

**TACKLING PARAMILITARY ACTIVITY, CRIMINALITY
AND ORGANISED CRIME**

EXECUTIVE ACTION PLAN

Ministerial/ Executive Foreword

A Fresh Start – the Stormont Agreement and Implementation Plan was published by the Executive and the UK and Irish Governments on 17 November 2015. This agreement set out our proposals for addressing some of the most challenging and intractable issues impacting our community, including commitments to tackle paramilitarism and organised crime. It is imperative that we work towards an end to all forms of paramilitary activity and to promote the use of peaceful and democratic means and the rule of law across all communities. Implementing *A Fresh Start* is a priority for the Executive, as set out in the Draft Programme for Government Framework 2016-2021¹.

As part of our commitments through *A Fresh Start*, the Executive appointed an independent Three Person Panel to report to the Executive with recommendations for a strategy for disbanding paramilitary groups. This Panel has now reported, and this report was published on 7 June². We believe that *A Fresh Start* and the Three Person Panel report, together with our new approach to collaborative 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.

The Panel's report makes 43 recommendations, and the Executive accepts the valuable contribution these make to tackling this issue. This action plan sets out how we intend to take forward and implement these recommendations, recognising the extensive work already being undertaken within communities on this issue, and building on existing expertise. We recognise the need to drive forward with a new and innovative approach to tackling paramilitary activity.

This action plan builds on existing programmes of work across the Departments, including work in support of Section A, of *A Fresh Start*. A more detailed internal action plan including timescales and costings will be submitted to the Executive for consideration in due course.

The Executive hopes this action plan sends a clear signal to communities that we value the work you do to move this issue forward, and the role you play in creating a safe and harmonious society. We will want community input in delivering the action plan, and we will be interested in ideas and innovations. We are also committed to growing community resilience and confidence, and to seeing citizens and communities flourish. In that respect, this action plan will make an essential contribution to delivering the Programme for Government.

¹ <https://www.northernireland.gov.uk/sites/default/files/consultations/newnigov/draft-pfg-framework-2016-21.pdf>

² <https://www.northernireland.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/newnigov/The%20Fresh%20Start%20Panel%20report%20on%20the%20disbandment%20of%20paramilitary%20groups.pdf>

Introduction

The Executive is committed to improving outcomes for citizens through its Programme for Government. There is a need to address some of the most difficult issues which continue to disrupt peaceful and democratic society. In particular, the issues of continued paramilitary activity, criminality and organised crime.

A series of actions are already being undertaken to deliver commitments made in *A Fresh Start* to tackle paramilitary activity and organised crime. However, we recognise that success can only be achieved through an ambitious multi-faceted approach which brings together all of 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 systemic and collaborative response to the underlying issues which are exploited by those seeking to sustain such activity. Consequently, the remainder of this action plan follows the strategic outline provided by the Three Person Panel: Promoting Lawfulness; Support for Transition; Tackling Criminality; and Addressing Systemic Issues.

It is important in taking forward this work that we keep in mind the ambitious outcomes that we are seeking to achieve: ultimately, a society where citizens and communities feel safe and confident; where paramilitarism has no place; where the public support and have even more confidence in the justice system; and where those who wish to move away from paramilitary activity and structures are supported to do it. It is recognised that communities and citizens have a role in delivering the actions outlined in this plan, and that new and exciting ideas will be put forward.

A Cross Departmental Programme Board has been established to drive forward commitments made in *A Fresh Start* and delivery of this action plan. The Board is chaired by Department of Justice, with representatives from The Executive Office, Department of Finance and Department for Communities. Other Departments with commitments in this action plan will also be invited to join the Programme Board.

Finances Available

Section D of *A Fresh Start* sets out the funding available for tackling continued paramilitary activity. The UK Government will provide £25m over five years and this will be matched by the Executive, giving a total of £50million over five years 2016-2021.

The Cross Departmental Programme Board (CDPB), through the Department of Justice, will issue a further call for bids for funding for the remainder of 2016/17 to help take forward the

action plan. These may include time-bound projects, research or scoping projects to inform the development of longer-term programmes. The CDPB will also invite longer term bids for funding over the four years beginning April 2017.

It is important to recognise that progress against actions put forward in this document are subject to resources being made available, where required.

