



Northern Ireland  
Assembly

Committee for Justice

# OFFICIAL REPORT (Hansard)

Safer Communities Directorate:  
Department of Justice

20 February 2020

# NORTHERN IRELAND ASSEMBLY

## Committee for Justice

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**Members present for all or part of the proceedings:**

Mr Paul Givan (Chairperson)  
Ms Linda Dillon (Deputy Chairperson)  
Ms Martina Anderson  
Mr Doug Beattie  
Mr Gordon Dunne  
Mr Paul Frew  
Mr Patsy McGlone  
Mr Pat Sheehan  
Miss Rachel Woods

**Witnesses:**

Ms Maura Campbell	Department of Justice
Ms Julie Harrison	Department of Justice
Ms Katie Taylor	Department of Justice
Ms Julie Wilson	Department of Justice

**The Chairperson (Mr Givan):** I welcome to the meeting Julie Harrison, director of the safer communities directorate in the Department of Justice; Maura Campbell, deputy director of policing policy and strategy division; Julie Wilson, acting head of protection and organised crime division; and Katie Taylor, deputy director of communities division. This session will be recorded by Hansard.

Julie, I will hand over to you to give us an overview, and then members, I am sure, will have some points to make.

**Ms Julie Harrison (Department of Justice):** Thank you very much. We are grateful for the opportunity to brief you today and look forward to working with you all in the next weeks and months. I thought that it would be helpful to take a wee bit of time to catch you up on where we have been and some of our key priorities for the remainder of the mandate and to highlight in particular some of the issues that we want to bring to you over the next while. I am joined by Katie, Maura and Julie, who you have already met, who head up the various divisions.

I should note up front that — I am getting my excuses in early — I have been in the role for about four weeks, so I apologise for deferring to colleagues on some of the detail. I will also ask you to bear with me, as this is quite a broad brief and an extensive directorate, so I will go as fast as I can to make sure that we cover the ground and give you time for questions.

It might be useful to start by reflecting on the tackling paramilitarism action plan, which, as you know, sits in safer communities but is a cross-Executive programme. I think that you have had a written

briefing on that since Anthony Harbinson was here at the end of January. Members will recall that the Executive action plan was in response to 43 separate recommendations in the Fresh Start Agreement in relation to making progress towards disbanding paramilitary organisations.

The action plan and the associated programme of work is coordinated by a team in safer communities, but it is absolutely a cross-Executive programme to address the harm caused by paramilitarism and the underlying issues that make individuals and communities vulnerable to paramilitary influence. Therefore, the team works with other Departments and across a range of statutory agencies and, critically, as well, with community and voluntary sector partners.

The delivery of the 38 commitments that sit with the Northern Ireland Executive is structured around four key work streams, which are mutually reinforcing. The first is on long-term prevention. Members will be aware of some of the work; for example, the Start programme to support vulnerable young people, the work that the Probation Board is doing with vulnerable young men, and curricular materials. There is a lot of work on building confidence in the justice system in terms of speeding up justice and more proactive policing with the community in problem-solving in that space. There is work on new powers and strategies to deal with paramilitary activity, notably the paramilitary crime task force, and there is work to support communities to enable the transition away from paramilitary influence and control, in particular by working on the role of women in community development.

As members know, progress is monitored by the Independent Reporting Commission (IRC), which publishes an annual report. We have had two independent reports to date. As members will appreciate, however, creating a society in which paramilitarism has no place is a complex task. This is long-term work, and it needs a sustained and collaborative approach. Reflecting on learning to date, solutions lie not only in funding for specific projects but in connecting not just across safer communities but more widely. That includes us working through the outcomes delivery plan and the Programme for Government with other Departments to tackle educational under-attainment, the vulnerability of young people in particular to influence and control, and wider systemic challenges created by drugs and alcohol.

Ring-fenced funding of £50 million was provided through Fresh Start, as you all know. The current funding period runs to March 2021, and we are now thinking about what the next phase of delivery should look like, based on learning to date and the two IRC reports. Ultimately, it will be for the Executive as a whole to consider how to ensure that this work is made a priority as outlined in the New Decade, New Approach agreement, but we will be keen to talk to you as that work progresses and as we work on the shape of it. You will also be aware that the Justice Minister has indicated her desire to enhance delivery, so I am sure that we will be talking to you about that in the coming months. I wanted to do that first in order to make the point that although that work lives in the Department of Justice it is a wider issue.

Addressing harm caused by paramilitary activity is, clearly, an essential part of building communities, but as well as coordinating that work, we have responsibility for resourcing policy and the legislative framework for policing and for community safety in Northern Ireland, and we provide the lead for security-related issues in the Northern Ireland Executive. We also encompass Forensic Science Northern Ireland, which is an executive agency of the Department. The agency supports the delivery not only of the Department's corporate plan and the Programme for Government but the forensic services strategy for Northern Ireland.

In the time that we have, I thought that it might be useful for the rest of these remarks to touch on current areas of work across safer communities and particularly to highlight some of the issues that we will want to talk to you about. The policing policy and strategy division is led by Maura Campbell, and its areas of work include the governance and oversight of all the Department's arm's-length bodies, including the Police Service of Northern Ireland, the Northern Ireland Policing Board, the Office of the Police Ombudsman, and the Probation Board for Northern Ireland. We have a particular focus on the tripartite accountability arrangement, working closely with the Policing Board.

The division is also responsible for issues relating to personnel policies in respect of police officers; maintenance of the legislative framework for police powers under the Police and Criminal Evidence (PACE) provisions; and for the appropriate adult service for young people and vulnerable adults who require support when they are in police custody. This division also leads on planning for the establishment of the new Historical Investigations Unit (HIU), which, as you will all be aware, is subject to political agreement and legislation being taken through Westminster to give effect to the Stormont House Agreement.

To date, we have sought to take a proportionate approach to this work since we cannot pre-empt the content of the legislation or the views of an incoming HIU director. Of course it is a politically sensitive area of work as well, and it attracts a lot of interest. In the event that a Stormont House Agreement Bill is introduced, we will want to work very closely with the Committee as plans are developed for implementation around the Historical Investigations Unit.

