



Department of  
**Justice**

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An Roinn Dlí agus Cirt

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Mánnystrie O tha Laa

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**DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE**

**BUSINESS PLAN 2023-24**

**YEAR 2 of**

**DoJ CORPORATE PLAN 2022-25**

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## **PERMANENT SECRETARY'S INTRODUCTION**

I am pleased to introduce the Department's Business Plan for 2023/24, which sets out our priorities for the year ahead. This plan aims to build on the progress which has been made in recent years to advance our priority areas organised through four strategic themes;

- Support Safe and Resilient Communities;
- Address Harm and Vulnerability;
- Challenge Offending Behaviours and Support Rehabilitation
- Deliver an Effective Justice System.

The 2023/24 budget settlement presents an extremely difficult position for the Department to manage. Without additional funding we will not be able to deliver the full range of our services as we would desire. As a Department, and in the absence of an Executive and a Minister, we have been required to make some difficult budgetary decisions. Given these challenges we will continue to consider and revise, if necessary, the deliverables, detailed within the plan. This plan will, of course, be subject to review and endorsement by an incoming Minister on the establishment of an Executive.

Even with these challenges in place, it is important for the Department to retain its ambitions to continue to progress. With dedicated and professional colleagues in place I am convinced we will continue to deliver across a wide range of services to the highest standards. I look forward to working together to deliver on this plan over the coming year.

**Richard Pengelly CB**  
**Permanent Secretary**

## Our Plan on a Page



## **Our Mission and Values**

Our mission is:

**‘working in partnership to create a fair, just and safe community where we respect the law and each other’.**

All of us within the Department seek to uphold the NICS values<sup>1</sup> of;

- Integrity;
- Honesty;
- Objectivity; and,
- Impartiality.

## **Our Department**

The Department of Justice, together with its agencies, Non-Departmental Public Bodies (NDPBs) and stakeholders supports the Minister of Justice (when in post) in delivering on this mission. The Department has a range of devolved policing and justice functions as set out in the Northern Ireland Act 1998 (Devolution of Policing and Justice Functions) Order 2010. It is further responsible for the resourcing, legislative and policy framework of the justice system.

The Department has a staff complement of over 3,000 staff, with many of those working in front-line operational roles. The Department is structured into four business areas to deliver our mission, which are:

- Access to Justice Directorate
- Safer Communities Directorate
- Justice Delivery Directorate
- Reducing Offending Directorate

The vast majority of work the Department undertakes on a daily basis involves the delivery of essential key services across the justice system. These services are delivered on behalf of the Department by five agencies, each with specific responsibilities.

## **Northern Ireland Prison Service**

The Northern Ireland Prison Service (NIPS) is responsible for providing prison services in Northern Ireland. The overall aim of the NIPS is to improve public safety by reducing the risk of re-offending through the management and rehabilitation of offenders in custody.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.finance-ni.gov.uk/publications/nics-code-ethics>

## **Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunals Service**

The Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunals Service (NICTS) supports an independent judiciary, Northern Ireland's courts and the majority of Northern Ireland's tribunals. It also supports the Parole Commissioners for Northern Ireland, the Coroners Service of Northern Ireland, the Legacy Inquest Unit and the Historical Institutional Abuse Redress Board. NICTS enforces civil court judgments through the Enforcement of Judgments Office, collects and enforces outstanding financial penalties imposed by a criminal court through the Fine Collection and Enforcement Service and manages funds held in court on behalf of minors and patients.

## **Youth Justice Agency**

The Youth Justice Agency (YJA) is responsible for preventing offending by children and young people through delivery of a range of community based, court ordered and diversionary interventions, youth conferencing and the provision of custody where necessary. The YJA aims to make communities safer by helping children to stop offending. The YJA works with children aged 10-17 years who have offended or are at serious risk of offending.

## **Forensic Science Northern Ireland**

Forensic Science Northern Ireland (FSNI) is responsible for the provision of effective scientific advice and support to enhance the delivery of justice. FSNI's primary role is to provide objective, independent scientific advice to support the Courts. Their services are also available to those representing both defence and prosecution interests in criminal cases.

## **Legal Services Agency Northern Ireland**

The Legal Services Agency Northern Ireland (LSANI) is responsible for the provision of publicly funded legal aid. This is an important contributor to the delivery of access to justice which is a fundamental feature of a democratic society committed to the fair and equal treatment of all its citizens

An organisation chart for the Department is included at **Annex B**.

