase in ex prisoner (re)integration
Funding	£1,547,915

Project	Enhancing the learning and well-being outcomes of people in separation
Description	To deliver a new curriculum of learning and training opportunities to support better outcomes for prisoners in separation.
Objective	To provide opportunities and a mechanism by which ex-prisoners are supported to re-integrate into society and support individuals who wish to leave paramilitary groups.
Outputs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased weekly hours of constructive activity available to those in separated accommodation. • Provision of support for the educational and wellbeing outcomes of those in separated accommodation.
Benefits	Reduction in recidivism Increase in ex prisoner (re)integration Improvement in availability and visibility of exit routes

Funding	£211,000
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Project	Engage project to support women leaving the criminal justice system
Description	The continued delivery of the 'ENGAGE' project, which works with women both in custody and in the community, to help build resilience and equip women with the skills and learning to withstand paramilitary influence when they exit criminal justice.
Objective	To enable women with issues such as trauma, addiction and mental health to engage with Department for Communities programmes in their communities, where appropriate, and support desistance from further offending.
Outputs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of a dedicated resource to support women who have offended and support them to make the transition back into local communities. • Delivery of a flexible and dynamic suite of programmes and interventions which build resilience and promote positive citizenship – linked clearly to the themes being developed in the Department for Communities programme. • Work with women offenders who are often marginalised within their communities to get them to the stage where they will have the confidence, motivation and support to participate in the main Department for Communities programme.
Benefits	<p>Reduction in individual risk factors</p> <p>Improvement in individual protective factors</p> <p>Reduction in recidivism</p> <p>Increase in ex prisoner (re)integration</p>
Funding	£92,000

Project	Developing interventions to support community reintegration among paramilitary related offenders
Description	The production of a report which will outline the key themes associated with reintegration of prisoners with links to paramilitary groups and delivery of its recommendations.
Objective	The development and implementation of specific interventions to prepare prisoners with links to paramilitary groups for return to society and to assist with reintegration.
Outputs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The development of a desistance framework for prisoners within separated conditions.
Benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduction in recidivism • Increase in ex prisoner (re)integration • Improvement in availability and visibility of exit routes
Funding	£50,000

Project	Developing Women in the Community
Description	The project will provide training for women to develop their skills and confidence to enable them to become influencers and take on leadership roles within their communities.
Objective	To enable personal progression which will reduce individual risk factors, therefore strengthening capacity and confidence to connect with and engage with communities.
Outputs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women and groups have influential relationships at different levels to support and/or lead positive change • Enhanced parental capacity - improved resilience, self-esteem, confidence and knowledge in managing their children's behaviour • Improved community relations
Benefits	<p>Reduction in individual risk factors</p> <p>Improvement in individual protective factors</p> <p>Improvement in availability and visibility of exit routes</p> <p>Reduction in social opportunities for paramilitaries</p>
Funding	£375,000

Project	Youth Service projects, which include Youth outreach workers, hospital navigators, engagement and capacity building with schools
Description	Provision of a range of Youth Work support in Start areas.
Objective	To develop the range and scope of work that can be delivered by youth workers EA proposes the clustering of start areas.
Outputs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An increase in young people's confidence and self-esteem. • Increased awareness of young people on the concept of lawfulness and the role of policing. • Increased skills base and knowledge of youth workers.
Benefits	<p>Reduction in threat to life warnings</p> <p>Reduction in individual risk factors</p> <p>Victims receive effective help</p> <p>Improvement in relations between the PSNI and communities</p> <p>Improvement in how issues relating to paramilitarism are discussed and addressed</p> <p>Improvement in front line workers efficacy</p> <p>Improvement in availability and visibility of exit routes</p> <p>Reduction in public order issues</p> <p>Reduction in individual risk factors</p> <p>Reduction in physical manifestations</p> <p>Reduction in social opportunities for paramilitaries</p> <p>Reduction in recidivism</p>
Funding	£1,812,189

Project	PSNI community safety and community engagement
Description	Flexible fund to support community interventions
Objective	To have funds available to develop a programme of flexible interventions which are designed and implemented in partnership with experienced delivery agents in four geographical areas.
Outputs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preventing harm and keeping people safe from the effects of, or involvement in, criminal behaviour. • Providing an effective, timely response to serious incidents that cause or might cause significant harm to individuals and the community. • Engaging those who are close to the issues and who can give an informed view on impacts and mitigations of any statutory response.
Benefits	<p>Increase in community resilience</p> <p>Improvement in how issues relating to paramilitarism are discussed and addressed</p> <p>Improvement in relations between the PSNI and communities</p> <p>Improvement in availability and visibility of exit routes</p> <p>Improvement in front line workers' efficacy</p> <p>Victims receive effective help</p>
Funding	£140,000

Project	Communities in Transition – Phase 2
Description	Phase 2 of the Communities in Transition Project seeks to build on the learning and momentum of the first phase of activity and to develop a full suite of community-led initiatives.
Objective	To build capacity and resilience in those 8 geographic areas where residual paramilitary activity and associated criminality continue to have a negative impact
Outputs	<p>Will be dependent on individual interventions. At a high level and consistent with the Theory of Change:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increasing participation: Empowering more people to take an active role in community life, increasing the agency of voice of the community overall. • Developing skills: Building the skills, knowledge and confidence of those who live and work in these communities. • Improving collaboration: Appreciate and build on positive work within communities with support from statutory bodies to achieve sustained impacts.
Benefits	<p>Increase in community resilience to paramilitary influence and involvement in paramilitarism, criminality and organised crime.</p> <p>Improvement in how issues relating to paramilitarism are discussed and addressed.</p>

	<p>Increase in frontline workers efficacy (including voluntary and community sector staff/volunteers)</p> <p>Increase in ex prisoner reintegration.</p> <p>Increase in individual protective factors.</p> <p>Improvement in relations between the PSNI and communities</p>
Funding	<p>£10m through New Decade, New Approach. Additional resources will be sought, where possible, through Monitoring Rounds.</p>

Phase One of the Programme

- 3.11 In this Section, we consider progress against each aspect of Phase One of the Executive Action Plan up to the end of March 2021. Our view is informed largely by update reports provided by the relevant teams working on these issues, the latest of which is available from the Programme's website: <https://www.justice-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/justice/quarter-4-delivery-update-report.pdf>. We have not repeated the updates from that paper in full, but instead focus on key developments in this Section. Our Report is also informed by meetings and discussions with those same officials and lead partners, and our broader engagement with those who are the intended beneficiaries of the Programme: communities, civic society, councils and individuals.
- 3.12 Much good work has been done to date. For the Programme to have developed in the way that it has, and to have provided support to people at risk of harm or affected by paramilitaries, from a standing start in 2017, is a significant achievement.
- 3.13 The Programme has, to date, sought to engender collaboration and partnership through bringing together Programme and other relevant officials and agencies in "One Team" meetings, as well as the Programme team building links, identifying connections and joining activities up, under the auspices of the Programme Board. We commend that work to date and welcome their new benefits realisation approach which requires delivery partners to communicate and measure how their projects contribute to a range of broader benefits (i.e. how they influence positive changes), which the Programme aims to achieve.
- 3.14 We welcome the commitment to evaluation shown in many of the projects. Many projects have brought in external support to review their approach, outcomes and to make recommendations for development, and we believe that is the best approach – these are novel approaches and difficult issues being dealt with, and it is vital that risks are taken, and that there is space to develop and adjust approaches in response to feedback and results.
- 3.15 We wanted to highlight some particular projects that have taken creative and effective approaches to particular problems. The obvious risk in doing so is that we know that we cannot highlight every project, but nevertheless we wanted to highlight these as particular examples of best practice, from which lessons can be drawn.
- 3.16 The Belfast City Council led multi-agency project to support people under threat which involves close co-operation between accredited restorative justice organisations and statutory partners is having a positive impact on the lives of those who need support. They are supporting some vulnerable clients with complex needs, in a situation of extreme stress when they come under threat. The work has led to needs being more effectively met and in many cases threats being addressed. The project has also benefited from external evaluation. The kind of close working and shared endeavour

seen in this project are the key ingredients to success across the Programme, and more broadly to all the work required to end paramilitarism once and for all.

3.17 The Communities in Transition project is still in its early stages, but we have seen some good examples of the impact it can have. A vital aspect of tackling paramilitarism is increasing the confidence of communities, empowering them and giving them the tools, resources and opportunities to reduce vulnerabilities and narrow the ground exploited by paramilitaries. Building alternative forms of community leadership is a key aspect of this and so capacity-building work to raise up new leaders and establish different community voices is of great importance. Much of that work through the Communities in Transition project has only just begun, but we can already see the potential there. Similarly, addressing the complex health and wellbeing needs of communities who have lived under paramilitary influence is so important to developing areas and helping them move forward, particularly by addressing vulnerabilities caused by drugs, alcohol and other forms of addiction. Health and wellbeing projects should also help change the situation in communities. Likewise, funding small projects to explore new approaches to community safety and to find new ways to resolve local issues is welcome – building trust and confidence in the statutory sector, and empowering communities to find solutions. Local problems must have locally-shaped and ideally locally-delivered solutions, and Communities in Transition is further demonstrating the power of that approach, as well as involving new organisations in delivery of this work. The mid-term evaluation of Communities in Transition’s work identified certain areas for development, including ensuring a common view of purpose. We welcome the ongoing commitment to focusing and driving this work, and to working in “areas of influence” which relate to the eight areas being focused on. The learnings from Communities in Transition projects must be passed up through the system, and agencies and organisations need to ensure that all of their activities are so focused on local need and challenging questions honestly considered by senior leaders such as why statutory health provision is not currently meeting health and wellbeing needs in these areas.

3.18 We regret, however, that a number of important aspects of this work have not progressed at the pace or scale that we would have liked to have seen. The establishment of a Centre for Restorative Excellence represents a significant opportunity for best practice in the field of restorative practice to be shared, to foster further partnerships and to develop this work further. We welcome the funding provided to various projects under the Communities in Transition scheme, but these are no substitute for a dedicated fund and Centre. The Executive should prioritise this work in the coming year.

3.19 Work on relevant legislation, including committal reform, an adoption bill, and ex-prisoners employment opportunities had understandably slowed in the absence of an Executive and fully functioning legislative Assembly. We welcome that Committal Reform legislation is at an advanced stage of consideration by the Assembly; the

various criminal justice agencies must now work to make full use of the opportunity that it represents and to implement it at pace. Other legislative actions must be given a high priority as well. Whilst we appreciate the complex issues around organised crime legislation, and the need to ensure that it is effective, we believe that this work should have received the same priority as the Organised Crime Strategy and that the draft legislation should be finalised by now. We urge the Department of Justice to prioritise this workstream and to ensure that law enforcement have all the tools that they need to tackle this problem.

3.20 We also believe that work on ex-prisoner issues needs to be reinvigorated, so that those needs and asks are progressing at the same pace as other aspects of this work such as crisis intervention, stabilisation and youth work with those most vulnerable to paramilitary influence.

3.21 The following section sets out our reflections on the work delivered against each aspect of the Executive's Action Plan, which has been progressing as the Tackling Paramilitary Activity, Criminality and Organised Crime Programme. The status of each action is one of the following four categories:

- Action complete: an action from the Action Plan which, in our view, has been undertaken and completed.
- Action underway: an action from the Action Plan which, in our view, has been started but is not yet complete. We note where follow up is required.
- Action planned: an action from the Action Plan which, in our view, has not yet started but there are clear plans to do so. We note where follow up is required.
- Action not taken: an action from the Action Plan which, in our view, has not been planned or is suspended. We note where follow up is required.

A1	The Executive should make promoting lawfulness a priority
Commitment by the Executive in its Action Plan	The draft Programme for Government Framework demonstrates through outcome 7 ²⁹ that promoting lawfulness is a key priority in the current mandate. <i>A Fresh Start</i> sets out the Executive’s commitments to upholding the rule of law, tackling paramilitarism, organised crime and criminality. These values and the commitment to disbanding paramilitary organisations and their structures are reflected in the new Ministerial Pledge of Office ³⁰ .
Lead responsibility	Executive
Summary of current position reported to the IRC by project leads	<p>The draft Programme for Government Framework demonstrated through Outcome 7 (“we have a safe community where we respect the law, and each other”) that promoting lawfulness was considered to be a key priority in the mandate of the Executive, and it is part of the current Outcomes Delivery Plan.</p> <p><i>A Fresh Start</i> set out the Executive’s commitments to upholding the rule of law and tackling paramilitarism, organised crime and criminality. These values and the commitment to disbanding paramilitary organisations and their structures are reflected in the Ministerial Pledge of Office. The commitments also form the basis of a new undertaking for each Member of the Legislative Assembly. A Lawfulness Framework has been developed as a living document, with input and feedback from stakeholders, to provide a shared understanding of lawfulness across the programme.</p>
IRC comments	<p>Building a culture of lawfulness – upholding the rule of law, and not taking actions which support or encourage paramilitary organisations tacitly or overtly but challenging them – continues to be a real need. The solemn commitments contained in the Ministerial Pledge of Office and the related undertaking that MLAs must give, including to “support the rule of law unequivocally in word and deed and support all efforts to uphold it”, must be the basis on which political discourse takes place. Political representatives must also, in the words of the Fresh Start Agreement, “not agree simply to a passive acceptance of these values but to an active fulfilment of them”. As a society we must also continue to work to challenge the normalisation of violence and threats of it.</p> <p>We see little priority given to efforts to promote lawfulness in the Executive’s draft Programme for Government Outcomes Framework</p>

²⁹ Outcome 7 of the Programme for Government is that “we have a safe community where we respect the law, and each other.”

³⁰ See sections 7 and 8 of the Northern Ireland (Stormont Agreement and Implementation Plan) Act 2016: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2016/13/contents/enacted>

	and believe that an opportunity to bring a focus to this issue should not be missed.
Implementation status	Action underway.