Monitoring and Evaluation

The First Minister, deputy First Minister and the Justice Minister will put in place arrangements to ensure they have an ongoing oversight and input on the detail of design and implementation of this plan. A Cross Departmental Programme Board has been established to monitor and evaluate implementation of the action plan and report on progress. In addition, the *Fresh Start* agreement provides for robust independent monitoring to ensure progress is made on these difficult issues. A four member Independent Reporting Commission (IRC) will be established by the UK and Irish Governments. The IRC will have responsibility for reporting annually on progress towards ending continuing paramilitary activity, and reporting on the implementation of the relevant measures from the three administrations.

Values and Principles Underpinning the Action Plan

This action plan is a collaborative document which takes an Executive-wide approach to tackling the issues of paramilitary activity, criminality, and organised crime. We recognise the need for a strategic approach to tackling paramilitary activity that must move beyond disparate actions. This document and the structures that we have in place demonstrate the commitment to a strategic and joined up focus on these important issues.

We have programme management arrangements in place as set out above, which will ensure that this work is given the focus and strategic direction that it requires. Through these mechanisms the Executive Office and the Head of the Civil Service will be a key driving force behind this programme of work, although individual actions will be taken forward by the Departments, associated agencies, statutory bodies, and third sector bodies and groups.

The engagement and participation of a broad range of stakeholders will be key in designing and delivering this programme of work. Programmes and projects within this action plan will need to be tailored to take consideration of local contexts, and to empower and support

citizens. We need to support communities to build confidence in the rule of law and promote lawfulness. Innovation and creativity will sit at the core of the approach to delivery.

Therefore, we recognise the vital contribution that the wider voluntary and community sector and civic society make in this area. A partnership approach with these sectors sits at the very heart of this document; recognising that delivery on the ground needs to include those people who are most affected by these issues. The Panel report recognises the importance of a strong partnership approach and, where appropriate, co-design of programmes and interventions, and this will be reflected through the way in which we implement these actions. In short, it is recognised that some of the answers, and indeed much of the current effort, lie with communities who will often be best placed to propose and deliver solutions to the problems they face. This action plan is intended to enhance that existing effort and to wrap additional interventions around the excellent work which goes on within communities.

Fresh Start

A Fresh Start – the Stormont Agreement and Implementation Plan was published in November 2015 and sought to address some of the most challenging and intractable issues facing our society. Section A of the agreement reaffirms support for the rule of law; creates fresh obligations on elected representatives to work together towards this shared objective; and provides a framework for tackling the ongoing issues of paramilitary activity and organised crime.

A Fresh Start provided an important focus on the issue of tackling paramilitary activity and organised crime, and since November the Executive has been working together to fulfil the commitments made in Section A of the agreement. The agreement set out a series of measures the Executive is committed to taking to tackle this issue, and these include: reforms to speed up justice and provide better support to victims and witnesses; investment in new specialist forensic equipment; and the development of programmes and interventions aimed at reducing reoffending. Alongside this, the Early Intervention Programme Board will take forward work to develop a cross-departmental programme to prevent vulnerable young people being drawn into paramilitary activity. Work is also underway to develop a programme to increase the participation and influence of women in community development. The Department of Justice is developing a public awareness campaign to support efforts to tackle paramilitarism and organised crime.

Three Person Panel Report

The recommendations in the Three Person Panel report are classified in four sections:

A: PROMOTING LAWFULNESS

Lawfulness is a cornerstone of any peaceful and prosperous society, and promoting lawfulness is a key component of what the Executive seeks to achieve through its Programme for Government. The *Fresh Start* agreement makes clear that the partnership approach to Government underpins a commitment to a peaceful society, supporting law and order, and the justice system. Promoting lawfulness, and generating a culture of lawfulness, are key recommendations in the Panel's report in which all parts of society have a role to play. This requires a shift towards creating a society where lawfulness is promoted and valued, and where law enforcement and the justice system are able to tackle harm and criminality in partnership with empowered and confident communities. It also means acknowledging the role that communities and citizens play in setting positive visions for their local areas.

B: SUPPORT FOR TRANSITION

Ending paramilitary activity is a challenging ambition that will inevitably involve a period of transition – but transition cannot continue indefinitely. The *Fresh Start* agreement included commitments to provide support for transition and reintegration of former prisoners. A range of targeted interventions are required to address the many issues identified by the Panel that individuals can face in seeking to move away from involvement in paramilitary activity. It is equally important that, linking to programmes aimed at achieving Programme for Government outcomes, we work with local communities to put in place interventions to develop capacity and confidence.

