Department of Justice | An Roinn Dlí agus Cirt | Männystrie o tha Laa

DOJ Section 75

EQUALITY SCREENING FORM

Title of Policy:

Reducing Offending and Reoffending in Northern Ireland:

Building strong foundations and empowering change

Strategic Framework (2026-2027)

The Legal Background – Under section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, the Department is required **to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity:**

- between person of different religious belief, political opinion, racial group, age, marital status or sexual orientation;

- between men and women generally;

- between persons with a disability and persons without; and,

- between persons with dependants and persons without.

Without prejudice to the obligations set out above, the Department is also required to:

- have regard to the desirability of promoting good relations between persons of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group; and

- meet legislative obligations under the Disability Discrimination Order.

Introduction

Part 1. Policy scoping – asks public authorities to provide details about the policy, procedure, practice and/or decision being screened and what available evidence you have gathered to help make an assessment of the likely impact on equality of opportunity and good relations.

Part 2. Screening questions – asks about the extent of the likely impact of the policy on groups of people within each of the Section 75 categories.
Details of the groups consulted and the level of assessment of the likely impact. This includes consideration of multiple identity and good relations issues.

Part 3. Screening decision – guides the public authority to reach a screening decision as to whether or not there is a need to carry out an equality impact assessment (EQIA), or to introduce measures to mitigate the likely impact, or the introduction of an alternative policy to better promote equality of opportunity and/or good relations.

Part 4. Monitoring – provides guidance to public authorities on monitoring for adverse impact and broader monitoring.

Part 5. Approval and authorisation – verifies the public authority's approval of a screening decision by a senior manager responsible for the policy.

Part 1. Policy scoping

The first stage of the screening process involves scoping the policy under consideration. The purpose of policy scoping is to help prepare the background and context and set out the aims and objectives for the policy, being screened. At this stage, scoping the policy will help identify potential constraints as well as opportunities and will help the policy maker work through the screening process on a step by step basis.

Public authorities should remember that the Section 75 statutory duties apply to internal policies (relating to people who work for the authority), as well as external policies (relating to those who are, or could be, served by the authority).

Information about the policy

Name of the policy:

Reducing Offending and Reoffending in Northern Ireland: Strategic Framework (2026 – 2027)

Is this an existing, revised or a new policy?

This is a new Strategic Framework which sets out the strategic direction for 2026 - 2027, whilst laying foundations for the development of a longer-term cross-Executive Strategy.

What is it trying to achieve? (Intended aims/outcomes)

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.

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.

This Strategic Framework provides a coherent, cross-government approach to addressing factors commonly associated with justice involvement, including:

- trauma and adverse childhood experiences;
- poor mental health and wellbeing;
- substance use;
- housing instability;
- social exclusion; and
- limited access to education, skills and employment opportunities.

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 a particular focus on prevention of offending that demonstrates measurable impact to wider society and offenders.

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.

Are there any Section 75 categories which might be expected to benefit from the intended policy?
If so, explain how.

The Strategic Framework is intended to apply across Northern Ireland. It does not target individuals or groups on the basis of Section 75 characteristics and, as a Strategic Framework, does not itself introduce or deliver specific services. It sets out a high-level, cross-government Framework focused on prevention, early intervention, rehabilitation and more coordinated, place-based working to help reduce offending and reoffending.

Available evidence indicates that the underlying factors the Framework seeks to address (including trauma, poor mental health, substance use, poverty, housing instability and social exclusion) can be experienced unevenly across the population and may intersect with certain Section 75 characteristics such as age, disability, gender and dependants. By setting a shared direction focused on strengthening protective factors and improving access to timely and appropriate support, the Framework has the potential to contribute to promoting equality of opportunity where need is greatest.

At this strategic stage, the Framework does not introduce new policies or operational changes that would differentially impact Section 75 groups. Instead, it establishes shared principles and coordination mechanisms.

- **Age**: Evidence indicates that risks and needs can vary across different ages and life stages, particularly at key transition points. The Framework recognises the importance of early intervention in helping to reduce entry into the criminal justice system (for example, noting that first offences accounted for 26.3% of recorded offences dealt with in 2024/25).

  The Framework also acknowledges that some children and young people experience higher

exposure to adversity, including those with care experience. The number of children in care increased from 3,362 in 2019 to 4,188 as at 31 March 2025, and care experience is recognised as a marker of cumulative adversity and unmet need. Actions within the Framework that support earlier help, sustained engagement in education and diversion from formal justice processes may therefore be particularly relevant to children and young people at increased risk, subject to delivery arrangements and further screening at project level.

- **Men and Women generally**: Evidence points to differences in patterns of harm and vulnerability for men and women. The Framework recognises this and supports the use of gender-responsive approaches within delivery. Examples referenced include the Engage programme, which provides targeted support for women involved in the criminal justice system, and the planned introduction of a bail support scheme initially for women, alongside broader rehabilitative and restorative activity.

  These approaches may help to address barriers to engagement and support, particularly where trauma, domestic abuse, mental health or substance use needs are present. The extent to which they promote equality of opportunity will depend on delivery detail and should be considered through programme and project-level screening.

  For men and boys, the Framework references preventative initiatives such as the Power to Change campaign, aimed at challenging harmful attitudes and behaviours, alongside targeted interventions including ASPIRE and Another Way within the justice and rehabilitation outcome. Any differential impacts are intended to be proportionate and responsive to different needs and should be monitored and assessed through delivery-level screening.

- **Disability**: The Framework places emphasis on improving access to trauma-informed, mental health and addiction support, and recognises the links between adversity, trauma and outcomes associated with offending. It draws on evidence about Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and the association with poorer outcomes such as mental ill-health, substance use and educational exclusion which can increase vulnerability.

Disabled people (including those with long-term conditions or learning disabilities) can face additional barriers to accessing support. In this context, the Framework's focus on more coordinated, person-centred approaches may be of positive relevance in supporting equality of opportunity. Any accessibility requirements and reasonable adjustments will need to be addressed through delivery-level design and captured through programme or project screening.

- **Racial Group and Religious Belief**: At strategic level, the Framework is neutral in intent and applies across Northern Ireland. While it does not specifically target racial group or religious belief, the Delivery Plan includes community-based and place-based actions (particularly under Outcome 2: Community and Inclusion) and through the Together for Families model.

  These delivery arrangements provide opportunities to consider inclusivity and accessibility at programme level, including addressing potential barriers related to language, trust and awareness of services, through engagement, design and equality screening.

- **Dependents**: The Framework recognises that offending and reoffending can have wider impacts on families and children and that earlier, preventative support may help reduce longer-term harm. The Delivery Plan includes family-focused early support, such as the neighbourhood-based Together for Families model, which is framed around providing early, preventative assistance to children and families at risk of care involvement, exclusion or justice contact.

  This suggests potential positive relevance for households with dependants through strengthened stability and clearer support pathways. As with other areas, the nature and extent of impact will depend on delivery and should be assessed through programme or project-level screening.

Who initiated or wrote the policy?

Department of Justice

Who owns and who implements the policy?

The Strategic Framework is owned collectively by the Northern Ireland Executive, with co-ordination provided by the Department of Justice in its role as the lead Department for the PfG commitment, working in partnership with the Departments of Health, Communities, Education, Economy, Justice, and The Executive Office.

Delivery will involve statutory agencies, criminal justice organisations, and voluntary/community sector partners.

Where specific programmes, projects or interventions are developed under the Framework, equality screening and, where appropriate, equality impact assessment (EQIA) will be undertaken by the relevant delivery Department, in line with Equality Commission guidance.

Implementation factors

Are there any factors which could contribute to/detract from the intended aim/outcome of the policy/decision?