A2	The Executive should use all avenues available to it to increase public awareness of what people can do about criminality in Northern Ireland and promote active citizenship in building a culture of lawfulness
Commitment by the Executive in its Action Plan	We welcome the emphasis that <i>A Fresh Start</i> (Section A) and the Panel Report have placed on the need to increase the public’s understanding of criminality. The Department of Justice will launch a public awareness campaign before the end of 2016 on the issue of organised crime and its links to paramilitary activity, which will promote active citizenship in building a culture of lawfulness. This will build on community views and understanding, and will provide more information for citizens and communities about the harm faced from organised crime. Alongside this, the Department of Education will consider commissioning the development of additional curriculum materials to support teachers and youth workers in delivering these aspects of the curriculum.
Lead responsibility	Department of Justice and Department of Education
Summary of current position reported to the IRC by project leads	<p>This year, the new ‘Ending the Harm’ public awareness campaign explicitly showed how paramilitary gangs use illegal money lending as a method to control and ruin vulnerable people’s lives in their own communities. The campaign is running across a number of platforms, including TV, outdoor (billboard) advertising, paid for social media advertising and updated campaign messages.</p> <p>A number of learning materials such as films and plays have been developed by the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA), the Department of Education, Cinemagic and the Northern Ireland Office for use in schools. CCEA has updated its active citizenship and lawfulness resources to make them accessible to pupils with special educational needs. CCEA has also added guidance for schools on using the CCEA Active Citizenship resources to discuss the impact COVID-19 has had on their communities and society, and how lawfulness has been a feature of this.</p>
IRC comments	We welcome the efforts of the Tackling Paramilitary Activity, Criminality and Organised Crime Programme to bring aspects of paramilitary activity to wider attention through a new public awareness campaign. Whilst Phase Two of the Programme is in its

	<p>early stages we expect to see join-up between the public awareness work and other programme work to tackle illegal money lending.</p> <p>We recognise the efforts of CCEA and Cinemagic and others in adapting their work in light of the effect that COVID-19 has had on schools; these continue to be vital messages for young people to learn and understand.</p>
Implementation status	Action underway.

A3	The Executive should work with leading figures and organisations throughout all sectors of society to take a stand against criminality in Northern Ireland and promote responsible co-operation with authorities as part of a culture of lawfulness.
Commitment by the Executive in its Action Plan	We agree the need to take forward this recommendation to promote these messages throughout society, and to clearly speak to the issues of concern to communities and citizens. We plan to take forward a number of actions across the Executive to further ensure that all sectors of society are equipped to take a stand against criminality and encourage responsible co-operation with relevant authorities. The Department for Communities will bring forward proposals for engagement on this issue via community, voluntary, and sports forums.
Lead responsibility	Department for Communities and Attorney General's Office
Summary of current position reported to the IRC by project leads	<p>The Department of Communities has worked with community, voluntary and sports forums to: rollout a number of lawfulness initiatives delivered by Volunteer Now and the NI National Citizen Service, support the formation of Redeeming Our Communities Action Groups and implement a Safer Borrowing Pilot.</p> <p>The Sporting Partners project (involving the Irish Football Association, Ulster Gaelic Athletic Association, Ulster Rugby and the Belfast Giants) was set up to provide sports-based learning and support for hard to reach young men and women to prevent them from becoming involved or recruited into paramilitary activity, organised crime and criminality continued to expand into additional areas. 41 young people from Belfast, Rathcoole and Carrickfergus have taken part in the project as of March 2021.</p> <p>A number of projects have been carried out in Greater Shankill and Galliagh (Derry) seeking to divert young people away from involvement in paramilitarism or being targeted by paramilitaries.</p>

	<p>Projects in East Belfast, Creggan (Derry) and Armoy (Antrim) that are designed to reduce their respective community's vulnerability to paramilitarism are ongoing.</p> <p>The Department of Communities has completed a mapping exercise across the Department to identify projects that they have funded which contribute, either directly or indirectly, to the delivery of the objectives of the Executive Action Plan. There are currently 210 such projects.</p>
IRC comments	<p>We recognise the value of the Department of Communities mapping exercise in efforts to join-up work better between different projects and the Tackling Paramilitary Activity, Criminality and Organised Crime Programme, and to identify interdependencies and gaps. This type of exercise could be useful for other departments to help them understand how their work to tackle paramilitarism complements their other programmes and we recommend that the Departments of Health and Education carry out a similar exercise to identify which aspects of their work could play a further role in helping tackle paramilitarism.</p> <p>We place particular importance on initiatives to identify and support young people at risk of being recruited by paramilitary organisations and welcome the work of these organisations to that end, often in partnership with the PSNI. This should remain a high priority in Departmental and Programme activities. Linkages between this Action and similar activity carried out by the Education Authority under Action A4 are important in terms of sharing experience and developing best practice; the Tackling Paramilitary Activity, Criminality and Organised Crime Programme's newly established benefits realisation group on protective factors should ensure that such linkages are well developed.</p>
Implementation status	Action underway. Follow up required.

A4	<p>As part of its “cross-departmental programme to prevent vulnerable young people being drawn into paramilitary activity,” the Executive should commission appropriate initiatives aimed at promoting lawfulness in schools and through youth work in communities.</p>
Commitment by the Executive in its Action Plan	<p>The Department of Education will develop initiatives to ensure that those schools and youth groups dealing with the effects of paramilitary activity on young people are appropriately trained to identify risk factors and to adopt a whole school/group approach to</p>

	<p>help deal with those challenges. The Department of Education and The Executive Office will deliver Youth Intervention programmes specifically targeted at vulnerable young people, including those most at risk of becoming involved in, or affected by paramilitary activity, so that they can make a positive contribution to their communities.</p>
<p>Lead responsibility</p>	<p>Department of Education</p>
<p>Summary of current position reported to the IRC by project leads</p>	<p>A wide range of youth projects and interventions are being implemented under this commitment. The first element is a Capacity Building Programme (for Teachers and Youth Workers) and over 700 professionals engaged with capacity building activities during phase one of the Programme. A range of training events were facilitated for youth service staff, youth outreach workers, teachers, police and community workers.</p> <p>The second element is a youth outreach programme, START (Steer Teenagers Away from Recurrent Trouble): Seventeen Youth Outreach Workers have been placed across NI, particularly focusing on work in Communities in Transition areas (areas most vulnerable to paramilitary influence). As of May 2021, over 4,000 young people have been involved in the START programme. Examples of engagement include: 609 young people in core group, 742 in peer/sibling groups, 615 young people from Core group receiving individual support, 28 young parents supported in life skills, 2,869 interventions put in place for young people across the programme in 2020/21. This work ranges from anger management to counselling and mentoring, and from dealing with drug and alcohol misuse to lawfulness work.</p> <p>The Connect Programme (previously named “Navigator”) was established in summer 2021 to build the capacity of youth workers to work in partnership with Altnagelvin Hospital Emergency Department, the PSNI and other key stakeholders to engage with young victims of violence, perpetrators of violence and – as part of follow-up support – to engage with their wider family. Three youth workers work alongside the Emergency Department to support young people admitted as a consequence of violence, drug and alcohol abuse. The team are involved in face-to-face delivery four nights a week from 8pm to 3am in addition to follow-up work with the young people.</p> <p>During the disorder in April there was an increased amount of detached (street based response) and outreach youth work that took place.</p>

	The SPARKS programme, a diversionary scheme to discourage risk-taking behaviour and provide opportunities and pathways, was implemented in 30 areas across Northern Ireland during summer 2021.
IRC comments	<p>We welcome the roll out of the Connect Programme as an important new initiative to engage with young people and offer support to those who need it. We note that similar initiatives in Scotland have been shown to be effective and we applaud the Education Authority and the Tackling Paramilitary Activity, Criminality and Organised Crime Programme for looking outside of Northern Ireland for initiatives that have worked in other jurisdictions. As advocates for a public health response to violence in Northern Ireland we welcome this initiative and look forward to learning about its impact.</p> <p>We commend the work of the Education Authority and its detached youth workers (and others) on the ground in April during disorder in various areas. Their agile response diverted young people away from trouble and ongoing engagement is having a tangible impact on the lives of young people.</p> <p>We note the ongoing efforts of the Education Authority to ensure work on tackling paramilitarism becomes part of mainstream youth service delivery and see this as important in ensuring sustainability for such critical work.</p>
Implementation status	Action underway.

A5	The Executive, the Policing Board and the PSNI should review the resourcing and operation of policing in communities to ensure that policing is visible and resourced to fully engage in those communities most vulnerable to criminal control.
Commitment by the Executive in its Action Plan	<p>The Executive, the Policing Board and the Police Service of Northern Ireland will review the resourcing and operation of policing in communities to ensure that policing is visible and resourced to fully engage in those communities most vulnerable to criminal control.</p> <p>Bespoke interventions and training designed to enhance confidence and trust between the police and communities will be developed.</p>
Lead responsibility	Northern Ireland Policing Board and PSNI
Summary of current position reported to the	<p>Review of community policing</p> <p>Following a consultation in August 2018 to seek views on the future delivery of local policing which drew on the Panel Report, Executive</p>

IRC by project leads

Action Plan and an HMICFRS³¹ recommendation on the effectiveness of policing, the PSNI developed an Action Plan and implementation plan. Nearly 400 additional neighbourhood officers have been identified and allocated to respective teams. Training has also been initiated to complement the vision of neighbourhood policing by focusing on problem solving, crime prevention, engagement and partnership working.

Policing with the Community Project

The PSNI is continuing delivery of a Policing with the Community Project (PWC); the additional bespoke work being taken forward in response to Commitment A5 links to this wider PWC programme. The overall aim of the work to date (and going forward to 2021) is to address issues of visibility, engagement and problem solving in those communities still susceptible to Paramilitarism. The project is focused on training; research into community issues; and local interventions to address the issues raised.

'Gauging Community Voice'

The PSNI procured support to conduct research, community engagement and community awareness raising events within communities most affected by the 'Troubles' including the eight Communities in Transition project areas in 2017/18 and this work was followed up in 2020/21. Lucid Talk conducted research with residents in 8 Targeted Area Polls (North and West Belfast, East Antrim, Foyle, North Down, Upper Bann and East and South Belfast) with a total of 910 responses. Initial findings have been considered and will inform their engagements strategies.

Training

Open University initially prepared training and development products on Collaborative Problem Solving for Community Safety; they then developed modules on Community Empowerment, Better Supporting Youth and Young People, Procedural Justice, Fairness and Mediation, and Evidence-based and Professional Judgement. Work has commenced to produce 4 additional modules including Adverse Childhood Experiences, Harm Reduction, Critical thinking, Building Analytical Capability, and SARA (Scanning, Analysis, Response and Assessment) problem solving for community safety.

³¹ Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services.

	<p><u>Targeted local interventions</u></p> <p>There is also a fund for projects for visible, meaningful engagement and activity linked to problem solving, which is critical to the development of trust and confidence in policing within communities impacted by the threat of paramilitary activity. PSNI Districts have been continuing to develop plans to progress and implement engagement activity to follow on from last year's delivery.</p> <p>Examples of work to date include diversionary activities, scoping projects looking at needs, and work with groups of vulnerable young people.</p> <p>The Tackling Paramilitary Activity, Criminality and Organised Crime Programme Team is working with the PSNI to identify targeted local interventions as well as wider opportunities to further embed policing with the community across the PSNI. Work is also ongoing between the Programme Team and the PSNI to explore the potential for better connection between commitments A5, A9, B13 and B4.</p>
IRC comments	<p>The PSNI's problem solving fund is a vital part of Policing with the Community, which alongside Neighbourhood Policing is crucial to building effective and good relationships between the PSNI and local areas – those good relationships are crucial to tackling paramilitarism and organised crime. The PSNI need to understand what is going on in local areas if they are to police them well, work in partnership to solve problems and meet need, and target criminal activity effectively; and community trust and confidence in the PSNI is vital to achieving this.</p>
Implementation status	<p>Action underway.</p>

A6	<p>In setting the strategic objectives of Policing and Community Safety Partnerships, the Department of Justice and Policing Board should ensure that the partnerships focus on building community confidence in the rule of law and embedding a culture of lawfulness.</p>
Commitment by the Executive in its Action Plan	<p>In setting new strategic objectives for the Policing and Community Safety Partnerships (PCSPs), the Department of Justice and the Policing Board will implement this recommendation. The Department for Communities will ask local Government to ensure that, in aspects of local Community Plans that address community safety issues or where Policing and Community Safety Partnerships act as a delivery agency, Community Planning Partnerships also focus on building</p>

	community confidence in the rule of law and embedding a culture of lawfulness. The designated organisations will ensure their representation at Policing and Community Safety Partnerships is of a sufficiently senior level to facilitate effective partnerships.
Lead responsibility	Department of Justice, Northern Ireland Policing Board and Department for Communities
Summary of current position reported to the IRC by project leads	A commitment to promoting lawfulness is in the strategic objectives of each PCSP. Links have also been made between the role of PCSPs and the Community Plans rolled out across all District Council areas. £4.25m was provided to support the work of the PCSPs in 2020/21. These plans link to the role of PCSPs in embedding a culture of lawfulness and improving confidence in the rule of law.
IRC comments	As PCSP plans are updated in the next year, tackling paramilitarism must be given a high priority.
Implementation status	Action underway.

A7	The designated organisations should also ensure that their representatives are sufficiently senior and committed to building effective partnerships.
Commitment by the Executive in its Action Plan	The designated organisations will ensure their representation at Policing and Community Safety Partnerships is of a sufficiently senior level to facilitate effective partnerships.
Lead responsibility	Department of Justice and Policing and Community Safety Partnerships
Summary of current position reported to the IRC by project leads	The seven designated organisations that have staff members on each of the 11 PCSPs and four District PCSPs (in Belfast) continue to play an active role in the work of PCSPs across Northern Ireland. Representation continues to be at an appropriately senior level and is augmented by further colleagues from the designated organisations – with particular subject or local area expertise – involving themselves in forums addressing issues such as community safety and anti-social behaviour. Organisations, such as Health Trusts, are able to make a particularly important and effective contribution to the work of a PCSP by having colleagues in disciplines such as mental health, safeguarding children, Emergency Department and NI Ambulance Service attend PCSP-convened Support Hubs in order to address the needs of vulnerable citizens from the PCSP/District Council area.

	A Joint Committee – a body comprising senior officials from the Department of Justice, two members of the NI Policing Board and the Board’s Chief Executive – provides oversight of PCSPs. The Joint Committee convenes annual meetings with Chief Executives from each of the designated organisations and District Councils to highlight best practice examples of partnership working and to address ways in which effective collaboration can help all parties represented on PCSPs to improve community safety, tackle anti-social behaviour and increase confidence in local policing.
IRC comments	It is vital that the contribution of PCSPs to tackling paramilitarism is maximised, and this requires the right officials to be at the table. We encourage PCSPs to be ambitious in their updated local plans, to ensure that they are doing all they can to tackle paramilitarism effectively in their Districts, and to use their role consulting the communities to build a shared understanding of problems and to collaboratively design solutions where that is within their remits.
Implementation status	Action underway.

