

Justice

We acknowledge the need for an effective and representative police service to uphold law, defend peace and protect the innocent. To achieve this goal a police force needs to have respect for the communities it serves. This respect must be two-way and can only be built through partnership. In the absence of full armed conflict the police service must now adjust to the new environment. We must develop initiatives that will assist in the development of safe and secure communities with rigorous opposition to organised crime, illicit drugs trade, anti-social behaviour and more. Our policy position is outlined below:-

(I) The Armed Forces Covenant recognises that the government has an obligation to the Armed Forces community and it establishes how they should expect to be treated. The Covenant was published in 2011 with a detailed document outlining the steps being taken to support the armed forces community. The Covenant exists to redress the disadvantages that the armed forces community may face in comparison to other citizens. Northern Ireland is the only region of the United Kingdom that has failed to implement this Covenant. The Progressive Unionist Party will seek to overturn this decision and ensure veterans living in Northern Ireland are not treated any less favourably than those in England, Scotland or Wales.

(II) Implementation of the Marriage Equality Act in Northern Ireland. Similar to England, Scotland and Wales and in line with the European Human Rights Convention, we will seek to enshrine the protections of those religious institutions, who do not endorse the act, into legislation.

(III) The Progressive Unionist Party supports a woman's right to control her body via the assertion of her reproductive rights. At present this particular aspect of healthcare is bound over by criminal legislation and has remained as such for a century and five decades. We would seek to change this outdated legislation and extend the 1967 Abortion Act to Northern Ireland. By decriminalising abortion here, we can ensure that all citizens in Northern Ireland have access to local, safe and free reproductive healthcare alongside those living in Great Britain.

(IV) Strengthen and expand laws defining rape, sexual assault and revenge porn; train police and judges about sexual violence and improve the application of existing laws. Improving existing laws and their implementation may serve to improve the quality of care afforded to survivors and may serve to curb sexual violence by strengthening sanctions against perpetrators.

(V) The Progressive Unionist Party fully supports the European Court of Human Rights and the implementation of the Human Rights Act 1998 in the United Kingdom. Subsequently we support the institutions in place working towards the application and protection of social, economic and cultural rights for all our citizens here in Northern Ireland. In order for a truly democratic, fair and just society, all citizens should be treated as equal individuals by its government and actively challenging discrimination where necessary, whether it's racial, religious belief, sexual orientation, disability, gender-based or otherwise.

(VI) We will seek adequate funding to educate prisoners. Educational underachievement and crime go hand in hand. Young men and women with numeracy and literacy problems make up a high percentage of today's prison population. We believe education and skills training in prisons and young offenders centres can prevent reoffending upon release from jail.

(VII) Given the unique history of Northern Ireland compared to the rest of the United Kingdom, it is necessary to acknowledge the role and impact of political prisoners in today's society. The involvement of released prisoners, former paramilitary activists and others within the political process will enable them to embrace the principles of participative democracy and to play an active role in working for social change, for the enrichment of their own personal lives as well as the corporate life of their community. We are dedicated to an honourable and equitable society, founded in democratic and accountable principles, from this we call for the abolition of social exclusion and discrimination which prevents prisoners from making a meaning contribution towards political and community reconstruction. The Progressive Unionist Party supports the removal of all impediments that prevent former political motivated prisoners from resuming full citizenship.

(VIII) We support Community Based Restorative Justice schemes which work alongside PSNI and other statutory agencies. Historically proven effective in tackling anti-social behaviour and low level crime, working particularly with young people, early intervention into their behaviour can help stop the elevation of criminal participation and keep them out of the criminal justice system while still addressing the crime they have become involved in. It is a proactive approach that helps break destructive cycles of criminal activity, incarceration and limited opportunities upon release.