If yes, are they (please delete as appropriate)

Financial - The availability and sustainability of funding is likely to influence the scale and timing of delivery during 2026-27. Some actions set out in the Delivery Plan remain are supported by time-limited funding arrangements, which may affect how quickly activity can be implemented or expanded.

However, the Strategic Framework is designed primarily to align, coordinate and maximise the impact of existing investment across Departments and partners, rather than to rely on the creation of new funding streams. This approach supports overall deliverability within the 2026-27 period, while recognising that progress may vary across different actions depending on funding certainty.

Legislative - The Framework is intended to operate within existing legislative arrangements. No legislative change is proposed at this stage, and the Framework does not depend on new statutory powers for implementation.

Other, please specify:

Operational, governance and data - Effective delivery of the Strategic Framework will depend on sustained cross-Departmental coordination, sufficient capacity, and clear governance arrangements. While the Framework establishes a shared, cross-government direction, overall delivery is reliant on collaboration across the six Departments, statutory agencies and voluntary and community sector partners, each operating within their own organisational contexts, priorities and pressures.

The Framework also recognises the importance of data, evidence and learning in supporting continuous improvement. Progress in strengthening data sharing, evaluation and analytical capacity will support improved monitoring and learning over time but may influence the speed at which outcomes can be evidenced during the 2026-27 period.

Some actions within the Delivery Plan are expected to be delivered on a place-based or cohort-focused basis, reflecting evidence about differing levels of need and risk. This may result in limited, intentional variation in delivery across locations or population groups. Such differences are proportionate and are intended to support equality of opportunity by responding appropriately to local context and need. Any specific equality implications will be considered and managed through programme and project-level equality screening, and EQIA where appropriate.

Main stakeholders affected

Who are the internal and external stakeholders (actual or potential) that the policy will impact upon?

Internal Stakeholders:

NI Executive Departments: Health, Justice, Education, Communities, Economy and the Executive Office.

External Stakeholders:

- Wider statutory and public bodies, including Health and Social Care Trusts, PHA, Education Authority, NIHE
- Local government
- Community and voluntary sector organisations
- Victim's organisations and advocacy bodies
- Universities and research academics
- People with lived experience of the justice system
- Children and young people
- Parents and carers

The Department of Justice will also involve relevant internal business areas and its key Agencies, including the Youth Justice Agency, Northern Ireland Prison Service, and Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunals Service. These bodies form part of the Department's overall data controllership arrangements and are not considered third-party recipients.

Other policies with a bearing on this policy

- what are they?
- who owns them?

Across the NI Executive:

- Programme for Government 2024-2027 - Our Plan: Doing What Matters Most [Northern Ireland Executive]
- Mental Health Strategy (2021-2031) [Dept. of Health]
- Preventing Harm, Empowering Recovery - Substance Use Strategy (2021-31) [Dept. of Health]
- Health and Wellbeing 2026 - Delivering Together [Dept. of Health]
- Children and Young People's Strategy 2020-2030 [Dept. of Education]
- Early Learning and Childcare Strategy [Dept. of Education
- Social Inclusion Strategies [Dept. for Communities] – range of strategies inc. Anti-Poverty, Disability, and Gender Equality.
- Interdepartmental Homelessness Action Plans [Dept. for Communities]
- Housing Supply Strategy 2024 – 2039 [Dept. for Communities]
- Skills Strategy [Dept. for the Economy]
- Economic Inactivity Strategy [Dept for the Economy]
- Domestic and Sexual Abuse Strategy 2024-2031 [Dept. of Health and Dept. of Justice]
- Ending Violence Against Women and Girls Strategic Framework [The Executive Office]

Across Justice related partners:

- Victims and Witnesses of Crime Strategy 2026 – 2032 [Dept. of Justice]
- Executive programme for tackling paramilitary activity and organised crime [Dept. of Justice]
- Adult Restorative Justice Strategy for NI [Dept. of Justice]
- Supporting Change - A strategy for women and girls in or at risk of contact with the justice system [Dept. of Justice]
- Strategic Framework for Youth Justice 2022-2027 [Dept. of Justice]
- Modern slavery and human trafficking strategy 2024-27 [Dept. of Justice]

- Safer Communities Strategic Framework (under development) [Dept. of Justice]
- Child Criminal Exploitation Action Plan [Dept. of Health and Dept. of Justice]
- Problem Solving Justice [PBNI]
- Probation Board for Northern Ireland 2026-29 (under development) [PBNI]
- Youth Justice Agency Business Plan 2025-26 [YJA] [Dept. of Health and Dept. of Justice]
- The Northern Ireland Policing Plan 2025-2030 [PSNI]
- PSNI Strategies – range of strategies inc. Hallmarks of Neighbourhood Policing, Crime Prevention, Children and Young People, Serious and Organised Crime, People, Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls [PSNI]
- NIPS Five Year Strategy (under development) [NIPS/DoJ]

For actions which will be implemented under the Strategic Framework, contributing public bodies (departments, ALBs etc.) will be responsible for screening and equality assessment of their respective policies and programmes. This should follow guidance from the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland and in the event that an EQIA is required, this should be published by the relevant body.

Available evidence

Evidence to help inform the screening process may take many forms. Public authorities should ensure that their screening decision is informed by relevant data. The Commission has produced this guide to signpost to S75 data.

What evidence/information (both qualitative and quantitative) have you gathered to inform this policy? Specify details for each of the Section 75 categories.

This screening is informed by a combination of population-level data, Department of Justice statistics and published research relevant to offending and reoffending in Northern Ireland. Evidence has been used to understand whether the Strategic Framework may reasonably give rise to differential impacts across Section 75 categories at a strategic level.

Key sources include:

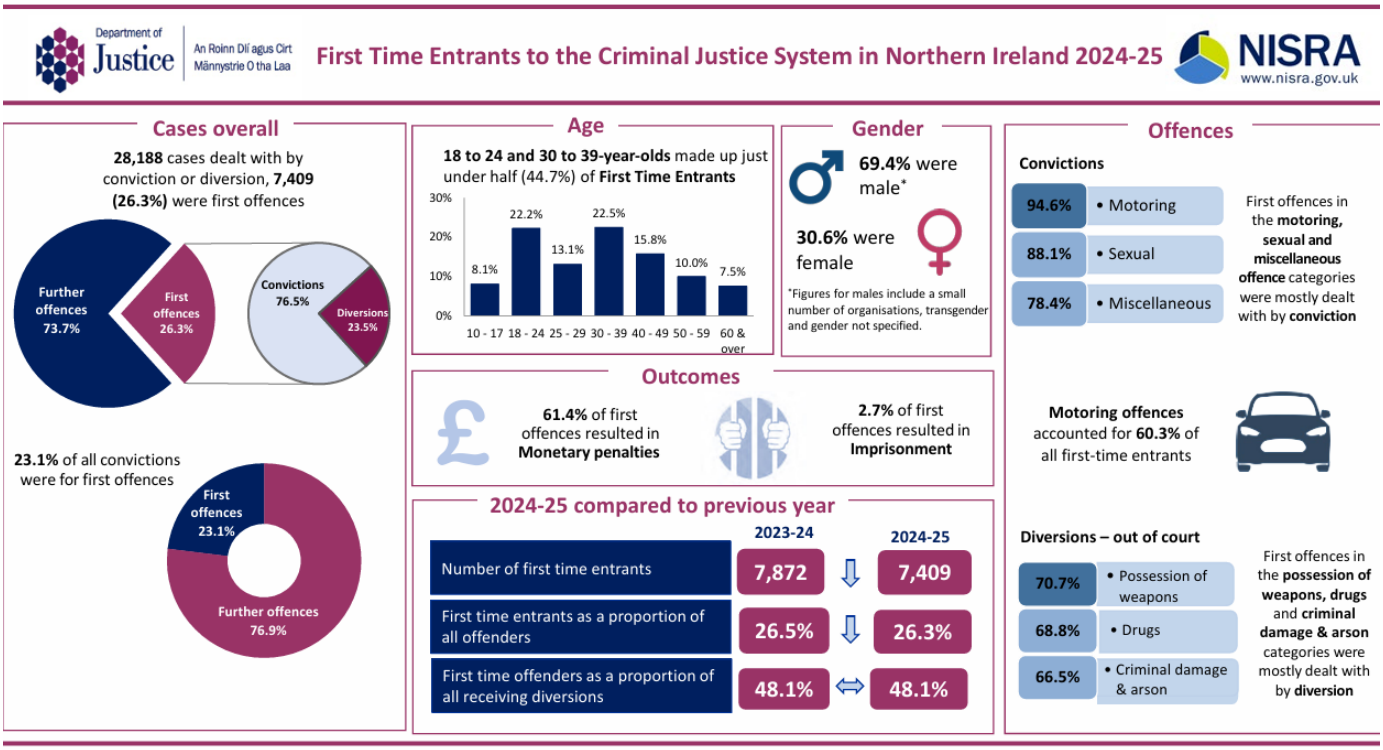
- Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency: https://www.nisra.gov.uk/statistics/census-2021/census-2021-results
- Department of Justice – Statistics and Research (Analytical Services Group): https://www.justice-ni.gov.uk/topics/statistics-and-research
- Police Service of Northern Ireland – Police Recorded Crime Statistics: https://www.psni.police.uk/about-us/our-publications-and-reports/official-statistics
- Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunals Service – Statistical publications: https://www.justice-ni.gov.uk/topics/courts-and-tribunals-statistics
- Probation Board for Northern Ireland – Corporate and research publications: https://www.pbni.org.uk/publications
- Northern Ireland Prison Service – Population and performance information: https://www.justice-ni.gov.uk/topics/northern-ireland-prison-service
- Youth Justice Agency – Workload and annual statistics: https://www.justice-ni.gov.uk/topics/youth-justice
- The Electoral Office of Northern Ireland: https://www.eoni.org.uk/results-data/electorate-statistics/–