A8	The Executive and the Police Service of Northern Ireland, in conjunction with the Northern Ireland Policing Board, should review their protocols for engaging with representatives of paramilitary groups. This change in approach should also apply to other public community bodies and public representatives.
Commitment by the Executive in its Action Plan	The Executive will propose to the Chief Constable and the Chair of the Policing Board that we commission an agreed independent expert – of suitable expertise and standing – to review current practice and legal requirements, as well as lessons from other contexts, and provide them with draft protocols for consideration.
Lead responsibility	The Executive, Northern Ireland Policing Board and PSNI
Summary of current position reported to the IRC by project leads	This is a particularly sensitive recommendation, and one that would benefit from Executive consideration. In the interim, the Tackling Paramilitary Activity, Criminality and Organised Crime Programme Team is exploring how best to engage on this issue with a view to identifying and better understanding the type of situations in which engagement by statutory agencies might fall into the space alluded to in order to explore some of the issues involved and identify learning. This is a complex issue, which is being taken forward in the context of the wider programme values, and the related issues around lawfulness.
IRC comments	We appreciate that engaging with paramilitaries is a sensitive issue but this matter needs to be dealt with urgently. We welcome that

	tentative discussion of this issue has taken place at the Political Advisory Group to the Programme and encourage this to continue.
Implementation status	Action planned. Follow up required.

A9	Put in place a dedicated fund for restorative justice initiatives to provide enhanced levels of resource over longer periods of time to deliver positive outcomes for individuals and communities. This should include resourcing the proposals for a centre of restorative excellence.
Commitment by the Executive in its Action Plan	The Executive will put in place a dedicated fund for restorative justice initiatives to provide enhanced levels of resource over longer periods of time to deliver positive outcomes for individuals and communities. The Department of Justice will carry out a feasibility study to identify best options for a new centre of restorative excellence.
Lead responsibility	Department of Justice and The Executive Office
Summary of current position reported to the IRC by project leads	<p>Levels of core funding have been maintained, to date, in order to support the restorative justice organisations in further developing capacity and practice. A regional restorative practice project (see update on Action B4) valued at approximately £1.4m has been rolled out. Engagement between the Department of Justice and the Executive Office regarding the development of a dedicated fund for restorative justice initiatives including funding for a centre of restorative excellence continues.</p> <p>Whilst the Justice Minister has approved restarting the accreditation process for community based restorative justice groups the Minister considers that in the first instance, in line with the views expressed in the recent consultation on the Adult Restorative Justice Strategy, it would be appropriate to review the 2007 Protocol for Community-based Restorative Justice Schemes Protocol to ensure that it remains fit for purpose.</p>
IRC comments	We are disappointed with the lack of tangible progress in implementing this Action. We note that restorative practice projects are taking place across eight areas under Communities in Transition (Action B4). We welcome the funding provided to various projects under the Communities in Transition scheme, but these are not a substitute for a dedicated fund and Centre. This Action is about changing the way we deal with certain types of offending and making restorative practice part of routine delivery in justice and other sectors. It is deeply disappointing therefore that a dedicated fund has yet to be established and that proposals for a Centre of Restorative

	Excellence have not sufficiently progressed this financial year. This should be taken forward as a priority in 2022.
Implementation status	Action underway. Follow up required.

A10	The Department of Justice should bring forward draft legislation to further reform committal proceedings to remove the need for oral evidence before trial.
Commitment by the Executive in its Action Plan	Committal proceedings will be further reformed. The Department of Justice will bring forward draft legislation in relation to this recommendation.
Lead responsibility	Department of Justice
Summary of current position reported to the IRC by project leads	A Criminal Justice (Committal Reform) Bill was introduced to the Assembly on the 3 November, completed Second Stage on the 16 November and continues to progress through committee and remaining stages during 2021.
IRC comments	We welcome the progress of this legislation through the Assembly, which will remove the need for oral evidence before trial – this will improve the experience of victims and ultimately play a part in speeding up criminal justice.
Implementation status	Action underway. Follow up required.

A11	The Department of Justice should also use the measures already available to it to abolish committal proceedings in respect of those offences most frequently linked to paramilitary groups, including terrorist offences and offences which tend to be committed by organised crime groups.
Commitment by the Executive in its Action Plan	Committal proceedings in respect of those offences most frequently linked to paramilitary groups will be abolished. The Department of Justice will work closely with justice organisations to identify suitable offences to be added to the list of offences which can be directly transferred to the Crown Court.
Lead responsibility	Department of Justice
Summary of current position reported to the IRC by project leads	The Criminal Justice (Committal Reform) Bill is presently before the Assembly and will see all offences which (in the case of an adult defendant) are triable only on indictment, directly committed to the Crown Court, bypassing the traditional committal process. The offences which will qualify for direct committal include murder, serious

	<p>assaults, firearms and explosives offences, terrorism offences, as well as the likes of serious sexual offences.</p> <p>Work is also ongoing to prepare for implementation of the Bill's provisions. Criminal justice organisations are working towards sequencing all necessary supporting arrangements to ensure readiness for the go-live date and will continue to develop IT solutions, testing scenarios, benefits realisation plans, and operational business processes required to support direct committal. On present planning assumptions, implementation of the initial phase of direct committal is planned for 2022. However, delays may occur due to the current COVID-19 pandemic and the Department of Justice are working to see what this will mean for implementation.</p>
IRC comments	<p>Speeding up justice is vital to building confidence in Northern Ireland's justice system, and for ensuring that victims and defendants are treated fairly. We regret that sometimes in Northern Ireland there is a perception that the criminal justice system is slow and not effective enough, and the impact this can have on community confidence in policing. Unfortunately, the COVID-19 pandemic has delayed many cases further. Committal reform is a vital part of efforts to remove avoidable delay, and we welcome the efforts made by the various agencies to prepare to implement this – the relevant legislation has almost completed its passage through the Assembly.</p> <p>Furthermore, the family of organisations involved in criminal justice must be unceasing in their efforts to speed up justice. COVID-19 has meant that courts have had to innovate and approach their work in alternative ways; this must be built on and the system continue to be improved in the years ahead.</p>
Implementation status	Action underway. Follow up required.

A12	The Department of Justice, the Courts Service and the Public Prosecution Service should implement the case management improvements piloted in the Ards area throughout Northern Ireland, particularly in respect of those offences linked to terrorism or serious organised crime groups.
Commitment by the Executive in its Action Plan	The Department of Justice and criminal justice partners will assess how best to implement the case management improvements in the Ards Indictable Cases Pilot (ICP) and will also explore other offence types which may be suitable for ICP type processing.
Lead responsibility	Department of Justice

<p>Summary of current position reported to the IRC by project leads</p>	<p>Following efforts to increase awareness, and a more focused approach across the PPS and the PSNI, the number of cases in which the indictable case principles have been applied has increased. These principles are based around:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • earlier engagement between the PSNI and the PPS to provide pre-charge advice regarding case building and case strategy; • earlier engagement between the PPS and defence representatives to narrow issues and, where possible, secure earlier guilty pleas; and • the use of proportionate evidence gathering to minimise nugatory police investigative time and costs. <p>The PPS and PSNI have also implemented a number of internal measures, including Quality Assurance processes, to ensure ICP cases are identified early and taken forward accordingly.</p> <p>An interim evaluation of ICP cases up to March 2019 examined the process and found that the 123 cases taken forward through the ICP process at that point completed in an average time of 374 days. This was a 26.4% improvement on the average (median) case processing time for all Crown Court cases completed in the baseline year (2014/15). The latest available management information figures (Q3 2020/21) indicate that at the end of December 2020, 517 Crown Court cases had completed through the ICP process in an average (median) time of 440 days. Court business has been impacted by COVID-19 which has had a knock on impact on the number, and timeliness of cases completed.</p>
<p>IRC comments</p>	<p>We welcome efforts to embed this good practice in the system. Effective co-operation between the PSNI, Public Prosecution Service, the NI Courts and Tribunals Service, Judiciary and others is vital if avoidable delay in the criminal justice system is to be eradicated, and this goal must continue to be a high priority across these organisations.</p>
<p>Implementation status</p>	<p>Action underway. Follow up required.</p>
<p>A13</p>	<p>Law enforcement agencies and others involved in the process of bringing prosecution cases to court should ensure that they have appropriate systems and procedures in place to enable cases to progress as expeditiously as possible.</p>

<p>Commitment by the Executive in its Action Plan</p>	<p>The Police Service of Northern Ireland is seeking to appoint an experienced Detective Superintendent to work with partners in developing more effective criminal justice processes to manage prosecutions in respect to paramilitary activity and organised criminality.</p> <p>The overall strategy for speeding up justice includes all of the measures described in the preceding Actions, as well as other measures contained in the Justice Act (Northern Ireland) 2015 including measures concerning Early Guilty Pleas, the reform of the Summons process, and the introduction of Statutory Case Management³².</p>
<p>Lead responsibility</p>	<p>PSNI and Department of Justice</p>
<p>Summary of current position reported to the IRC by project leads</p>	<p>The purpose of this commitment is to identify and implement the actions required to secure the best possible outcomes in terrorism cases in Northern Ireland, focusing particularly on eliminating delay and tackling the specific problems which arise. The first phase of the project's work has focused on undertaking research to establish the facts on bail, sentencing and disclosure in order to lay the groundwork for actions to be taken to improve outcomes in those areas.</p> <p>Justice partners have introduced a number of measures to facilitate the operation of the system coming out of lock down, some of which over the longer term will help to contribute towards the efficiency and effectiveness of the justice system such as the introduction of telephone statements, extension of live links in courts and the use of penalty notice for disorder.</p> <p>Work continues to bring, amongst other things, the NI Courts and Tribunals Service back to normal by addressing backlog issues. Initiatives implemented as part of the pandemic arrangements will be reviewed for longer term benefits they could bring to the system.</p> <p>Other progress includes:</p> <p>Legislative reform – Measures around encouraging Early Guilty Pleas (s.88) and enabling Prosecutors to issue summons without first requiring approval from a Lay Magistrate (s.93) have been implemented. The Office of the Lord Chief Justice implemented a new case management practice direction in Autumn 2019 and the Department is presently planning to keep under review the impact of</p>

³² <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/nia/2015/9/contents>

	<p>the practice direction, along with other key speeding up justice initiatives, with a view to informing the future direction on Statutory Case Management Regulations, subject to the views of the Minister. Also to help inform the process, the Department and criminal justice partners are in the process of developing a criminal justice end to end case management framework.</p> <p>Performance focus – The Department produces quarterly statistical reports outlining the average time taken to complete criminal cases. The information, which is disaggregated by court tier and case type (charge or reported / summons), is used to identify problem areas within the system. Reports can also be produced by offence type, and by court locations providing the basis for more detailed analysis.</p>
IRC comments	<p>As we said above, it is vital that justice in Northern Ireland is sped up, and efforts to remove avoidable delay redoubled. That will involve close partnerships, learning from other jurisdictions, effective change management and culture change. The relevant agencies, driven from senior leadership level, must give this high priority in the coming months, as justice being done and being seen to be done (and efficiently) are vital to our society.</p>
Implementation status	<p>Action underway. Follow up required.</p>

A14	<p>The Department of Justice, working with the judiciary and with counterparts in the UK and Irish Governments, should review the position regarding bail in respect of serious offences to determine the facts about its availability and, if required, bring forward measures to improve the situation.</p>
Commitment by the Executive in its Action Plan	<p>The Department of Justice will lead work, drawing on assistance from colleagues in UK and Ireland, initially to establish facts about bail decisions. Should that review and the analysis of its findings demonstrate any gaps in the law, phase two of this work will consider whether further measures are needed.</p>
Lead responsibility	<p>Department of Justice</p>
Summary of current position reported to the IRC by project leads	<p>In 2017, the Department of Justice held a workshop with operational partners to look at general concerns about bail decisions and the reasons for these. The fundamental conclusion was that bail is sometimes granted in serious cases, including those connected with terrorism and serious and organised crime, due to the length of time the suspect has spent on remand. The workshop agreed that the primary task was, therefore, to improve the speed of the justice</p>

	system and updates on that work are provided under A13, as well as updates on committal reform under A10 and A11.
IRC comments	<p>Whilst we recognise the ongoing work to speed up justice by the Department of Justice, Courts Service, the PSNI, Attorney General and others, these are medium-term projects.</p> <p>To ensure public confidence in the justice system, no-one must be seen as ‘untouchable’ or above the law, and justice must be done, and be seen to be done, in a timely manner.</p>
Implementation status	Action underway. Follow up required.

A15	The Department of Justice should ensure that an appropriate mechanism is in place to enable the Director of Public Prosecutions to refer sentences he believes to be unduly lenient, particularly to include offences linked to terrorism and organised crime groups.
Commitment by the Executive in its Action Plan	The Department of Justice will consider this recommendation within the scope of the recently announced Sentencing Policy Review. The Department will prioritise this element of the Review and seek to bring proposals for consultation as soon as possible, including the possibility, in the shorter term, of adding further “linked” offences to the statutory list by secondary legislation.
Lead responsibility	Department of Justice and the Lord Chief Justice
Summary of current position reported to the IRC by project leads	Following a public consultation paper prepared by the Department in August 2018 a Statutory Order was laid in the Assembly on 9 July 2019 bringing hybrid offences linked to terrorism, paramilitary activity and organised crime groups within the scope of the unduly lenient sentence provisions.
IRC comments	<p>We welcome the introduction of legislation extending the list of offences that are within the scope of the unduly lenient sentence provisions. We recommend that those bodies responsible for criminal justice, including the Lord Chief Justice’s Sentencing Group, review statistics and information about its use to consider whether there are relevant trends or patterns emerging which require further action, such as possible gaps in sentencing advice.</p> <p>We note that Serious Crime Prevention Orders this year have only been used twice this last year – whilst this is an improvement on previous years, we urge the PSNI to use all the tools available to it.</p>
Implementation status	Action complete.

