Public Prosecution Service

Independent
Fair
Effective

Annual Business Plan 2026-27

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Foreword
By the Director

I am pleased to present our Annual Business Plan for the 2026-27 financial year.

This document sets out our priorities as a Service and the milestones we will use to assess our progress.



Stephen Herron
Director of Public Prosecutions

In the year ahead, our focus will be on delivering a range of initiatives with our partner agencies, aimed at driving improvements across a criminal justice system that is facing growing demands on services and ever increasing complexity.

The launch of a Joint Strategy for Investigating and Prosecuting Serious Sexual Offences with the PSNI will mark a critical step forward for the Service and for the wider justice system. The Strategy sets ambitious objectives, including reducing the time taken to reach prosecutorial decisions in serious sexual offence cases and ensuring that no victim withdraws as a result of their experience of the criminal justice process.

The Strategy contains practical improvements, including strengthened governance, improved disclosure processes, enhanced engagement with victims and a continued emphasis on trauma informed practice. Delivering against the Strategy will be a defining measure of our success in the years ahead.

Reducing avoidable delay more generally, and improving case quality, are also key priorities for the Service during 2026-27. Effective collaboration with the PSNI is essential if we are to achieve sustained improvement in timeliness and the Working Together Programme is fundamental to this. Through the Programme's workstreams on file quality and disclosure, modernisation and out of court disposals, we are already seeing tangible benefits, including earlier engagement, more proportionate case handling and reducing demand on prosecutors and investigators. Over the year ahead, further progress will be made via the ongoing Indictable Gateway Project, the development of Better Case Management pilots and the embedding of initiatives, such as the No File Decision process, that are now transitioning into normal business. All of

this work should complement and help to support the direct committal of cases to the Crown Court, which is expected later this year.
These initiatives sit within a wider strategic framework as set out in 'PPS 2030: A Strategic Vision for the Future of the PPS'. This provides a clear roadmap for modernising how we operate, including the redesign of service delivery models, enhancing digital processes and the use of new technologies. One such example is the introduction of electronic summons signature which will launch in May 2026. The PPS 2030 vision and its related themes complement and support the PPS's new strategic priorities, which cover the areas of avoidable delay, casework quality, confidence and trust in the PPS, and organisational capability.

Whilst our transformation agenda is supported by additional funding from the Department of Justice, the overall financial position for 2026-27 remains challenging, and difficult choices will be required to ensure that our limited resources are aligned to our highest priorities, particularly those initiatives that deliver the greatest benefit for victims and the justice system as a whole.

Our people are critical to the delivery of our work programme, and I want to conclude by paying tribute to my PPS colleagues. The dedication, professionalism and resilience of our people underpin everything we do. In an increasingly complex and demanding environment, I want to recognise the skill, care and integrity shown by staff across the Service in delivering a high-quality prosecution service while supporting victims and witnesses through the criminal justice system.



Stephen Herron
Director of Public Prosecutions
for Northern Ireland

May 2026

Our Mission

Delivering an independent, fair and effective prosecution service.

Our Vision

Working collaboratively towards a safer and fairer society.

Our Values

Acting with Integrity

We act with independence, fairness and impartiality in everything we do. We are accountable, open and transparent.

Everyone Matters

We serve our society and treat each other with respect, sensitivity and understanding, recognising that there are people behind every case.

Making a Difference

We take our responsibilities to victims seriously - driving change, minimising delay and working collaboratively for a more effective justice system.

