Child Rights Impact Assessment template

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STAGE 1: SCOPING (Background and Rights Framework)

Question 1: Name the measure / proposal being assessed and describe the overall aim
Cross-government Strategic Framework 2026–2027 for Reducing Offending and Reoffending in Northern Ireland.
The Strategic Framework for Reducing Offending and Reoffending (2026–2027) sets the shared cross-government direction for reducing offending and reoffending in Northern Ireland over the period 2026–2027, whilst laying foundations for the development of a new longer-term cross-Executive Strategy to reduce offending and reoffending which will be brought forward in 2027. This Strategic Framework is the first step in the journey of breaking the cycle of offending and reoffending in Northern Ireland. By tackling the root causes that drive offending and reoffending like poverty, trauma, homelessness, addiction, and lack of opportunity we aim to deliver a fair, just, and inclusive society where harm is reduced and lives are transformed.

The current strategic approach is outlined in the 2013 **Strategic Framework for Reducing Offending** and the 2015 **Supporting Change: A strategic approach to desistance**.

These are deemed to be in need of review and do not fully reflect the evolving social, economic, and justice landscape. Recent reports and recommendations on this area from both the **NI Audit Office - Reducing Adult Reoffending in NI (2023),** and the NI Assembly Public Accounts Committee **Report on Reducing Adult Reoffending in NI (June 2025)** have highlighted the need for cross-government collaboration to develop a more contemporary, data-driven strategy with an additional focus on prevention of offending that demonstrates measurable impact to wider society and offenders.

The Strategic Framework is intended to support a whole-system approach to breaking cycles of offending and reoffending by addressing key drivers such as poverty, trauma, homelessness, addiction and lack of opportunity, and by promoting early intervention, trauma-informed practice, and restorative and rehabilitative approaches. The Framework aligns collective effort around four strategic outcomes:

- **Health and Wellbeing** – improved health, wellbeing and resilience.
- **Community and Inclusion** – strengthened community support, cohesion and inclusion.
- **Education and Employability** – increased participation in education and employment opportunities.
- **Justice and Rehabilitation** – strengthened restorative and rehabilitative justice, and accountability for harmful behaviour.

This CRIA should be read in conjunction with the Equality Screening and other relevant impact assessments on the proposed Strategic Framework for reducing offending and reoffending in Northern Ireland, to provide assurance that children's rights considerations have been embedded at this strategic stage. This Child Rights Impact Assessment (CRIA) follows the Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People's Office guidance as set out at NICCY CRIA Guidance.

The Framework is strategic in nature. It does not introduce new legislation, policies or operational interventions. Instead, it establishes agreed priorities, outcomes and principles to support coordinated action across Departments and partners, and to lay foundations for longer-term change. Any specific policies, programmes or delivery initiatives developed under the Framework will be subject to separate, proportionate impact assessments at the appropriate stage.

The Framework recognises children both as those who may experience harm as victims or family members, and as children who may come into contact with the justice system themselves. The strategic focus on prevention and early intervention is intended to support both groups.

Question 2: Which children's human rights instruments and articles are relevant to the measure / proposal?		
Human Rights Instrument	**Article**	**Further analysis on the expected / actual effect**
UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)	Article 2 - Non-discrimination	The Strategic Framework's preventative focus is intended to support children and young people who experience higher levels of vulnerability and risk of harm, including poverty, trauma, housing instability, additional needs or social exclusion.
UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)	Article 3 - Best interests of the child	The best interests of the child have been a central consideration in shaping the development of the Framework with an emphasis on a whole-system approach that prioritises early intervention and trauma-informed support, helping to prevent escalation into harmful behaviour and improve long-term outcomes by addressing underlying vulnerabilities.
UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)	Article 6 - Life, survival and development	By prioritising prevention and early intervention, and addressing drivers such as trauma and addiction, the Strategic Framework is intended to support children's healthy development and reduce exposure to adverse experiences that can contribute to later offending.

UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)	Article 12 - Respect for the views of the child	Every child has the right to express their views in matters affecting them, and to have those views considered. The Strategic Framework commits to meaningful engagement with children and young people, including those with lived experience of the justice system.
UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)	Article 19 - Protection from violence, abuse and neglect	The preventative and trauma-informed intent of the Strategic Framework seeks to reduce children's exposure to harm, including victimisation and exploitation, through earlier identification of vulnerabilities and improved access to joined-up support.
UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)	Article 24 - Health	The Strategic Framework recognises the links between offending and reoffending and health-related drivers such as mental health needs, addiction and trauma, with the intention of improving access to appropriate support and more integrated responses.
UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)	Article 39 - Recovery and reintegration	The restorative and rehabilitative emphasis of the Strategic Framework is intended to support recovery and reintegration for

		children affected by harm, including those with lived experience of the justice system and child victims.
UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)	Article 40 - Juvenile Justice	The Strategic Framework supports the principles of Article 40 through its emphasis on prevention, proportionality, diversion and trauma-informed, rehabilitative responses. While it does not introduce new legal or operational measures, it provides a strategic basis for reviewing and developing a longer-term approach that is child-centred, rights-respecting and focused on reintegration.
Other Relevant International Instruments		
United Nations Guidelines for the Prevention of Juvenile Delinquency (Riyadh Guidelines)	Part 1 - Fundamental Principles 5(b)	The Framework supports a whole-system, preventative approach with tailored, child-centred interventions that address underlying needs and improve life chances for children.
United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the	Rule 5 - Aims of juvenile justice	The Framework is focused on promoting proportionality, child wellbeing and responses tailored to individual need while reflecting wider societal considerations.

Administration of Juvenile Justice (Beijing Rules)	Rule 17 - Adjudication	
United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Administration of Juvenile Justice (Beijing Rules)	Rules 14 and 15	The Framework aims to support children, and their parents or guardians, having opportunities to express views in decisions and processes affecting them.

Question 3: Which groups of children are most likely to be affected by the measure / proposal?		
Group of children	**How are they likely to be affected?**	**How will you engage with them?**
Children already in contact with the justice system	May benefit from a stronger strategic focus on constructive, rehabilitative and restorative approaches, including diversion, with the intention of reducing offending and reoffending and supporting reintegration.	Initial engagement has begun with children and young people, including those with lived experience, supported by statutory and third-sector partners. Further engagement will be supported through Call for Views and consultation activity and through organisations representing children and young people.

Children at risk of offending (e.g., those experiencing poverty, trauma, or social exclusion)	May benefit from an increased emphasis on prevention, early intervention and family support, aimed at addressing vulnerabilities and preventing escalation into harmful behaviour.	Further engagement is planned through partnerships with statutory bodies and organisations representing children and young people, alongside Call for Views and consultation activity.
Care-experienced children and care leavers	May benefit from a strategic focus on stability, including housing-led and wraparound support, reducing vulnerability to homelessness and offending.	Organisations representing, and those working with, care-experienced children and young people will have the opportunity to highlight potential impacts through targeted Call for Views and stakeholder engagement.
Children who are victims of crimes carried out by other children	May benefit from strengthened restorative and victim-focused approaches that recognise harm, support recovery and ensure children's voices are heard.	Engagement through organisations representing victims' views, alongside targeted Call for Views and consultation activity.

Children affected by parental/familial offending and custody	May benefit indirectly from a preventative and rehabilitative strategic direction, including improved stability and access to support for families affected by justice involvement.	Engagement through organisations working with families and children impacted by the justice system, and through consultation responses.

Question 4: Which stakeholder groups should be engaged during the policy development process? (e.g., parents/carers, NGOs, unions, NICCY, academics, etc.)		
Stakeholder group	**What can they contribute to the process?**	**How will you engage with them?**
Children and Young People	Lived experience insights to inform child-centred policy direction.	Structured engagement supported by statutory and community/voluntary sector partners, alongside Call for Views and public consultation. Engagement methods and materials will be accessible and inclusive.
Parents and Carers	Perspectives on family circumstances, support needs and impacts.	Engagement through statutory and community/voluntary sector partners and consultation routes.

