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December 2022**

INDEPENDENT REPORTING COMMISSION

FIFTH REPORT

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This is the Fifth Report of the Independent Reporting Commission. We were established in 2017 to report on progress towards ending paramilitary activity connected with Northern Ireland by an international treaty between the UK and Irish Governments, and the terms of the Fresh Start Agreement. That Agreement was the result of intensive discussions in response to continued paramilitary activity in Northern Ireland, and in it the Governments and the NI parties reiterated “the primacy and centrality of peace and the political process to the continued transformation of our society”. Fresh Start identified a key goal: the ending of paramilitarism “once and for all”. In doing our work, we are mandated to look at progress on delivering against the wider, more comprehensive approach that was decided upon for tackling paramilitarism by the NI Executive and UK and Irish Governments – one that combined policing and justice responses with a wide range of measures aimed at addressing the systemic socio-economic challenges besetting communities where the paramilitaries mainly operate. In our analysis, we have termed that the Twin Track approach to ending paramilitarism.

In Section A of this report we give an overview of our role and provide our key observations and findings. Section B contains a range of data and research related to paramilitarism in Northern Ireland. In Section C we report in detail on implementation of Phase Two of the Executive Programme for Tackling Paramilitary Activity, Criminality and Organised Crime and the relevant measures of the Executive’s Action Plan. We summarise our Recommendations in Section D and also report on how our Recommendations made last year are being addressed.

2022 has been another mixed year in respect of efforts to bring paramilitarism to an end. Reaction to political developments, particularly relating to the Protocol on Ireland and Northern Ireland of the EU-UK Withdrawal Agreement, led to new instability at political level, which in turn fed speculation about the potential for a resurgence of paramilitary activity. A number of paramilitary-related incidents served to heighten that speculation. Overall, we have not altered our view that the risks posed to society by the continuing existence of Paramilitary Groups and structures mean that paramilitarism remains a clear and present danger in and for Northern Ireland.

We make the case that there are reasons both to be encouraged and for continuing concern. On the positive side, some of the data around paramilitary activity showed reductions and there has been good progress in several of the initiatives being developed by the Programme. The Fresh Start process has established a whole new infrastructure to tackle paramilitarism, involving a wide range of measures and initiatives which are now beginning to gain real traction, and with a whole cohort of organisations and services, at public sector and community levels, actively engaged in the process. In 2022, there was particular evidence of this as Phase Two of the Programme continued to be rolled out and has started demonstrating some significant dividends.

Moreover, we note the increasing emphasis on a Whole of Government approach to tackling paramilitarism, which is at the heart of the Executive Programme. In this report we welcome the establishment of the Sponsor Group, under the leadership of the Head of the Northern Ireland Civil Service, which draws together senior officials from those departments and agencies involved in tackling paramilitarism, to implement the strategic direction of the Programme and demonstrating the necessary collaborative culture between departments and agencies and making linkages between and beyond this and other Executive initiatives. We see this as having the potential to foster further change and to drive in a holistic way the wider transformative work that the IRC and the Fresh Start Agreement itself identified as necessary to deal comprehensively with paramilitarism.

The PSNI continues to play a crucial role in tackling paramilitarism through its law enforcement activities against Paramilitary Groups and individuals claiming affiliation to those groups, through the Paramilitary Crime Task Force, the Terrorism Investigation Unit, collaborative working with the National Crime Agency and partnership with other bodies including HMRC (UK Tax Authority). Many PSNI teams are involved in this work, including Community Safety, Local Policing, Crime Operations and others, as the problem of paramilitary crime takes many forms and needs to be tackled in many different contexts (rural, urban, localised and regional). Criminality with a backdrop of a paramilitary allegiance (whether sanctioned by groups or not) has a pervasive effect on local communities, and causes harm to individuals, groups and society. Good work is being done in this regard and we urge the PSNI to continue to pursue those involved in this criminality and to use all of the resources at their disposal to do so. We also note and welcome the join-up between the Department of Justice, the Northern Ireland Office and the various agencies in tackling the “shared ecosystem” of organised crime, paramilitary crime and national security in line with commitments contained in the Fresh Start Agreement. As with all of this work, collaboration and effective joined-up working are crucial to success, and we urge all those involved to continue to focus on threat, risk and harm caused. Cross-border law enforcement co-operation continues to be a vital part of this work, including through the Joint Agency Task Force (set up to tackle organised and cross jurisdictional crime).

While we report on these positive developments, the reality is that there remains much to be concerned about, and much work to be done in ending paramilitarism definitively. We remain concerned about the risks posed to society by the continuing existence of paramilitary structures and groups which can be harnessed for the purposes of violence or the threat of violence. One reason for our concern is the absence, to date, of a plan to address the continuation of the structures and infrastructure of paramilitarism – which we believe would be best addressed by our proposal for a process of engagement with Paramilitary Groups themselves with a view to Group Transition and disbandment. We see Group Transition as a necessary addition to, and working in parallel with, the Twin Tracks of a policing and criminal justice response and addressing the socio-economic challenges of the communities concerned.

We believe that Group Transition would help empower communities, deepen the rule of law, foster further participation and equality in civic life and could result in much needed investment; all as part of the continuing transformation of Northern Ireland as well as contributing to reconciliation efforts. We continue to believe that if those obstacles and concerns can be overcome, the prize of success would be a major achievement for the whole of society.

In this report we develop our thinking further on our previous Recommendation of the need for consideration of a process of Group Transition. We remain firmly of the belief that a formal process of engagement is needed with the Paramilitary Groups if Group Transition and disbandment are to be achieved. We urge the two Governments, the NI parties and civic society to give urgent consideration to a comprehensive process of Group Transition, building on models from elsewhere, including the concept of DDR (Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration). In addition, we believe there would be merit in preparing the ground for a formal process. This could be done, for instance, by the Governments appointing (with the support of the Executive) an Independent Person who would be authorised to speak to the various interested parties, including the Paramilitary Groups themselves.

What is involved in tackling paramilitarism is not amenable to short-term solutions, but rather will require a long-term commitment and comprehensive focus. That is why we believe that it is vital that funding for a Programme and the goals behind it must be maintained well into the future. Furthermore, dedicated and targeted investment is not sufficient alone. Funding for prevention, tackling socio-economic need and transformative change must also be priorities.

We highlight a number of initiatives that are working well, including local and neighbourhood approaches to policing, Youth Service work with young people who have been harmed by paramilitaries and/or those who are most at risk from them, multi-agency hub collaborative arrangements, and community-based initiatives such as Communities in Transition. We also highlight a number of other areas where we believe further progress is required, including the passage of organised crime legislation, further work to remove avoidable delay from the criminal justice system and support for ex-prisoners.

The well-established public health approach – which treats violence like a disease, seeks to understand its causes and develops innovative practice to prevent it – is an important model and we welcome the Programme’s commitment to it. We have previously called for a “Whole of Government” approach to tackling paramilitarism and believe that further embedding this public health approach will help with ensuring that everyone plays their part in tackling paramilitarism (whether funded by the Programme or not). In addition, tackling paramilitarism should be a dedicated outcome in an Executive Programme for Government.

The underlying goal of the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement is the transformation of society into an entirely peaceful one, based on the politics of accommodation and reconciliation. The continuation of paramilitarism is part of the unfinished business of the Agreement. We would strongly urge, therefore, a redoubling of efforts over the coming year by focussing on developing a process of Group Transition.

Overall, we believe there are grounds to be encouraged by the progress made. However, there is no doubting the scale of what still remains to be done. We reiterate that there is now an opportunity as the 25th Anniversary of the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement approaches to re-double efforts at all levels to achieve the vision of that Agreement of a Northern Ireland free of paramilitarism and based entirely on the principles of peace and democracy.

SECTION A: OVERVIEW

Introduction

- 1.1 This is the Fifth Report of the Independent Reporting Commission (IRC). The IRC was established in 2017 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 While the IRC was formally established in August 2017, it operated in shadow form from January of that year. 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). The four Commissioners were reappointed for a further three-year term in March 2022.
- 1.3 Under the remit we were given by the two Governments and the NI parties, we are required to report annually³. There is, of course, overlap between the content of each Report. Part of the reason for this is that inevitably the activities we are reporting on each year are building on work initiated and undertaken in previous years, and, therefore, reported on previously by us. But the other reason for the overlap is that we seek to construct our Reports as stand-alone documents in each case. We do so on the basis that each Report, while focussing primarily on the year under review, should also represent in its own right a comprehensive, “one-stop-shop” overview of what is happening in terms of addressing continued paramilitarism in Northern Ireland today. This Fifth Report, therefore, while focussing significantly on activity in 2022, is drafted on the basis of being read as a comprehensive, up-to-date overview of efforts to discharge the goal of the Fresh Start Agreement to bring paramilitarism to an end.

Our Mandate

- 1.4 As we usually do, we want to say a few words at the outset about our mandate. An international treaty establishing the IRC sets out what we should report on:

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, our [Third](#) in November 2020 and our [Fourth](#) in December 2021. They are all available on our website: www.ircommission.org

- Progress towards ending continuing paramilitary activity connected with Northern Ireland; and
- Implementation of the relevant measures of the Government of Ireland, the Government of the United Kingdom, and the Northern Ireland Executive, including the Executive’s Strategy, to inform the implementation of that Strategy.

We have made clear that 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. We have previously reported how 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”. Some commentators suggest that we should play an analogous role, so we reiterate again that that is not the mandate we were given.

- 1.5 Our mandate at the IRC was set in the context of the Fresh Start Agreement of November 2015, followed by the Report of the Three Person 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 Activity, Criminality and Organised Crime Programme (hereafter referred to as “the Programme”)⁶. In these initiatives, a wider, more comprehensive approach was decided upon for tackling paramilitarism, which combined policing and justice responses with a wide range of measures aimed at addressing the systemic socio-economic challenges besetting communities where the paramilitaries mainly operate.
- 1.6 It is worth recalling the words in the Ministerial/Executive Foreword of then First Minister Arlene Foster, then deputy First Minister Martin McGuinness and then Minister of Justice Claire Sugden in launching the Executive Action Plan in July 2016. They stated: *“We believe that “A Fresh Start” and the Three Person Panel Report, together with our new approach to collective working, as represented in the draft Programme for Government Framework, combine to present us with a unique opportunity to collectively address the difficult issue of tackling paramilitary activity. ... We recognise the need to drive forward with a new and innovative approach to tackling paramilitary activity”*. The subsequent Introduction Section of the Executive Action Plan goes on to state: *“... we recognise that success can only be achieved through an*

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

⁵ <https://www.justice-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/justice/tackling-paramilitary-activity-action-plan.pdf>

⁶ <https://www.northernireland.gov.uk/articles/executive-programme-tackling-paramilitary-activity-and-organised-crime-0>

ambitious multi-faceted approach which brings together all the Executive departments and other key stakeholders. Whilst we need a law enforcement response to the criminal acts that are perpetrated, we also require a systematic and collaborative response to the underlying issues which are exploited by those seeking to sustain such activity”⁷.

- 1.7 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. The net point, we believe, is clear: it was the express intent of the Fresh Start Agreement, and the Executive Action Plan flowing from it, that this initiative to end paramilitarism should take a broad, comprehensive, innovative approach that addressed all of the complexities underlying the continuation of paramilitarism in Northern Ireland so many years after the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement. That is how we have approached our mandate as the reporting body and our Reports are constructed on that basis.
- 1.8 That said, 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 Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI), the UK Security Service and An Garda Síochána. In our reporting, therefore, we provide a general outline 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 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.
- 1.9 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 consult and report on the specific measures currently underway under the Executive Action Plan and the 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”.
- 1.10 In this Report we give our updated analysis on where matters stand in regard to all elements of our mandate, with additional Recommendations on how progress can be accelerated.

⁷ <https://www.northernireland.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/newnigov/Executive%20Action%20Plan%20-%20Tackling%20Paramilitary%20Activity.pdf>

The Format of our Report

1.11 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.
- In Section D, we report on how the Recommendations we made in our earlier Reports are being addressed, and make further Recommendations for the way forward.

Our Methodology

1.12 In terms of our method of working, we meet 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 ground. 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 attention⁸. In particular, we thank those victims of violence, coercive control and intimidation who shared their experiences with us in writing and in person. We have consistently said in our Reports that they have been the most impacted by paramilitaries, and we will continue to engage with them as we take forward our work.

1.13 We again 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. We have made clear in our previous Reports that their work makes a very important contribution. We remain of that view and urge them to continue their critical work.

1.14 We are grateful to both Governments, to the Northern Ireland Executive 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 Programme Team which co-ordinates the Programme, and its Sponsor Group. 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

⁸ Our e-mail address is enquiries@IRCommission.org and our postal address is PO Box 2205, Belfast BT4 9EL.

the importance of the cross-border element of this work. Our special thanks to those community-based groups and others, including civic society organisations, who have shared their experiences of working on the ground. We are also most grateful to our colleagues in our Joint Secretariat for their dedication, professionalism and hard work in support of our deliberations.

Our Analysis

- 1.15 We have already set out above how our mandate is different to previous initiatives, based on the new approach to tackling and ending paramilitarism heralded in the Fresh Start Agreement and the actions that have stemmed from it. As indicated, what particularly marks out this difference of approach is its comprehensiveness and also the focus on innovation. 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 specifically where paramilitary control is a factor.
- 1.16 Since our role at the IRC in this overall initiative is to provide an accurate analysis – of the actions being taken, the progress being made and where gaps might continue to lie – we place a focus on ensuring the best possible understanding of the underlying nature of paramilitarism in Northern Ireland today, since so much hinges on that. In our view, a flawed analysis of the nature of paramilitarism is not simply a case of differing views on the same subject, but rather that the actions which follow to address it will themselves inevitably be incomplete.
- 1.17 We have set out in our previous Reports our view of how paramilitarism involves a complex landscape comprising different categories of people. At one end of that landscape there are undoubtedly individuals and groups who use paramilitarism as a cloak for overt criminality (such as extortion, drug dealing, threats, trade in counterfeit goods, money laundering, illegal money lending, sexual exploitation and other illegal activities). For many commentators that is the only definition of paramilitarism – pure criminality, and their response is framed exclusively in law and order terms.
- 1.18 But we have a different view. While we are in total agreement that that is an accurate description of *part* of the landscape, it does not describe the totality of what is in question. We also see a range of other categories of people who are involved in paramilitarism today. Some do so for reasons of socio-economic disadvantage. In these cases, much of the rationale for their involvement is related to the lack of an alternative pathway, to poor educational and employment opportunities, vulnerabilities related to addiction, peer pressure and the absence of positive role models. There are also “dormant” members who retain some form of affiliation with a group willingly, while for others there is not a means to exit the group. Some pay a membership fee. Whilst not currently active in the organisations they could be asked to play a role in the future.

- 1.19 We have also expressed the view, and continue to hold to it, that there is a further category involving those who remain engaged in paramilitarism for political and identity reasons which reach back to the Troubles/conflict. These individuals, while remaining part of paramilitary structures, regard their primary motivation for continuing involvement as being driven by the needs and perspective of their community. This category also contains people, including at leadership level in some of the groups, who articulate a positive wish to see paramilitarism ended.
- 1.20 We recognise that even acknowledging the existence of this viewpoint within paramilitarism is believed by some to confer legitimacy where none should exist. We understand these concerns and, to be very clear, our own view remains that paramilitarism has no place in Northern Ireland and should be ended. We abhor the coercive control that paramilitary groups and their members exercise in certain communities in Northern Ireland today. But we have an obligation to report what we see and hear faithfully and accurately. The landscape of paramilitarism is a complex one; it is only by addressing each element of that complexity can the desired outcome be achieved. We believe that there is a residual political dimension to the continuation of paramilitarism today, and that too must be taken into account in constructing sustainable actions to end it once and for all.
- 1.21 Another dimension of the “complex landscape” is the fractured nature of politics in the years since the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement. As we approach its 25th anniversary we note that much of the 24-year period has been characterised by turbulence in political life, with several periods with a lack of a functioning 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. We also note that 2022 has seen a further chapter in this instability unfold with the absence of an Executive because of difficulties around the Protocol on Ireland and Northern Ireland of the EU-UK Withdrawal Agreement. The stop-start nature of politics in recent decades, and now once more being experienced, has been a further inhibiting factor in terms of efforts to end paramilitarism in Northern Ireland.
- 1.22 None of this has altered our view about the nature of paramilitarism today, about the complex range of factors underlying it and that the multi-faceted direction of travel signposted by the Fresh Start Agreement is the correct one and needs to be maintained and driven forward.
- 1.23 We continue to summarise our analysis as a Twin Track approach in the tackling and ending of paramilitarism, which means that the policing/justice responses are framed in Track One and the measures to tackle the socio-economic issues are in Track Two.
- 1.24 In our more recent Reports, we have given 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. In our Fourth Report, published in December 2021, we elaborated further on what we had in mind in that regard. 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. Whilst for many communities paramilitarism is not visible on a daily basis, we remain concerned about the risks posed to society by the continuing existence of paramilitary structures and groups which can be harnessed for the purposes of violence or the threat of violence. As we have been saying above, it is our view that a policing/justice approach alone is not sufficient. 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. The disbandment of paramilitary organisations has to involve voluntary action by the groups themselves.

- 1.25 There is also the reality that continued paramilitarism is connected to the wider context of the Troubles/conflict, and therefore just as a process of political engagement – ultimately leading to the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement – was needed to bring the Troubles/conflict to an end, a similar process is now required to definitively end paramilitarism. It is part of the unfinished business of the peace process. 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.
- 1.26 While the actions needed to undertake the task are largely a matter for the relevant authorities and bodies carrying the relevant accountability, having support across society is a critical factor in ensuring success. That is why in previous Reports – and we reiterate here – we have called for a whole of society debate on the issue, with a view to ensuring maximum consensus and support behind the measures needed if paramilitarism is to be brought to an end. We offer our Report as a contribution to that debate.
- 1.27 We have outlined our analysis in detail here because, as we stated above, so much hinges on correct and comprehensive analysis. In this Report we will be setting out progress being made in implementing the Fresh Start Agreement, and the gaps that still remain, building on our previous Reports. We also make observations, findings and Recommendations where further action is required on various dimensions of the paramilitarism issue.

Observation and Findings

Broad Picture

- 1.28 **2022 has been another mixed year in respect of efforts to bring paramilitarism to an end. As was the case in 2021, some of the data around paramilitary activity showed reductions again in 2022 and there has been good progress in several of the initiatives being developed by the Programme. In particular Phase Two of the Programme is demonstrating tangible benefits. On the other hand, reaction to political developments, particularly relating to the Protocol on Ireland and Northern Ireland of the EU-UK Withdrawal Agreement, led to new instability at political level, which in turn fed speculation about the potential for a resurgence of paramilitary activity. A number of paramilitary-related incidents served to heighten that speculation. Overall, we have not altered our view that the risks posed to society by the continuing existence of paramilitary groups and structures mean that paramilitarism remains a clear and present danger in and for Northern Ireland.**

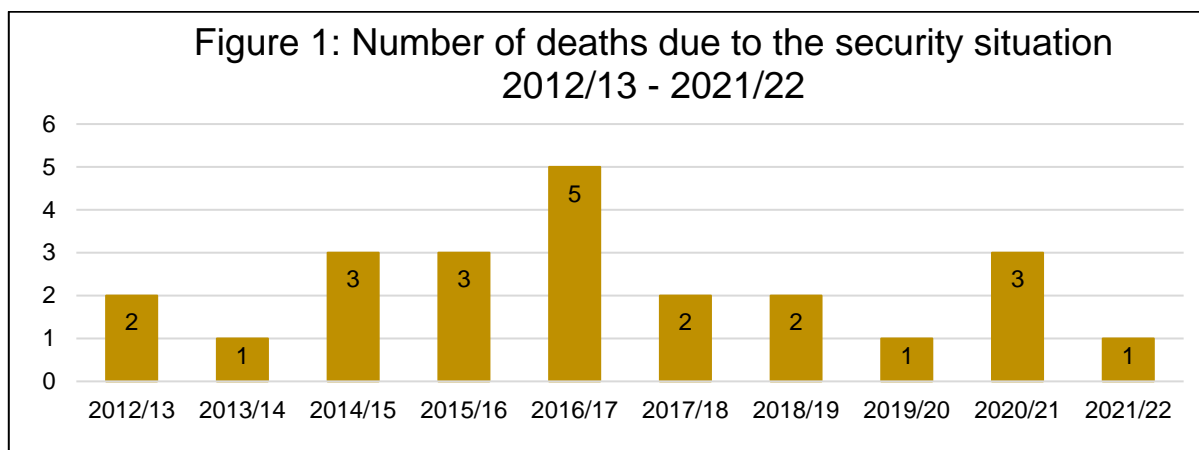
Reasons to be encouraged

- 1.29 We describe 2022, like 2021, as a mixed year and point to positive developments that undoubtedly give grounds for encouragement. We elaborate further on these developments in these paragraphs.
- 1.30 One of the benefits of the Fresh Start Agreement and the initiatives it has triggered has been the fact that there is now a major and comprehensive focus on tackling paramilitarism. In our view, this is a significant step. The reality is that long before Fresh Start there was a need to tackle the range of issues surrounding paramilitarism in Northern Ireland, but they were not being systematically addressed, or if they were, only in a piece-meal, inadequate way.
- 1.31 The Fresh Start process has established a whole new infrastructure which has been put in place to tackle paramilitarism, involving a wide range of measures and initiatives which are now beginning to gain real traction, and with a whole cohort of organisations and services, at public sector and community levels, actively engaged in the process. While, as we have said in previous Reports, we share the impatience of many to see more progress more quickly, putting in place effective steps to deal with the complex issues involved takes time. Some of these measures and initiatives have now bedded down and are starting to make a positive impact in the communities where the paramilitaries mainly operate.
- 1.32 In 2022, there was particular evidence of this as Phase Two of the Programme continued to be rolled out and has started demonstrating some significant dividends. Moreover, we are encouraged by 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 working across a whole range of public bodies, collaborating closely with the community and voluntary sector and others. We are pleased that this approach is at the heart of the Executive Programme and has been significantly enhanced in Phase Two.

1.33 We also welcome the increased focus on evidence and data underpinning the work of Phase Two of the Programme. Good, sustainable policy-making needs to be based on good evidence and data. In the same vein, we are impressed with the quality and quantity of new, bespoke research on aspects of the Programme. We comment further on all of this in a subsequent part of this Section and in more detail in Section C of the Report.

1.34 In terms of data, one of the metrics on trends around paramilitary activity is the PSNI security situation statistics. PSNI data shows that there has been a decline this year again in terms of numbers of deaths due to the security situation, shooting and bombing incidents, paramilitary style assaults and shootings. The tables below drawn from PSNI-published data show that this downward trajectory has been a feature over a number of years now. While they are but snap-shots in time, assembled collectively they serve to show an overall trend. We elaborate further on this in Section B.



Source: PSNI data⁹

⁹ <https://committees.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/109808/html/>

Figure 2: Number of shooting and bombing incidents 2012/13 - 2021/22

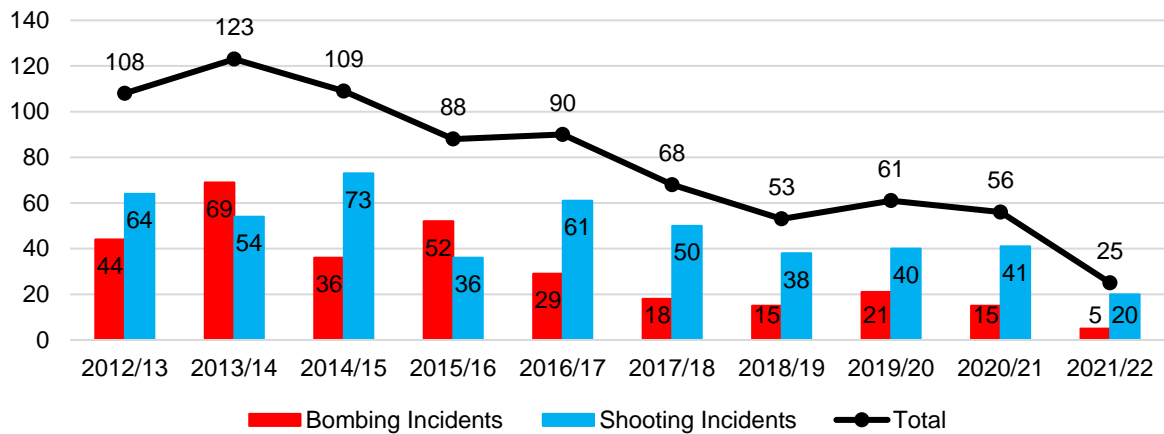


Figure 3: Number of casualties as a result of paramilitary style shootings 2012/13 - 2021/22

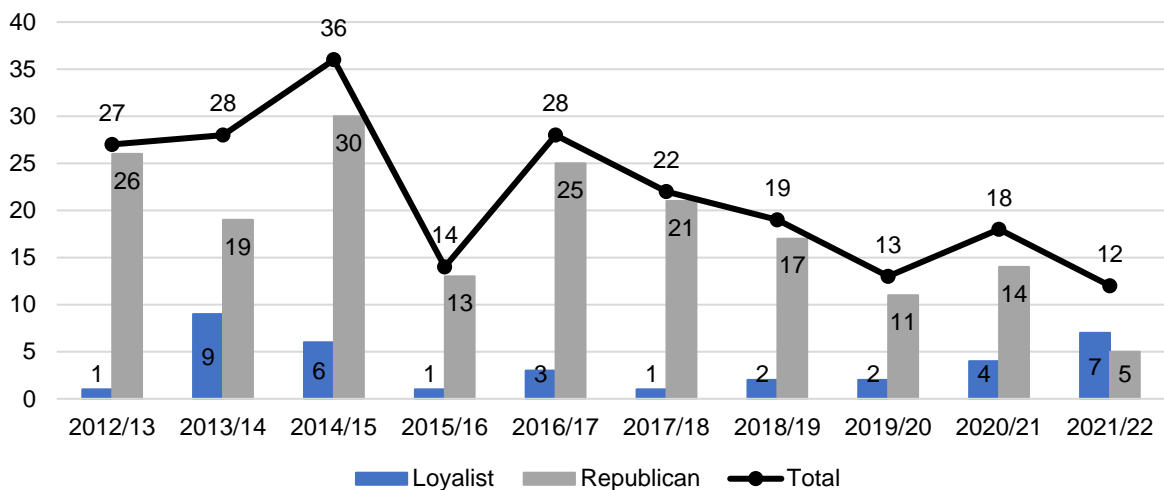
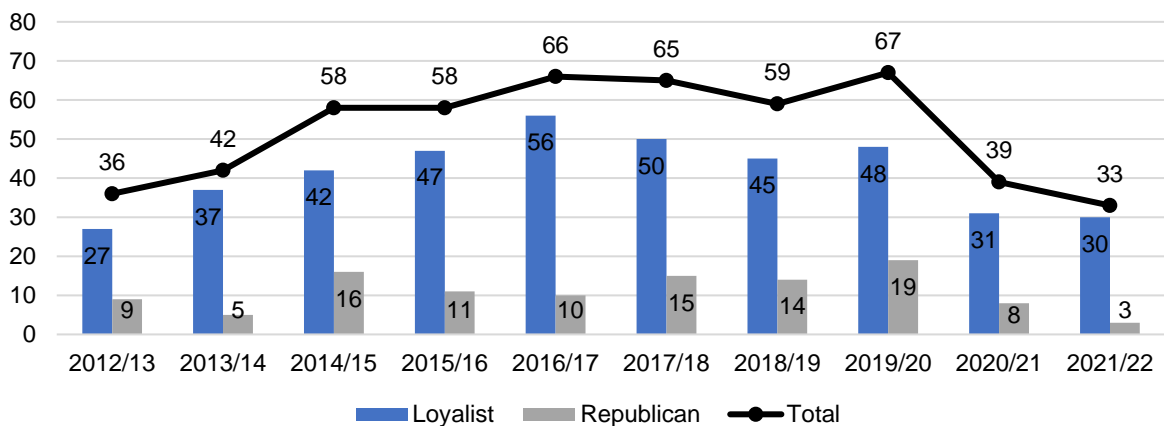


Figure 4: Number of casualties as a result of paramilitary style assaults 2012/13 - 2021/22



- 1.35 The Paramilitary Crime Task Force (PCTF) established in response to a recommendation of the Fresh Start Three Person Panel Report continued to have an impact on paramilitary criminality in 2022 and we welcome this. We also welcome the fact that, in line with the holistic, joined-up approach heralded by the Fresh Start Agreement and the resultant Executive Action Plan, the increased focus on co-operation taking place between the PSNI and others involved in the Programme has continued.
- 1.36 The announcement in March 2022 by the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland that the threat posed by Northern Ireland Related Terrorism was being reduced one level¹⁰ – the first reduction in twelve years – is another step forward.
- 1.37 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.
- 1.38 At a broader level, the point we made above about the value of the increasing focus on tackling and ending paramilitarism was further demonstrated in 2022 by the inquiry into paramilitarism in Northern Ireland that has been instituted by the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee at Westminster¹¹. Under the leadership of Chairperson Simon Hoare, the Committee has been examining the issue in a comprehensive way. The inquiry entitled “The effect of paramilitaries on society in Northern Ireland” is an important new initiative on the issue, and we have made a submission to it based on our Reports. We look forward to considering the findings it reaches in its Report once it has completed its work.
- 1.39 We also note the publication last December of the Final Report of the Commission on Flags, Identity, Culture and Tradition¹². Its thoughtful consideration of the issue of continued paramilitarism in Northern Ireland we believe has made an important contribution to the public debate on the matter. The Commission’s focus on the importance of political leadership and the role of civic society to ending paramilitarism echoes our own analysis. We noted the chapter of the Report on “Memorials, Remembrance and Commemoration” which reiterated points we have been making in our Reports on what we term “Memorialisation” and we comment further on that below.

Reasons for continuing concern

- 1.40 While these are all encouraging developments, the reality is that there remains much to be concerned about, and much remaining work to be done in ending paramilitarism

¹⁰ <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/northern-ireland-security-update>

¹¹ <https://committees.parliament.uk/committee/120/northern-ireland-affairs-committee/news/165190/impacts-of-paramilitarism-in-ni-inquiry-launch-21-22>

¹² <https://www.executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk/publications/commission-flags-identity-culture-and-tradition-final-report>

definitively. We reported last December on the worrying return of some street disorder in 2021, with suspected paramilitary involvement in some cases. While the level of disorder in 2022 to date was not on the same scale there were paramilitary-related incidents in 2022 which gave rise to renewed concern. Moreover, as mentioned above, political turbulence around the Northern Ireland Protocol led to heightened speculation about the possibility of renewed paramilitary activity. While a lowering in the threat level posed by Northern Ireland Related Terrorism was announced by the Secretary of State in March, it nonetheless continues to be classed as “substantial”. 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.

- 1.41 We acknowledge that paramilitarism is not on the same scale as it was during the Troubles/conflict and it is also the case there are many areas of Northern Ireland today where paramilitaries have little or no direct impact on daily life. But that does not hold true for those communities where the paramilitaries remain strong, and this is a continuing worry in 2022. In reality, Paramilitary Groups remain embedded in these communities and are part of the fabric of daily life there. Part of the complexity of the situation is that while at one level what is happening is coercive control, that is not the complete picture. It is also the case that in some areas their presence and involvement are reflective of the wishes of cohorts of the community, with the groups involved being seen as in effect part of the so-called authority structure of that community. This is not an acceptable situation and underlines all the more the urgency of undertaking the necessary steps to bring paramilitarism to an end.
- 1.42 We further note the fact that there has been no Executive in place in Northern Ireland since early February this year. While Ministers continued in office until 28 October 2022, the absence of the Executive itself has had an impact on cross-cutting working. This in turn has implications for the implementation of the Programme, given how critical joined-up working across departments and agencies is to its effectiveness. While it is not for us to comment on the politics of the situation, which we acknowledge are challenging and sensitive, we are simply re-stating the point we have made in previous Reports around the importance of political leadership in driving a complex Programme with many difficult dimensions attached to it.
- 1.43 Finally, one other reason for concern is the absence so far of a plan to address the continuation of the structures and infrastructure of paramilitarism – which we believe would be best addressed by our proposal for a process of engagement with Paramilitary Groups themselves with a view to Group Transition and disbandment. While we welcome the discussion of the IRC’s Recommendations at the British-Irish Intergovernmental Conference during the year, we are disappointed that more substantial progress has not been made on Group Transition in 2022. We acknowledge that there are many other pressing issues besetting the two Governments and the Northern Ireland parties at the moment, but our point is that apart from addressing Group Transition as a necessary action in its own right for the

good of society in Northern Ireland, it is also the case that the paramilitarism issue touches most if not all the other major questions on the political table at the moment and makes each one's resolution more difficult.

- 1.44 We remain firmly of the view that a process of Group Transition is a necessary part of bringing paramilitarism to an end and we explore the matter further later in this Section of our Report. We welcome the support expressed by the PSNI in their evidence to the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee inquiry on paramilitarism for the need for a process of Group Transition, which is encouraging¹³. We elaborate further on this later in this Section.

Developments in 2022 – a more detailed look

- 1.45 We wish to turn now to a more detailed look at developments towards tackling paramilitarism in 2022. Firstly, we take a look at the progress of Phase Two of the Programme in overall terms and then highlight some developments within the two Tracks of our Twin Track analysis – the policing/justice responses and addressing systemic socio-economic issues in communities. Thereafter, we turn to that further dimension we believe is necessary, namely Group Transition.

Phase Two of the Programme

- 1.46 In 2021, the Programme developed to tackle paramilitarism which was based on the Executive Action Plan of 2016 moved to Phase Two of its operation. Phase Two is now well underway and delivering results. The big difference between Phase One and Phase Two is that the former was focussed on individual project outputs and outcomes, whereas in Phase Two all projects are working towards shared outcomes. This new approach has been framed as “benefits realisation” – in other words, an emphasis on actual measurable and sustainable benefits as distinct from project outputs. Underlying the new direction is a “public health approach methodology” – 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 – something which aligns with best practice internationally.
- 1.47 There is also a greater focus on data and evidence in Phase Two. We think this is a very good development. We also strongly welcome the related enhanced emphasis on bespoke new research around aspects of the Programme. Some very interesting and important new findings are emerging from this research, which in turn, as they should, are informing the further evolution of the Programme. This is very much in line also with the injunction in the Fresh Start Agreement, the Three Person Panel Report and the original Executive Action Plan of 2016 for a focus on innovative approaches in tackling paramilitarism. We commend the focus on bespoke research on aspects of the Programme and call for further investment along these lines.