Overview of First Entrants to the Criminal Justice System

In 2024-25, 28,188 offences were recorded as dealt with by conviction or diversion in the justice system in Northern Ireland. Of these, 26.3% (7,409) were first offences. The comparative figure for 2023-24 was 26.5%.

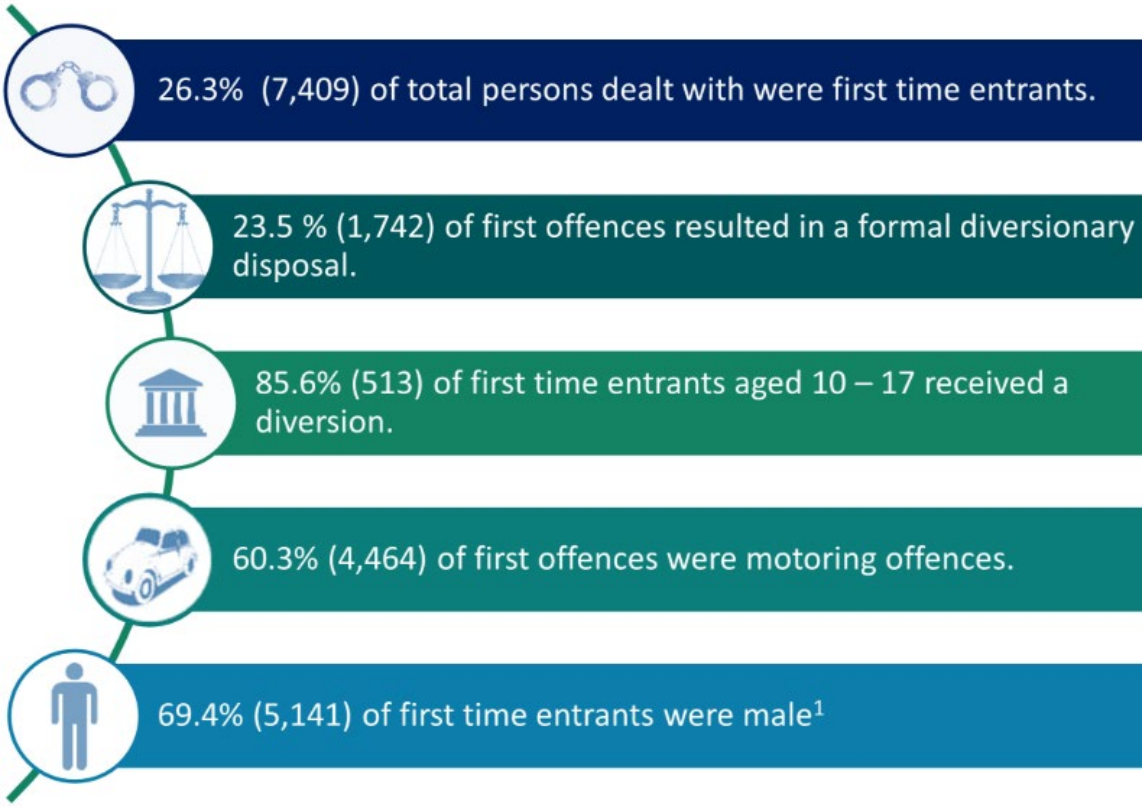
Source: First Time Entrants to the Criminal Justice System in Northern Ireland 2024-25

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



For further information and the full statistical bulletin go to www.justice-ni.gov.uk. Some icons used within this document were sourced from https://www.flaticon.com/

Figure 2: First Time Entrants to the Criminal Justice System in Northern Ireland 2024-25 – Main points First Time Offenders