C: TACKLING CRIMINALITY

We made clear in *A Fresh Start* our commitment to upholding the rule of law and tackling all forms of paramilitary activity, including placing a greater strategic focus on tackling paramilitary activity linked to organised crime so that communities and businesses can prosper without the threat of coercive control or intimidation. We have set out in the previous section measures to support those who want to move away from involvement in paramilitary activity, including criminality. However, there will be those who persist in such activity and a robust law enforcement response is required. A range of stakeholders have a role in tackling the threat posed by organised crime and to this end we will continue to support the work of the Organised Crime Task Force and the new Joint Agency Task Force.

D: ADDRESSING SYSTEMIC ISSUES

The Programme for Government Framework sets out how we intend to tackle the many complex challenges facing our society, such as disadvantage, educational underachievement, and division; and how we propose to improve outcomes for all our people. In the longer term we must address the factors that can be exploited by those seeking to sustain paramilitary activity if we are to succeed in bringing about its end. This is a long term, generational and ambitious process of social change and we will need to work in partnership with public, private, voluntary and community sectors to ensure success.

The following action plan builds upon the existing work already underway in support of *A Fresh Start* and sets out the additional measures to be taken to tackle paramilitary activity, criminality and organised crime, accepting and building upon the recommendations of the Three Person Panel report.

A: PROMOTING LAWFULNESS

A1 - The Executive should make promoting lawfulness a key priority in the current mandate.

The draft Programme for Government Framework demonstrates through Outcome 7 – “we have a safe community where we respect the law, and each other” - that promoting lawfulness is a key priority in the current mandate. *A Fresh Start* sets out the Executive’s commitments to upholding the rule of law, tackling paramilitarism, organised crime and criminality. These values and the commitment to disbanding paramilitary organisations and their structures are reflected in the new Ministerial Pledge of Office.

A2 - The Executive should use all avenues available to it to increase public awareness of what people can do about criminality in Northern Ireland and promote active citizenship in building a culture of lawfulness.

We welcome the emphasis that *A Fresh Start* (Section A), and the Panel’s report have placed on the need to increase the public’s understanding of criminality. The Department of Justice will launch a public awareness campaign before the end of 2016 on the issue of organised crime and its links to paramilitary activity, which will promote active citizenship in building a culture of lawfulness. This will build on community views and understanding, and will provide more information for citizens and communities about the harm faced from organised crime. Alongside this, the Department of Education will consider commissioning the development of additional curriculum materials to support teachers and youth workers in delivering these aspects of the curriculum.

A3 - The Executive should work with leading figures and organisations throughout all sectors of society to take a stand against criminality in Northern Ireland and promote responsible cooperation with the authorities as part of a culture of lawfulness.

We agree the need to take forward this recommendation to promote these messages throughout society, and to clearly speak to the issues of concern to communities and citizens. We plan to take forward a number of actions across the Executive to further ensure that all sectors of society are equipped to take a stand against criminality and encourage responsible cooperation with relevant authorities. The Department for Communities will bring forward proposals for engagement on this issue via community, voluntary, and sports forums.

The Attorney General will expand his Living Law programme building on the relationships with secondary and other non-grammar schools. He will also develop the community element of the Living Law programme to facilitate direct engagement with a broad range of community based organisations, promoting the rule of law, engagement with the law, and active citizenship.

A4 - As part of its “cross-departmental programme to prevent vulnerable young people being drawn into paramilitary activity”, the Executive should commission appropriate initiatives aimed at promoting lawfulness in schools and through youth work in communities.

The Department of Education will develop initiatives to ensure that those schools and youth groups dealing with the effects of paramilitary activity on young people are appropriately trained to identify risk factors and to adopt a whole school/group approach to help deal with those challenges.

The Department of Education and Executive Office will deliver Youth Intervention Programmes specifically targeted at vulnerable young people, including those most at risk of becoming involved in, or affected by paramilitary activity, so that they can make a positive contribution to their communities.

A5 - The Executive, the Policing Board and the PSNI should review the resourcing and operation of policing in communities to ensure that policing is visible and resourced to fully engage in those communities most vulnerable to criminal control.

The Executive, the Policing Board and the PSNI will review the resourcing and operation of policing in communities to ensure that policing is visible and resourced to fully engage in those communities most vulnerable to criminal control.

Bespoke interventions and training designed to enhance confidence and trust between the police and communities will be developed.

A6 - In setting the strategic objectives of PCSPs, the Department of Justice and Policing Board should ensure that the partnerships focus on building community confidence in the rule of law and embedding a culture of lawfulness.