Community safety division is led by Katie Taylor. Community safety is a shared issue that must be delivered collaboratively and in partnership. Almost all our work in that space is with other organisations. It is also quite broad-ranging, from a significant focus on domestic and sexual violence, which I will say a little more about later, through to hate crime and antisocial behaviour (ASB). We work with our partners in the PSNI and in other operational agencies, including, of course, a close working relationship with the policing and community safety partnerships.

We also support communities to be safe and resilient, and we do that in a number of ways. First, by raising awareness of how individuals and communities can support themselves to reduce the likelihood of becoming a victim of crime and, critically, by raising awareness of the risks associated with certain behaviours that we know can lead to offending. We also put a focus on supporting victims and witnesses of crime, and specifically provide funding of about £1.7 million to Victim Support Northern Ireland and around £400,000 to the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) for its young witness service, as well as offering practical support in navigating the criminal justice system.

A key task in this area is to ensure that legislation is fit for purpose, to keep the public safe, and to support the criminal justice system effectively. Members are probably aware, for example, of the independent review that we are sponsoring on hate crime legislation, which is being delivered by Judge Marrinan. As part of our focus on community safety, we have a role in working with operational partners to ensure that offenders can be safely managed in the community, through managing effective public protection and, where they cannot, recalling them into custody.

I am sure that you will all have a strong interest in domestic and sexual violence and abuse. We jointly lead a strategy with the Department of Health on these issues and are taking forward a number of significant issues in this space at the moment, including domestic homicide reviews and the piloting of behavioural change programmes. Members will have a particular interest in the Domestic Abuse Bill announced by the Minister, and we look forward to working closely with the Committee to progress that as quickly as possible. I am sure that we are all keen to see provisions extended — enacted, excuse me — to ensure that victims of domestic abuse are afforded the appropriate protections in Northern Ireland.

On community safety, which is a wide brief, there is our work to reduce and remove interface structures. That is part of the wider Together: Building a United Community (T:BUC) strategy. As you will all appreciate, this is a complex programme of work that can only be delivered through a multi-agency approach and in close collaboration with community and voluntary sector partners and communities living in and around interfaces. We continue to engage with people living at interfaces where there is an appetite to see interface structures removed or reduced.

As you can see, there is an extensive range of work ongoing in the community safety space. I hope that it gives you a sense of what we are trying to do in the spirit of outcome 7, around creating an environment where you:

*"respect the law and each other"*

and creating safe communities. Another key element of this wider task is addressing broader security and protection issues, particularly organised criminality.

Finally, I want briefly to cover the work of the protection and organised crime division, which is led by Julie Wilson. Our work in this area includes a wide range of policy, strategy and legislation relating to key organised crime threats, modern slavery and the provision of the secretariat to the Organised Crime Task Force (OCTF). In the next few weeks and months there are a number of pieces of work that we will want to take your views on. These include a legislative consent motion (LCM) to implement all outstanding provisions in the Criminal Finances Act (2017); proposals for legislation to create new specific offences to tackle organised crime; and a new draft strategy on tackling organised crime.

We are also focused on operations and resilience planning, including management of the Department's 24-hour information flow in relation to security incidents, and protection and organised

crime division leads on the Department's role in central civil contingency arrangements for Northern Ireland. In partnership with the emergency services and other statutory authorities, it is responsible for emergency planning and preparedness in respect of a range of major emergencies. We also have policy responsibility for search and rescue, police use of less-lethal weaponry, cross-border policing powers, the future regulation of the private-security industry, and responsibility for statutory functions relating to the control of firearms and explosives in Northern Ireland.

The state pathology branch, which is based in Castle Buildings, is responsible for providing the physical and financial resources to the State Pathologist's Department. A key priority there in the coming months will be the overseeing of a number of recruitment processes, including for an additional forensic pathologist.

I made the point at the beginning that everything that we do to deliver a safe community that respects the law and each other relies on other partners. We work collaboratively on most things in safer communities, and I suppose that most of our focus is on outcome 7. In everything that we do, we cannot work in isolation if we are to meet the challenges and build safer communities. We will work with you, with Departments and agencies, across sectors and, crucially, with communities.

That was a very quick run-through of what is a broad remit. I hope that it was helpful. We are very happy to take your questions.

**The Chairperson (Mr Givan):** OK. Thank you. I want to take you to a point that you maybe did not touch on: the modern slavery responsibilities of the directorate and, in particular, the human trafficking and exploitation aspect. I see that a review was commissioned into that under section 15 of the Act. Will you bring me up to speed on the process that was involved in awarding the contract to Queen's University? It was awarded to individuals who had already given evidence to the Committee and clearly set out their opposition to what the Assembly did. Your Department then gave them a contract to carry out an independent review, and I use the word "independent" advisedly.

**Ms Julie Wilson (Department of Justice):** I was not involved in awarding that contract, so I am unable to give any detail on the process that was applied. We can certainly write to the Committee with further details, but another part of the Department led on it. The review has been published and I have seen its findings, but my side was not involved in leading on the awarding of the contract, at all.

**The Chairperson (Mr Givan):** Can you explain the status of the report that was commissioned by the Department? Does it own the Queen's University's report?

**Ms Wilson:** I am not sure whether the Department owns the report. The Department commissioned the report and it was made to the Department. I am not sure of its ownership. I did not lead on the contract.

**Ms Harrison:** Chair, we are happy to come back to you on how the work was procured and who owns the data related to the report. We can do that in writing. That is no problem.

**The Chairperson (Mr Givan):** How have the concerns that were raised by a number of organisations about the awarding of that contract been dealt with? Concerns were raised about its publication, and I know that the former Minister of Justice, Claire Sugden, raised concerns about the process, as did other participants who were heavily involved in arguing for the legislation to be brought forward.

Concerns were raised about how Queen's awarded the contract to individuals who made strong representation against, and opposition to, the legislation. What is your view of how those concerns were handled? Does the Department recognise that those concerns are legitimate, and how will it seek to address them?

