



BASE 2: WORKING TO SUPPORT INDIVIDUALS UNDER THREAT

AN INSPECTION OF THE ROLE OF
BASE 2 IN THREAT VERIFICATION

March 2020





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Laid before the Northern Ireland Assembly under Section 49(2) of the Justice (Northern Ireland) Act 2002 (as amended by paragraph 7(2) of Schedule 13 to The Northern Ireland Act 1998 (Devolution of Policing and Justice Functions) Order 2010) by the Department of Justice.

March 2020





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List of abbreviations

CJI	Criminal Justice Inspection Northern Ireland
CRJI	Community Restorative Justice Ireland
DfC	Department for Communities
DoJ	Department of Justice
NIA	Northern Ireland Alternatives
NIACRO	Northern Ireland Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders
NIHE	Northern Ireland Housing Executive
PfG	Programme for Government
PSNI	Police Service of Northern Ireland
STEM	Supporting Tenancies for Ethnic Minorities



Chief Inspector's Foreword

Services and processes designed and implemented 30 years ago to protect life and keep people safe are still much needed today.

Base 2 has saved lives and works in our communities to effectively validate threats from paramilitary groups to individuals and families living in public housing and helps them to relocate and resettle. The small number of dedicated staff have the trust and confidence of statutory providers.

In a normalised society we shouldn't need Base 2 but the reality is we do.

This review concluded that overall the Base 2 project was working soundly, processes were operating with integrity and clear human welfare outcomes had been delivered. It makes a strategic recommendation that the Department of Justice integrates the Base 2 process with the Executive Action Plan on Tackling Paramilitary Activity, Criminality and Organised Crime. Inclusion within the proposed centre of excellence for restorative justice should ensure Base 2 continues to effectively contribute to our journey towards normalisation.

Dr Stephen Dolan conducted this inspection and I am grateful to all those who contributed to this review.

Jacqui Durkin
**Chief Inspector of Criminal Justice
in Northern Ireland**

March 2020

**Criminal Justice Inspection
Northern Ireland**
a better justice system for all





Executive Summary

Origins of Base 2

The Base 2 project was established in 1990 with the support of several statutory bodies and had a role in supporting people under threat prior to its formal funding relationship with the Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE) which began in 2003-04; Base 2 receives £95,000 annually. The Base 2 project has been managed by the Northern Ireland Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders (NIACRO) - a large voluntary sector body - since its inception.

The initial 200 or so referrals per year to Base 2 now numbers just under 1,300 annually¹. Base 2 engages with 60 community based sources to verify threats, to mediate with individuals and groups and to signpost individuals to other statutory and voluntary support services.

The Base 2 Role in Verification

Criminal Justice Inspection Northern Ireland (CJI) examined the processes and governance of the Base 2 project through: observations of the process in practice; reviews of case files; interviews with a wide range of stakeholders; and analysis of the available statistics. Taking into account the checks arising from the application process, information sharing arrangements with the NIHE, the triangulating of evidence from

over 60 community based contacts, the input of restorative justice agencies, the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) and the extensive experience of the Base 2 interviewers,² a large scale or systematic misuse of the system was unlikely.

However, there were localised areas of concern with public perception being that the award of intimidation points³ meant threats could be misused to achieve higher priorities on the NIHE/Housing Associations' housing lists and that a local waiting list with a high level of applicants with intimidation points could negatively impact on other applicants in housing need. Local political representatives also expressed concerns about problem applicants being exported from one area to another and a potential conflict of interest due to the community contacts providing verification possibly being associated with the source of the threat. Compounding this was difficulty in providing triangulated evidence to verify threats emanating from dissident republican groups.

With these localised areas of concern noted, Inspectors formed the view that allegations of widespread abuse of the scheme or that Base 2 acted without integrity or to the benefit of particular individuals or groups were unfounded.

1 Referrals to Base 2, NIACRO Annual Report 2018-19 available at www.niacro.co.uk/publications

2 The Senior Practitioner has conducted 18,000 interviews.

3 Where an individual is assessed to be under threat the NIHE may award intimidation points which gives that individual a higher priority on the NIHE/Housing Associations' housing lists.

The overall working of the project was deemed to be sound and a widespread or systematic abuse of the public housing system remains unlikely.

Verification of threats and Intimidation Points

When an individual presents as homeless to the NIHE due to a threat or intimidation, the NIHE will request the PSNI to verify the threat⁴ and in a number of cases, the NIHE will also make a referral to Base 2. The NIHE will review this information and all relevant information to decide whether the individual's circumstances meet the criteria under the rules of the statutory Housing Selection Scheme for an award of intimidation points.⁵ In 2017-18, 558 individuals presented to the NIHE citing intimidation as the reason for their being rendered homeless. Of these 355 (64%) were accepted (figures provided by the NIHE). A review of the Waiting List in May 2018 identified that there were roughly 250 individuals with intimidation points on the Waiting List of around 40,000 at that time; less than 1%.

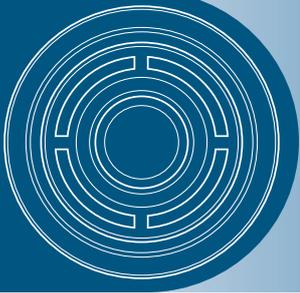
Looking forward

Some of the issues identified in this report extend beyond the role of Base 2. There are a range of social issues of which paramilitary coercion is but one. There is a need for a more strategic approach through the Executive Action Plan to *Tackle Paramilitary Activity, Criminality and Organised Crime* (the Action Plan) dealing with coercive control within communities. Base 2 should be included within Action Plan activities and its reporting could form part of the progress.

Over the last six years anti-social behaviour, drugs issues and community disputes have formed the majority of referrals to Base 2. This indicates that a restorative justice approach may be viable and supports the intention to create a centre of excellence for restorative justice. The report makes one strategic recommendation in this regard.

Most significantly, potential changes to social housing allocations and the current Housing Selection Scheme is part of a fundamental review by the Department for Communities (DfC) with a proposal to remove intimidation points from the Scheme.⁶

4 Some individuals present themselves to Base 2 in the first instance. Base 2 staff will always direct them to report to the NIHE.
5 The Housing Executive is required to provide an Allocations Scheme under Article 22 of the Housing (Northern Ireland) Order 1981.
6 Further information on the Department's review of the Housing Selection Scheme is available at <https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/consultations/communities/AW-041017%200641%20Housing%20Consultation%20Review%20of%20Social%20Housing%20Allocation.pdf>



Recommendations

Strategic recommendation

1 Within six months of the publication of this report, in accordance with the objectives agreed in the Executive Action Plan on *Tackling Paramilitary Activity, Criminality and Organised Crime*, the Department of Justice (DoJ) should bring forward options to create a centre of excellence for restorative justice and Base 2 should be affiliated to this centre (*Paragraph 2.7*).

Operational Recommendation

1 Following confirmation of information sharing arrangements, the annual/bi annual meetings of the Tackling Paramilitarism Team with Base 2, the PSNI and the NIHE should take place, with the Base 2 annual report as an agenda item to provide additional input to gauging Action Plan progress (*Paragraph 4.7*).

Areas for Improvement are highlighted in bold text throughout the report.