In setting new strategic objectives for the PCSPs the Department of Justice and the Policing Board will implement this recommendation.

The Department of Communities will ask local Government to ensure that, in aspects of local Community Plans (due for delivery by April 2017) that address community safety issues or where PCSPs act as a delivery agency, Community Planning Partnerships also focus on building community confidence in the rule of law and embedding a culture of lawfulness.

A7 - The designated³ organisations should also ensure that their representatives are sufficiently senior and committed to building effective partnerships.

The designated organisations will ensure their representation at PCSPs is of a sufficiently senior level to facilitate effective partnerships.

A8 - The Executive and the PSNI, in conjunction with the Policing Board, should review their protocols for engaging with representatives of paramilitary groups. This change in approach should also apply to other public and community bodies and public representatives.

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.

A9 - The Executive should 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 proposal for a centre of restorative excellence.

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 also carry out a feasibility study to identify best options for a new centre of restorative excellence.

³ A number of statutory organisations (PSNI, NI Housing Executive, Probation Board NI, Youth Justice Agency, NI Fire and Rescue Service, Education Authority, Health and Social Care Trusts) are formally designated within the Policing and Community Safety Partnerships (Designated Organisations) Order (Northern Ireland) 2013.

A10 - The Department of Justice should bring forward draft legislation to further reform committal proceedings to remove the need for oral evidence before trial

Committal proceedings will be further reformed. The Department of Justice will bring forward draft legislation in relation to this recommendation.

A11 - The Department of Justice should also use the measures already available to it to abolish committal proceedings in respect of those offences most frequently linked to paramilitary groups, including terrorist offences and offences which tend to be committed by organised crime groups.

Committal proceedings in respect of those offences most frequently linked to paramilitary groups will be abolished. The Department of Justice will work closely with justice organisations to identify suitable offences to be added to the list of offences which can be directly transferred to the Crown Court.

A12 - The Department of Justice, the Courts Service and the Public Prosecution Service should implement the case management improvements piloted in the Ards area throughout Northern Ireland, particularly in respect of those offences linked to terrorism or serious organised crime groups.

The Department of Justice and criminal justice partners will assess how best to implement the case management improvements in the Ards Indictable Cases Pilot (ICP)⁴ and will also explore other offence types which may be suitable for ICP type processing.

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.

The PSNI 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.

The overall strategy for speeding up justice includes all of the measures described in the preceding recommendations, as well as other measures contained in the Justice Act 2015

⁴ The Ards Indictable Cases Pilot (ICP) was a pilot which ran in the Ards area between 02 January 2015 and 31 December 2015 to demonstrate the optimum performance model for progressing criminal cases through the Crown Court.

including: measures concerning Early Guilty Pleas, the reform of the Summons process; and the introduction of Statutory Case Management.

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.

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.

A15 - The Department of Justice should ensure that an appropriate mechanism is in place to enable the Director of Public Prosecutions to refer sentences he believes to be unduly lenient, particularly to include offences linked to terrorism and organised crime groups.

The Department of Justice will consider this recommendation within the scope of the recently announced Sentencing Policy Review. The Department will prioritise this element of the review and seek to bring proposals for consultation as soon as possible, including the possibility, in the shorter term, of adding further 'linked' offences to the statutory list by secondary legislation.

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.

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.

B: SUPPORT FOR TRANSITION

B1 - The Executive should urgently adopt recommendations by the Review Panel that (a) the Fair Employment and Treatment Order 1998 (FETO) 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.

The Executive will urgently adopt recommendations by the Review Panel that (a) the Fair Employment and Treatment Order 1998 (FETO) 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.

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.

The Executive will engage with the Review Panel (appointed by the Ex-prisoners Working Group⁵) to address the issues identified relating to access to financial services (including lending and insurance), adoption and travel.

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.

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.

⁵ The Ex-Prisoners Working Group was established primarily to consider and address the barriers facing people with conflict-related convictions in accessing employment as well as goods, facilities and services. The Executive Office facilitates regular meetings of the Ex-Prisoners Working Group which is chaired by the head of the NICS Sir Malcolm McKibbin.

B4 - The Executive should establish a fund to support ambitious initiatives aimed at building capacity in communities in transition, including through developing partnerships across civil society and across community divisions.

The Executive will establish a fund to support ambitious initiatives aimed at building capacity in communities in transition, including through developing partnerships across civil society and across community divisions. The Executive Office and the Department for Communities will take forward this recommendation on behalf of the Executive. This will be designed in collaboration with stakeholders with relevant experience and expertise, such as the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, the Community Relations Council, The International Fund for Ireland, local Government, and community representatives.