Having a Strong Voice

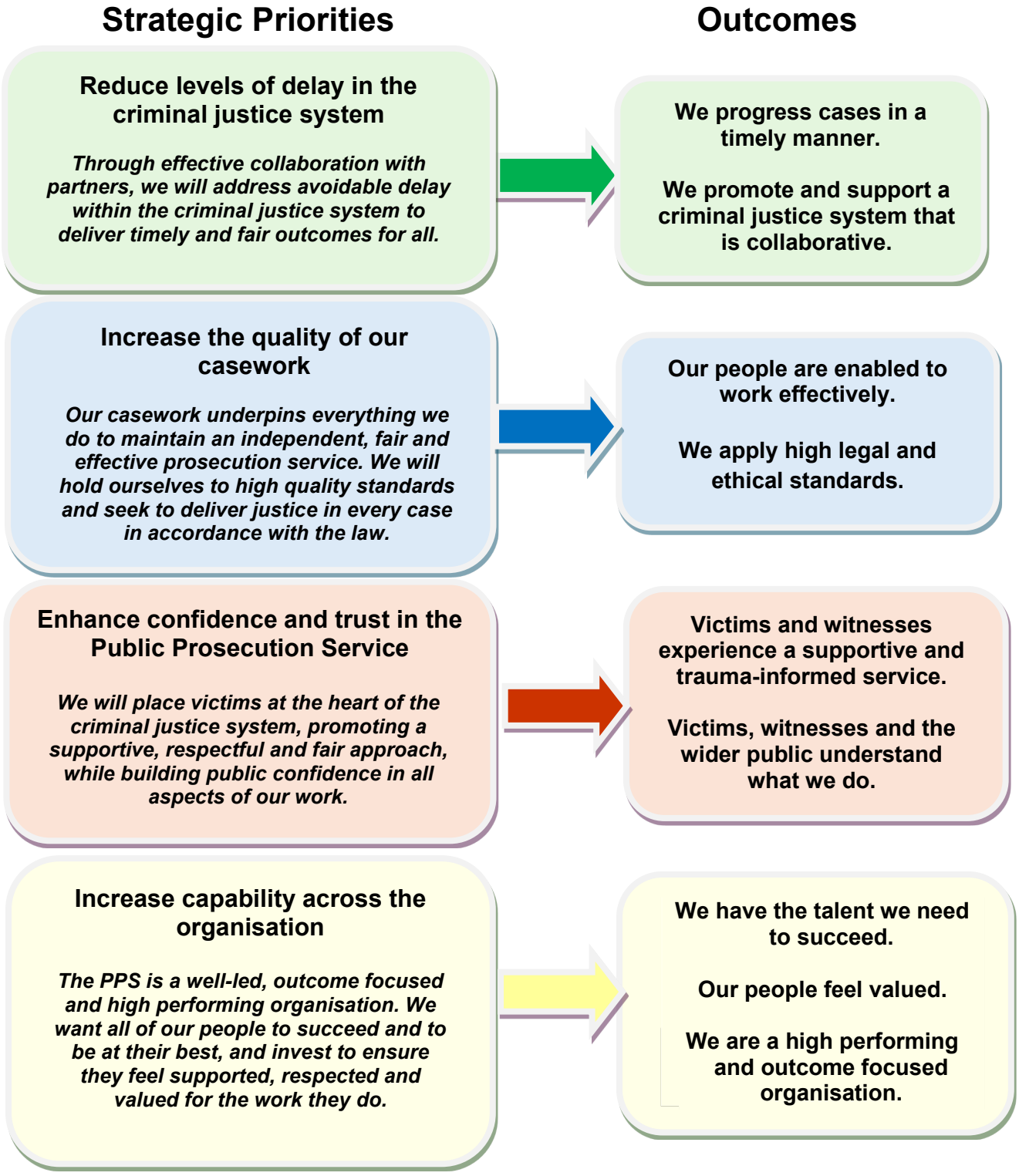
We have a strong voice within the criminal justice system - being robust in our actions and holding ourselves and others accountable.

Succeeding Together

We are one PPS, supporting each other, promoting well-being and taking pride in everything we do.

Our Strategic Priorities

PPS corporate planning is based around four strategic priorities which act as a framework to drive our planning outcomes and related benefits, as well as our approach to managing performance and risk. Further details are provided at Annex A.



Our Organisation

The Public Prosecution Service (PPS) is the principal prosecuting authority in Northern Ireland. In addition to taking decisions as to prosecution in all cases initiated or investigated by the police, it also considers cases initiated or investigated by other statutory authorities, for example HM Revenue and Customs.

The PPS was established in June 2005. The Justice (Northern Ireland) Act 2002 defines the PPS, its statutory duties and responsibilities, and the legislative framework within which it must provide its services.

Since the devolution of policing and justice to the Northern Ireland Assembly in April 2010, the Service has been designated as a non-ministerial government department. Funding for the PPS is provided by the Northern Ireland Assembly and, as Accounting Officer for the Service, the Director is responsible for ensuring that the public monies provided are used efficiently. All staff, other than the Director and Deputy Director, are members of the Northern Ireland Civil Service.

PPS Services

The primary role of the PPS is to reach decisions to prosecute or not to prosecute and to have responsibility for the conduct of criminal proceedings. Additional services are also available which have been designed to enhance the effectiveness of the Service, including the provision of prosecutorial and pre-charge advice.

Options are available to allow prosecutors to deal with offenders other than through prosecution. These include cautions, informed warnings and youth conferencing. Prosecutors may also refer offenders to the National Driver Alertness Course.

PPS Structures

The PPS is a regionally based organisation. There are currently three regions:

- Belfast Region;
- Northern and Western Region; and
- Southern and Eastern Region.

Each region is headed by lawyers at Assistant Director (AD) level. The ADs are responsible for working with the courts and the police to provide a high-quality prosecution service in their area, as well as contributing to a range of corporate and policy initiatives.

The regions deal with a wide range of cases, from the less serious summary cases, which are heard in the Magistrates' Courts, through to more serious indictable cases which are heard in the Crown Court.

In addition, there are five legal sections, based in PPS Headquarters, which are also headed at AD level. These sections are as follows:

- The Serious Crime Unit deals with a range of the most serious offences including murder, manslaughter, rape and other serious sexual offences, human trafficking, prostitution and related offences.

- Central Casework Section deals with some of the highest profile and difficult cases in Northern Ireland, including files relating to terrorism and organised crime.

- Fraud and Departmental Section deal with serious and complex fraud files submitted by the police, as well as files from Government Departments and agencies.

- High Court and International Section deal with a range of specialist legal matters, including High Court bail applications, restraint and confiscation orders, extradition, international letters of request, judicial reviews, appeals to the Court of Appeal and cases referred by the Criminal Cases Review Commission.

- The Legacy Unit deals with historical cases related to the 'Troubles' in Northern Ireland.

Corporate Services provides the PPS with a variety of professional, technical and other support services, and includes the Policy and Information Unit, Victim and Witness Care Unit, Information and Communications Technology, Resource Management Team, Finance and Fees, Communications Unit, Strategic Improvement Team, Modernisation Team and Property Management.

An Organisation Chart for the PPS is presented at **Annex B**.

Working in Partnership: Criminal Justice System Northern Ireland (CJSNI)

The PPS works in partnership with the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI), the Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunals Service (NICTS), the Northern Ireland Prison Service (NIPS), the Probation Board for Northern Ireland (PBNI), the Youth Justice Agency (YJA) and the Department of Justice (DOJ) and a wide range of other stakeholders, as part of the Criminal Justice System Northern Ireland.