Inspection Report



Introduction

- 1.1 NIACRO, as the sponsor of the Base 2 project proposed a review of the project to assess its practice and process. Under section 47(4) of the Justice (Northern Ireland) Act 2002, the Minister of Justice may require the Chief Inspector of Criminal Justice to carry out a review of any matter relating to the criminal justice system in Northern Ireland (apart from a matter relating to a court or tribunal). On 16 January 2019 the Department of Justice (DoJ) asked the Chief Inspector of Criminal Justice in Northern Ireland to undertake an independent review of the Base 2 project, its role in the verification of threats to individuals and its work with the NIHE.
- 1.2 Additionally, the DoJ asked that the review also take into consideration the potential role of Base 2 in the Executive Action Plan *Tackling Paramilitary Activity, Criminality and Organised Crime (the Action Plan)*.
- 1.3 In direct response to the DoJ invitation, the then Chief Inspector developed Terms of Reference as set out in Appendix 1.
- 1.4 The Base 2 project is part of a programme of work provided by NIACRO within its overall framework to reduce crime and its impact on people and communities. The Base 2 project provides a crisis intervention service for individuals and families who are at risk of exclusion from their homes due to paramilitary or community threat. Base 2 also mediates on behalf of individuals at risk, in some cases the threats are lifted or moderated and signposts individuals to support programmes offered by NIACRO and others.
- 1.5 The Base 2 service provides information to the NIHE to assist in making decisions regarding housing and homelessness.
- 1.6 The NIHE decision-maker balances information from a range of sources including the PSNI and their own local knowledge which may also include information from Base 2. If the NIHE decides that an individual meets the criteria under the housing selection scheme relating to Intimidation Points they will be awarded an additional 200 points in addition to other housing need points. An award of Intimidation Points results in an applicant being placed in the top category of the Waiting List in their area(s) of choice. In the eventuality that an individual becomes permanently resettled, they may also receive an Emergency Grant of a fixed amount of £754 to assist with moving expenses.



Strategy and governance

Base 2 and NIACRO

- 2.1 The establishment of Base 2 in 1990 was a response to the number of individuals being placed under threat in their communities. With the support of statutory authorities, including social services and the Probation Board for Northern Ireland, the project had a role in supporting people under threat. The Northern Ireland Office (NIO) recognised the humanitarian efforts of NIACRO and the Base 2 project and thus provided the basis for funding by the NIHE from 2003-04.
- 2.2 After 30 years, NIACRO remains the home of the Base 2 project and oversees the delivery of the service, management of staffing and applications for funding. Reporting is formally through annual reports to NIACRO's Executive Committee with regular updates and reporting to the Adult Services Manager within NIACRO. Due to its nature there is no comparable project to Base 2 in the rest of the United Kingdom or the Republic of Ireland. The development of project oversight and governance has relied to a large extent on the corporate experience of NIACRO.
- 2.3 The umbrella of governance provided by NIACRO goes further than internal compliance. The acceptability of NIACRO within both republican and loyalist communities and its recognition by other statutory bodies, has contributed to the creation of the network of contacts and community access that is essential to the operation of Base 2.
- 2.4 Base 2 also reports to the NIHE as its primary funder and produces annual reports. In addition, quarterly meetings with the NIHE Homelessness Unit and provision and updating of data covering the work of Base 2 were completed.
- 2.5 During its formative years Base 2 received 200 or so referrals per year rising to 1,297 in 2018-19 as the service became more widely known with involvement of the statutory agencies gradually increasing. Annual funding from the NIHE is £95,000. Over 60 community based contacts provide information to Base 2.
- 2.6 Base 2 is closely associated with and has developed alongside community based restorative justice schemes. NIACRO's efforts in helping the establishment of community based restorative justice bodies, primarily Community Restorative Justice Ireland (CRJI) and Northern Ireland Alternatives (NIA) were significant. The aim was to provide an alternative to paramilitary style attacks, increase community engagement and ultimately create an environment where

the PSNI became acceptable in every community. During their formative years the high risk status afforded these restorative justice bodies was reflected in comprehensive governance arrangements. In the words of Professor Kieran McEvoy⁷ of Queen's University Belfast, *"the governance arrangements imposed on the restorative justice bodies initially reflected a level of distrust between them and the authorities. However, as the organisations have developed the rigour of these arrangements has actually been of benefit and probably contributed to the sustainability and wider acceptance of these schemes."*

- 2.7 Base 2 also provides a conduit for individuals and organisations that are in the process of establishing working relationships with statutory bodies and ultimately, in the transition from community control to community development. It is within this context that Base 2 should be considered as an element of the proposed centre for restorative justice being pursued by the Northern Ireland Executive through the Action Plan.⁸

Strategic recommendation 1

Within six months of the publication of this report, in accordance with the objectives agreed in the Executive Action Plan on *Tackling Paramilitary Activity, Criminality and Organised Crime*, the DoJ should bring forward options to create a centre of excellence for restorative justice and Base 2 should be affiliated to this centre.

Objectives of Base 2

- 2.8 The Base 2 project is most strongly associated with its role in threat verification which is wrongly conflated with only contributing to the award of intimidation points. Base 2 also provided background information for the International Committee of the Red Cross and the Independent Reporting Commission⁹ to support, among other things, their monitoring of paramilitary style attacks. Base 2 also provides mediation between parties and claims some 30% of threats are either lifted or rendered null and void following Base 2 intervention.

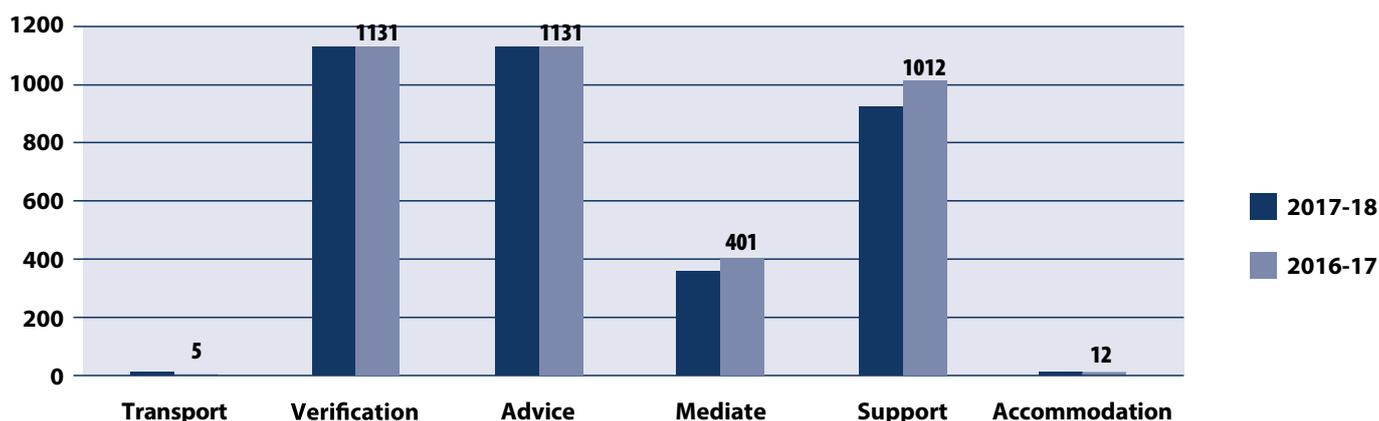
7 Professor Kieran McEvoy is a professor within the Queens University, Belfast School of Law and heads the Senator George J Mitchell Institute for Global Peace, Security and Justice.