B5 - The Executive's programme for women in community development should be designed not only to enable women's organisations to continue to carry out transformative community development work in our communities but also to ensure that women are equipped to take on more leadership roles in public decision-making.

The Department for Communities will organise a series of co-design workshops to determine the shape and content of the programme. These will include TEO and DOJ participation and other Executive Departments where appropriate, alongside experts in the community and women's organisations who will be taking forward the delivery of the programme.

B6 - The Executive, in implementing rigorous enforcement of funding rules, should ensure that funding will be available for supporting creative and ambitious initiatives.

The Executive is providing additional funding to support the delivery of this action plan and is committed to working with local communities, as well as relevant criminal justice and statutory agencies, in developing creative and ambitious initiatives that will support communities in transition. Executive Departments and other bodies allocating funds made available by the Executive will continue to rigorously enforce funding rules, (*Managing Public Money*, the *Guide on Grant and Procurement* and the Government Funders' Database) in a proportionate manner, commensurate with risk. The Department for Communities is also giving consideration to what further work can be done in this area.

B7 - A dedicated unit should be established to carry out a programme of work, including research, to enable Government to better understand relevant issues in communities and the options for influencing change; to ensure that all Executive Departments are fully

engaged in the strategy; to develop further targeted interventions; and to ensure that wider Government policy and messaging contribute to delivering positive outcomes in respect of paramilitaries and communities in transition. For that reason, this unit should not sit within any one department but instead report to the Executive.

The Executive will establish a dedicated unit to ensure a joined up approach to delivering this programme. The Department of Justice will lead this, working in partnership with other Executive Departments, statutory bodies and community and voluntary sector organisations where appropriate.

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.

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.

B9 - Whilst ensuring that all prisoners are treated fairly, the Department of Justice should ensure that appropriate education and training opportunities are provided to prisoners in the separated regime.

Recognising that there are operational challenges involved in managing the separated regimes, the current provision of constructive activity in separation is commonly identified as an issue of concern by prisoners being held there. NIPS' aspiration is to deliver well matched interventions to everyone in custody.

The Department of Justice will commission a consultative evaluation of constructive activity in separated prison accommodation leading to the development and delivery of a new model of constructive activity for separated prisoners focused upon positive educational and wellbeing outcomes.

B10 - The Department of Justice and the Probation Board should work together with others to urgently develop and implement specific interventions to prepare offenders with links to paramilitary groups for return to society and to assist with reintegration.

The Department of Justice will commission research to inform the design of relevant interventions that will develop a tailored desistance pathway for offenders with links to paramilitary groups to assist them as they prepare to return to their communities and to support their successful reintegration. This will be taken forward in conjunction with the Probation Board and other relevant individuals and organisations. This work will include community views on reintegration.

B11 - The Department of Justice should also work with law enforcement agencies and the Probation Board to improve the monitoring arrangements for 'paramilitary' offenders when on license.

The Department of Justice will develop and implement a plan for improving monitoring arrangements.

B12 - The Executive, in conjunction with the Probation Board, should develop, fund and implement an initiative (based on the INSPIRE⁶ model) focused on young men who are at risk of becoming involved, or further involved, in paramilitary activity. This initiative should be a collaboration between Government departments and restorative justice partners to combine restorative practices and peer mentoring with targeted support in respect of employment, training, housing, health and social services.

The Probation Board will lead on the development of a model aimed at systematically addressing the age related specific risks, experiences and needs of young men who have offended and are at risk of being drawn into crime and paramilitarism. The model will be co-designed between Government departments and restorative justice partners to combine restorative practices and peer mentoring with targeted support in respect of employment, training, housing, health and social services.

⁶ The Probation Board for Northern Ireland established the INSPIRE Women's project in October 2008 'to develop and deliver in the community a new, enhanced range of gender informed services which would directly contribute to reducing women's offending through targeted community based interventions'.

B13 - As part of the cross-departmental programme, the Executive Departments with responsibility for Education, the Economy, Health, Communities, Infrastructure and Justice, together with the Executive Office, should all identify the opportunities available to them to both prevent at-risk individuals becoming involved in paramilitary activity and measurably address the underlying issues that put some young people at a higher risk of becoming involved

A cross-departmental programme to prevent vulnerable young people being drawn into paramilitary activity will be developed to sit within the Early Intervention Transformation Programme (EITP). The EITP Board will develop a draft programme for consideration and approval by the Executive. This programme will be designed in conjunction with representatives from wider civic society.

