



Department of

Justice

An Roinn Dlí agus Cirt

Máinnystrie O tha Laa

www.justice-ni.gov.uk

**FROM THE PERMANENT SECRETARY
HUGH WIDDIS**

Castle Buildings
Stormont Estate
BELFAST BT4 3SG
Tel: 028 9052 2992
email: hugh.widdis@justice-ni.gov.uk

Daniel McCrossan
Chairperson
Public Accounts Committee
By Email: committee.publicaccounts@niassembly.gov.uk

Our ref: SCORR-0095-2025
3 November 2025

Dear Daniel

MEMORANDUM OF REPLY – REDUCING ADULT REOFFENDING IN NORTHERN IRELAND

Thank you for your letter dated 3 October 2025, setting out the Committee's concerns following the review of the Memorandum of Reply to the 'Reducing Adult Reoffending in Northern Ireland' report.

I would like to assure the Committee that the decisions taken on the Department's position and commitments against Recommendations 2 and 3 were evidence based and founded on best practice and due process.

Whilst the Department has not accepted Recommendation 2, work is underway to enhance outcome measurement across a number of different areas aligned with the cross-Executive strategy to reduce offending and reoffending. You will note in the response to Recommendation 2, that most factors affecting reoffending sit within the responsibilities of other Executive Departments. However, aligned to this strategy, we have prioritised resources towards harnessing data from across government departments to develop an outcome measurement dashboard to measure reoffending outcomes on release from custody. This will be a collaborative piece of work with support needed from



across several Departments and should inform our future strategic approach to reducing offending and reoffending.

In respect of your request for an interim update to recommendation 3, the Department fully acknowledges the urgency and importance of developing a strategic approach to reducing offending and reoffending. While the six-month timeframe proposed by the Committee is ambitious, the Department has taken proactive steps to ensure meaningful progress is made within the current mandate.

A Strategic Framework is currently being developed to reflect ongoing work across government, including pathfinder projects that aim to deliver tangible outcomes in reducing offending and reoffending. We are working to have this framework in place by the end of December 2025, which is designed to balance immediate action with a longer-term strategic vision

In parallel, the Department, in partnership with DoF Innovation and Consultancy Services and key Departments and stakeholders, is progressing the development of a cross-Executive Strategy, as committed to under the Programme for Government. Acknowledging the need to follow due process (as laid out in 'Making a Difference: The NICS guide to making policy that works') this strategy is expected to be ready for consultation by the end of the current mandate.

Given the complex and interrelated socio-economic factors that influence offending—such as homelessness, poverty, mental health, substance misuse, and lack of education and employment opportunities—a collaborative cross-governmental approach is essential. Active and timely participation from the Departments of Justice, Communities, Economy, Education, Health, and the Executive Office is critical to supporting desistance and achieving long-term change.



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To support this work, a new team has been established to lead the development and delivery of the cross-Executive strategic approach.

The Department is committed to transparency and accountability and would be pleased to provide annual updates to the Committee on progress against recommendations.

We trust this update provides reassurance of the Department's commitment to addressing the Committee's concerns and delivering a robust and effective strategy.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if anything further is needed.

Yours sincerely,

HUGH WIDDIS