¹³ <https://committees.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/109808/html/>

- 1.48 A key feature of Phase Two is the requirement for joined-up working across all aspects of the Programme – or to use the analogy of the Twin Track Approach, across both tracks of the approach. This has led to a further evolution of the implementation and governance architecture of the Programme to reflect cross-cutting working at all levels. In practical terms, a new “Benefits Realisation Coordination Group” has been established, chaired by the Permanent Secretary at the Department of Justice. Its focus includes ensuring delivery and achievement of benefits within the Programme, as well as robust accountability. We welcome the establishment of a further structure at senior level, the Programme Sponsor Group, chaired by the Head of the Civil Service, and elaborate further on this below. At ground level, new initiatives are developing, reflecting these joined-up structures. For instance, a number of hubs have been created which bring together a range of stakeholders in a particular locality, including the PSNI, relevant agencies (such as the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, Health and Social Care Trusts, the Education Authority and others), local Councils and community groups.
- 1.49 As 2022 draws to a close, we maintain a close interest in the issue of strategic leadership of the effort to end paramilitarism. We have stated in this Report that we welcome the tangible progress being made by the Programme and its various initiatives including the PCTF, and the increased focus on a joined-up, holistic approach, the enhanced approach for measuring the impact of the Programme, and the creation of the new senior Sponsor Group.
- 1.50 Paramilitarism operates within a shared ecosystem in which the Northern Ireland (NI) Executive, the UK and Irish Governments all have specific roles in addressing. Roles include national security, policing and justice, social change and the cross-border dimension, and it is vital that there is effective join-up, co-operation and leadership to ensure maximum effect is achieved. There are good examples of collaboration in place within this sphere: the Joint Agency Task Force (which involves multi-agency cross-border collaboration to disrupt criminality in border areas), the Community Safety Board (which brings community safety partners together to identify cross-cutting community safety issues and facilitate partnership working to put in place a problem solving approach to emerging and shared issues), and the Secretary of State for NI, NI Justice Minister and senior PSNI’s regular Security Interface Meetings to discuss issues of shared and overlapping concern, including paramilitarism, which are also mirrored at official level. UK and Irish Ministers regularly meet at the British-Irish Intergovernmental Conference and have discussed security co-operation and efforts to tackle paramilitarism and associated criminality. The NI and Irish Ministers of Justice also meet regularly.
- 1.51 The Sponsor Group is a new development, under the leadership of the Head of the Northern Ireland Civil Service, drawing together senior officials from those departments and agencies involved in tackling paramilitarism, to implement the strategic direction of the Programme, demonstrating the necessary collaborative

culture between departments and agencies and making linkages between and beyond this and other Executive initiatives. We see this as having the potential to foster change and drive in a holistic way the wider transformative work that the IRC and the Fresh Start Agreement itself identified as necessary to deal comprehensively with paramilitarism. We welcome this development and encourage the Sponsor Group in its mission in order to ensure both strategic and operational join-up. We will watch its progress with interest and will continue to keep a close focus on the question of joined-up, strategic leadership of the effort to end paramilitarism.

- 1.52 We set out in more detail below and in Section C the activities that are underway in Phase Two against this backdrop. It is a complex structure, with many issues, factors and organisations in the mix, but we have always said that ending paramilitarism is a complex task with a whole range of dimensions, each of which needs to be addressed if success is to be achieved. We have met several of the agencies and bodies working at ground level in this new approach and we are impressed with the level of commitment shown and the clear benefits beginning to come from the collaborative approach involved. We also meet regularly with the Programme Team and appreciate the dedicated way that they have continued to evolve the Programme, taking account of the learning that is emerging.
- 1.53 We strongly agree with them also that what is involved is not amenable to short-term solutions, but rather will require a long-term commitment. That is why we believe that it is vital that funding for the Programme and the goals behind it must be maintained well into the future.
- 1.54 While we welcome this significant progress, both at operational and governance levels, it is vital there is a continuing commitment to oversee all aspects of the effort to end paramilitarism, given the many stakeholders involved. That is why we have included a specific Recommendation in this Report on that matter.
- 1.55 We turn now to a more detailed look at both tracks of what we call the Twin Track approach to tackling paramilitarism – the policing/justice measures (Track One) and the measures addressing the systemic socio-economic issues facing communities where the paramilitaries operate (Track Two).

Track One - Policing

- 1.56 The PSNI continues to play a crucial role in tackling paramilitarism through its law enforcement activities against Paramilitary Groups and individuals claiming affiliation to those groups, through the PCTF, the Terrorism Investigation Unit, collaborative working with the National Crime Agency and partnership with other bodies including HMRC (UK Tax Authority). Many PSNI teams are involved in this work, including Community Safety, Local Policing, Crime Operations and others, as the problem of paramilitary crime takes many forms and needs to be tackled in many different contexts (rural, urban, localised and regional). Criminality with a backdrop of a

paramilitary allegiance (whether sanctioned by groups or not) has a pervasive effect on local communities, and causes harm to individuals, groups and society. Good work is being done in this regard and we urge the PSNI to continue to pursue those involved in this criminality and to use all of the resources at their disposal to do so.

- 1.57 Effective neighbourhood policing is also vital to tackling paramilitarism and we welcome the PSNI's continuing commitment to it. The PSNI launched a new set of neighbourhood policing "hallmarks"¹⁴ in June of this year and an engagement strategy: "Here For You"¹⁵. This neighbourhood approach – which focusses on understanding and meeting the needs of local communities, including through collaborative local problem solving, dialogue, clarifying expectations and using the model to reduce harm and enhance community safety and trust and confidence in policing – is commendable and fully deserves the attention being given to it by the PSNI. We urge the PSNI to continue to prioritise this approach, and to continue its work with communities to embed it.
- 1.58 We also welcome the approach by the PSNI in establishing a new model of practice (a locality model) in Rathcoole, Carrickfergus and Greenisland bespoke to the local community. This will allow a shared platform for all of those interested and engaged in reducing the harm caused by paramilitary groups in those areas to work together, join up activities, learn lessons and share experiences, thereby hopefully multiplying the impact. We encourage the PSNI to roll out this approach to other areas once it has bedded in and demonstrated its effect.
- 1.59 The PSNI also continues to participate in multi-agency support hub arrangements, to help vulnerable people get access to the right support, at the right time, from the right organisation in their local area. This collaborative, preventative and upstream work, as well as PSNI's support for diversionary projects and engagement with local communities, are the kinds of value-added activities that should be seen as core policing activity, and continue to be adequately funded. The Belfast City Council-led multi-agency threat support project and the youth support hub pilot being run by Mid & East Antrim Council are also valuable pieces of work in that they will help with establishing what is effective in terms of the particularities of multi-agency collaboration to address harm and threat posed by paramilitaries.
- 1.60 We are mindful of the very challenging financial position that the PSNI finds itself in. We have consistently argued that funding and commitment to tackling paramilitarism must be long-term, multi-year and sustainable, so that progress can be built upon and work is not stop-start and beholden to short budget cycles and associated pressures. We appreciate that this is a broader issue for both the PSNI and the public sector, exacerbated by the lack of a functioning Executive, but it is our duty at the IRC to

¹⁴ <https://www.psni.police.uk/sites/default/files/2022-09/The%20Hallmarks%20of%20Neighbourhood%20Policing.pdf>

¹⁵ <https://www.psni.police.uk/sites/default/files/2022-09/engagement-strategy-spreads.pdf>

highlight the implications of budgetary constraints for the task of tackling paramilitarism. The PSNI must be able to recruit the officers it needs, and whilst we welcome the Chief Constable's commitment to protecting neighbourhood policing funding, other important work must also be appropriately funded including early intervention and prevention activities, local problem-solving, locality working and other collaboration with agencies working in those areas.

- 1.61 We also note and welcome the join-up between the Department of Justice, the Northern Ireland Office and the various agencies in tackling the "shared ecosystem" of organised crime, paramilitary crime and national security in line with commitments contained within the Fresh Start Agreement. As with all of this work, collaboration and effective joined-up working are crucial to success, and we urge all those involved to continue to focus on threat, risk and harm caused.
- 1.62 Cross-border law enforcement co-operation continues, including through the Joint Agency Task Force (set up to tackle organised and cross jurisdictional crime), and is working well. Cross-border collaboration between the PSNI and An Garda Síochána continues to provide opportunities to disrupt the activity of organised crime groups and reduce criminal activity in border areas and this dimension of the work continues to be vital.

Track One - Other Criminal Justice Aspects

- 1.63 We are disappointed that the Executive did not deliver **organised crime legislation** during the last Assembly mandate (2017-2022). Organised crime legislation, similar to that used in Scotland, Ireland and in other jurisdictions, would give law enforcement agencies another tool in their work against paramilitary-affiliated criminal activity, and we see real value in creating offences of directing serious organised crime and participating in serious organised crime, and making serious organised crime an aggravating factor for the purposes of determining sentences to tackling paramilitarism. Whilst we recognise the importance of other legislation passed by the previous Assembly, and the range of priorities, we urge the Department of Justice and the Executive to prioritise this in the next mandate.
- 1.64 We welcome that the Assets Recovery Community Scheme continues to fund projects in community settings aimed at preventing crime, using monies from the **proceeds of crime**. We note the Irish Government's establishment of the Community Safety Innovation Fund which reinvests the proceeds of crime seized by the Criminal Assets Bureau in local projects to build stronger, safer communities. Likewise, the Police Property Fund Grant Scheme funds projects building community safety and/or confidence in the police the in local area in question using assets recovered from criminal investigations.
- 1.65 Since November 2017, the PCTF has seized £0.5m in cash and £2.3m in property; £1.5m in property Recovery Orders has been issued; and over £5.1m in revenue loss

has been prevented. In June 2021, law enforcement agencies and investigation authorities got access to new financial powers, including Unexplained Wealth Orders and Accounting Freezing Orders. The new powers should be additional tools of value in tackling paramilitary-linked criminality in the period ahead.

- 1.66 We note the progress that has been made in a number of other criminal justice matters and urge further momentum in the period ahead. The Criminal Justice (**Committal Reform**) Bill received Royal Assent in March 2022 and should alleviate some of the avoidable delay in the judicial process, and remove the need for victims and witnesses to give oral evidence twice. We welcome the second phase of this work – **direct committal** – which will allow cases involving the most serious offences to go directly to the Crown Court, bypassing the traditional committal process. While we understand that this entails significant reform, we urge that it needs to be implemented expeditiously. There is still more work to be undertaken in relation to removing avoidable delay from the criminal justice system, which is linked to public trust and confidence in the rule of law.
- 1.67 We recognise that engaging with the criminal justice system can be challenging, and confidence levels can be driven by personal experience, or by experiences of friends or family. There continues to be a real fear for witnesses to come forward on the grounds of intimidation, and giving evidence can still be seen as a life changing experience. There is a lack of understanding of how the criminal justice works from start to finish and more needs to be done to demystify the process and raise public awareness.
- 1.68 Linked with public confidence and the speed of justice is the continuing problem of public concerns around bail and sentences given in cases. We welcome the commitment of the Chief Justice to a problem-solving approach, effective case management and removing avoidable delay.¹⁶ Whilst we recognise the challenging fiscal climate, we view problem-solving approaches as an upfront investment which will ultimately save the public sector resources in the long-run, as well as being the right thing to do.
- 1.69 Work continues with individuals in the justice system to divert them from paramilitary activity, including: learning and development and constructive activity provision in the separated regime; wrap-around support to address complex needs and support individuals to help them resist negative influences, and increase resilience and capacity; and work to explore what more could be done in this area.
- 1.70 Although we welcome the work of an independent panel to review the Community Based Restorative Justice protocol in Northern Ireland and look forward to considering

¹⁶ https://www.lawsoc-ni.org/DatabaseDocs/new_5657072_lcj_opening_of_term_address_2022_-_5_sept_2022.pdf

their report, we continue to be disappointed that a Centre of Excellence, as supported in the Fresh Start Panel Report in 2016, has not yet been established. We renew our call for this Centre to be prioritised.

- 1.71 Last year, we highlighted the concerns of the NI Commissioner for Children and Young People about the consistency of the presence of children’s social care and safeguarding agencies in work relating to protecting children from harm including abuse, violence, coercion and exploitation by organised gangs and groups¹⁷. Whilst we welcome the establishment of a multi-agency group to explore these issues further, it is vital that there be consistency of approach across the board.

Track Two – addressing systemic socio-economic issues

- 1.72 Phase Two of the Programme includes a number of initiatives designed to contribute to a stated goal of “People and communities are more resilient to paramilitary influence and involvement in paramilitarism, criminality and organised crime”. We welcome the focus on supporting communities in areas of high paramilitary activity and are encouraged by the early results of these initiatives.
- 1.73 We see educational underachievement as a key underlying factor in the persistence of paramilitarism and welcome the carryover of the WRAP project into Phase Two. This project is delivering wrap-around education services through flexible interventions to thousands of children and young people facing significant challenges. We are encouraged by the positive feedback from children, parents and teachers and see merit in expanding the programme beyond the four areas it currently targets to ensure access to additional support where needed through work to implement “A Fair Start”.
- 1.74 Linked to the work of the Programme is the Report of the Expert Panel on Educational Underachievement which was published in May 2021: “A Fair Start”¹⁸. We welcomed its recommendations and note that implementation of the plan is underway. We encourage the Executive to implement the Action Plan and allocate funds accordingly.
- 1.75 Other Phase Two community-based initiatives such as the Communities in Transition project, which aims to build capacity to support the communities most impacted by paramilitary activity, and the Developing Women in Community Leadership project, which seeks to equip women with the skills and confidence needed to become influencers and take on leadership roles, are making an impact on the ground. Given that the wider aim of both projects is to transition communities away from paramilitarism and build capacity, we see these projects as long-term endeavours that require multi-annual funding if they are to help make communities sustainably more resilient to paramilitarism.

¹⁷ <https://www.niccy.org/publications/advice-to-government-child-criminal-exploitation-safeguarding-children-and-young-people-from-abuse-and-exploitation/>

¹⁸ <https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/publications/fair-start-final-report-action-plan>

- 1.76 The Youth Service provides support in partnership with the community and voluntary sector, and other agencies such as the PSNI, that covers a wide range of activity. This includes working directly with young people who have been harmed by paramilitaries and/or those who are most at risk from them. For example, the CONNECT Programme in Altnagelvin Emergency Department seeks to provide wrap-around support to young people at a 'reachable and teachable moment' after violent attacks – this model is now being rolled out to other hospitals. The Education Authority (EA) also continues to increase awareness, capacity and understanding of the effects of paramilitary activity through training, research and other activity. Fresh Start Through Sport has been positively evaluated this year for its work engaging those on the edges of the youth justice system who are vulnerable to paramilitary harm and influence using physical activity, sports-based activity and specific support. These projects are important in supporting young people who need help but also in providing stability to allow additional interventions to be more effective. We commend the EA Youth Service and Department for Communities and their partners on this good work.
- 1.77 While targeted and community-level initiatives are crucially important to the mission of tackling paramilitarism, we continue to see the need for ambitious transformative initiatives of a different order to deal sustainably with ingrained issues such as poverty, social exclusion, lack of investment, drug addiction and educational underachievement, all of which contribute to the environment where paramilitaries endure. Tackling paramilitarism requires concerted government intervention to comprehensively support communities in these areas. Such intervention may involve further work in marginalised communities to address issues such as deprivation, social exclusion, job creation and opportunity in a more comprehensive manner. We recognise that an anti-poverty strategy is being developed and encourage read across to tackling paramilitarism and recommend it pays due regard to the impact that its work could have in creating the environment to sustainably end paramilitarism.
- 1.78 These initiatives, the relationships and connections being developed through them, are underpinned by structures that are undoubtedly playing a role in wider efforts to address systemic issues. The Programme Team and the Safeguarding Board have worked hard to embed a trauma-informed approach across the Programme, and promote it further across the public sector. This is an important initiative to ensure that the system is responsive to the needs of people who need support.
- 1.79 We see the Sponsor Group (as outlined in paragraph 1.51) as having the potential to make additional connections between the Programme and other work, providing strategic leadership and driving the wider transformative work that the IRC, the Fresh Start Agreement and others have identified as crucial to dealing comprehensively with paramilitarism.
- 1.80 Ensuring that paramilitarism is ended once and for all must remain our collective focus. This will require a concerted cross-government effort and we urge the Executive to

ensure that they deliver on this through their commitment in New Decade, New Approach to adopt “a targeted and specific focus” across government to tackle paramilitarism¹⁹. We reiterate our call that tackling paramilitarism becomes a distinct outcome in the next Programme for Government.

¹⁹ https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/856998/2020-01-08_a_new_decade_a_new_approach.pdf

The additional dimension – Group Transition

- 1.81 As recalled above, we set out comprehensively in last year's Report our view that in addition to the two Tracks of policing/criminal justice responses and measures to address socio-economic challenges facing communities, a further dimension was needed if paramilitarism was to be ended, namely, a process of engagement with the Paramilitary Groups themselves to bring about Group Transition and, ultimately, disbandment.
- 1.82 We said in last year's Report that we would continue our discussions with the two Governments, the political parties and various interested stakeholders on the matter. We have done that. In the course of 2022, we have had a range of useful exchanges on Group Transition and about the need for a process of engagement with the Paramilitary Groups aimed at bringing about disbandment. In these paragraphs we wish to set out our findings in terms of what has emerged from those discussions and the point we have now reached in terms of our analysis.
- 1.83 Our position is that we remain firmly of the belief that a process of engagement is needed with the Paramilitary Groups if Group Transition to disbandment is to be achieved, and while we are disappointed that more progress has not been made on the issue, we intend to press on with making the case for our proposal.
- 1.84 In the course of our discussions with various stakeholders we have heard a wide gamut of views about the matter, ranging from support for our thinking to outright opposition, and various shades of opinion in between.
- 1.85 Mostly the views expressed have been couched in terms of concern about the risks, complexities and sensitivities involved. We fully understand and share those concerns and noted that this would be a difficult and challenging path to undertake. We remain firmly of that view. But equally we fear that if something along these lines is not attempted, there is little or no chance of achieving the Fresh Start goal of ending paramilitarism. We recognise that there are judgment calls involved, but with the right preparation and being aware of the risks involved, we believe it is a path worth taking for the good of society as a whole. By the same token we are of the view that *not* undertaking an initiative of this kind carries risks of the problem of paramilitarism being perpetuated.
- 1.86 We seek to address the concerns that have been expressed by various stakeholders with a view to mitigating them in the Sections below.

Clarity of definition – the meaning of Group Transition

- 1.87 One of the concerns that recurs regularly in our exchanges is a perceived lack of clarity about precisely what is meant by the concept of "Group Transition" or even "Transition" more broadly in this context. It is a reasonable question and concern. The concept of "Transition" is mentioned frequently in the various Fresh Start documents – the

Agreement itself, the Three Person Panel Report and the Executive Action Plan. In broad terms it means the movement from involvement in or connection to paramilitary activity to a life lived entirely based on peaceful, democratic norms. Moreover, we see three main forms of Transition – individual Transition, community Transition and Group Transition.

- 1.88 The Programme makes clear that its focus is on the first two and that there is no mandate in the Executive Action Plan for an engagement around Group Transition. It is our task at the IRC to keep measures to end paramilitarism under constant review and that is why we have returned to the issue in several of our Reports and do so again now.
- 1.89 Let us look then more closely at the definition of “Group Transition”. It is our view that a key feature of paramilitarism today is the continuation of its structures and infrastructure in the form of the various groups, both Republican and Loyalist. In design terms, therefore, if paramilitarism is to be ended, it follows that the issue of the groups themselves organisationally and structurally must be addressed. In our view, the end state of that journey of Transition is disbandment of the groups, though we acknowledge that there are a variety of means by which that can be achieved. We explore those later in these paragraphs.
- 1.90 One key question in this debate about definition is whether Group Transition is an event or a process. In our considered view, it is the latter – although of course the end point (disbandment) could indeed be an event. If the definition of Transition incorporates a process, then one question which has arisen in our discussions over the past year is whether Group Transition is already happening in some form. To delve deeper into that question begs a further one – is paramilitarism the same today as it was in the height of the Troubles/conflict say over 30 years ago? One reply we have heard to that question is: “it is different”. Certainly, as we have said earlier in this Report, in terms of scale nobody could claim that paramilitarism is of the order it was at that time in terms of numbers involved and levels of activity.
- 1.91 We have given this question of whether Group Transition in some form is already underway considerable thought over the past year. In our view it is. The evidence for this is clear. It is there in the sharp decline in the numbers of people involved in paramilitary groups compared to the height of the Troubles/conflict. It is there in the scale of activity being engaged in by the groups, as is set out in the data provided in this Report. It is there in the wide range of constructive community activity being undertaken by people historically associated with various paramilitary groups.
- 1.92 But having said all that, it is also clear that while some dimension of Transition has taken place at group level, the reality is that it has stalled or not been completed. A major obstacle to completion is the absence of a formal process of engagement with the authorities to ensure Group Transition is accelerated and completed.

Reduction of the problem is still success

- 1.93 One of the concerns that has been raised in our discussions around the issue is the perceived fragmentation of some of the groups – that their lack of cohesion could inhibit the ability to achieve meaningful Transition of groups at scale. This is a valid concern but not one which in our view should mean not initiating a formal process. Achieving the transition of a significant portion of the Paramilitary Groups would ensure a strong reduction in the scale of paramilitarism. In our view, that would count as success and a very significant advance on where we are at the moment. Moreover, it would also mean that the groupings, or parts of groupings, left behind after the process would be of a much smaller scale.

DDR

- 1.94 In examining the valid concern regarding the lack of clarity around what a process of Group Transition would entail, we have revisited a concept associated with conflict resolution internationally, known as DDR: Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration. The United Nations (UN) recognises DDR as an essential part of a conflict resolution process stating:

“Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) is a process through which members of armed forces and groups are supported to lay down their weapons and transition to civilian life. DDR processes contribute to stabilization and peacebuilding efforts, and to creating an environment in which a peace process, political and social reconciliation, access to livelihoods and decent work, as well as sustainable development can take root. For these reasons, DDR processes should be seen as integral parts of efforts to consolidate peace and promote stability, and not merely as a set of sequenced technical programmes and activities”²⁰.

- 1.95 The 1998 Belfast/Good Friday Agreement included elements of DDR (decommissioning of weapons, the release of prisoners, normalisation of security arrangements etc.), but it did not formally frame these as DDR in the sense outlined by the UN. We believe there is merit in having a Group Transition viewed through the lens of DDR, as defined by the UN. It is true, Northern Ireland differs to a significant degree to situations where armed groups operate in quasi-military format and often at a distance from their own neighbourhoods. In Northern Ireland, paramilitaries continued to live for the most part in their own or connected communities and as a consequence a different kind of process would be required – one tailored to its context. In other words, the DDR process as applied elsewhere could be adapted to apply to ending paramilitarism in Northern Ireland today. Lessons could also be gleaned from other contexts such as the concept of post-conflict reconstruction.

²⁰ [https://www.un.org/peacebuilding/sites/www.un.org.peacebuilding/files/pb_review_thematic_paper_orolsi_ddrs - role of ddr in pb and sp-final.pdf](https://www.un.org/peacebuilding/sites/www.un.org.peacebuilding/files/pb_review_thematic_paper_orolsi_ddrs_-_role_of_ddr_in_pb_and_sp-final.pdf)

- 1.96 One obvious question is what would Reintegration – the R in DDR – mean in Northern Ireland terms. We believe exploring this question could be a valuable element of a Group Transition process in Northern Ireland today. We are aware of the concern of stakeholders that Group Transition might mean the continuation of coercive control in communities in another guise. That is certainly a valid concern. But these worries are not unique to Northern Ireland and are valid issues to be addressed, drawing on models of practice that have worked elsewhere.
- 1.97 A key point we are seeking to make in this Report is that best practice internationally, led by the UN, shows that addressing the issue of Group Transition is an essential part of many peace processes and should be on the agenda in Northern Ireland. We recognise and acknowledge the complexities but in our view it is not acceptable to frame them as insurmountable obstacles from the outset.
- 1.98 We have also heard the view “but it is now over two decades since the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement, the Transition train left the station long ago and it is too late to be addressing this now”. The reality is, however, that paramilitarism remains and needs to be addressed.

The role of women in Group Transition

- 1.99 Throughout the peace process women have played a critical role within local communities and continue to make an important contribution at multiple levels. The value of that contribution in terms of tackling paramilitarism was recognised in the Three Person Panel Report, the Executive Action Plan and today in the Programme through bespoke projects with a focus on the particular leadership role women can actively play.
- 1.100 For women to contribute to peacebuilding and conflict transformation it is important that they have the space to raise concerns in a non-threatening environment that is not controlled by paramilitarism; that their concerns and aspirations are recognised as raising important every-day peace indicators; that women are trained as skilled facilitators to conduct sensitive and critical conversations; and that there is recognition of the contribution of women with longer-term support for 'bottom-up' community initiatives. This process must therefore ensure that the voice of women living in those communities most adversely impacted is listened to.

Possible elements of a Group Transition process

- 1.101 Moving to the overall shape and nature of such a process around Group Transition, we continue to be asked about what that would look like in practice. In last year's Report, we sought to elaborate on our proposals. We repeat here the key elements of what would constitute the building blocks of such a process. These are not definitive, but we think they are a useful contribution to the debate around the issue – a debate we continue to believe that should be held at many levels, including with Governments, the NI parties and wider society. Where relevant, we have incorporated

some new ideas that have arisen during the last year.

1.102 A critical question is “Who would own the process?” Our answer last year was, and remains, 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.

1.103 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.

1.104 We believe there would be merit in preparing the ground for a formal process. This could be done, for instance, by the Governments appointing (with the support of the Executive) an Independent Person who would be authorised to speak to the various interested parties, including the Paramilitary Groups themselves, to gather their views and thereby help ensure that any resulting process that emerged had the highest chance of success.

1.105 In terms of the various milestones that would mark the formal process of engagement with the Paramilitary Groups, we envision them committing, among others, to the following steps:

- 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 below).

1.106 The primary goal of the process should be disbandment of the groups. Achieving each step in itself would be valuable progress.

1.107 We acknowledge that this process would involve significant work on Reintegration and is based on good practice internationally. A bespoke model for Northern Ireland should be designed. An inclusive design would form part of the process.

1.108 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, including last

year's, we acknowledge that Deproscription is a highly sensitive issue. We are not taking a view on its merits at this point, but point out that it remains on the statute books and would be a factor to be considered in any comprehensive process of Group Transition.

A prize worth aiming for

1.109 To sum up, we reiterate our appreciation of the major sensitivities and challenges which surround the issue of Group Transition. But after many years working together in the IRC, we believe that ending paramilitarism cannot be achieved without a comprehensive process of Group Transition. Events over the last number of years have shown how problematic the continuation of paramilitarism is for Northern Ireland. Not addressing the continuing existence of the groups would in our view be not only a missed opportunity but could make ending paramilitarism an even harder goal to achieve. Our view is that the two Governments and the parties signed up to the goal of ending paramilitarism in 2015 and a real onus is on them now to ensure it is delivered. We also note that all Ministers and Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs) are required to make six specific commitments around ending paramilitarism in the Ministerial Pledge of Office and the undertaking given by MLAs. Working together towards a process of Group Transition is, in our view, a part of the delivery of those commitments.

1.110 The underlying goal of the Agreement was the transformation of society into an entirely peaceful one, based on the politics of accommodation and reconciliation. The continuation of paramilitarism is part of the unfinished business of the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement. We would strongly urge, therefore, a redoubling of efforts over the coming year by focussing on developing a process of Group Transition. The disbandment of groups would have a positive impact on the communities most affected by paramilitary activity and control, and society as a whole. It would help empower communities, deepen the rule of law, foster further participation and equality in civic life and could result in much needed investment; all as part of the continuing transformation of Northern Ireland as well as contributing to reconciliation efforts. We continue to believe that if those obstacles and concerns can be overcome, the prize of success would be a major achievement for the whole of society.

1.111 We reiterate our call, therefore, to the two Governments, the parties and civic society to give urgent consideration to a comprehensive process of Group Transition, building on models from elsewhere, including the concept of DDR.

Legacy of the Past

1.112 There is a 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. We believe that any legacy process will have major implications for the ending of paramilitarism and Group Transition. While legacy is not part of our mandate at the IRC, it is a key element of the wider context in which we undertake our work. We note the policy

direction favoured by the UK Government in the Northern Ireland Troubles (Legacy and Reconciliation) Bill currently making its way through the UK Parliament. We also note the strong opposition to the proposed legislation by the Northern Ireland parties, the Irish Government, many victims' groups and others in civic society in Northern Ireland.

Other issues for comment

1.113 There are other issues relating to paramilitarism we wish to offer our views on and these are set out in the following paragraphs. In most cases, they are matters that have been raised before, but we do so here as we believe them to be of continuing relevance in the work of bringing paramilitarism to an end.

Coercive control of communities

1.114 In last year's Report, we included a Section on coercive control of communities by paramilitary groups as an often-underappreciated dimension of the overall paramilitary issue. We wish to refer to the matter again in this Report as we know from exchanges we have had during 2022 with people living in these communities that it remains an ongoing reality for them. That pervasive influence is particularly demonstrated in the data from the Housing Executive that 142 households presented to them as homeless due to paramilitary intimidation in the last financial year²¹. That figure only provides a snapshot of intimidation, and we are mindful of the life-changing effect of paramilitary threats forcing people to leave an area. Coercive control can take many forms, including intimidation, financial extortion, creating an environment where people are afraid to speak out, sexual exploitation, and stifling alternative voices and leadership. Often the control is insidious and involves communities and individuals adapting their behaviour to avoid the attention of paramilitaries. Physical manifestations of that control include what are sometimes termed "paramilitary style attacks"; assaults causing actual or grievous bodily harm, and shootings.

1.115 In our Analysis Section above we pointed to the complexity that there can often be some support within communities for the control exercised by paramilitary groups or individuals claiming to be associated with them – including in respect of "paramilitary style attacks". Nonetheless, it is clear that coercive control by paramilitary groups is an unacceptable feature of Northern Ireland life today and another reason for the urgent need to bring paramilitarism to an end.

1.116 Part of our rationale for highlighting this point in our Report is that it is an unseen part of the problem for most people living in Northern Ireland. The evidence shows that the great majority of communities in Northern Ireland do not experience or witness paramilitary influence in their daily lives. But for those communities where the paramilitaries operate, it is a very different situation indeed.

²¹ <https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/topics/housing-statistics>

Financial commitments

1.117 As we have made clear in this Report and previous ones, the task of putting an end to paramilitarism requires an ongoing and comprehensive focus, including multi-year financial commitments to reflect the need for sustained investment. Financial support for a tackling paramilitarism programme and initiatives should be maintained to the full by the UK Government and the Northern Ireland Executive. Dedicated and targeted investment is not sufficient alone. Funding for prevention, tackling socio-economic need and transformative change must also be priorities. We reiterate our call in our last Report that 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 the socio-economic challenges associated with paramilitarism.

Cost of living crisis

1.118 In that regard, the cost-of-living crisis is clearly having an impact across society in Northern Ireland. The effect of economic turbulence is particularly severe in those communities already struggling in socio-economic terms. Those are also the communities where the paramilitary influence tends to be at its strongest. We know from experience that when economic difficulties arise, people in these communities are more likely to be exposed to paramilitary influence, thus further deepening the grip of the latter in those communities. Good work has been undertaken to address the issues at community level, including in socio-economic terms, and it is vital that nothing is done to undermine that progress, but rather that the communities involved continue to be supported in every way possible.

1.119 We, therefore, call on the UK Government and the Northern Ireland Executive to give special consideration to the needs of communities where paramilitaries operate in addressing the cost-of-living crisis in Northern Ireland.

Memorialisation

1.120 In our last two Reports, we have raised the issue of commemorations of the past that have a paramilitary dimension: “Memorialisation” of the paramilitary past. 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. There have been further examples over the past year of the challenges and difficulties which these events give rise to. We believe an express focus should be brought to bear on Memorialisation, including particular arrangements and approaches.

1.121 We are pleased that the Report of the Commission on Flags, Identity, Culture and Tradition (FICT) published in December 2021 addressed this subject comprehensively. In particular, we noted with interest the chapter entitled “Memorials, Remembrance and Commemoration”. Much of this chapter was in fact exploring

commemoration of events and people connected to paramilitarism, which has been the focal point of our consideration. The complexity is reflected in the fact that the Commission was unable to reach agreed Recommendations on a number of matters relating to the subject. However, we feel that the FICT Commission's exploration has done a considerable service and is highly relevant to the debate around several of the dimensions of the task of ending paramilitarism.

1.122 We welcome the publication of the FICT Report and in renewing our call for a special focus on Memorialisation of past events and figures connected to paramilitarism, we urge continued consideration be given to ways to implement its findings.

Shared Housing and Integrated Education

1.123 We have included a focus on Shared Housing and Integrated Education in all of our Reports. We continue to believe that among the contextual factors that influence the challenge of tackling paramilitarism on a long-term, sustainable basis are the current approaches to housing and education in Northern Ireland. We welcome the Secretary of State's announcement on 6 July 2022 of a new funding package of £1.9m to support greater integrated education in Northern Ireland²². In our view, Integrated Education breaks down barriers, builds good relations amongst young people from an early age and promotes a culture of tolerance – all of which we believe play a role in tackling paramilitarism.

1.124 A small 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 well as education. As the Executive recognised in the 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"²³.

1.125 In undertaking our mandate as the IRC we have considered the many complex factors underlying the continuation of paramilitarism in Northern Ireland today and, notwithstanding the strongly held views on both sides of the debates, we remain of the view that the slow progress being made towards Shared Housing and Integrated Education is an inhibiting factor in the ending of paramilitarism, as is the continuing existence of interface barriers, and ending division would help in a major way. These are important contextual factors in the way that they continue separated structures in their respective spaces. Our view is that every opportunity must be taken to promote shared approaches and shared inter-action if ending paramilitarism is to be achieved.

²² <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/secretary-of-state-for-northern-ireland-boosts-integrated-education-in-ni-with-19m-funding-package>

²³ <https://www.executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk/publications/together-building-united-community-strategy>

1.126 We recommend, therefore, that the Executive uses the opportunity of the review of T:BUC to broaden its ambition on T:BUC's key themes of shared education and housing and removing interface barriers as part of wider efforts to realise Northern Ireland's transformation. A new T:BUC strategy should also take account of the communities most affected by paramilitarism and ensure that all departments are involved in building a united community.