The Department also sponsors a number of NDPBs/bodies affiliated with policing and justice as follows:

- Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI);
- Northern Ireland Policing Board;
- Office of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland;
- Probation Board for Northern Ireland;
- RUC George Cross Foundation.
- Northern Ireland Police Fund;
- Police Rehabilitation and Retraining Trust; and
- Criminal Justice Inspection Northern Ireland (CJINI).

## **Our Strategic Themes**

The Department has identified the following themes to deliver on our mission of

***‘working in partnership to create a fair, just and safe community, where we respect the law and each other’***

### **Support Safe and Resilient Communities**

We will work with our partners to help build safe and resilient communities and reduce the vulnerability of individuals to becoming a potential victim and/or offender. We will empower communities, businesses and individuals to protect themselves from becoming a victim of crime, and will provide support where people do become victims of crime. We will also work within a multi-agency partnership model to provide for and link strategic and operational responses to cross-cutting community safety issues, and will address criminality and coercive control within our communities through proactive collaboration and local problem solving.

### **Address Harm and Vulnerability**

We will work with partners to provide early stage diversionary approaches to address issues that contribute to offending behaviours. We will provide practical support to victims, and develop policies and legislation to protect those most vulnerable in our society.

### **Challenge Offending Behaviours and Support Rehabilitation**

We will work with people who offend to challenge their behaviour and support them to become active and responsible citizens. Working with our partners we will promote rehabilitation; and when a custodial sentence is imposed our focus will be on resettlement leading to integration back into society.

### **Deliver an Effective Justice System**

We will lead work to make our justice system faster and more effective, and more importantly, to serve the needs of those who engage with it. We will ensure appropriate access to justice for our citizens. We will also deliver a system which supports other court users in the early and proportionate resolution of civil and family proceedings. We will support and empower people working within the justice system to deliver effectively.

Further detail on what we will do to deliver on these priorities during 2023-24 is included in **Annex A**.

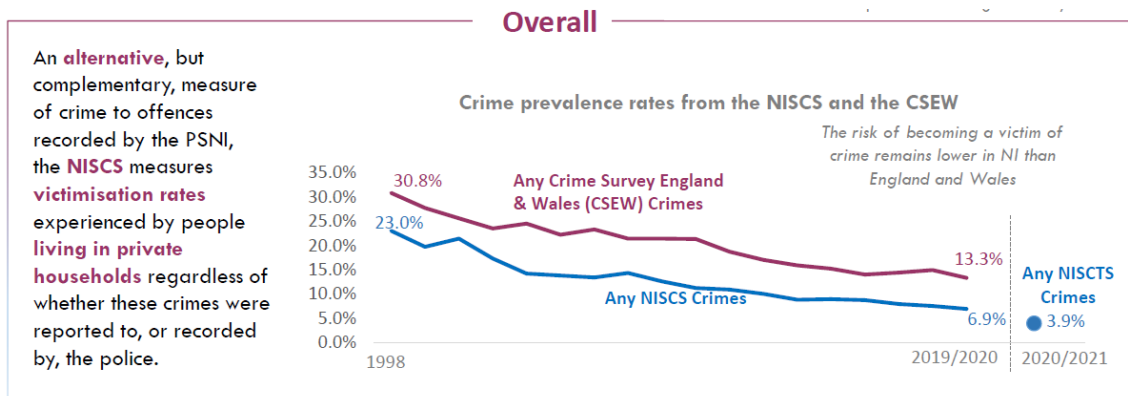
## Continued Progress

The Department continues to make progress through its strategic themes which have been the corner stone of our corporate plans since 2021. This progress reflects the commitment of colleagues across the justice sector and can be illustrated through the indicators of:

- **reduced crime**, measured by the prevalence rate, which is the percentage of the population who were victims of any NI Safe Community Survey (NISCS) crime; and,
- **reduced reoffending**, measured by the reoffending rate.

