

Review of the first year of the restored Northern Ireland Executive

PIVOTAL TRACKER
JANUARY 2025

PIVOTAL

PUBLIC POLICY
FORUM NI

Introduction

Following a two-year collapse, the Northern Ireland Assembly and Executive were restored in February 2024. They faced numerous challenges: public sector strikes, a cost-of-living crisis, overstretched budgets, and deteriorating public services. One year on, the Executive can point to many important actions, and without doubt there has been progress that would not have happened in the absence of the institutions.

Since Pivotal's [last tracker report](#), there have been a number of positive actions, particularly the publication of a [draft Programme for Government \(PfG\)](#) and a [draft Budget for 2025-26](#), together with specific actions including an [Environmental Improvement Plan](#), improvements in [childcare provision](#), and a strategy to [End Violence Against Women and Girls](#). The publication of the draft PfG is a positive step forward, but it has been challenged as being too aspirational, without clear targets or delivery plans.

While these actions are welcome, Pivotal would highlight four connected areas where much more progress is needed. First, the public services that people experience day-to-day are in a very poor state, and the Executive must bring about improvements in 2025. Delivery of tangible changes is essential, for example on health service waiting times, housing, and childcare. Second, Northern Ireland's long-standing structural problems persist, and at present there is not convincing evidence that current plans will result in significant improvements to wastewater infrastructure, poverty, productivity, or the environment. The challenge for the Executive now is to acknowledge these crises and accelerate the development of realistic plans. Third, transformation and reform of public services are long overdue and must be prioritised, in order for good quality services to be affordable now and in the future. Fourth, there needs to be a continued focus on getting the best from public

sector budgets, including full consideration of efficiencies, reforms and revenue raising.

Finally, to achieve any of this requires the commitment of all parties to the continued operation of the institutions, without the threat of collapse. The stop-start government that Northern Ireland has experienced over the last decade has left public services in a dire condition. Stable and effective government is essential if we are to have a chance of getting public services back on track.

THIS REPORT CONSIDERS

- 1 The effectiveness of the Executive and its departments since February 2024
- 2 Four cross-cutting areas for focus and improvement for the Executive during 2025
- 3 Key data which illustrate some of Northern Ireland's biggest challenges

Pivotal is an independent think tank based in Northern Ireland that aims to inform and enhance policy-making here. It is on that basis that we offer this analysis.

How effective has the Executive been in the past year?

Since its return, the Executive has shown a commitment to the institutions and to getting on with the job in a business-like manner. There seems to be a positive and constructive working relationship between the First and deputy First Ministers. On the whole, this spirit of partnership appears to be shared around the Executive table.

Overall the Executive is in a much stronger and more stable position than at many times in the past. The publication of the draft PfG showed that common aims have been agreed, many of which resonate with the public. Individually, Ministers are tackling some of the issues that affect people right across Northern Ireland, including [SEN provision](#), a fair and [just transition to green energy](#), and supports for [victims and survivors](#) of the Troubles.

However, despite this progress, there is a very long way to go. Many public services are in crisis, and fundamental structural issues remain unaddressed. Continuing with current approaches will only lead to further poor outcomes. Indeed, problems are likely to become more acute and challenging to resolve.

The draft PfG has been criticised for being aspirational and unfocused, with nine priorities, four missions, almost fifty indicators, but no targets. It lacks detail on how many of the actions will be funded and delivered. [Fewer than half of the bills proposed](#) to have been tabled this year made it to the Assembly floor, leaving crucial legislation on decarbonisation, public health, and redress for those affected by injustices in the mother and baby homes unprepared. The Assembly has spent a lot of time debating issues that do not lead to any meaningful actions.

There is a repeated pattern amongst Executive Ministers of identifying problems and saying how important it is that

they are addressed, but without any specific action plans, funding or targets. The Executive needs to move beyond this, to agree concrete proposals for change and how they will be held accountable for improvements. Their plans need to be deliverable and affordable, and inevitably will involve making choices between different issues. Choosing a small number of joint priorities where they can realistically make a difference may be the best approach at this stage.

The continued stability of the institutions is essential. Collapse, or the threat of collapse, should not be options. But more than this, the Executive needs to face up to the seriousness of the problems they face, and work constructively, collectively, and at pace to tackle them. Silo mentality, a failure to act and take big decisions, and fractured Executives in the past have not been able to solve the problems in our society, and so a culture of collaboration and seriousness is vital.