Conclusion

1.127 We have sought in this Report, as we have in each of our Reports, to set out a comprehensive analysis of paramilitarism in Northern Ireland today, what lies behind its continuation, the key factors involved in tackling and ending it, the measures being undertaken, the progress being made and the gaps that remain. Our overall view continues to be that, regrettably, paramilitarism remains a clear and present danger for Northern Ireland. We have reported on the comprehensive new focus that is being brought to bear by the various initiatives underway and the increasing impact this focus is having. But more needs to be done, across all relevant agencies and departments, and with communities. We continue to pay close attention to how the entire effort is brought together in strategic terms. Furthermore, it remains our belief that in addition to the Twin Track approach of policing/justice responses and measures addressing socio-economic issues in the communities where the paramilitaries operate – which is delivering valuable results – a comprehensive and credible process of engagement with the Paramilitary Groups themselves around Group Transition, with the aim of disbandment, is now required.

1.128 Overall, we believe there are grounds to be encouraged by the progress made. However, there is no doubting the scale of what still remains to be done. We reiterate that there is now an opportunity as the 25th Anniversary of the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement approaches to re-double efforts at all levels to achieve the vision of that Agreement of a Northern Ireland free of paramilitarism and based entirely on the principles of peace and democracy.

SECTION B: DATA AND INDICATORS FROM NORTHERN IRELAND

2.1 This Section of the Report contains data from various statutory bodies and departments that are relevant to considering trends in reported paramilitary activity.

Security statistics

2.2 Monthly statistics relating to the security situation in Northern Ireland are published by the PSNI, including the numbers of security situation deaths, shootings and bombings, and paramilitary style assaults and shootings²⁴. Below we reproduce the statistics and trends up to March 2022 (i.e. the end of the last Financial Year).

2.3 There has been a generally downward trend in security-related incidents over recent years, and comparing the last two years these have all reduced. We look at trends in each domain in the section below.

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

12/13	13/14	14/15	15/16	16/17	17/18	18/19	19/20	20/21	21/22
2	1	3	3	5	2	2	1	3	1

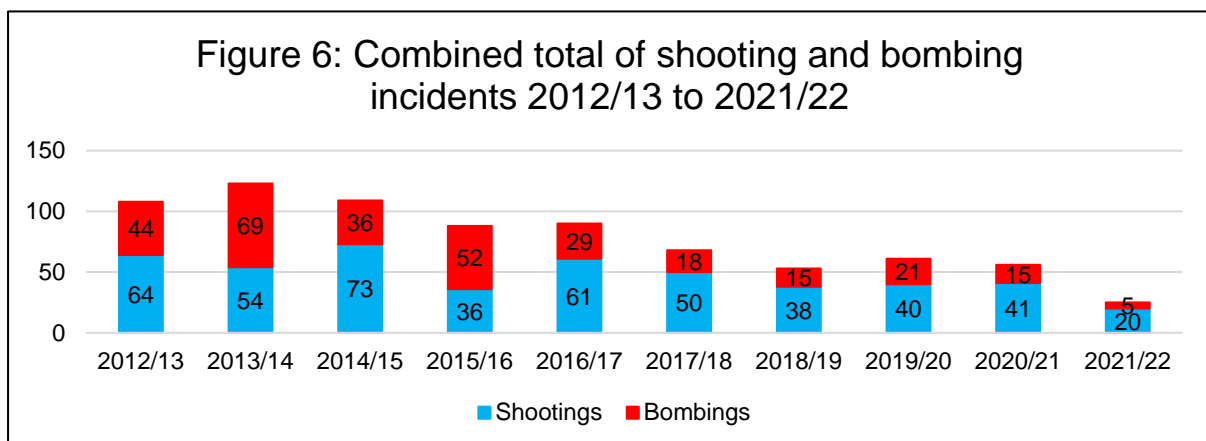
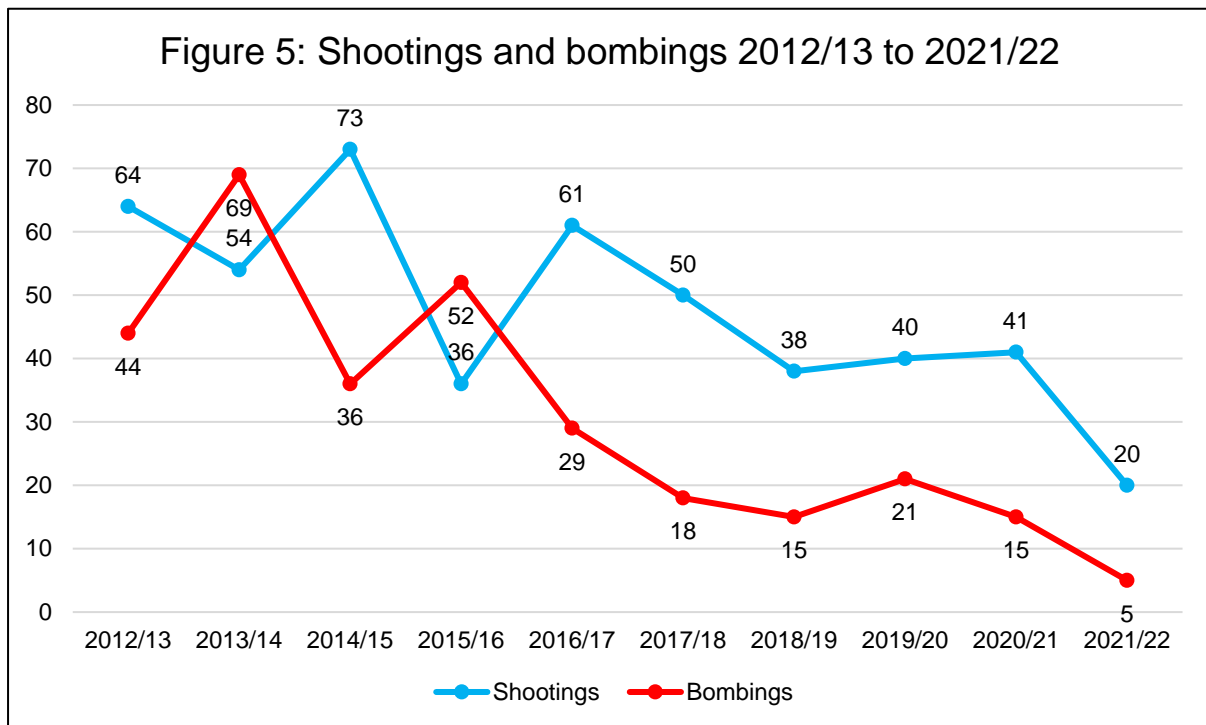
Source: PSNI security situation statistics bulletin

2.5 After a peak of five deaths in 2016/17, deaths have ranged from one to three a year. There was one death last year, which occurred in Belfast. Over the last ten years there has been no year in which there has been no security-related death. In the period 2012/13 to 2016/17 there were 14 such deaths; in the period 2017/18 to 2021/22 there were nine.

²⁴ <https://www.psni.police.uk/official-statistics/security-situation-statistics>

Shootings and Bombings

2.6 Figure 5 shows shootings and bombings recorded in the past ten years²⁵. There has been a reduction in the frequency of shootings and bombings since last year. There were five bombing incidents last year, a third of the number that occurred during the previous year (15) and the lowest number of bombings since 1995/96. There were 20 shooting incidents, approximately half the number that occurred during the previous year (41) and the lowest number of shootings since records began in 1969.

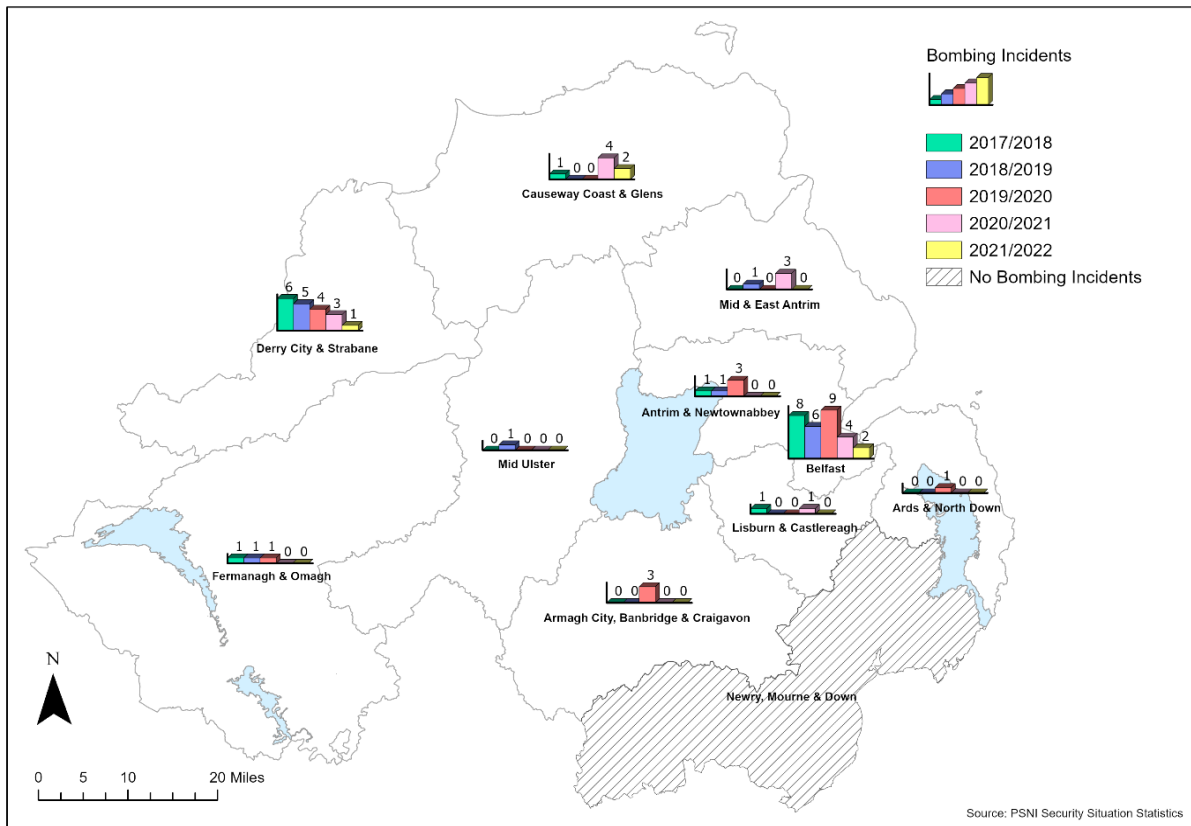


Source: PSNI security situation statistics bulletin

²⁵ 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.

Figure 7: Number of bombing incidents broken down by Policing District 2017/18 to 2021/22



Individual bombing incidents involve one or more explosive devices. Incidents include explosions and defusings. Incidents involving hoax devices, petrol bombings or incendiaries are excluded.

2.7 This year has seen an overall reduction in the number of bombing incidents from the previous year. In Belfast City and Causeway Coast & Glens Districts the number of incidents decreased from four each in 2020/21 to two each in 2021/22; in Derry City & Strabane District the number fell from three in 2020/21 to one in 2021/22; there were no bombing incidents in Mid & East Antrim and Lisburn & Castlereagh Districts compared to three and one in 2020/21 respectively.

Table 2: Attribution of bombing incidents related to the security situation in Northern Ireland between 2012/13 and 2021/22²⁶

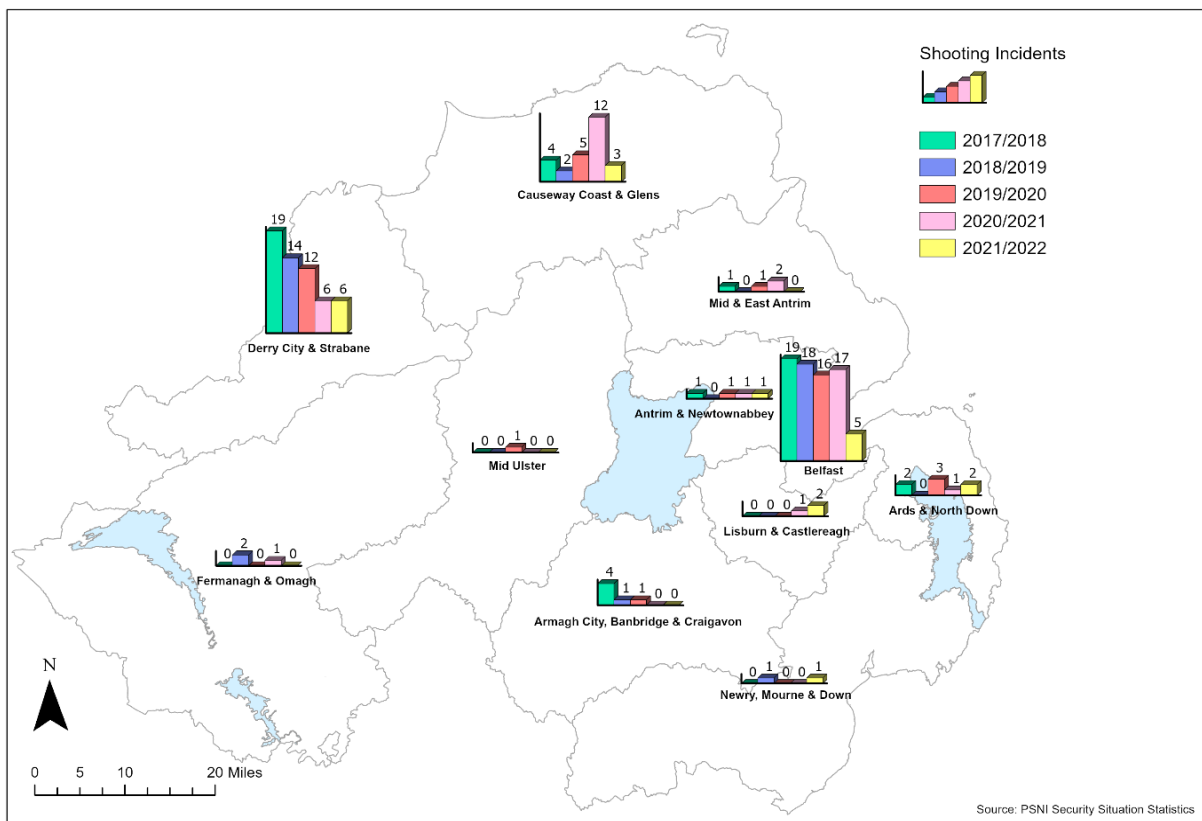
Financial Year	Loyalists	Republicans	Unknown	Total
2012/2013	8	29	7	44
2013/2014	18	39	12	69
2014/2015	5	22	9	36
2015/2016	13	30	9	52
2016/2017	4	20	5	29
2017/2018	5	13	0	18

²⁶ 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.

2018/2019	6	6	3	15
2019/2020	8	13	0	21
2020/2021	11	3	1	15
2021/2022	2	3	0	5
Total	80	178	46	304

Source: PSNI data

Figure 8: Number of shooting incidents broken down by Policing District from 2017/18 to 2021/22



The following types of incidents are included: shots fired by terrorists, shots fired by the security forces, paramilitary-style attacks involving shootings, shots heard (and later confirmed).

2.8 The greatest number of shooting incidents took place in Derry City & Strabane (6) and Belfast City (5) Districts last year. The number of incidents reduced from 17 to five in Belfast City across the last two years. The number of incidents in Causeway Coast & Glens decreased from 12 to three. There were six incidents in each of the last two financial years in Derry City & Strabane.

Table 3: Attribution of shooting incidents related to the security situation in Northern Ireland between 2012/13 and 2021/22

Financial Year	Loyalist	Republican	Unknown	Total
2012/2013	6	49	9	64
2013/2014	16	33	5	54
2014/2015	14	53	6	73
2015/2016	5	30	1	36
2016/2017	8	47	6	61
2017/2018	8	37	5	50
2018/2019	6	29	3	38
2019/2020	9	30	1	40
2020/2021	17	23	1	41
2021/2022	11	9	0	20
Total	100	340	37	477

Source: PSNI data

Paramilitary Style Attacks

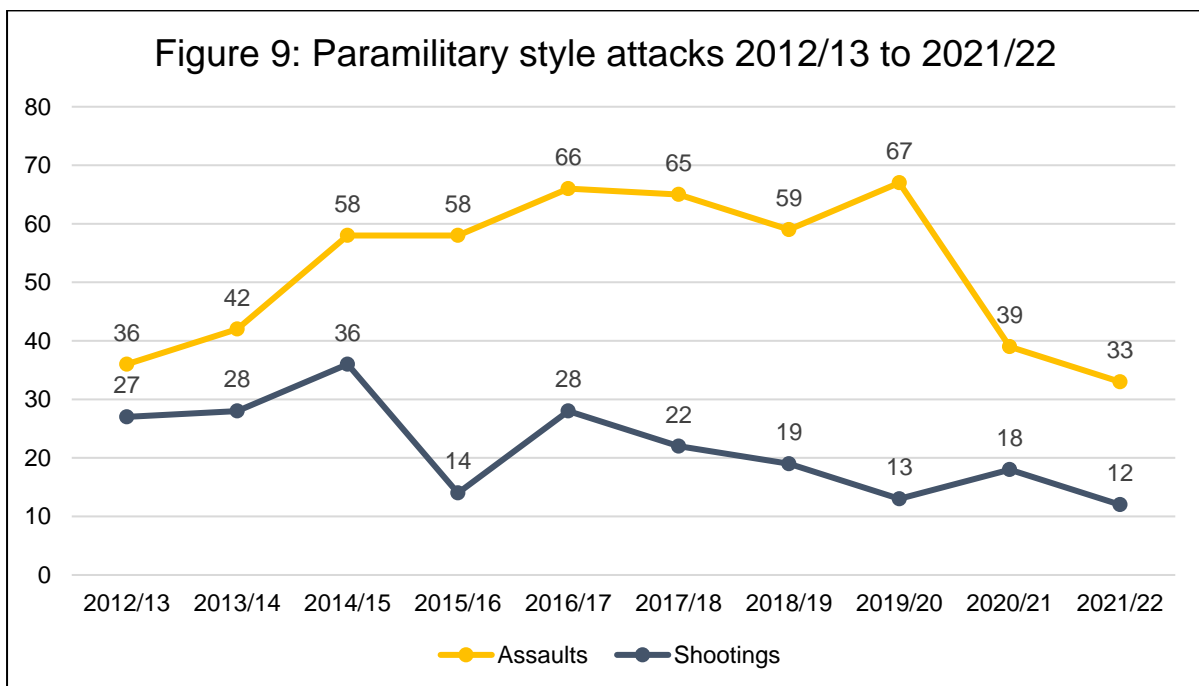


Figure 10: Combined total of paramilitary style attacks
2012/13 to 2021/22

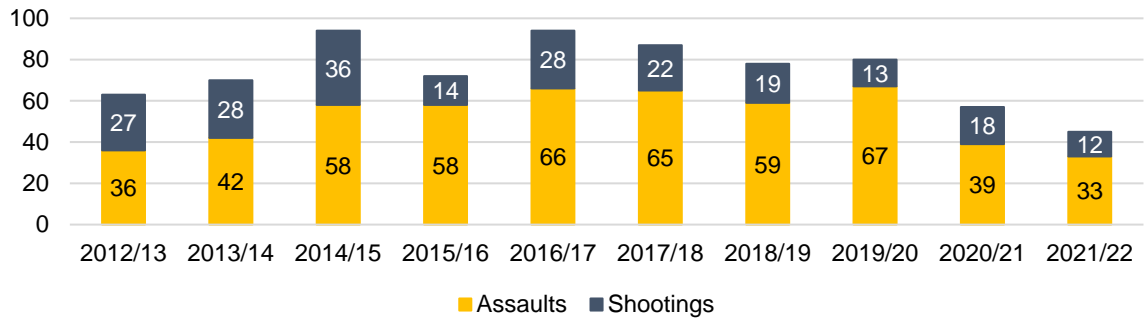


Figure 11: PSNI attribution of paramilitary style assaults
2012/13 to 2021/22

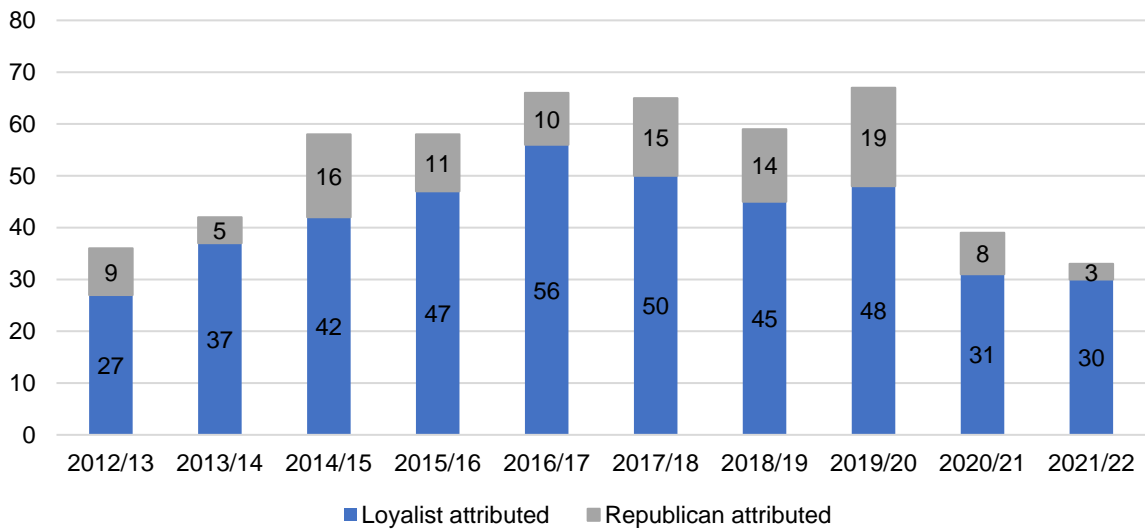
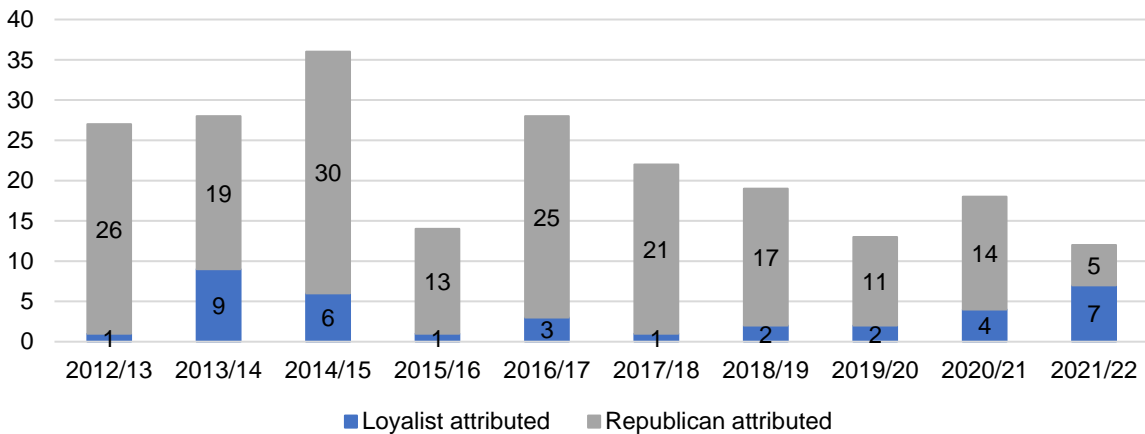


Figure 12: PSNI attribution of paramilitary style shootings
2012/13 to 2021/22

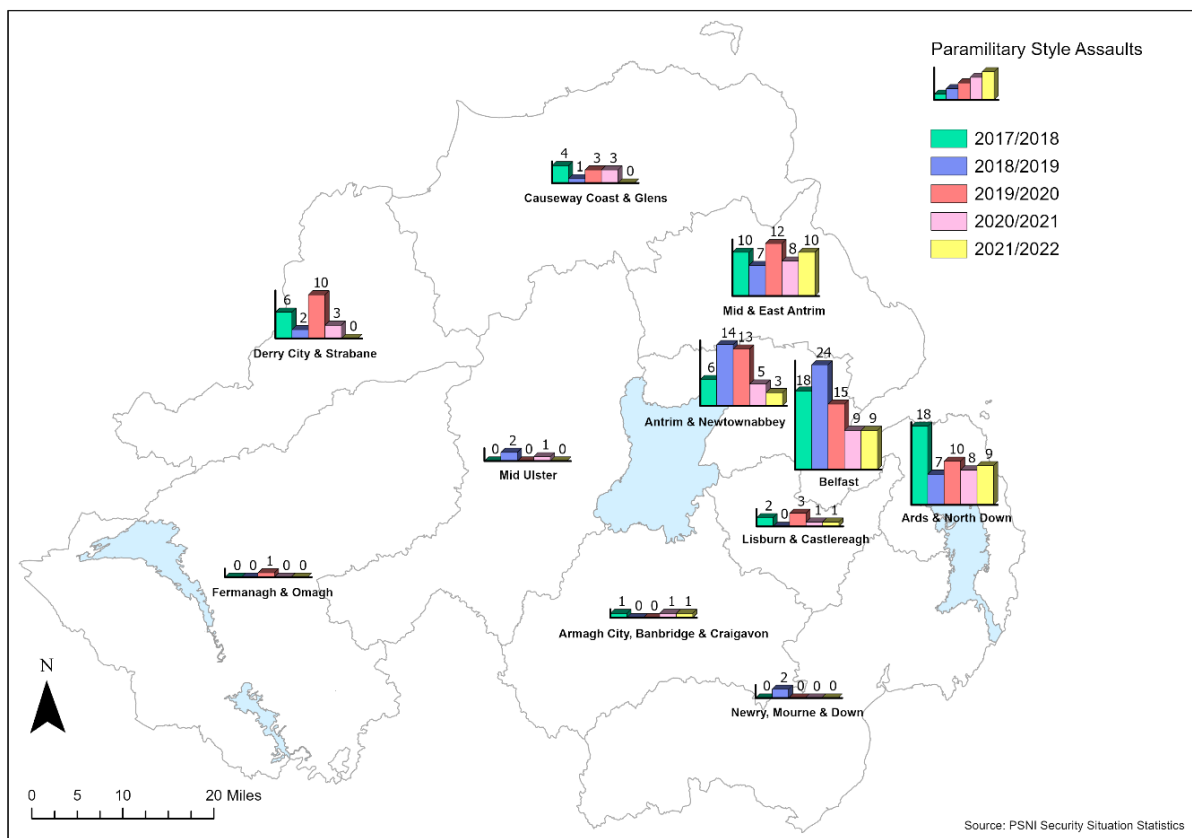


Source: PSNI data

2.9 *Totals:* Figure 10 shows reported paramilitary style assaults and shootings in the past ten years. There were 33 casualties of paramilitary style assaults during 2021/22, six fewer than during the previous year (39) and the lowest number since 1985/86. However, the number of assaults during the past 5 years (263) is similar to the number that occurred during the previous 5 years (260 incidents).

2.10 There were 12 casualties of paramilitary style shootings during 2021/22, six fewer than during the previous year (18) and the lowest number since 2007/08. The number of casualties of paramilitary style shootings during the past 5 years has fallen by 37% compared to the number during the previous 5 years (133 recorded between 2012/13 and 2016/17, and 84 recorded between 2017/18 and 2021/22).

Figure 13: Number of casualties of paramilitary style assaults in each policing district between 2017/18 and 2021/22



Paramilitary style assaults/shootings that result in death are counted as security related deaths and are not included in the casualties of paramilitary style assaults/shootings figures.

2.11 The greatest number of **paramilitary style assaults** occurred in Mid & East Antrim (10), followed by Belfast City and Ards & North Down (9 each).

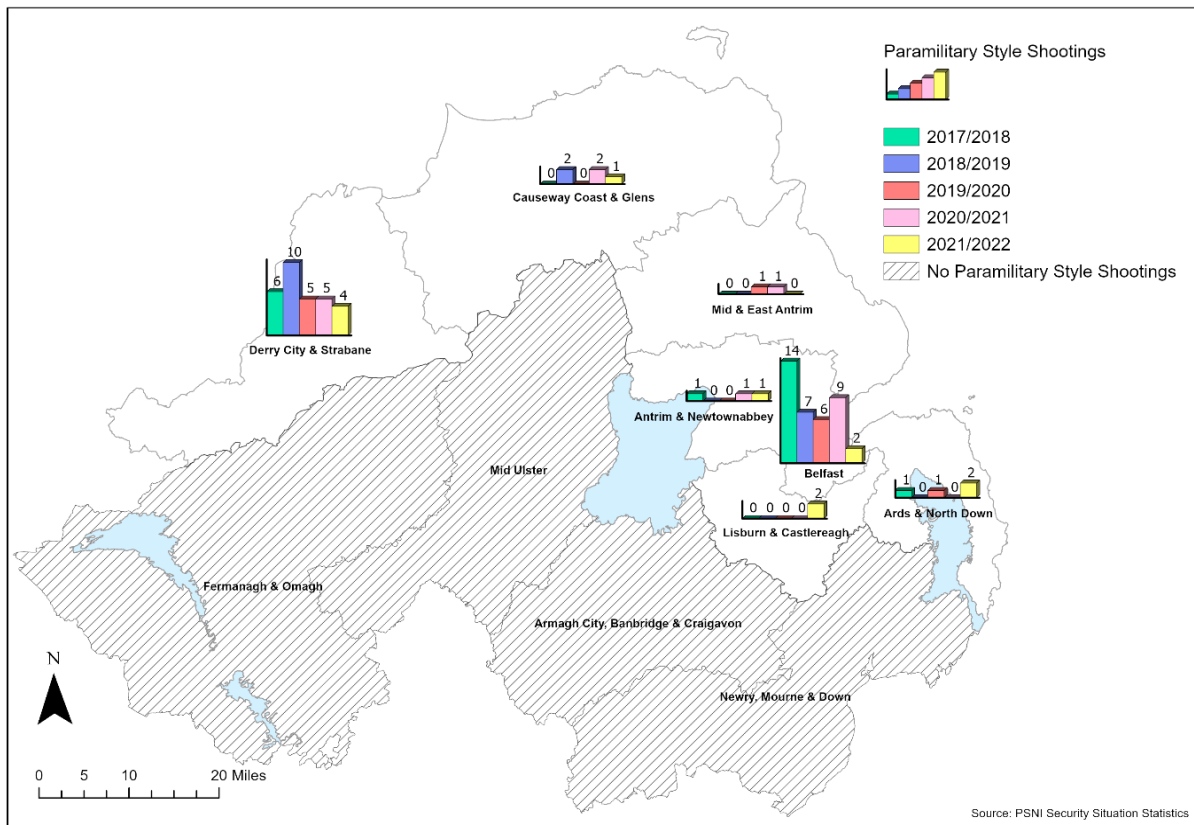
There were five Districts in which there were no such assaults in 2021/22:

- Derry City & Strabane and Causeway Coast & Glens (which each had three paramilitary style assaults during the previous year);
- Mid Ulster (which had one incident in the previous year); and

- Newry, Mourne & Down, Fermanagh & Omagh, (which recorded no casualties for the last two years)

2.12 *Attribution:* In 2021/22, 30 of the 33 paramilitary style assaults (91%) were attributed to Loyalists; the other three were attributed to Republicans (in 2020/21 it was 31:8).

Figure 14: Number of casualties of paramilitary style shootings in each policing district between 2017/18 and 2021/22



Paramilitary style assaults/shootings that result in death are counted as security related deaths and are not included in the casualties of paramilitary style assaults/shootings figures.

2.13 Derry City & Strabane had the highest number of casualties of **paramilitary style shootings** (four, a reduction of one from the previous year). Belfast City was the District with the largest reduction: from nine in 2020/21 to two in 2021/22.

2.14 Of the 12 paramilitary style shootings in 2021/22: seven were attributed to loyalists and five were attributed to republicans (in 2020/21 it was 4:14). This is the first time more paramilitary style shootings have been attributed to loyalists than republicans since 2006/07.

Seizure or recovery of firearms, explosives and ammunition

2.15 There were 45 firearms found during 2021/22 compared to 17 during the previous year. There was 0.5kg of explosives found during 2021/22 compared to 2.9kg during the previous year and 1,877 rounds of ammunition found during 2021/22 compared to 2,049 during the previous year.

Table 4: Seizure or recovery of firearms, explosives and ammunition²⁷

	Firearms	Explosives (kg)	Rounds of ammunition
2012/13	57	11.4	2,589
2013/14	101	23.1	5,057
2014/15	58	22.9	4,569
2015/16	66	2.4	4,418
2016/17	45	75.1	2,635
2017/18	40	0.4	5,758
2018/19	45	1.2	1,284
2019/20	30	0.9	774
2020/21	17	2.9	2,049
2021/22	45	0.5	1,877

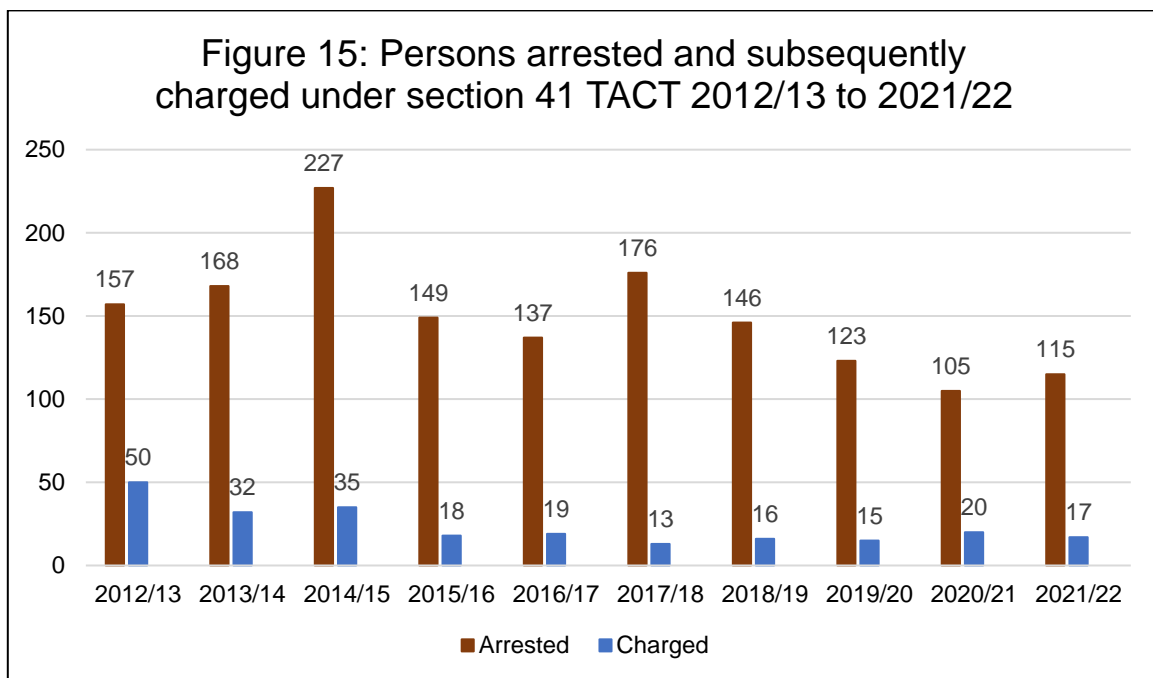
Source: PSNI security situation statistics

²⁷ These refer to the seizure or recovery of all illegal firearms, ammunition, explosives, rocket/mortar launchers, detonators and bomb making material/equipment.