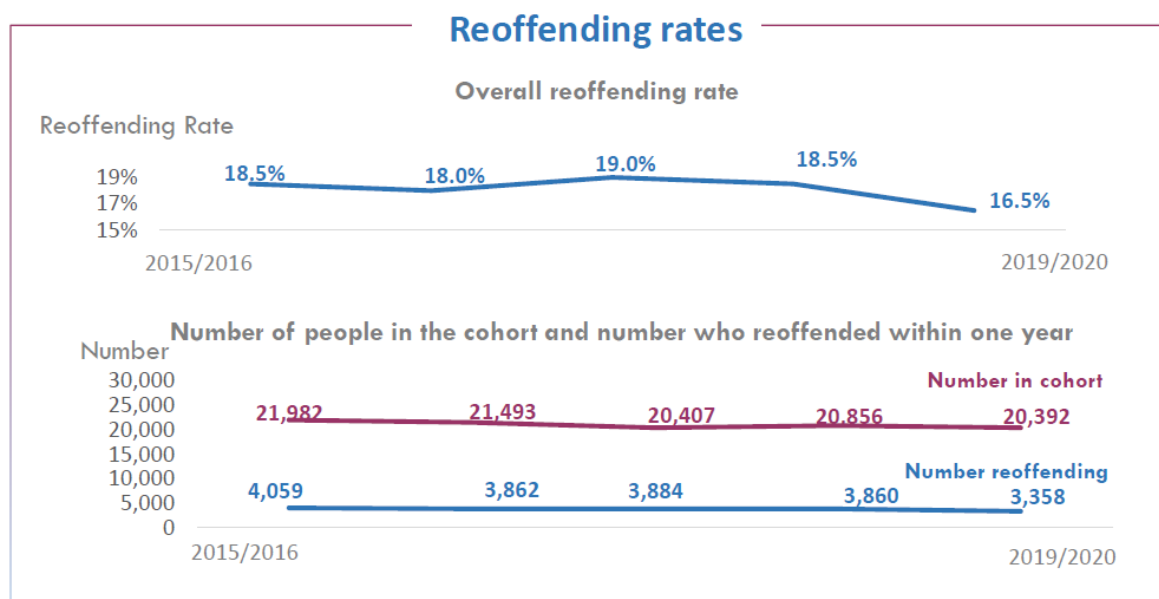
Progress continues to be monitored during the lifetime of this current corporate plan.

### Reduced crime



The results of the NI Safe Community Survey 2020-21, published in 2022, indicate that the risk of becoming a victim of crime in Northern Ireland continues to reduce and remains significantly lower in Northern Ireland than in the England and Wales.

### Reduced Reoffending





Statistics relating to the reoffending rate for 2019/20 show 16.5% reoffended during the one year observational period. This represents a 2.0 percentage point decrease in the rate of reoffending since 2018/19 (18.5%).

**Significant progress was made during 2022-23 across a range of areas including:**

#### **Supporting Safe and Resilient Communities**

- Continued co-ordination of the Executive Programme on Paramilitarism and Organised Crime
- Removal of further interface security structures 'Peace Walls'

#### **Addressing Harm and Vulnerability**

- Implementation of commitments under the Victims and Witnesses Strategy
- Appointment of a Victims of Crime Commissioner Designate in June 2022.
- Continued implementation of recommendations from the Gillen review of Serious Sexual Offences – over 60% fully or partially completed.
- Continued implementation of actions from the Department of Health/Department of Justice 'Improving Health within Justice Action Plan – over 90% completed or on track for completion.

#### **Challenging Offending Behaviours and Supporting Rehabilitation**

- Implementation of the Adult Restorative Justice Strategy.
- Implementation of the Regional Care and Justice Campus Programme in conjunction with DoH.
- Implementation of the Strategic framework for Youth Justice Action Plan.

#### **Delivering an Effective Justice System**

- Provide support for the recovery of the Criminal Justice System from the impacts of Covid-19.
- Implementation of the New Ways of Working Policy across the Department.
- Delivery of Year 1 of the Prisons 25 by 25 Continuous Improvement Programme.
- Development of a Courts Estates Strategy.

## **Our People**

The NICS Board has a vision for a NICS that is “*well led, high performing and focused on outcomes*”. Within the DoJ we continue to work to realise the vision of the NICS Board as well as responding to challenges faced by staff through:

- a more collaborative approach to delivering on key departmental priorities;
- investing in, and encouraging, leadership at all levels;
- enhanced internal and corporate communications;
- embracing and valuing diversity and inclusion; and,
- a focus on organisational and personal development.