The Director is a member of the Criminal Justice Board which is chaired by the Minister of Justice. This was established by the Minister to improve engagement between the most

senior leaders within the criminal justice system and to provide strategic oversight for the work of the CJSNI.

NICS People Strategy

The PPS is fully committed to the NICS People Strategy. The implementation of the Strategy will enable the Civil Service to build on its strengths, deliver key work programmes, and prepare for future challenges and opportunities.

The PPS is developing and implementing its own People Plan in line with the wider NICS Strategy.



Managing Change

Delivering PPS 2030

'PPS 2030' provides a strategic vision for the future operation of the Public Prosecution Service, setting out a programme of work over a 5 year period to deliver a more efficient organisation that will target its resources to those areas of greatest priority and where greatest value can be added.

The overarching objectives of the programme are to:

- Redesign and optimise our service delivery model and processes to deliver our business more effectively;
- Develop arrangements to allow cases to be dealt with proportionately and contribute to the reduction of avoidable delay;
- Support staff and key stakeholders to work in a changing environment; and
- Achieve a sustainable financial operating model for the PPS in the longer term.

Delivery of PPS 2030 is being taken forward through the identification of a portfolio of projects based around one or more of the following themes which complement and support the PPS's broader strategic priorities as set out above:

- *Effective Processes*
  We will review our practices and procedures to facilitate more effective decision making.
- *Proportionate Processes*
  We will implement more proportionate methods of handling casework in order to optimise the use of prosecutorial resources.
- *Digital Processes*
  We will enhance current digital ways of working in order to improve services and efficiency, both internally and in conjunction with our CJSNI partners.
- *Victim Processes*
  We will work with partners to improve information and services to victims and witnesses.

Tackling avoidable delay remains a key objective for the Service and we continue to engage in a range of criminal justice initiatives with the Department of Justice and other CJSNI partners. This includes the 'Speeding up Justice' Programme and the various reforms set out in the Justice Act (Northern Ireland) 2015 and subsequent provisions. Our main priorities include committal reform, as well as the PSNI/PPS Working Together

Programme (see below). In addition, the Service is closely involved in the delivery of the CJSNI Digital Strategy.

Transformation Funding

In March 2025, the Department of Justice announced that an additional £20.45 million had been allocated to help speed up justice. The additional funding, which is spread across five years, is intended to provide opportunities for the PPS and its criminal justice partners to modernise services. Within PPS, the funding is being targeted at a number of initiatives including a 'Gateway' Model for indictable volume crime files, which is being progressed under the Working Together Programme (see below for further details).

The Working Together Programme

The Working Together Programme, which commenced in early 2024, aims to strengthen collaboration between the PPS and the PSNI in order to improve the quality of prosecution files and the pace of case progression. The Programme is supported by a Board chaired jointly by the Deputy Director of Public Prosecutions and the Assistant Chief Constable for the PSNI's Justice Department. Members include the two PPS Senior Assistant Directors and the PSNI's Head of Criminal Justice Branch.

The programme is made up of three main project strands, as follows:

File Quality and Disclosure

The File Quality and Disclosure Working Group is seeking to implement robust file build standards for all case types, agree early engagement arrangements for the provision of prosecutorial advice and improve disclosure management processes – with the overall aim of streamlining case progression and reducing delay. The workstream is led jointly by the PPS's Head of Strategic Improvement and a PSNI Chief Inspector.

Key areas of focus during 2025-26 included the implementation of a new Gateway Pilot for indictable domestic abuse cases, designed to foster a collaborative understanding of file quality and a 'getting it right first time' ethos. This builds on the earlier Gateway Pilot for summary domestic abuse cases which has now been subject to final evaluation. Work has also been ongoing to embed new file builds for indictable cases to promote a more proportionate approach to file building. Priorities for 2026-27 include:

- Scoping and development of better case management principles to align with the delivery of Direct Committal;
- Enhancements to the PPS/PSNI prosecutorial advice framework;
- Scoping and development of a revised 28 day charge protocol;
- Scoping and development of joint evidential standards for domestic violence and abuse; and

- Ongoing evaluation of the Indictable Gateway Pilot and indictable file builds.

Modernisation and Transformation

The Modernisation and Transformation Working Group is focused on digital transformation and innovation. The workstream is jointly led by the PPS's Head of Modernisation and a PSNI Superintendent. Work carried out during 2025-26 included the development of new processes to support the use of electronic summons signature, the implementation of 'voice to text' transcription (for example to produce transcripts of police interviews) and the implementation of a police remote evidence pilot.

Deliverables for the year ahead include the electronic service of summonses. This will provide a range of benefits, for example by lowering the demand on police resources in the service of physical papers, as well as reducing the delay associated with the issuing and re-issuing of summonses by the PPS. The project team will also investigate the potential opportunities presented by Artificial Intelligence, particularly in relation to the redaction of documentary and multi-media evidence, supporting prosecutors in their consideration of evidential material. This will include benchmarking with other jurisdictions and ensure that PSNI/PPS take a collaborative approach in relation to practices around evidence management.