Replica/blank firing firearms, petrol bombs and petrol bomb making materials, grenades and munitions from World War 1 or World War 2 found on the beach or in attics etc. are not recorded as finds.

Terrorism Act arrests and subsequent charges

2.16 There were 115 persons arrested under Section 41 of the Terrorism Act 2000 during 2021/22 compared to 105 during the previous year (Figure 15). That legislation provides that a constable may arrest without a warrant a person whom he reasonably suspects to be a terrorist. Of the 115 arrests, 53 (46%) of them occurred in Derry City & Strabane and 28 (24%) occurred in Belfast. There were 17 persons arrested under Section 41 of the Terrorism Act 2000 and subsequently charged (with any offence) during 2021/22, compared to 20 during the previous year.



Source: PSNI security situation statistics bulletin

2.17 Reproduced below are some key statistics from the latest *Northern Ireland Terrorism legislation: annual statistics bulletin*²⁸.

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

2.18 In 2021, 16 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.

Charged	32	35	18	19	13	16	17	20	16	186
Not proceeded against	13	2	4	1	0	1	3	0	1	25
Awaiting prosecution	3	0	3	5	1	6	4	19	15	56
Prosecuted	16	33	11	13	12	9	10	1	0	105
Found not guilty	5	7	1	3	2	4	2	0	0	24
Other	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Convicted	11	25	10	10	10	5	8	1	0	80
TACT offences	1	7	2	3	1	0	0	1	0	15
Schedule 7 TACT	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Other legislation (non-TACT) - terrorism related	10	18	7	6	8	4	8	0	0	61
Other legislation (non-TACT) - non-terrorism related	0	0	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	4

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

2.19 Between April and December 2021, 50 charges were brought against persons detained in Northern Ireland under section 41 of the Terrorism Act 2000. This included two charges of murder, eight charges for firearms offences, seven charges of throwing petrol bombs and seven for riotous behaviour. This brings the total number of charges brought against persons detained under section 41 since 19 February 2001 to 2,087.

2.20 During the period April to December 2021, three persons detained under section 41 of the Terrorism Act 2000 were charged with a total of five offences under the same legislation. Four of these charges were related to possession for terrorist purposes while the remaining charge related to the collection of information.

²⁸ <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/northern-ireland-terrorism-legislation-annual-statistics-for-the-period-01-april-2021-to-31-december-2021>

²⁹ Figures for 2021 cover April to December 2021.

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

2.21 58 premises were searched in 2021 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>2021 broken down by quarter ³⁰</i>	
<i>Apr - Jun</i>	18
<i>Jul - Sep</i>	21
<i>Oct - Dec</i>	19

Source: Northern Ireland Terrorism legislation: annual statistics bulletin

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

2.22 In 2021, a total of 90 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>2021 broken down by quarter ³¹</i>	
<i>Apr - Jun</i>	26
<i>Jul - Sep</i>	29
<i>Oct - Dec</i>	35

Source: Northern Ireland Terrorism legislation: annual statistics bulletin

³⁰ 2021 total covers April to December 2021. Data for the period April 2021 to December 2021 is based on information recorded as at May 2022.

³¹ 2021 total covers April to December 2021. Data for the period April 2021 to December 2021 is based on information recorded as at May 2022.

Persons convicted in Northern Ireland of an offence under Terrorism Legislation

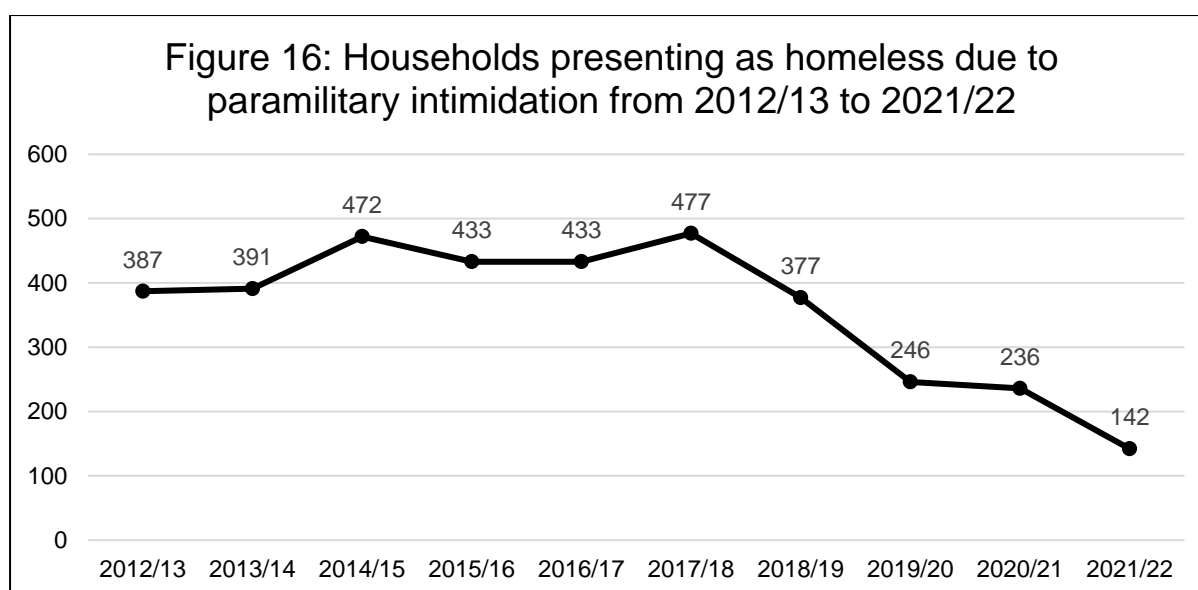
2.23 In 2021, 20 persons were convicted in NI of an offence under the Terrorism Act 2000, the Terrorism Act 2006 or the Counter-Terrorism Act 2008.

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>2021 broken down by quarter³²</i>			
<i>Apr - Jun</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>Jul - Sep</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>16</i>	<i>16</i>
<i>Oct - Dec</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>1</i>

Source: Northern Ireland Terrorism legislation: annual statistics bulletin

Homelessness due to Paramilitary Intimidation

2.24 Figure 16 shows numbers of households presenting to the Northern Ireland Housing Executive as homeless due to intimidation by paramilitaries³³ over the past ten years.



Source: Department for Communities

³² 2021 total covers April to December 2021.

³³ <https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/topics/housing-statistics>

2.25 After a peak in numbers of households presenting as homeless due to paramilitary intimidation in 2017/18, there has been a decline in the years since, with 142 households presenting as homeless due to paramilitary intimidation in the last financial year. 149 households were accepted as homeless due to paramilitary intimidation in 2021/22.

2.26 The table below shows where households were accepted as homeless due to paramilitary intimidation last financial year broken down by District.

District	Intimidation - Paramilitary
Antrim & Newtownabbey	11
Ards & North Down	56
Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon	0
Belfast City	46
Causeway Coast & Glens	0
Derry City & Strabane	15
Fermanagh & Omagh	0
Lisburn & Castlereagh	10
Mid & East Antrim	8
Mid Ulster	<5
Newry, Mourne & Down	<5
Total	149

Source: Department for Communities

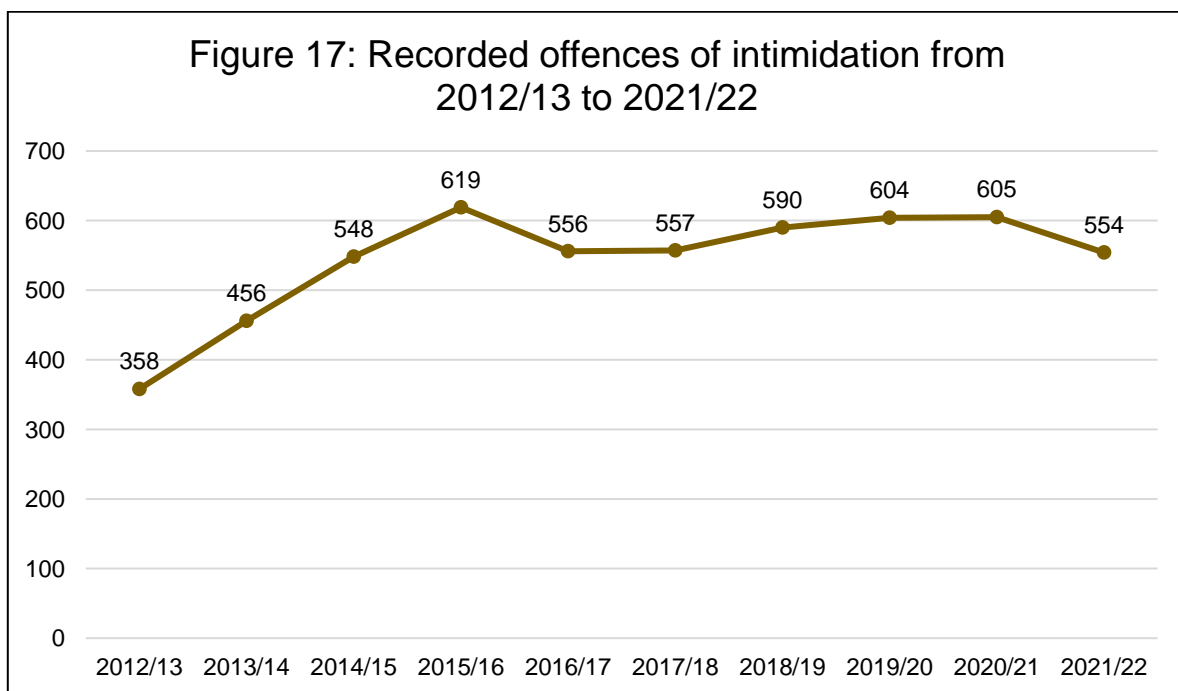
Other criminal justice trends and metrics

2.27 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.

2.28 *Relevance:* Although not all intimidation and hate crime is carried out by paramilitaries, we know that sectarian and hate crimes and intimidation take place in areas where paramilitaries operate. These statistics provide an indication of the environment in which paramilitaries operate.

Intimidation

2.29 Last year there were 554 recorded offences of intimidation in Northern Ireland. PSNI explain that Intimidation is an offence in legislation in Northern Ireland but not specifically recorded as such within England and Wales. It is associated with the Northern Ireland security situation, involving offences such as intimidation to leave residence/occupation, intimidation to leave employment or to do/refrain from doing any act.

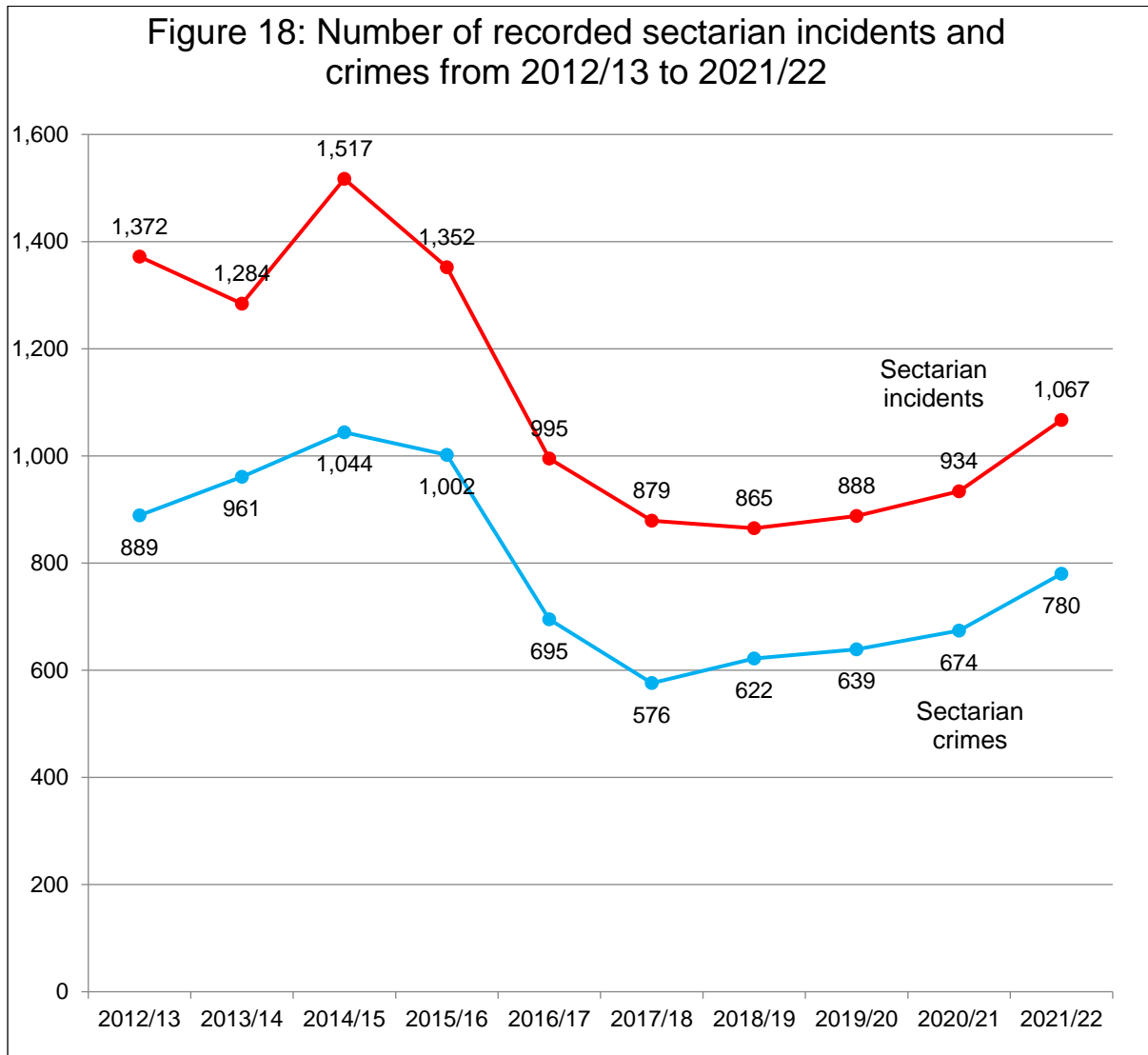


Source: *PSNI Crime Statistics*³⁴

³⁴ <https://www.psni.police.uk/sites/default/files/2022-08/crime-tables-mar-22.xlsx>

Sectarian incidents and crimes recorded by PSNI

2.30 The number of sectarian incidents and crimes increased in 2021/22 compared to 2020/21. There were 1,067 sectarian incidents recorded by the police in Northern Ireland in 2021/22, an increase of 133 when compared with the previous 12 months. The number of sectarian crimes recorded by the police rose to 780, an increase of 106 on the previous 12 months.

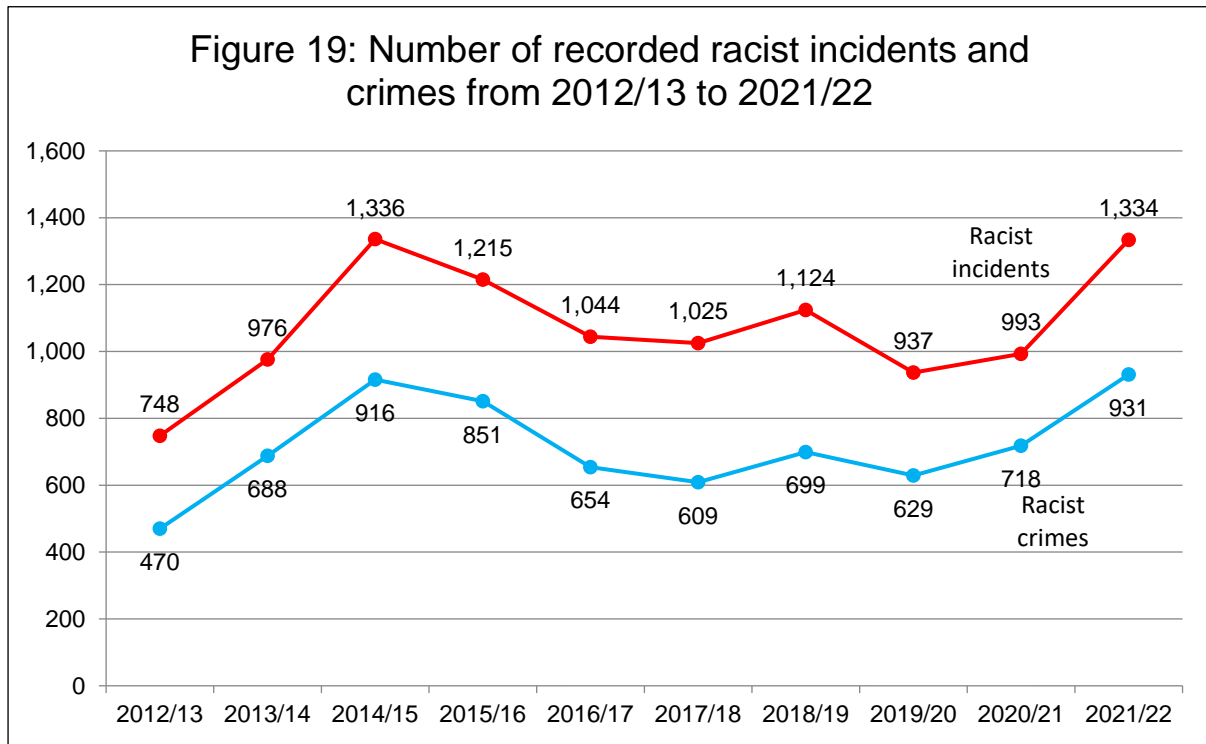


Source: *PSNI Bulletin: Incidents and Crimes with a Hate Motivation Recorded by the Police in Northern Ireland*³⁵

The PSNI note that “not all sectarian incidents will result in the recording of a crime, as what has occurred in the incident may not be of the level of severity that would result in a sectarian crime being recorded. Some sectarian incidents will result in multiple crimes being recorded. Sectarian crimes are included in the incident count and the two should not be added together”.

³⁵ <https://www.psni.police.uk/sites/default/files/2022-08/hate-motivations-bulletin-mar-22.pdf>

2.31 There was a sharp rise in the number of racist incidents and crimes between 2020/21 and 2021/22. The number of racist incidents recorded in 2021/22 is the second highest in the data series (there were 1,336 racist incidents recorded in 2014/15). The number of racist crimes recorded in 2021/22 is the highest since the start of the data series.



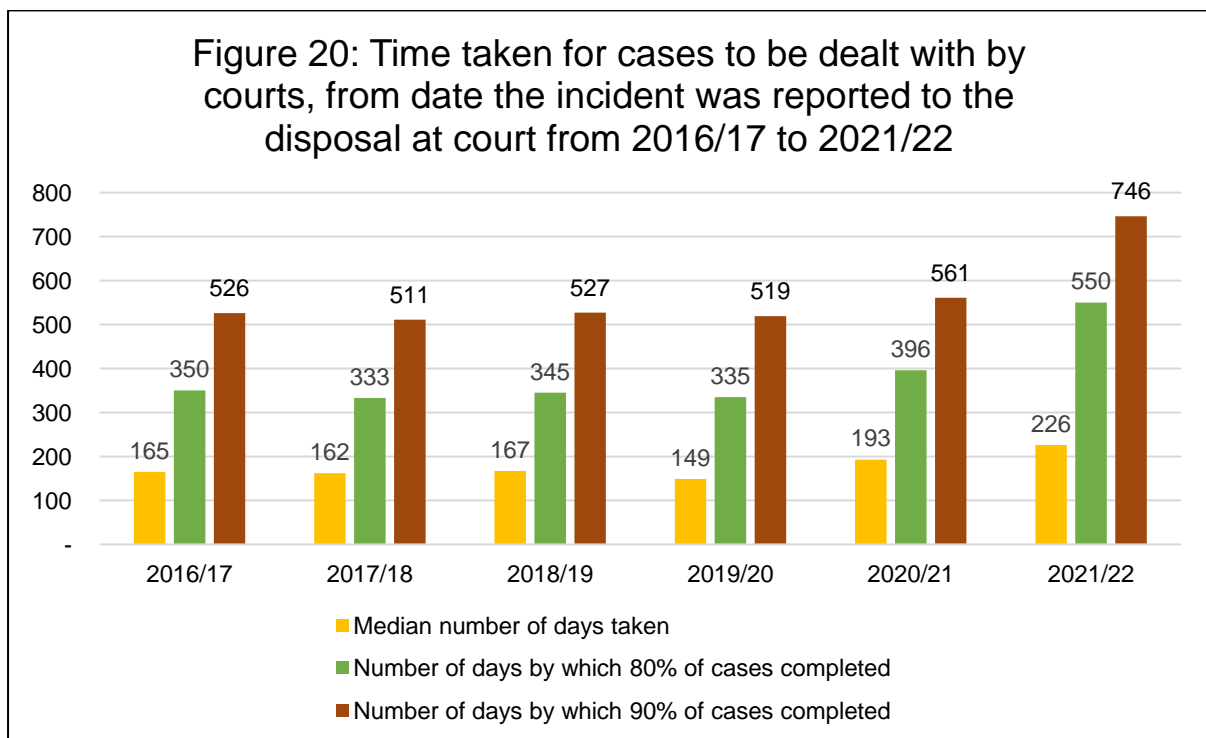
Source: PSNI Bulletin: Incidents and Crimes with a Hate Motivation Recorded by the Police in Northern Ireland

The PSNI note that “Not all racist incidents will result in the recording of a crime, as what has occurred in the incident may not be of the level of severity that would result in a racist crime being recorded. Some racist incidents will result in multiple crimes being recorded. Racist crimes are included in the incident count and the two should not be added together”.

Court statistics

2.32 *Source:* The graph below shows data from the NI Courts and Tribunal Service³⁶ 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.

2.33 *Relevance:* We comment on the impact of delays further in Section A of our Report; speed of justice is critically linked to trust and confidence in policing and the criminal justice system.



Source: Department of Justice statistics

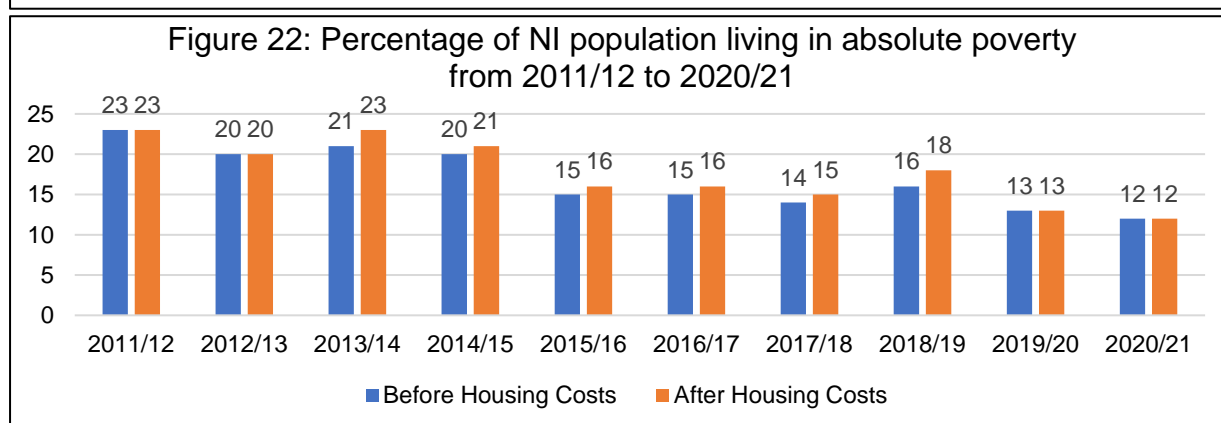
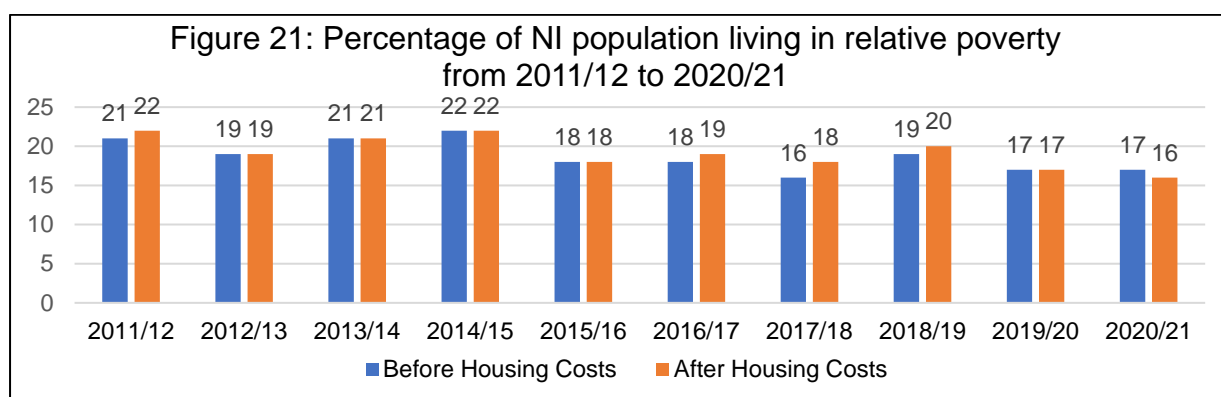
³⁶ <https://www.justice-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/justice/case%20processing%20times%20for%20criminals%20dealt%20with%20in%20court%202021-22%20-%20published.pdf>

Poverty and living conditions

2.34 *Source:* Each year, a sample of 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 NI³⁷.

2.35 *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, transformative work is required to deal with this ingrained issue.

2.36 In 2020/21 the proportion of individuals estimated to be living in relative poverty was 16% (representing 297,000 people) and 12% (c. 228,000) were estimated to be living in absolute poverty (both figures are after housing costs and are not statistically significant changes from the previous year). The tables below show the ten year trends³⁸.



³⁷ <https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/publications/northern-ireland-poverty-bulletin-2020-21>

³⁸ 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 (£204 per week, £16,875 per year) 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. In 2020/21 the absolute poverty threshold for a couple with no children was an income of £301 per week (BHC) (£15,713 per year).

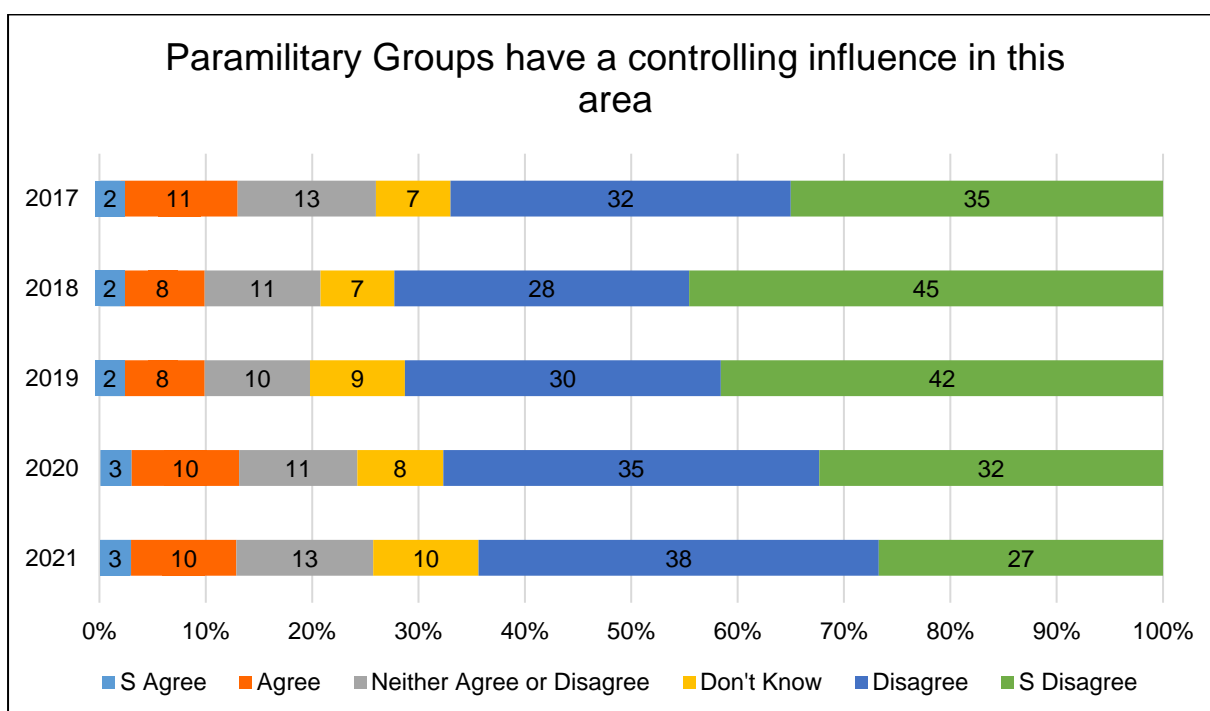
Community views on paramilitary influence and community safety

Views about paramilitaries

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 issues³⁹. A number of the questions about paramilitarism are funded by the Programme.

Relevance: Understanding how communities perceive paramilitaries, and perceive the 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 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.