As well as solid working relationships with Trade Union representatives across the core Department and its agencies, the Department has an active Staff Engagement Forum which plays a key role in developing interventions to support the development of our people. It is our ambition to ensure that staff reach their full potential and we continue to work with everyone in the Department, at all levels, across the core Department and agencies, to ensure that we focus our energies on those issues which will make most impact for our people and help make the Department a great place to work. We will also maintain a strong focus on staff well-being and will continue to ensure that staff are apprised of NICS-wide and local events that will be organised to improve their personal well-being.

## **Our Operating Environment**

Delivering on our themes to achieve our mission remains the key focus for the Department. However, as we progress through the current strategic period there are a number of significant challenges that will continue to impact on delivery. There are also opportunities that can be capitalised on to deliver our strategic objectives.

In addition to the financial constraints, the capacity and capability of our people influences business delivery. The current budget allocation will mean that vacancies will need to be prioritised and to ensure that available resources are aligned to achieving priorities.

Effective collaboration is essential to the delivery of our strategic objectives. Less formal, more regular communication with ALBs, across the justice sector and with other delivery partners, will continue to be maintained. Whilst collaborative working across NICS departments remains a challenge, there is a need to get others to buy-in to our collaborative priorities to ensure successful delivery.

We rely more than ever on technology and IT systems. Adapted and innovative business delivery methods developed through the response to Covid have highlighted some real successes including remote business delivery, video meeting technology and greater flexibility for some workers. We are committed to ensuring these successes are maintained and further developed over the coming period.