On the following page, Pivotal makes suggestions as to what actions the Executive should prioritise looking forward.

1

Deliver improvements to the issues that matter to people day to day

There is an urgent need for the Executive to deliver improvements in the public services people interact with each day, like the health service, schools, childcare, and transport. There is understandable disillusionment about the current state of public services. People need to see progress if they are to be confident in our government's ability to provide what they need. We welcome the agreement of a draft Programme for Government, but we are concerned at the lack of delivery plans and targets. It is imperative now that the Executive sets out specifically how it will improve public services in 2025 and is held accountable for delivering that.

2

Agree specific plans that will make a difference to Northern Ireland's long-standing structural problems

Northern Ireland's long-standing challenges are well known, including wastewater infrastructure, housing, productivity, poverty, environmental regulation, and health service reconfiguration. Most of these have been exacerbated by years of inaction. While the draft Programme for Government identifies many of these structural issues, it sets out aspirations for change without concrete actions or funding. Continuing with the current approach will just lead to the same poor outcomes. Change is needed. In 2025, the Executive needs collectively to acknowledge that we are not on track, and put in place ambitious but realistic plans that will bring about step-change improvements.

3

Relentlessly pursue and deliver transformation of public services

Reform and Transformation of Public Services is one of the PfG priorities, and should be at the core of everything the Executive does. The Bengoa Report's prediction of 'change

or collapse' should warn our politicians that it is not enough for our public services to stand still, but instead there should be a continued process of improvement. The Interim Public Service Transformation Board should be put on a permanent footing, and progress accelerated on projects funded from the Transformation Fund. Meaningful actions should be driven by evidence and data, with a focus on improvement, effectiveness and efficiency. The PfG's [Wellbeing Dashboard](#) is a positive step towards a data-driven Executive, but it remains to be seen how it will be used.

// It is imperative now that the Executive sets out specifically how it will improve public services in 2025 and is held accountable for delivering that. //

4

Manage public finances to get the best for Northern Ireland

There has been good progress over the year on budgetary management, including agreeing an Interim Fiscal Framework, a Budget Sustainability Plan and a draft Budget for 2025-26. The Executive needs to continue to look collectively at how to get the best from NI's finances, including a sharp focus on potential savings from efficiencies and transformation. The Executive should also consider the options for increased local revenue raising, noting that a refusal to consider this limits the amount of funding available for public services. The UK Budget in autumn 2024 provided a significant injection of new funding for NI in 2025-26 (£1.5 billion more DEL). This is much more than in the past, with further additions on this scale looking unlikely. It is therefore concerning that politicians are already saying that this funding is insufficient. There is a serious risk that these additions will be used to just maintain current service provision, rather than be spent strategically to improve or transform services, as is the intention in the rest of the UK.

Health

HEADLINE ACTIONS IN 2024



Hospital reconfiguration framework published



Three-year Health and Social Care Plan published



Resolution of industrial disputes

PRIORITIES FOR THE DEPARTMENT



Action on hospital reconfiguration



Plan to reduce waiting lists



Restructure services to deliver more in primary care

There are over **half a million** patients waiting for their first outpatient appointment with a consultant.¹ The Department's target is that no one waits more than a year, but the median wait time in the latest data is 59.4 weeks. Only **30% of women** were seen within the 14 day target following a breast cancer referral, down from almost 53% the year before. One of the Executive's nine priorities is to cut health waiting times, which are the longest in the UK. Despite this, the draft PfG states that 'it will not be possible to reduce our lengthy waiting times with the funding currently available'. It is therefore not clear at present what the Department's plan is for addressing waiting times.

During the year the Minister did not support the Budget or the monitoring rounds, saying that implementing them would result in '**catastrophic consequences**' for service delivery. It is welcome, therefore, that the Minister **agreed to the draft Budget** for 2025-26. It was also good to hear of the '**positive response**' of trade unions to the pay offer for 2024-25.

A **hospital reconfiguration framework** setting out principles is out for consultation, which says that acute hospitals will not close, but that the health service should be seen as a 'network' of hospitals which creates 'centres of excellence' for certain services. Despite this, and the innovative change to a **regional breast cancer waiting list**, there is no information yet about what specific changes will be made to implement reconfiguration. While the **three-year**

Health and Social Care plan has positive language about reconfiguration, it is largely unfunded and is therefore difficult to see yet what it will mean in practice.