Respondents were asked how much they agree or disagree with the statement: **“Paramilitary groups have a controlling influence in this area.”**

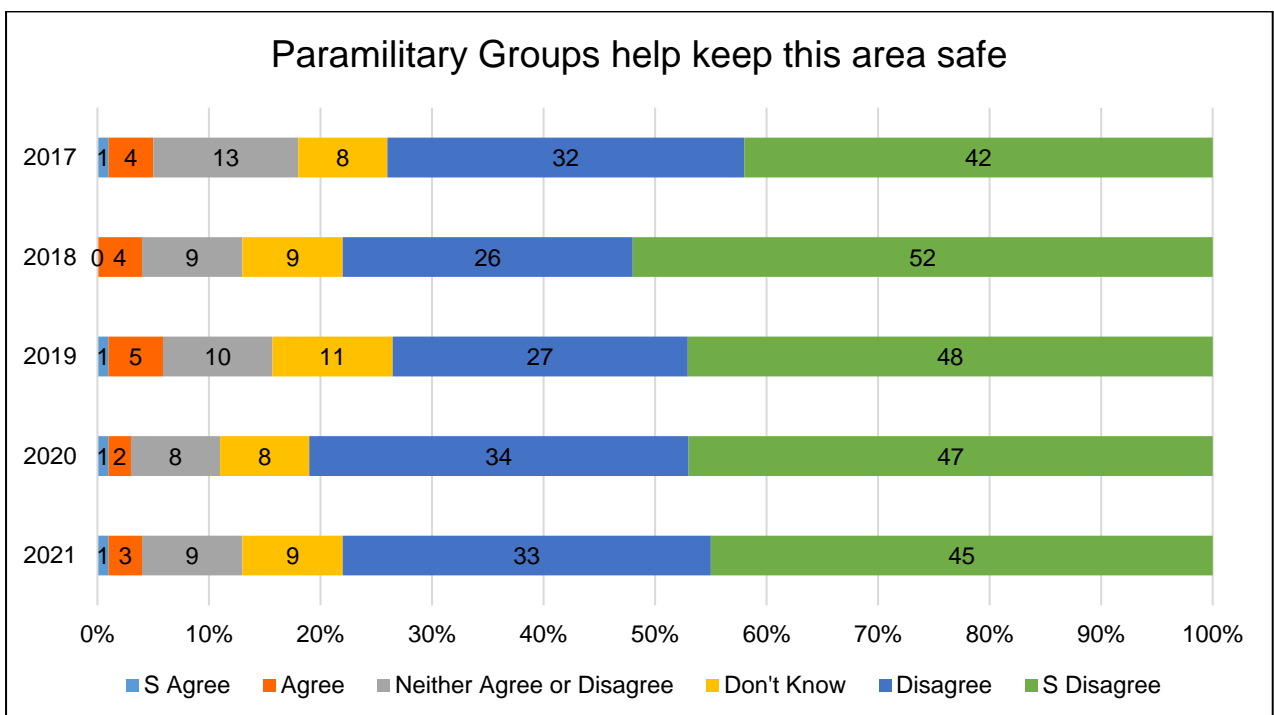


The table overleaf shows the one, three and five year changes in the data:

³⁹ <https://www.ark.ac.uk/nilt/results/>

	S Agree	Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Don't Know	Disagree	S Disagree
5 year change (2017-2021)	↑ 1	↓ -1	→ 0	↑ 3	↑ 6	↓ -8
3 year change (2019 -2021)	↑ 1	↑ 2	↑ 3	↑ 1	↑ 8	↓ -15
1 year change (2020-2021)	→ 0	→ 0	↑ 2	↑ 2	↑ 3	↓ -5

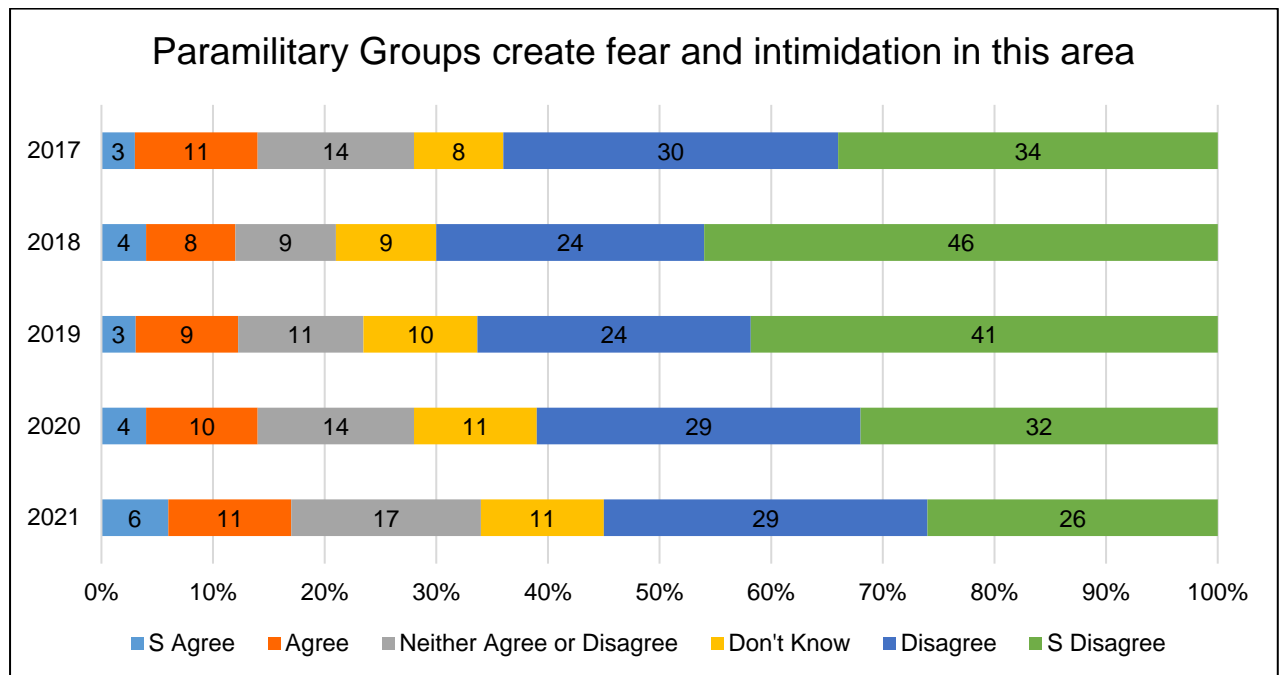
Respondents were asked how strongly they agreed or disagreed with the statement: **“Paramilitary groups help keep this area safe.”**



The table below shows the one, three and five year change in data:

	S Agree	Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Don't Know	Disagree	S Disagree
5 year change (2017-2021)	→ 0	↓ -1	↓ -4	↑ 1	↑ 1	↑ 3
3 year change (2019 -2021)	→ 0	↓ -2	↓ -1	↓ -2	↑ 6	↓ -3
1 year change (2020-2021)	→ 0	↑ 1	↑ 1	↑ 1	↓ -1	↓ -2

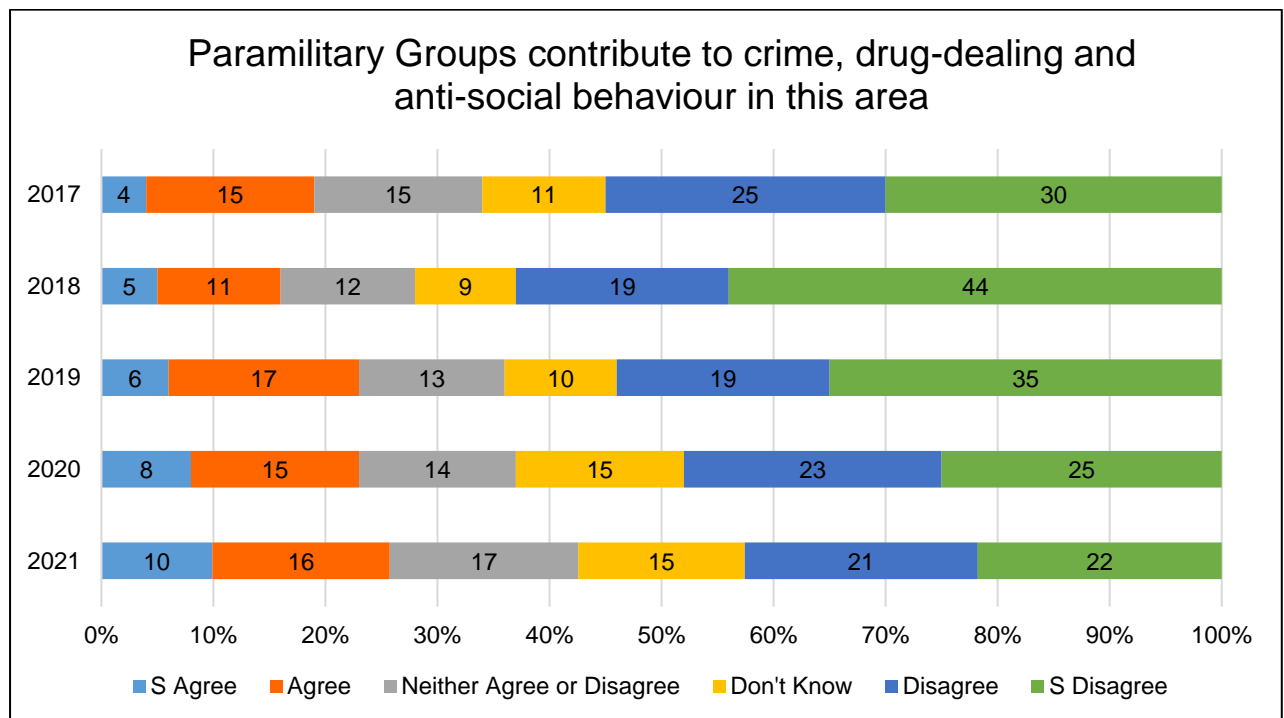
Respondents were asked how strongly they agreed or disagreed with the following statement: **“Paramilitaries create fear and intimidation in this area.”**



The table below shows the one, three and five year changes in the data:

	S Agree	Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Don't Know	Disagree	S Disagree
5 year change (2017-2021)	↑ 3	→ 0	↑ 3	↑ 3	↓ -1	↓ -8
3 year change (2019 -2021)	↑ 3	↑ 2	↑ 6	↑ 1	↑ 5	↓ -15
1 year change (2020-2021)	↑ 2	↑ 1	↑ 3	→ 0	→ 0	↓ -6

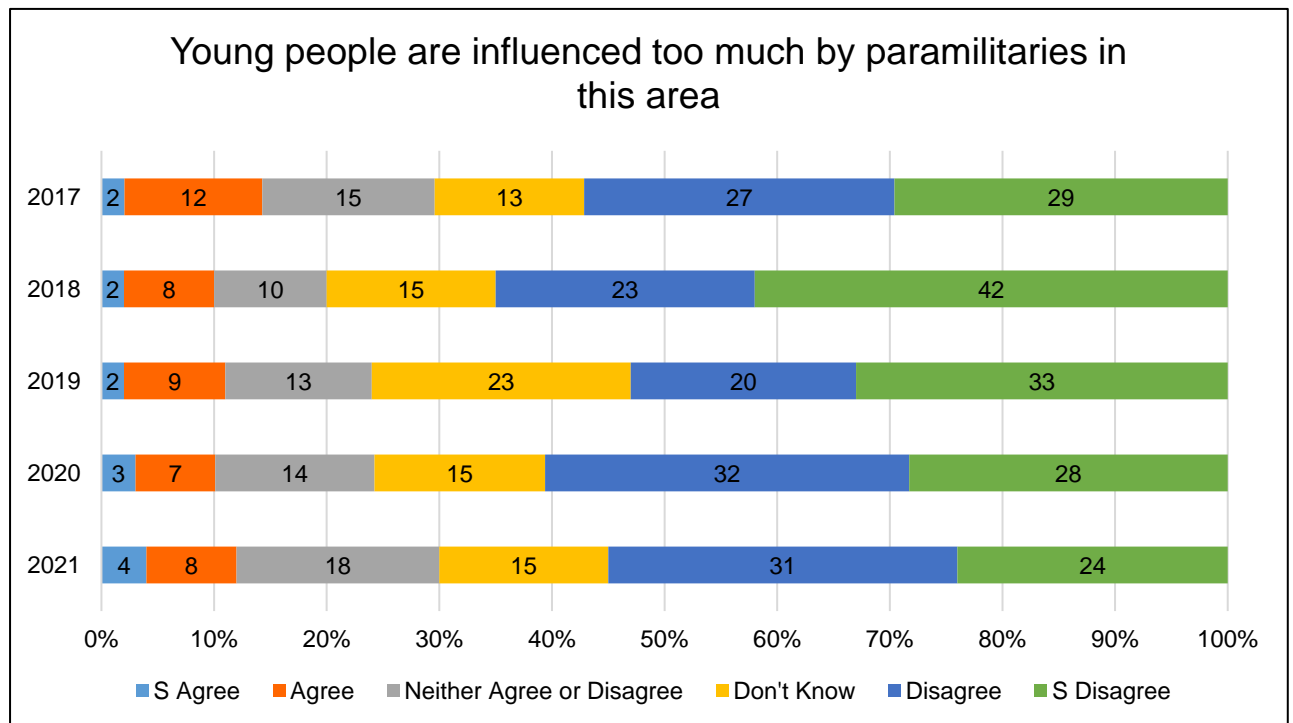
Respondents were asked how strongly they agreed or disagreed with the following statement: **“Paramilitary groups contribute to crime, drug-dealing and anti-social behaviour in this area.”**



The table below shows the one, three and five year changes in data:

	S Agree	Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Don't Know	Disagree	S Disagree
5 year change (2017-2021)	↑ 6	↑ 1	↑ 2	↑ 4	↓ -4	↓ -8
3 year change (2019 -2021)	↑ 4	↓ -1	↑ 4	↑ 5	↑ 2	↓ -13
1 year change (2020-2021)	↑ 2	↑ 1	↑ 3	→ 0	↓ -2	↓ -3

Respondents were asked how much they agree or disagree with the following statement:
“Young people are influenced too much by paramilitaries in this area.”



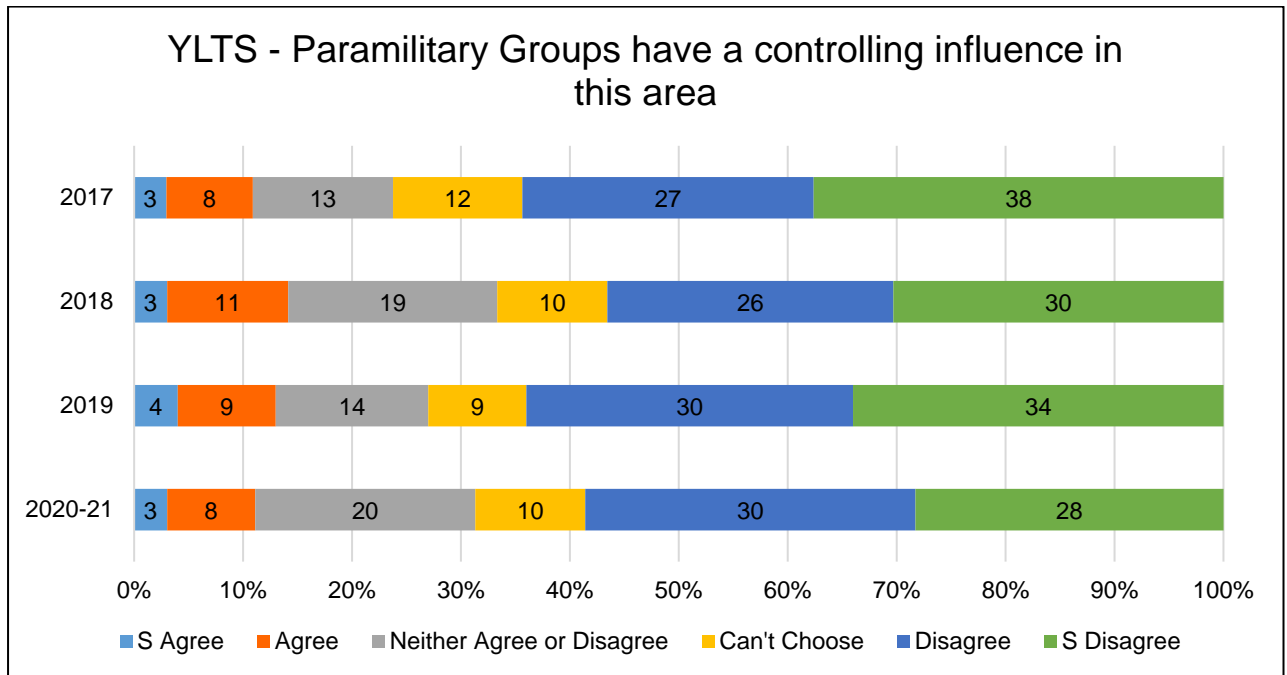
The table below shows the one, three and five year changes:

	S Agree	Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Don't Know	Disagree	S Disagree
5 year change (2017-2021)	↑ 2	↓ -4	↑ 3	↑ 2	↑ 4	↓ -5
3 year change (2019 -2021)	↑ 2	↓ -1	↑ 5	↓ -8	↑ 11	↓ -9
1 year change (2020-2021)	↑ 1	↑ 1	↑ 4	→ 0	↓ -1	↓ -4

This year in our report we have also included some results of a survey of the opinions and attitudes of NI Young People.

Source: The Young Life and Times Survey (YLTS) records the attitudes and opinions of 16 year olds in Northern Ireland about the issues that concern them.

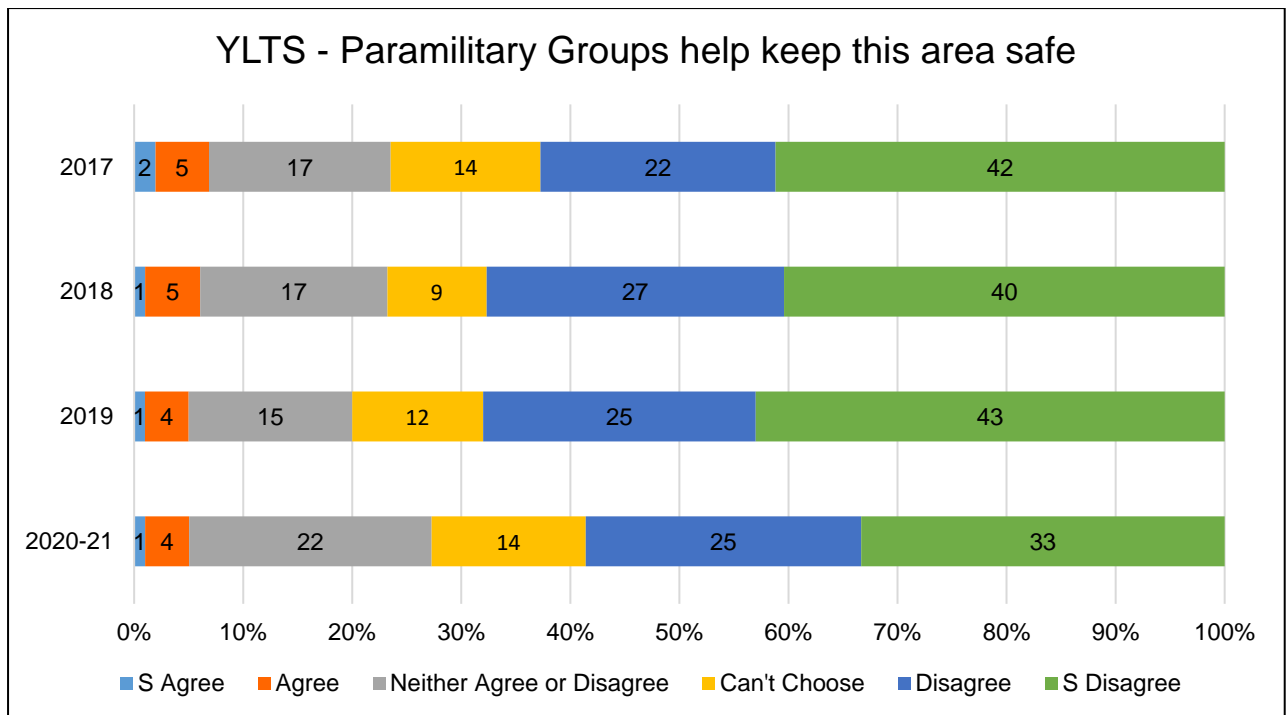
Young people were asked to consider how much they agree or disagree with the following statement: **'Paramilitary Groups have a controlling influence in this area.'**



The table below shows the one, two and four year changes in data:

	S Agree	Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Can't Choose	Disagree	S Disagree
4 year change (2017-2020)	→ 0	→ 0	↑ 7	↓ -2	↑ 3	↓ -10
2 year change (2018-2020)	→ 0	↓ -3	↑ 1	→ 0	↑ 4	↓ -2
1 year change (2019-2020)	↓ -1	↓ -1	↑ 6	↑ 1	→ 0	↓ -6

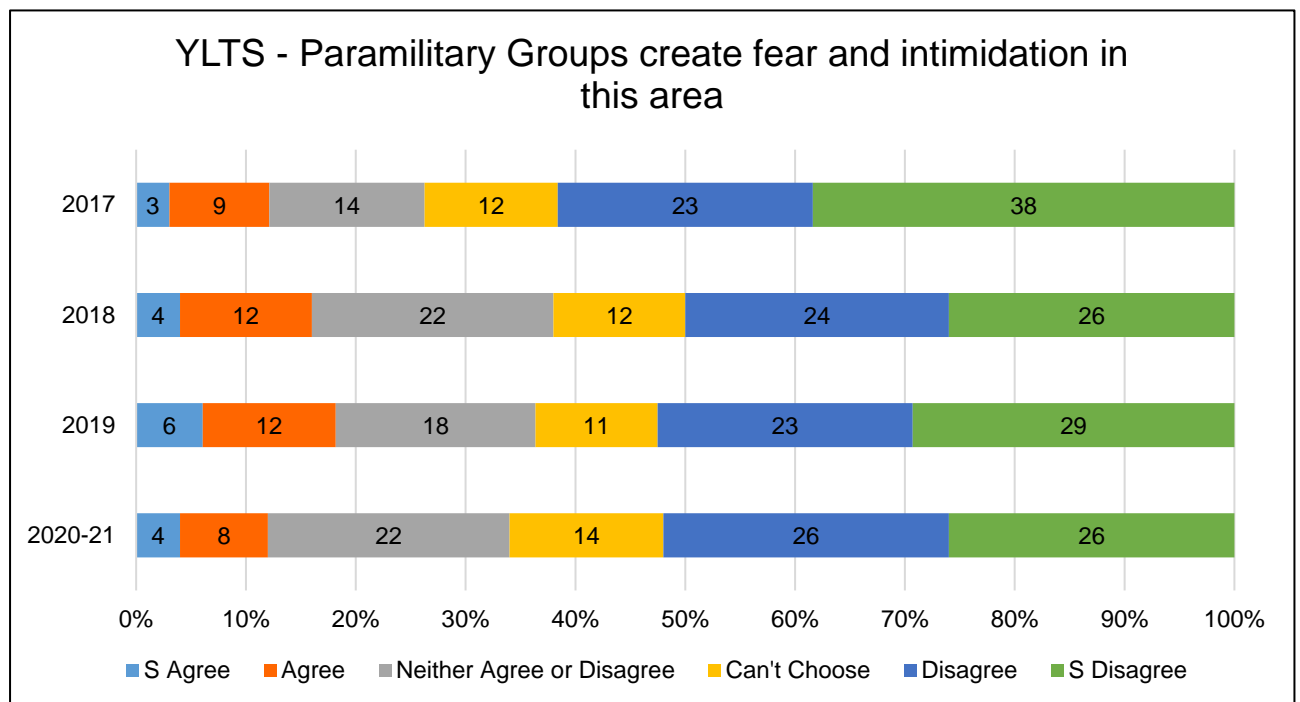
Young people were asked how strongly they agreed or disagreed with the following statement: **'Paramilitary groups help keep this area safe.'**



The table below shows the one, two and four year changes in data:

	S Agree	Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Can't Choose	Disagree	S Disagree
4 year change (2017-2020)	↓ -1	↓ -1	↑ 5	→ 0	↑ 3	↓ -9
2 year change (2018-2020)	→ 0	↓ -1	↑ 5	↑ 5	↓ -2	↓ -7
1 year change (2019-2020)	→ 0	→ 0	↑ 7	↑ 2	→ 0	↓ -10

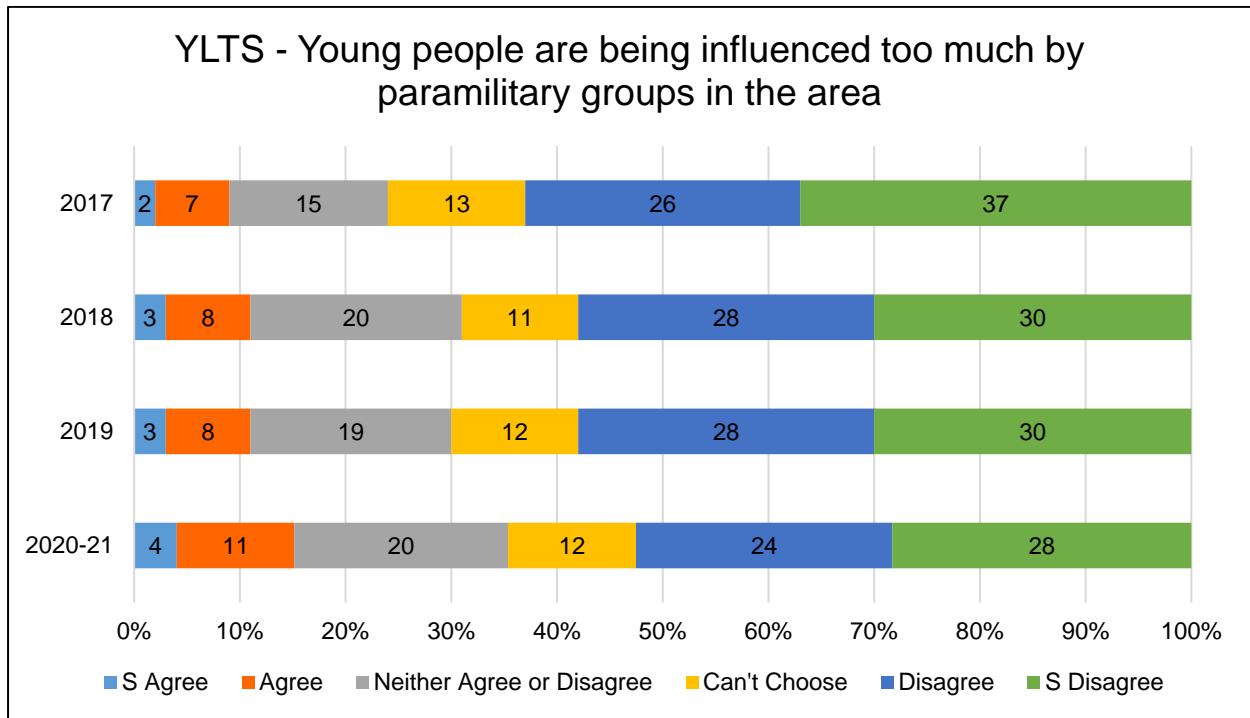
Young People were asked how strongly they agreed or disagreed with the following statement: **'Paramilitaries create fear and intimidation in this area.'**



The table below shows the one, two and four year changes in data:

	S Agree	Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Can't Choose	Disagree	S Disagree
4 year change (2017-2020)	↑ 1	↓ -1	↑ 8	↑ 2	↑ 3	↓ -12
2 year change (2018-2020)	→ 0	↓ -4	→ 0	↑ 2	↑ 2	→ 0
1 year change (2019-2020)	↓ -2	↓ -4	↑ 4	↑ 3	↑ 3	↓ -3

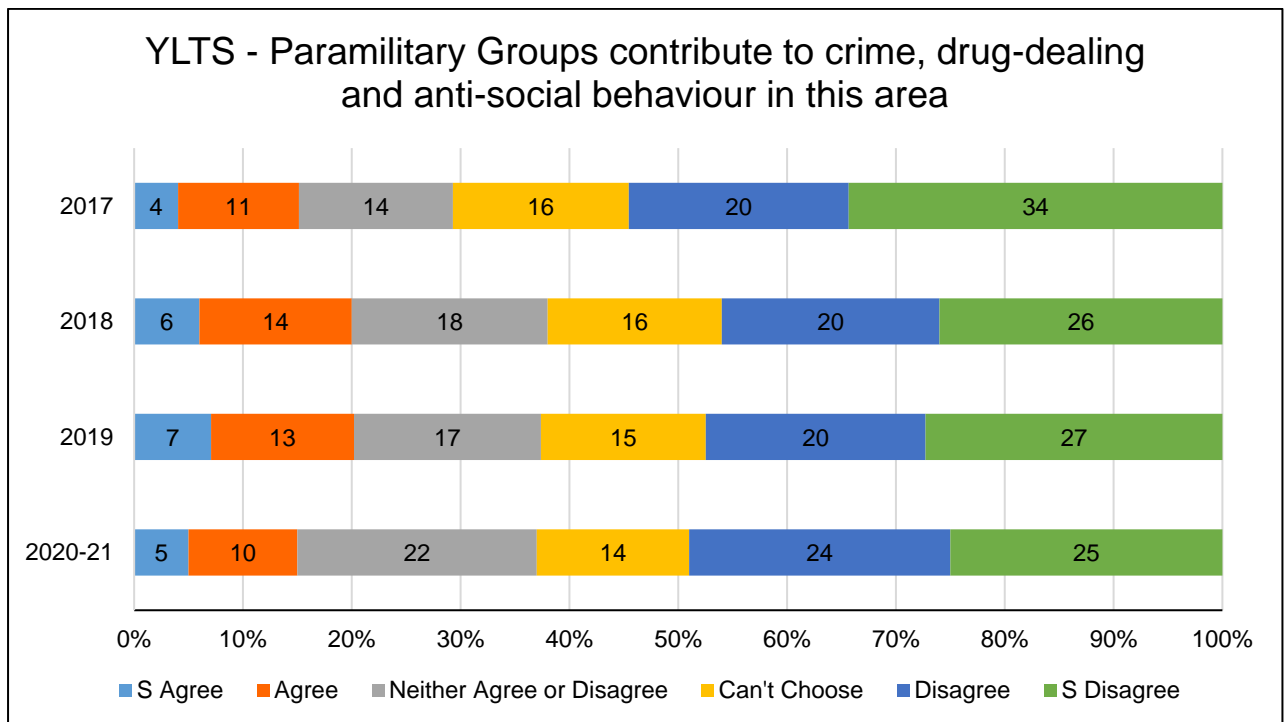
Young people were asked how strongly they agreed or disagreed with the following statement: 'Young people are being influenced too much by paramilitary groups in the area.'



The table below shows the one, two and four year changes in data:

	S Agree	Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Can't Choose	Disagree	S Disagree
4 year change (2017-2020)	↑ 2	↑ 4	↑ 5	↓ -1	↓ -2	↓ -9
2 year change (2018-2020)	↑ 1	↑ 3	→ 0	↑ 1	↓ -4	↓ -2
1 year change (2019-2020)	↑ 1	↑ 3	↑ 1	→ 0	↓ -4	↓ -2

Young people were asked how strongly they agreed or disagreed with the following statement: **'Paramilitary groups contribute to crime, drug-dealing and anti-social behaviour.'**

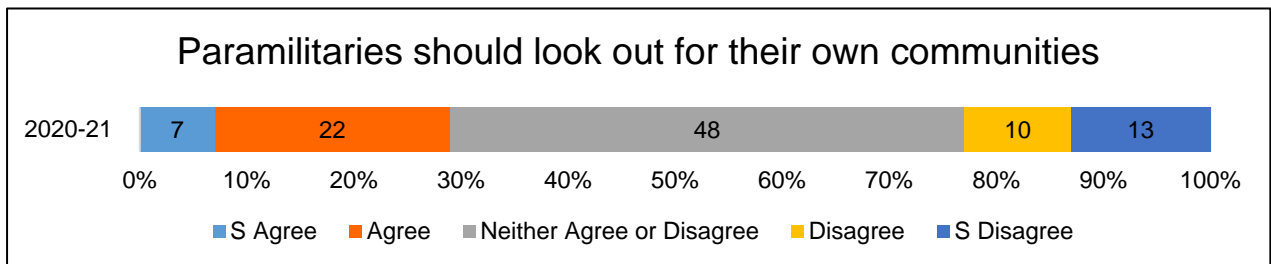


The table below shows the one, two and four year changes in data:

	S Agree	Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Can't Choose	Disagree	S Disagree
4 year change (2017-2020)	↑ 1	↓ -1	↑ 8	↓ -2	↑ 4	↓ -9
2 year change (2018-2020)	↓ -1	↓ -4	↑ 4	↓ -2	↑ 4	↓ -1
1 year change (2019-2020)	↓ -2	↓ -3	↑ 5	↓ -1	↑ 4	↓ -2

The 2020/21 Youth Life and Times Survey included questions that had not been asked previously:

When considering the statement: '**Paramilitaries should look out for their own communities**' almost half of young people (48%) neither agreed nor disagreed. Those agreeing and strongly agreeing that paramilitaries should look after their own communities was 29% and those disagreeing and strongly disagreeing was 23%.



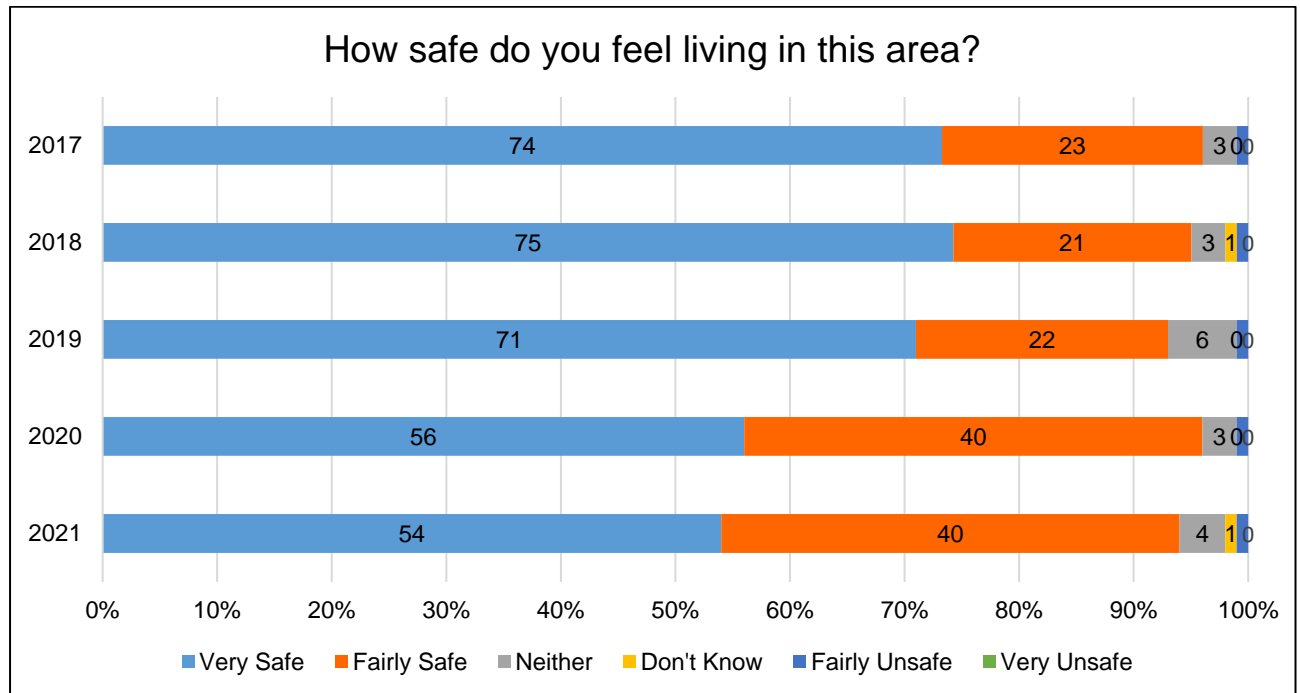
Furthermore:

- 2% of young people responded that they had been threatened by a paramilitary group;
- 1% of young people had to move house because of intimidation; and
- None of the respondents had been a victim of a paramilitary-related “beating or some other kind of punishment”.

Views about the police and criminal justice system

Relevance: Trust and confidence in the police and criminal justice system is a key element in understanding confidence communities have in the institutions of the state, and creating a culture within communities where the majority of individuals are law-abiding citizens. Understanding trends and developments in this area helps shape activity and work accordingly. *Source:* NILT.