**Ms Harrison:** I hesitate to come to a view until I find out a little bit more about the process, who raised the concerns and so on. We will absolutely come back to you.

**The Chairperson (Mr Givan):** I would highly recommend that you read the evidence sessions that the Justice Committee held at the time, the evidence that was presented by the individuals from Queen's University, the comments that were made, and seek to satisfy yourselves. I would also like to get feedback that the Department is satisfied that that was all appropriate. It is an issue that I anticipate being raised further with the Department, because we obviously have to deal with human trafficking.

There is an inbuilt review mechanism on how we take that forward, because how the Department has handled this is a concern that has been brought to my attention.

**Ms Dillon:** First, thank you for your presentation. I have loads of questions, but, don't worry, I am not going to ask them all.

**Ms Harrison:** My pen is poised.

**Ms Dillon:** I appreciate that you are limited in what you can do with regard to the HIU because the legislation has not passed. I have asked this of other people from the Department but have not really got a satisfactory answer. The Office of the Police Ombudsman previously offered to train people to investigate so that they would be ready to hit the ground running. It would also assist the ombudsman in dealing with the backlog in her office. However, I am not sure whether the new Police Ombudsman is willing to make the same offer, to be fair, so it is something that you would have to go back to her on.

The offer was that if they had additional resource, they could recruit people who would help them to deal with the backlog, but it would really be a method of training them to become part of the HIU. I do not know. Obviously, you have not been given any of the resource that comes with legacy yet, and I appreciate that that is an issue. Nevertheless, I think that it is something that could at least be considered in the Department and that should be looked at as a possibility, because it will take some time to get the HIU up and running even after the legislation — if it is ever brought forward — goes through. I would like a wee answer on that.

The overall question that I will ask you at this time is about the domestic and sexual violence strategy. You are working with Health on this, which is good, as is any of the Departments working together. What is the role of Education in that? That is a gap. I see it as a gap, because I have been at events at which people tell me that good work is going on in Education, but when I talk to young people at school they tell me that what they are getting is not very good. They do not feel that what they are taught about healthy relationships is beneficial to them or gives them an idea of what a healthy relationship looks like. They do not feel that it is engaging. Often, it is somebody coming in and almost lecturing them, and what they get is very limited. That is not beneficial to young people.

Is there a benefit — I am going to sound like a broken record — in the Youth Service being part of the work in schools with young people? Often, those coming in do not have experience of working directly with young people. If the Youth Service is involved, it can have an influence on how best to engage young people. As I say, I sound like a broken record, but I think that the Youth Service has to be a part of anything that engages young people; they are best qualified to work with young people. They have all the experience and knowledge. That does not mean that they can carry out the work, but they should play some part in engaging with young people to work with you and to get the most out of anything that is being done educationally.

**Ms Harrison:** If Maura does not mind, I will ask her to speak about the ombudsman's offer on preparedness.

**Ms Maura Campbell (Department of Justice):** There were a couple of issues there on resourcing for current legacy work, and I will start with that. You are right: there is a backlog of historical cases that are being dealt with by the Office of the Police Ombudsman, and an even bigger backlog of cases sitting with the PSNI.

The ombudsman's office recently submitted a business case to the Department seeking additional funding for work on historical cases over the next three years. From memory, I think that the office requested £4.4 million over a three-year period. The Department will have to consider that request alongside a number of other pressures that have been submitted across the system, and that is in the context that we do not yet know what our budget for next year, or further years, will be. The difficulty is, as you mentioned, that we are simply not resourced to deal with the legacy cases in the system across the piece. That is why there needs to be properly funded arrangements to deal with the legacy of the past, because we do not have them at the moment.

As for how and when we might use the skills of those individuals to train staff who would be working in the Historical Investigations Unit, there is a bit of a sequence — this was touched on in previous evidence sessions with colleagues — whereby until we know the content of the Stormont House Agreement Bill it is very difficult for us to do a lot of meaningful implementation work. We can do some

pre-planning, look at assumptions and scope out some of that work, but significant issues were raised in the NIO consultation, so there could be quite a bit of change to the legislation once it is introduced. We have not yet seen another iteration of the Bill, so we cannot really make an assessment.

I am also conscious that we do not want to cut across the independence of an incoming Historical Investigations Unit director, so there would not be a recruitment process initiated until after the director was in post. We have been looking at the sequencing of how this work will be done, and the requirement to recruit a significant number of additional staff if this goes forward has contributed in part to our estimate that it will take at least two years from the legislation being passed to having a HIU established. Any expertise in the system that can assist with training and induction would be very welcome, but, at this point in time, we cannot do a lot in that space.

**Ms Dillon:** I appreciate that.

**Ms Harrison:** The other point was about joint work with the Health Department on the role of youth workers.

**Ms Katie Taylor (Department of Justice):** We are joint leads for the Stopping Domestic and Sexual Violence and Abuse strategy with the Department of Health, but is very much a cross-Executive initiative. On our strategic delivery board, we have representatives from the Department of Health, the Department for Communities, the Department of Finance, the Department of Education and ourselves. So, there are quite good working relationships, and the board has a number of actions. It is a seven-year strategy, and we have yearly action plans; we are developing year five of the action plan. The Department of Education has a number of actions in that and is reviewing the iMatter programme, which is probably one of the curriculum initiatives that you referred to. The Committee previously discussed Operation Encompass and working with the police on it to try to allow better information sharing. The point about the Youth Service is important, and it is certainly one that I will take back to the strategy board; it is worth exploring, especially as we develop our next action plan.

There are a couple of things that we are doing. This year, we funded the Spanner in the Works Theatre Company, which delivered six performances of a play called 'Mind Games', educating viewers on coercive and controlling behaviour and abuse in relationships, and followed that up with 18 workshops. That is relatively small scale, but it is a good initiative to start having a conversation with young people about what controlling and coercive behaviour is in light of a new abuse offence being introduced. It is also relevant to — you will have had a separate briefing on this — the implementation of the Gillen review recommendations. There are a lot of recommendations in that on issues of consent and the importance of education and talking to young people about healthy relationships. It all wraps up as one issue, namely how we talk to young people about those issues.