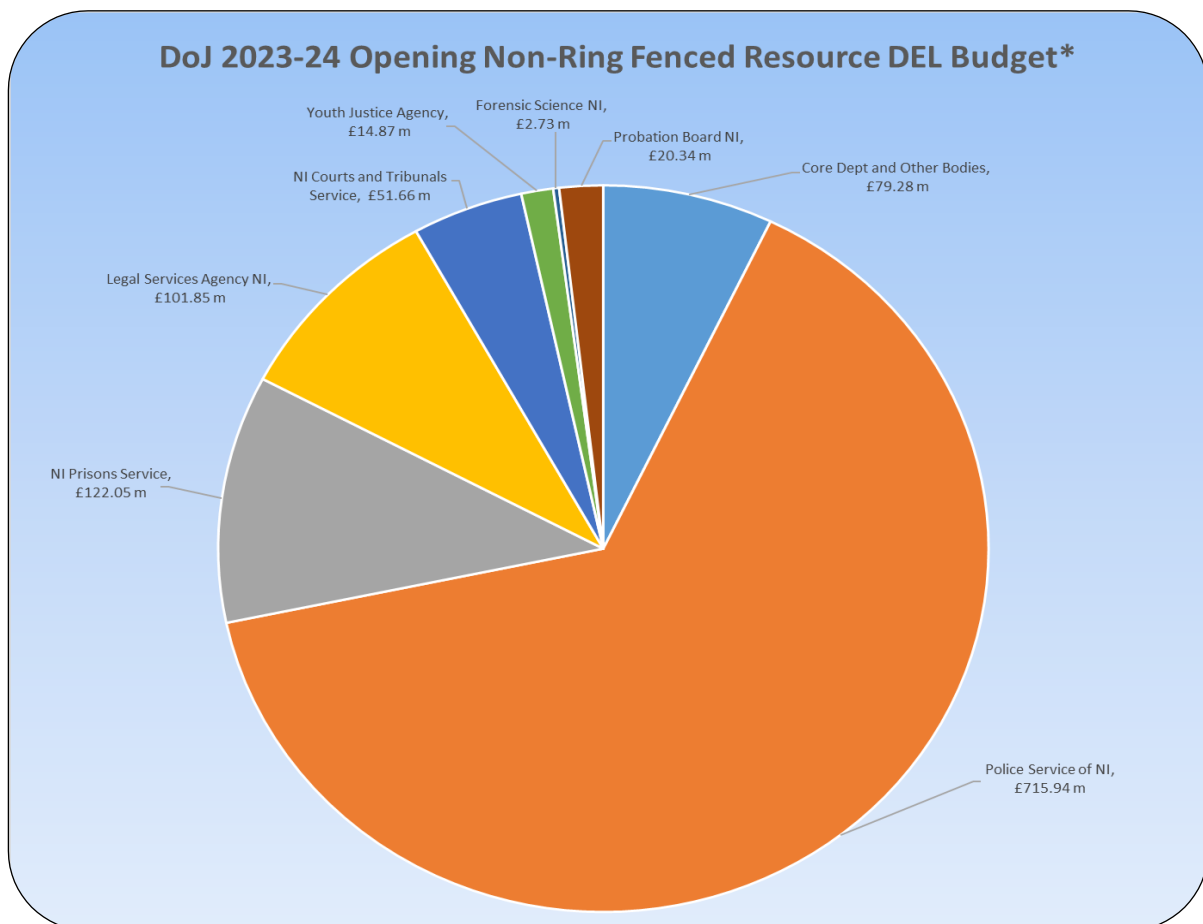
## Our Budget

On 27 April 2023, the Secretary of State NI set out the budget position for 2023-24, providing to the Department of Justice a non-ring fenced Resource DEL budget of £1,122m (excluding HMT funding for Additional Security and NI Protocol). This reflected an effective reduction against the Department's baseline of 1.7%.

The Budget also provided a Ring Fenced budget of £93m and a Capital DEL budget of £129m.

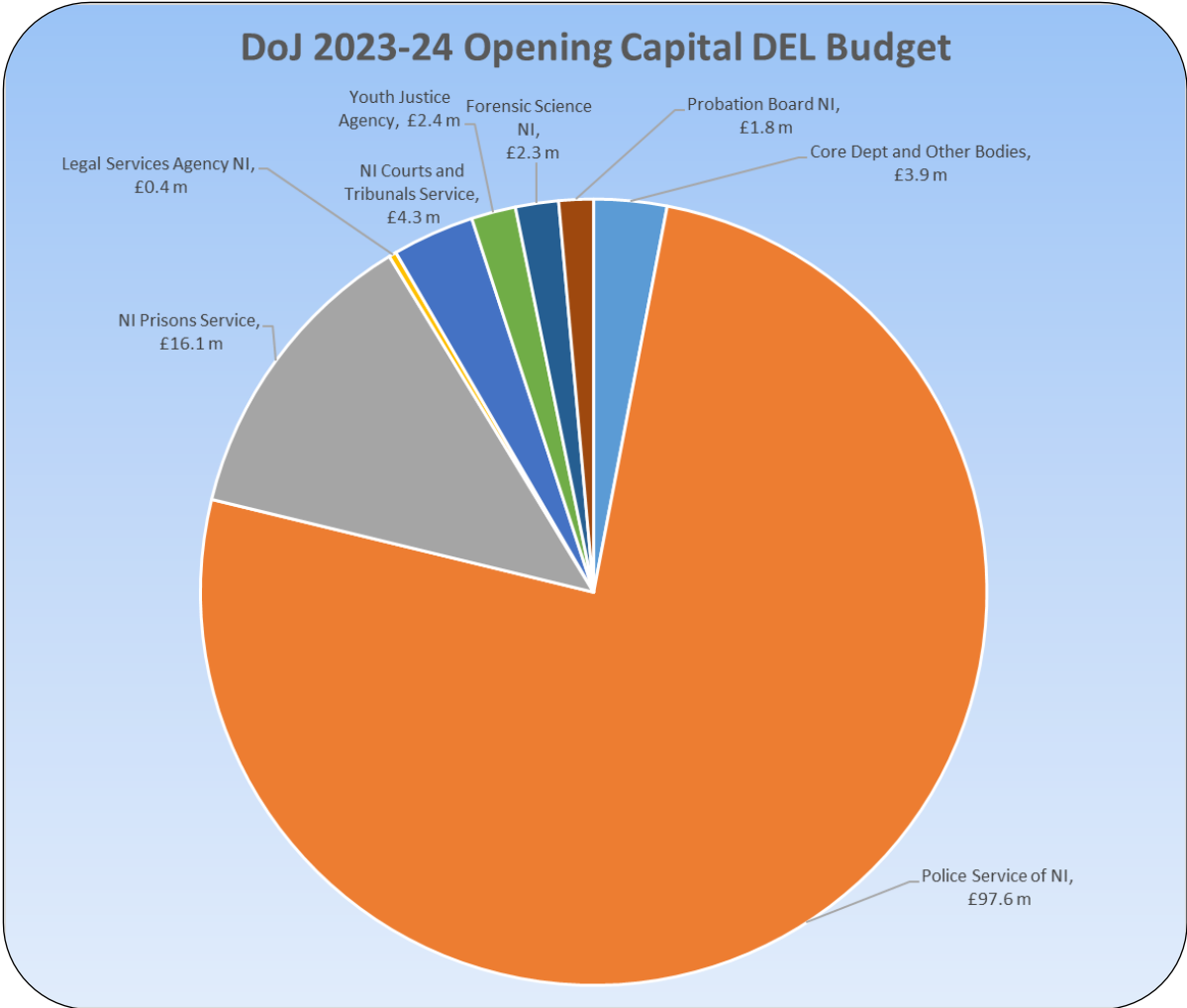
The Capital Budget is made up of contractual commitments, inescapable and high priority projects.