8 The Executive Action Plan for Tackling Paramilitary Activity, Criminality and Organised Crime identified an objective to enhance restorative justice. A9 - *The Executive should put in place a dedicated fund for restorative justice initiatives to provide enhanced levels of resource over longer periods of time to deliver positive outcomes for individuals and communities. This should include resourcing the proposal for a centre of restorative excellence.* The Executive will put in place a dedicated fund for restorative justice initiatives to provide enhanced levels of resource over longer periods of time to deliver positive outcomes for individuals and communities. The Department of Justice will also carry out a feasibility study to identify best options for a new centre of restorative excellence. More information available here: <https://www.northernireland.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/newnigov/Executive%20Action%20Plan%20-%20Tackling%20Paramilitary%20Activity.pdf>

9 The Independent Reporting Commission was established under the Fresh Start Agreement to independently monitor paramilitary activity. More information is available here: <https://www.ircommission.org/>

- 2.9 Base 2 has engaged with community representatives and groups to maintain and develop its contacts. This assists its work in mediating on behalf of those who feel threatened and the advice it can offer them. Moving forward this is an aspect of the work of Base 2 that could potentially be incorporated within the DoJ's wider framework of delivering the draft Programme for Government (PfG) outcomes¹⁰ (specifically "We have a safer community where we respect the law and each other") and the Executive Action Plan Tackling *Paramilitary Activity, Criminality and Organised Crime*.
- 2.10 Base 2 staff engage and maintain links with a wide range of bodies and attend a number of organisations' board meetings either as a non-executive member or on an attendee basis. An allegation that the role of Base 2 staff in this context created a conflict of interest was dismissed by Inspectors as having no basis in fact. One of the groups was an accredited restorative justice body. In the other instance examined by Inspectors, the Base 2 staff provided advice and assistance supporting the governance process.
- 2.11 Another important aspect of the work of Base 2 is its input to other projects run by NIACRO. This includes the Assisting People and Communities Project which provides a floating support service to individuals at risk of losing their tenancies; Supporting Tenancies for Ethnic Minorities (STEM) for individuals who are victims of hate crime; and Aspire Community Engagement project which focuses on young men (aged 16-30) who are at risk of becoming involved or further involved in criminality to prevent and reduce offending and enable young men to develop their full capacity.

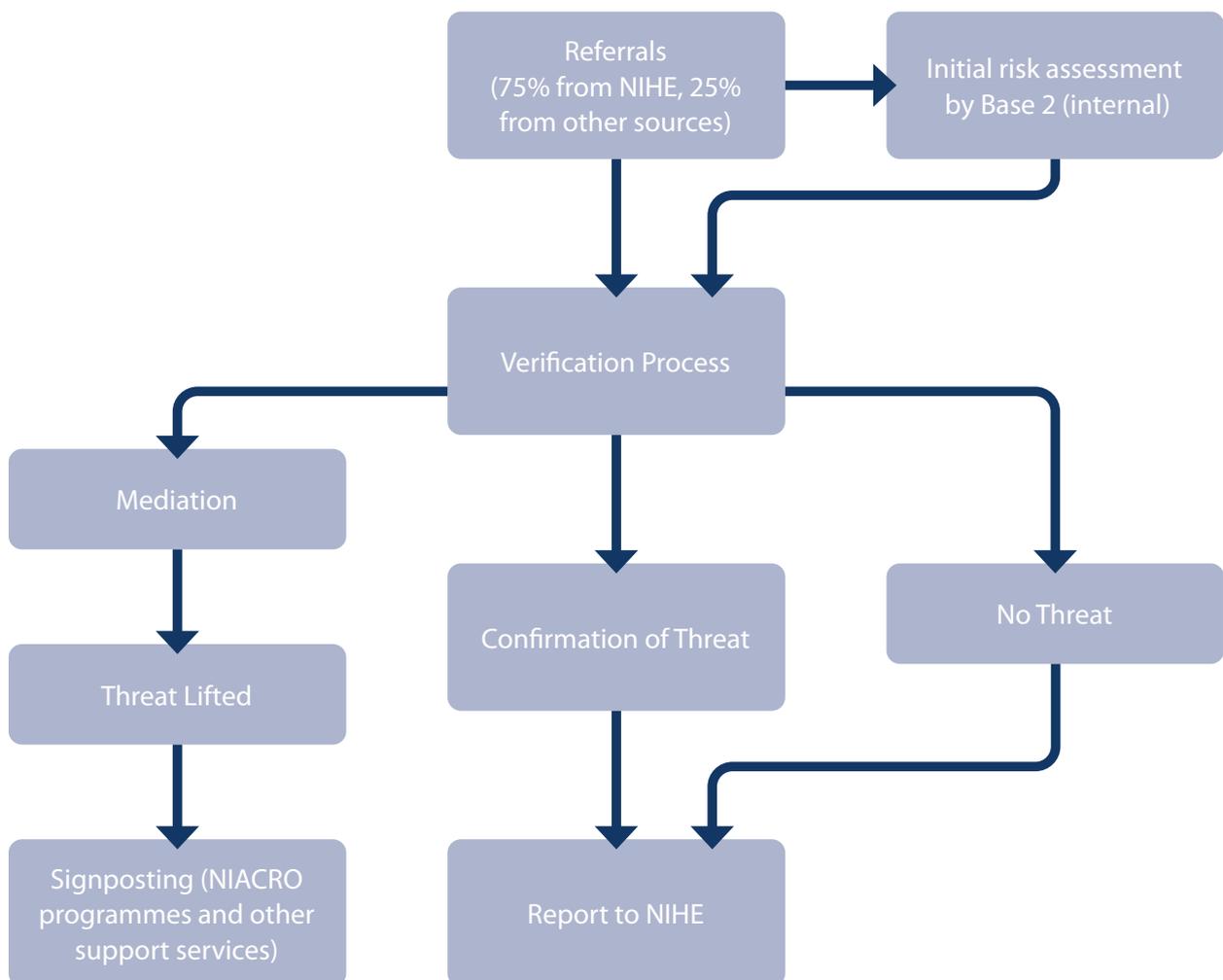
Figure 1 Services Provided by Base 2 (Source Base 2)



10 The Programme for Government 2016-21 uses a new approach which focuses on the major societal outcomes that the Executive wants to achieve and provides a basis for all sectors to contribute to the development of plans and actions. It is available here: <https://www.nienvironmentlink.org/cmsfiles/draft-pfg-framework-2016-21.pdf>

- 2.12 The point to note here is the other services provided by Base 2 which are often overlooked due to its association with the threat verification process. The NIHE under its statutory duty will provide temporary accommodation to anyone presenting as homeless when there is sufficient reason to believe the applicant is homeless, eligible and in priority need. In a small number of cases Base 2 identified emergency accommodation and provided transport to remove some individuals under immediate threat from their locale before they had presented to the NIHE as homeless. Base 2 write letters to the housing authorities and to the Family Courts and social services. The latter referrals arose due to concerns of the courts and social services where individuals under threat were seeking access to their children.
- 2.13 Although Base 2 signposts individuals to voluntary and statutory support services, the chaotic lifestyles of many of the presenters is a barrier to entering many of the schemes under offer and also maintaining a home. The capacity for Base 2 to provide further assistance to these individuals is limited by both capacity and available resources.