I thank you for your comment about the Youth Service. I will certainly take it back. There is work ongoing, but there is always more that we can do.

**Ms Dillon:** Thank you; I appreciate that. You are right about 'Mind Games'; those types of initiatives are brilliant, but we do not put enough into the preventative end of things to prevent people from getting themselves into that position. I do not want to take away the focus on what happens at the legislation end and people being brought to book when they carry out abusive actions, but the preventative work is so important. It is so important to educate our young girls how to protect themselves — in most instances, it is girls — and to educate our young men how not to end up in that position and try to help them in whatever way we can. I believe that nobody is born bad. Society makes people the way they are, and we have to look at how we can prevent people from getting to that point. It is about breaking the cycles in homes where there is domestic and sexual violence going on and all of that kind of stuff. I know that really good work is going on in that sphere, but there is just not enough of it. We are too focused on the other end.

**Mr Beattie:** Julie, we have been carrying on, throughout the whole time that the Assembly has been down, talking about tackling paramilitarism. I know that we are coming pretty much to the end of the five years and the £50 million that was set aside for that. It is to be hoped that we can carry on the really good initiatives that we have had going. A real point to be made here is this: how are we measuring success? At the end of this five years, what is going to be the measurement of success that says that we need to carry this on again, as opposed to saying, "We have done some good work over the five years, but it has not changed a great deal"?

**Ms Harrison:** We have done a lot of work, particularly in the past year and a half or so, on exactly that. What does success look like and how do we measure it in an objective way? I am scribbling indicators as I am talking to you. I suppose there are some specific measures, such as the level of paramilitary-style attacks. We know, for example, in the last 12 months, how many people were beaten or shot by paramilitaries. There are some routinely collected statistics — housing intimidation is another one — that are a clear measure, so we do have all of those metrics to begin to tell a story.

I think there is also a piece about attitudinal change. Members may be aware of the Ending the Harm public awareness campaign, and there has been a really encouraging shift over the past two years in communities' views around that and the kind of societal shrug, for want of a better phrase. We have gone from in the region of a third of people in communities impacted thinking, "Well, there must be something going on there for someone to be treated in that way" to 19%. That is still a very significant sum, but we also have attitudinal measures around that, and we can also provide some of that detail on the metrics if that would be useful.

**Mr Beattie:** Yes. It is useful to understand, because the problem with stats is that you can always read stats in two different ways. For example, from looking at the paramilitary crime task force searches over the last five years, I see that they have gone down. Since the peak in 2017 of 190-odd, they have gone down to 111 in this financial year. Is that because there is less to search, which would be a measure of success, or is it because the task force is not as proactive, in which case the whole thing has shifted slightly? I guess looking at statistics is great, but there is that other concern that you can read them in two different ways.

**Ms Harrison:** On the specific point about the paramilitary crime task force, the encouraging correlation to that is the increase in the number of convictions. On the wider point, the IRC in its last report recommended the need for wider societal conversations around all of this, and we fully support that because, actually, that programme alone cannot really engage in the level and scale and complexity that we would like to. I think there is something in the next phase about how we amplify the work, particularly now that we have elected representatives back, and how we can engender more political support around it.

**Mr Beattie:** We keep linking paramilitaries with organised crime, yet we have a paramilitary crime task force and we have an organised crime task force. It is nearly as if we are separating the two when what we are trying to do is to say that one pretty much bleeds into the other. My views on how the separated prison regime is out of kilter with what we are trying to do in society are well known. I will not go into that, but, if we are looking at paramilitaries being, in essence, organised crime groups these days, surely those two separate entities need to be working together.

**Ms Harrison:** I spoke a little about the focus on outcome 7, and, over time, we will be progressing work on a community safety framework because, actually, you are right. We are interested in harm from wherever it comes, and that is the focus right across the piece. Therefore, we are working very closely with colleagues on the organised crime side too. We probably know better now, compared with three years ago, what the really good initiatives were and what the useful projects at the time were. How can we align work streams around the vulnerability-and-harm early intervention and the law-enforcement piece more collectively? Outcome 7 is the key to this:

*"We have a safe community where we respect the law, and each other"*

Everyone is very comfortable with that, and a focus on harm, I think, keeps us in the right space.

**Mr Beattie:** To finish off, as things are now, you are making a business case to keep going and for more funding. There will be a year 6, year 7, year 8 and year 9. What is your sense? Another five years?

**Ms Harrison:** On the basis of commitments in 'New Decade, New Approach', we are taking that as support on a cross-party basis, and we will be planning until 2024. There is a risk that, if you just keep adding years, you will not maintain the focus, but we think that there is a lot of work to do next year on the ongoing projects. Some of that work needs to be continued, but, between now and the summer, we certainly want to work with you and others on what the shape of the next phase will be.

**Mr Beattie:** Hence the initial question was, "How do you measure success?". That is absolutely key to what happens next.

**Miss Woods:** I have a number of questions. Some of them are a wee bit different so I will start with the easiest one. Just out of curiosity, how does one get a firearms certificate, and what checks are done on people before one is issued?

**Ms Wilson:** The firearms certificates are a matter for the Chief Constable. People apply to the PSNI for a firearms certificate, the PSNI does checks and people are asked to provide information on their medical background and things like that, such as whether they have been treated for certain conditions, etc. That is all a matter for the police. It is an operational matter. The Department's role comes in when someone has been refused a firearms certificate and an appeal is made to the Department of Justice on that.

**Miss Woods:** Thank you. That was just out of interest.

On the community safety framework, I notice a lot of similarities where there is collaborative working, council, locality and statutory partners. Do we not already have this in the policing and community safety partnerships (PCSPs) rather than doing the same thing again?

**Ms Taylor:** The idea behind a community safety framework is to ensure that connectivity between what is happening at a local level and what is happening at local council level with our PCSPs. You are entirely right: PCSPs are very good bodies, and that function is already there to bring together the right partners to talk about community safety issues and what we do at a policy level and a strategic level. The community safety framework is to ensure that partners are focused and that the mechanisms and the lines of communication are well established to ensure that continuous feedback loop between what is happening on the ground and how we use that to inform policy and vice versa.