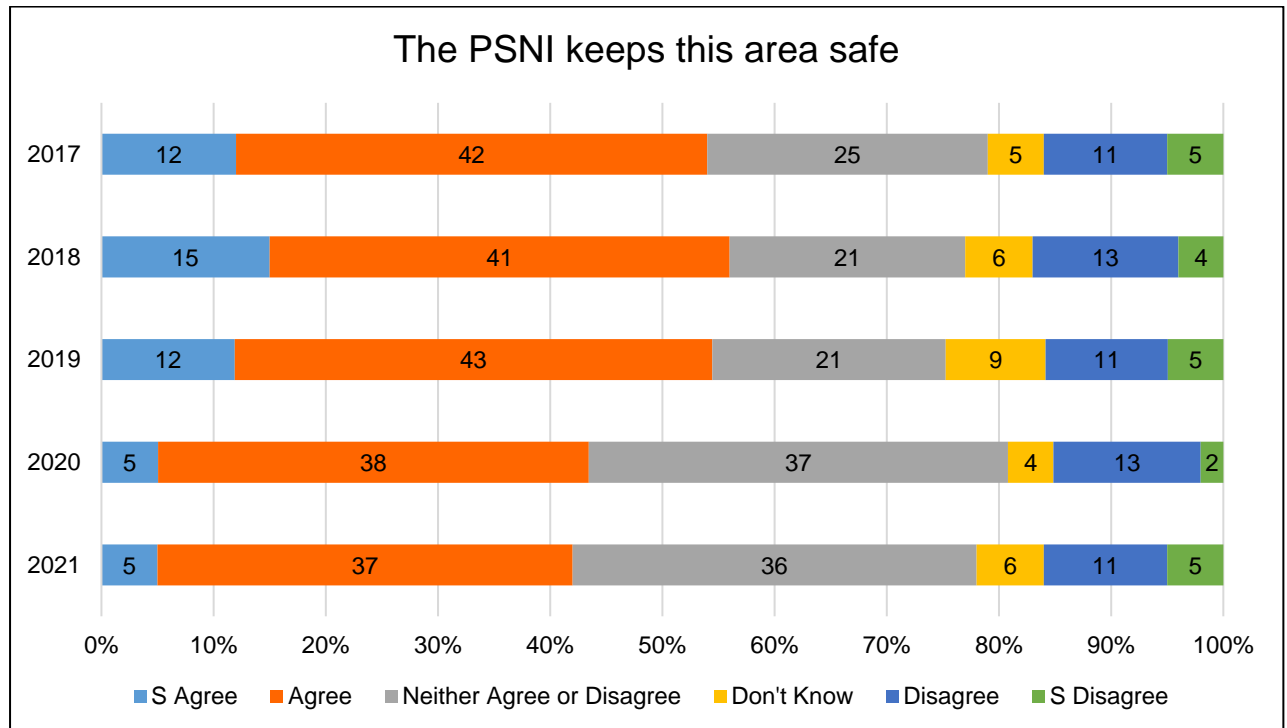
Respondents were asked: ‘**how safe do you feel living in this area?**’



The table below shows the one, three and five year changes in data:

	Very Safe	Fairly Safe	Neither	Don't Know	Fairly Unsafe	Very Unsafe
5 year change (2017-2021)	↓ -20	↑ 17	↑ 1	↑ 1	↑ 1	→ 0
3 year change (2019 -2021)	↓ -17	↑ 18	↓ -2	↑ 1	→ 0	→ 0
1 year change (2020-2021)	↓ -2	→ 0	↑ 1	↑ 1	→ 0	→ 0

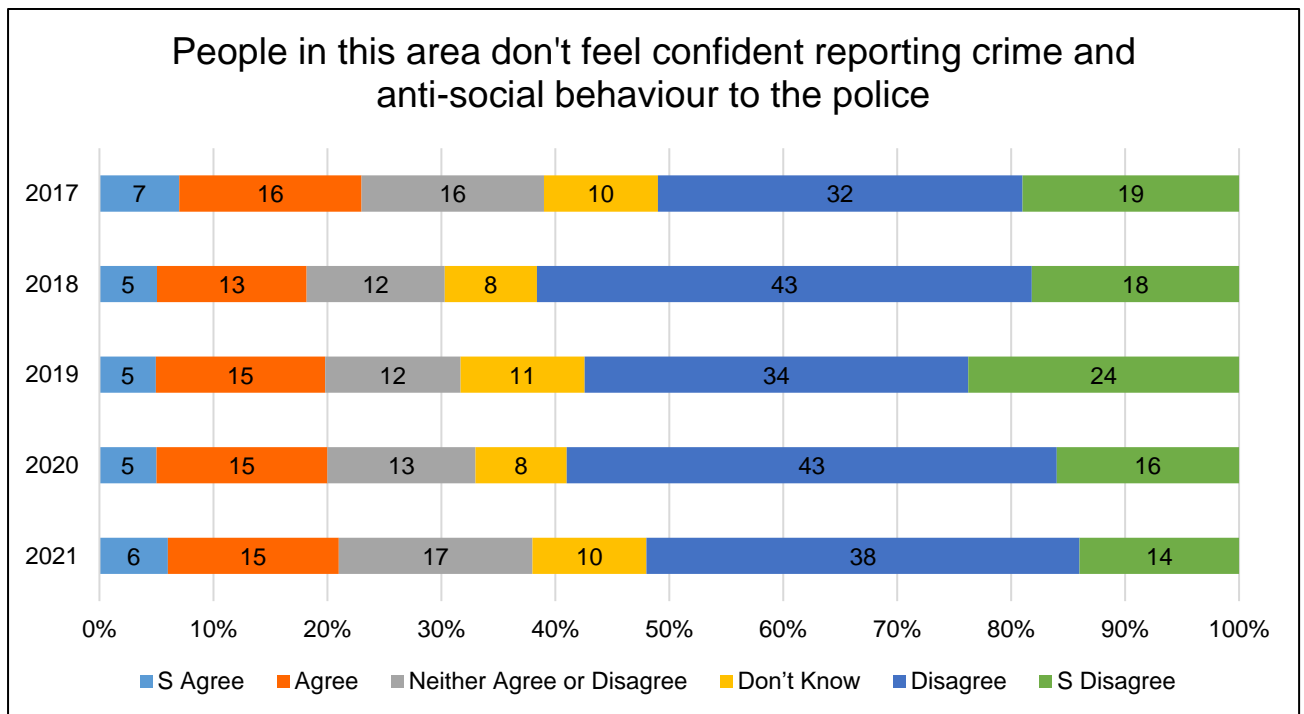
Respondents were asked how much they agreed or disagreed with the statement: **‘the PSNI keeps this area safe.’**



The table below shows the one, three and five year changes to the data:

	S Agree	Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Can't Choose	Disagree	S Disagree
5 year change (2017-2021)	↓ -7	↓ -5	↑ 11	↑ 1	→ 0	→ 0
3 year change (2019 -2021)	↓ -7	↓ -6	↑ 15	↓ -3	→ 0	→ 0
1 year change (2020-2021)	→ 0	↓ -1	↓ -1	↑ 2	↓ -2	↑ 3

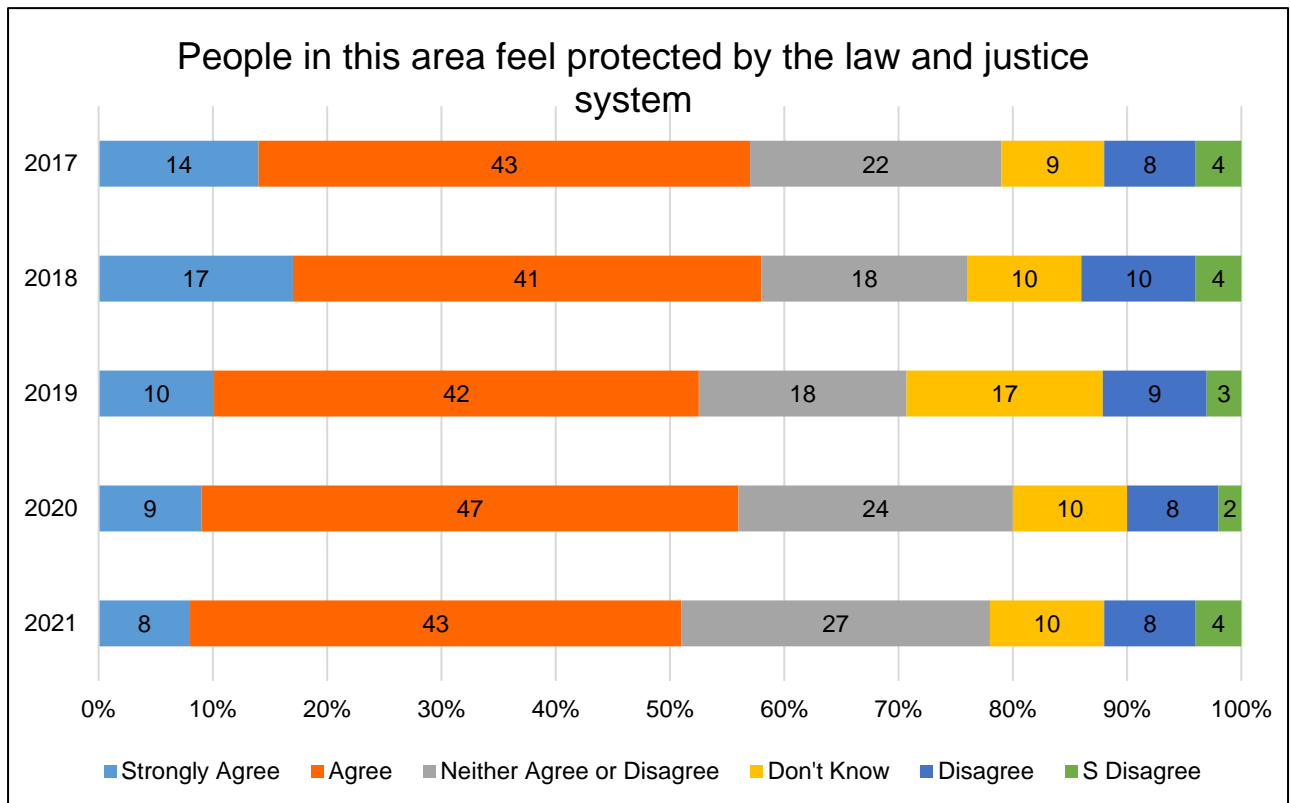
Respondents were asked how strongly they agreed or disagreed with the statement: **'People in this area don't feel confident reporting crime and anti-social behaviour to the PSNI.'**



The table below shows the one, three and five year changes in the data:

	S Agree	Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Don't Know	Disagree	S Disagree
5 year change (2017-2021)	↓ -1	↓ -1	↑ 1	→ 0	↑ 6	↓ -5
3 year change (2019 -2021)	↑ 1	→ 0	↑ 5	↓ -1	↑ 4	↓ -10
1 year change (2020-2021)	↑ 1	→ 0	↑ 4	↑ 2	↓ -5	↓ -2

Respondents were asked how strongly they agreed and disagreed with the statement: **‘People in this area feel protected by the law and justice system.’**



The table below shows the one, three and five year change in the data:

	S Agree	Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Don't Know	Disagree	S Disagree
5 year change (2017-2021)	↓ -6	→ 0	↑ 5	↑ 1	→ 0	→ 0
3 year change (2019 -2021)	↓ -2	↑ 1	↑ 9	↓ -7	↓ -1	↑ 1
1 year change (2020-2021)	↓ -1	↓ -4	↑ 3	→ 0	→ 0	↑ 2

Other recent research concerning the impact of paramilitaries in NI

'Accelerators': Targeted Youth Services' Contribution Towards the Attainment of Multiple Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

This research, carried out by Dr. Colm Walsh, frames work involved in tackling paramilitarism within an international context: the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The SDGs cover complex socio-economic issues such as poverty, wellbeing, education and justice. The investment by the Tackling Paramilitarism and Organised Crime Programme and Department of Education has resulted in the design and implementation of targeted youth services in communities with elevated exposure to paramilitary related harms, community violence, increased rates of mental health and psychological distress, reduced levels of educational attainment and increased rates of violence and other risk taking behaviours. The evidence presented in the study shows that this type of work can accelerate progress across multiple issues that young people experience. Additionally, this work can contribute to a range of outcome areas, thereby accelerating progress towards multiple SDGs (which UN Member States, including the UK, have committed to achieve by 2030).

Participants on EA programmes were asked to complete surveys with the aim of identifying accelerators and drivers that enable progress across the SDGs as well as provide an overview of the needs of young people, and to capture any changes that took place between the start and end of their engagement. A range of information was recorded, including demographic data such as gender, age, religion and the areas in which young people lived; safety; mental health and wellbeing; exposure to paramilitary harms including violence; perceptions of the law and police; and protective factors including social support, self-efficacy, personal responsibility, lawfulness and openness to the future. A total of 368 young people completed the baseline survey; 143 completed the endpoint survey. Semi-structured interviews were also conducted.

Key findings included:

Sense of safety

- More than two-fifths of the sample (40.2%, n=142) of the young people reported that they felt very safe in their communities. When disaggregated by gender, there were some notable differences. For instance, young men were more likely to self-report feeling safe than young women. Further, there was a statistically significant difference in the mean age of young people and their self-reports of sense of safety with younger people more likely to report feeling safe than those who were older.

Adversity and probable trauma

- Adversity and probable trauma, particularly interpersonal trauma, appears to be elevated within this sample when compared with population estimates.
- Indirect and direct exposure to violence rates appear to be higher in this group.
- The group had experienced a range of adversities which placed them at elevated risk of a range of psycho-social difficulties, including mental health disorders and behavioural difficulties.

Perception of and exposure to paramilitaries

- Close to half of this sample believed that paramilitaries were either 'active' or 'very active' in their communities. Some workers believed that such activity was so common that it was normative – and worryingly, that there was very little that could be done to reduce it.
- Almost one-quarter of the sample (24.9%, n=87) reported having been threatened by someone that they believed to be in a paramilitary group.
- A small but significant minority also reported being attacked by someone that they believed to be in a paramilitary group (8%).
- Just over half (50.9%, n=147) reported being witness to an attack being carried out by individuals they believed to be involved with a paramilitary group.
- Greater adversity was associated with more likelihood of both being threatened and being attacked by paramilitaries.

Risk taking

- Some risk taking behaviours, while somewhat normative and even developmentally appropriate, can increase vulnerabilities to paramilitary harms. Almost two thirds of young people indicated that they would use alcohol within the next month (63.2%); over one-third suggested that they would be involved in a fight in the next month (35.3%); and more than one-fifth reported the intention to use drugs within the next month (21.4%). Interestingly there was significant variation across the areas. There were significant reductions in self-reported intent to engage in violence. Whilst 41.4% of young people reported an intention to engage in fighting at baseline, this reduced to only 3.3% at endpoint.
- Strong associations were found between various exposures to violence and a range of risk taking behaviours. The strongest relationships were found between exposure to violence in the home, community and paramilitary type violence and self-reported intention to engage in violence

- The data suggests that young people exposed to such adversity often experience them in multiples. That is, victims are often poly-victims, experiencing a range of violent events both directly and indirectly.

Attitudes towards the Police

- 58% of respondents believed that their community were confident in reporting ASB to police, a rise on 49% in 2017 (Walsh, 2020). However, these data appear to show that amongst some young people, particularly those engaged in phase II of these targeted interventions, the issue of policing remains contentious. 61% (n=204) of the young people believed at baseline that the police were prejudiced against their community. There did not appear to be any significant difference between young people of different religious backgrounds with young people from Protestant, Catholic backgrounds equally likely to hold these views.
- There appeared to be a strong association between these attitudes in areas that were considered to be most active in regard to paramilitary activity. On average, those who reported paramilitaries either being active or very active, as well as those who refused to respond, were more likely to score lower on the measure of police legitimacy

Collectively, the targeted EA interventions were shown to have contributed to change in measurable ways. For example, in regards to increased lawfulness, improved attitudes towards violence and aggression, reduced levels of risk taking behaviour and increased levels of self-efficacy. These are well established protective factors that may reduce levels of vulnerability. Conversely, there are other areas where the anticipated change was not observed as strongly, such as in regard to young people's attitudes towards the police, mental health and wellbeing, gender norms, social supports and hope for the future. It is not clear why there was less progress in these areas

Informed by the strategic commitment to attain the SDGs by 2030, the drivers of change recommended through the INSPIRE framework (World Health Organisation, 2016)⁴⁰, and connecting these to the regional policy context of Northern Ireland in regard to tackling paramilitarism and organised crime, Dr. Walsh developed a conceptual framework which outlines how each of the Tackling Paramilitarism and Organised Crime Programmes related to targeted youth responses are in turn aligned to key SDGs and which INSPIRE strategies could conceivably be employed to achieve what the EA have defined as their desired outcomes as a result of such implementation.

Link to full Report: <https://www.justice-ni.gov.uk/publications/accelerators-targeted-youth-services-contribution-towards-attainment-multiple-sustainable>

⁴⁰ The Inspire framework was developed by ten global agencies as the first comprehensive package of strategies for preventing violence involving children and young people.

SECTION C: IMPLEMENTATION OF MEASURES

3.1 In this Section of the Report, we consider in further detail the progress of the various aspects of the Executive's Programme to tackle Paramilitarism, Criminality and Organised Crime and other relevant work by the Governments. We also comment on gaps or opportunities for further activity to bring about the ending of paramilitary activity. We consider the work of the Programme using the same themes as its benefits realisation groups (paragraph 1.46 of the Overview refers), which draw together those working on projects contributing to particular outcomes: keeping people safe; protective factors; and community resilience. Within each theme we cover:

- A short overview of the benefit;
- A summary of relevant Phase 2 Programme activity contributing to the goal;
- Some other initiatives that might contribute to success; and reference to major completed Executive Action Plan Actions;
- Relevant actions from the Executive Action Plan that require further progress; and
- A short piece on how success is being measured by the Programme in each domain.

We adopt the above structure because the Executive agreed a Second Phase of the Programme (which commenced in 2021), the relevance of wider work to these shared goals, and because we continue to see relevance in Actions from the original Executive Action Plan which have not sufficiently progressed.

Phase Two of the Programme

3.2 As set out in the Overview, a Programme management structure was put in place to oversee delivery of 2016 Executive Action Plan (based on the recommendations of the Fresh Start Panel Report) – it worked to support delivery of many of the Actions in Phase One of this work. Following a review of Phase One, the Executive committed to a Second Phase of the Programme, from 2021-2024. The strategic outcome is:

“Safer communities, resilient to paramilitarism, criminality and coercive control”.

3.3 A “benefits realisation” system was put in place to support a collective focus on desired outcomes. The idea is that each project and activity contributes towards one or more ‘intermediary benefits’ and these in turn collectively help to deliver change when it comes to ‘end benefits’. Furthermore, the projects and those involved in them should be sharing ideas, experiences and learnings with each other, to build further expertise and foster ongoing collaboration, and to identify any gaps and/or duplication.

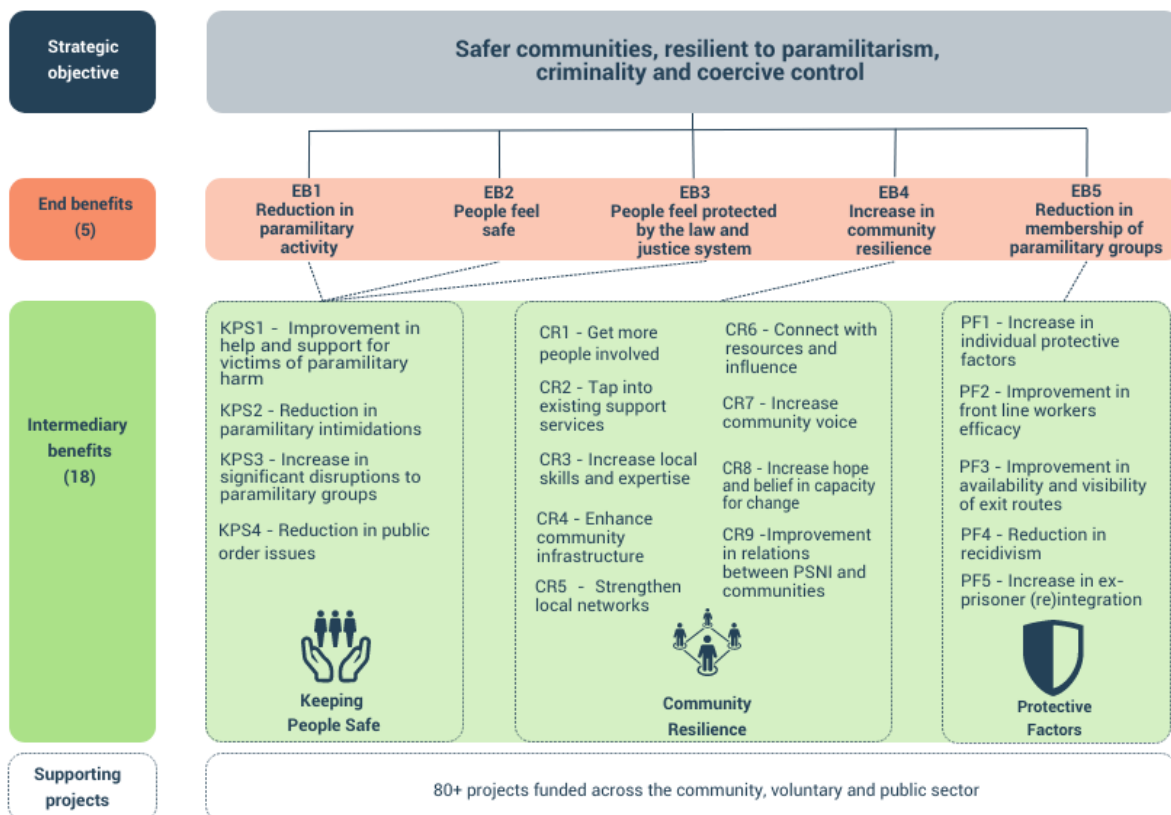
3.4 Projects and associated work are linked to two workstreams:

- People and communities are safe from the harm caused by paramilitarism; and

- People and communities are more resilient to paramilitary influence and involvement in paramilitarism, criminality and organised crime.

3.5 The Programme seeks to be aligned with public health approaches to violence, it exhibits many of the characteristics of Violence Reduction Units that are working across the UK and internationally, and is working towards being trauma-informed. The Programme is focused on being data and evidence-driven. A Programme Team supports co-ordination of the work, and projects are led by delivery leads in various departments and agencies, sometimes in partnership with the community and voluntary sector. Three benefits realisation groups pull together work against each benefit area and a benefits realisation coordination group works across the three groups. A senior Sponsor Group chaired by the Head of the Civil Service has been established to implement the strategic direction of the Programme, demonstrating the necessary collaborate culture between departments and agencies and making linkages between and beyond this and other Executive initiatives.

3.6 The diagram below shows the end benefits, and intermediate benefits against which the Programme is seeking to deliver change. We will explore each in greater detail, and comment on the various projects being delivered in terms of the end benefits, as well as identify areas for further work or progress.



3.7 Underpinning this work is an “enabling framework”, also agreed by the Executive. It consists of six elements:

- Leadership – demonstrating clear political leadership
- Partnerships & Alignment – consciously aligning with other strategies
- Communications – communicating that violence is preventable and not inevitable and ‘what works’
- Locality working – maximising the use of existing resources in particular areas and drawing on local expertise and connections
- Research & Best Practice – harnessing data/evidence to understand the problem and to develop solutions that work and provide a sound basis for investment
- Governance – involving cross-sectoral structures that ensure the programme has an impact after the lifecycle of funding

3.8 This Programme makes a vital contribution to efforts to tackle paramilitarism, as do various community and voluntary sector initiatives funded by philanthropic and other bodies, alongside the broader work of the Executive, and the UK and Irish Governments. Its approach of realising benefits, in line with best practice, has real potential to support the aim of bringing about “safer communities, resilient to paramilitarism, criminality and coercive control.”

3.9 The Programme has a budget of approximately £16m this year to invest in direct project delivery, and with that level of funding it can pilot new ideas, share learnings and make efforts to encourage system change across Northern Ireland departments, to help them increasingly take on and collaborate on work tackling paramilitarism. But the Programme alone cannot deliver an ending of paramilitarism – this requires a Whole of Government effort. As the Programme’s submission to the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee’s inquiry into paramilitarism notes: “Success at population level is not, however, wholly within the gift or control of the Programme. Project outcomes have a role to play but there is also a need to address wider strategic risks, dependencies and opportunities that extend beyond the Programme.”⁴¹ It is our hope that with leadership provided by the Sponsor Group and the Head of the Civil Service, and the partnerships forming through the Programme, that every opportunity will be taken to end paramilitarism – including transforming education, creating job opportunities, reducing vulnerabilities, increasing community resilience, and transforming the culture connected with continuing paramilitarism.

⁴¹ <https://committees.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/111013/html/>

Keeping People Safe

Overview:

3.10 Keeping people safe is also a crucial aspect of this work. As the security situation statistics and other measures and feedback show: paramilitary-linked criminality is still causing harm to individuals and communities.

3.11 The Programme's work in this area is designed to contribute towards:

- Decreasing levels of paramilitary activity;
- People feeling safe; and
- People feeling protected by the criminal justice system.

3.12 The benefits realisation approach means that the collective impact of the Programme's projects, if delivered effectively, focused on the right issues, in the right places and based on robust data, should help realise intermediary benefits, which in the case of keeping people safe are:

- Victims receive effective help;
- Reduction in paramilitary intimidation;
- Reduction in public order issues; and
- Increase in significant disruption to paramilitary groups.

Relevant Programme activity:

3.13 The Programme funds a number of projects in support of these goals and we give details of these below (noting that several projects include multiple benefits and to avoid unnecessary duplication we have commented on each project, mindful of the contribution across multiple benefit areas).

Project	Paramilitary Crime Task Force
Description	A Paramilitary Crime Task Force (PCTF) incorporating the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI), HMRC (the UK Tax Authority) 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; and • A more bespoke and effective law enforcement response against specific groups or individuals.
Funding	£5,661,000

Contribution to Programme	The project will provide a law enforcement response to tackle the threat from paramilitary linked organised crime.
Benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduction in public order issues; and • Increase in significant disruptions to paramilitary groups.
Summary update	Over the period April 2021 to March 2022, the PCTF made 83 arrests, and brought 75 charges/reports. It seized drugs with a street value of £1,035,029, along with 27 weapons, and £175,832 in cash.
IRC comment	<p>The PCTF is a vital component of tackling paramilitarism, as it addresses harm caused by criminality such as drug dealing, extortion, money lending etc. It brings together the PSNI, HMRC and the NCA. It does not operate alone within the PSNI, but instead works with the Terrorism Investigation Unit, Community Safety Branch, Local Policing etc.</p> <p>The pattern of lawful seizures, arrests, searches ultimately leading to convictions disrupts paramilitary criminality and sends a clear message that paramilitary crime will not be tolerated. We comment further on policing in paragraphs 1.56-1.62 of the Overview.</p> <p>Given the complexity involved in investigations, we recognise that this is a challenging job. The PSNI, HMRC and NCA should continue to prioritise tackling paramilitarism through their combined effort.</p>

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; and • Trauma support.

Funding	£100,000
Contribution to Programme	This project will provide dedicated, community-based support to victims of paramilitary activity and harm.
Benefits	Victims receive effective help.
Summary update	We note that this project is progressing well in offering the appropriate support to victims since its establishment earlier this year.
IRC comment	<p>We welcome the addition of a victim support project to the Programme. It is vital that support be appropriate to the needs of victims affected by paramilitary activity, and that it continues to be joined up with other service providers. Having this dedicated support mechanism should ensure that support is consistently offered to victims of paramilitary criminality.</p> <p>It also provides an opportunity to deepen understanding of the wider impact of paramilitary activity. Lessons learned and data should be shared to inform other interventions (within ethical and data protection parameters, and respecting the needs and rights of victims).</p>

Project	Belfast City Council support project for people under threat
Description	Develop, support and implement the multi-agency 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	<p>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:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improving communication, co-ordination amongst service providers; and • Gathering 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; and

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proactive case management system to support, protect and prevent PSAs within West and North Belfast.
Funding	£95,000
Contribution to Programme	This project aims to develop, support and implement multiagency arrangements in West and North Belfast (these have already been piloted within West Belfast) to address issues relating to victims of paramilitary groups and those under threat. This work will aim to align the work of various agencies, including community partners, to help assist those under threat.
Benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase in individual protective factors; Reduction in paramilitary intimidations; and Victims receive effective help.
Summary update	This work supported 146 people in West Belfast and 59 in North Belfast in 2021/22. The support varied depending on the needs of the victim. Each case referred to the PSNI was given personal safety advice. Some victims received support to address accommodation needs. Those referred had threats lifted or resolved. Some received specialist support such as mental health and addiction services through Aspire.
IRC comment	<p>We welcome this collaborative approach which recognises the complexity of needs of those who come under threat from paramilitaries.</p> <p>Many of the agencies involved have previously worked with victims of paramilitary threats. We recognise that this pilot is seeking to explore the best way to encourage multi-agency collaboration to address threats – we recommend that the findings of a comprehensive evaluation are disseminated to other areas when available, to encourage sharing of best practice and consistency of services offered in different areas.</p>

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.
Funding	£120,000
Contribution to Programme	This Programme directly contributes to the implementation of Committal Reform.
Benefits	Victims receive effective help.
Summary update	<p>This funding is supporting the project management and progression of committal reform, which has been designed to speed up the time taken to progress cases and reduce the burdens on victims and witnesses of crime.</p> <p>The relevant legislation received Royal Assent in March 2022. For new cases brought forward from 17 October 2022, a victim or witness will not be put on the stand to be examined and cross-examined in a committal hearing before the actual trial.</p> <p>The justice system is also working to rollout phase two of the reform in 2024, whereby cases involving more serious offences will go directly to the Crown Court.</p>
IRC comment	<p>We welcome the passage of this legislation by the Northern Ireland Assembly, which will improve the victim's experience as a witness and reduce the delay in bringing cases to the Crown Court.</p> <p>We encourage those delivering this reform to prioritise its rollout and to continue to explore other reforms which could remove the delay in proceedings in Northern Ireland's criminal justice system.</p>

(We comment on Education Authority Youth Service projects under the protective factors benefits realisation group material below).

3.14 We acknowledge the contributions made by these projects with the aim of keeping people safe. We are aware that other work in the Department of Justice, PSNI, multi-agency Community Safety Board, Police and Community Safety Partnerships

(PCSPs) and within the community and voluntary sector also contributes to this goal. The strength of a benefits realisation approach is the identification of other relevant work, opportunities, risks and interdependencies that are linked to how progress is being achieved as a result.

Other relevant initiatives:

3.15 A number of other Actions from the original Executive Action Plan that were linked to safety, feelings of protection by the criminal justice system, support for victims and reducing paramilitary harm have been completed, including:

- The rollout of Indictable Cases Processes across NI, to support earlier engagement between the PSNI, Public Prosecution Service and defence representatives on indictable cases, to support removing avoidable delay from the criminal justice system;
- Extending unduly lenient sentences provisions (which allow the Director of Public Prosecution for Northern Ireland to ask the Court of Appeal to review a sentence on the grounds that it is unduly lenient) to cover a range of offences linked to terrorism and organised crime groups;
- Including the Northern Ireland Environment Agency and the Environmental Protection Agency in Ireland in the cross-border Fresh Start Joint Agency Task Force which supports the tackling of cross-jurisdictional organised crime;
- An investigative and strategic focus on paramilitary-linked criminality by the PSNI, NCA and HMRC;
- Use of some of the assets recovered from criminal activity for the benefit of victims, communities and the environment through various schemes including the Assets Recovery Community Scheme and the Irish Government's Community Safety Innovation Fund; and
- Reviewing neighbourhood policing.

3.16 We welcome the PSNI's commitment to neighbourhood policing, through the development of its engagement strategy and its publication of the hallmarks of effective neighbourhood policing. We encourage its ongoing commitment to a problem-solving approach, and its work to partner with relevant organisations in early intervention, prevention and response work.

3.17 There is significant potential in further efforts to improve trust and confidence in the criminal justice system. Much of this work does not require the support of the Programme, but rather the collective efforts of the Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunal Service, Office of the Lady Chief Justice, PSNI, Department of Justice, Public Prosecution Service (PPS), Probation Service and others working alongside the justice system. Removing avoidable delay from the criminal justice system is vital to improving confidence as well as, promoting trust in the rule of law. We recommend that the Justice agencies continue to prioritise removing avoidable delay, and continue its work to build trust and confidence in the system.

- 3.18 Partnership work is effective in tackling paramilitarism, which manifests itself differently in different areas. PCSPs therefore have a vital role to play: ensuring PSNI, local Councils and other agencies including the Housing Executive, Youth Justice Agency, Probation Board NI, Education Authority, health and care agencies, Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Services, elected representatives and independent members are all aware of the specific needs in areas that experience paramilitary activity, and are actively planning to work more effectively together. They must continue to meet their strategic objective: “to support confidence in policing, including through collaborative problem solving with communities through: ... building community confidence in the rule of law by helping mitigate the harm caused to people and communities by paramilitarism, criminality and organised crime consistent with wider Programme for Government objectives and through use of co-design principles, where appropriate”.
- 3.19 Other organisations and groups are also involved in community safety work, including restorative justice and practice organisations, local community safety partnerships, and local projects and collaborations.

Actions from the original Executive Action Plan which require further progress:

- 3.20 There are a number of actions from the original Executive Action Plan against which we believe there still needs to be further progress, connected to the work associated with the ‘keeping people safe’ benefits realisation group.

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 (2016)	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
IRC comment	Having seen how effective the use of organised crime legislation has been in disrupting organised crime in other jurisdictions, we consider this legislation to be a crucial additional tool in the fight against paramilitary and organised crime. We regret that the Executive and Assembly did not consider organised crime legislation in the last mandate. A public consultation took place on proposals in 2020. We urge Ministers to prioritise this in their future legislative programme, as we see significant benefits from being able to add:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offences of directing serious organised crime; • Offences of participating in serious organised crime; and • Aggravation by connection with serious organised crime <p>to the legislative toolkit being used to tackle paramilitarism.</p>
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A13	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.
Commitment by the Executive in its Action Plan (2016)	<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 Management.⁴²</p>
Lead responsibility	PSNI and Department of Justice
IRC comment	<p>Delay in the criminal justice system in Northern Ireland has been highlighted by many as an issue with a knock-on impact on trust and confidence in the criminal justice. 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 and the criminal justice system. We recognise the impact of COVID restrictions on the Courts Service and the speed of justice. Removing avoidable delay and speeding up justice should be a priority for the Executive. Creative solutions should be devised, tested and implemented.</p> <p>We welcome the commitment of the Chief Justice to a problem-solving approach, as well as removing avoidable delay. Whilst we recognise the challenging fiscal climate, we view this as an upfront</p>

⁴² <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/nia/2015/9/contents>

	investment which will ultimately save the public sector resources in the long-run, as well as being the right thing to do.
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A14	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.
Commitment by the Executive in its Action Plan (2016)	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.
Lead responsibility	Department of Justice
IRC comment	The removal of avoidable delay from the criminal justice system will have an impact on bail and more broadly in public trust and confidence in the criminal justice system.