Reducing health inequalities is one of the Minister's priorities as demonstrated in the **Live Better Initiative** in low-income communities in Derry-Londonderry and Belfast.

The recent **crisis in Emergency Departments** has shown the urgent need for both better provision of social care so people can leave hospital when they are fit for discharge, and also the importance of 'shifting left' into primary care, so that more services are provided in local communities rather than hospitals. With winter pressures becoming an annual crisis in the health service, the need for transformation is clear.

¹The South Eastern and Belfast Trusts have launched the Encompass digital data record, and as such, not all the data is available, but the information provided is 'of sufficient quality for publication and use'.

Education

HEADLINE ACTIONS IN 2024



Investment in childcare and early years



Response to Independent Review of Education



Investment in Special Educational Needs

PRIORITIES FOR THE DEPARTMENT



Publish an Early Learning and Childcare Strategy



Resolution of teachers' pay dispute



Improvements to the schools' estate

The Department of Education has invested **£25m in childcare**, moving towards an offer of 22.5 hours of pre-school per week for all 3-4 year olds, and also **increased funding for non-statutory pre-school providers**. In the first two weeks of the Childcare Subsidy Scheme opening, **10,000 people had signed up**. It is welcome that the Minister has resolved the funding **cliff-edge**, with the **15% subsidy included in the draft Budget** for the next financial year. The Department should now work towards developing a full Early Learning and Childcare Strategy, which will be **vital to growing our economy**.

The Minister announced significant **SEN reforms** in the Assembly, focusing on early intervention, an evidence-based move away from one-to-one supports, and greater flexibility for schools in facilitating SEN pupils. Previous investments include capital spends on **eight new special schools**, and **£1.2m in supports** for SEN pupils. The upcoming SEN Delivery Plan is welcome, but the Minister has acknowledged the funding challenges these reforms pose. It is important that the Minister continues to focus on this, and that SEN students have both the support and **school places** they need.

In the Minister's response to the Independent Review of Education, he announced a review of the schools curriculum and of assessment, work on a new literacy and numeracy strategy, and that legislation will be brought to keep all children in education or training until 18 years of age. Much of his response aligned with the Review's

recommendations, but despite the recommendation that the post-primary transition process (i.e. academic selection at 11) should be modified, the Minister said that this was **not a departmental priority**.

A **Northern Ireland Audit Office report** detailed the historic under-investment in the schools' estate, highlighting that the maintenance backlog has risen by 50% since 2017-18 to £450m. With numerous schools reporting **damp, mould and rodent infestations**, action must be taken to ensure schools remain safe places to learn. A **curriculum-led capital investment programme** has been announced, but it has come under criticism for **failing to invest** in the right places.

While recognising the budgetary pressures, finalising negotiations for a satisfactory pay award for teachers should be a priority for the Department, to avoid the disruption of further **industrial action from teachers** and other school staff.

Justice

HEADLINE ACTIONS IN 2024



Domestic and Sexual Abuse Strategy launched



Enabling Access to Justice programme announced



Increased PSNI funding

PRIORITIES FOR THE DEPARTMENT



Address court backlogs



Passage of the Victims Bill



Ensuring sufficient police numbers

The draft PfG states that the Executive will seek 'to achieve a sufficient number of police officers in line with NDNA [New Decade New Approach]', which commits to increasing the PSNI to 7,500 officers from the 6,305 full-time officers employed currently. The Chief Constable has stated that a 'reasonable assessment' to keep Northern Ireland safe is 8,000 officers, but nonetheless, the PSNI have welcomed the PfG commitment. The riots and violence in the summer highlighted the insufficient capacity of the PSNI.

In the November monitoring round following the UK Budget, the Department was allocated an extra £39.3m, with the PSNI receiving a further £36.7m. This will help relieve the pressures the Department and PSNI face, and it is vital that both continue to manage within their budgets in the coming year. The Department should also work within its allocation to seek to resolve the industrial action of criminal barristers.