Victim Support organisations	Expertise on victim needs and safeguarding considerations.	Ongoing engagement through Call for Views, public consultation.
Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People (NICCY)	Advice on children's rights considerations and scrutiny of the CRIA approach.	Engagement with NICCY as appropriate during development.
NI Executive Departments: Health, Justice, Education, Communities, Economy and the Executive Office.	Alignment with cross-departmental strategies, data and delivery considerations.	Ongoing engagement, including through Call for Views, public consultation, and cross-government governance arrangements.
Criminal Justice Agencies: Youth Justice Agency, Probation Board for Northern Ireland, Northern Ireland Prison Service, Police Service of Northern Ireland, and NI Courts Service.	Operational insight and system-level perspectives.	Ongoing engagement through consultation routes.
Statutory Bodies: Health and Social Care Trusts, Public	Safeguarding, health, education and housing expertise.	Ongoing engagement through consultation and stakeholder engagement.

Prosecution Service, Education Authority, NI Housing Executive.		
Community and Voluntary Sector	Local insight and experience of supporting vulnerable children and families.	Ongoing engagement through Call for Views and public consultation.
Research Academics	Evidence-based analysis and learning on what works.	Commissioned research and consultation routes.

STAGE 2: CONTEXT AND COLLABORATION

Question 5: Which Programme for Government outcomes does this policy aim to impact on?	
PFG Outcome	**Way in which the policy will have an impact**
We enjoy long, healthy, active lives	By addressing drivers such as trauma, mental health need and addiction.
We have more people working in better jobs	By supporting access to education, training and employment opportunities linked to rehabilitation and prevention.
We have a safe community where we respect the law and each other	By strengthening prevention, early intervention and restorative approaches.
We give our children and young people the best start in life	By promoting early support and joined-up services.

Question 6: Which Children and Young People's Strategy outcomes does this policy aim to impact on? Resource: CYPS	
Children's Strategy Outcome	**Way in which the policy will have an impact**
Children and young people live in a society in which equality of opportunity and good relations are promoted	The Strategic Framework seeks to promote inclusion and equality by addressing socio-economic disadvantage and other underlying drivers of offending. By supporting place-based, community-focused and restorative approaches, it aims to contribute to improved good relations and more equitable access to early support, particularly for children and young people who experience higher levels of vulnerability or exclusion.
Children and young people live in safety and stability	By setting a cross-government direction focused on reducing offending and reoffending, strengthening family and community support, and promoting housing stability, the Strategic Framework aims to help create safer environments for children and young people. The preventative and trauma-informed emphasis is intended to reduce exposure to harm, instability and exploitation over time.
Children and young people make a positive contribution to society	Through a commitment to ongoing and meaningful engagement, the Strategic Framework recognises children and young people as active contributors. Their views and lived experience are intended to inform the development of the longer-term cross-Executive strategy, supporting more child-centred, responsive and effective approaches.

Children and young people live in a society which respects their rights	The Strategic Framework is intended to align with relevant international children's rights instruments, including the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, as outlined in Question 2. Its emphasis on prevention, proportionality, restorative practice and rehabilitation reflects a rights-respecting approach that prioritises children's best interests.
Children and young people experience economic and environmental well-being	By promoting access to education, training and employment opportunities and addressing challenges such as poverty, homelessness and instability, the Strategic Framework seeks to support longer-term economic wellbeing for children and young people. Its focus on prevention and early intervention is intended to contribute to healthier, more sustainable living environments and improved life chances.

Question 7: What opportunities are there to promote joined up outcomes for children? Resource: CSCA		
Department and policy area	**Shared outcome / cross cutting issue**	**How will you engage with them? (eg joint working, keep informed, consultation, etc)**
Department Of Health - Health and Wellbeing	Trauma-informed care, mental health and family support, including early intervention through the Family Support Model.	Engagement will be supported through a Call for Views, public consultation, and Departmental representation on the Strategic Board to ensure alignment with health, mental health and family support priorities.
Department of Education - Education and Employability	Wellbeing, restorative practice, education and employability.	Engagement will be supported through a Call for Views, public consultation, and Departmental representation on the Strategic Board to promote alignment with education and employability policy and practice.