The Department is still working through the detail of the budget, which will remain as draft until equality screening is completed. Details of the opening budget allocations are:



\*Allocations are net of income and exclude funding provided by HMT for specific purposes (additional security and NI Protocol) and funding held centrally in DoJ for Legacy Inquests, Gillen Review and other emerging pressures.

# DoJ 2023-24 Opening Capital DEL Budget



### Departmental Business Plan 2023/24 – Deliverables

#### Strategic Theme – Support Safe and Resilient Communities

*We will work with our partners to help build safe and resilient communities and reduce the vulnerability of individuals to becoming a potential victim and/or offender. We will empower communities, businesses and individuals to protect themselves from becoming a victim of crime and will work within a multi-agency partnership model to support responses to cross-cutting community safety issues, and will address criminality and coercive control within our communities through proactive collaboration and local problem solving.*

Actions	What we will deliver during 2023-24	Target Date	Owner
To engage with our partners to reduce the vulnerability of businesses and individuals from the harm caused by crime.	Progress legislation to reinforce the response to organised crime in Northern Ireland which aims to introduce new organised crime offences and enhanced measures aimed at disrupting criminality, subject to legislative processes.	March 2024	Director Safer Communities
	Develop a system wide response to Child Exploitation through supporting the co-ordination of the multi-agency implementation of a series of recommendations from the Child Criminal Exploitation Task and Finish Group	March 2024	Director Safer Communities
To engage with our partners to help build safe and resilient communities, improve community	Support for co-ordination under the cross- Executive Tackling Paramilitary Activity, Criminality, and Organised Crime Programme which supports people and communities across Northern Ireland who are vulnerable to paramilitary influence.	March 2024	Director Safer Communities

relations and tackle paramilitary activity.	Enhanced collaborative working with statutory and community partners to deliver key community safety priorities, including tackling anti-social behavior and hate crime, alongside progression of legislative reviews on these issues.	March 2024	Director Safer Communities
	Continued progression of the Interfaces Programme with further reduction and removal of interface structures, contributing to the development of a more shared society.	March 2024	Director Safer Communities
Review the legislative framework for the control of firearms.	Pre-consultation engagement with police and stakeholders to inform a consultation on proposed changes to the Firearms (Northern Ireland) Order 2004.	March 2024	Director Safer Communities



### Strategic Theme - Address Harm and Vulnerability

*We will work with partners to provide early stage diversionary approaches to address issues that contribute to offending behaviours. We will provide practical support to victims, and develop policies and legislation to protect those most vulnerable in our society.*

Actions	What we will deliver during 2023-24	Target Date	Owner
To work in partnership to tackle domestic and sexual abuse by addressing the root causes; providing access to support; and holding individuals who are abusive to account.	Design of the operational arrangements and finalisation of a business case for the appointment and payment of legal representatives appointed by the court under the Domestic Abuse and Civil Proceedings Act (NI) 2021 and preparation of secondary legislation and guidance required in support of the Act	November 2023	Director Access to Justice
	Publish a new cross-Executive Domestic and Sexual Abuse Strategy and associated Year-One Action Plan, subject to Executive approval.	September 2023	Director Access to Justice
	Implementation of in-year action plans in support of the strategy for women and girls at risk of, or in contact with the justice system and continued work in partnership to support the development of a strategy to end violence against women and girls.	March 2024	Director Reducing Offending & Northern Ireland Prison Service and Director