A16	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.
Commitment by the Executive in its Action Plan (2016)	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. The Department of Justice will work with justice organisations to develop proposals on other sentencing measures, such as confiscation orders.
Lead responsibility	Department of Justice and the Chief Justice
IRC comment	We encourage the Chief Justice to continue to keep relevant aspects of this Action under review.
A9	Put in place a dedicated fund for restorative justice initiatives to provide enhanced levels of resource over longer periods of

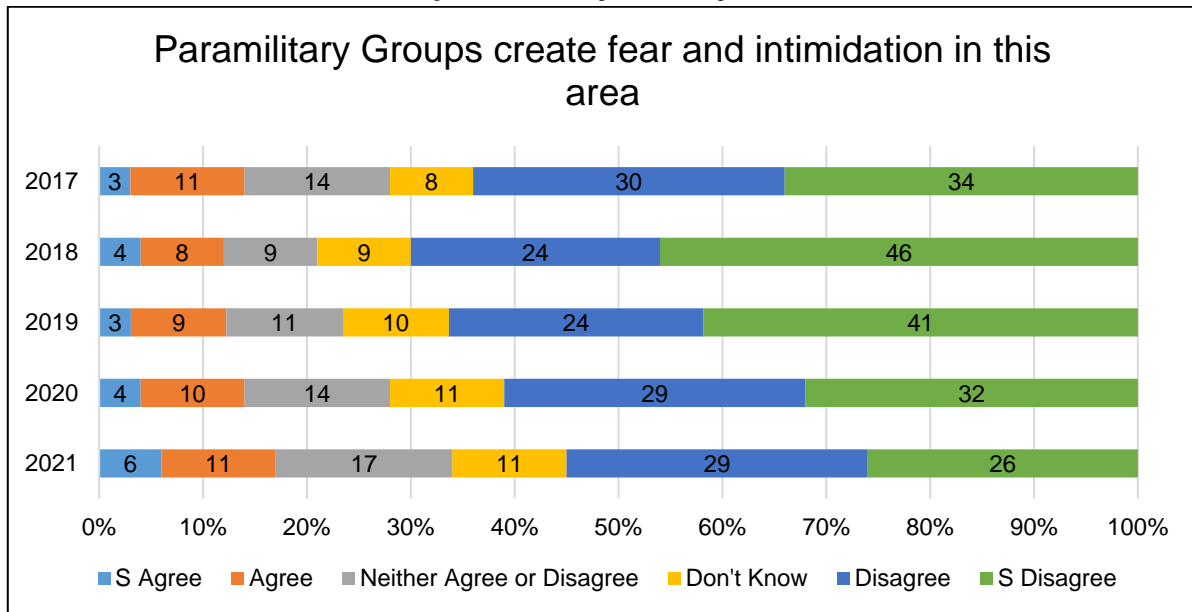
	time to deliver positive outcomes for individuals and communities. This should include resourcing the proposals for a centre of restorative excellence.
Commitment by the Executive in its Action Plan (2016)	The Executive will put in place a dedicated fund for restorative justice initiatives to provide 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
IRC comment	<p>Northern Ireland has an international reputation for delivery of restorative justice work, including mediation, diversion and alternative disposals. We acknowledge the funding provided to various streams of restorative justice/practice work through the Communities in Transition programme, funding from the Justice Department and agencies, and note the step taken by the Justice Minister to commission a review of the protocol for community-based restorative justice organisations, to support further growth of restorative practice. That work should be further progressed, to ensure that this vital work moves forward.</p> <p>We reiterate our disappointment at the significant delay in implementing the recommendation from our previous Reports. We recommend that a Centre be established without further delay, and certainly within the coming year, and that the contribution of restorative justice work be recognised and appropriately resourced in the period ahead.</p>

Measuring progress:

- 3.21 Measuring success in reducing paramilitary activity is not straightforward, especially as there is an underreporting of this type of crime, linked to fear and intimidation. It is not always straightforward to measure or fully understand the impact the interventions have on groups. Given that the Programme and law enforcement partners seek to measure changes in levels of paramilitary activity and disruptions, we welcome ongoing work to further develop this.
- 3.22 In Section B we set out some relevant findings of the Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey, some of which the Programme uses as part of the measures of success in this area: one such example of this is the Programme analysing trends in responses

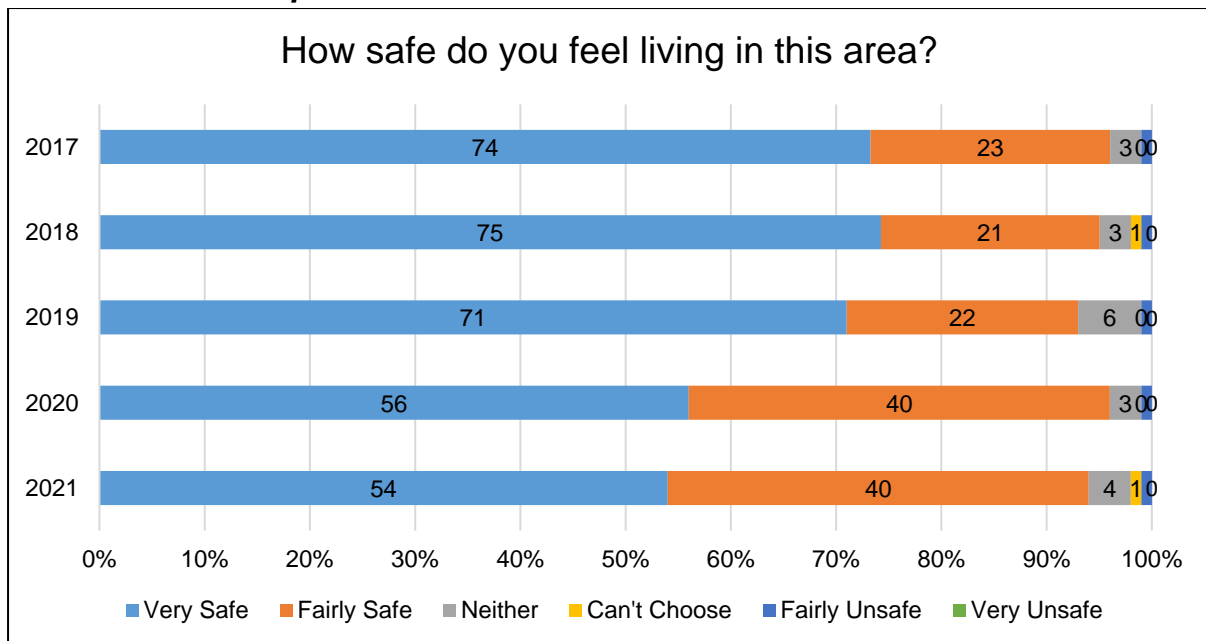
on fear and intimidation created by paramilitaries⁴³.

End benefit 1: Reduction in paramilitary activity



3.23 The Programme has also been gathering specific data that helps build a useful picture, for example numbers of households accepted by the Housing Executive as homeless due to paramilitary intimidation. There are other traditional measures such as security situation statistics (also covered in Section B), but like the Programme we recognise that these have limitations as they only measure the most acute levels of harm. It is vital that as full a picture is gathered and we encourage the planned further work to that end.

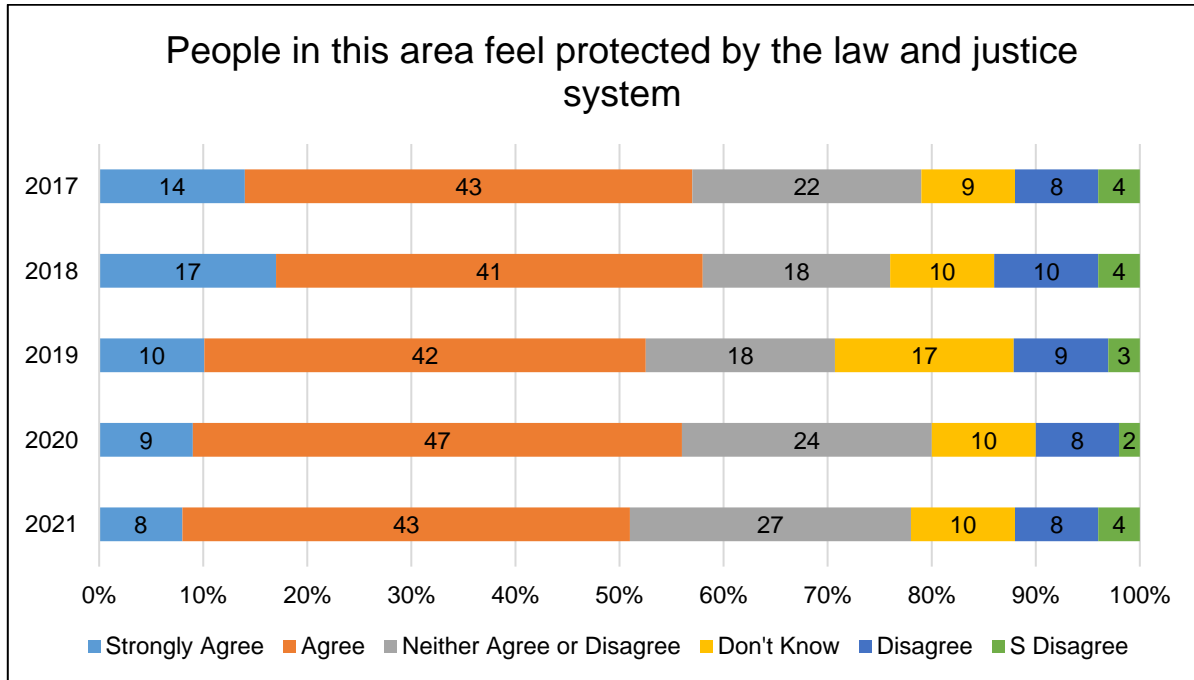
End Benefit 2: People feel safe



⁴³ <https://www.ark.ac.uk/ARK/nilt/results>

3.24 The Programme is also measuring changes in perceptions of safety, both through the NILT and a NI Statistics and Research Agency Safe Community Survey. We recognise the significance of perceptions to this work, as ensuring that communities feel safe and are safe helps narrow the space for paramilitaries.

End Benefit 3: People feel protected by the law and justice system



3.25 The Programme is also seeking to measure change around people feeling protected by the law and justice system. This is also a complex area, especially when many of the levers for change are not held by the Programme. And yet it is vital that this is appropriately measured, given the links between confidence in the criminal justice system and tackling paramilitarism effectively (whether confidence for people reporting crimes, giving evidence or believing that criminals will be prosecuted). Again the Programme uses data from the NILT to measure this and survey data on confidence in the police. This is an area where considerable work is ongoing, and we encourage all relevant agencies to continue with this and to share relevant data with the Programme, as it seeks to track progress.

Protective Factors

Overview:

- 3.26 The next area of benefits realisation work is increasing protective factors, in line with a public health approach to violence. By protective factors the Programme tends to mean characteristics associated with a lower likelihood of negative outcomes or that reduce a risk factor's impact.
- 3.27 We see increasing protective factors as vitally linked to the sustainable ending of paramilitarism, as it should help to address vulnerability and the susceptibility to recruitment or involvement in paramilitary activity. Linked to increasing protective factors is the reintegration of prisoners so that they do not reoffend and/or be recruited into (or back into) paramilitary groups.
- 3.28 Work to improve and enhance protective factors is connected to the end benefit of reduction in membership of paramilitary groups. Its intermediary benefits include:
- Increase in individual protective factors;
 - Reduction in recidivism;
 - Improvement in front line workers' efficacy;
 - Increase in ex-prisoner (re) integration; and
 - Improvement in availability and visibility of exit routes.

Relevant Programme activity:

- 3.29 A number of projects funded by the Programme contribute to this ambition.

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, the Education Authority (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; and • Increased skills base and knowledge of youth workers.
Funding	£1,963,560

Contribution to Programme	The project will help prevent vulnerable young people from becoming involved in paramilitary activity and from being harmed from paramilitary violence.
Benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase in individual protective factors; and • Reduction in public order issues.
Summary update	<p>Over 300 youth work programmes were delivered over 2021/22.</p> <p>About 600 young people specific to the Engage programme targeting young people at risk participated in the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Summer intervention programmes; • Diversionary programmes; • Lawfulness programmes; • Outdoor residentials; and • Community social action projects. <p>Education Authority Youth Services have been delivering capacity and capability training for schools and other organisations. In 2021/22 over 300 people took part and 26 schools were supported. This work included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth workers/teachers participating in training addressing effects of paramilitary activity; • Training young peer researchers from six Engage areas; • Development of Critical Champions in Engage areas; • Facilitation of Youth Work Conference; • Critical Incident Reviews; • Specific area research into delivery approaches across two sites; and • Feasibility study published in academic youth/education journal with the aim of progressing an efficacy study. <p>Connect:</p> <p>128 young people were supported over six months; 58 engaged in conversation in the Emergency Department (ED); 64 were engaged in short term follow up; nine engaged in long term follow up. 35 attended ED due to violence-related injury, 27% of the total. Eight had previously presented.</p> <p>The mean age for youth presenting to ED with violent injuries was 18.2; the range was between 12 and 23 years old. 46.2% were</p>

within the 16-19 age band, 15.4% were within the 12-16 age band. About 79% of all of those attending ED with injuries were male compared with about 21% who were female.

Serious injuries are clustered across the summer months, in particular, August and September. In fact, these two months account of a total of 36.8% of the total presentations to this ED. Weekends were the busiest time for ED dealing with violence-related injuries.

Almost one-quarter (24.2%) of presentations were multiple presentations, indicating that there is a small, but important sub group of youths are at elevated risk of poly-injury.

SPARK:

The SPARK project, a diversionary scheme to discourage risk-taking behavior and provide opportunities and pathways was extended to 21 areas. 24 programmes and 69 social action projects were delivered between April and September 2022. 244 young people took part; 93% completed the project.

Wider Education Authority:

Partnership working with PSNI, Youth Justice Agency, Child and Adult Mental Health Services, Probation (Aspire & Insync programmes), Schools, Social Services, Safeguarding Board Northern Ireland continues.

Youth workers attend 'Threat to Life' meetings and contribute to risk management for the individual. A youth worker attends the Mid & East Antrim Young Person Vulnerability Hub to receive referrals. Youth workers also advocate on behalf of young people with solicitors, Courts, Juvenile Justice and Hydebank College planning meetings.

IRC comment

This project continues to have real impact on the lives of vulnerable young people at risk, or potentially at risk, from paramilitary groups. The Education Authority Youth Service have continued to adapt their approach through the clever use of data to ensure they are targeting the right people and are delivering the biggest impact.

Time and effort invested in intervention work has been shown to equip young people with the skills, resilience and support structures to avoid being drawn into paramilitary groups. The Youth Service's

	early intervention schemes and diversionary work are critical elements in the long-term tackling paramilitarism but which also have short and medium-term impact.
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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.
Funding	£147,814
Contribution to Programme	The project contributes to supporting vulnerable people.
Benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase in individual protective factors; and • Improvement in availability and visibility of exit routes.
Summary update	The hub handled 18 cases in 2021/22, providing a wrap-around service. Clients ranged in age from 10 to 24 years old, and had an average age of 15. Some cases were in the hub for 4 weeks; others over a year. The average was 20 weeks. Through evaluation and review it was shown that there was adversity involved in 80% of cases. On average, young people were referred with two distinct issues; younger members were likely to be experiencing a range of vulnerabilities. Substance use, family issues and exposure to violence were all common themes.
IRC comment	This pilot project is intended to develop a model for multi-agency support for vulnerable young people who are of particular risk of recruitment by paramilitary organisations. Not all support hubs (led by Councils, and involving partner organisations in developing support arrangements aimed at tackling the root causes of offending behaviour and reducing potentially harmful behaviour within families and the community) currently have young people in their remits. We encourage the Programme to continue to evaluate this pilot work and

	to share findings and lessons with others who could take similar approaches.
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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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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; and • 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; and • Participants gain improved emotional self-regulation, improved behaviour and positive attitudes to education.
Funding	£567,000
Contribution to Programme	The project will strengthen protective factors and reduce the risk factors for individuals.
Benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase in individual protective factors.
Summary update	<p>This is a wrap-around, flexible education service to children and young people facing significant challenges in four geographical areas. It focusses on tackling educational under attainment and, in particular, the impact which socio-economic deprivation has on children and young people's outcomes. Over 7,000 children, young people, parents and practitioners have been supported by over 3,000 interventions.</p> <p>There is a focus on well-being within all interventions, promoting resilience and self-efficacy and helping children and young people to be ready to learn, improving emotional self-regulation, behaviour and attitudes to education. The programme adopts a whole family</p>

	<p>approach, building the confidence of parents in supporting learning and managing behaviour.</p> <p>There have been positive outcomes across all areas. Many supporting case studies focus on life and social skills development; parenting and family therapy; positive change in aspirations for their own life and for their community.</p> <p>Qualitative evaluation has shown strong results in delivering common goals of improvements in children, young people and parents attitudes to self, education and outlook on future and the extent to which participants feel more connected with people in their community.</p>
IRC comment	<p>The WRAP project consists of locally tailored interventions that are having a positive impact on the lives of young participants and their families.</p> <p>One programme, ASPIRE (In Your Corner), helped all of those who took part (nine young people) to get five GCSEs or equivalent in 2020/21.</p> <p>The BOOST programme helped young people learn in an environment outside of school and also reported positive outcomes on parental engagement with their children’s education. Dealing comprehensively with educational underachievement is a key issue and can provide young people with the best start in life and positively affect life trajectory.</p> <p>The scale of transformation required in this area is great and we welcomed the work of the Expert Panel on Educational Underachievement and their Final Report and Action Plan – “A Fair Start” – in May 2021 as an important step in this direction.</p> <p>We welcome that the WRAP project has helped inform “A Fair Start’s” Reducing Educational Disadvantage (RED) Programme and that the Programme Team have a seat on the Fair Start Stakeholder Reference Group which is responsible for the RED Programme. This is important in ensuring that this work takes due account of the work of the tackling paramilitarism programme. We urge the Minister and Executive partners to ensure that delivery matches the ambition of “A Fair Start.”</p>

Project	Trauma-Informed Practice
Funding	£169,686
Summary update	The Programme funds a Safeguarding Board NI-led trauma-informed practice (TIP) project which aims to embed TIP across Health, Social Care, Education, Justice and the Community and Voluntary Sector. It delivered workshops, accredited training and has seen positive survey results, with over 75% of participants reported increased knowledge, skills and confidence, and looking for new professional development opportunities. However, they were much less confident about their ability to make changes in their organisation and the long term commitment of their organisation.
IRC comment	We welcome this specific project, the work to raise understanding and awareness of this approach across the public sector, and the Programme's work to ensure that all of its activity is trauma-informed. Understanding complex needs and drivers is crucial to building interventions and delivering services which meet the needs of individuals, and we encourage the Programme to continue to raise awareness of this vital learning and to encourage its application by relevant agencies and individuals.

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.
Funding	£1,547,915
Contribution to Programme	Providing intensive additional interventions to marginalised men to prevent them becoming involved in paramilitary or criminal activities.
Benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase in individual protective factors;

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduction in recidivism; and • Increase in ex-prisoner (re)integration.
Summary update	<p>Aspire has supported 491 young men in 2021/22 across three strands: Aspire, Aspire Community engagement, and Aspire Restorative. Some referrals are made through the probation system; others are through the voluntary sector. Service users reported improvements in their mental health, wellbeing, use of time and offending behaviours. 59% of service users noted the programme had been helpful in addressing their behaviour. 54% reported progress towards achieving a crime-free life.</p> <p>250 people were supported through NIACRO (Northern Ireland Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders) mentoring: 56% completed the programme.</p> <p>45 people were supported through restorative practice with many reporting progress. 80 people have been supported in addressing alcohol and drugs-related issues by the ASCERT charity since April 2021.</p> <p>Demand for Aspire’s services has been highest in Greater Belfast. A large percentage is for the mental health strand with this accounting for 68 of the referrals and addiction accounting for 22. 67% reported a positive change as regards drug use and 58% report a positive change in their offending behaviour and their relationship to offending behaviour.</p> <p>Qualitative research about participants on the Aspire programme demonstrated the long term effects of exposure to paramilitary adversity, including clinically diagnosable disorders, such as Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), which exacerbates the risk of involvement with the justice system. There was also evidence of a lack of trauma screening and assessment and few supports for clients.</p>
IRC comment	<p>The Aspire Programme is making a positive impact on the lives of many of its services users, as has been shown by evaluation. The complex nature of issues faced by Aspire service users, and their exposure to paramilitary harms, is shown in emerging research. Such research underlines the pressing need to continue to provide targeted intensive support for those affected by paramilitary harms.</p>

	We encourage the Programme to consider expanding this work to include people over 30.
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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	Provision of a dedicated resource to support women who have offended and to help them to make the transition back into local communities; delivery of a suite of programmes and interventions which build resilience and promote positive citizenship; work with women offenders who are often marginalised within their communities to give them the confidence, motivation and support to participate in the main Department for Communities Women's programme.
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; and • 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.
Funding	£92,000
Contribution to Programme	The project will support the outcome that people and communities are more resilient to paramilitary influence and involvement in paramilitarism, criminality and organised crime.
Benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase in individual protective factors; • Reduction in recidivism; and • Increase in ex-prisoner (re)integration.

Summary update	The ENGAGE Programme (currently run by Start360) provides support for about 80 women coming out of the criminal justice system and is designed to build resilience, reduce the negative community pressure on these women, improve their mental health and contribute to positive change in aspirations for their own life and for their community. The programme supported 117 women in 2021/22. Participants overwhelmingly reported improvements in family relationships, mental health, and their participation in their community.
IRC comment	<p>This work is crucial in helping women to transition back into their communities and provides important support.</p> <p>The role that women play in maintaining peace in post-conflict societies is long-established. The role of women in tackling paramilitarism efforts should continue to be seen as an integral element of the Programme.</p> <p>The actions of paramilitaries affect women differently and the Programme must continue to be cognisant of this when planning new initiatives.</p>

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; and • Provision of support for the educational and wellbeing outcomes of those in separated accommodation.
Funding	£130,000
Contribution to Programme	The project will provide a mechanism by which ex-prisoners are supported to re-integrate into society and support individuals who wish to leave paramilitary groups.

Benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduction in recidivism; • Increase in ex-prisoner (re)integration; and • Improvement in availability and visibility of exit routes.
Summary update	Learning and skills provision has continued, in partnership with Belfast Metropolitan College, to improve readiness for employment on release. Courses have included Catering, Barbering, Irish, Business Administration, Art, Information and Communications Technology, Food Safety, Health & Safety in the Workplace, Essential Skills Numeracy and Enterprise & Employability, all of which are accredited. 251 classes were delivered across 2021/22 and 14 individuals were registered for qualifications (figures were down due to COVID).
IRC comment	Availability of training and learning opportunities to those in the separated regime is important in encouraging a move away from paramilitarism and to encouraging reintegration.

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; and • Improvement in availability and visibility of exit routes.
Funding	£50,000 (2021/22)
Summary update	Following an initial phase of work, wider engagement has been undertaken and a report is being prepared on developing a 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.
IRC comment	Reintegration of offenders is vital to bringing about an end to paramilitarism in Northern Ireland. We welcome the analytical work being done to consider what more could be done in this area. It will be important that appropriate action plans to implement recommendations from this work are developed in a timely manner, funded and given required support.

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 Service Level Agreement; and • Gateway review.
Benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase in protective factors; and • Reduction in recidivism.
Funding	£65,000 (2021/22)
Summary update	New multi-agency risk arrangements have been rolled out.
IRC comment	We welcome the progress made on this important work and that new arrangements are now in place to monitor and supervise offenders convicted of terrorism offences.

3.30 The Support Project for People Under Threat is covered under “Keeping People Safe” but also contributes to increasing protective factors.

3.31 A number of projects contribute to both increasing protective factors and increasing community resilience. In the next benefits section, we cover the following projects which contribute to both benefits: Communities in Transition, Developing Women in the Community Project, Fresh Start Through Sport and Community pilot projects, and PSNI Community Safety and Community Engagement.

Other relevant initiatives:

3.32 Through the above projects, and previous work under Phase One of the Programme, a number of the Actions from the original Executive Action Plan have been significantly progressed or completed which are linked to increasing protective factors, including:

- Supporting young people at risk;
- Capacity building for those working to support young people at risk;
- An initiative focused on young men who are at risk of becoming involved, or further involved, in paramilitary activity to combine restorative practices and peer monitoring with targeted support in respect of employment, training, housing, health and social services;
- A Programme for women in community development 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;
- Improved monitoring arrangements for paramilitary offenders when on license;
- Training and education opportunities for prisoners in the separated regime; and
- 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.

3.33 There have been other developments and activities which could contribute to enhancing individual protective factors since our last Report, and to enhance community resilience.

3.34 We recommended that the team developing the Executive Investment Strategy – which seeks to provide a clear framework for planning and prioritising infrastructure investment for Northern Ireland as a whole – pay due regard to the impact that investment decisions could have in creating the environment to sustainably end paramilitarism and believe that objectives such as enhancing communities and places, strengthening essential services, and building a strong, connected and competitive region etc. will all play a part in tackling paramilitarism. A new Executive should recognise this dimension when finalising the Strategy.

3.35 We also note the potential of the current refresh of “People and Place – A strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal” which seeks to provide a framework to address poverty and social exclusion and deprivation, taking a place-based approach. It is vital that this

work also be cognisant of the overlap with and potential for it to play a role in tackling paramilitarism.

- 3.36 Similarly, efforts to improve education standards, the availability of suitable housing and other socio-economic factors which can play a part in the continuance of paramilitarism should all be leveraged to play their part in the transformational change required to bring about an end to paramilitary activity once and for all.
- 3.37 Other public sector and philanthropic funded initiatives are very relevant to this work, such as the International Fund for Ireland's work with at risk young people, PEACE IV funded shared spaces, youth and positive relations work, and broader work by teachers and schools, social workers, youth clubs and health care professionals, housing professionals, and specific supports (e.g. addiction services, counselling, other mental health provision).
- 3.38 The Programme has also been supporting other mainstream work including deep engagement with a task and finish group on child criminal exploitation, linkages with the Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy, participation in the People and Places review, and supporting the educational underachievement work, Reducing Education Disadvantage, among others.

Actions from the original Executive Action Plan which require further progress:

- 3.39 There are a number of areas from the original Executive Action Plan connected to the work on protective factors where we believe much further progress is required.
- 3.40 A number of actions in Phase One of the Programme concerned the reintegration of ex-prisoners. Three specific Actions (B1, B2, and B3) have not been completed and whilst they do not form part of Phase Two's funded work they remain part of the crucial work involved in tackling paramilitarism and supporting – in the words of the Ministerial Pledge of Office and related MLAs undertaking – “those who are determined to make the transition away from paramilitarism”. These actions would support the reintegration of ex-prisoners, support transition efforts and should be implemented.
- 3.41 The Ex-Prisoner Working Group recently met and considered its membership, name and purpose – the group are currently considering if they expand the work to include post Good Friday Agreement prisoners and to rebrand, possibly focussing on post-conflict transformation instead of ex-prisoners. This is a potentially important initiative that could revitalise and refocus the reintegration of ex-prisoners.

B1

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 measures should be included within the remit of the Independent Reporting Commission.
Commitment by the Executive in its Action Plan (2016)	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
IRC comment	Despite a previous Executive's commitment in 2016 to "urgently adopt" this recommendation, it has not yet been progressed. This should be an early priority in the mandate of a new Executive and Assembly, as removing barriers to employment is a vital part of encouraging people in their transition away from paramilitarism.

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 (2016)	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
IRC comment	We encourage the Executive Office and others to continue working together to address issues faced by ex-prisoners and their families. Reintegration into society is vital to building a transformed Northern Ireland.

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 (2016)	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
IRC comment	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.

3.42 We also believe that the Executive needs to be more ambitious to bring about the transformation required to change the socio-economic conditions which contribute to continuing paramilitary activity. We continue to see the need for transformative initiatives to deal with issues such as poverty, social exclusion and lack of investment, that contribute to the environment linked to paramilitary activity. Ending paramilitarism requires concerted government intervention to comprehensively change the trajectory for people living in these communities, complementing bottom-up efforts. These transformative changes would also contribute significantly to increasing community resilience, another key goal of the Programme’s work. We continue to argue that tackling paramilitarism should be an explicit outcome in the next Programme for Government.

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 (2016)	<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
IRC comment	<p>Targeted support to deprived communities to help improve educational and employment prospects is necessary to improve life trajectories in these areas.</p> <p>We welcomed the work of the Expert Panel on Educational Underachievement and their Final Report and Action Plan – “A Fair Start” – in May 2021 and also note that the WRAP project has helped inform “A Fair Start’s” Reducing Educational Disadvantage Programme. We are encouraged that the Tackling Paramilitarism Programme Team is represented on the Fair Start Stakeholder Reference Group which is responsible for the RED Programme. We urge the Minister and Executive partners to ensure that delivery matches the ambition of “A Fair Start”.</p>

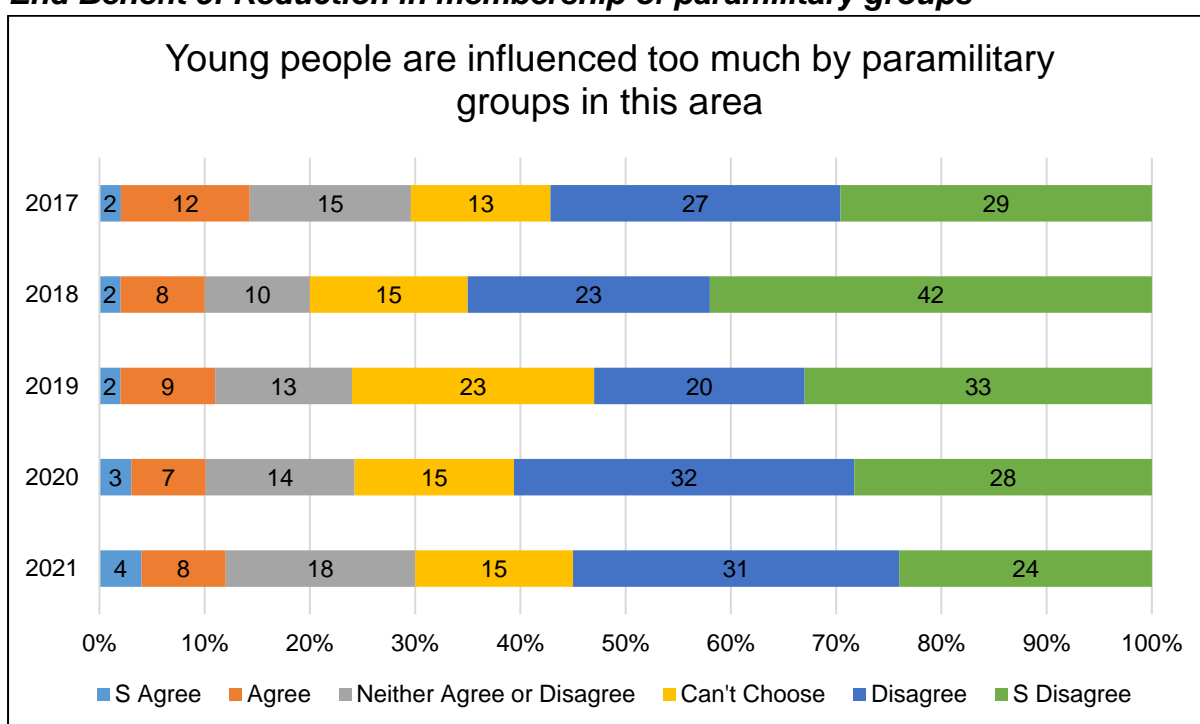
B8	The Department of Justice should revisit the framework related to the separated regime and arrange for an independent review to be undertaken examining the operation of the separated regime, evidencing the need for any changes and providing useful information for stakeholders to take forward.
Commitment by the Executive in its Action Plan (2016)	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)
IRC comment	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 Northern Ireland 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, while it continues to exist.

Measuring progress:

3.43 Measuring progress in this area is complex, and we continue to be encouraged by the work of the Programme Team, delivery partners and others to develop this. The Programme’s analysis is that, in line with a public health approach, increasing protective factors will lead to a “reduction in membership of paramilitary groups”. We support such an analysis, which reflects the need to address complex deep-rooted socio-economic issues linked to paramilitarism.

3.44 The main population-level indicator being used by the Programme to measure membership is Northern Ireland Life and Times survey responses to the statement “young people are being influenced too much by paramilitary groups in this areas”.

End Benefit 5: Reduction in membership of paramilitary groups



3.45 Other data provides figures on prevalence and the nature of paramilitary involvement, intimidation and coercion. This is useful evidence to support further work and will benefit from further sources being added based on local data and findings.

Community Resilience

Overview:

3.46 The work on this end benefit is seeking to enhance the resilience of communities that are vulnerable to paramilitarism. Community resilience is a multi-faceted concept involving of a range of elements including social capital, community activism, access to resources and decision makers, levels of educational attainment, culture and the wider socio-economic context. In developing their approach to measuring progress, those involved have articulated three broad areas for change:

1. **Mobilise Resources:** Increase community resilience by increasing local capacity to mobilise resources and expertise to address issues relating to paramilitary activity, criminality and organised crime through getting more people involved, tapping into existing support services, enhancing community infrastructure and increasing local skills and expertise.
2. **Lever social networks:** Increase community resilience by building social capital, strengthening relationships within communities, between/among communities, and between communities and statutory agencies to enable collective action to address issues relating to paramilitary activity, criminality and organised crime.
3. **Give people a say:** Increase resilience by involving people in decisions that affect their lives, increase community voice – giving more people, particularly marginalised voices a say in what happens in their area and increasing hope of the future and belief that change is possible.

3.47 Increasing community capacity is a vital aspect of tackling paramilitarism – communities need the support, confidence, relationships and skills to tackle local issues and problems and to reject paramilitarism.

3.48 The intermediate benefits involved are:

- Improvement in relations between PSNI and communities;
- Get more people involved;
- Strengthen local networks;
- Increase local skills and expertise;
- Enhance community infrastructure;
- Connect with resource and influence;
- Increase in community voice;
- Tap into existing support services; and
- Increase hope and belief in capacity for change.

Relevant Programme activity:

Project	Communities in Transition – Phase 2
Description	The Communities in Transition project includes a series of interventions in eight key areas ⁴⁴ . The interventions cover a broad range of themes which taken together seek to reduce the physical and social effects of paramilitary activity.
Objective	To build capacity to support those communities which continue to be most impacted by paramilitary activity and coercive control.
Outputs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased number of people participating in community life; • Increased skills, knowledge and confidence of those living within each community; and • Opportunities for shared learning, collaboration and partnership working within and between communities.
Funding	£3,638,605
Contribution to Programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To enable a reduction in community vulnerability; • No permissive physical manifestations of paramilitarism; and • A reduction in social opportunities for paramilitaries.
Benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase in individual protective factors; • Improvement in front line workers' efficacy; • Improvement in relations between PSNI and communities; • Increase in ex-prisoner (re)integration; • Get more people involved; • Strengthen local networks; • Increase local skills and expertise; • Attitude to change; • Connect with resources and influence; • Get help from other communities; • Increase in community voice; and • Tap into existing support services.
Summary update	Work to date has focused on seven key emerging themes, following a detailed participative design process: Community Safety and

⁴⁴ 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 Mount and Ballymacarrett in East Belfast; Drumgask (Craigavon) and Kilwilkie (Lurgan); and parts of North Down including Clondeboye and Conlig, including Kilcooley.

Policing; Addressing the needs of young people; Health and Wellbeing; Environment and Culture; Community Development Issues; Restorative Justice and Restorative Practice; and Personal Transition.

Projects are designed and delivered locally, reflecting area need, and have included:

- Community champions/volunteers;
- Community engagement/awareness raising;
- Health and wellbeing initiatives;
- Baseline health check and group action plan;
- Mentoring for organisations;
- Social action/civic engagement;
- Community navigators;
- Networking;
- Restorative practice training, mentoring and experiential learning;
- Awareness raising and strategic influencing;
- Stakeholder forum including training and learning visits;
- Community engagement on community safety;
- Community safety interventions;
- Culture and identity educational events;
- Information exchange and learning visits;
- Personal skills training and support for participants;
- Positive identity arts activity;
- Stakeholder forum;
- Capacity building for parents/carers/influencers;
- Supporting educational attainment;
- Community integration;
- Support services (personal transition);
- Youth intervention;
- Social action projects;
- Evaluation report;
- Social action/civic engagement projects;
- Local relationship building with response services;
- Career aspirations;
- Collaborative working within CIT area;
- Collaborative working platform – youth working group;
- Baseline health check and action plan;
- Supporting education attainment;
- Personal and skills development;

- Training;
- Health and wellbeing interventions;
- Community champions;
- Stakeholder forum, including training and learning visits; and
- Culture and identity education events.