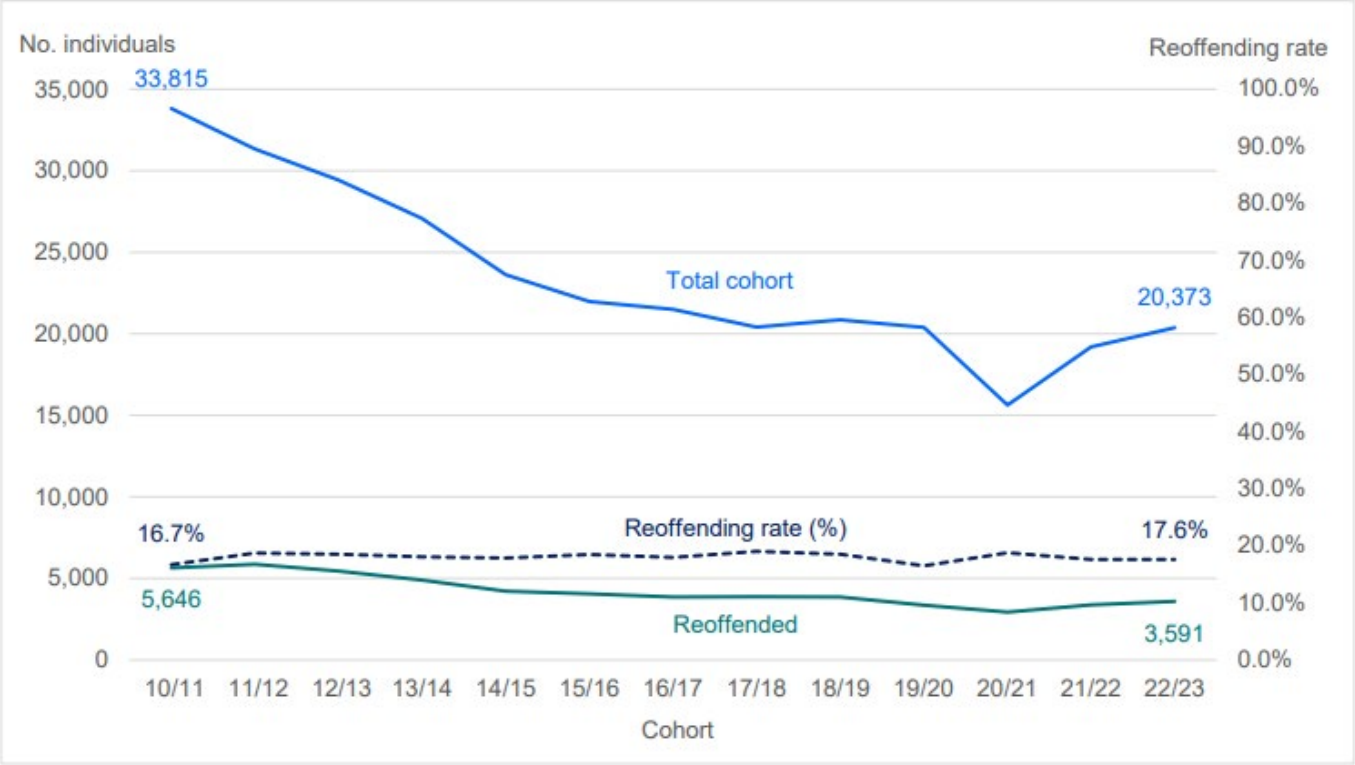


Overview of Reoffending in Northern Ireland.

The overall proven reoffending rate for the 2022/23 cohort was 17.6%. This represents no change in the actual rate of reoffending from 2021/22 (17.6%).

Source: Adult and Youth Reoffending in Northern Ireland

Figure 3: Overall reoffending cohorts, 2010/11 to 2022/23



Of the 20,373 people in the 2022/23 cohort, 3,591 (17.6%) reoffended during the one-year observation period.

Religious belief evidence / information:

According to the 2021 Census, 42.3% of usual residents identified as Catholic, 37.4% as Protestant or other Christian denominations, around 1.3% as belonging to other religions, and just under one-fifth reported having no religion or did not state a religious affiliation.

Source: NISRA Census 2021

https://www.nisra.gov.uk/statistics/census-2021/census-2021-results

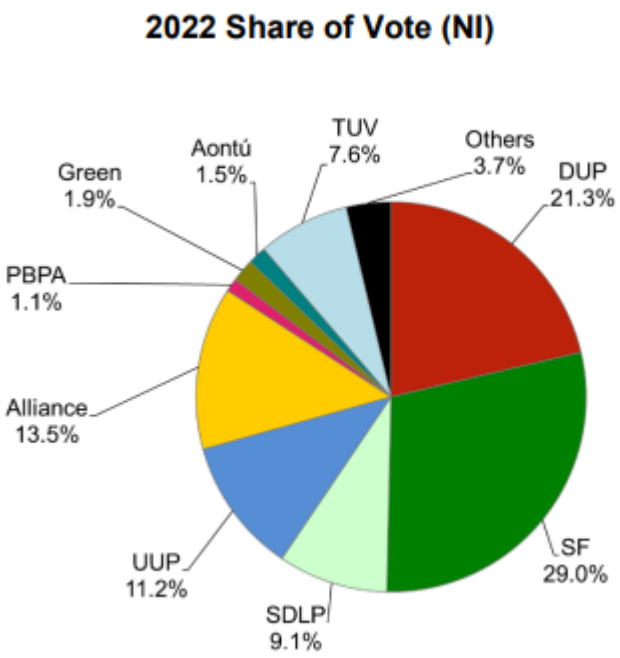
These figures reflect the diversity of religious belief in Northern Ireland and do not indicate that offending or reoffending is confined to, or disproportionately associated with, any particular religious group. At strategic level, the evidence does not suggest differential impacts by religious belief arising from the overall direction of the Strategic Framework, which focuses on social, economic and health-related factors that cut across communities.

Political Opinion evidence / information:

Data from the NI Assembly Election 2022 demonstrates a diverse political landscape across Northern Ireland.

Source: NI Assembly Research Service Research paper

Figure 4: Individual Party Performance – NI Assembly Election, 5 May 2022 – Share of the vote



There is no evidence to suggest that offending or reoffending is associated with political opinion. The Strategic Framework is cross-Executive in nature and does not engage with political identity as a factor influencing access to support or outcomes. No differential impacts by political opinion have been identified at Framework level.

Racial Group evidence / information:

Census 2021 data shows that 96.6% of usual residents identified as White, with smaller proportions identifying as Irish Traveller, Asian, Chinese, Mixed or other ethnic groups.

Source: NISRA Census 2021 - Main statistics
https://www.nisra.gov.uk/statistics/census-2021-results/main-statistics

Available evidence does not demonstrate that offending or reoffending is confined to any racial or ethnic group. However, population-level data highlights that minority ethnic communities may experience barriers related to language, awareness or trust in services. These issues are relevant to implementation rather than to the strategic direction of the Framework, which addresses cross-cutting drivers of offending.

Age evidence / information:

The 2021 Census indicates that Northern Ireland has a relatively young population, with approximately 19% aged 0–14 and 17% aged 65 and over.

Source: NISRA Census 2021
https://www.nisra.gov.uk/statistics/census-2021-results/main-statistics

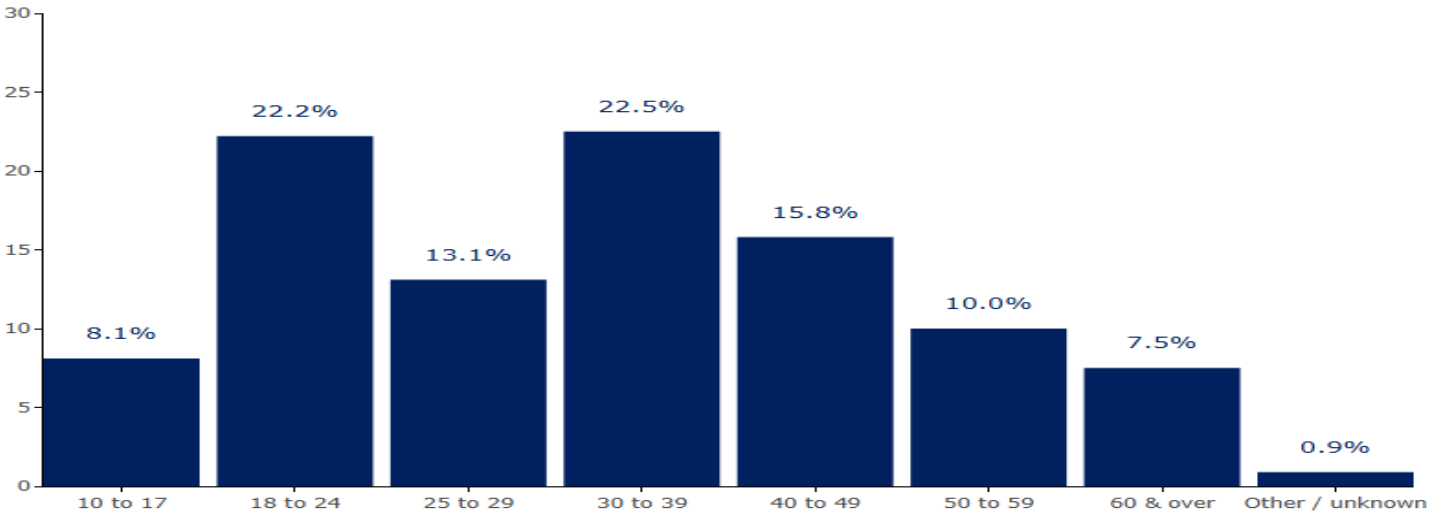
Figure 5: Number (percentage) of population by age group in 2021:

Age group	2021
0-14	365,213
	19.19%
15-64	1,211,486
	63.66%
65-84	287,084
	15.08%
85+	39,391
	2.07%

Data shows variation in patterns of offending and reoffending by age. In 2024–25, 18 to 24 and 30 to 39-year-olds made up just under half (44.7%) of First Time Entrants.