The proposition that we are putting forward — we have only briefed the Minister on this at a very high level, so she will also have views — is that we will create a community safety board and bring together those key partners at a strategic level to make sure that there are opportunities to touch base on those key issues and, most importantly, to ensure that it is a flexible approach. Rather than having a seven-year strategy that sets out priorities for an extended period, recognising that the nature of the threat or the nature of the issue is different from area to area and changes over time, we want a more flexible model that allows us to have the conversations that we need to have with the right people at the right time. It is about embedding and securing the collaborative working that already takes place and just putting a framework around it. We are looking at the Organised Crime Task Force model — that is a different topic — whereby you have a strategic level and then you have groups that look at the specific operational issues, for example, antisocial behaviour. We already have some of that in the Department. We have delivery groups on certain issues, but this is about making sure that we are looking strategically at the local council level and the locality.

**Miss Woods:** I completely understand that. We could maybe give more responsibility or more *[Inaudible]* within the PCSPs, because PCSPs operate very differently in each council area, and you get certain buy-in from statutory organisations in some areas but not in others. It also varies throughout the months of the year whether you will get somebody from, say, the Housing Executive around the table or not. You can reform the relationship that the PCSPs have, because you still have that local representation through the councils and the *[Inaudible]* and, if there was much more interaction from the Department with the PCSPs, rather than coming up once a year and sitting in front of the board, you could do that and give more responsibility to the chair and vice-chair. I was the chair of a PCSP recently, so that is where I am coming from on this. There is so much potential there. There is so much funding already given to the PCSPs, and there is so much more that could be done at a local level with them. I completely understand the point about the overarching framework, but something could be done at that level with what already exists, rather than having to recreate that with different people.

**Ms Taylor:** I reassure you that the intention is not to recreate them. We see PCSPs as a very integral part of this and as the delivery mechanism at a local level. What we want to do is make sure that we are best utilising the really valuable learning about the issues at a local level that you get through a PCSP. As you say, they have the expertise about what is happening at a local level. It is about making sure that that feedback loop, as you mentioned, is more comprehensive than perhaps it is currently, that we are having a two-way conversation and that we have buy-in from the top of the organisation and all the relevant bodies.

**Miss Woods:** Thank you. Can I ask just one more, Chair?

**The Chairperson (Mr Givan):** Yes. Can I bring Linda in? She wanted to pick up on your point, and then I will come back to you.

**Miss Woods:** Of course. That is fine.

**Ms Dillon:** On the back of that, did the Minister get any view on the community safety board? The Chief Constable raised that last week as well.

**Ms Taylor:** We just have not had the chance to brief her yet.

**Ms Dillon:** OK. No problem.

**Miss Woods:** Finally, with regard to tackling paramilitarism and B4, the Communities in Transition project, if possible, can I get an update on where we are with that? Has there been any assessment of the engagement from local people on the ground and any feedback on how that has been rolled out, specifically in the North Down area?

**Ms Taylor:** I will get you that. I cannot give it to you today, but we will certainly come back to you on that. I will get that from TEO.

**Miss Woods:** Brilliant. Thank you.

**Mr Frew:** Thank you, Julie. Congratulations on your promotion.

**Ms Harrison:** Thank you.

**Mr Frew:** You have worked well with us, as Doug has mentioned, on the tackling paramilitarism stuff over the last number of years. I always felt that it was worthwhile, and if it was not worthwhile, I would not have been there, to be honest. In my eyes, it has been worthwhile. There has always been a measure of success, but, again, the degrees of that success will vary with regard to different things. I just want to put it on the record that I appreciate the work that you and your team have done over the last number of years when this place was down.

**Ms Harrison:** Thank you.

**Mr Frew:** I have a couple of worries about issues that I see as falling in your area. The first is about advocacy. Charitable groups out there already provide that service, and some of them are very nervous about the advocacy moves, with the direction of travel to one advocacy service and the one-size-fits-all approach to the domestic violence piece and the sexual violence piece. They are also nervous about where they would be based and where they would link into further support. What moves have been made of late in that regard? The last time that I had an update was probably in the autumn of last year. I am just wondering whether there has been anything done in the last number of months on the issue. Have we moved forward? Have we gained agreement from the groups?

**Ms Taylor:** You are right. There has been a lot of discussion over the last 12 months about exactly what shape and form an advocacy model should take. It is fair to say that there is not complete agreement. We have had extensive engagement with all the voluntary sector groups, and the team had a lot of discussions with organisations, talking to them together and separately. I know that the Minister also met Women's Aid this week. We are getting to the point of wanting to finalise an advocacy model. Of course, we want to finalise a model that will be accepted by the voluntary sector. We have to balance that with constraints in resource and ensure that, with the resource available, we are able to support the largest number of victims.

The model that we have put forward, as you will know, supports victims of both domestic abuse and sexual violence, given the number of crossovers in terms of harm. We often find that people present with both, unfortunately. Experience from the independent sexual violence advocates, run by Victim Support currently, is that when you have only a small number of advocates, they have to spend a lot of their time travelling because they cover a really large geographical area. Our concern is that, within the resource available, we would end up providing a less-than-ideal service to certain groups if, for example, you split up domestic violence and sexual violence, because you could split them in a number of ways. We are in conversation with the police about working towards a shared funding

model. One reason why it has taken a bit of time is that we are very conscious that we would like to introduce a model that can be mainstreamed. We do not want to pilot it, because we think that it could cause more difficulties to pilot something and then remove it.

I suspect that it will be difficult to come up with a model that is satisfactory to everyone. We have always said that we are willing to keep it under review, and when we introduce something, we hope to be in a position that other Departments might see the benefits and seek to offer some funding to extend the service, for example. At the moment, we see it primarily supporting those who are progressing through the criminal justice system or, of course, those who have been designated as high risk through the Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) or the Rowan.