A recent survey of participants found that:

- 89% of CiT participants agreed or strongly agreed with the statement 'Through this project or event, I am helping to improve things for my local community';
- 86% of CiT participants agreed or strongly agreed with the statement 'I am more hopeful about the future as a result of this project or event';
- 92% of CiT participants agreed or strongly agreed with the statement 'This project has enabled me to have an increased say in decisions that affect me/my area';
- 93% of CiT participants agreed or strongly agreed with the statement 'I feel better prepared to connect with local networks and statutory agencies as a result of this project';
- 85% of CiT participants agreed or strongly agreed with the statement 'This project has improved relationships between this community and statutory agencies';
- 86% of CiT participants agreed or strongly agreed with the statement 'I have increased trust in statutory agencies as a result of this project';
- 87% of CiT participants agreed or strongly agreed with the statement 'My organisation has increased collaboration with other organisations as a result of this project';
- 92% of CiT participants agreed or strongly agreed with the statement 'I work more with others to improve my area as a result of this project';
- 91% of CiT participants agreed or strongly agreed with the statement 'This project has increased the capacity of my organisation to address issues in our community';
- 95% of CiT participants agreed or strongly agreed with the statement: 'This project has increased my knowledge and skills';
- 87% of CiT participants agreed or strongly agreed with the statement: 'I am more aware of where to signpost people for help and support as a result of this project or event';
- 87% of CiT participants agreed or strongly agreed with the statement: 'I am more aware of ways to get involved in my community as a result of this project or event';

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 94% of CiT participants agreed or strongly agreed with the statement: ‘This project or event has enabled me to get more involved in the community’; and • 92% of CiT participants agreed or strongly agreed with the statement: ‘I intend to get more involved in my community’.
IRC comment	<p>There is a large amount of varied and valuable work ongoing under Communities in Transition (CiT) to improve community resilience of 8 areas impacted by paramilitary activity and coercive control. For example, building new and stronger community partnerships to address local safety issues; supporting the growth of new community infrastructure, providing new ways to problem solve; and helping to address mental health and wellbeing needs in local areas, as they transition away from paramilitary control. Collectively the work of CiT is designed to contribute to one of the Programme’s two workstreams: “People and communities are more resilient to paramilitary influence and involvement in paramilitarism, criminality and organised crime”. After three years the project is building capacity, and work needs to continue with evaluation of its impact to ensure clear links between its activity and tackling paramilitarism, together with understanding which approaches have been effective in transitioning communities away from paramilitaries.</p> <p>The mid-term evaluation of CiT recommended that it look at best practice elsewhere, especially where there has been progress in tackling criminal gangs. We encourage the team to study the Place-Based Leadership Development Programme (PBLDP) that is running in Drogheda and Darndale (Dublin) as a useful example of a strengths-based approach. The PBLDP strengthens the capacity of those already working hard to improve the quality of community life and facilitates collaboration between peers. Insights may also be gained from discussions with “Cure Violence” who work with individuals, communities and local organisations across the world to interrupt violence and bring about change.</p> <p>The evaluation showed that a number of interviewees were concerned that some individuals had different ideas of what constituted success in this work. CiT should be addressing paramilitarism through targeted community development, and that purpose must be continually revisited. The real challenge here is to continually connect all projects with the ending of paramilitarism, whilst recognising that different areas are at different stages and have different needs. Work was undertaken to develop a theory of</p>

	<p>change and to articulate that during tender processes, and we encourage the team to continue its focus on this.</p> <p>We are mindful of the passage of time since the research identifying the areas to work in, and the potential for community needs to have changed since the outset of the programme. We encourage the Programme to continue to evaluate and understand area need.</p> <p>We encourage the Executive to review the various sources of funding being used to build capacity and resilience in communities, and to adopt a more strategic approach to funding. A review of which areas need to be funded could also be considered as part of this work.</p> <p>The Programme puts a strong emphasis on CiT to achieve an “Increase in Community Resilience” (end benefit five). However, resilience is not something that can be built at a community level alone; sustainable resilience needs additional transformative government support.</p>
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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; and • Improved community relations.
Funding	£375,000
Contribution to Programme	An increase in community resilience and cohesion, where people are confident to make decisions and contribute to influential

	community decisions which aim to increase resilience to paramilitary exploitation.
Benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase in individual protective factors; • Get more people involved; • Increase in local skill and expertise; • Attitude to change; and • Tap into existing support services.
Summary update	<p>The aims of the Programme are to provide women with the skills, knowledge and confidence to become influencers in their own areas, and to take on leadership roles. Embedded within the Programme are access to new opportunities, whilst simultaneously addressing the barriers that may prevent women from civic engagement. 254 women have been supported across 14 areas in pilot projects up to the end of March 2022. In the summer, each organisation was given financial support to enable the programme to continue beyond March 2022.</p> <p>This project also achieved positive outcomes related to community resilience, including collective efficacy, skills and contacts to take on a leadership role in an area. Research showed that there were significant reductions in probable anxiety, depression and improvements in life satisfaction score and mental health at the end of the project for participants. There were also positive changes in aspirations for their own life and for how they saw their community.</p> <p>Phase Two of the project (2022-24) opened for applications in October 2022 and will focus on seventeen district electoral areas that have been identified as areas of high need.</p>
IRC comment	<p>The Independent Review of the Developing Women in the Community Programme (June 2022) recognised the success of the pilot phase and its positive impact on the women who participated.</p> <p>We note that the Department are implementing the recommendations of the Independent Review, including developing a theory of change to align with the Tackling Paramilitarism benefits framework as well as ensuring the Programme is trauma-informed. The Programme should continue work to identify links with other activities to ensure greater impact (as recommended in the Programme evaluation). A tie-in with the Communities in Transition work would increase the impact of the wider Executive Programme</p>

	<p>on paramilitarism and organised crime. We encourage the Programme to continue to prioritise both targeted women’s projects and continue to ensure women are enabled to take a full part in the rest of the Programme.</p> <p>Academic review of the programme (by Dr. Colm Walsh) noted positive feedback from the Programme participants, including significant increases in life satisfaction and a significant increase in the number of participants who indicated that they had the skills and increased confidence, and had taken on a leadership role in their area. Furthermore, nearly three quarters believed that they could now meaningfully influence decisions in their area. How much was a direct result of the programme was less clear, however, the self-reports of improvement and positive appraisal by participants were encouraging. There was no statistically significant change in participant’s sense of safety at a wider Programme level: those who initially reported feeling safe were equally likely to continue to report feeling safe, but conversely, those who reported feeling least safe continued to do so.</p> <p>For women to contribute fully to peacebuilding efforts it is important they have the space to raise concerns in a non-threatening environment that is not controlled by paramilitarism and that there is recognition of the contribution of women with longer-term support for 'bottom-up' community initiatives.</p>
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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; and • Clear pathways to available support services.
Funding	£566,000

Contribution to Programme	The projects will increase resistance to paramilitary activity and influence for individuals and their families, supporting people and communities who wish to move away from paramilitary activity and structures.
Benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase in individual protective factors; • Get more people involved; and • Strengthen local networks.
Summary update	<p>The aim of the Fresh Start through Sport is to “use the universal appeal of sport to engage with young people at risk of becoming involved in paramilitarism and/or organised crime”. Between October 2020 and March 2021, 41 young people aged 16-24 years completed the pilot programme in four areas: East Belfast, North Belfast, Rathcoole and Carrickfergus. During the period when COVID-related restrictions were in place programme activities consisted of a mix of online and (fewer) in-person activities.</p> <p>Fresh Start community pilots have involved interventions in three areas. Over a thousand children and young people, parents and community workers have participated and availed of support to enable life and social skills development, training opportunities, along with parenting and family support:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Conflict Resolution projects work with at risk young people, their parents/carers and those in the community to address issues like anti-social behaviour to develop community ownership and capacity building; • Ballyarnett Community Safety and Development Programme works with at risk young people and with their parents/carers and those in the community, to address issues such as anti-social behaviour and to develop community ownership and build capacity; • Strengthening Futures, Waterside Neighbourhood Partnership – This project is a community-based education and active citizenship project aimed at young adults who feel disconnected from their communities and that their voices are not being heard; and • Creggan Community Inclusion & Cohesion project is designed to increase the level of Youth/Community programmes and activities in the Creggan area.

IRC comment	<p>The evaluation of the Fresh Start through Sport pilot showed early progress, citing participants' recognition of the role of the programme in helping to break down a range of barriers, including those related to cross-community physical and mental health issues. The evaluation also revealed that participants wanted better signposting to available support organisations in their communities.</p> <p>We agree with the evaluation's recommendation that signposting is integrated into the Programme delivery to increase pathways to support and other opportunities. Enhancing a joined-up approach between different service providers, and visibility to the young people taking part in the programme, should be a core function of the Programme.</p> <p>The evaluation also recommended that opportunities should be taken to ensure that those who may benefit the most from the Programme are encouraged to participate, and that there is a more balanced demographic and gender makeup of participants (just 22% of pilot participants were women).</p> <p>Feedback from the Ballyarnett Programme showed it is having positive impact on participants, 85% of whom reported improvements in their ability to identify and make positive life choices.</p> <p>Evaluation of the Strengthening Futures pilot was broadly positive. Young people reported making progress in a number of areas, including their mental health, feelings of self-worth, and their sense of community belonging amongst others following participation on the Programme.</p> <p>Whilst progress is welcome this sort of work needs to happen on a larger scale. A long-term approach that mainstreams and appropriately resources such valuable work is needed as part of work to sustainably end paramilitarism.</p>
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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; and • Engaging those who are close to the issues and who can give an informed view on impacts and mitigations of any statutory response.
Funding	£145,000
Contribution to Programme	It is anticipated that this will contribute to increased interaction between the police and communities in key areas, the development of trust and confidence and the increase of partnership approaches to local problems as evidenced by increased initiatives, local information / intelligence and improved satisfaction with policing.
Benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improvement in front line workers' efficacy; • Improvement in relations between the PSNI and communities • Victims receive effective help; and • Improvement in availability and visibility of exit routes.
Summary update	<p>PSNI have invested in a range of small scale projects which provide PSNI officers to engage with people in the community, partnering with community organisations to create opportunities for police officers to be seen in a different light. Many of these projects were working with young people, frequently those who might be considered at risk of anti-social behaviour or criminality.</p> <p>Common characteristics of these projects are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sports; • Recreational trips; • Educational and cultural trips; • Demystification / humanisation / personalisation of police officers; and • Educational sessions, particularly about drugs.
IRC comment	This allocation of specific funding allows the PSNI to respond more flexibly to emerging priorities and needs working with experienced

delivery partners. We recommend that the PSNI, and the Departments of Justice and Finance should continue resourcing this work, noting that innovative practice is often at risk in times of fiscal constraint.

Other relevant initiatives:

- 3.49 There are a number of relevant initiatives that sit outside the Programme but can contribute to its goals and play a part in delivering the goals of Fresh Start. These include Together: Building a United Community (T:BUC), Urban Villages and Neighbourhood Renewal. The Department for Communities has been seeking to deliver Neighbourhood Renewal in 36 deprived areas across Northern Ireland. Neighbourhood Renewal Partnerships created local plans to improve everyday life for people in the targeted areas. The review of the strategy, with its focus on locality, provides the statutory sector with an opportunity to set a standard for partnership work with the community and voluntary sector in targeting local need, and building sustainable solutions. This work should take account of the potential impact on tackling paramilitarism, by learning from the experience of the Programme and recognising the potential to target and address socio-economic conditions in the areas where paramilitaries mainly operate and the contribution this makes to ending paramilitarism.
- 3.50 T:BUC was set up to provide a vision and vehicle for the continuing transformation of Northern Ireland to a more united and shared society. There is potential for any new T:BUC strategy to foster conditions through the increased provision of shared housing and integrated education that can also serve to counteract the influence of paramilitaries on young people. We also see potential to learn from the Urban Villages model, fostering positive community identities, building community capacity and improving the physical environment.
- 3.51 Aspects of the PEACE Plus programme (the successor to the European Union PEACE programme) can contribute to progress, with its support for building peaceful and thriving communities, delivering socio-economic regeneration and transformation, empowering and investing in young people, healthy and inclusive communities, supporting a sustainable and better connected future, and building and embedding partnership and collaboration.
- 3.52 The UK Government's Levelling Up Fund and UK Shared Prosperity Fund can make a significant contribution, if delivered in a way that recognises the potential added value of the contribution it can make to efforts to end paramilitarism through investing in infrastructure and town centre regeneration, as well as programmes designed to support communities and places, people and skills enhancement.

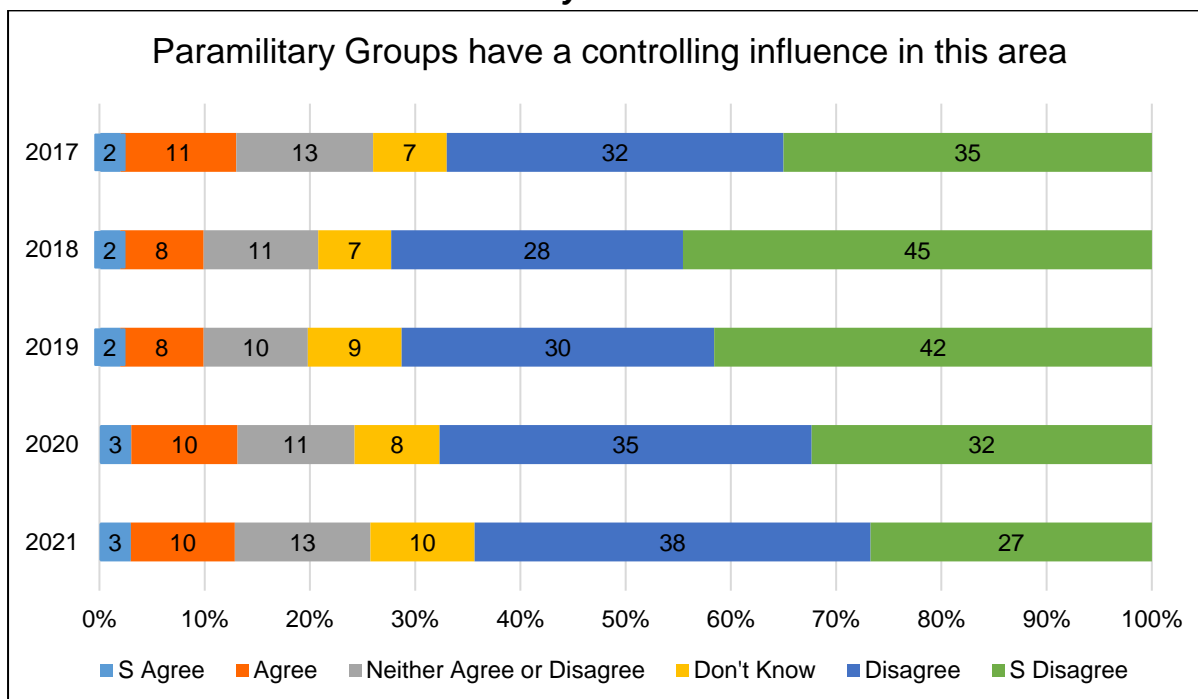
Actions from the original Executive Action Plan which require further progress:

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 (2016)	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
IRC comment	The ongoing review of the T:BUC Strategy should provide an opportunity for the Executive to significantly increase its ambition in respect of reducing segregation in education and housing, and to harness Good Relations work across the Executive to play its part in tackling paramilitarism where that work overlaps or intersects. We encourage bold targets given that the aim of T:BUC is social transformation.

Measuring progress:

- 3.53 Significant work has been undertaken to refine benefits in this area and to collect relevant information about the impact on various projects. The Programme is aiming for change in responses to the NILT question: “Do paramilitary groups have a controlling influence in this area?”

End Benefit 4: Increase in community resilience



3.54 We encourage those involved to continue refining the model to ensure that what works best in one community receives the necessary investment and support, and that measures of success are appropriately tailored to reflect local need. In the drive to measure impact, the importance of tailored responses is a key factor. The linkages between progress enhancing community resilience and reducing paramilitary influence must be at the centre of this workstream, ensuring that community capacity is enhanced in ways most likely to tackle paramilitarism and people are empowered in each of the identified areas for targeted work. Given the range of interlinked issues, such change will take time. We note the efforts to date and encourage further progress.

Attitudinal change

3.55 The Programme includes a focus on attitudinal change across all of the benefits areas, as all of the work in its entirety should be contributing to this change in mindset. It has been exploring the best way to drive this, and we encourage them as they innovate to achieve this. We would hope that not having its own benefit group will not diminish the continuing prioritisation of attitudinal change, as we see it as vital – we encourage the Programme to continue to prioritise attitudinal change. We noted in the Overview that the complex landscape of paramilitarism and differing attitudes towards them – in some areas their presence and involvement are reflective of the wishes of cohorts of the community, with the groups involved being seen as in effect part of the so-called authority structure of that community.

3.56 Linked to that attitudinal change is also an Action from the original Executive Action

Plan.

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 (2016)	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
IRC comment	We understand that the Programme is considering the wider issues here. We recognise that engagement with paramilitary groups continues to be a sensitive issue. In the Overview, we refer to the need for a formal, structured process of engagement to bring about disbandment of the groups.

3.57 Although many of the projects, programmes and initiatives stemming from this work promote building a culture of a more integrated cohesive and lawful society, and the primacy of the democratic political process, ensuring this emphasis continues in work with young people, communities, in the justice system or with ex-prisoners, and in wider work is key.

3.58 We support the aim of having a shared vision of attitudinal change, with active political endorsement and visible support. This should help delivery and refine the approach, and we encourage the Programme and partners to consider specific ways to measure the change in attitudes towards paramilitaries.

Achieving the end benefits and transformation

- 3.59 We noted in our previous Report that the benefits realisation framework has the potential to ensure that responsibility for the Programme was shared across the Executive, and that if implemented effectively it could support a Whole of Government approach. The Programme has developed and adapted the model. We encourage this approach and further refinement of the benefits will be welcome so that everyone involved in this work can see its collective impact.
- 3.60 Correlating the work of the Programme and its end benefits will take time to emerge. We urge the Programme to retain its focus on the direct impact on the strategic objective of safer communities, resilient to paramilitarism, criminality and coercive control.
- 3.61 The Programme has identified that success in achieving the end benefits and strategic objectives are not wholly under its control. We called in previous Reports for better linkages between the Programme and wider policy discussions around relevant socio-economic transformation and do again.
- 3.62 As noted in paragraph 1.51, we welcome the establishment of the Sponsor Group to implement the strategic direction of the Programme set by the Executive by establishing and demonstrating the necessary collaborative culture within the Executive, and making linkages between and beyond this and other Executive programmes. Its aim of having a more conscious strategic and external focus on wider dependencies, risks and opportunities (with the potential to link to new Executive priorities and other collaborative work) is vital. The Department for Communities has mapped the contribution of non-Programme funded projects to tackling paramilitarism and it may be useful to the Sponsor Group if all relevant departments and agencies conduct a review of how their work contributes to tackling paramilitarism.
- 3.63 The Sponsor Group has a key role in providing strategic leadership and driving the wider transformative work that the IRC and the Fresh Start Agreement have identified as necessary to ending paramilitarism.
- 3.64 It is through building a deep understanding of how paramilitarism manifests differently in different areas, understanding what works by way of targeted interventions and collaborative working to address this, and building a community of informed practitioners with a shared commitment to this goal, who can motivate others to play their part, that we will see significant progress tackling paramilitarism. The Programme, and the Sponsor Group, are seeking to embed such an approach and we encourage them to continue in that vein.
- 3.65 The collective focus brought by the Programme, the piloting and evaluation of “what works”, combined with the commitment and expertise of delivery partners and leads are all necessary elements of success in tackling paramilitarism. Transformation of our society as called for in the Fresh Start Agreement will require the Sponsor Group

and the Whole of Government to take a holistic approach, including driving the wider transformative work that the IRC and Fresh Start Agreement recognise as essential in ending paramilitarism.

3.66 The Programme has been fostering links, showing what can be achieved through collaboration and targeted approaches, and seeking to encourage change and this interdepartmental work must continue. It also requires overt political leadership and support. We support the Sponsor Group in its work encouraging all relevant departments to ensure that their routine business, and particular initiatives, that can contribute to tackling paramilitarism do so. The Programme is making a significant contribution towards tackling paramilitarism and we urge the Executive and partners to continue to support it. We also urge the Executive, and the two Governments, to ensure that broader efforts to support the prosperity of Northern Ireland pay due regard to the contribution that they could make to ending the conditions that are linked to the continuation of paramilitary activity, and coordinate their efforts to achieve that.

Fresh Start Actions owned by the UK and Irish Governments and not yet completed

3.67 In this Section, we comment further on commitments made by the UK and Irish Governments. We continue to ask the Governments for updates on these matters, as we still consider them important to ongoing and future efforts to tackle paramilitarism.

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 (2016)	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
Updates received	<i>UK Government update:</i> The NIO continues to keep the need for such a mechanism under review through engagement with partners and in the context of progress on the Northern Ireland Executive’s work to tackle paramilitarism. <i>Irish Government update:</i> The Irish Government will continue to keep this commitment under review in accordance with the wider policy aim of transitioning groups away from violence.
IRC comment	We welcome the ongoing willingness of the two Governments to keep the need for any such process under review.

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 (2016)	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
Updates received	<i>UK Government update:</i> The NIO continues to keep under review UK legislation to ensure it remains effective in supporting Northern Ireland Executive-led

efforts to tackle paramilitarism. This includes engagement with the Northern Ireland Executive and other partners on the role of UK legislation in tackling terrorism in Northern Ireland, as well as the role of devolved legislation in challenging paramilitary and organised crime groups.

The IRC will be aware from our previous update that a working group was established in 2021 to consider potential 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 contained in the Justice and Security (Northern Ireland) Act 2007 would no longer be necessary. The working group consists of representatives from the Public Prosecution Service, PSNI, Department of Justice, Tackling Paramilitary Programme, the Court Service, the Bar, the Law Society, academics and other independent organisations. As part of this process the working group has produced a paper for the Independent Reviewer of the Justice and Security Act summarising its findings on practical/legal measures that could be taken to reduce the number of non-jury trials. The group will soon be producing a further paper for the Independent Reviewer on the indicators that could be used to inform decision making on the necessity of Northern Ireland-specific non-jury trial provisions.

Irish Government update:

The Irish Government continues to keep relevant legislation under review to ensure its effectiveness. An Independent 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 European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) rights and international law. The Review Group is expected to complete its work and submit a report by the end of 2022.

IRC comment

We welcome the commitment of both the UK Government and the Irish Government to keep relevant legislation under review.

C5	The UK Government should resource the NCA and HMRC to appropriately prioritise intensive work to tackle all organised crime linked to paramilitary groups in Northern Ireland.
Action Plan commitment (2016)	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
Updates received	<p><i>UK Government update:</i></p> <p>UK Government funding supports the NCA and HMRC to continue to operate successfully. The NCA's most recent annual report outlines a number of direct successes in NI. In addition to their direct successes in NI, their work to tackle organised crime across the UK and internationally has an impact on the activities of organised crime groups operating in NI.</p> <p>Following the commitment made in the New Decade, New Approach deal in January 2020, to continue efforts to address paramilitarism, and the Northern Ireland Executive's subsequent decision in 2021 to extend the Tackling Paramilitarism Programme, the Government has committed a further c.£8 million per year (through the Spending Review 2021 and NDNA funding) to match Northern Ireland Executive funding until the end of the second phase in March 2024. Additionally, through the latest spending review the Government has committed c.£5 million for the financial year 2024-2025, which will see a sustained contribution to efforts to tackle paramilitarism in the final year of the current Spending Round.</p> <p>UK Government funding has supported ongoing work by the Paramilitary Crime Task Force. Over the period from April 2021 to March 2022, the PCTF made 83 arrests, and brought 75 charges/reports. It seized drugs with a street value of £1,035,029, along with 27 weapons, and £175,832 in cash.</p>
IRC comment	This work should continue to be resourced and prioritised.

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 (2016)	<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>
Updates received	<p><i>UK Government update:</i></p> <p>While the response to the threat from Northern Ireland related terrorism is the responsibility of the UK Government, and the response to wider paramilitary activity and organised crime is the responsibility of the Northern Ireland Executive, these problems need to be addressed in the round to bring a sustainable end to the threat and harm they pose to communities in Northern Ireland. None of these threats can be dealt with sustainably in isolation. A whole of system response is required.</p> <p>A number of mechanisms are in place to help ensure there is close coordination on both policy and delivery. The NIO participates at senior official level in the Sponsor Group for the Tackling Paramilitary</p>

	<p>Activity, Criminality and Organised Crime Programme, and also participates at working level in the range of coordination meetings supporting delivery of the Programme, including benefits realisation groups. Officials working across these issues are considering how to develop a better, shared understanding of the full extent of the threat, risk and harm caused across different crime types to make it easier to assess the effectiveness of measures in place and how well joined up they are. The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland and the Northern Ireland Justice Minister meet regularly to discuss developments in areas where interests overlap, and the Secretary of State regularly engages with the PSNI Chief Constable on these issues. UK Government and Irish Government officials regularly discuss shared security challenges.</p>
IRC comment	<p>We note and welcome the join-up between the Department of Justice, the Northern Ireland Office, the Irish Government and the various agencies in tackling the “shared ecosystem” of organised crime, paramilitary crime and national security in line with Fresh Start commitments. As with all of this work, collaboration and effective joined-up working are crucial to success, and we urge all those involved to continue to focus on threat, risk and harm caused. We will continue to keep a close focus on the question of joined-up, strategic leadership of the effort to end paramilitarism.</p>

D3	<p>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.</p>
Action Plan commitment (2016)	<p>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.</p>
Lead responsibility	<p>UK and Irish Governments</p>
Updates received	<p><i>UK Government update:</i> The UK Government introduced the Northern Ireland Troubles (Legacy and Reconciliation) Bill in May 2022. The Bill seeks to address the legacy of Northern Ireland’s past by implementing an effective information recovery process that will provide answers for families, delivering on our commitments to those who served in Northern Ireland, and helping society to look forward.</p>

The current mechanisms for addressing the past are not working well for anybody. It is delivering neither justice nor information to the vast majority of families. This legislation will establish the Independent Commission for Reconciliation and Information Recovery, which will have all the necessary powers to be able to conduct effective investigations compliant with the UK Government's procedural obligations under Articles 2&3 of the ECHR.

The legislation also reflects a number of significant changes from the proposals contained within the July 2021 Command Paper - including the introduction of a conditional immunity approach that ensures that those who choose not to cooperate with the Commission's inquiries will remain indefinitely liable to the threat of prosecution. It is also consistent with previous approaches implemented in Northern Ireland since 1998. For example, the Northern Ireland Arms Decommissioning Act 1997 created an 'amnesty period' for the process of secretly decommissioning paramilitary weapons, while a limited immunity from prosecution is available for individuals who share information with the Independent Commission for the Location of Victims Remains.

The UK Government recognises that the provisions within the Bill are difficult, and remain challenging, and it continues to engage constructively with all stakeholders regarding their concerns, and how these might be addressed as the Bill proceeds through Parliament.

Irish Government update:

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 remains the basis for a way forward on legacy matters.

This commitment was solidified with the Criminal Justice (International Co-operation) Act 2019 which facilitates further cooperation 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. In July 2022 the Irish Government passed a further instrument to facilitate the sharing of information to assist an ongoing legacy review in Northern Ireland. The government has also prepared legislation to give effect to the Independent Commission on Information Retrieval (ICIR). However,

	<p>the unilateral introduction of the Legacy and Reconciliation Bill by the UK in May 2022 has halted progress on the collective approach agreed in Stormont House.</p> <p>The Irish Government has been clear in its opposition to the UK Legacy Bill and has raised these concerns with the UK Government at every available opportunity, most recently in October at the British-Irish Intergovernmental Conference (BIIGC) in London. Those concerns include, but are not limited to, the independence and powers of the Commission, the status of the 'reviews' proposed in the Bill, and, fundamentally, the immunity provisions. Overall we are concerned about compliance with the European Convention on Human Rights and other international human rights obligations.</p>
IRC comment	<p>We believe that any legacy process will have major implications for the ending of paramilitarism and Group Transition. We note the policy direction favoured by the UK Government in the Northern Ireland Troubles (Legacy and Reconciliation) Bill currently making its way through the UK Parliament. We also note the strong opposition to the proposed legislation by the Northern Ireland parties, the Irish Government, many victims' groups and others in civic society in Northern Ireland.</p>

SECTION D: RECOMMENDATIONS

In this section, we summarise recommendations made in this report and consider progress against recommendations made last year.

Part 1: Recommendations 2022

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

1. A Process for Paramilitary Group Transition

We reiterate our call to the two Governments, the NI parties and civic society to give urgent consideration to a comprehensive process of Group Transition, building on models from elsewhere, including the concept of DDR. We believe that there would be merit in preparing the ground for a process and encourage the Governments to consider appointing (with the support of the Executive) an Independent Person who would be authorised by them to speak to the various interested parties, including the paramilitary groups, to gather their views and thereby help ensure that any resulting process that emerged had the highest chance of success.

2. Sponsor Group to deepen focus on collaborative working

In welcoming the establishment of the Sponsor Group – against the background of the importance we attach to joined-up, strategic leadership of the effort to end paramilitarism – we urge that the Group continues to deepen its focus on collaborative working across all dimensions of that effort.

3. Prioritise the introduction of organised crime legislation

Having seen how effective the use of organised crime legislation has been in disrupting organised crime in other jurisdictions we consider this legislation to be a crucial additional tool in the fight against paramilitary and organised crime. We urge the Justice Minister and the Executive to prioritise legislation for this in the next mandate of the Northern Ireland Assembly.

4. Financial support for tackling paramilitarism to be maintained to the full

Ending paramilitarism requires an ongoing and comprehensive focus, including multi-year financial commitments to reflect the need for sustained investment. Financial support for a tackling paramilitarism programme and initiatives should be maintained to the full by the UK Government and the Northern Ireland Executive. However, dedicated and targeted investment is not sufficient alone. Funding for prevention, tackling socio-economic need and transformative change must also be priorities. The Executive should budget appropriately for transformational socio-economic change and the UK Government must ensure that its Levelling Up work gives sufficient priority to tackling paramilitarism and associated socio-economic challenges. Maintaining funding for the PSNI is also critical in ensuring that they can continue to deliver an

effective policing service, including their vital contribution to efforts to tackling paramilitarism.

5. Further embedding of the public health approach

The established public health approach – which treats violence like a disease, seeks to understand its causes and develops innovative practice to prevent it – is an important model and we welcome the Programme’s commitment to it. We have previously called for a “Whole of Government” approach to tackling paramilitarism and believe that further embedding of this public health approach will help with ensuring that everyone plays their part in tackling paramilitarism (whether funded by the Programme or not).

6. Deepening of the multi-agency and collaborative approaches

Building on recommendation five, we commend the efforts of those involved in joined-up multi-agency working to tackle issues related to paramilitarism. The collaborative approaches dealing with complex issues in certain areas – including the locality model (devising local approaches and solutions to issues) and the multi-agency support hubs – are significant initiatives that have shown real value. These initiatives and their approaches have been key in supporting the vulnerable in communities and reducing the harm of paramilitarism, and should also help support strengthening communities. We recommend further roll out of such approaches and initiatives in areas where they are most needed.

Part 2: Recommendations 2021

1. A process for paramilitary Group Transition

Last year we recommended that the two Governments, the Northern Ireland political parties and civic society give urgent consideration to a comprehensive process of engagement with paramilitary groups.

We welcome the two Governments' continued consideration of the IRC's Fourth Report and Recommendations at meetings of the British-Irish Intergovernmental Conference. We have also had a range of useful discussions with others, including representatives of the Northern Ireland political parties. As we have stated in this Report, we will continue to advocate for such a process and will continue to engage further with the two Governments, the Northern Ireland political parties and others on the issue.

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

Paramilitarism cannot be tackled effectively without collaboration at every level. To that end, we recommended that the Programme Board consider adding other senior figures to its core membership, including the Northern Ireland Housing Executive.

We are pleased that this recommendation has been adopted through a broad membership of the Sponsor Group and we welcome the insight, leadership and commitment that the Housing Executive and other agencies can provide to the task of tackling paramilitarism.

3. Continuing join-up of work

Tackling paramilitarism requires effective collaboration and co-operation across all levels. We consider the establishment of the Sponsor Group chaired by the Head of the Civil Service to be a significant new initiative to ensure the implementation of the strategic direction of the Programme and drive the necessary collaborative culture within the Executive and its departments and agencies. We encourage the Sponsor Group in its mission in order to ensure both strategic and operational join-up. In the course of the last year we have also seen increasingly effective collaboration between departments, agencies and others through the Programme's benefits framework and other multi-agency approaches. We will continue to keep a close focus on strategic join-up of efforts to end paramilitarism.

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
Assembly	The Northern Ireland (Legislative) Assembly
BHC	Before Housing Costs
BIIGC	British-Irish Intergovernmental Conference
CiT	Communities in Transition
DOJ	Department of Justice
EA	Education Authority
ECHR	European Convention on Human Rights
ED	Emergency Department
FICT	Flags, Identity, Culture and Tradition
HMRC	His Majesty's Revenue and Customs (UK Tax Authority)
IMC	Independent Monitoring Commission
IRC	Independent Reporting Commission
JATF	Joint Agency Task Force
MLA	Member of the Legislative Assembly
NCA	National Crime Agency
NI	Northern Ireland
NIACRO	Northern Ireland Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders
NIHE	Northern Ireland Housing Executive
NILT	Northern Ireland Life and Times
NIO	Northern Ireland Office
NIPS	Northern Ireland Prison Service
OCTF	Organised Crime Task Force
Panel Report	Fresh Start Panel Report
PBLDP	Place-Based Leadership Development Programme

PCSP	Policing and Community Safety Partnership
PCTF	Paramilitary Crime Task Force
PPS	Public Prosecution Service
Programme Team	Tackling Paramilitary Activity, Criminality and Organised Crime Programme Team
PSNI	Police Service of Northern Ireland
PTSD	Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder
RED	Reducing Educational Disadvantage Programme
TACT	Terrorism Act 2000
T:BUC	Together: Building a United Community
TIP	Trauma-Informed Practice
The (NI) Executive	Northern Ireland Executive
YLTS	Young Life and Time Survey