Source: Department of Justice – First Time Entrants 2024–25
https://www.justice-ni.gov.uk/articles/first-time-entrant-statistics

Figure 6: First offences by age band - 2024-25

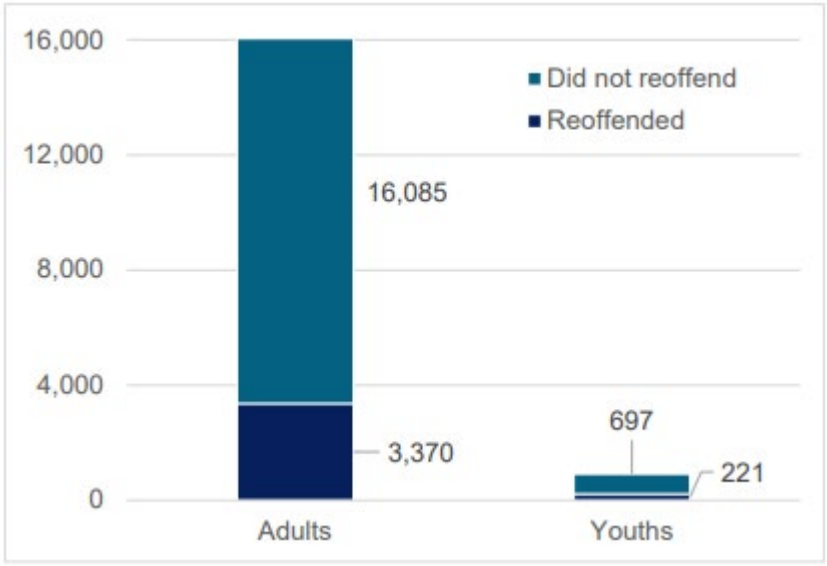


Reoffending data for the 2022/23 cohort shows differences between adult and youth cohorts, although offending and reoffending occur across all age groups.

Source: Adult and Youth Reoffending in Northern Ireland Adult and Youth Reoffending in Northern Ireland (2022/23 Cohort) | Department of Justice

These differences reflect variations in risk and need rather than exclusion or disadvantage arising from the Framework itself.

Figure 7: Adult and Youth reoffending rates 2022/23



Marital Status evidence / information:

Census 2021 data indicates that among people aged 16 and over, 48.8% are married, 35.7% are single, and smaller proportions are separated, divorced or widowed.

Source: NISRA Census 2021
https://www.nisra.gov.uk/statistics/census-2021/census-2021-results

There is no evidence to suggest that offending or reoffending is associated with marital status. The Strategic Framework does not engage with relationship status as a factor influencing justice involvement.

Sexual Orientation evidence / information:

Census 2021 data shows that 90.0% of respondents identified as straight or heterosexual, with 2.1% identifying as lesbian, gay or bisexual.

Source: NISRA Census 2021

https://www.nisra.gov.uk/statistics/census-2021/census-2021-results

There is no evidence to indicate that offending or reoffending is linked to sexual orientation. The Framework's focus on trauma, mental health and social exclusion reflects factors that can affect people across sexual orientations.

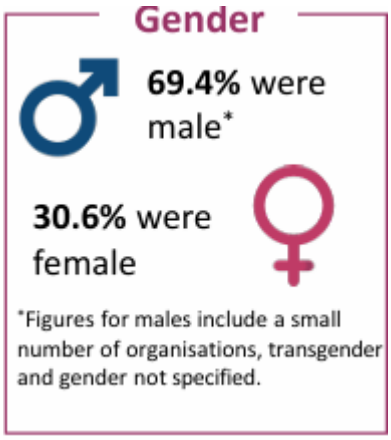
Men and Women generally - evidence / information:

Census 2021 shows a broadly balanced population by sex (967,047 females and 936,125 males).

Source: NISRA Census 2021
https://www.nisra.gov.uk/statistics/census-2021-results/main-statistics

Statistics indicate that males account for a higher proportion of first-time entrants and reoffenders. In 2024–25, 69.4% of first offences were committed by males and 30.6% by females.

Source: First Time Entrants 2024–25 - First Time Offenders



Reoffending rates for the 2022/23 cohort were higher for males than females. Of the 2022/23

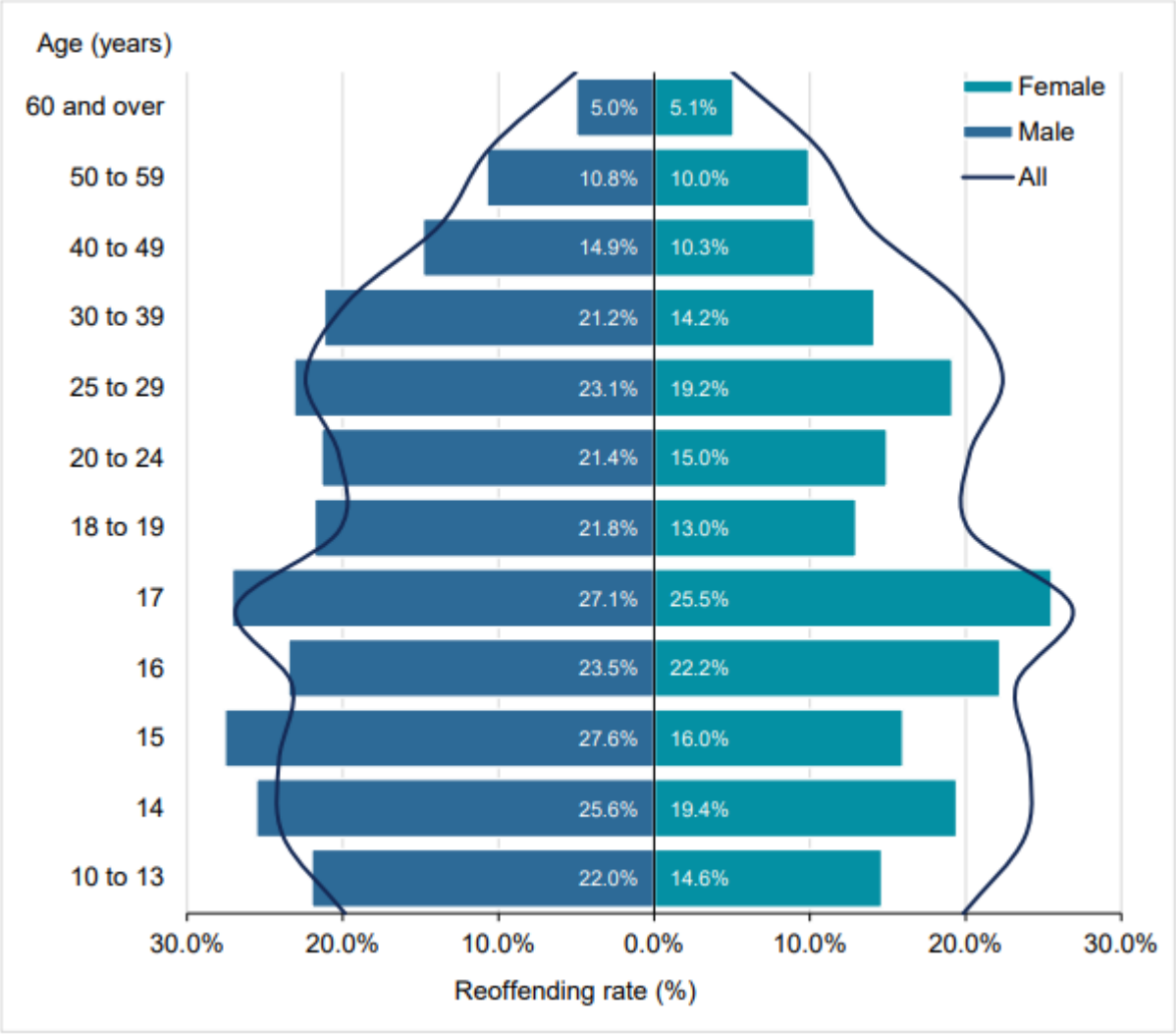
cohort (20,373 individuals), 16,118 (79.1%) were male and 4,255 (20.9%) were female; 3,019 (18.7%).