In short, and to answer your question, a final model has not been decided on. Our recommendation to the Minister is to have a combined service, based simply on the scope of the resource.

**Mr Frew:** There is a massive differential between the numbers though, is there not? While there is a crossover — there is, absolutely — there is a massive differential between domestic violence victims and sexual violence victims.

**Ms Taylor:** There is a differential, and that is probably where part of our concern stems from. If you were to separate them and operate on the basis of having approximately 20 advocates, you would end up with a relatively small number of advocates who are dedicated to supporting victims of sexual violence and abuse. Therefore, we would have a similar situation as we do now, with them covering wide geographic areas.

**Mr Frew:** I want to jump to another area: unexplained wealth orders. Where are we with those? What progress has been made?

**Ms Harrison:** One of the things that we will be bringing to you is an LCM on the Criminal Finances Act 2017. We await the detail of that.

**Ms Wilson:** I think that we are due to give the Committee an oral briefing on that in a few weeks. We need to bring an LCM to the Assembly, so our starting point for that will be to come to the Committee.

We hope to secure legislative consent for all outstanding provisions of the Criminal Finance Act by the summer recess, if possible. We are working to implement the outstanding provisions by October, but that will obviously be subject to the timescales for the LCM and Home Office timescales, as we will have to rely on the Home Office to bring forward some secondary legislation. We are working in the background on some of the enabling legislation, the codes of practice and court rules that would be required to fully implement the rest of the Act. At this point, we are aiming for October.

**Mr Frew:** OK. Thank you. Jumping again: hate crime. Is it the case that we record hate crime complaints as statistics by personalising those statistics to the person who has been alleged to have caused a complaint or committed a crime? Are we recording statistics about complaints rather than crimes? Do we know?

**Ms Taylor:** I will answer that to the best of my ability. We, of course, record hate crime statistics, or rather, the police do. The police also record hate incidents. I am not quite sure that I understood the question about it being personalised. Sorry.

**Mr Frew:** I did not put it across correctly; that was my fault. Is that retrievable information? Is it personalised? If I were accused of a hate crime — it is not a hate crime; I do not like the terminology, by the way — but the police have investigated and decided that there was not a crime or incident. Will that still be recorded? Is it still retrievable by third parties? Will it be personalised to me?

**Ms Taylor:** I do not know the answer to that. I would need to check with the police, but I am happy to come back to you on that.

**Mr Frew:** Yes, please.

There has been a wee bit of media interest in peace walls this week. There still seems to be grave reluctance to bring down peace walls, especially among the people who live in those areas. It strikes me that the people who live there are probably the most important factor in the conversation. Have

you been given a directive by the Minister or anyone else in the Department to progress the removal of peace walls?

**Ms Taylor:** We continue to work under the direction of the Together: Building a United Community (T:BUC) strategy, which indicates that the aim to work towards should be the removal of peace walls by 2023. It is probably fair to say that that is an aspiration rather than a set or specific target. In the Department, we work very closely with communities to try to create the conditions whereby the division that potentially led to the peace wall's being put up in the first place, or the reluctance, potentially, for it to come down, can be addressed. We cannot do that on our own. We have an interfaces programme board. We work with other Departments, including the Executive Office, on how we can support that and use things like the good-relations programmes to try to build those conditions, but we work on the basis of community consent. We try to maximise community consent where possible. We will always engage with the communities that are most impacted upon by the peace wall when starting a conversation about whether the conditions are right for its removal.

**Mr Frew:** Have you ever taken down a peace wall or part of one, or contemplated doing so, without community consent?

**Ms Taylor:** Not as far as I am aware, but it is probably fair to say that, if you were to survey all the structures, you would find that there are some that have, potentially, become redundant for the purposes for which they were erected, which was the preservation of peace and security. We do not always find that there are communities living on both sides of the structure any more because demographics have changed. Some structures may have become the boundary wall of a large road or are no longer near residential homes, in which case, the basis on which you engage changes slightly, but you still engage with those who are impacted upon most. You do not necessarily have communities there, in which case, you could have a situation where you would take the view that the legislative underpinning for maintaining those structures might no longer exist.

**Mr Frew:** OK. Thank you.

**The Chairperson (Mr Givan):** Rachel, you wanted to pick up on the last question that Paul raised.

**Miss Woods:** Please. You mentioned community consultation and getting community consent. What does that look like?

**Ms Taylor:** It is a complicated process. We purposely do not put a formula around it, because every single interface is unique and every community dynamic at every interface structure is unique. We have significant engagement with communities. For example, if a structure impacted directly on 10 houses, we would engage in a variety of ways. We would have conversations door-to-door. We would work with architects to draw up designs of what potential alternatives or changes could look like. We would hold public meetings. We also work closely with the International Fund for Ireland (IFI)-funded groups. There are a range of ways. There is no one-size-fits-all method for that. It is very important to emphasise that, because it depends: there will also be times when we engage with communities who might not be impacted upon directly, but we do not want someone to find out for the first time that a wall is coming down when they walk out of their house and down the road and see it, so there is also broader community engagement to make people aware of proposed changes.

**Mr Dunne:** Thanks very much for your presentation and answering questions. A review of antisocial behaviour legislation is taking place. A public consultation has been undertaken to help to identify inadequacies in the current legislative process and to address antisocial behaviour. Can we have more details on that — what is proposed and what is likely to be rolled out? I take it that there has been a lot of engagement with various councils, the Housing Executive, the police, and so on? It continues to be a big issue. In many cases, it is difficult to address where the legislation is probably not strong enough or directed enough towards the problem.

**Ms Taylor:** There are probably a number of parts to that. I will answer your query about the legislation review, but, as well as relying on a legislative fix, it is important to make the point that some broader pieces of work need to be done on addressing the issues that lead to antisocial behaviour.

The initial consultation took views on the status of the current legislative framework, and we published the analysis of the consultation responses just before Christmas. There was quite a mix of views, which indicated to us that we need some more in-depth understanding of a number of issues before

we can move towards recommending legislative change. For example, there are crossovers with council by-laws on a number of issues. We are working with DFC to engage with councils to determine how any application of legislative change would cut across council by-law issues.