A16	<p>The Judiciary may also wish to review the use of sentences and other punitive measures, including confiscation powers, to establish whether they are deployed to best effect in respect of terrorism and organised crime offences, including environmental crime.</p>
Commitment by the Executive in its Action Plan	<p>Taking into account the Department of Justice’s review of sentencing policy, the Lord Chief Justice’s Sentencing Group will consider the guidance available to the judiciary in respect of relevant offences.</p> <p>The Department of Justice will work with justice organisations to develop proposals on other sentencing measures, such as confiscation orders.</p>
Lead responsibility	Department of Justice and the Lord Chief Justice
Summary of current position reported to the IRC by project leads	<p>Guidance for the judiciary</p> <p>The Lord Chief Justice’s Sentencing Group considered the issue of guidance available to the judiciary issue in March 2017 and concluded that existing guidance available to the judiciary is sufficient but it raised policy issues for consideration by the Department of Justice (DOJ).</p> <p>The DOJ review of sentencing policy explored the issue of media reporting raised by the Sentencing Group in the context of securing public confidence in sentencing. The Justice Minister has agreed that a multi-agency working group be established to develop and implement an administrative programme of engagement to aid understanding and public confidence</p> <p>Proposals on other sentencing measures</p> <p>In addition to work to develop specific organised crime legislation the Department of Justice has also considered with law enforcement partners how other sentencing measures, such as Serious Crime Prevention Orders might be used, as appropriate, to reduce the risk of harm posed by organised criminals. The Department also continues to engage with the Home Office on a wide programme of economic crime reform. The DOJ has also worked with the NCA’s Proceeds of Crime Centre to highlight and promote training for law enforcement on the application of Proceeds of Crime Act powers to partners in Northern Ireland.</p> <p>Civil recovery</p> <p>A Review of the NI Asset Recovery Incentivisation Scheme (ARIS) was initiated to explore the possibility of securing the full value of civil</p>

	<p>recovery receipts and cash forfeitures to be directed for distribution for appropriate purposes in Northern Ireland. On civil recovery receipts, currently 50% is returned to the UK ARIS pot; 25% is returned to the enforcement agency (NCA); and 25% to the referring agency (e.g. PSNI). Further work was commenced to scope legal gateways or gaps/barriers and potential administration arrangements.</p> <p>The Criminal Finances Act 2017 (CFA) was commenced in June 2021 (that is to say, brought into effect in Northern Ireland), which makes some changes to confiscation regime. This legislation enhances powers in Northern Ireland to tackle terrorist and organised crime groups, including through the availability of wider confiscation and civil recovery powers, such as Unexplained Wealth Orders (UWOs) and Account Freezing Orders which were not previously available to law enforcement in Northern Ireland. Upon commencement of the relevant CFA powers in NI, the Justice Minister wrote to the Home Secretary requesting that consideration be given to the reallocation of civil recovery and cash forfeiture receipts to Northern Ireland. This would support community investment in those areas most affected by paramilitarism and organised crime, and ultimately undermine coercive control by helping to address some of the vulnerabilities that criminals seek to exploit.</p>
IRC comments	<p>We welcome the introduction of unexplained wealth order and accounting freezing powers in Northern Ireland. The delay by the UK Government in progressing these vital elements is a matter of some regret. It is vital that law enforcement agencies now make full use of these powers to show that crime does not pay, and to further disrupt and frustrate the activities of paramilitary and organised crime groups. We welcome the efforts of the Justice Minister to ensure that civil assets recovered in Northern Ireland are reinvested in this jurisdiction as well and we call on the UK Government to agree to this change, which would further support efforts to show communities that crime does not pay.</p>
Implementation status	<p>Action underway. Follow up required.</p>

B1	<p>The Executive should urgently adopt recommendations by the Review Panel that (a) the Fair Employment and Treatment Order 1998 should be amended; (b) the employers' guidance should be implemented in respect of public sector recruitment and vetting; and (c) that there should be greater transparency over all these issues. Oversight of the implementation of these specific</p>
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	measures should be included within the remit of the Independent Reporting Commission.
Commitment by the Executive in its Action Plan	The Executive will urgently adopt recommendations by the Review Panel that (a) the Fair Employment and Treatment Order 1998 should be amended; (b) the employers' guidance should be implemented in respect of public sector recruitment and vetting; and (c) that there should be greater transparency over all these issues.
Lead responsibility	The Executive Office and Department of Finance
Summary of current position reported to the IRC by project leads	<p>The Executive Office has drafted policy instructions to amend the Fair Employment and Treatment Order 1998 and a submission is currently with Ministers for a decision on the best approach.</p> <p>Consideration is being given to reviving a sub-group of the overall Working Group to discuss barriers to employment.</p> <p>The Northern Ireland Civil Service has implemented the Employers' Guidance and updated relevant policies. A website providing information and support is available and work to promote the guidance has also taken place.</p> <p>The Ex-Prisoner Review Panel is working with partners implementing work on personal transition under Action B4 to identify opportunities for engagement through outreach to ex-prisoners in these eight areas. The Panel, along with the Ex-Prisoner Working Group, have helped refine the regional pilot programme on personal transition to provide support for ex-prisoners across all eight B4 areas.</p>
IRC comments	Removing barriers to employment for ex-prisoners would support reintegration, which is a fundamental part of the efforts to support people in their transition away from paramilitary organisations. Long-delayed amendments to existing legislation (the Fair Employment and Treatment Order 1998) must be made as soon as possible particularly as the Executive has previously committed to 'urgently adopt' the recommendations.
Implementation status	Action underway.

B2	The Review Panel's work should continue to consider what steps can be taken to improve access to financial services (including lending and insurance), adoption, and travel advice.
Commitment by the Executive in its Action Plan	The Executive will engage with the Review Panel (appointed by the Ex-Prisoner Working Group) to address the issues identified relating

	to access to financial services (including lending and insurance), adoption and travel.
Lead responsibility	The Executive Office
Summary of current position reported to the IRC by project leads	<p>Progress has been made on increasing access to insurance for those with conflict related convictions. The British Insurance Brokers' Association has provided an update on insurance availability; service provision/access has been reviewed and improved to better assist those with conflict related convictions.</p> <p>The Adoption and Children Bill brought forward by the Department of Health contains a specific power to make regulations which may provide that an adoption agency, in determining the suitability of an individual to adopt, must not take into account offences of a prescribed description. The regulations and the offences to be prescribed will be subject to public consultation once the Bill receives Royal Assent.</p> <p>Officials from the Executive Office have engaged with the US Consulate in Belfast, the Northern Ireland Office (NIO), the Department for Foreign Affairs and the Northern Ireland Bureau in Washington to discuss the way forward on issues relating to travel to the United States.</p> <p>The Review Panel meets regularly and continues to take forward work on individual cases in relation to barriers faced and has engaged with the Australian, Canadian and New Zealand embassies on ongoing difficulties with access to travel to these countries and advice/guidance on travel to Australia and New Zealand has been shared with ex-prisoner working group members.</p>
IRC comments	We are concerned that whilst the Review Panel continues to try to address the issues identified, actions related to ex-prisoners have not been taken forward by the Executive. The Executive should be engaging on an ongoing basis with the Review Panel and giving this work the attention that it requires.
Implementation status	Action underway.

B3	The Executive should make representations to the US Secretary of State to seek an expedited procedure for visa applications from ex-prisoners affiliated with groups on ceasefire.
Commitment by the Executive in its Action Plan	The Executive will make representations to the US Secretary of State to seek an expedited procedure for visa applications from ex-prisoners affiliated with groups on ceasefire.
Lead responsibility	The Executive Office
Summary of current position reported to the IRC by project leads	<p>The Executive Office has met the US Consulate and engaged with the Northern Ireland Bureau in Washington with a view to advancing this issue with the State Department. Officials will continue to liaise with the US Consulate, the NIO, the Department of Foreign Affairs and the NI Bureau.</p> <p>In parallel, the Review Panel seeks to help on a case by case basis, where appropriate. The insights derived from these individual cases are helping to inform the development of the over-arching policy representation.</p> <p>The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland engaged with a number of US Representatives in November and the issue of visas was raised with regard to a proposed draft amendment to US immigration law. There was further correspondence on the issue in January 2021 and it is hoped that progress might be more positive under the current Administration.</p>
IRC comments	We welcome the ongoing engagement on this issue between Northern Ireland, the UK, Ireland and the US. Successive administrations have acknowledged the importance of reintegrating ex-prisoners, and travel limitations are one barrier in this journey.
Implementation status	Action underway.

B4	The Executive should establish a fund to support ambitious initiatives aimed at building capacity in communities in transition, including through developing partnerships across civil society and across community divisions.
Commitment by the Executive in its Action Plan	The Executive will establish a fund to support ambitious initiatives aimed at building capacity in Communities in Transition, including through developing partnerships across civil society and across community divisions. The Executive Office and the Department for Communities will take forward this recommendation on behalf of the Executive. This will be designed in collaboration with stakeholders with relevant experience and expertise, such as the Northern Ireland

	Housing Executive, the Community Relations Council, the International Fund for Ireland, local Government, and community representatives.
Lead responsibility	The Executive Office. The Department for Communities and the NI Housing Executive also have responsibility for taking forward related strands of work.
Summary of current position reported to the IRC by project leads	<p>Action B4, also known as ‘Communities in Transition’, aims to support eight identified areas across Northern Ireland, where there has been a significant history of paramilitary activity and coercive control, to move to more open and accessible communities where paramilitarism no longer plays a role³³.</p> <p>The Executive Office worked with a strategic partner (a consortium led by Co-operation Ireland) to develop a two-phase programme to support the Department in the delivery of Action B4. Through a participative design process, seven key emerging themes were identified where interventions would be required to facilitate transition:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Community safety and policing; ● Addressing the needs of young people; ● Health and wellbeing; ● Environment and culture; ● Community development issues; ● Restorative justice and restorative practice; and ● Personal transition. <p>In phase one 34 projects were rolled out despite restrictions imposed as a result of COVID-19. These contracts include six capacity building/community development programmes with the involvement of 86 groups and over 90 participants, two area regeneration projects, eight health and wellbeing programmes with 118 groups and over 330 participants, one employability programme, six community safety awareness programmes with 68 groups and 91 participants, four arts and culture projects and a regional restorative practices programme. Delivery has now also commenced on a personal transition project in Lurgan, and a project working to raise aspirations of school age children and young people in North Down.</p>

³³ New Lodge and Greater Ardoyne; Lower Falls, Twinbrook, Poleglass, Upper Springfield, Turf Lodge and Ballymurphy; Shankill, upper and lower, including Woodvale; Brandywell and Creggan; Larne area, including Antiville and Kilwaughter and the Carrickfergus area, including Northland and Castlemara; parts of the Mountand Ballymacarrett in East Belfast; Drumgask (Craigavon) and Kilwilkie (Lurgan); and parts of North Down including Clandeboye and Conlig, including Kilcooley.

	Two contracts were awarded in March 2021 to deliver a regional pilot programme to support ex-prisoners in the eight areas under the theme of personal transition. This activity will also support the work under Actions B1-B3, and includes a role for the ex-prisoner Review Panel in terms of outreach/information sharing activity.
IRC comments	<p>Important work is ongoing under this Action to build capacity within communities and we note that an evaluation of the programme found that the majority of participants were generally positive about it. It is a significant undertaking given the complex problems in areas where paramilitaries have traditionally been more active. Given the scale of the project it is difficult to give a singular view on its impact, as the projects are progressing at different speeds in different areas. Transitioning communities continues to require long-term support and resources.</p> <p>We are also cognisant that some communities need more intensive support to transition than others because of a lack of community infrastructure and that this may dictate the nature of the project in certain areas. However, some of the projects, whilst welcome endeavours, were not sufficiently ambitious enough to achieve the transformation necessary to transition communities, and it may have been more appropriate to fund them under community development schemes. As we have called for elsewhere in this report, the system must feel empowered to take risks as sometimes it is the untested project than can deliver more impact than the 'safe' project.</p> <p>We called last year for links to be strengthened between this Action and others and we welcome the join-up with Actions related to ex-prisoner re-integration.</p>
Implementation status	Action underway. Follow up required.

B5	The Executive's programme for women in community development should be designed not only to enable women's organisations to continue to carry out transformative community development work in our communities but also to ensure that women are equipped to take on more leadership roles in public decision-making.
Commitment by the Executive in its Action Plan	The Department for Communities will organise a series of co-design workshops to determine the shape and content of the programme. These will include The Executive Office and Department of Justice participation and other Executive Departments where appropriate,

	alongside experts in the community and women’s organisations who will be taking forward the delivery of the programme.
Lead responsibility	Department for Communities and Probation Board for Northern Ireland
Summary of current position reported to the IRC by project leads	<p>Women Involved in Community Transformation</p> <p>Phases one and two of the Women Involved in Community Transformation (WICT) programme (involving 539 and 439 women respectively), supporting women in taking on community leadership roles, have been completed. Phase three of the programme saw 534 women registered. Training has commenced in a number of locations; however, restrictions introduced due to COVID-19 delayed delivery from taking place for a number of groups. Project delivery partners have continued to engage with these participants, in order to provide support and keep them involved in the programme and have changed delivery methods where possible. The programme’s objective was to engage 500 women in 25 locations between 1 April 2019 and 31 March 2021. As of 31 March 2021, a total of 525 women had engaged on the programme, 89 of whom completed all the training, representing 17% of those engaged in the programme; 60 dropped out.</p> <p>Engage Project</p> <p>The Engage Project (run by the Probation Board), which supports about eighty women a year within the justice system to resettle in their communities and engage with community and women’s groups, is also part of this Action. Due to COVID-related restrictions the service reverted to telephone and online support which was a challenge for some service users but participation overall remained high. The referral rate and level of engagement rose in 2021 at a time when insecurity about further funding impacted service delivery. As a result of funding challenges referral allocation was halted in February and referrals were placed on a waiting list. Despite these challenges the Probation Board increased their referral rate and just one individual awaiting allocation on her release from custody.</p>
IRC comments	<p>We recognise the positive impact that the WICT programme has been having since 2017. This year we heard from some of those that have taken part in the programme about how they are applying what they have learned in their communities, including taking leadership roles in response to interface disorder.</p> <p>Last year the IRC recommended that WICT and other women’s groups working on these issues to share and develop expertise on women and peace building, and build on recent sectoral work on the</p>

	<p>role of paramilitaries in illegal money lending. It was through this recommendation that the IRC had identified the need to elevate these issues to show public leadership for women in communities where paramilitaries mainly operate. We encourage those involved in phase two of the programme to take this recommendation on.</p> <p>We support the approach that the Engage programme has adopted to holistically address women’s needs and recognise the positive impact that it is having on the lives of these women.</p>
Implementation status	Action underway.