In the courts system, the median time for a case to be completed was 190 days in 2023-24, with the figure standing at 551 days in the Crown Court, and 675 days for a sexual offence case. There are PfG commitments to reforms including digital enhancements, efficiencies, and looking at the jurisdiction of the courts. It is imperative that reforms are undertaken to restore confidence in the criminal justice system. A key part of this will be tackling reoffending rates, with the most recent statistics showing that 17.6% reoffended within one year of release. Reoffending in England and Wales has

an economic and social cost of £16.7bn, highlighting the huge impact this has on justice budgets. While Northern Ireland data is not available, the Department should nonetheless produce a strategy to reduce reoffending rates here. In 2023, an Audit Office report into reoffending made a number of recommendations which the Department should follow.

While an Executive strategy, the Department of Justice will have an important role in the Ending Violence Against Women and Girls Framework, a key document published this year. With 25 women killed in Northern Ireland in the last five years, and recent data showing a significant gender disparity in the experiences of gender-based violence, the implementation of this strategy is of the utmost importance.

This ties into the Justice Minister's focus on victims, which includes the extension of the Sexual Offence Legal Advisers pilot, the Victim and Witness Charters, a Victims and Witnesses of Crime bill consultation, as well as cross-departmental strategies and action plans on child criminal exploitation and domestic sexual abuse.

Economy

HEADLINE ACTIONS IN 2024



Four-pillar vision for the economy announced



Sub-regional economic plan published



Magee Taskforce Reports and Action Plan produced

PRIORITIES FOR THE DEPARTMENT



Action and progress on the economic vision



Improvements to productivity



Action on economic inactivity

The Department's work has been centred around the Minister's [four priorities in his Economic Vision](#): good jobs, regional balance, increased productivity, and decarbonisation. On the first, the Minister put a [Good Jobs Bill](#) out for consultation, which closed in September. With a shortened mandate, it is important that this 'landmark' legislation is brought before the Assembly soon, to allow for sufficient scrutiny.

On regional balance, the [Sub-Regional Economic Plan](#) proposes Local Economic Partnerships, a 'realigned Department', and a restructured Invest NI which will work to drive investment outside Belfast. While there have been some successes on this, [investment and funding remains concentrated in the capital](#). The [Magee Taskforce's Action Plan](#) details the potential an expanded campus would have for the North West, and the Executive should invest the necessary funds and energy into realising its aims.

Despite a rise in productivity during the pandemic, it once more fell to [13% below the UK average](#) (10th out of 12 UK regions), and 20% below the Republic of Ireland in 2022. Of the Productivity Institute's 18 metrics, 14 are worse for NI than the rest of the UK. The PfG outlines the use of the City and Growth Deals, as well as numerous funds and initiatives to boost productivity, but lacks any firm details or actions. The Minister has, however, announced a [£350,000 scheme](#) to boost productivity for SMEs. Similarly, despite

advancements like the [Digital Skills Action Plan](#), much more needs to be done to tackle the overall [low level of skills](#) in Northern Ireland.

On decarbonisation, the Minister has consulted on [smart electricity meters](#) and [low carbon heating](#), established a [Net Zero Advisory Board](#), and announced that he will introduce [legislation to ban fracking](#) in late 2025. While these actions are welcome, there needs to be a sustained effort to decarbonise if we are to meet our Climate Change Act 2022 obligations. With only [44.5% of electricity consumption coming from renewables](#), we are far behind our 2030 target of 80%. The Minister must also ensure that business and industry are committed to and equipped for green growth.

Over a quarter of the working age population in Northern Ireland are [economically inactive](#). The Department must produce a clear plan to tackle this problem, to provide a larger, more productive workforce that can meet our future labour needs and help grow the economy.

Infrastructure

HEADLINE ACTIONS IN 2024



Opening of Grand Central Station



Approval of A5 improvements



Assembly decarbonization approval

PRIORITIES FOR THE DEPARTMENT



Action on wastewater infrastructure



More efficient planning system



Resolving traffic problems in Belfast

One of the biggest challenges facing Northern Ireland is the condition of its wastewater infrastructure. Despite the Minister saying the funding model is *fit for purpose*, years of inaction have led to over 19,000 development applications being delayed. The NI Audit Office has recommended a ‘comprehensive review’ of alternative funding models. The Minister has ruled out household water charges and is considering developer contributions, but these have been criticised for having ‘minimal impact’. Funding has been released for a number of developments in Northern Ireland, but this issue remains an urgent priority for the Department and the Executive as a whole.