Out of Court Disposals

The remit of the Out of Court Disposals Working Group is to assess and implement measures to reduce demand within both organisations, the introduction of new (non-court) disposal types and the wider use of existing police discretionary disposals. The workstream is jointly led by the PPS's Head of Policy and Information and the Head of PSNI's Criminal Justice Branch. During 2025-26, the project team progressed the 'No File Decision' Pilot. Under the pilot framework, which commenced on 29 November 2023, police are no longer required to submit all files in a limited class of cases where a no prosecution recommendation is made for each of the suspects on the file. A final evaluation was completed in January 2026 and, based on the significant progress made to date, the Working Together Programme Board has taken the decision to place the NFD procedures on a 'normal business' footing. Other measures considered have included a public consultation on the use of Penalty Notices for Disorder and Prosecutorial Fines and the implementation of a new Restorative Justice Pilot.

During 2026-27, further opportunities to expand non-court disposals will be explored, including the extended use of Fixed Penalty Notices, providing front line police officers with a wider range of appropriate alternatives to address lower level offending.

Strategic Improvement Board

The Strategic Improvement Board (SIB), chaired by the Deputy Director, is responsible for the internal oversight of all major change initiatives taken forward by the PPS. With the commencement of PPS 2030 and the Working Together Programme, as well as other ongoing initiatives, the SIB's role as a main forum for the prioritisation and oversight of all project activity across the Service is a crucial one. This recognises the ongoing need to ensure that all new projects, regardless of their origins, are considered by senior management in the context of finite project management, policy, ICT and other resources within the organisation.

The Senior Assistant Director for Resources and Change and Senior Assistant Director for Serious Crime and Regional Prosecutions act jointly as the Senior Responsible Officer (SRO) for the agreed suite of projects.

Modernisation Team

The PPS Modernisation team is responsible for the coordination, prioritisation and control of modernisation projects throughout the organisation, utilising established project management techniques and practices. The various Speeding Up Justice and Working Together Programme initiatives are also supported by the Policy and Information Unit and the Strategic Improvement Team.

Key Issues for the Year Ahead

Ahead of each annual business planning cycle, it is important that we assess our current operating context. As well as helping to plan for the year ahead, this allows us to focus on key priorities and to respond to any new opportunities and challenges, so that we can provide our managers and staff with the information and support they need. The summary below outlines a number of the key themes identified for the year, including work being undertaken in respect of domestic and sexual violence and abuse.

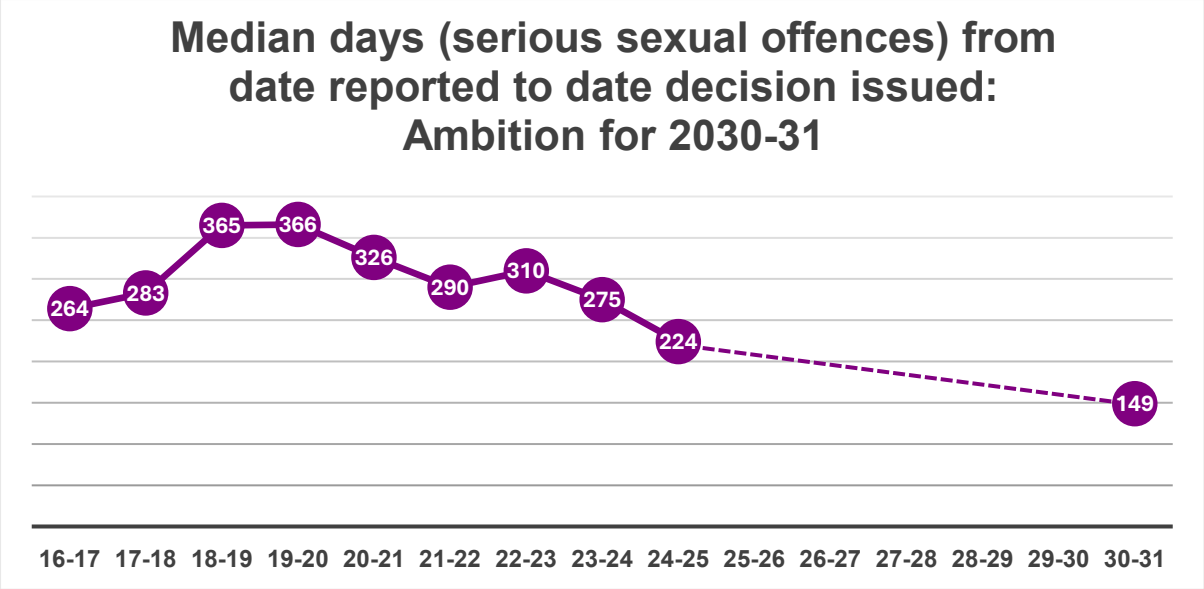
This business plan should be regarded as a 'living document'. The PPS is operating in a very dynamic environment, and we must be willing to adapt as circumstances dictate. Therefore throughout 2026-27, the PPS Management Board will take regular opportunities to look ahead to identify emerging trends, so that our approach can be adjusted as necessary. In particular, there is a need to keep the financial situation under review as regards the organisation's capacity to meet our statutory obligations and business priorities.

Domestic and Sexual Violence and Abuse

The PPS and PSNI will publish a new Joint Strategy for Serious Sexual Offences in spring 2026, building on ongoing work to strengthen and improve the quality and efficiency of the investigation and prosecution process.