B6	The Executive, in implementing rigorous enforcement of funding rules, should ensure that funding will be available for supporting creative and ambitious initiatives.
Commitment by the Executive in its Action Plan	The Executive is providing additional funding to support the delivery of this Action Plan and is committed to working with local communities, as well as relevant criminal justice and statutory agencies, in developing creative and ambitious initiatives that will support communities in transition. Executive Departments and other bodies allocating funds made available by the Executive will continue to rigorously enforce funding rules (Managing Public Money, the Guide on Grant and Procurement and the Government Funders’ Database) in a proportionate manner, commensurate with risk. The Department for Communities is also giving consideration to what further work can be done in this area.
Lead responsibility	Department for Communities
Summary of current position reported to the IRC by project leads	<p>The Department for Communities has proposed that grant funding rather than procurement is the preferred method of commissioning projects to be taken forward by the Department for Communities as part of phase two of the Tackling Paramilitary Activity, Criminality and Organised Crime Programme. They believe that grant funding is more suitable for a community-based project as it gives the groups flexibility to modify the programme to suit the needs of participants and their community.</p> <p>The Developing Women in the Community programme has been developed as a new programme to deliver Action B5. The governance and management of this programme will differ from other Fresh Start programmes making it more user friendly for delivery organisations. It will also ensure those that stand to benefit most from the programme take part.</p>

<p>IRC comments</p>	<p>We recognise that rigorous enforcement of funding rules is necessary to protect public funds and to ensure that funding is not given to those that can undermine the overall objective of this work. However, this should not prevent funding being made available for ambitious initiatives. Over the past year in particular we have heard from many about the outsized impact that relatively small sums can have in diverting or transitioning people away from paramilitarism or disorder, for example. Organisations such as the International Fund for Ireland have repeatedly shown their ability (and agility) to fund work which may be perceived as risky by some but have been shown to deliver real impact. We recognise that the Executive have funded some such initiatives and would encourage the Executive to be bold and fund initiatives that may appear risky, but could deliver impact. It must also continue to carefully evaluate when interventions and funding are best handled by the community and voluntary sector, rather than the public sector alone.</p> <p>We also urge the Executive to be forceful in countering unwarranted media commentary about what groups are funded through the Tackling Paramilitary Activity, Criminality and Organised Crime Programme.</p> <p>We welcome the change in funding arrangements which should allow implementing partners to follow the evidence and tailor their work to deliver what they know is working.</p>
<p>Implementation status</p>	<p>Action underway.</p>

<p>B7</p>	<p>A dedicated unit should be established to carry out a programme of work, including research, to enable Government to better understand relevant issues in communities and the options for influencing change; to ensure that all Executive Departments are fully engaged in the strategy; to develop further targeted interventions; and to ensure that wider Government policy and messaging contribute to delivering positive outcomes in respect of paramilitaries and communities in transition. For that reason, this unit should not sit within any one Department but instead report to the Executive.</p>
<p>Commitment by the Executive in its Action Plan</p>	<p>The Executive will establish a dedicated unit to ensure a joined-up approach to delivering this programme. The Department of Justice will lead this, working in partnership with other Executive Departments, statutory bodies and community and voluntary sector organisations where appropriate.</p>

Lead responsibility	The Programme Team
Summary of current position reported to the IRC by project leads	<p>A dedicated Programme Team was established in 2016 that leads co-ordination and implementation of the Executive Action Plan. Its establishment also contributes to Action D4, which called for "...strong programme management arrangements for developing and delivering the strategy".</p> <p>The Programme Team has been developing measures of success of the programme outcomes, which has included identifying existing data and commissioning new data from the Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey. It is also implementing new monitoring and evaluation arrangements through the introduction of a benefits management approach. This will involve developing shared measurable improvements across delivery themes and establishing associated governance structures to enable delivery partners to work together to deliver those benefits.</p> <p>The Programme Team has also been embedding a "one team" approach to bring statutory partners together and enhance delivery. Under this approach the Programme Team and delivery leads meet in a monthly forum, as "one team" to discuss and co-ordinate activity, share learning and strengthen existing links. This collaborative approach has resulted in greater alignment of effort and improved connections on a cross-Departmental basis.</p> <p>A Political Advisory Group, set up to facilitate engagement with political parties, met on a monthly basis ensuring that political parties are informed and supportive of the approach being taken to delivery of the programme.</p>
IRC comments	<p>We commend the team for their work as advocates for the programme and its aims across the Executive. We note the committed efforts of the team to engage Executive departments and partners with the programme through the establishment of four benefits realisation groups, which we see as having the potential to embed tackling paramilitarism work throughout the Executive and beyond. Although in the early stages of development, we see this as ensuring that responsibility for the programme is shared across the Executive. We had previously recommended that monitoring and evaluation methodology be developed and we will follow the implementation of the new model with interest.</p>

	<p>We support the efforts of the Programme Team and partners in implementing a 'locality working' approach to join-up work in specific areas. We see potential in this model, which has worked in other jurisdictions, to ensure coherence in implementation and project visibly a Whole of Government approach – together with other partners – to tackling paramilitarism.</p> <p>We urge all Executive departments to engage fully in efforts to tackle paramilitarism and ensure that they are doing all that they can to mainstream this work into their daily departmental mission.</p> <p>Given the onus we attach to tackling paramilitarism we continue to see merit in establishing a cross-government hub to give sufficient priority and focus to efforts to deal comprehensively with paramilitarism.</p>
Implementation status	Action underway. Follow up required.

B8	The Department of Justice should revisit the framework related to the separated regime and arrange for an independent review to be undertaken examining the operation of the separated regime, evidencing the need for any changes and providing useful information for stakeholders to take forward.
Commitment by the Executive in its Action Plan	The Northern Ireland Prison Service remains committed to finding ways to address the challenging issues associated with the operation of the separated regime. The Department of Justice will engage with stakeholders, develop terms of reference, and identify individuals to lead an independent review. The review will deliver a report and make recommendations required in respect of the framework for separation.
Lead responsibility	Northern Ireland Prison Service (NIPS)
Summary of current position reported to the IRC by project leads	The progress of this project was significantly impacted upon by the lengthy abeyance of the Assembly and subsequently whilst NIPS focused upon the mitigating measures required in response to COVID-19. In August 2020, Ministerial approval was granted for NIPS to undertake an internal scoping exercise and to develop draft Terms of Reference. This scoping exercise is necessary to take account of the prevailing operational, community (including in respect of COVID-19) and stakeholder context. Unfortunately progressing this work is more difficult at a time when the prison service is responding to the COVID-19 outbreak.

	There is considerable and ongoing work by NIPS in respect of managing separation and delivering an effective and stable regime (within the constraints of COVID-19). Whilst the formal review (as envisaged in 2016) hasn't been initiated, the intent of the Panel's recommendation in terms of continuing to make progress in this contested and challenging area is being addressed effectively through the work of the NIPS HQ Senior Management Team and Governors.
IRC comments	We recognise the sensitives and complexities of work involving the segregated regime. Dialogue and innovation continue to be vital to this challenging work, and we encourage the NI Prison Service to continue to seek ways to build on existing practice. We are encouraged that careful thought and attention is being given to how it is run, whilst it continues to exist.
Implementation status	Action underway. Follow up required.

B9	Whilst ensuring that all prisoners are treated fairly, the Department of Justice should ensure that appropriate education and training opportunities are provided to prisoners in the separated regime.
Commitment by the Executive in its Action Plan	<p>Recognising that there are operational challenges involved in managing the separated regimes, the current provision of constructive activity in separation is commonly identified as an issue of concern by prisoners being held there. The Northern Ireland Prison Service's aspiration is to deliver well matched interventions to everyone in custody.</p> <p>The Department of Justice will commission a consultative evaluation of constructive activity in separated prison accommodation leading to the development and delivery of a new model of constructive activity for separated prisoners focused upon positive educational and wellbeing outcomes.</p>
Lead responsibility	Department of Justice and Northern Ireland Prison Service
Summary of current position reported to the IRC by project leads	<p>The work programme for this initiative has been centred on a consultative review of constructive activity in the separated prison accommodation, and the development and design of a new model, focused upon positive educational and wellbeing outcomes.</p> <p>Three researchers with specific experience and expertise in education and prisoner engagement were engaged by the Prison</p>

	<p>Service to develop and deliver a consultative evaluation which would seek to engage with all prisoners in separated accommodation.</p> <p>The Review Team’s report was published in March 2019. See: https://www.justice-ni.gov.uk/publications/b9-report-education-and-training-prisoners-separated-regime-northern-ireland Detailed planning was undertaken in consultation with delivery partners (Belfast Metropolitan College and voluntary and community sector organisations), and new arrangements commenced.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Belfast Metropolitan College have delivered classes in Irish, Numeracy, Literacy and Enterprise and Employability; • Prisoner Arts have delivered art and creative writing classes; • GAA sessions and IFA football sessions have taken place; • Virtual sessions have commenced offering classes in Business Admin, Employability, Irish and Numeracy. <p>A total of 112 classes were held for the separated regime between 8th June 2020 and 31 March 2021, amounting to 165 attendees out of a potential 262.</p> <p>A Distance Learning Review Team has been set up to carry out a review of Distance Learning to create a long-term approach to the provision of effective education for individuals within prison establishments, including within separated, high-security accommodation. The team completed an interim report in March 2020 however review of this has been delayed due to the current situation with COVID-19.</p>
IRC comments	We welcome the progress made on this Action. It is vital that the Prison Service continue to progress this work so that appropriate education and training opportunities are provided to prisoners in the separated regime.
Implementation status	Action underway.
B10	The Department of Justice and the Probation Board should work together with others to urgently develop and implement specific interventions to prepare offenders with links to paramilitary groups for return to society and to assist with reintegration.
Commitment by the Executive in its Action Plan	The Department of Justice will commission research to inform the design of relevant interventions that will develop a tailored desistance pathway for offenders with links to paramilitary groups to assist them as they prepare to return to their communities and to support their

	successful reintegration. This will be taken forward in conjunction with the Probation Board and other relevant individuals and organisations. This work will include community views on reintegration.
Lead responsibility	Department of Justice
Summary of current position reported to the IRC by project leads	The University of Ulster has been engaged to develop a framework for the reintegration of offenders with links to paramilitaries. A report, “The Reintegration and Rehabilitation of Ex-Combatants and Ex-Prisoners”, has been considered by the Justice Minister and approval has been granted to move to the next phase of work. This aspect of the research has been delayed due to COVID-19 restrictions. It is anticipated, however, that qualitative fieldwork will commence once restrictions are relaxed.
IRC comments	<p>We see this work, once complete, as providing significant support to efforts to reintegrate offenders with paramilitary links and supporting work to transition people away from paramilitary organisations. It is vital that this work is effectively linked-up with the work of other relevant initiatives including the ex-prisoners working group.</p> <p>We note that the University of Ulster research includes material on “Exit” schemes that support people to leave far right groups in a number of European countries and encourage the Programme Team to explore options for an interim scheme to assist those wishing to leave paramilitary groups in Northern Ireland as part of their work to develop support.</p>
Implementation status	Action planned. Follow up required.

B11	The Department of Justice should also work with law enforcement agencies and the Probation Board to improve the monitoring arrangements for paramilitary offenders when on license.
Commitment by the Executive in its Action Plan	The Department of Justice will develop and implement a plan for improving monitoring arrangements.
Lead responsibility	Department of Justice
Summary of current position reported to the IRC by project leads	The Department of Justice has been reviewing options with statutory agencies to ensure a suitable mechanism for collective risk management. They have engaged an expert at Cranfield University to develop a risk assessment tool to inform risk management and monitoring arrangements. A draft toolkit has now been tested to

	<p>assess validity and applicability in the NI. Significant progress has been made to develop the statutory guidance and supporting governance, oversight mechanisms and policies to underpin the delivery model.</p> <p>The Risk Assessment tool is only one of a number of work strands being that are being progressed to enhance the monitoring and supervision of terrorist-related offenders (TROs) on licence. On 8 September 2020, the Department introduced interim multi-agency review arrangements (MARAs) to support the management of the risks posed by terrorist-related offenders. Those have created a platform to build a more comprehensive multi-agency approach which is informed by the risk assessment toolkit, and proactive engagement with TROs on licence in the community.</p>
IRC comments	We welcome the significant progress made in developing tools and processes for the monitoring and supervision of terrorist offenders. It is vital that an appropriate balance continues to be struck between ensuring public safety, preventing recidivism, and supporting the reintegration and resettling of offenders.
Implementation status	Action underway. Follow up required.

B12	The Executive, in conjunction with the Probation Board, should develop, fund and implement an initiative (based on the INSPIRE model) focused on young men who are at risk of becoming involved, or further involved, in paramilitary activity. This initiative should be a collaboration between Government Departments and restorative justice partners to combine restorative practices and peer monitoring with targeted support in respect of employment, training, housing, health and social services.
Commitment by the Executive in its Action Plan	The Probation Board for Northern Ireland will lead on a model aimed at systematically addressing the age related specific risks, experiences and needs of young men who have offended and are at risk of being drawn into crime and paramilitarism. The model will be co-designed between Government Departments and restorative justice partners to combine restorative practices and peer mentoring with targeted support in respect of employment, training, housing, health and social services.
Lead responsibility	Probation Board for Northern Ireland
Summary of current position	The Aspire project seeks to prevent and reduce offending and to enable marginalised young men (aged 16 to 30 years-old) to resist

reported to the IRC by project leads	negative influences and develop their full capacity. This involves intensive interventions with a focus on personal development, health and wellbeing, opening up access to alternative social pathways, including employment, training and stable housing. By the end of May 2021, 536 statutory and 709 non-statutory referrals had been made to Aspire. There was a significant increase in referrals from 2019/2020 to 2020/2021 due to clients' reporting that COVID-related restrictions on movement were having a detrimental effect on their mental health and emotional wellbeing. The Aspire Ascertain service delivery has supported 85 young people in their treatment for addiction and mental health issues.
IRC comments	We applaud the work of the Aspire team in helping to support over 1,000 marginalised young men since 2017. We welcome the tie-in with Ascertain as a good example of the coordinated multi-agency approach necessary to ensure that targeted support is provided for young, and often vulnerable, people. The Aspire programme highlights an important lesson for the Executive which is the need to recognise that sufficient resources over the long-term are required to deal sustainably with the deeply ingrained issues such as those that marginalised young people need support with.
Implementation status	Action underway.