The planning system is also contributing to Northern Ireland’s problems with wait times exceeding targets across the board. While the Minister has made some minor interventions in the planning system, much more needs to be done. The backlog on planning has knock-on effects in numerous sectors, including decarbonisation – an Executive priority. Improved performance in the planning system is key to transforming Northern Ireland’s economy, enabling development, meeting Net Zero targets, and building homes.

The works around the new Grand Central Station have had a major impact on traffic in Belfast City Centre, especially during the already busy Christmas period. Despite some mitigations from the Department, police responses, buses, and businesses were affected. The Minister’s solutions have faced mixed

responses from businesses and transport groups. Long term fixes are needed for this problem, including the viability of public transport and park and rides.

A number of major infrastructure projects have been completed or have gained approval in the last year, such as Grand Central Station and the authorisation of the A5 upgrade, although it now faces fresh legal challenges. As long-standing Executive commitments, these should be welcome, and will help deliver safer, more efficient travel across Northern Ireland.

The Minister took a number of steps to tackle the long MOT waiting times faced by road users, including recruiting new examiners, temporary MOT exemptions for taxed, insured, and roadworthy cars, and emergency tests for tax-expired cars. Despite these changes, however, the average wait for an MOT remain well above the Department’s six week target, at 55 days.

Agriculture, Environment & Rural Affairs

HEADLINE ACTIONS IN 2024



Progress on the Lough Neagh Action Plan



Environmental Improvement Plan published



Independent review of environmental governance launched

PRIORITIES FOR THE DEPARTMENT



Continued action on Lough Neagh



Lead work to achieve climate change targets



Clarity for farmers affected by Agricultural Property Relief changes

One of the biggest challenges facing the Executive when it returned in February 2023 was the ecological crisis in Lough Neagh. In July, the Executive approved the Minister's [Lough Neagh Action Plan](#), which has 17 cross-cutting actions alongside the 20 actions already approved by DAERA. Some of these actions have been undertaken, such as the [Small Business Research Initiative](#) to explore solutions and treatment, and the use of a [monitoring and research vessel](#) on the Lough. The Minister has said that it could take 'decades' to solve the problem, so it is vital that the Department and the Executive work effectively and at pace to implement the Action Plan.

The Minister also gained Executive approval for his [Environmental Improvement Plan](#), which will act as Northern Ireland's first environment strategy. Its objectives are: excellent air, water, and land quality; a healthy and accessible environment everyone can enjoy; thriving nature and wildlife; sustainable production and consumption on land and at sea; zero waste and a circular economy; and net zero emissions and climate resilience. This was a requirement of the Environment Act 2021, and should have been delivered by July 2023.

The Department should lead on endeavours to meet the requirements of the Climate Change Act 2022. [21 m tonnes of carbon](#) was estimated to have been emitted in 2020, rising to [22m in 2021](#). There should be a relentless focus

on meeting NI's climate change targets. The agreement of [carbon budgets](#) is welcome, but the Minister should now bring forward a Climate Action Plan (due in 2023) detailing emission reduction policies.

In November, the Minister announced an [independent review](#) 'to strengthen environmental governance', which will consider options for an independent environment protection agency. Environmental groups have called on the Minister to '[get on with the job](#)' of creating this agency, which was a New Decade New Approach commitment.

The agriculture industry reacted strongly to the UK Budget's changes to Agricultural Property Relief on inheritance tax. The Minister said the changes would affect [half of all farms](#) here. However, the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland claimed that [most farms would not be affected](#) by the changes. The Minister should lead on providing clarity and assurance to the agriculture sector, stating clearly the realities of the policy and the ways in which it will impact farmers.

Communities

HEADLINE ACTIONS IN 2024



£100 winter fuel payment support announced



Welfare mitigations extended



Housing Supply Strategy published

PRIORITIES FOR THE DEPARTMENT



Expand provision of social housing



Develop an anti-poverty strategy



Reach agreement about re-development of Casement Park

The draft PfG states that there are 47,000 households on the waiting list for social housing, 35,000 of whom are in housing stress. The Housing Executive and housing associations will only be able to deliver 400 social homes in 2024-25, well below the target of 2,000. There have been some interventions from the Minister, such as the Intermediate Rent Scheme. The Housing Supply Strategy sets out a system capable of delivering 100,000 homes by 2037, one third of which will be social homes. However, it emphasises that this is not a target, and it is unclear how it will be funded and delivered.