The complexity and scale of the challenges in investigating and prosecuting sexual offences have grown significantly over recent years. There are a number of drivers for this, including the proliferation of digital material, dealing with complaints of non-recent offending, handling the sensitivities of the disclosure process and growing online harm. The impact of these pressures has been compounded by the Covid-19 pandemic with the result that we are still seeing unacceptable levels of delay. Whilst substantial efforts have been made since 2020 to reduce delay, we recognise that further work is needed. Therefore, the strategy sets out an ambition to reduce the time taken to investigate and issue a decision in serious sexual offence cases by a third.

The strategy also focuses on the needs of victims. Being the victim of a sexual crime and facing the criminal justice process is a traumatic experience, and we understand the value of a trauma-informed approach across all elements of our services. It is for this reason, that a second ambition has been set out which is that no victim will withdraw from their case as a result of their experience of the investigation or prosecution process.



The strategy incorporates a detailed action plan for 2026-27 and 2027-28 under four key outcomes including: support to victims; improving timeliness and quality; demonstrating accountability and leadership; and developing our people. Key issues for the current year include:

- A review of victim needs assessment processes and existing templates for communication with victims and victim support organisations;
- Engagement with the Departments of Justice and Health regarding plans to scope and implement a Barnahus Model for child victims of sexual crime in Northern Ireland;
- A review of disclosure processes across PPS and PSNI; and
- Conduct of an audit to assess the need for additional PPS and PSNI training.

A robust governance framework has been developed to ensure the effective implementation of the Strategy and Action Plan. This includes a new Sexual and Domestic Violence and Abuse Strategic Oversight Board, as well as an Independent Consultation Group comprising key stakeholders.

We will also build on our capacity in the area of domestic violence and abuse, for example through the ongoing provision of training and guidance for prosecutors and joint quality assurance with the PSNI. The Service Level Agreement between the PSNI and the PPS, implemented in August 2024, will be a major focus for quality assurance activity. The QA regime will also examine the operation of the Domestic Abuse and Civil Proceedings Act 2021 and any areas for improvement as identified by Criminal Justice Inspection NI (CJI) as part of their annual review programme. This work is being led by the joint PPS/PSNI Domestic Violence and Abuse Working Group.

A new ‘fast track’ Domestic Abuse Court Pilot is under development. The initiative, which is being led by the Presiding District Judge, will focus initially on overnight charge cases,

and is intended to speed up domestic proceedings in the Magistrates' Court and reduce witness attrition.

We will continue to provide support for the overarching strategies being progressed elsewhere, including the Domestic and Sexual Abuse Strategy led by the Department of Health and the Department of Justice, and the 'Equally Safe' Strategy, led by the Executive Office which aims to tackle violence against women and girls.

Victims and Witnesses

Over the coming year, we will contribute to the delivery of the agreed objectives set out in the CJSNI's Victim and Witness Strategy. We will also support the Victim and Witness Steering Group in identifying and responding to emerging issues and taking forward initiatives to improve outcomes for victims and witnesses.

The use of special measures will be a particular focus for the year ahead. This follows the publication of CJI's Report on the use and operation of special measures which highlighted a number of areas where improvements are required.[1] In response, a review of all existing processes and procedures is being taken forward. This will include the establishment of a new joint task and finish group with the PSNI. The group will be responsible for providing detailed proposals for the timely identification and management of special measures and will examine related issues such as quality assurance and the provision of monitoring data. The PPS/PSNI Service Level Agreement on special measures will also be aligned with the agreed outputs from the group.

We will continue to engage with the DOJ, PSNI and other partner organisations regarding the potential enhancement of the Victim and Witness Care Unit (VWCU) and the needs assessment process applied by the Unit. Existing proposals involve the restructuring of the VWCU to include a new Needs Assessment Service (NAS) led by Victim Support NI. This is intended to enhance the Unit's responsiveness to victim and witness needs in line with its obligations under the Victim and Witness Charters. The NAS was originally designed to cover the period from submission of a police file to the PPS to disposal; under the new model, the service would cover the entire period from the initial report of a crime through to the completion of criminal proceedings. Immediate priorities include agreement of the revised model and the development of a business case in order to secure ongoing funding.

The Service continues to work with the Department of Justice and other partners to ensure that the Remote Evidence Centres (RECs) in Belfast and Craigavon are being utilised effectively. It is essential that appropriate special measures applications are made for use

[1] *Special Measures in Northern Ireland's Criminal Courts: An Inspection of their Use and Operation (March 2026)*

of the RECs, and additional training and guidance will be provided for prosecutors and other staff as required.

The use of Victim Personal Statements is also under review via a DOJ-led working group. This is an important initiative, and we will take the steps necessary to enhance our processes and procedures in response to emerging recommendations.

Committal Reform

The Criminal Justice (Committal Reform) Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 set out a number of measures to simplify the committal process in Northern Ireland. The Act has two main aims: Firstly, to provide support to victims and witnesses by removing the option of calling on them to provide oral evidence in advance of trial and secondly, to speed up Crown Court cases by allowing certain cases to be directly committed, or transferred, to the Crown Court, without first having to go through the traditional committal process. The overall aim of the initiative is to speed up justice, facilitate early and targeted case management and reduce demands on witnesses. An important step has already been taken with the abolition of oral evidence at the committal stage in October 2022.

The next phase, focusing on 'Direct Committal', is scheduled for implementation in November 2026. From November, all offences that are triable only on indictment will transfer directly to the Crown Court. This is a complex and challenging undertaking, and the PPS has been working closely with the DOJ, PSNI and other partners to ensure that the necessary processes and procedures (including IT system enhancements) are in place ahead of launch.