Source: Adult and Youth Reoffending in Northern Ireland [Adult and Youth Reoffending in Northern Ireland (2022/23 Cohort) | Department of Justice]

These differences reflect patterns within the justice system rather than impacts arising from the Framework's strategic direction.

Figure 9: Reoffending rates by age at baseline and gender, 2022/23

Evidence Source: Adult and Youth Reoffending in Northern Ireland (20223 Cohort))



Disability evidence / information:

Census 2021 reports that 24.3% of the population consider themselves disabled or living with a long-term health condition.

Source: NISRA Census 2021
https://www.nisra.gov.uk/statistics/census-2021-results/main-statistics

There is no evidence to suggest that offending or reoffending is confined to people with or without disabilities. However, research highlights links between trauma, mental ill health and later justice involvement, which may be more prevalent among some disabled people.

Relevant research:
https://pureadmin.qub.ac.uk/ws/portalfiles/portal/631630700/Impact_of_Adverse_Childhood_Experiences_-_Tagged.pdf

Dependants' evidence / information:

Census data indicates that a significant proportion of households include children or adults with caring needs.

Source: NISRA Census 2021
https://www.nisra.gov.uk/statistics/census-2021-results/main-statistics

There is no evidence to indicate that offending or reoffending is confined to people with or without dependants. However, caring responsibilities may influence how individuals engage with services, which is relevant to implementation rather than to the Framework's strategic intent.

Summary

The evidence reviewed does not indicate that the Strategic Framework is likely to give rise to significant adverse impacts across any Section 75 category at a strategic level. Patterns observed within the justice system reflect broader social and structural factors, which the Framework seeks to address in a cross-cutting way. Any differential impacts are more appropriately considered through programme and project-level equality screening as delivery progresses.

Needs, experiences and priorities

Taking into account the information referred to above, what are the different needs, experiences and priorities of each of the following categories, in relation to the particular policy/decision?

Specify details of the needs, experiences and priorities for each of the Section 75 categories below:

Religious Belief

At Framework level, no evidence has been identified to indicate that the Strategic Framework's overall direction would result in differential needs, experiences or priorities based on religious belief. The Framework's focus is on addressing underlying drivers of offending and reoffending (for example, trauma, mental ill-health, addiction and housing instability) and is intended to apply consistently across all communities. No significant adverse differential impact has been identified at this stage.

Political Opinion

No differential needs, experiences or priorities have been identified at Framework level in relation to political opinion. The Framework is cross-Executive in nature and applies at a strategic level irrespective of political opinion. It does not propose measures that distinguish between people on this basis. No significant adverse differential impact has been identified at this stage.

Racial Group

At Framework level, no significant adverse differential impact has been identified in relation to racial group. It is recognised that some minority ethnic communities may experience barriers in accessing services, for example, relating to language, trust or previous experiences of statutory systems. However, as the Framework does not set out specific delivery mechanisms, the appropriate point to identify and address such barriers in detail will be at programme or project stage.

Age

Age can shape people's experiences of risk, support needs and contact with services in different ways across the life course. For example, evidence points to the value of preventative and early support approaches for children and young people, particularly during periods of transition, while adults may experience different and changing needs linked to factors such as employment, family responsibilities, health or ageing. The Framework recognises these broad differences within its whole-system approach. No significant adverse differential impact related to age has been identified at Framework level.

Marital Status

No evidence has been identified at Framework level to indicate differential needs, experiences or priorities by marital status. The Strategic Framework does not propose measures that distinguish between people on this basis. No significant adverse differential impact is identified at this stage.

Sexual Orientation.

At Strategic Framework level, no significant adverse differential impact has been identified in relation to sexual orientation. It is recognised that some people may experience stigma or barriers when seeking support, which is relevant to how services are designed, communicated and delivered. Detailed consideration of any specific needs or barriers for lesbian, gay or bisexual people will be undertaken at programme or project stage.

Men and Women Generally

No significant adverse differential impact has been identified at Framework level for men and women generally. The Framework supports the principle that delivery should be responsive to differing experiences and pathways, for example recognising trauma, caring responsibilities and patterns of justice involvement. Any gender-responsive measures and their impacts will be assessed in detail at programme or project stage.

Disability

At Strategic Framework level, no significant adverse differential impact has been identified in

relation to disability. It is recognised that disabled people, including those with learning disabilities, neurodivergence or mental ill health, may face barriers in accessing services, information and support. As a strategic mitigation, the Framework commits to accessible communication and formats, including Easy Read and child-friendly versions where appropriate, for Framework publication and engagement activity.

Dependants

At Framework level, no significant adverse differential impact is identified for people with dependants. The Framework is intended to have a broadly positive preventative focus, supporting approaches that may help reduce disruption to family life through prevention and rehabilitation. Any specific impacts, such as how caring responsibilities affect access to services, will be assessed at programme or project stage.

Part 2. Screening questions

Introduction

In making a decision as to whether or not there is a need to carry out an equality impact assessment, the public authority should consider its answers to the questions 1-4 which are detailed below.

If the public authority's conclusion is **none** in respect of all of the Section 75 equality of opportunity and/or good relations categories, then the public authority may decide to screen the policy out. If a policy is 'screened out' as having no relevance to equality of opportunity or good relations, a public authority should give details of the reasons for the decision taken.

If the public authority's conclusion is **major** in respect of one or more of the Section 75 equality of opportunity and/or good relations categories, then consideration should be given to subjecting the policy to the equality impact assessment procedure.

If the public authority's conclusion is **minor** in respect of one or more of the Section 75 equality categories and/or good relations categories, then consideration should still be given to proceeding with an equality impact assessment, or to:

- measures to mitigate the adverse impact; or
- the introduction of an alternative policy to better promote equality of opportunity and/or good relations.

In favour of a 'major' impact

a) The policy is significant in terms of its strategic importance;

b) Potential equality impacts are unknown, because, for example, there is insufficient data upon which to make an assessment or because they are complex, and it would be appropriate to conduct an equality impact assessment in order to better assess them;

c) Potential equality and/or good relations impacts are likely to be adverse or are likely to be experienced disproportionately by groups of people including those who are marginalised or disadvantaged;

d) Further assessment offers a valuable way to examine the evidence and develop recommendations in respect of a policy about which there are concerns amongst affected individuals and representative groups, for example in respect of multiple identities;

e) The policy is likely to be challenged by way of judicial review;

f) The policy is significant in terms of expenditure.

In favour of 'minor' impact

a) The policy is not unlawfully discriminatory and any residual potential impacts on people are judged to be negligible;

b) The policy, or certain proposals within it, are potentially unlawfully discriminatory, but this possibility can readily and easily be eliminated by making appropriate changes to the policy or by adopting appropriate mitigating measures;

c) Any asymmetrical equality impacts caused by the policy are intentional because they are specifically designed to promote equality of opportunity for particular groups of disadvantaged people;

d) By amending the policy there are better opportunities to better promote equality of opportunity and/or good relations.

In favour of none

a) The policy has no relevance to equality of opportunity or good relations.

b) The policy is purely technical in nature and will have no bearing in terms of its likely impact on equality of opportunity or good relations for people within the equality and good relations categories.