Figure 2 Base 2 Process



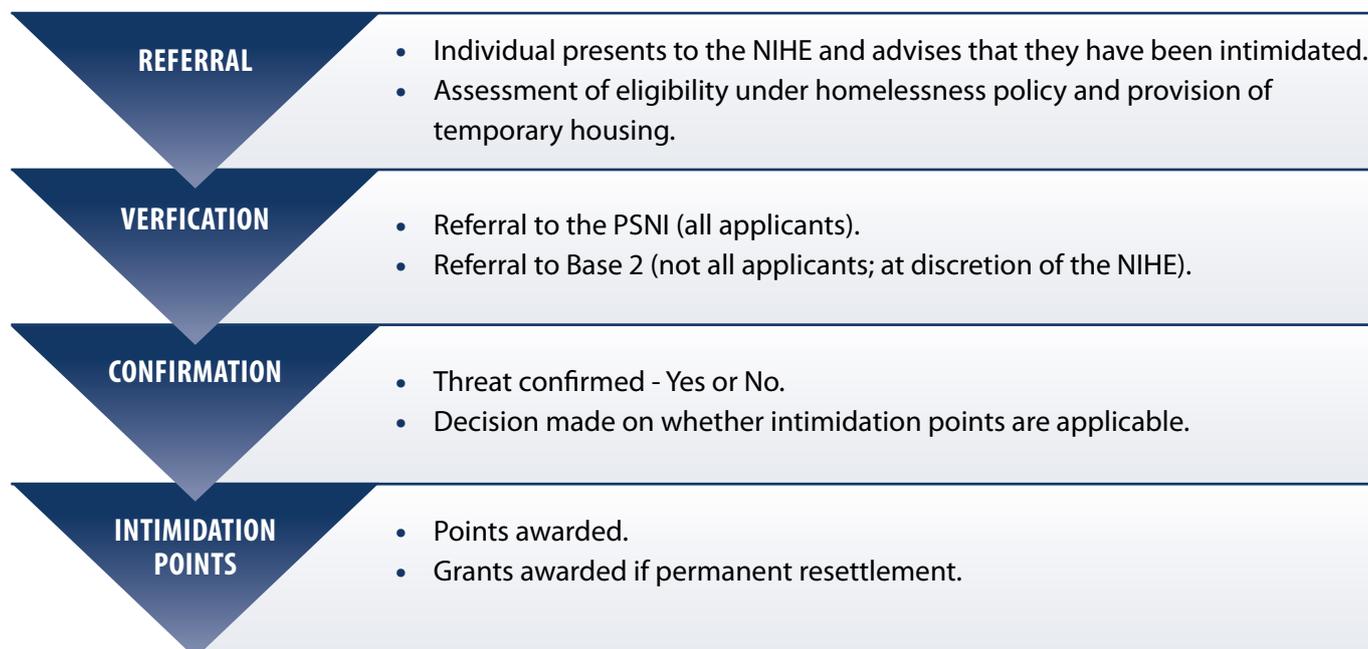
- 2.14 There are a number of sources of referrals to Base 2 although the NIHE accounts for 75% of them. In each case Base 2 reports to the NIHE the existence or otherwise of a threat. In other instances Base 2 will report to the PSNI, social services and the family courts in answer to referrals from these organisations.

Threat assessment: the NIHE, Base 2 and the PSNI

- 2.15 The PSNI receive threats mostly through intelligence source handling and anonymous calls with a smaller number of self-reporting. Under the PSNI Threat Policy the threats are graded Low, Medium, or High¹¹. On request the PSNI will report to the NIHE whatever data is available in their systems to verify a threat. In practice this may be a generalised response as the PSNI record may not have sufficient detail to specifically identify a threat against an individual. The PSNI would not advocate having a role in directly verifying threats through community contacts as this could be misconstrued as a conflict of interest in dealing with paramilitaries and their associates. Also the PSNI cannot share intelligence with other agencies as it could reveal their contacts and, to a large extent, they leave contacts with community-based sources to Base 2.
- 2.16 There were some criticisms about the consistency of the PSNI approach, for instance the initial risk assessments of those under threat were not reviewed to reflect changes in circumstances.
- 2.17 The NIHE will make a referral to the PSNI in every instance where a person presents to them as being under threat. The NIHE may also make a referral to Base 2 to assist in substantiating the existence or otherwise of a threat. As stated above, the PSNI may also liaise with Base 2 to avail of their community contacts. Following its investigation, Base 2 will complete a pro forma report to the NIHE setting out its findings.
- 2.18 It is important that individuals understand that the NIHE makes the decision around the award of intimidation points which determine the priority for re-housing and the role of Base 2 is restricted to verifying substantiated threats. Base 2 assured Inspectors that this is made clear to individuals and is reinforced by the fact that the consent form that they sign for the NIHE to make a referral to Base 2 states this fact.
- 2.19 The NIHE and Base 2 have in place a data sharing agreement and there is also an Information Sharing Protocol in place between the PSNI and the NIHE.
- 2.20 The NIHE and Base 2 have regular discussions around service provision and continuous improvement, including improvements of the information sharing agreements between both organisations.

11 In discussion with PSNI officers the threat policy was deemed too inflexible. There was little regular review of the threat level in the light of changing circumstances. In one example a prisoner under threat was deemed low risk due to being in custody. However, they were granted bail and the assessment remained low.

Figure 3 NIHE Process



2.21 After the completion of the verification process and where a threat is assessed as being genuine, the NIHE will award intimidation points according to the statutory rules:

Rule 23 (1) The Applicant's home has been destroyed or seriously damaged (by explosion, fire or other means) as a result of a terrorist, racial or sectarian attack, or because of an attack motivated by hostility because of an individual's disability or sexual orientation, or as a result of an attack by a person who falls within the scope of the Housing Executive's statutory powers to address neighbourhood nuisance or other similar forms of anti-social behaviour.

Rule 23 (2) The Applicant cannot reasonably be expected to live, or to resume living in his/her home, because, if he or she were to do so, there would, in the opinion of the Designated Officer, be a serious and imminent risk that the Applicant, or one or more of the Applicant's household, would be killed or seriously injured as a result of terrorist, racial or sectarian attack, or an attack which is motivated by hostility because of an individual's disability or sexual orientation, or as a result of an attack by a person who falls within the scope of the Housing Executive's statutory powers to address neighbourhood nuisance or other similar forms of anti-social behaviour.

- 2.22 In 2017-18 the NIHE recorded 558 individuals citing intimidation as their reason for presenting as homeless. Of these, 355 (64%) of presenters were accepted as being under threat (see Appendix 2 for a breakdown of the classification of threats presented to and accepted by the NIHE since 2012). An applicant who is deemed to be the victim of intimidation may receive up to 290 points (200 for intimidation, 20 for risk of violence and 70 for homelessness) in addition to any other points arising from the assessment of their housing needs. This does not automatically result in an applicant being rehoused but they do receive a very high priority on the Waiting List. A download from the Waiting List in May 2018 identified that there were roughly 250 individuals with intimidation points on the Waiting List of around 40,000. Applicants who have presented as homeless on the basis of intimidation and meet the statutory tests for the award of Full Duty Applicant (Statutory Homelessness) status and homelessness points, but do not receive intimidation points are still offered temporary accommodation and placed on the Waiting List.
- 2.23 While the number of individuals receiving intimidation points was less than 1% of the Waiting List they can be localised in particular areas. The DfC has conducted a Fundamental Review of Allocations of Social Housing in Northern Ireland and the removal of intimidation points from the scheme is one of its major proposals.