			Access to Justice
To work in partnership to improve the experiences of victims and witnesses within the criminal justice system.	Work with partners to deliver entitlements under the Victim Charter and Witness Charter and oversee delivery of priorities under the Victim and Witness Strategy, in line with available resources.	March 2024	Director Access to Justice
	By working with partners, improved protections, support and experiences of vulnerable witnesses and complainants in serious sexual offence cases through continued implementation of prioritised recommendations under the Gillen Review of Serious Sexual Offences.	March 2024	Director Access to Justice
To work with partners to support improved health (including mental health) within the justice system to maintain the safety and wellbeing of people in our care	The development and implementation of a refreshed 2-year action plan to deliver on the joint DoH/DoJ <i>Improving Health within Justice</i> Strategy.	March 2024	Director Reducing Offending & Northern Ireland Prison Service

### Strategic Theme - Challenge Offending Behaviours and Support Rehabilitation

We will work with people who offend to challenge their behaviour and support them to become active and responsible citizens. Working with our partners we will promote rehabilitation; and when a custodial sentence is imposed our focus will be on resettlement leading to integration back into society.

Actions	What we will deliver during 2023-24	Target Date	Owner
To improve the outcomes for those in contact with the justice system by enhancing opportunities to address the needs of individuals, helping them address the root cause of their offending behaviour and reduce the rate of offending.	Delivery of actions agreed under year two of the Adult Restorative Justice Strategy Action Plan.	March 2024	Director Reducing Offending & Northern Ireland Prison Service
	Development of a justice-wide approach to reduce the growing levels of remand within the Northern Ireland prison population.	March 2024	Director Reducing Offending & Northern Ireland Prison Service
	Completed procurement exercise to deliver a new Electronic Monitoring contract that is responsive to justice policy needs.	March 2024	Director Safer Communities
To provide the mechanisms support an effective independent monitoring and complaints system for prisons that provides assurance that the prison environment and	Exploration of further recruiting opportunities to increase the membership of the current Independent Monitoring Board.	March 2024	Director Safer Communities
	Support for the Prisoner Ombudsman's office on the work it is undertaking to move it to a statutory footing and address a backlog of complaints cases.	March 2024	Director Safer Communities

treatment of prisoners is appropriate.			
To put in place arrangements for the care of children in a safe, secure, therapeutic, child-centred environment supported by a youth justice policy and legislative framework with a coherent approach to early intervention	Implementation of the Strategic Framework for Youth Justice Action Plan, with a focus on those actions which are to be delivered in the medium-term (i.e. within 2-3 years of publication).	March 2024	Director Reducing Offending & Northern Ireland Prison Service
	Continue to develop a strategic approach to Earlier Stage Diversion by working with partners to create additional alternatives to children entering the formal justice system.	March 2024	Director Reducing Offending & Northern Ireland Prison Service
	Continue to work with the Department of Health and Department of Education to implement a Regional Care and Justice Campus Programme to better support the needs of vulnerable children including those in the justice system.	March 2024	Director Reducing Offending & Northern Ireland Prison Service

### Strategic Theme - Deliver an Effective Justice System

We will lead work to make our justice system faster and more effective, and more importantly, to serve the needs of those who engage with it. We will ensure appropriate access to justice for our citizens. We will also deliver a system, which supports other court users in the early and proportionate resolution of civil and family proceedings. We will support and empower people working within the justice system to deliver effectively.

Actions	What we will deliver during 2023-24	Target Date	Owner
To support the continued modernisation and transformation the Civil and Criminal Justice Systems	Lead on Speeding Up Justice programme to provide leadership and support regarding initiatives targeted at reducing avoidable delay within the criminal justice system in Northern Ireland through a multifaceted work programme involving performance reporting; working in partnership; legislation; research and analysis; and, improvement projects.	March 2024	Director Access to Justice
	Consultation on a draft Access to Justice Strategy to set a framework for modernisation and facilitate effective prioritisation of access to justice enablers.	March 2024	Director Justice Delivery
	Development and implementation of a rolling programme of civil and family justice modernisation.	March 2024	Director Justice Delivery
	Ensure the legal aid frameworks are fit for purpose and comply with the relevant statutory criteria to support citizen's access to justice.	March 2024	Director Justice Delivery
To support the effective operation of devolved tribunals	Continue to work with the Ministry of Justice to facilitate the McCloud remedy options exercise for members of the devolved judiciary.	November 2023	Director Access to Justice

