



Chair of the Committee  
Northern Ireland Affairs Committee

Via email: [NORTHIRCOM@parliament.uk](mailto:NORTHIRCOM@parliament.uk)

6 March 2023

Dear Chair

### **Northern Ireland Prison Service - Supplementary Evidence**

Firstly, I would like to extend my thanks to the Committee on behalf of the Northern Ireland Prison Service for the opportunity to provide oral evidence in support of its inquiry into the effect of paramilitary activity and organised crime on society in Northern Ireland.

I would also like to acknowledge the assistance provided by your parliamentary specialist throughout the process, which we appreciate greatly.

You will recall that I undertook to provide follow up information in relation to questions 394 and 398/9 in writing and I am pleased to do so within the attached document. I trust we have sufficiently addressed the Committee's queries, though please do not hesitate to revert to me should you need any clarification.

Yours sincerely

**RONNIE ARMOUR**  
Director General

enc

## Appendix

### Northern Ireland Prison Service – Supplementary Evidence

#### Q394 – information relating to any differential in literacy and numeracy skills and reoffending rates between dissident republican paramilitaries and loyalist paramilitaries in prison

Our learning and skills delivery partner, Belfast Met undertakes educational assessments in literacy and numeracy at an early stage of each individual's sentence. The table below illustrates the differential in the literacy and numeracy assessments between the two cohorts:

	Literacy		Numeracy	
	Assessment below level 1	Assessment level 1 or above	Assessment below level 1	Assessment level 1 or above
Loyalists	42%	58%	42%	58%
Dissident Republicans	25%	75%	25%	75%

Turning to the reoffending rate between the two cohorts, we are obliged to apply routine disclosure controls to all datasets in order to mitigate the risk of identifying any individuals within the data. As a result, it is unfortunately not possible to deduce any meaningful reoffending analysis between the two cohorts.

However, members will recall that during our evidence session, it was noted that the reoffending rate for the 2019/20 cohort leaving separation was 18%. It is worth noting that this represents a reduction from 25% in 2017/18.

#### Q398 – what is the age profile of those who are separated?

A total of 36 individuals were held in separated accommodation on 22nd February 2023, all of whom were adult. Those who identified as republican represented 21 of these. Of this cohort, 7 were aged 39 and under at that date, while 14 were aged 40 and over.

Of the remaining 15 who identified as loyalist, 8 were aged 39 and under at that date and 7 were aged 40 and over.

It has not been possible to provide a further breakdown of the age profiles given the low numbers involved and associated disclosure risk.



**Q398/9 – are different approaches taken to the younger prisoners associated with Paramilitarism?**

There are currently no young adults held within separated accommodation.

The learning and skills curriculum takes account of the unique needs of all persons held in the care of the Northern Ireland Prison Service including women, older people, foreign nationals and young adults. 18-24 year olds are detained in Hydebank Wood College, which operates under a college ethos of encouraging and supporting individuals into education and skills training.

All committals are encouraged to undertake educational assessments to ascertain their individual educational and aspirational needs to enable the Northern Ireland Prison Service to support them on their pathway to employment.