Delivery

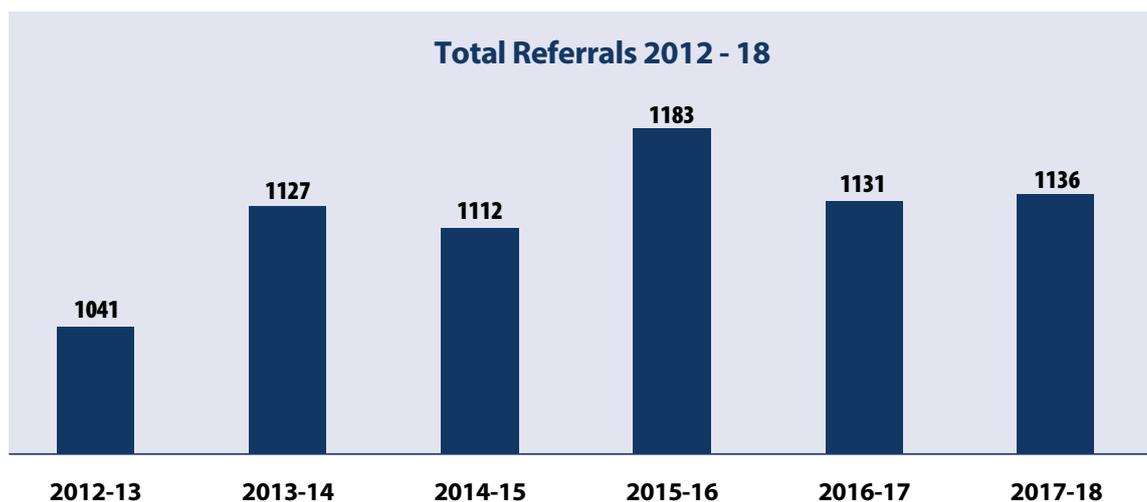
Base 2 services

3.1 As well as verification of threat Base 2 provided:

- conflict mediation;
- advice and support;
- assistance, if necessary, with re-location out of the area of threat; and
- referral to other NIACRO services where appropriate.

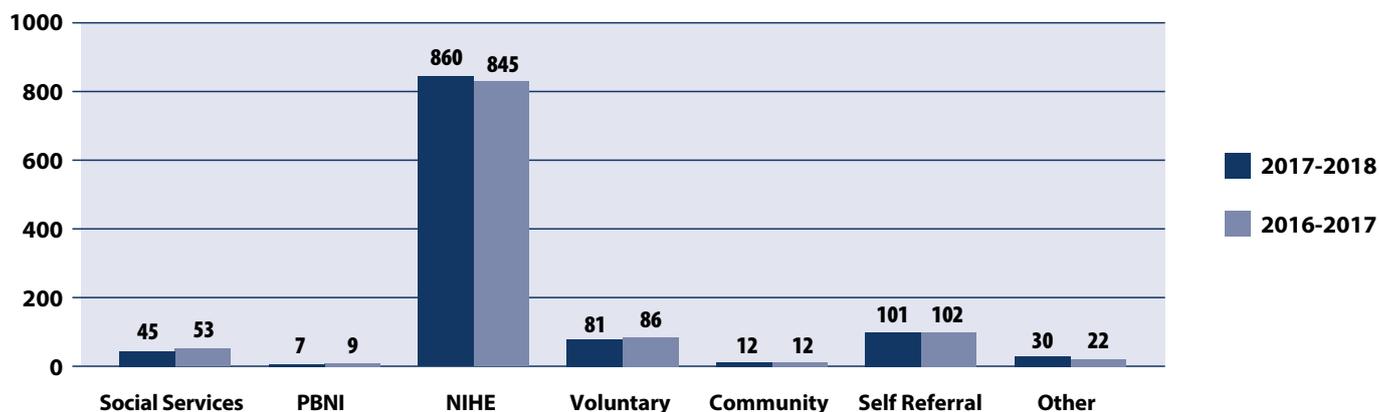
3.2 The project mediates within communities to address anti-social and offending behaviour, attempting to maintain people within their homes as far as possible. Base 2 has also worked with communities to facilitate discussions with victims of intimidation linked to hate crime, interface violence, internal feuding and community safety issues.

Figure 4 Annual number of referrals to Base 2 2012-18 (source Base 2)



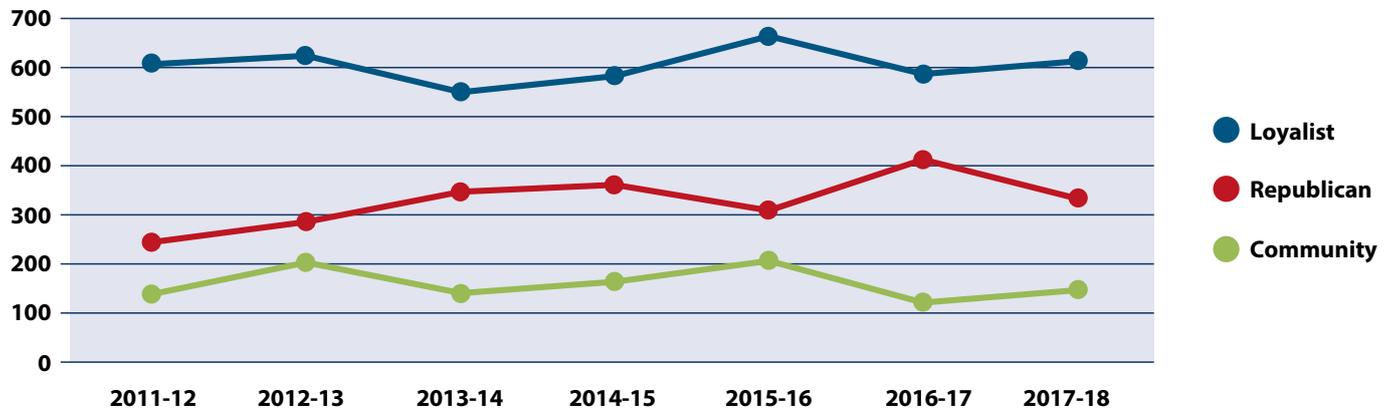
- 3.3 The total number of referrals has remained fairly constant since 2013-14 as has the amount of funding provided and the personnel. The source of referrals have also remained constant with the NIHE accounting for 75%, with the remainder coming from self-referrals, voluntary bodies and social services.
- 3.4 It is worth noting that the number of referrals does not equate to the number of reports presented by Base 2 to the NIHE. The 558 figure reported by the NIHE represents the number of clients presenting to the NIHE claiming intimidation (435 citing a paramilitary threat) and seeking Full Duty Applicant (intimidation status) which merits 200 additional points. Base 2 would be asked to verify threats in many of these cases. Many other individuals present to the NIHE claiming to be under threat from neighbours, local criminal gangs and so on who are considered by the NIHE for Full Duty Applicant status receiving 70 homeless points and potentially 20 fear of violence points, but not the 200 intimidation points. Base 2 would frequently be requested to verify risk in these cases also.
- 3.5 The other point to note is that in 2017-18, 247 referrals were deemed not to pose a threat and in 116 cases, the threat was lifted. Hence referrals to the project would exceed the number of referrals to the NIHE seeking the additional 200 intimidation points.
- 3.6 Base 2 provides information from community sources to support the verification process provided by the PSNI and the work of the NIHE. The triangulation of sources and the local knowledge of the NIHE decision-makers reduces the risk of invalid claims by individuals being accepted. The low numbers in rural areas with the localised nature of the claims means the urban areas in Londonderry/Derry and Belfast presented the higher risk. Inspectors concluded that the work of Base 2, the PSNI and the NIHE decision-makers managed this risk.