B13	As part of the cross-Departmental programme, the Executive Departments with responsibility for Education, the Economy, Health, Communities, Infrastructure and Justice, together with the Executive Office, should all identify the opportunities available to them to both prevent at-risk individuals becoming involved in paramilitary activity and measurably address the underlying issues that put some young people at a higher risk of becoming involved.
Commitment by the Executive in its Action Plan	A cross-Departmental programme to prevent vulnerable young people being drawn into paramilitary activity will be developed to sit within the Early Intervention Transformation Programme (EITP). The EITP Board will develop a draft programme for consideration and approval by the Executive. The programme will be designed in conjunction with representatives from wider civic society.
Lead responsibility	Department of Health and the Early Intervention Transformation Programme
Summary of current position reported to the	Belfast City Council Multi-Agency Pilot The Belfast City Council Multi-Agency Pilot, set up to address the associated issues of victims of paramilitary groups and those under threat throughout West Belfast, continues to deliver a targeted

<p>IRC by project leads</p>	<p>approach to address the needs of those under threat, and is focused on improving communication and co-ordination amongst services funded to work with these individuals and their families. A total of 157 individuals have been supported by Community Restorative Justice Ireland and partner organisations in the period April 2020 – March 2021. An independent evaluation recommended a number of operational and strategic recommendations and the partner organisations will implement the organisational recommendations. They will also consider how to move work taken forward in Phase Two beyond stabilisation into a public health stepped support approach.</p> <p>Multi-agency youth stream of the Mid & East Antrim Support Hub Mid and East Antrim Council was granted funding under this Action to create a multi-agency youth stream of the Mid and East Antrim Support Hub to support young people at risk of being involved with, influenced by or exploited by paramilitary groups. Its function is to identify vulnerable young people and ensure a collaborative response to support, protect and divert them away from the control of paramilitary groups. Up to the end of May 2021, the hub has supported with eleven young people (nine males, two females) aged between 11 and 18 years-old.</p> <p>Trauma-Informed Practice project The Trauma-Informed Practice project, which aims to support transformative change through embedding a better understanding of Adverse Childhood Experiences and trauma-informed thinking across government, continues to deliver a significant volume of operational (workforce development support and contributions to current practice) and strategic support to organisations and across the system. Between April 2020 and May 2021, there have been a total of 90 implementation support meetings hosted through the Trauma-Informed Practice team.</p>
<p>IRC comments</p>	<p>We welcome the work ongoing under this Action, the links being made between the different parts of the Programme and the multi-agency models used to implement work. We commend the work of the Trauma-Informed Practice project to embed a better understanding of adverse childhood experiences and trauma-informed thinking across the system. This is important transformational work and will take time but developing a trauma-informed workforce should ensure a sound understanding of how adverse childhood experiences affect the life trajectory and ensure that the system works for the most vulnerable.</p>

	<p>We also welcome the establishment of the Mid and East Antrim Support Hub for young people and the Belfast City Council Multi-Agency Pilot as important new initiatives supporting those at risk from paramilitary groups. Having considered the Support Hub and met the Multi-Agency Pilot team we believe that now that both these projects are up and running, the Executive and partner agencies should agree a timeline for evaluating their impact and develop an action plan for how similar joined-up approaches can be implemented in other areas where people are at risk. We also agree with a number of recommendations of the independent evaluation of the Multi-Agency Pilot including that whilst recognising the project has helped individuals at immediate risk, the process of stabilisation is insufficient alone to address longer-term outcomes. While the Multi-Agency Pilot is rightly concerned with the immediate consequences of paramilitary harm perhaps other initiatives should be considered under this Action to measurably address the underlying issues that put some young people at risk. Feedback from this project and others to address vulnerabilities should be captured and considered within the development of future work by the relevant Departments.</p>
Implementation status	Action underway.

C1	The strategies and activity of the Police Service of Northern Ireland and other law enforcement agencies should be updated to reflect a shift in focus from ‘paramilitary activity’ to criminality.
Commitment by the Executive in its Action Plan	Strategies and activity in this area will be updated by the Police Service of Northern Ireland as appropriate to reflect the situation as informed by regular operational and strategic assessments.
Lead responsibility	PSNI
Summary of current position reported to the IRC by project leads	<i>For update see C4.</i>
IRC comments	We welcome the focus of the PSNI and other law enforcement agencies on the harm caused by criminality committed under the paramilitary flag of allegiance in their approach. It is vital that we do not lend credibility or credence to these activities by elevating their status or masking the very real harm caused by assaults, attempted murder, coercive control and other illegal activities by use of shorthand or imprecise language. These criminals cause real and

tangible harm and hurt in their communities and to the whole of society, and the Paramilitary Crime Task Force (PCTF) must continue to frustrate, disrupt and dismantle these organised crime groups. The PCTF (comprising the PSNI, HMRC and NCA) are seeking to:

- increase understanding the activity of paramilitary linked Organised Crime Gangs (OCGs), and their criminal enterprises and networks;
- increase the number of paramilitary linked OCGs frustrated, disrupted and dismantled;
- increase the number and quantity of cash seizures / confiscations from paramilitary linked OCGs; and
- increase the number of paramilitary linked offenders subject to Serious & Organised Crime Prevention Orders.

Paramilitary style attacks should no longer be part of our vocabulary – they are actual and grievous bodily harm; and, where it involves a minor, child abuse.

The impact of trade in illegal drugs in Northern Ireland is significant, and more must be done to catch the leaders of paramilitary groups involved with organised crime activities including drug dealing, money lending, extortion, threats, intimidation, money laundering, trade in counterfeit goods, sexual exploitation and other criminal endeavours.

As part of shifting the conversation, and societal attitude, towards criminality claiming to be linked to paramilitary organisations, we must continue to do all we can to show the devastating effects it has, and to apply the approach we associate with other forms of criminality.

As set out under relevant actions in this Section, law enforcement must be given and use all the tools it needs to tackle criminality, including organised crime legislation. But as set out in the Overview, a law enforcement response alone will not tackle this complex set of problems – instead a twin track approach of addressing the deep-rooted socio-economic conditions which have allowed paramilitaries to continue to exist and engage in criminality alongside dealing with criminality through an effective criminal justice system must continue to be the model.

As set out in the Overview, we welcome the PSNI's work to join-up with other aspects of the Programme and encourage that work to continue. The police have an important role to play and we welcome

	the recent focus on investigating leadership figures, seizures, searches and arrests made, and other work that they are doing. But law enforcement agencies alone cannot address this problem. An expansion and deepening of the locality approach that is currently being piloted by the Tackling Paramilitary Activity, Criminality and Organised Crime Programme in three locations can form part of a further integrated approach; and we continue to advocate for a Whole of Government, public health approach.
Implementation status	Action underway.

C2	The Department of Justice should urgently review the legislation relating to serious and organised crime in Northern Ireland to make sure that it is as effective as possible.
Commitment by the Executive in its Action Plan	The Department of Justice will commence a review of relevant legislation in July 2016. The review findings will then go out for consultation with a view to introducing draft legislation to the Assembly in the current mandate.
Lead responsibility	Department of Justice
Summary of current position reported to the IRC by project leads	The Department of Justice ran a public consultation on draft policy proposals for new organised crime provisions in Northern Ireland from July-October 2020, following internal scoping work and discussions with operational partners. Fifteen responses were received, all of which were supportive of the general principle of introducing bespoke organised crime legislation, including the introduction of new offences of directing and participating in serious organised crime. Specific practical and legal issues raised in consultation responses are being considered, to ensure that the legislation will reinforce the response to serious organised crime in this jurisdiction.
IRC comments	<p>It is a matter of deep regret that this important piece of work was slowed down by the lack of an Executive during the initial years of the Programme. It is vital that the legal framework supporting law enforcement agencies is up-to-date and reflects established practice in other jurisdictions where additional tools have proven effective. We welcome other work by the Department of Justice on organised crime, including their updated Organised Crime Strategy and continued work through the Organised Crime Task Force.</p> <p>We call on the Executive to introduce legislative provisions putting organised crime offences in place urgently following the forthcoming Assembly elections. Organised crime continues to harm communities and wider society, including in areas where</p>

	paramilitaries have considerable influence – it must be tackled robustly and the PSNI and other law enforcement partners must have all the tools that they need to do so effectively. Organised crime legislation will be another valuable tool for the PSNI to use, given the activities of paramilitary groups involved in criminality. The PSNI must ensure that it makes full use of tools it is given.
Implementation status	Action underway. Follow up required.

C4	The PSNI should prioritise investment in its investigative capacity for tackling criminality linked to paramilitary groups and work with the NCA and other agencies to tackle all organised crime linked to paramilitary groups in Northern Ireland.
Commitment by the Executive in its Action Plan	To establish an additional dedicated investigative capacity to tackle criminality linked to paramilitary groups. The objective is to tackle the insidious influence of paramilitary groups and reinforce efforts to tackle more intensely organised crime and criminality. Key to maximising the disruption (and ultimate disbandment) of these groups will be the niche capabilities provided by relevant law enforcement agencies.
Lead responsibility	PSNI
Summary of current position reported to the IRC by project leads	<p>The Paramilitary Crime Taskforce (PCTF) was set up to provide a dedicated, co-located law enforcement response to tackle the particular issue of criminality related to paramilitary groups. It consists of the PSNI, National Crime Agency and HMRC, creating dedicated investigative resource so that a long term consistent focus can be applied to the investigation of paramilitary groups.</p> <p>The Paramilitary Crime Taskforce has also been supporting wider community based strategies aimed at promoting a culture of lawfulness.</p> <p>Summary of recent Paramilitary Crime Taskforce successes: In the period January - March 2021 (the period covered by the latest Programme update):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 65 searches were carried out; • 4 vehicles and 8 weapons were seized; • Over £120k worth of drugs were seized; and • Over £28k of cash was confiscated.

	<p>Since its inception, the Paramilitary Crime Taskforce has³⁴:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prevented over £4.8 million of revenue loss (i.e. taxes which would not have been collected to support public services etc.); • Seized 61 vehicles; • Seized £2,251,064 worth of drugs; • Carried out 772 searches; • Arrested 358 people; • Charged or reported 261 people to the Public Prosecution Service.
<p>IRC comments</p>	<p>A strong law enforcement response to paramilitarism and organised crime is vital to our shared objective of ending paramilitarism, and the harm that it causes, once and for all. We welcome the combined efforts of agencies working in the Paramilitary Crime Task Force, as well as the collective efforts of the PSNI. And it is vital that their successes are not overlooked or played down: disrupting drugs, communications, illegal goods etc. is all vital work. It is important that communities see that crime does not pay, and that law enforcement is taking action against these criminal elements, who are harming local communities.</p> <p>We welcome the Chief Constable’s decision to focus a particular operation on the leadership of paramilitary organisations, and the arrests of alleged senior figures this year. Four years since its formation, we recognise that the Paramilitary Crime Taskforce has made progress, including some major disruptions of illegal activities. We are encouraged by reports of join-up between various projects and the police (for example to identify vulnerable young people), the PSNI’s strategic engagement with the Programme and wider initiatives such as the Community Safety Board, and their continuing efforts to ensure the law enforcement response is as effective as possible. Connections and relationships must continue to be built upon, and structures continually improved, as it is only with everyone playing their part that we can effectively tackle paramilitarism once and for all.</p>
<p>Implementation status</p>	<p>Action underway.</p>

³⁴ These statistics are for the period April 2016 to March 2021 and are subject to change.

C6	The Northern Ireland Environment Agency, and the Environmental Protection Agency in Ireland, should be included in the cross-border Fresh Start Joint Agency Task Force, including the Operations Co-ordination Group.
Commitment by the Executive in its Action Plan	The Joint Agency Task Force will undertake a new strategic assessment in October 2016, and will again consider if it would benefit these agencies either joining the Task Force or participating during specific operations.
Lead responsibility	PSNI
Summary of current position reported to the IRC by project leads	The PSNI continues to support Northern Ireland Environment Agency activity operationally and has invited the agency to participate in a multi-agency operation. The Northern Ireland Environment Agency and the Environmental Protection Agency in Ireland are included in the Joint Agency Task Force, including the Operations Coordination Group.
IRC comments	At a time when a light is being shone on climate change, the importance of sustainability and protecting our environment, it continues to be essential that the Environment Agency and Environmental Protection Agency co-operate and are engaged by law enforcement partners in relation to environmental crime, such as dumping of illegal waste.
Implementation status	Action complete.

C7	The Executive, the UK Government and the Irish Government should consider whether there is merit in allowing some of the assets recovered from criminal activity to be used for the benefit of victims, communities and the environment.
Commitment by the Executive in its Action Plan	The Department of Justice will take forward a review of the Assets Recovery Community Scheme to consider whether current arrangements can be improved upon for further benefit to victims, communities and the environment.
Lead responsibility	Department of Justice
Summary of current position reported to the IRC by project leads	The Assets Recovery Community Scheme (ARCS) provides significant funding for the benefit of victims and communities to prevent crime and reduce the fear of crime. Following a review, a number of changes were made to improve its effectiveness: proactive communication regarding projects addressing crime in relation to environmental issues and the eligibility to apply for funding; introducing sub criteria requiring projects to demonstrate how they

would benefit victims, communities and/or the environment; and a three-year strategic view to the allocation of funding.

An amended Assets Recovery Community Scheme launched in August 2018. 50 projects received funding, totalling £1.8 million, up to March 2021. A further 12 projects were funded to deliver short-term initiatives from December 2019 to March 2020 due to Assets Recovery Community Scheme receipts being greater than the 2019/2020 funding commitment.

Payments totalling £924,268 were made to community-based Assets Recovery Community Scheme projects from April 2019 – March 2020 and from April 2020 the scheme has made further payments totalling £401,023 to the remaining 23 projects.

Case study:

Poleglass Community Association @ Sally Gardens

The “Safer Communities Project” was allocated £37,200 over the three year period of this scheme, commencing in 2018/19. The project’s aim was to tackle anti-social behaviour by delivering Open College Network (OCN) accredited qualifications and providing a mentoring programme to “at risk” young people.

In 2020/21, 11 (100%) participants gained OCN Level 2 Equal Opportunities accreditation. 95% reported an increase in attitudinal views on the need for equal opportunities and the impact of discrimination.

The majority of those completing OCB Level 1 Social Media have completed training, and face to face assessments will be completed 2021-22 (following an extension). A mentoring programme was delivered one to one through a number of methods, including Zoom, phone and face to face in a socially-distanced way. 12 young people completed it and have volunteered at a number of community initiatives such as food packs, inter-generational projects, peer support and social action initiatives. Attitudinal assessment indicates that 80% of participants overall have made a measurable change in areas such as community safety and opinions of the PSNI and policing as a whole.