Northern Ireland has been without an anti-poverty strategy since 2022, committed to in the St Andrew's Agreement 2006 and codified in the Northern Ireland Act 1998. 14% of people and 19% of children are in absolute poverty here, showing the severity of this problem. The Public Accounts Committee's damning report into child poverty in Northern Ireland detailed the failings of the Department over the years. In light of this, reports that the Minister has yet to meet with any anti-poverty groups are concerning. As a matter of urgency, the Minister should sit down with key stakeholders and develop an anti-poverty strategy. There have also been calls to include poverty as a PfG priority.

The Minister has extended the welfare reform mitigations beyond their cliff-edge at the end of the financial year. This will provide assurance and support for the 38,000 people

who benefitted from it in 2023-24. This has been a focus of campaign groups for a long time, and will be welcome news to many.

Following the Minister's disappointment at the UK Government's cut to the Winter Fuel Payment, he announced a one off payment of £100 to all pensioners in Northern Ireland, as well as an additional £21.3m of pensioner benefits through the Make the Call service.

The UK Government announced it was no longer contributing funds to build Casement Park in time for the Euro 2028 tournament. Despite this, the Department have said that they remain committed to building it, as set out in the agreement reached with the GAA in 2011. With a more modest design proposal, and the GAA reconsidering its decision on extra funding, the Department needs to deliver results on this long-running Executive commitment.

Finance

HEADLINE ACTIONS IN 2024



Interim Fiscal Framework agreed



Budget Sustainability Plan published



Draft Budget 2025-26 out for consultation

PRIORITIES FOR THE DEPARTMENT



Balancing budgets and spending pressures



Agree Final Fiscal Framework



Full consideration of revenue raising

The [draft Budget for 2025-26](#) is currently out for consultation. Following additional funding in the UK Budget in October, the total funding available is 9% higher than at the start of 2024-25. There will be a [£735 increase in spending per head](#) compared to 2024-25. The draft Budget allocates over half of the total funding to the Department of Health, together with £100m of capital funding for housing and £105.7m for NI Water. However, overall it is not clear that the Budget is driven by the PfG priorities, for example no specific funding was announced for waiting lists.

In May 2024, the Minister agreed an [Interim Fiscal Framework](#) for Northern Ireland with the UK Treasury. This deal adds a 'needs-based funding factor' into the Barnett formula, giving Northern Ireland a 24% uplift to Barnett consequentials if NI's funding per head falls below 124% compared to England. This offers enhanced funding to reflect relative need and to halt the 'Barnett squeeze'. Both parties to the Framework have committed to delivering a Final Fiscal Framework. There was also a commitment to a Strategic Infrastructure Plan, which has not yet been published.

The Department published a [Budget Sustainability Plan](#) which provides a strategic framework for future financial planning in Northern Ireland, and was a condition of the restoration package in February 2024. It commits to multi-year budgets when possible, more publishing of in-year

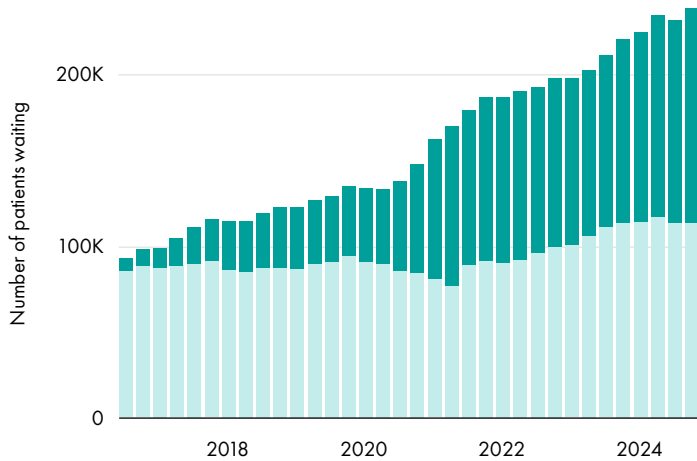
finance data, regular consideration of income generation, and to departmental financial sustainability plans. This, along with the Fiscal Framework, should contribute to more stable and sustainable public finances. It also set out options for revenue raising, in line with the restoration package requirement to raise £113m additional revenue locally. The Executive should have a serious conversation about revenue raising options, including whether suitable progressive measures would be desirable to contribute to funding public services.