One of the things that the consultation threw up is a desire for a better understanding of how well some of the changes to ASB legislation in England and Wales have worked, so we are scoping a review of that to understand whether the changes that have been brought in there have been effective. We want to look at the feedback from that review and decide whether there are things that we can talk to our stakeholders here about and whether doing them would be helpful. Again, we recognise that a lot of the powers sit with a number of agencies and with local councils. We are setting up a multi-agency group to deal with some of that.

We have also started a review of ASB forums to understand better what best practice we can lift from them and what is perhaps not working so well. The north Belfast forum is the first one that we will look at, just to see how we can utilise the structures of the forum to address ASB. In short, there is still a lot of work to do. The consultation threw up a number of areas into which we really want to dig a little deeper, but we will have the multi-agency group and are having those conversations.

**Mr Dunne:** Which will include the police, the Housing Executive and councils, yes?

**Ms Taylor:** It will, yes.

**Mr Dunne:** It is a big issue, and the legislation needs to be much more effective. To be fair, the Housing Executive has taken on tackling antisocial behaviour in recent years and moved things forward, but a number of issues still need to be addressed. Thank you.

**Mr Frew:** I also want to ask about the work on antisocial behaviour. I have experienced it in the past, and that is well-documented. Of all the groups that Gordon mentioned, one fundamental element is missing: parents. Somehow, through legislative change or otherwise, we have to get into the homes of parents of the children who are engaging in antisocial behaviour. Sometimes it is criminal, sometimes it is not, but it still has a massive and negative impact on victims.

In one of the initiatives that I was involved in, the police wrote to the parents of the children concerned, and, 80% of the time, that was a really great move. Some of the parents realised for the first time what was going on. Getting a letter from the police that said, "Do you realise that your child is involved in something bad?" had an impact, and that resolved the issue. However, 20% of the time, it went the other way. The reaction was negative, but that, to me, comes down to parental responsibility and parental irresponsibility. Where the behaviour is not criminal, and sometimes even when it is, and we do not want to criminalise young people, it strikes me that parents are at the heart of the issue. Somehow, we need to get into the parents' living room. If there is legislative change or a deterrent, that may need to be imposed on the parents rather than on the children. That may seem a bit harsh, as I say it, but it may be something that we should scope out.

**Ms Taylor:** I know that you will be receiving a separate briefing from the Youth Justice Agency. It is doing some really good work on early intervention, working with young people who have not entered the criminal justice system but who might be displaying concerning risk-taking behaviours to divert them away from antisocial behaviour. You make a good point that antisocial behaviour is not a crime, by definition. It is behaviour before it reaches the criminal threshold. Although we hear concerns from communities about disorder among young people, it is important that we reflect the breadth of issues.

**The Chairperson (Mr Givan):** Linda wants to make a wee follow-up point, and then Patsy is next.

**Ms Dillon:** This is just a quick point. I am a wee bit concerned. As you said yourself, Paul —.

**Mr Frew:** I was thinking out loud.

**Ms Dillon:** I am concerned for two reasons. The parents might have many issues, and it would not be right to take punitive measures against them. We know that, in so many cases, the parents have either drug or alcohol misuse problems or mental health issues, or there is domestic violence in the home. The PSNI initiatives have done some work on trying to engage parents, but sometimes, if there is domestic violence in the home, that can end up putting the child in a much worse position. It is probably a case of trying to get the balance right. Engagement with parents, rather than being

punitive, should be about working with them and supporting them. It should be a more positive engagement, of the like of, "How can we help this family to work better as a family so that the parents know and care where the child is?". Most of those children are out and about, yes, but sometimes the antisocial behaviour is being carried out by adults. I just wanted to make that quick point.

**Mr Frew:** Yes. That is true.

**Ms Dillon:** You talk about the Housing Executive. It is grown-ups in other flats and houses where people live who are engaging in the antisocial behaviour. I want to broaden the discussion. I caution against taking punitive measures, but there is a lot of work to be done by parents on their parenting responsibilities. I am more on the side of trying to help them, however. I am more on the side of trying to help the family work better as a family unit. Where children need to be protected, somebody needs to move in to ensure that they are in a safe environment. It is important that that work be carried out as well, because there are massive gaps in social services.

**Mr Dunne:** I want to make one wee point. An ongoing big issue in our town centres, open spaces and parks is the group behaviour of young people. When the bright evenings come in, managing that behaviour becomes a major problem. It places a strain on the police and other resources. They have to try to help the council correct the situation.

It has been said that antisocial behaviour is not a criminal offence, but it has a serious impact on local communities. The whole image of town centres is tarnished. Many people are afraid to go into them in the evenings, so antisocial behaviour is something that needs to be addressed. Fortunately, in areas such as north Down, we have the likes of street pastors who are out working with those young people and engaging with them directly. They are doing a lot of good work and have the total support of the police. Those are all good initiatives, but more needs to be done on the legislative side. Thank you for that, Chair. Sorry Patsy.

**The Chairperson (Mr Givan):** Patsy, you have been very patient.

**Mr McGlone:** I will pick up on that point. As elected representatives, we have all been in situations in which we have dealt with some awful cases of antisocial behaviour. It can drive people up the wall, without a shadow of a doubt. Antisocial behaviour may not be technically criminal, but its outcome is criminal. People are on tablets and other medication purely because things are kicking off in the flat above them. It is incredible.

However, it may not be the young people but the person with care who has to be approached. I presume that you are involving health trusts, social services and suchlike. In case it is missed out, the housing association movement should be involved. To be honest, I have known the housing association movement to act more rapidly than the Housing Executive, and with more effect, particularly where children are involved and drugs are about the place. It therefore may be another organisation, or conglomerate of organisations, that you want to speak to.

Antisocial behaviour has been about since I was first elected. Is there a time frame for pulling together some sort of strategy? It is grand to talk about it, and I have sat in numerous meetings talking about it. It is good to learn that some thinking is going on around tackling it. You have published the departmental response online, but I am looking at the action column.

