

Written Ministerial Statement

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The Executive Office/Justice

EXECUTIVE STRATEGY FOR TACKLING PARAMILITARISM

Published at 3 pm on Tuesday 19 July 2016.

Ministers: We are today announcing the publication of the Executive Action Plan for Tackling Paramilitary Activity, Criminality, and Organised Crime.

A Fresh Start Agreement – The Stormont Agreement and Implementation Plan was published by the Executive and the two governments on 17 November 2015. This agreement set out our proposals for addressing some of the most challenging and intractable issues that impact upon our community, including commitments to tackle paramilitarism and organised crime. Implementing *A Fresh Start* is a priority for the Executive, as set out in the *Draft Programme for Government Framework 2016-2021*¹.

As part of our commitments in *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. The Panel's report was published on 7 June² and this action plan sets out how the Executive intends to implement these recommendations.

We believe that the *Fresh Start* agreement and the Panel report, along with the outcomes-based approach to cross-Executive working as represented in the draft *Programme for Government*, provide a unique opportunity to tackle paramilitary activity collectively as an Executive, and in an ambitious and collaborative manner.

This document sets out our strategic approach to tackling paramilitarism and organised crime. It includes a series of actions that we will take, in conjunction with local communities, in pursuit of *A Fresh Start*, and in response to the recommendations made by the Panel, to address the impact of criminality and paramilitarism on our society.

It recognises the multiple impacts paramilitary activity has on our society and the multi-faceted approach required to tackle it, ranging from robust action on the part of law enforcement agencies, to actions that support communities in bringing about a transition away from paramilitarism, and addressing the socio-economic issues that can lead to individuals becoming or remaining involved in paramilitary activity.

Delivering this action plan requires recognition of the excellent work underway in communities to support and complete the transition away from paramilitarism. It will require partnership working

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>

across the Executive and with the UK and Irish Governments, law enforcement agencies, the public, private and voluntary and community sectors, and importantly, with local communities.

Implementation of this action plan will be supported by the additional £25m over five years pledged by the Executive for tackling paramilitary activity in *A Fresh Start*. This is match funding for an additional £25m being provided to the Executive by the UK Government.

We will meet regularly to review progress in delivering on the commitments made. Implementation will be coordinated by a Cross-Department Programme Board, chaired by the Department of Justice.

We have no doubt that this will be a challenging and ambitious programme of work but we are determined to provide the leadership necessary to address this challenge and bring about a peaceful and prosperous future for our community.

The Executive Action Plan for Tackling Paramilitary Activity, Criminality and Organised Crime is available at:

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