The Minister announced her intention to [lift the maximum valuation cap on rates](#) and a revenue neutral revaluation of domestic properties. Through this, around 8,000 of the most valuable homes would face a higher rates bill. However, due to delays in agreeing when this would appear on the Executive's agenda, the [changes won't be implemented until at least 2026](#). This feels like a missed opportunity to raise some extra revenue in a progressive manner.

In a letter to the Treasury, the Minister pressed for supports and funding to [offset the rise in employer National Insurance Contributions](#). Many businesses have expressed concern, and [community and voluntary organisations](#) have said that job losses and service reductions are inevitable in light of the changes.

JANUARY 2025

Data Tracker



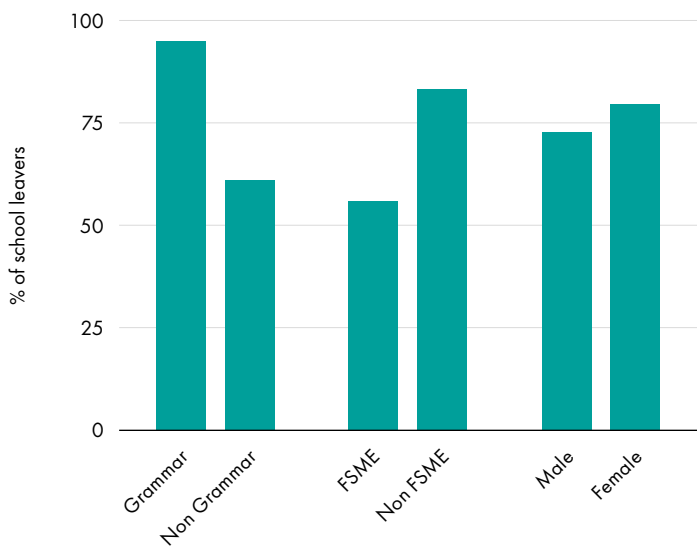
Health - Chart 1

Number of patients waiting for a first consultant-led outpatient appointment

More than half of patients in NI wait more than a year for a first appointment, compared to just 3% in England.

● Over 52 weeks ● Under 52 weeks

Note: Chart excludes South East Trust and Belfast Trust as latest data not available
Source: [Northern Ireland waiting time statistics, September 2024](#)

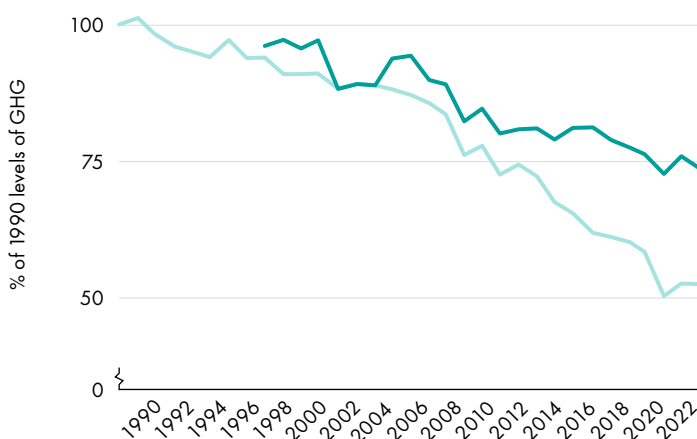


Education - Chart 2

Percentage of school leavers achieving 5 or more GCSEs A*-C including English and Maths

Large attainment gaps exist across our education system, particularly depending on school type and social background.