Figure 5 Sources of referrals to Base 2



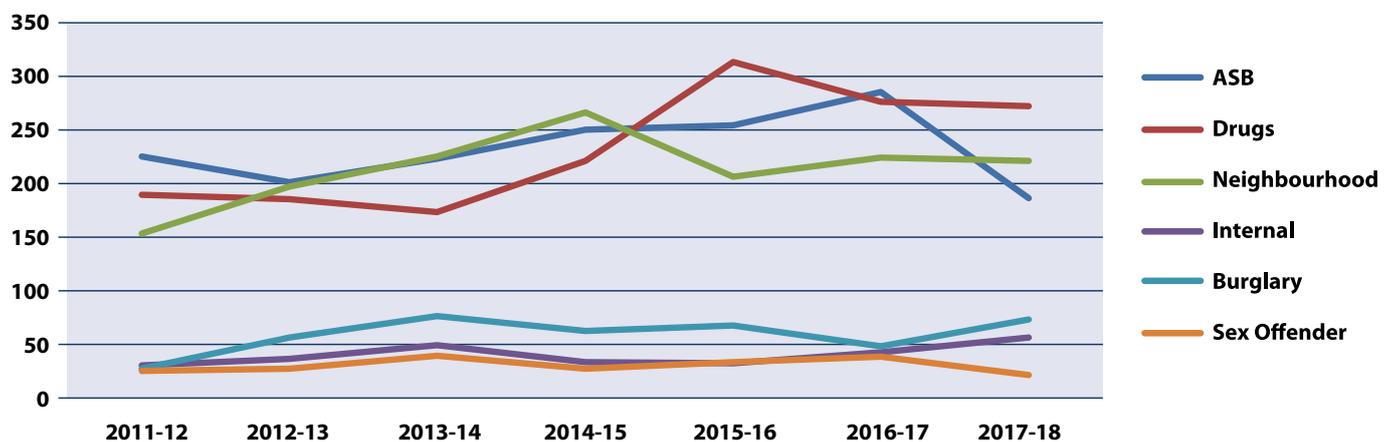
- 3.7 The alleged source of threats have also remained reasonably constant over this period. About half were from loyalist connections, one third from republican sources and the remainder (1/6th) being defined as community based threats.

Figure 6 Alleged sources of Threats recorded by Base 2



3.8 The reasons for threats are classified at the time of referral and reflect the applicants' classification of the nature of the threat. The caveat to these figures is that the nature of the threat is not reviewed during the process, even if it becomes apparent that the original reason no longer applies. Based on the figures recorded, drugs related issues are now the most common reason, overtaking anti-social behaviour.

Figure 7 Reasons for Threats (Source Base 2)



- 3.9 One issue raised with Inspectors was the number of repeat applicants that were viewed, in some quarters, as rewarding bad behaviour. Base 2 estimated over the period 2014 to 2018 about 25% of individuals would have presented to Base 2 on previous occasions. The most common feature of these applicants was their chaotic lifestyles due to substance abuse, and emotional or mental health problems making it difficult for them to sustain a stable home.
- 3.10 It was the view of Base 2 that supporting these people to create a more stable lifestyle would be more productive than simply moving them from location to location. However, supporting them is beyond the resources of Base 2 and referring them to support programmes outside NIACRO such as Support Hubs¹² is beyond the scope of Base 2 but could be a point for future development. The proposals for expanding restorative justice programmes could also be a starting point for addressing applicant behaviours.

Other selected statistics

Table 1 Categories of referrals

Category of referral	2016-17	2017-18
Hate crime	106	141
Involving Children	227	239

- 3.11 Referrals from victims of hate crime have increased over the last year by 40% and in response Base 2 has maintained close relationships with other agencies working with the gay, lesbian, bi-sexual and trans-gender community to offer the project's support service.
- 3.12 Over 200 children were at risk from potential violence due to threats against parents or siblings. The increasing number of referrals on the instructions of the Family Courts was seen by Inspectors as further evidence of confidence in the work of Base 2.

Base 2 Indicator: Time taken to verify threat

- 3.13 Table 2 shows the average time taken for verification of threats for all referrals to the project. The NIHE did comment on delayed response times from Base 2 in respect of Republican threats in the North West area. Base 2 explained to Inspectors that this arose due to the temporary replacement of the staff member working this area coupled with the need to re-establish community links in one particular area. This may account for the overall increase in 2017-18.

12 Vulnerable people can get help from a range of organisations. Support hubs are designed to help vulnerable people get access to the right support, at the right time, from the right organisation in their local area. The hubs can help people who may be experiencing a range of problems. This can include being a victim of ongoing antisocial behaviour or other crime. Other people may need support in order to avoid being drawn into behaviour which may lead to offending. <https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/support-hubs>

Table 2 Time to verify threat (working days)

Source	2016-17	2017-18
Loyalist Threat	5 days	5 days
Republican Threat	11 days	13 days
Community Threat	8 days	7 days

3.14 The project has committed considerable resources to developing and maintaining connections within rural communities, both loyalist and republican. This has proved important as referrals from areas such as Portrush, Donaghadee and Strabane have increased. Base 2 receives around £95,000 from the NIHE and irrespective of the difficulties of a statutory agency being able to engage with the communities in question, it is difficult to imagine them being able to provide the level of service for the current cost. Of equal importance, the contribution of the community contacts makes the whole process possible and reflects their commitment to the humanitarian objectives of Base 2.

Community engagement

3.15 Despite a general downward trend in paramilitary style attacks there was a slight increase from July 2018 to June 2019 with 64 casualties of paramilitary style assaults, compared to 59 in the previous 12 months. More significantly, there were 17 casualties of paramilitary style shootings, over this period of which 10 occurred in Derry City and Strabane¹³. In response Base 2 has taken additional steps to improve community links to address the issue. To this end Base 2 has held over 25 meetings within both loyalist and republican communities. There are a number of other restorative justice agencies, including Northern Ireland Alternatives (NIA), Community Restorative Justice Ireland (CRJI), Resolve and Consensus that provide threat verification although mediation and conflict resolution constitute the greater element of their activities. As mentioned earlier, the development of a centre of excellence for restorative justice could coalesce the efforts of these individual agencies promoting collaboration rather than competition.