Taking into account the evidence presented above, consider and comment on the likely impact on equality of opportunity and good relations for those affected by this policy, in any way, for each of the equality and good relations categories, by applying the screening questions given overleaf and indicate the level of impact on the group i.e. minor, major or none.

Screening questions

1. **What is the likely impact on equality of opportunity for those affected by this policy, for each of the Section 75 equality categories?**

Please provide details of the likely policy impacts and determine the level of impact for each S75 categories below i.e. either minor, major or none.

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.

For the purposes of this screening, 'minor impact' is used to reflect ongoing relevance for monitoring at delivery stage rather than the presence of any adverse impact at strategic level Where evidence indicates that the Framework has no relevance or differential effect for a particular category at this stage, the impact is recorded as "none".

Any specific actions, programmes or delivery models developed under the Framework, will be subject to separate screening/full EQIA, as appropriate at programme or policy level, in line with statutory and policy requirements.

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Religious belief**: The Framework is intended to apply across Northern Ireland and focuses on shared structural and social factors associated with offending and reoffending that affect individuals across all communities. It does not differentiate between individuals or groups on the basis of religious belief.
What is the level of impact? Minor / Major / None (Underline as appropriate)

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Political Opinion**: The Framework sets out a shared, cross-Executive strategic direction and does not distinguish between individuals or groups on the basis of political opinion. It does not give rise to differential treatment, access or outcomes linked to political views.

No adverse impacts on equality of opportunity have been identified at Framework level.
What is the level of impact? Minor / Major / None (Underline as appropriate)

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Racial Group**: The Framework does not differentiate between racial groups and addresses broad determinants associated with offending and reoffending that cut across the population. No adverse impacts on equality of opportunity for any racial group have been identified at strategic level.
A minor impact is recorded solely to reflect that inclusive engagement, and culturally appropriate practice may be relevant at delivery stage, and will be considered as specific work is developed.
What is the level of impact? Minor / Major / None (Underline as appropriate)

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Age**: The Framework recognises, at a high level, that experiences of risk, vulnerability and access to support can vary across the life course. This includes preventative approaches relating to children and young people, as well as differing circumstances affecting adults.
No adverse impacts on equality of opportunity by age have been identified at this strategic stage.
A minor impact is recorded to reflect that age-related considerations will require attention as delivery arrangements are designed and implemented.
What is the level of impact? Minor / Major / None (Underline as appropriate)

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Marital Status**: There is no evidence to suggest that the Strategic Framework affects equality of opportunity on the basis of marital status. The Framework does not create differential impacts, requirements or access linked to marital or family status.
No adverse impacts have been identified at Framework level.
What is the level of impact? Minor / Major / None (Underline as appropriate)

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Sexual Orientation**: The Framework does not differentiate on the basis of sexual orientation and no adverse impacts on equality of opportunity have been identified at strategic level.
A minor impact is recorded to recognise that issues such as stigma or barriers to engagement may be relevant when individual services are developed and will be considered through

implementation and oversight.
What is the level of impact? Minor / Major / None (Underline as appropriate)

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Men and Women**: The Framework is neutral in its application and does not introduce differential treatment for men or women. While it acknowledges that experiences of offending and reoffending may differ, no adverse impacts on equality of opportunity have been identified at strategic level.
A minor impact is recorded to reflect that gender-related considerations may be relevant to the design of specific interventions under the Framework.
What is the level of impact? Minor / Major / None (Underline as appropriate)

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Disability**: The Framework does not give rise to adverse impacts on equality of opportunity for disabled people at strategic level. It does not set operational requirements that would affect access, eligibility or participation.
A minor impact is recorded to reflect the importance of accessibility and inclusion being addressed through delivery-level policy and programme development.
What is the level of impact? Minor / Major / None (Underline as appropriate)

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Dependents**: The Framework does not identify or introduce any differential impacts on people with dependants and does not affect equality of opportunity at strategic level.
A minor impact is recorded to recognise that caring responsibilities can influence engagement with services in practice and will be considered during implementation and delivery planning.
What is the level of impact? Minor / Major / None (Underline as appropriate)

2. **Are there opportunities to better promote equality of opportunity for people within the Section 75 equalities categories? Yes/No**

Detail opportunities of how this policy could promote equality of opportunity for people within each of the Section 75 Categories below:

While the Strategic Framework applies across Northern Ireland, opportunities to promote equality of opportunity arise through implementation, particularly where actions are place-based or focused on specific cohorts. Ensuring that the shared benefits of reducing offending and reoffending are realised fairly across communities represents a clear opportunity under Section 75.

Religious Belief – Yes. The Framework is intended to apply across all communities in Northern Ireland. By focusing on shared factors associated with offending and reoffending, it provides an opportunity to promote equality of opportunity for people of different religious beliefs through consistent and inclusive implementation.

Political Opinion – Yes. The Framework sets out a shared, cross-government approach that applies across Northern Ireland. This provides an opportunity to promote equality of opportunity by ensuring that actions are taken forward in a way that is inclusive and accessible, irrespective of political opinion.

Racial Group – Yes. The Framework applies across Northern Ireland and provides an opportunity to promote equality of opportunity through inclusive implementation and engagement with diverse communities

Age – Yes. The Framework applies across all age groups in Northern Ireland and recognises that needs can vary across the life course. While interventions may reflect age-related needs, such as prevention for children and young people or rehabilitation for adults, this approach provides an opportunity to promote equality of opportunity through proportionate, needs-led responses.

Marital Status – Yes. The Framework applies across Northern Ireland without distinguishing by marital status and provides an opportunity to ensure that approaches are inclusive and accessible in practice.

Sexual Orientation – Yes. the Framework applies to all individuals in Northern Ireland,

regardless of their sexual orientation. There is an opportunity to promote equality of opportunity for people of different sexual orientations through inclusive implementation and by being mindful of factors that may affect confidence in accessing support.

Men and Women generally – Yes. The Framework applies equally to men and women and recognises that experiences of offending and reoffending can differ. By supporting proportionate and responsive approaches, the Framework provides an opportunity to promote equality of opportunity while addressing differing needs in practice.

Disability – Yes. The Framework applies across the population, including disabled people. Opportunities to promote equality of opportunity arise through attention to accessibility, communication and inclusive approaches as actions are taken forward.

Dependants – Yes. The Framework applies to individuals with and without caring responsibilities. There is an opportunity to promote equality of opportunity by recognising how caring roles can shape engagement with support and by maintaining awareness of family circumstances in how support is accessed and experienced in practice.

To what extent is the policy likely to impact on good relations between people of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group?

Please provide details of the likely policy impact and determine the level of impact for each of the categories below i.e. either minor, major or none.

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Religious Belief**: The Framework applies across Northern Ireland and focuses on shared factors associated with offending and reoffending that arise across all communities. It is neutral in relation to religious belief and does not contain provisions intended to influence relationships between people or communities of different religious beliefs.

At this strategic stage, the Framework does not give rise to any identifiable impact (positive or negative) on the promotion of good relations. There is no evidence to suggest it will affect

patterns of interaction, perceptions, or relations between religious communities.

What is the level of impact? Minor / Major / None (Underline as appropriate)

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Political Opinion**: The Framework sets out a shared, cross-government approach and is neutral in relation to political opinion. It does not seek to influence political views, relationships, or engagement between individuals or groups of differing political opinion.
There are no provisions within the Framework that would reasonably be expected to impact on good relations in this context. As such, no impact on the promotion of good relations between people of different political opinions has been identified at strategic level.
What is the level of impact? Minor / Major / None (Underline as appropriate)

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Racial Group**: The Framework addresses broad structural and social factors associated with offending and reoffending that cut across the population. It does not differentiate on the basis of racial group and is not designed to influence relationships between people of different racial backgrounds.
While delivery of future actions may involve engagement with diverse communities, the Framework itself does not introduce mechanisms or intentions that would have a direct or significant impact on good relations between racial groups at this stage.
What is the level of impact? Minor / Major / None (Underline as appropriate)

Are there opportunities to better promote good relations between people of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group?