Department for Communities - Communities and Inclusion	Housing stability and support for vulnerable families.	Engagement will be supported through a Call for Views, public consultation, and Departmental representation on the Strategic Board to strengthen links between housing, inclusion and prevention agendas.
Department of Justice - Justice and Rehabilitation	Diversion, rehabilitation and restorative justice.	Engagement will be supported through a Call for Views, public consultation, and Departmental representation on the Strategic Board to ensure coherence across justice policy and delivery.
The Executive Office - Communities and Inclusion	Prevention, inclusion and good relations.	Engagement will be supported through a Call for Views, public consultation, and Departmental representation on the oversight board to align with Executive-level priorities on prevention and inclusion.

Cross Executive - Collaboration and Partnership	Information governance	Where cross-departmental data sharing is progressed to support evidence and monitoring, this will be developed in line with data protection and information governance requirements, with DPIA arrangements kept under review.

STAGE 3: EVIDENCE GATHERING

Question 8: What quantitative evidence have you used to inform your assessment? What does it tell you?		
Evidence collected	**Evidence source**	**Explanation of the importance -** These statistics describe the scale and nature of offending and reoffending at population level and inform strategic direction.
Adult and Youth Reoffending in Northern Ireland (2022/23 cohort)	NISRA - Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency	Provides data on reoffending rates for youths, patterns by age and gender, and offending history, enabling effective monitoring of trends and progress.

		The proven reoffending rate for youths in the 2022/23 cohort was 24.1%. This represents an increase of 0.6 percentage points in the reoffending rate from 2021/22 (23.5%). The youth reoffending rate has fluctuated between 23.5% and 32.2%. Youths consistently make up a small proportion of the overall cohort.
YJA - Youth Engagement Statistics (2023/24)	NISRA - Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency	Provides data on the number of young people who came into contact with the criminal justice system and patterns by age and gender, enabling effective monitoring of trends and progress. There were 3,356 cases relating to young people coming into formal contact with the criminal justice system in 2023-24. This is a decrease of 397 (10.6%) from 2022-23. The majority (74.2%, 2,491) of young people coming into formal contact with the justice system in 2023-24 were male.
First Time Entrants to the Criminal Justice System in Northern Ireland (2024/25)	NISRA - Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency	Provides data on the number of young people entering the system for the first time, enabling effective monitoring of trends and progress. Of all first-time entrants in 2024-25, 8.1% (599) were aged 10 to 17

Figure 1 - First Time Entrants to the Criminal Justice System in Northern Ireland 2024-25[1]