PPS Resources

For the 2026-27 financial year, the Service has been provided with a draft allocation of £46.3 million. This is currently forecast to be split across the PPS's spending priorities as set out in the table below.

Our budgetary position remains challenging, and the draft allocations will be insufficient to meet the current forecast spending levels for the PPS across all categories for 2026-27. The increased forecast spending is the result of a number of factors, including recent pay rises for NICS staff. A number of additional staffing needs have also been identified as part of a redesign of the Service's capacity model based on current and forecast demands, as well as the implementation of a number of new CJSNI initiatives that will require substantial PPS resources over the coming financial years.

Draft PPS Budget Allocation 2026-27

Spending Area	£m
Staffing	28.4
Legal and Court Costs (including Counsel Fees)	8.0
Accommodation, IT and Other Costs	4.9
IFRS16 Leases/Depreciation Costs	4.2
Capital	0.8
Total	**46.3**

Managing Corporate Risks

The PPS faces a range of risks and uncertainties in delivering its priorities and objectives over the next year. The identification and review of corporate risks is the responsibility of the Management Board. All corporate risks are owned by members of the Board and will be actively managed over the course of the financial year.

The corporate risk areas identified at the beginning of the 2026-27 financial year include the following:

Priority 1: Reduce levels of delay in the criminal justice system

- Progressing serious and high-profile cases.
- Maintaining the Service's capacity to deliver legacy casework.
- The impact of funding pressures on our capacity to address current caseloads and to tackle backlogs and delay.
- The Transformation and Working Together Programmes (and related change initiatives) and delivering the anticipated business benefits and outcomes.
- The impact of Direct Committal on operational pressures and organisational costs.

Priority 2: Increase the quality of our casework

- Compliance of PPS records management systems, processes and procedures with the required standards.

Priority 3: Enhance confidence and trust in the Public Prosecution Service

- The effectiveness of our approach to stakeholder and public engagement in building confidence in the Service.
- Meeting the needs of victims and witnesses in terms of the services provided.

Priority 4: Increase capability across our organisation

- Delivery of the PPS People Plan.
- Addressing challenges to staff wellbeing.
- Workforce planning and the retention and recruitment of staff.

What We Plan to Achieve in 2026-27

Priority 1: Reduce levels of delay in the criminal justice system

Initiatives and actions

- Ensuring the effective operation of the 'PPS 2030' programme, including:
    - Management of existing priority projects and the Identification of potential initiatives to be taken forward under the programme umbrella.
    - Regular monitoring by the PPS Strategic Improvement Board.
    - Internal and external stakeholder engagement as required.
- Collaboration with PSNI on Year 3 priorities under the Working Together Programme and progress of agreed action plan objectives in respect of the main project themes, including File Quality and Disclosure, Modernisation, and Out of Court Disposals.
- Our contribution to the delivery of key inter-agency initiatives under the CJSNI Speeding Up Justice and Transformation Programmes, including Direct Committal and early engagement.
- Working with the Youth Justice Agency and PSNI to manage and progress the ongoing youth early diversion scheme pilot (PPS Southern and Eastern Region).
- Engagement with the DOJ and partners in the rollout of the new Adult Restorative Justice Diversionary Pilot.
- Implementation of PPS ICT Strategy objectives for 2026-27, including support for CJSNI Digital Strategy initiatives and enhancements to the PPS Case Management System.

Priority 2: Increase the quality of our casework

Initiatives and actions

- Development of action plans in response to Criminal Justice Inspection Northern Ireland's recommendations and ongoing monitoring of agreed action plan objectives.
- Delivery of the PPS Quality Assurance Review Programme, including the assessment of casework against the Service's Prosecution Quality Standards (PQS) via monthly dip sampling.
- Development of new legal policies and internal guidance, as required.
- Publication of the Joint Strategy for Investigating and Prosecuting Serious Sexual Offences and progress of agreed action plan objectives for 2026-27.
- Progress the actions agreed by joint PPS/PSNI working groups in the areas of domestic abuse, sexual abuse and special measures.
- Our ongoing work with CJSNI partners to implement:
    - The new provisions set out in the Criminal Justice (Sentencing etc.) Bill and other proposed legislation.
    - The remaining recommendations arising from the Gillen Review, including the ongoing development and evaluation of the Remote Evidence Centres (RECs).
    - A new domestic abuse Pilot Court (overnight charge cases) at Laganside.

Priority 3: Enhance confidence and trust in the Public Prosecution Service

- Implementation of the PPS Communications Strategy and agreed objectives for 2026-27.
- Publication of Official Statistics and performance data in line with the agreed schedule, including statistical bulletins on public confidence, hate crime and sexual offences.
- Management of complaints and requests for review, identifying learning to inform improved services and processes for victims and witnesses and other service users.
- Publication of the Annual Report of the Independent Assessor of Complaints and the implementation of agreed actions.
- Achievement of action plan objectives for 2026-27 in support of the PPS Equality Scheme and Disability Discrimination Act.
- Continued consultation and engagement with stakeholders via the PPS Stakeholder Engagement Forum (SEF).