Irish Government update:

Ireland’s Minister for Justice Helen McEntee T.D. and Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform Michael McGrath T.D. agreed earlier

	<p>this year to establish a new Community Safety Innovation Fund, to reflect the significant successes of An Garda Síochána and the Criminal Assets Bureau in disrupting criminal activity and seizing proceeds of crime by providing additional funding for investment in community safety projects. The fund will encourage and recognise the efforts of local communities to improve community safety based on their experience and unique perspectives.</p>
IRC comments	<p>We welcome the work done by the Department of Justice (NI) to reinvest the proceeds of assets recovered from criminal activity to be used for the benefit of victims, communities and the environment. As covered under Action A16, we welcome the efforts of the Justice Minister to ensure that civil assets recovered in Northern Ireland are reinvested in this jurisdiction as well and we call on the UK Government to agree to this change, which would further support efforts to show communities that crime does not pay.</p> <p>We welcome steps to establish a Community Safety Innovation Fund in Ireland to allow seized assets to be directed into community safety projects.</p>
Implementation status	Action underway.

C8	<p>The UK Government, the Executive and law enforcement agencies, working with their partners in Ireland, should ensure that tackling organised criminal activity is an integral part of their efforts to deal with Northern Ireland related terrorism.</p>
Commitment by the Executive in its Action Plan	<p>The Executive supports this recommendation and affirms its commitment to continue and build upon existing efforts in this area. The Secretary of State, Justice Minister and Chief Constable meet regularly to discuss the threat and our combined strategic response. Within the Executive, the Justice Minister chairs the Organised Crime Task Force (OCTF) bringing together law enforcement agencies to provide a multi-agency partnership that also includes civil society and the business community.</p> <p>Under the Fresh Start agreement a Cross Jurisdictional Joint Agency Task Force was established in December 2015 to enhance efforts to tackle cross-jurisdictional organised crime and paramilitary activity. On a North/South basis, the Minister of Justice and the Minister of Justice and Equality meet at least twice a year under the auspices of the Intergovernmental Agreement on co-operation on criminal justice matters.</p>

	<p>The Government of Ireland has also restated its commitment to tackling paramilitarism, criminality and organised crime, and its full support for the work of the Cross-Border Joint Agency Task Force established under the Fresh Start Agreement.</p>
Lead responsibility	<p>UK Government, NI Executive, Government of Ireland and law enforcement agencies in both jurisdictions</p>
Update provided to the IRC	<p>For Executive update see Action C4.</p> <p><i>UK Government update:</i></p> <p>The Northern Ireland Office (NIO) is responsible for the UK Government's strategic response to Northern Ireland related terrorism. We recognise that terrorism, paramilitarism and organised crime exist within a shared ecosystem, with significant interdependencies, and that it is vital that the NIO maintains a close and coordinated relationship with the Northern Ireland Executive's Tackling Paramilitarism, Criminality and Organised Crime Programme team to ensure that activities to address these related threats are mutually reinforcing and aligned with overarching objectives.</p> <p>The NIO continues to actively participate in the Tackling Paramilitarism, Criminality and Organised Crime Programme Board meetings through Director level attendance, and also participates at working level in the range of coordination meetings supporting delivery of the Tackling Paramilitarism, Criminality and Organised Crime Programme.</p> <p>The Secretary of State has regular engagement with the Justice Minister, and extensive, regular engagements with the Chief Constable, his senior officers and a variety of law enforcement bodies. Security challenges are a regular feature of discussion with the Irish Government in a range of fora. In all of these discussions, it is clear that a whole of system approach to a shared problem is critical. This remains a priority for the Secretary of State.</p>
IRC comments	<p>We welcome the UK Government's acknowledgement that a whole of system approach to the shared problem of tackling the shared ecosystem within which terrorism, paramilitarism and organised crime exist is required, and their ambition to ensure that activities to address these related threats are mutually reinforcing and aligned with overarching objectives. We recommend that the Executive, UK Government and partners, including Irish agencies on the cross-border dimension, continue joining-up that work effectively and</p>

	ensuring that opportunities are maximised and lessons and learnings shared.
Implementation status	Action underway. Follow up required.

D1	The Executive should prioritise steps to significantly and measurably improve the educational and employment prospects of children and young people in deprived communities, focusing particularly on those who are at greatest risk of educational under- attainment.
Commitment by the Executive in its Action Plan	<p>In line with the Programme for Government commitment to a more equal society and in the context of its Programme for Government Delivery Plan the Department of Education will work with other Departments to review and refresh actions. The Department of Education will also continue to promote pupil attendance at school. In support of this, the Education and Training Inspectorate will publish a good practice guide for schools on the promotion of pupil attendance.</p> <p>The Department for the Economy, through the “Social Inclusion” project <i>Further Education Means Success</i> will identify the barriers that inhibit groups of learners from participating in further education provision, and explore ways to overcome those barriers.</p> <p>The Department for Infrastructure will, in line with the rest of the public sector, ensure social clauses are included in contracts for major infrastructure schemes, such as the Belfast Transport Hub project. This will include targeting of long-term unemployed, apprenticeships and engagement with the local community.</p>
Lead responsibility	Department of Education, Department for the Economy, Department for Infrastructure, and the Strategic Investment Board
Summary of current position reported to the IRC by project leads	Work to tackle educational under-attainment and improve the quality of educational provision continues. The Department of Education has developed a range of programmes including: a Parental Engagement Campaign; an Extended Schools Programme; a “Miss School, Miss Out” strategy targeted at increasing pupil attendance; the Engage Programme (additional teaching support for pupils, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds, to address the impact of COVID-19); Promoting pupil attendance at school; a Primary Principals Support Programme in North Belfast; and a West Belfast Community Project that includes the Greater Shankill Partnership Board which is targeted at supporting pupils transitioning between pre-school, primary and post-primary schools.

	<p>The WRAP programme continues to provide wrap-around education services to children and young people in a number of different areas which are significantly impacted by social and economic deprivation. The programme delivers a holistic intervention which connects young people, their school, their family and the community.</p> <p>The Expert Panel on Educational Underachievement published its Final Report and Action Plan <i>A Fair Start</i> in June 2021. The Panel recommended action on eight key areas within which it has identified 47 actions for change including: Redirecting the focus to Early Years; Championing Emotional Health and Wellbeing; Ensuring the relevance and appropriateness of Curriculum and Assessment; Promoting a whole community approach to education; Maximising boys' potential; Driving forward Teachers' Professional Learning; Supporting the professional learning and wellbeing of school leadership; Ensuring Interdepartmental collaboration and delivery. The Panel recommended that £180m be allocated over five years to address educational under achievement</p>
IRC comments	<p>We commend the work of the Department of Education and others in delivering on measures to improve the educational prospects of children and young people in deprived communities in the last year. We have seen evidence both of good work that is benefitting children and young people on the ground now through the WRAP project, as well as the beginning of the development of a broader policy framework recommended by the Expert Panel on Educational Underachievement.</p> <p>We welcome the report of the Expert Panel on Educational Underachievement and its ambition. We see the Panel's recommendations as having a critical contribution to make to an issue that we have always regarded as essential to the sustainable ending of paramilitarism. Recognising that the scale of the challenge requires a cross-Executive approach, we urge the Education Minister together with the Executive to ensure that delivery matches the ambition of the plan. This is all the more important given the focus that the disruption to children's education in the last 18 months has brought to the importance of education in establishing positive life trajectories for young people. This work should be taken forward as the basis on which transformative change is built, and not represent the ceiling of ambition.</p> <p>We also welcome the setting up of the Independent Panel on Education to carry out a fundamental review of the education system</p>

	<p>in Northern Ireland and that its terms of reference mean they will also develop a realistic timetable for implementation. We see this and the Expert Panel on Educational Underachievement as significant initiatives that can lead to tangible actions to ensure the sustained tackling of educational underachievement which is a key underlying aspect of the persistence of paramilitarism.</p> <p>We welcome the setting up of a pilot programme (WRAP project) and note that early feedback has been positive.</p> <p>A number of actions are being delivered by the Department for the Economy, which, whilst not being implemented as a result of the programme, can contribute indirectly to tackling paramilitarism (ensuring that skills training is providing good opportunities for young people, for example). It is therefore vital that the Department for the Economy is sufficiently joined-up to the work of the Tackling Paramilitary Activity, Criminality and Organised Crime Programme so that it can take account of this work in their departmental policy planning.</p>
Implementation status	Action underway. Follow up required.

D2	The Executive should accelerate and build on its existing good relations strategy to measurably reduce segregation in education and housing and set ambitious targets and milestones to achieve measurable progress as quickly as possible.
Commitment by the Executive in its Action Plan	The Executive is committed to continuing to build on existing strategies and will give ongoing consideration to this going forward.
Lead responsibility	The Executive Office
Summary of current position reported to the IRC by project leads	This commitment is related to the existing Together: Building a United Community (T:BUC) programme on shared education and shared housing/neighbourhoods and includes the following projects: Shared Neighbourhoods, Urban Villages, Shared Education Campuses and the Removal of Interface Barriers amongst others.
IRC comments	We note the ongoing activity related to this Action and the progress achieved to date. We do, however, believe that the time has come to set more ambitious targets to achieve outcomes that can result in the type of transformative change required to support long term peace and stability in Northern Ireland. The proportion of shared housing constructed (10 neighbourhoods or 483 homes under Together:

	<p>Building a United Community) and further shared housing schemes under development represents a small fraction of the total amount of social housing being built and falls far short of what is required to support transformation in Northern Ireland.</p> <p>The Executive should build significantly on the ambition set out in Together: Building a United Community and increase the number of shared housing units built as a proportion of the entire social housing stock. In any refresh of the Together: Building a United Community Strategy and in the policy debates related to shared housing and integrated education, due regard must be given to their impact on efforts to end paramilitarism.</p>
Implementation status	Action underway. Follow up required.

D4	<p>The Executive should put in place strong programme management arrangements for developing and delivering the strategy, incorporating all those organisations which we have highlighted as having a direct role in implementing the recommendations in this report. More broadly, the Executive should adopt a partnership approach to involve, where possible, representatives of the public and private sectors and the voluntary and community sectors in the design, delivery and evaluation of the measures in its strategy.</p>
Commitment by the Executive in its Action Plan	<p>The Cross-Departmental Programme Board will extend the opportunity to apply for <i>Fresh Start</i> funding to voluntary and community sector organisations and to statutory bodies working in partnership with voluntary and community sector organisations to develop new programmes and actions in support of this Action Plan. The Executive will also put in place appropriate mechanisms to engage strategically with the range of partners involved in delivering this Action Plan. The Executive will extend membership of the Cross-Departmental Programme Board to include representatives of other Executive Departments. The Board will report on progress, through the Chair, to the Executive in line with the <i>Fresh Start</i> reporting arrangements.</p>
Lead responsibility	Tackling Paramilitary Activity, Criminality and Organised Crime Programme Board
Summary of current position reported to the IRC by project leads	Programme management arrangements, including the Programme Board, are in place.

<p>IRC comments</p>	<p>We welcome the Programme Team's efforts in adapting their programme management arrangements including through the development of a benefits management approach to measuring outcomes. This should serve to embed the Whole of Government approach to the programme and ensure that responsibility for delivery of the programme is not the preserve of the Tackling Paramilitary Activity, Criminality and Organised Crime Programme alone. We recognise the important work of the Programme Team in adopting a partnership approach to delivery to include expertise and advice from across the voluntary and community sectors. We encourage the Programme Team to continue to deepen partnership working including through seeking input from wider society, including civic society and others, and to ensure that engagement from the Programme with the community and voluntary and funding sectors is given a high priority.</p> <p>We welcome the greater role for the Political Advisory Group in deliberations about the Programme.</p>
<p>Implementation status</p>	<p>Action underway.</p>

PART II: Other measures

3.22 In this part of the report we set out progress made against actions and commitments made by the UK and Irish Governments as part of the Executive Action Plan.

B14	The UK and Irish Governments should consider a mechanism being put in place for a limited period to deal with any future decommissioning of residual weapons or material.
Action Plan commitment	If there is a need identified for a decommissioning mechanism, both the Government of Ireland and the Government of the UK have advised that they will consult to consider this recommendation.
Lead responsibility	The UK and Irish Governments
Summary of current position reported to the IRC	<p><i>UK Government update:</i> The NIO will keep the need for such a mechanism under review through engagement with other partners and in the context of progress on the NI Executive's work to tackle paramilitarism.</p> <p><i>Irish Government update:</i> The Irish Government will keep this commitment under review in accordance with the wider policy aim of transitioning groups away from violence.</p>
IRC comments	We welcome the ongoing willingness of the two Governments to keep the need for any such process under review.
Implementation status	Action underway.

C3	The UK and Irish Governments should review the legislation relating to paramilitary groups (e.g the Terrorism Act 2000) to ensure that it remains in step with the transitioning status of groups in NI.
Action Plan commitment	The Government of the UK and the Government of Ireland have advised that they continue to keep relevant legislation under review to ensure its effectiveness.
Lead responsibility	Northern Ireland Office, the Executive, Department of Justice
Summary of current position reported to the IRC	<p><i>UK Government update:</i> The NIO continues to keep under review UK legislation to ensure it remains effective in supporting NI Executive-led efforts to tackle paramilitarism. The legislative toolkit in Northern Ireland has been significantly enhanced through the commencement of the provisions in the Criminal Finances Act 2017 and the Crime (Overseas Production Orders) Act 2019 by the Department of Justice. We also note the intention set out in the Organised Crime Strategy for</p>

	<p>Northern Ireland 2021-2024 to develop further provisions to tackle organised crime in Northern Ireland. The IRC may be aware that this year, following a public consultation, the Northern Ireland-specific provisions for non-jury trials were renewed for a further two years (they will now expire in July 2023 unless renewed again prior to that). Since the renewal of the provisions, however, the NIO has established a working group as recommended by the Independent Reviewer of the Justice and Security Act. This group will seek to identify practical and legal measures that could be taken to reduce the number of non-jury trials and identify the indicators that could be used to determine when the Northern Ireland-specific non-jury trial provisions would no longer be necessary. The NIO will continue to engage with the NI Executive and other partners on the role of UK legislation in facilitating transition.</p> <p><i>Irish Government update:</i> The Irish Government continues to keep relevant legislation under review to ensure its effectiveness. A Review Group was established in February 2021, tasked with examining all aspects of the Offences Against the State Acts having regard to the current threat posed by domestic/international terrorism and organised crime, the duty to deliver a fair and effective criminal justice system to ensure the protection of communities and the security of the State and Ireland’s obligations in relation to Constitutional and ECHR rights and international law.</p>
IRC Comments	<p>We welcome the commitment of the UK Government to continue to engage with the Northern Ireland Executive and other partners on the role of UK legislation in facilitating transition, and its keeping under review of the efficacy of UK legislation in supporting Northern Ireland Executive-led efforts to tackle paramilitarism. Furthermore, we welcome work to ensure that activities to address the related threats of terrorism, paramilitarism and organised crime are “mutually reinforcing and aligned with overarching objectives” (as explained under the update for C8 above). This work must continue, to ensure that the combined response is as effective as possible.</p> <p>We welcome the Irish Government’s commitment to keep relevant legislation under review and its establishment of a Review Group to examine all aspects of the Offences Against the State Acts.</p>
Implementation status	Action underway.