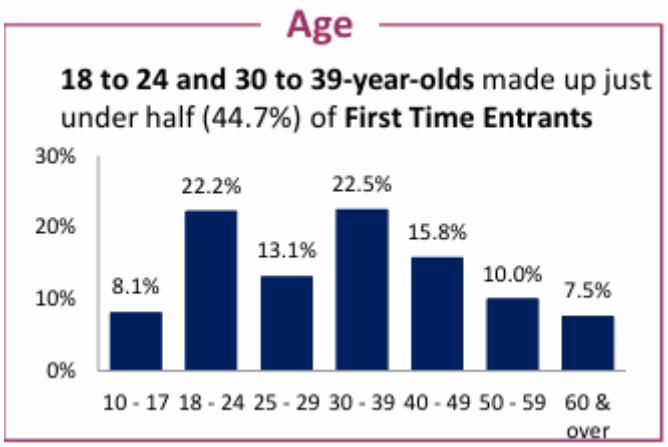
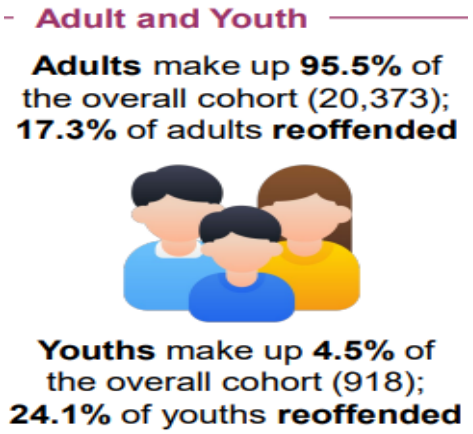
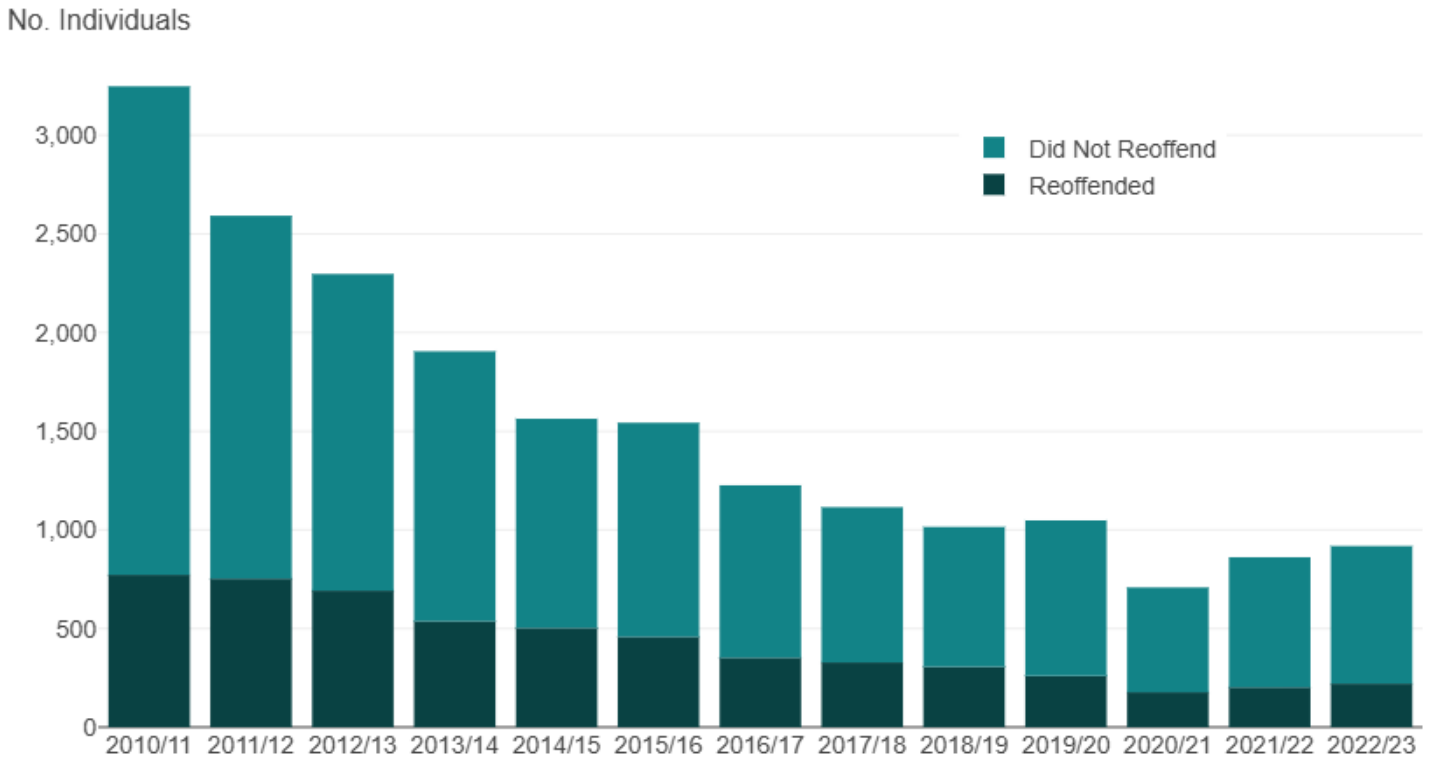


Figure 2 - Adult and Youth Reoffending in Northern Ireland (2022/23 Cohort)[2]