Priority 3: Enhance confidence and trust in the Public Prosecution Service (Continued)

Initiatives and actions

- Our work with CJSNI partners to:
    - Deliver the agreed objectives set out in the CJSNI's Victim and Witness Strategy, including the development of mechanisms to monitor how well we are delivering the rights and entitlements as laid out in the Victim and Witness Charters.
    - Support the Victim and Witness Steering Group in identifying and responding to emerging issues and the delivery of improved outcomes for victims and witnesses.
    - Review the VWCU needs assessment process and develop a business case for the establishment of a new VSNI-led Needs Assessment Service.
    - Provide support for the Registered Intermediaries Scheme.
    - Provide appropriate support for the Domestic and Sexual Abuse Strategy led by the Department of Health and the Department of Justice and the 'Equally Safe' Strategy, led by the Executive Office.
    - Respond to recommendations made in respect of Victim Personal Statements.

Priority 4: Increase capability across our organisation

Initiatives and actions
• Agreement of a new PPS People Plan and related objectives in line with the NICS People Strategy for 2025 – 2030. • Ongoing evaluation of 'New Ways of Working' and the NICS Hybrid Working Policy. • Ensuring that all agreed actions are taken forward following Investors in People reaccreditation. • Implementation of PPS Corporate Social Responsibility and well-being objectives for 2026-27. • Delivery of the Annual Corporate Training Plan. • Maintenance of effective employee relations within the PPS. • Implementation of the Health and Safety Work Programme for 2026-27.

Key Delivery Measures

The following are the key delivery measures for 2026-27 against which the performance of the PPS will be assessed. Performance against these measures will be accounted for in our Annual Report for the coming financial year.

Priority 1: Reduce levels of delay in the criminal justice system

- **Timeliness of decisions issued (Regions)**
  - Median calendar days taken from submission of a police file to issue of a decision.

- **Timeliness of decisions issued in cases involving serious sexual offences (Serious Crime Unit)**
  - Median calendar days from report of an offence to issue of a decision.[2]

Priority 2: Increase the quality of our casework

- **Casework Quality Assurance (Dip sampling)**
  - Percentage of prosecution decisions taken in accordance with the Code for Prosecutors.

- **Unsuccessful outcomes**
  - Number of No Bills granted in the Crown Court.
  - Number of Acquittals by Direction in the Crown Court.

- **Requests for a review of a decision not to prosecute**
  - Percentage of requests (a) acknowledged within 5 working days (b) dealt with within 8 weeks.

[2] *To be monitored jointly with the PSNI.*

Priority 3: Enhance confidence and trust in the Public Prosecution Service

- **Public confidence**
  - Public confidence in the provision of a fair and impartial prosecution service (NI Life and Times Survey).

- **Victim and witness satisfaction**
  - Victim and witness satisfaction with the information and services provided by the PPS.

- **Delivery against Victim and Witness Charter Commitments (VWCU)**
  - Percentage of notifications of file submission within 7 days of receipt.
  - Percentage of notifications to the victim within 7 days of decision.
  - Percentage of notifications of arraignment within 7 days of scheduling.

- **Complaints**
  - Number of complaints by type of issue raised.
  - Percentage of complaints (a) acknowledged within 5 working days (b) dealt with within 30 working days.

Priority 4: Increase capability across our organisation

- **Staff satisfaction (NICS People Survey)**
  - Percentage of staff who agree that the PPS is a good organisation to work for.
  - PPS Employee Engagement Index (%).

- **Performance management**
  - Percentage of staff with a completed Personal Performance Agreement by the agreed target date.
  - Percentage of end of year Performance Management Reports completed by the agreed target date.

- **Training**
  - Number of agreed training events delivered.

Annex A: PPS Strategic Priorities and Outcomes

Priority 1: Reduce levels of delay in the criminal justice system

Through effective collaboration with partners, we address avoidable delay within the criminal justice system to deliver timely and fair outcomes for all.

We progress cases in a timely manner.

- ✓ ***There are reducing levels of avoidable delay.***
- ✓ ***We are a 'digital first' organisation, extending the use of integrated digital processes and reducing reliance on paper-based systems in the delivery of our services.***
- ✓ ***Our processes and operating procedures are operating efficiently.***
- ✓ ***We adopt a 'whole system' approach which helps to drive efficiency across all stages of the criminal justice process.***

We promote and support a criminal justice system that is collaborative.

- ✓ ***We have strengthened relationships with criminal justice partners.***
- ✓ ***Demand in the criminal justice system is collectively understood and managed.***
- ✓ ***We work with partners to implement more proportionate and streamlined ways to deal with cases and focus resources on more serious and complex cases.***
- ✓ ***We successfully collaborate with partner organisations and service users to implement new digital services.***

Priority 2: Increase the quality of our casework

Our casework underpins everything we do to maintain an independent, fair and effective prosecution service. We hold ourselves to high quality standards and seek to deliver justice in every case in accordance with the law.

Our people are enabled to work effectively.

- ✓ ***Our processes prioritise quality and embed a 'get it right first time' approach.***
- ✓ ***We demonstrate a commitment to clear quality standards, ensuring compliance with our obligations under the Code for Prosecutors.***
- ✓ ***We work with police to improve file quality and ensure our disclosure duties are met.***

Our people apply high legal and ethical standards.

- ✓ ***We act with integrity and impartiality in everything we do and are open, accountable and transparent.***
- ✓ ***Our people have strong legal and administrative skills.***
- ✓ ***Our cases are expertly prepared and presented.***

Priority 3: Enhance confidence and trust in the Public Prosecution Service

We place victims at the heart of the criminal justice system, promoting a supportive, respectful and fair approach, while building public confidence in all aspects of our work.