Detail opportunities of how this policy could better promote good relations for people within each of the Section 75 Categories below:

Religious Belief – The Framework does not target or apply to people based on religious belief. However, where actions are delivered on a place-based basis, there are opportunities at project level to ensure that interventions are designed and implemented in a way that is sensitive to local community context. This may help avoid reinforcing divisions and support shared benefits

through safer communities, resulting in a minor and indirect contribution to good relations**.**

Political Opinion – The Framework does not engage with political opinion and is neutral in intent. However, opportunities exist at delivery stage to ensure that place-based interventions are applied fairly and transparently across communities. This can help maintain confidence that initiatives are need-led rather than politically influenced, which may support good relations in a limited and indirect way.

Racial Group – The Framework is neutral in relation to racial or ethnic groups. It is not intended to directly influence relationships between racial groups; any contribution would be indirect and linked to inclusive practice and engagement. Nevertheless, implementation provides opportunities to ensure that services are inclusive and accessible to minority ethnic communities, particularly in areas such as engagement. This may contribute marginally to good relations by reducing barriers to participation and ensuring equitable access to support.

Additional considerations

Multiple identity

Generally speaking, people can fall into more than one Section 75 category. Taking this into consideration, are there any potential impacts of the policy/decision on people with multiple identities?

(For example; disabled minority ethnic people; disabled women; young Protestant men; and young lesbians, gay and bisexual people).

People may fall within more than one Section 75 category and overlapping identities can influence how individuals experience disadvantage or barriers to support. The Framework is intended to apply across Northern Ireland and does not distinguish between people on the basis of Section 75 characteristics. However, the factors associated with offending and reoffending (such as trauma, mental health needs, addiction, poverty and social exclusion) may be experienced differently by people with multiple identities.

This underlines the importance of remaining alert to differing experiences and avoiding assumptions about need. While the Framework itself does not set out specific responses to multiple identity, it provides a strategic context within which such considerations can be recognised and explored as work progresses.

Provide details of data on the impact of the policy on people with multiple identities. Specify relevant Section 75 categories concerned.

Evidence indicates that people involved in offending or reoffending often experience multiple, overlapping disadvantages, including trauma, poor mental health, disability, poverty and social exclusion. These factors may intersect with Section 75 characteristics. The Framework promotes a whole-system approach intended to support more coordinated responses and reduce fragmented support.

Specific impacts for people with multiple identities will be assessed and addressed at programme and project level.

Relevant Section 75 categories concerned: may include age, disability, gender, racial group, sexual orientation and dependants.

Part 3. Screening decision

If the decision is not to conduct an equality impact assessment, please provide details of the reasons.

Decision – Screened out – EQIA not required at this stage.

The Strategic Framework is a short-term, high-level Framework that sets strategic direction rather than delivering services directly.

No evidence has been identified that it will have adverse or disproportionate impacts on any Section 75 category at a strategic level.

Although some categories are recorded as ‘minor’, this reflects potential variability in how people may experience delivery in practice rather than any adverse effect arising from the Framework itself. Given the Framework’s strategic nature, additional mitigation at this level is not considered proportionate; equality considerations will be addressed through established governance and delivery-level screening and monitoring as actions progress.

At this strategic stage, the Framework does not introduce new policies or operational changes that would differentially impact Section 75 groups. Instead, it establishes shared principles and coordination mechanisms. Equality impacts will be assessed in full where specific actions or programmes are developed.

If the decision is not to conduct an equality impact assessment the public authority should consider if the policy should be mitigated or an alternative policy be introduced - please provide details.

No mitigation is required at Strategic Framework level.

Any potential differential impacts, and the actions required to address them, will therefore be identified and managed through programme and project level equality screening and assessment, where evidence and detail are available.

If the decision is to subject the policy to an equality impact assessment, please provide details of the reasons.

N/A - Screening has determined that an EQIA is not required.

All public authorities' equality schemes must state the authority's arrangements for assessing and consulting on the likely impact of policies adopted or proposed to be adopted by the authority on the promotion of equality of opportunity. The Commission recommends screening and equality impact assessment as the tools to be utilised for such assessments. Further advice on equality impact assessment may be found in a separate Commission publication: Practical Guidance on Equality Impact Assessment.

Mitigation

When the public authority concludes that the likely impact is 'minor' and an equality impact assessment is not to be conducted, the public authority may consider mitigation to lessen the severity of any equality impact, or the introduction of an alternative policy to better promote equality of opportunity or good relations.

Can the policy/decision be amended or changed or an alternative policy introduced to better promote equality of opportunity and/or good relations?

If so, give the reasons to support your decision, together with the proposed changes/amendments or alternative policy.

At a strategic level, the Strategic Framework does not propose measures that are likely to adversely impact good relations between people of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group. On this basis, no significant adverse impact on good relations has been identified at this stage.

No amendments or alternative policy are considered appropriate at this stage. The Framework is a short-term strategic document, covering the period 2026-27, and is intended to set overall direction and priorities rather than establish detailed policy measures.

While the screening has identified the potential for minor differential impacts, these arise primarily from how actions will be implemented at project level, rather than from the Framework's

strategic intent. The Framework does not seek to differentiate between individuals or groups on the basis of Section 75 characteristics and does not introduce measures that would be more appropriately addressed through amendment at this level.

The Framework provides a cross-departmental context for addressing factors associated with offending and reoffending, such as trauma, mental health needs, addiction and social exclusion, which can affect people across Section 75 categories. Any mitigation required to address minor impacts or to better promote equality of opportunity or good relations will be identified and implemented through programme and project-level design, supported by appropriate equality screening and, where necessary, further assessment.

The Framework will remain under review during the 2026-27 period. Learning from implementation, stakeholder engagement and lived experience will help to inform the development of a longer-term strategy to succeed this Framework. This provides an opportunity to further strengthen consideration of equality and good relations over time, informed by emerging evidence and learning.

Timetabling and prioritising - N/A

Factors to be considered in timetabling and prioritising policies for equality impact assessment.

If the policy has been **'screened in'** for equality impact assessment, then please answer the following questions to determine its priority for timetabling the equality impact assessment.

On a scale of 1-3, with 1 being the lowest priority and 3 being the highest, assess the policy in terms of its priority for equality impact assessment.

Priority criterion [Author pick 1, 2 or 3 if a full EQIA is to take place] Effect on equality of opportunity and good relations
Social need

Effect on people’s daily lives

Relevance to a public authority’s functions

Note: The Total Rating Score should be used to prioritise the policy in rank order with other policies screened in for equality impact assessment. This list of priorities will assist the public authority in timetabling. Details of the Public Authority’s Equality Impact Assessment Timetable should be included in the quarterly Screening Report.

Is the policy affected by timetables established by other relevant public authorities?

If yes, please provide details.

Part 4. Monitoring

Public authorities should consider the guidance contained in the Commission's Monitoring Guidance for Use by Public Authorities (July 2007).

The Commission recommends that where the policy has been amended or an alternative policy introduced, the public authority should monitor more broadly than for adverse impact (See Benefits, P.9-10, paras 2.13 – 2.20 of the Monitoring Guidance).

Effective monitoring will help the public authority identify any future adverse impact arising from the policy which may lead the public authority to conduct an equality impact assessment, as well as help with future planning and policy development.

Further advice on monitoring can be found at: ECNI Monitoring Guidance for Public Authorities

Part 5 - Approval and authorisation

Approved by: Veronica Holland
Position/Job Title: Deputy Director, Reducing Offending Division
Date: 22/07/26