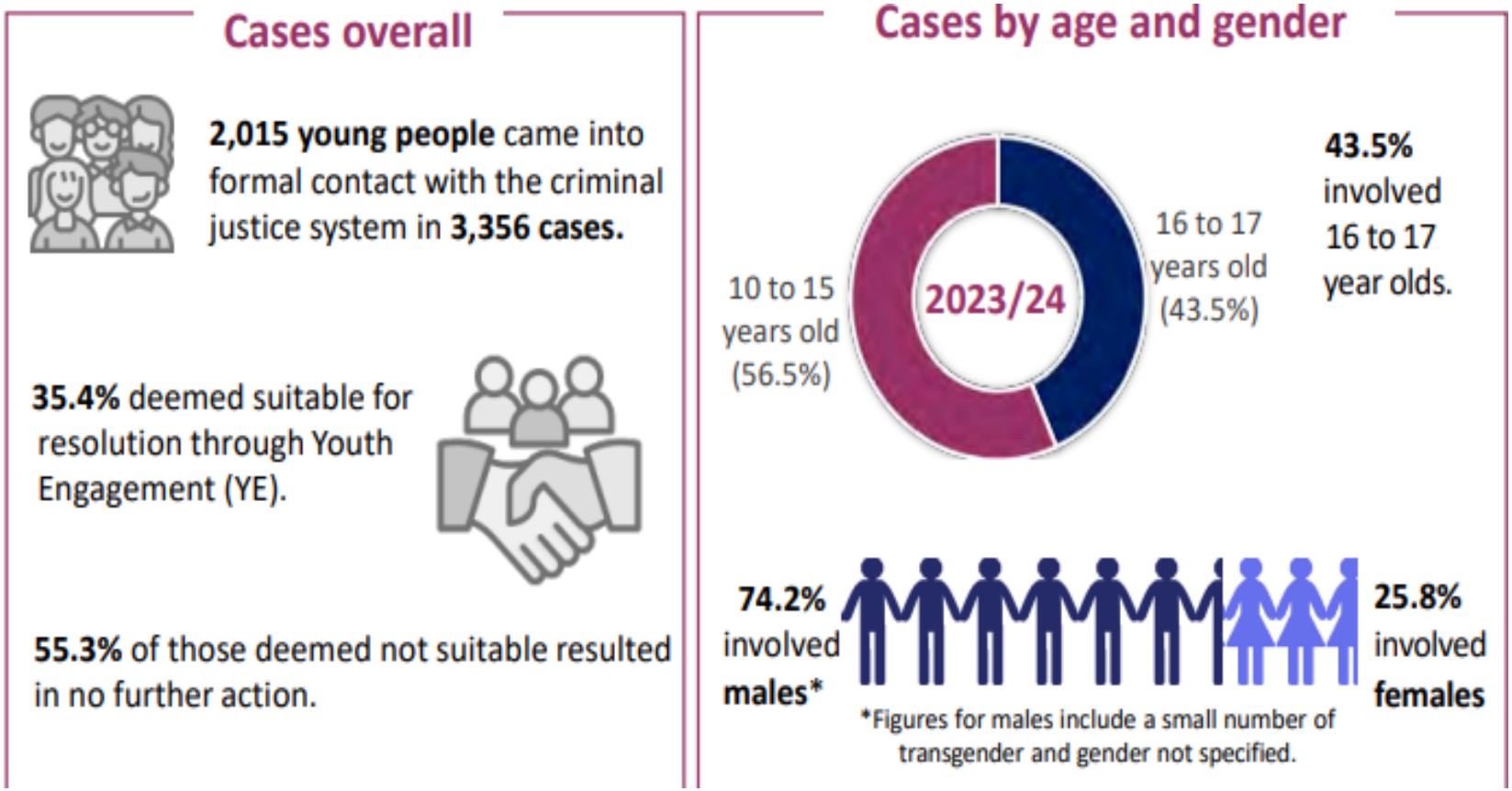
[1] First Time Entrants to the Criminal Justice System in Northern Ireland 2024-25
[2] Adult and Youth Reoffending in Northern Ireland 2022-23 cohort