13 PSNI, security statistics to June 2019 available at <https://www.psni.police.uk/globalassets/inside-the-psni/our-statistics/security-situation-statistics/2019/june/security-situation-statistics-to-june-2019.pdf>

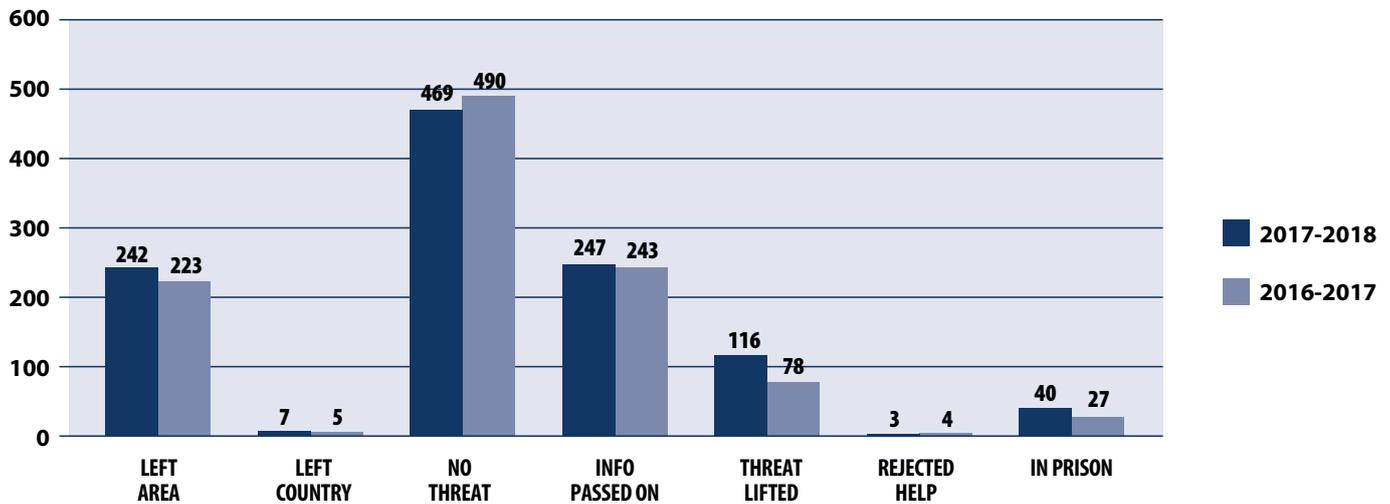


Outcomes

Objectives of Base 2

- 4.1 The following objectives were set by Base 2 for its 2017-18 Business Plan.
- 1. To prevent homelessness by providing a crisis intervention service for people under threat dealing with up to 1,000 referrals. Seek clarification in respect of all referrals received and provide feedback to the referrer and client within a 10-day period.*
 - 2. Provide ongoing support and assistance to Base 2 clients who are at risk in the community and who may become homeless as results of threats made against them.*
 - 3. Raise the profile of the service amongst key stakeholders, the NIHE District offices and relevant referral agencies.*
 - 4. Maintain and develop contacts within the community to assist with verification and integration.*
- 4.2 Over the last three years Base 2 has engaged with communities to promote its role in helping address problems of crime and anti-social behaviour. To this end Base 2 staff have attended public meetings in West Belfast, East Belfast, Newtownards and Ballymoney. Base 2 staff have also facilitated discussions on dealing with anti-social behaviour and other criminality following requests from local community leaders.

Figure 8: Outcomes arising from Base 2 Intervention



- 4.3 A positive outcome was the rise in successful mediation with 116 threats lifted as opposed to 78 in the previous year (source Base 2).

Tackling Paramilitary Activity, Criminality and Organised Crime: Executive Action Plan¹⁴

- 4.4 The Action Plan identified transition as a proactive move towards a culture of lawfulness with communities and individuals subject to paramilitarism achieving, and being supported to achieve, a move away from the coercive influence of organised crime and paramilitary organisations into communities where paramilitary activity no longer plays a role. During discussions at the Tackling Paramilitarism Programme Board stakeholders engaged in developing the Action Plan agreed that to achieve transition there was a need *“to create the conditions where individuals and communities have the confidence to speak out against... criminality and coercion... People (need the) confidence that information shared with authorities will be acted upon and, more importantly, that personal safety is not at risk when they do”*.

14 As part of the Fresh Start agreement a three person panel was appointed to make recommendations to the Executive. The Executive in turn accepted the report and published an action plan to implement the 43 recommendations. The action plan is available here: <https://www.justice-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/justice/tackling-paramilitary-activity-action-plan.pdf>

- 4.5 There were four long-term outcomes which were:
- safe and confident communities;
 - the public support and have increased confidence in the justice system;
 - support is available for those who wish to move away from paramilitary activity and structures; and
 - paramilitarism has no place in society.
- 4.6 The Base 2 project directly aligns with the fourth of the outcomes identified above by assisting individuals moving away from the coercive influence of paramilitary organisations albeit on a case by case basis. Base 2 also measures the number of individuals subject to intimidation by paramilitaries which mirrors the indicator included in the Action Plan.
- 4.7 Base 2 does provide a confidential and trusted avenue for individuals to report intimidation although it falls short of reporting this as a criminal act to the authorities. To do so would probably jeopardise the individuals and also undermine the relationships with the various groups that provide verification data to Base 2. Where threats are verified these are always reported through PSNI call handling.

Operational recommendation 1

Inspectors recommend that **following confirmation of information sharing arrangements, the annual/bi annual meetings of the Tackling Paramilitarism Team with Base 2, the PSNI and the NIHE should take place, with the Base 2 annual report as an agenda item to provide additional input to gauging Action Plan progress.**

- 4.8 The ability of Base 2 in its current format to influence the level of intimidatory behaviour would appear to be limited. Their sphere of influence focuses on mitigating the impact of intimidation on victims after the threat has arisen.
- 4.9 Creating a society in which paramilitarism has no place with increased confidence in the criminal justice authorities is a key outcome of the Executive Action Plan. Base 2 provides a conduit by which threat assessment within communities is carried out and communicated to the housing authorities. The suggestion that this provides legitimacy to the paramilitaries may have had some currency in the past, but the NIO officially confirmed NIACRO's humanitarian credentials leading to the NIHE funding Base 2 to support those under threat since 2003-04.

- 4.10 Professor McEvoy says that it is inevitable that tensions will arise where statutory authorities, even through a proxy, have contact with bodies that are proscribed, and therefore illegal, or with bodies that lie in a grey area of legality. Further, where the communication concerns intimidation and threats which by their very nature are illegal, this puts the statutory agencies in uncomfortable territory.

Excerpt from Co-operation Ireland consultation

- 4.11 Although not specifically aimed at the Base 2 project, the 2017-18 consultation conducted by Co-operation Ireland provides some context. As part of its work on conflict resolution and specifically building capacity in communities in transition¹⁵ Co-operation Ireland gathered views across communities of engagement with paramilitaries¹⁶.
- 4.12 A general view was expressed that ...*“the current approach was unspecified and resulted in some degree of confusion: the groups were seen as being in regular informal contact with different departments and agencies (including the PSNI), which concerned many members of the local community, who believed that this approach reinforced the presence of these organisations in the area (..... the statutory bodies were indirectly legitimising the groups via this type of engagement)”*.
- 4.13 An alternative view, offered by a number of interviewees was that Base 2 reduces violence in communities by offering an alternative pathway and creates a line of communication with paramilitaries and their associates that can move them towards a less coercive role.
- 4.14 Helping stabilise the often chaotic lives of those presenting as homelessness is a key outcome for Base 2. **Extending the role of Base 2 beyond signposting individuals to various services by actively referring them to the Support Hubs and specific programmes offered by the voluntary and community sector and statutory agencies would be a positive development.**
- 4.15 If intimidation points are removed from the Housing Selection Scheme in line with the Fundamental Review of Allocations, there could be a future role for Base 2 within a restorative justice practice environment using its community contacts to help with transitioning to a less coercive environment. This could operate within the proposed centre of excellence for restorative justice and CJI would endorse this proposal. It should also be noted that all NIHE funding of outside agencies from the Homelessness Budget are funded subject to the successful annual bid for required funding from the DfC.