in Northern Ireland for which the Department has responsibility.			
	Work with partners to ensure devolved judicial appointments are effectively facilitated and to support an effective justice system by taking forward policy in relation to pay, pensions and conditions of appointment of the devolved judiciary.	March 2024 (ongoing)	Director Access to Justice
To plan for the future commencement of further provisions of the Mental Capacity Act (NI) 2016.	A business case with options for establishment of an Office of the Public Guardian in Northern Ireland.	November 2023	Director Access to Justice
To have a primary legislative programme in place for the new Assembly mandate and support the progression of the legislation in Year 1 of the programme.	Progress agreed legislative priorities, supporting business areas in planning and developing legislation for introduction during the mandate and overseeing its delivery once there is a functioning Executive and Assembly in place.	March 2024	Director Access to Justice
To develop improved court, tribunal and enforcement services that meet the needs of our stakeholders.	Stakeholder engagement to finalise the NICTS Estates Strategy, and commence data capture and analysis to inform future Strategic Asset Management Plans	March 2024	Director NI Courts and Tribunals Service
	Completion of a competitive dialogue procurement process to the receipt of final tenders stage for Themis (the new NICTS digital system and web portal).	March 2024	Director NI Courts and Tribunals Service
To support the effective delivery of Justice through effective scientific support services, promote sustainability, budget	Engage with partners to deliver the NI Forensic Services Strategy and continue work to further develop and implement actions in support of integrated and improved forensic services including progression of the Atlas project for new accommodation	March 2024	Director Safer Communities

management, staff development, ICT, support services and disclosure certificates.	Promotion and management of sustainability and carbon reduction across the DoJ in line with the Sustainability Strategy and action plan by developing a departmental carbon action plan and commencing removal of consumer single use plastic from the Stormont estate.	March 2024	Director Justice Delivery
	Ensure the effective management of the Department's budget to maximise efficiency and utilize resources for maximum effectiveness, reduce risk of overspend and develop and implement an action plan to support and promote development of the Department's people.	March 2024	Director Justice Delivery
	Provide an efficient and effective system for the issue of disclosure certificates that contain accurate information in line with Ministerial targets.	March 2024	Director Justice Delivery
To continue to enhance measures to identify and reduce error and fraud in the legal aid system	Deliver improvements to the level of official error in legal aid claims and develop an action plan to reduce levels of practitioner error	March 2024	Director Justice Delivery
To update long term policing objectives to provide an evidence based strategic framework through which the Northern Ireland Policing Board can create the Policing Plan 2025 and deliver on its statutory role to secure effective policing.	Through cross government/agency/strategic partner engagement build an evidence base for long term policing objectives and develop a public consultation document.	March 2024	Director Safer Communities

<p>To progress updates to the Police and Criminal Evidence (Northern Ireland) Order 1989 and subordinate legislation and Codes of Practice to ensure policing has an appropriate set of powers through which to deliver effective policing.</p>	<p>Support for OLC in the preparation of amendments to the primary legislation on Live Links and preparation of the required standalone updates for PACE Codes and amendments to the primary legislation on Biometrics including provisions for a Biometrics Commissioner.</p> <p>Reviewing and preparing for consultation on changes to primary legislation on a range of matter including allowing testing of urine and oral samples for the presence of Class A Drugs and detention to be continued to allow for testing conditions to be met; requirements for search records; an extra definition of a specified offence relating to human trafficking; and powers to re-arrest on release.</p>	<p>March 2024</p>	<p>Director Safer Communities</p>
<p>Enhance the delivery of services to support NIPS staff and people in our care and further support operational prison staff to meet the challenges of working in a custodial environment</p>	<p>Develop and deliver Year Two of the Prisons 25 by 25 Continuous Improvement Programme against the five pillars of Our People, Our Services, Our Infrastructure, Our partnerships and Our Contribution</p>	<p>March 2024</p>	<p>Director Reducing Offending &amp; Northern Ireland Prison Service</p>
	<p>Complete implementation of the outstanding recommendations from the review of support services to serving Prison Officers.</p>	<p>March 2024</p>	<p>Director Reducing Offending &amp; Northern Ireland Prison Service</p>
<p>To improve the effectiveness of operational delivery by NIPS/YJA and outcomes it achieves through the ongoing implementation of recommendations made by Criminal Justice Inspection Northern Ireland.</p>	<p>Complete and evidence the implementation of recommendations made by CJINI in the Inspection of Woodlands Juvenile Justice Centre 2022 report.</p>	<p>March 2024</p>	<p>Director Reducing Offending &amp; Northern Ireland Prison Service</p>



# Department of Justice Organisation Chart