Figure 3: Youth reoffending cohorts, 2010/11 to 2022/23[3]



[3] Adult and Youth Reoffending in Northern Ireland

Figure 4 - Youth Engagement Statistics for Northern Ireland 2023/24[4]



[4] Youth Engagement Statistics for Northern Ireland 2023-24 | Department of Justice

Question 9: What qualitative evidence have you used to inform your assessment? What does it tell you?		
Evidence collected	**Evidence source**	**Explanation of the importance**
Initial insights from engagement with children and young people, including those with lived experience	Initial engagement with children and young people, including those with lived experience, supported by statutory and third-sector partners. This included interviews, structured responses and focus groups facilitated by statutory and community and voluntary sector organisations.	Captured early views from children and young people with lived experience of the justice system and related services. This provided valuable insight into systemic challenges such as housing instability, gaps in mental health provision and ineffective interventions, while also highlighting positive influences such as peer support and structured activities. These insights helped to inform the strategic direction of the Framework and identify priority areas for further exploration in the longer-term strategy.
Innovation Consultancy Services analysis of roundtable events	Strategic Insight Lab sessions and roundtable discussions involving cross-Executive Departments, statutory bodies,	Gathered perspectives from a diverse range of stakeholders and enabled collaborative problem-solving. This evidence helped identify shared challenges, gaps and opportunities across the system, and supported exploration of innovative, preventative

and Strategic Insight Lab	and the community and voluntary sector, delivered through the Department of Finance Strategic Insight Lab process.	approaches to reducing offending and reoffending. The learning will also inform development of the longer-term cross-Executive strategy.
Academic research and evidence reviews.	Commissioned research examining regional and international trends, key societal drivers contributing to offending and reoffending, evaluation of existing interventions, and reviews of current evidence.	Ensured that the Strategic Framework is grounded in robust evidence and best practice. Academic research provided analysis and synthesis to support an evidence-informed approach, helping shape the Framework and informing development of a more targeted, cross-departmental longer-term strategy to reduce offending and reoffending in Northern Ireland.
Qualitative insights are captured in a way that protects privacy and does not publish identifiable information. Participants are not required to provide personal details.		

Question 10: What key missing information / evidence would have been beneficial to your analysis?
Improved cross-Departmental data sharing

Question 11: What existing evidence on children and young people views has been considered in the development of the proposal or measure?[5]			
Group of children	**Source of Information**	**Please provide a brief description of process**	**What were the findings?**
Evidence includes feedback from previous consultations with children and young people linked to youth justice policy development.	Youth Justice Strategic Framework feedback from consultations with children	Engagement involved children with lived experience and voluntary organisations supporting affected children. .	Key themes and findings from this evidence source will be summarised prior to finalisation to demonstrate how children and young people's views have been considered.

[5] This Strategic Framework - Reducing Offending and Reoffending 2026 - 27 represents the starting point, laying the foundations for the longer- term cross-Executive Strategy. Current evidence and data provide an initial foundation, but further research and engagement will be essential to strengthen analysis and inform the development of the longer-term Strategy.

Question 12: What groups of children and young people have been directly involved in developing the proposal or measure?			
Groups involved [if those affected by the proposal]		**How were they involved?**	**What were the findings?**
Young people with lived experience of the criminal justice system		Initial engagement has begun to capture early insights into challenges and protective factors.	Early themes include housing instability, gaps in mental health provision and the importance of positive relationships and structured support. Further engagement will be undertaken*.