15 Co-operation Ireland undertook a programme of work as part of the Northern Ireland Executive Action Plan to Tackle Paramilitary Activity, Criminality and Organised Crime. This is available at: <https://www.cooperationireland.org/building-capacity-in-communities-in-transition>

16 A series of reports were carried out by Co-operation Ireland during 2017-18 as part of its work on Conflict Resolution. These are available at: <https://www.cooperationireland.org/cit-reports>



Appendices



Appendix 1: Terms of reference and methodology

An Inspection of the Base 2 Project

Introduction

Base 2 is a crisis intervention initiative delivered by NIACRO and funded with support from the Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE). The initiative offers clarification, support and mediation services to individuals and families across Northern Ireland at risk of violence or exclusion from their community. A small project team works directly with people supporting them to deal with intimidation or difficulties they are experiencing either from individuals or paramilitary organisations.

The initiative seeks to verify the nature and validity of the threats and can offer mediation services to assist individuals to remain within their homes or give practical support to safely relocate out of the area. When referrals are received they are subject to verification upon which recommendations are made to the NIHE.

Aims of the Inspection

- Identify how the process works and assess the Base 2 processes and identify any areas for improvement.
- Assess the nature of any underpinning principles for engagement, with the individuals under threat, the PSNI and statutory agencies and the community including who is involved and the nature of the relationships / engagement / interface between them.
- Report on how effective the existing arrangements are in responding to cases where individuals are under threat and impact if the existing arrangements were not in place.
- Assess the relative roles of Base 2, the statutory and voluntary agencies and how engagement with communities helps to support relevant statutory organisations in protecting the safety and welfare of individuals.
- Review and assess potential conflicts of interest and how they are identified and managed.
- Examine succession planning and possible risks to sustainability.
- Assess the delivery of longer term outcomes resulting from the Base 2 interventions such as:
 - whether or not the engagement has been shown to have an effect in terms of promoting a culture of lawfulness; and
 - whether or not the engagement provides opportunities for actively promoting transition at a personal or community level (such as directing individuals to interventions/services that might support transition).
- Identify and assess any examples of good practice that might have the potential for wider application of the Base 2 approach (or modification thereof) to other situations.

Methodology

The inspection will be based on the CJI Inspection Framework, as outlined below, for each inspection that it conducts. The three main elements of the inspection framework are:

- Strategy and governance;
- Delivery; and
- Outcomes.

Constants in each of the three framework elements and throughout each inspection are equality and fairness, together with standards and best practice. Inspectors will look for evidence in strategy, service delivery and in outcomes that equality and fairness are integral to the work of Base 2.

Fieldwork

- Scoping with interested parties will inform preparation of draft Terms of Reference. These will be shared with the NIHE and DoJ prior to the initiation of the inspection.
- Relevant policy documents, guidance notes, financial and other regulatory reports will be reviewed.
- A review of casework files will be carried out.
- Interviews will be conducted with Base 2 staff, NIHE operational and policy sections, PSNI personnel, DoJ, NIACRO and community organisations and individuals that have insight into or are stakeholders in the Base 2 operations.
- Evidence of impartial decision-making supported by verified data will be gathered.
- Observations of the project in action will be made.

Feedback and Writing

Following completion of the fieldwork and analysis of data a draft report will be shared with the sponsors for factual accuracy check. The Chief Inspector will invite views from stakeholders to address the recommendations.

Inspection Closure

- Upon completion a report will be sent to the Department of Justice for permission to publish.
- The circulation of the final report will be agreed in consultation with stakeholders.



Appendix 2 Classification of threats presented to and accepted by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive¹⁷

12/13 Presenters	Intimidation-ASB	Intimidation-Paramilitary	Intimidation-Racial	Intimidation-Sectarian	Intimidation-Sexual Orientation	Grand Total
Total	79	391	37	66	20	594
12/13 Acceptances	Intimidation-ASB	Intimidation-Paramilitary	Intimidation-Racial	Intimidation-Sectarian	Intimidation-Sexual Orientation	Grand Total
Total	47	300	24	49	17	437
%	59	77	65	74	85	74

13/14 Presenters	Intimidation-ASB	Intimidation-Paramilitary	Intimidation-Racial	Intimidation-Sectarian	Intimidation-Sexual Orientation	Grand Total
Total	77	472	39	65	14	668
13/14 Acceptances	Intimidation-ASB	Intimidation-Paramilitary	Intimidation-Racial	Intimidation-Sectarian	Intimidation-Sexual Orientation	Grand Total
Total	37	293	18	32	10	391
%	48	62	46	49	71	59

14/15 presenters	Intimidation-ASB	Intimidation-Paramilitary	Intimidation-Racial	Intimidation-Sectarian	Intimidation-Sexual Orientation	Grand Total
Total	62	433	47	35	13	590
14/15 acceptances	Intimidation-ASB	Intimidation-Paramilitary	Intimidation-Racial	Intimidation-Sectarian	Intimidation-Sexual Orientation	Grand Total
Total	30	312	33	19	11	405
%	48	72	70	54	85	69

15/16 presenters	Intimidation-ASB	Intimidation-Paramilitary	Intimidation-Racial	Intimidation-Sectarian	Intimidation-Sexual Orientation	Grand Total
Total	77	433	23	39	9	582
15/16 acceptances	Intimidation-ASB	Intimidation-Paramilitary	Intimidation-Racial	Intimidation-Sectarian	Intimidation-Sexual Orientation	Grand Total
Total	48	325	14	21	5	414
%	62	75	61	54	56	71

Homeless Presentations 16/17 – Intimidation	Intimidation-ASB	Intimidation-Paramilitary	Intimidation-Racial	Intimidation-Sectarian	Intimidation-Sexual Orientation	Grand Total
Total	98	477	28	45	13	661
Homeless Acceptances – Intimidation 16/17	Intimidation-ASB	Intimidation-Paramilitary	Intimidation-Racial	Intimidation-Sectarian	Intimidation-Sexual Orientation	Grand Total
Total	49	310	13	10	5	387
%	50	65	46	22	38	59

Homeless Presentations 17/18 – Intimidation	Intimidation-ASB	Intimidation-Paramilitary	Intimidation-Racial	Intimidation-Sectarian	Intimidation-Sexual Orientation	Grand Total
Total	61	425	19	42	10	558
Homeless Acceptances – Intimidation 17/18	Intimidation-ASB	Intimidation-Paramilitary	Intimidation-Racial	Intimidation-Sectarian	Intimidation-Sexual Orientation	Grand Total
Total	31	286	10	25	3	355
%	51	67	53	60	30	64

17 It should be noted in the tables above that some presentations in relation to intimidation due to disability have been removed. However, the total number of intimidation cases has not been adjusted in order to match existing published data on intimidation. Intimidation on the grounds of a person's disability would not normally be referred to Base 2 for verification.



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