Victims and witnesses experience a supportive and trauma-informed service

- ✓ **We engage empathetically and proactively with victims and witnesses and support them to participate.**
- ✓ **We promote and enable a joined-up criminal justice system approach to supporting victims.**
- ✓ **We work with partners to extend the services we provide to victims and witnesses including an enhanced Needs Assessment Service and greater access to 'real time' information.**

Victims, witnesses and the wider public understand what we do

- ✓ **We ensure that victims and witnesses know their rights and that we adhere to the standards set out in the Victim and Witness Charters**
- ✓ **We are clear about our role, decisions and independence.**
- ✓ **We promote our successes and are accountable for our mistakes.**

Priority 4: Increase capability across our organisation

The PPS is a well-led, outcome focussed and high performing organisation. We want all of our people to succeed and to be at their best, and invest to ensure they feel supported, respected and valued for the work they do.

We have the talent we need to succeed

- ✓ *We target the recruitment and retention of appropriately skilled people.*
- ✓ *We enable our people to develop and progress.*
- ✓ *Excellence is encouraged and promoted.*
- ✓ *Our people have the skills to adapt to a changing environment.*

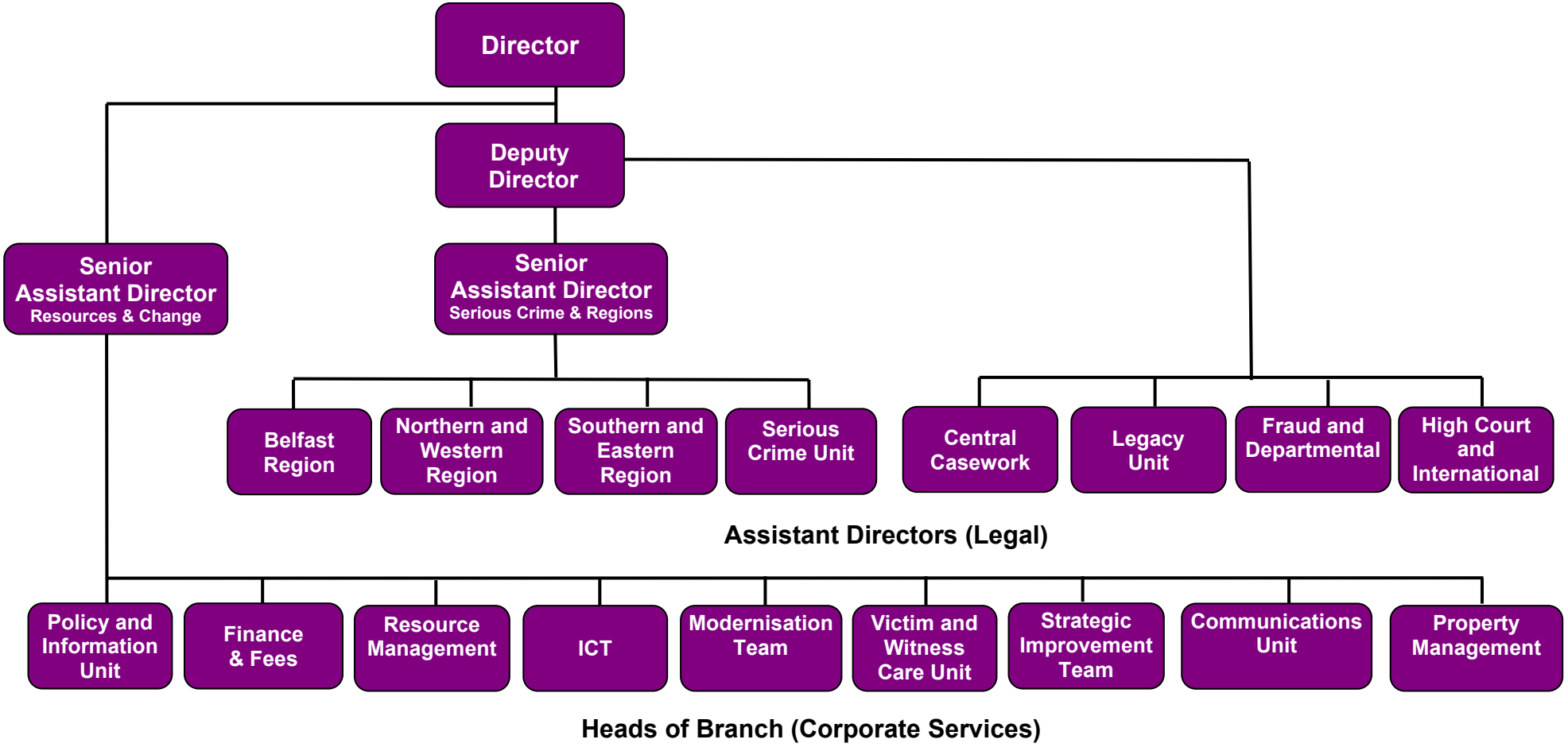
Our people feel valued

- ✓ *Our people are engaged and motivated by their work.*
- ✓ *Success is recognised and celebrated.*
- ✓ *Our people's wellbeing is improved.*

We are a high performing and outcome focused organisation

- ✓ *Our organisational structures and people are agile.*
- ✓ *Our senior team and managers uphold and ensure PPS standards and performance levels.*
- ✓ *We adopt and embed a culture of continuous improvement.*
- ✓ *All staff and teams know what is expected of them.*

Annex B: PPS Organisation Chart



Contact Us

If you require any further information about the PPS, or a copy of this document in an alternative format, please contact:

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