C5	The UK Government should resource the National Crime Agency and HM Revenue and Customs to appropriately prioritise intensive work to tackle all organised crime linked to paramilitary groups in Northern Ireland.
Action Plan commitment	The UK Government supports efforts to tackle paramilitarism and organised crime in Northern Ireland by providing £25 million of funding through the Fresh Start Agreement to help ensure that the relevant agencies are appropriately resourced to fulfil that commitment.
Lead responsibility	UK Government
Summary of current position reported to the IRC	<p>UK Government funding allows the NCA and HMRC to continue to operate successfully in NI; the NCA's most recent annual report has highlighted a number of successes in Northern Ireland. In addition, continued funding provided by UKG, through the UK's c. £8m contribution to the Tackling Paramilitary Activity, Criminality and Organised Crime Programme in this financial year, has supported ongoing work by the Paramilitary Crime Task Force (PCTF).</p> <p>In the financial year 2020/21, in the context of the operational challenges of the pandemic, the PCTF continued to disrupt paramilitary activity. The Task Force carried out 199 searches, seized approximately £1.3 million of drugs, arrested 84 people, charged or reported 41 people to the PPS and secured 18 convictions.</p>
IRC Comments	We welcome the UK Government's continuing commitment to funding the work of the NCA and HMRC in Northern Ireland, and its contribution of funding towards the work of the Paramilitary Crime Task Force. With the introduction of new powers (including Unexplained Wealth Orders) and the opportunities that come with those, the UK Government, the Executive and partners must continue to work together closely to ensure the efficacy and adequacy of the joined-up response to terrorism, paramilitarism and organised crime.
Implementation status	Action underway.

D3	Agreement on a way forward for dealing with the past should be reached as soon as possible and the agreed mechanisms should be completed in a time-limited period.
Action Plan commitment	There remains a need to resolve the outstanding issues relating to the past. The Executive, the UK Government and the Irish Government are reflecting on how to achieve this.

Lead responsibility	UK and Irish Governments
Summary of current position reported to the IRC	<p><i>UK Government update:</i></p> <p>The UK Government remains committed to addressing legacy issues comprehensively and fairly, in a way that supports information recovery and delivers better outcomes for victims and survivors, while laying the foundation for greater reconciliation and a shared future for all communities.</p> <p>On 14 July 2021, the UK Government published a Command Paper setting out its proposals for addressing the legacy of Northern Ireland’s past, which focuses on information recovery and reconciliation. Obtaining information via a thorough and robust investigative process - supported by full disclosure by the State - is the cornerstone of these proposals.</p> <p>Since the publication of the Command Paper, the UK Government has engaged intensively with the Irish Government, Northern Ireland parties, representatives from the victims sector, and individuals and organisations from across civil society. The Government continues to engage and reflect on what we have heard, with a view to bringing forward legislation as quickly as possible.</p> <p><i>Irish Government update:</i></p> <p>The Irish Government remains committed to working with the UK Government and the political parties in Northern Ireland to address the painful legacy of the Troubles. It has been the consistent position of the Government that the implementation of the Stormont House Agreement framework is the way forward on legacy matters. This commitment was solidified with the Criminal Justice (International Co-operation) Act 2019 which facilitates further co-operation with the Legacy institutions under the Stormont House Agreement as well as providing for co-operation on Legacy Inquests being undertaken by the Northern Ireland Coroner. The preparation of legislation to give effect to the Independent Commission on Information Retrieval (ICIR) has also furthered this commitment.</p> <p>At the British-Irish Intergovernmental Conference on 24 June 2021, the Irish Government agreed to begin, with the UK Government and the Northern Irish parties, a process of intensive engagement on legacy which is now underway. The objective of this engagement is to find a way forward that can be collectively agreed.</p>

IRC Comments	It is vital that agreement on how to address the legacy of the past is achieved, and that interdependencies with work to tackle paramilitarism and bring about disbandment of the groups are identified and managed effectively.
Implementation status	Action underway. Follow up required.

D5	It is important that the IRC is put in place as soon as possible and is vigorous in holding to account all those responsible for delivering actions as part of the strategy.
Action Plan commitment	The UK and Irish Governments are working together to establish the Independent Reporting Commission.
Lead responsibility	
Summary of current position reported to the IRC	This action was completed with the passing of legislation.
IRC Comments	The two Governments should continue to work closely with the Executive and the IRC to ensure that the Independent Reporting Commission continues to play a helpful role in supporting those working to end paramilitarism once and for all.
Implementation status	Action complete.

SECTION D: RECOMMENDATIONS

In this Section, we summarise recommendations made in this Report and set out progress made against previous recommendations.

Part 1: Recommendations 2020

We made the following recommendations in our third report published in November 2020.

1. Linking the Twin Tracks

Last year, we noted that the sustained, long-term investments needed in communities to tackle deep-rooted, intractable issues have not yet been made in a sufficiently targeted way which take account of the very particular circumstances prevailing in each of them. We encouraged the Executive to outline how it will integrate wider socio-economic transformation elements with efforts to tackle paramilitarism.

We, again, encourage the Executive to take due account of the work needed to tackle paramilitarism in policy discussions around wider socio-economic transformation and to ensure that links between the twin tracks are reflected in the Programme for Government. A new Programme for Government should be ambitious in this regard. We welcome the initial steps of the Programme Team and partners in implementing a 'locality working' approach to join-up work between the criminal justice and non-criminal justice measures in specific areas and will observe the development of this model with interest.

2. Review of governance to ensure political ownership

We recommended that the role of the Political Advisory Group be reviewed to ensure that it can give political steering to the Programme, particularly on sensitive and challenging issues.

We welcome the Political Advisory Group's consideration of some of the Programme's more challenging issues and see this as the beginning of deeper engagement on such matters. Political leadership is vital for this complex and challenging work to be further progressed.

3. Women and peacebuilding

We recommended that the Women involved in Community Transformation (WICT) network share and further develop expertise on women and peace building with other women's regional groups and representatives of the women's sector, and build on recent sectoral work on the role of paramilitaries in illegal money lending.

We made this recommendation to highlight the importance of these newly formed networks interacting with other groups and policymakers, to seek progress on relevant

issues particularly those related to tackling paramilitarism. This vital role for women as agents of change in their communities is an ongoing aspect of the tackling paramilitarism work and we encourage those involved in phase two of the programme to take this recommendation on.

4. Memorialisation

We recommended that there should be greater debate and focus on this area and that those organising events and so on consider the wider impact of such actions.

This is a long-term endeavour for society, progress on which is best measured over many years. We recommend in this Report that the Community Relations Council commission a piece of work to explore options for further developing approaches to memorialisation, building on learning from the approach to the Decade of Centenaries.

Last year we restated two recommendations from our Second Report:

5. Civil Recovery of Criminal Assets

We urged the Executive to consider setting up a Northern Ireland agency for the civil recovery of the proceeds of crime.

We regret that little consideration appears to have been given to this recommendation in the last year, despite support from some quarters including from within the communities in which paramilitaries mainly operate. One of the key strategic objectives in the Northern Ireland Organised Crime Strategy is to “ensure that partners have effective capability, tools and legislation to tackle organised crime” and we urge the Department of Justice to reconsider this recommendation given that context, and the clear benefits of seizing assets illegally obtained and redistributing those proceeds among affected communities.

6. A Transition Process for paramilitary groups

We recommended that consideration of a transition process for paramilitary groups is now required, with the ultimate aim of disbanding the groups.

The existence of paramilitary groups continues to pose a clear and present danger on an ongoing basis. In this report we elaborate further on the need for a transition process and include some further material about what a process could look like.

Part 2: Recommendations 2021

We make the following recommendations in this year's report:

1. A process for paramilitary Group Transition

In this Report we develop our analysis that an additional dimension is required. The disbandment of paramilitary organisations has to involve voluntary action by the Groups and therefore their co-operation, and so we believe that a dedicated, formal process of engagement with an end goal of disbandment is required. Just as a process of political engagement – ultimately leading to the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement – was needed to bring the Troubles to an end, a similar process is now necessary to definitively end paramilitarism. We have outlined our latest thinking on what steps could be involved in a Group Transition process, and urge further consideration of it by the two Governments, the Executive and civic society.

2. The Programme Board consider adding other senior figures to its core membership, including the Northern Ireland Housing Executive

We consider leadership and collaboration at every level to be vital to tackling paramilitarism once and for all. From our engagements, that is how progress is best delivered on the ground. The Programme Board (chaired by the Head of the Civil Service and convening senior leaders from relevant authorities) provides strategic leadership to all of these endeavours. We recommend that the Programme Board consider adding other senior figures to its core membership, including the Northern Ireland Housing Executive which is involved in relevant activity at project and strategic levels and through its everyday work.

3. Continuing join-up of work

We welcome the endeavours by the Programme Team and project leads to establish a new governance framework which focuses on realising benefits – ensuring that common goals and goods are being pursued by various projects, furthering collaboration, identifying interlinkages, and identifying interdependencies and needs. We believe that a public health approach is a useful approach for this work.

Tackling paramilitarism requires everyone to play their part. An expansion of the locality approach currently being piloted in three locations can help form part of a more integrated approach.

APPENDIX A: EXTRACTS FROM FRESH START AGREEMENT

17 November 2015

Section A: Ending Paramilitarism and Tackling Organised Crime

Statement of Principles

- 2.1 There has been huge progress in recent years in helping transform society in Northern Ireland. However it is clear that there is work that still remains to be done in completing this transition.
- 2.5 All the parties to this Agreement remain fully dedicated to each and all of these principles and further commit to:
- work collectively to achieve a society free of paramilitarism;
 - support the rule of law unequivocally in word and deed and support all efforts to uphold it;
 - challenge all paramilitary activity and associated criminality;
 - call for, and work together to achieve, the disbandment of all paramilitary organisations and their structures;
 - challenge paramilitary attempts to control communities;
 - support those who are determined to make the transition away from paramilitarism; and
 - accept no authority, direction or control on our political activities other than our democratic mandate alongside our own personal and party judgment.

Monitoring and Implementation

- 5.1 A four member international body including persons of international standing will be established by the UK and Irish Governments. The UK Government and the Irish Government will nominate one member each and the Executive shall nominate two members. The body will:
- report annually on progress towards ending continuing paramilitary activity connected with NI (or on such further occasions as required);
 - report on the implementation of the relevant measures of the three administrations; and
 - consult the UK Government and relevant law enforcement agencies, the Irish Government and relevant law enforcement agencies and, in Northern Ireland, the Executive, PSNI, statutory agencies, local councils, communities and civic society organisations.
- 5.2 The reports of the body will inform future Executive Programme for Government priorities and commitments through to 2021.

Section D: UK Government Financial Support

Tackling Continued Paramilitary Activity

- 8.2 The UK Government will provide an additional £25 million over five years to tackle continuing paramilitary activity. The UK Government funding will only be released after the Executive has agreed a strategy to address continuing paramilitary activity.
- 8.3 The NI Executive will match the UK Government's additional funding to tackle continuing paramilitary activity.

Full text available at:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/479116/A_Fresh_Start_-_The_Stormont_Agreement_and_Implementation_Plan_-_Final_Version_20_Nov_2015_for_PDF.pdf

APPENDIX B: LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

Action Plan	The Executive's Action Plan on Tackling Paramilitary Activity, Criminality and Organised Crime
ACE	Adverse Childhood Experience
ARCS	Assets Recovery Community Scheme
ARIS	Asset Recovery Incentivisation Scheme
Assembly	The Northern Ireland (Legislative) Assembly
CCEA	Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment
CFA	Criminal Finances Act 2017
CIT	Communities in Transition
DEIS	Developing Equality of Opportunity in Schools
DOJ	Department of Justice
EA	Education Authority
EITP	Early Intervention Transformation Programme
FICT	Flags, Identity, Culture and Tradition
HMICFRS	Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services
HMPPS	Her Majesty's Prisons and Probation Service
HMRC	Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs
ICP	Indictable Cases Pilot
IMC	Independent Monitoring Commission
IRC	Independent Reporting Commission
MARA	Multi-agency review arrangements
MLA	Member of the Legislative Assembly
NCA	National Crime Agency
NI	Northern Ireland
NIACRO	Northern Ireland Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders

NIEA	Northern Ireland Environment Agency
NIHE	Northern Ireland Housing Executive
NIMDM	Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measures
NIO	Northern Ireland Office
NIPB	Northern Ireland Policing Board
NIPS	Northern Ireland Prison Service
OCN	Open College Network
OCG	Organised Crime Gang
Panel Report	Fresh Start Panel Report
PCSP	Policing and Community Safety Partnership
PCTF	Paramilitary Crime Task Force
PPS	Public Prosecution Service
Programme Board	Tackling Paramilitary Activity, Criminality and Organised Crime Programme Board
Programme Team	Tackling Paramilitary Activity, Criminality and Organised Crime Programme Team
PSNI	Police Service of Northern Ireland
PWC	Policing With the Community
START	Steer Teenagers Away from Recurrent Trouble
ROC	Redeeming Our Communities
START	Steer Teenagers Away from Recurrent Trouble
SYTE	Supporting Youth Through Engagement
T:BUC	Together: Building a United Community
TRO	Terrorist Related Offender
The (NI) Executive	Northern Ireland Executive
UWO	Unexplained Wealth Order
WICT	Women Involved in Community Transformation