Note: FSME - Eligible for Free School Meals
Source: [NISRA - Qualifications and Destinations of Northern Ireland School Leavers 2022-23](#)



Environment - Chart 3

Greenhouse gas emissions in NI and UK compared to 1990

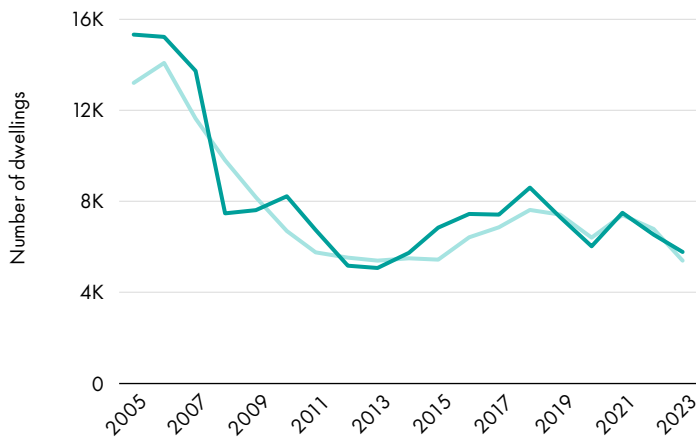
Northern Ireland lags well behind the UK in reducing Greenhouse gas emissions, despite ambitious targets set in the Climate Change Act 2022.

● NI ● UK

Source: [Climate Change Committee - 2024 Progress Report to Parliament](#)

JANUARY 2025

Data Tracker

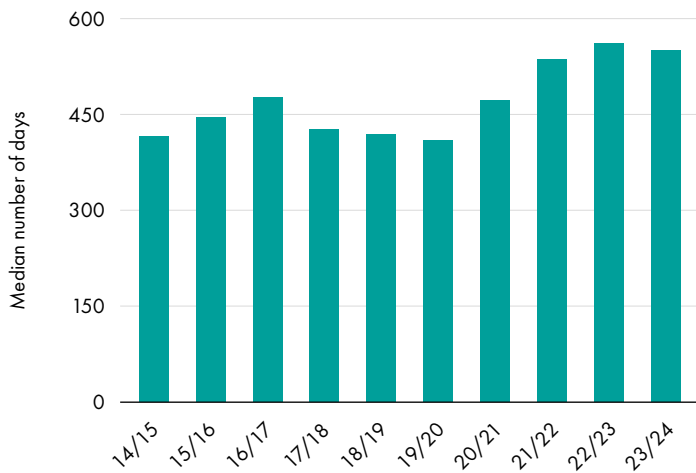


Housing - Chart 4
Annual new dwelling starts and completions

2023 saw the lowest number of housebuilding completions in Northern Ireland since 1959.

- Total new dwelling starts
- Total new dwelling completions

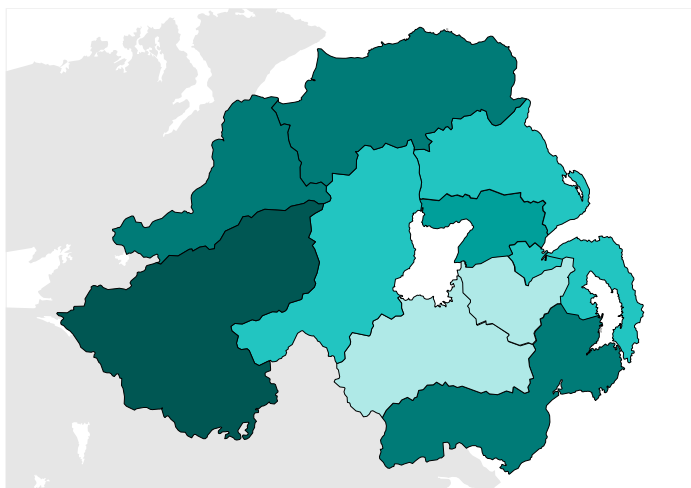
Source: Department of Finance - New dwelling statistics



Courts - Chart 5
Median number of days taken for cases to be dealt with at Crown Court

The median number of days for a Crown Court completion is down slightly from its 2022/23 high to 551, while the median time for a sexual offence is 675 days.

Sources: NISRA - Case Processing Time for Criminal Cases Dealt with at Courts in Northern Ireland April 2023 to March 2024, NISRA - Case Processing Time for Criminal Cases Dealt with at Courts in Northern Ireland 2018/19



Poverty - Chart 6
Relative poverty rate by Local Government District after housing costs

There are significant disparities in poverty across Northern Ireland, with particularly high levels west of the Bann.

- Poverty rate**
- 12-14%
 - 15-17%
 - 18-20%
 - 21-23%
 - 24-26%

Source: JRF - UK Poverty 2024

PIVOTAL

27 January 2025
www.pivotalppf.org



@PivotalPPF



@Pivotal-PPF



@pivotalppf.bsky.social