*Safeguarding and privacy:

Engagement is undertaken with partner organisations and designed to capture perspectives without publishing identifiable information. Participants are not required to provide personal details

Question 13: What stakeholder groups have been engaged in developing/reviewing the proposal or measure?		
Stakeholder group	**How were they involved?**	**What were the findings?**
NI Executive Departments: Health, Justice, Education, Communities, Economy and the Executive Office	Departments took part in engagement sessions, pre-event discussions and roundtable events, and contributed through the Strategic Insight Lab process. Departments also completed structured templates to provide input to the development of the Framework, feedback on the draft Strategic Framework, including its scope, priorities, and alignment with existing departmental strategies.	Engagement supported both development and critical review of the Strategic Framework. Departments highlighted the need for a whole-system, preventative approach and confirmed the importance of early intervention, trauma-informed practice and stronger cross-departmental alignment.
Criminal Justice Agencies: Youth Justice Agency,	Agencies took part in engagement sessions,	Engagement informed both development and critical review of the Strategic Framework. Agencies reinforced the

Probation Board for Northern Ireland, Police Service of Northern Ireland	pre-event discussions and roundtable events, and contributed through the Strategic Insight Lab process. Agencies also reviewed the draft Strategic Framework and provided input through templates, drawing on operational and system-level experience.	importance of diversion, rehabilitation and restorative justice within a preventative framework, and emphasised the need for trauma-informed, proportionate responses.

STAGE 4: ASSESSING THE IMPACT

Complete questions 14-16 for each option being considered

Question 14: What impact will (or does) the proposal or measure have on children and young people's rights?		
Type of impact *[please highlight]*	**Justification for Argument**	**likely or actual short/medium/long-term outcomes**
Positive	The Strategic Framework sets cross-Executive direction towards prevention, early intervention, and restorative and rehabilitative approaches, with the intention of improving wellbeing and reducing pathways into offending This Impact Assessment considers the potential impacts of the Strategic Framework at a strategic level only. As the Framework does not itself determine service design, or operational delivery, it does not give rise to direct impacts at this stage. Where specific actions, programmes or delivery models are developed under the Framework, impacts will be assessed in full at programme or policy level, in line with statutory and policy requirements.	As a strategic framework, impacts are primarily indirect and will depend on subsequent delivery decisions. Children's rights impacts will be kept under review and this CRIA updated as further evidence and delivery proposals emerge.

Question 15: Will there be (or are there) different impacts on different groups of children and young people?		
Group of children affected	**Initial analysis of the positive impact on rights**	**Initial analysis of the negative impact on rights**
Children in contact with the justice system	May benefit from more constructive, rehabilitative and restorative responses, including diversionary approaches, supporting reintegration and reducing reoffending.	No direct negative impacts are anticipated at this strategic stage.
Care-experienced children and young people	Focus on stability, including housing-led and wraparound support, could improve safety and wellbeing and reduce vulnerability to offending.	No direct negative impacts are anticipated.
Children living in socio-economically disadvantaged areas	Place-based initiatives and early intervention aim to improve access to education, training and community support.	No direct negative impacts are anticipated.

Children with mental health or additional needs (including neurodiversity)	Emphasis on trauma-informed care and improved integration across services could improve access to support and earlier help.	No direct negative impacts are anticipated.

Question 16: If a negative impact is identified for any area of rights or any group of children and young people, what options are there to modify the proposal or measure to mitigate the impact?	
Negative impact	**What options are there to modify the measure(s) or mitigate the impact?**
No direct negative impacts are identified at this strategic stage.	**Mitigation and assurance measures include:** • continued meaningful engagement with children and young people, including those with lived experience; • accessible and inclusive engagement methods and materials; • ongoing review and update of this CRIA as the longer-term strategy and delivery actions develop; and • monitoring through established governance and programme reporting arrangements.

Question 17: In summary, what are your key findings on the impact of the measure or proposal on children and young people's rights?
The Strategic Framework has the potential to positively impact children and young people's rights by: • promoting early intervention; • strengthening family and community support; and • encouraging restorative and rehabilitative approaches. • it seeks to establish a whole-system, preventative direction that supports child-centred interventions, helps prevent escalation into harm, supports wellbeing and recovery, and improves life chances. • as this is a Strategic Framework, impacts are primarily indirect and will depend on subsequent delivery decisions. Children's rights impacts will therefore be kept under review. This Impact Assessment relates solely to the Strategic Framework (2026–2027), which sets strategic direction and coordination arrangements. Any specific policies, programmes or delivery interventions developed under the Framework will be subject to separate, proportionate impact assessments at the appropriate stage.