**Ms Taylor:** We do not have an antisocial behaviour strategy as such. We have a number of work plans in the Department and a number of work streams. We can certainly write to the Committee with some detail on some of the predicted milestones in the work that we are doing.

**Mr McGlone:** That would be helpful so that we can see what is happening.

I want to flip back to the information in the briefing about the Criminal Finances Act and unexplained wealth orders. Given that legislative consent was good to go when the previous Assembly dissolved in 2017, is there any particular reason for implementation of the Act being delayed now? What has changed since then to mean that it might take longer to implement?

**Ms Wilson:** We need to come back to the Committee — this new Committee — and start the legislative consent process again. A few additional changes were made to the legislation after we last briefed the Committee on the Act, so we need to provide a bit more detail on those changes. We are

coming back in the next few weeks with a draft legislative consent motion to take the Committee through that.

For the other body of work, we need the legislation to be commenced, after which we will take forward some supporting pieces of work around codes of practice, amendments to Proceeds of Crime Act (POCA) codes etc. We have started that work, and it is ongoing, but we cannot implement it until we have legislative consent. Some of that work will involve secondary legislation going through Westminster, so we are relying on the Home Office for that.

**Mr McGlone:** That is grand. According to the briefing paper, you are the person who deals with modern slavery.

**Ms Wilson:** Yes.

**Mr McGlone:** I note from your briefing:

*"This multi-agency strategy covers a wide range of actions to address modern slavery and human trafficking."*

We have read about cases in the news, and, unfortunately, some of the people who have been interviewed and are currently on remand are from Ireland, North and South. You state:

*"A significant piece of work being delivered under the strategy is a strategic approach to training and awareness for statutory bodies across Northern Ireland on how to identify victims."*

It is grand to take a multi-agency approach in the North, but, given that modern slavery is a multi-country criminal racket with big money involved, how are you learning from other countries and inputting and exchanging information? I put that question to the police when they were before the Committee. We want to nail this issue so that every Department and agency, nationally on the island, in the EU and further afield, can take part. Modern slavery is awful, crass stuff. What happened those poor people over in Essex would bring a tear to a stone. I am a bit concerned to read that the strategy seems to be a purely Northern Ireland one. I would like to hear a bit more about the external influences involved and their input.

**Ms Wilson:** You are talking specifically about the training plan. Our focus has been on statutory agencies in the North, particularly those with a health and social care focus. We view them as being key to identifying and, in some cases, supporting victims. A real focus for us has been on working with the health and social care sector to mainstream specific and appropriate training on modern slavery to different cohorts of staff.

We also work with counterparts in the South. We work with policy officials, and our Organised Crime Task Force (OCTF) has a specific modern slavery group, on which there is cross-border representation. The police, the National Crime Agency, HMRC and other law enforcement agencies are all part of the Joint Agency Task force, which, again, has cross-border representation on it.

**Mr McGlone:** Sorry for interrupting you, but is that the multi-agency strategy? Are you saying that that involves the South?

**Ms Wilson:** The strategy is for within Northern Ireland, but we are working closely with partners.

**Mr McGlone:** Right. It is not just on health, because I was picking up that you were saying —.

**Ms Wilson:** No. I am talking about the training plan. Our focus has been on statutory agencies, NGOs and the public in the North, and we work closely on awareness with counterparts on an all-Ireland basis.

We are also participating in a research project that is being taken forward on an all-Ireland basis. It is being led by Mary Immaculate College in Limerick. That comes under the Santa Marta Group, a project to which the DOJ and PSNI are contributing. It looks at the scale and nature of trafficking and modern slavery on the whole island. We have been providing input from a data perspective, and some of the anticipated outputs are identifying trends, where there is scope for education and awareness, and what resources we need.

We are ahead of the game on such things, so there is a lot of best practice that we can share and that we have offered to share. We have developed educational resources that we have made available to all secondary schools in Northern Ireland. We also have primary-school resources that have been shared on an all-Ireland basis. As I said, we are part of the Santa Marta Group research project, so we can share a lot of products. There is therefore a lot of learning available about the nature of trafficking on the island of Ireland, about our response to it and about best practice in the respective jurisdictions.

**Mr McGlone:** Awareness and education are two things, but I am concerned about the other element. What you have said is that the project is purely school-based and school-focused, but I am talking about wider societal stuff. Perhaps the research that you mentioned will address that, as that is typically how we spot such things. The other element of justice is how it is dealt with.

**Ms Wilson:** That is where the Joint Agency Task Force, police-to-police information sharing and the Organised Crime Task Force come in. On the OCTF, we have cross-border representation and information being shared. Therefore, it is not just about awareness. Awareness is a critical part of the response, but investigation, detection and agency collaboration on a cross-border basis are also really important, and that work is going ahead.

**Mr McGlone:** That body of work will be very useful. Did you say the University of Limerick?

**Ms Wilson:** Yes. It is done by the Santa Marta Group.

**Mr McGlone:** Does the task force take a strategic multi-agency approach? Is it headed up by the DOJ? What is the structure?

**Ms Wilson:** The strategy is a DOJ strategy. It is a multi-agency strategy that DOJ has published. It looks at what our strategic response to modern slavery should be. There are a number of different elements to it, including the training part that I mentioned. Our focus is on the North, as that is what we are resourced to do, but we are working with partner agencies and Departments to make sure that the approaches taken are consistent. At an operational level, the PSNI and other law enforcement bodies have their links to it.

**Mr McGlone:** When do you anticipate the research coming to completion?

**Ms Wilson:** Mary Immaculate College leads on it, and it is working towards publication in late spring or early summer.

**Mr McGlone:** That is grand.

Chair, it would be very helpful to get a briefing on that research when it is published.

**The Chairperson (Mr Givan):** We could tie it into an overall briefing on modern slavery and where the Department is at on human trafficking.

**Mr McGlone:** It will be important to do that.

Thanks very much, Julie.

**The Chairperson (Mr Givan):** Thank you all very much for coming to the Committee. It is much appreciated.