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.

If there is a need identified for a decommissioning mechanism, both the Government of Ireland and the United Kingdom have advised that they will consult to consider this recommendation.

C: TACKLING CRIMINALITY

C1 - The strategies and activity of the PSNI and other law enforcement agencies should be updated to reflect a shift in focus from 'paramilitary activity' to criminality.

Recognising the importance of keeping the strategic assessment of activities relating to paramilitary activity under constant review, strategies and activity in this area will be updated by PSNI as appropriate to reflect the situation as informed by regular operational and strategic assessments.

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, with a view to introducing draft legislation to the Assembly in the current mandate.

Recognising that communities are concerned about this issue, 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.

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 Northern Ireland.

The UK Government and the Irish Government have advised that they continue to keep relevant legislation under review and ensure it is effective.

C4 - The PSNI should prioritise investment in its investigative capacity for tackling criminality linked to paramilitary groups and work with the NCA and other agencies to tackle all organised crime linked to paramilitary groups in Northern Ireland.

The Executive will urge the PSNI to prioritise investment in its investigative capacity. PSNI has submitted a funding proposal to create an additional dedicated investigative capacity to tackle criminality linked to paramilitary groups. The objective of this is to tackle the insidious influence of paramilitary groups and reinforce efforts to tackle more intensely organised crime and criminality. Key to maximising the disruption (and ultimate disbandment) of these groups will be the niche capabilities provided by relevant law enforcement agencies.

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.

The Government is strongly supporting efforts to tackle paramilitarism and organised crime in Northern Ireland and the £25m of funding it is providing through the Fresh Start Agreement will help ensure that the relevant agencies are appropriately resourced to fulfil that commitment.

C6 - The NIEA, and the Environmental Protection Agency in Ireland, should be included in the cross-border Fresh Start Joint Agency Task Force, including the Operations Co-ordination Group

The Joint Agency Task Force will undertake a new strategic assessment in October 2016, and will again consider if it would benefit these agencies either joining the Task Force or participating during specific operations.

C7 - The Executive, the UK Government and the Irish Government should consider whether there is merit in allowing some of the assets recovered from criminal activity to be used for the benefit of victims, communities and the environment.

The Department of Justice will take forward a review of the Assets Recovery Community Scheme to consider whether current arrangements can be improved upon for further benefit to victims, communities and the environment.

C8 - 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.

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.

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 cooperation on criminal justice matters.

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.

D: ADDRESSING SYSTEMIC ISSUES

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.

In line with the Programme for Government (PfG) commitment to a more equal society and in the context of its PfG Delivery Plan the Department for Education (DE) will work with other departments to review and refresh actions. DE 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.

The Department for the Economy, through the 'Social Inclusion' project in *Further Education Means Success*, will identify the barriers that inhibit groups of learners from participating in further education provision, and explore ways to overcome those barriers.

The Department for the 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.

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.

The Executive is committed to continuing to build on existing strategies and will give ongoing consideration to this going forward.

D3 - Agreement on a way forward for dealing with the past should be reached as soon as possible and the agreed mechanisms should be completed in a time-limited period.

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.

Both the UK Government and the Irish Government have advised that they are committed to establishing the legacy bodies contained in the Stormont House Agreement.

D4 - The Executive should put in place strong programme management arrangements for developing and delivering the strategy, incorporating all those organisations which we have highlighted as having a direct role in implementing the recommendations in this report. More broadly, the Executive should adopt a partnership approach to involve, where possible, representatives of the public and private sectors and the voluntary and community sector in the design, delivery and evaluation of the measures in its strategy.

The Cross Departmental Programme Board will extend the opportunity to apply for *Fresh Start* funding to voluntary and community sector organisations and to statutory bodies working in partnership with voluntary and community sector organisations to develop new programmes and actions in support of this action plan. The Executive will also put in place appropriate mechanisms to engage strategically with the range of partners involved in delivering this action plan.

The Executive will extend membership of the Cross Departmental Programme Board to include representatives of other Executive Departments. The Board will report on progress, through the Chair, to the Executive in line with our *Fresh Start* reporting arrangements.

D5 - It is important that the IRC is put in place as soon as possible and is vigorous in holding to account all those responsible for delivering actions as part of the strategy.

The UK and Irish Governments are working together to establish the Independent Reporting Commission.