

# **OPERATIONAL GUIDELINES FOR** **INSPECTION**

**CRIMINAL JUSTICE INSPECTION NORTHERN IRELAND**  
**(CJI)**

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



# **I Introduction**

Recommendation 263 of the Criminal Justice Review 2000 proposed an independent statutory inspectorate for Northern Ireland. Criminal Justice Inspection Northern Ireland (CJI) was established under the Justice (Northern Ireland) Act 2002 (as amended) to inspect all aspects of the Criminal Justice System (CJS) except the courts.

In 2007 the Court Service, Legal Services Commission and Life Sentence Review Commissioners were added to CJI's remit.

CJI is an independent, non-departmental public body (NDPB), funded by the Secretary of State. In addition to its planned inspection programme the Secretary of State has powers to request that the Chief Inspector undertakes specific pieces of work. Inspectors are empowered to require documents to be produced and to enter premises for the purpose of inspection at any reasonable hour.

Annex A sets out in full the relevant legislation and a list of bodies subject to inspection by CJI.

## **I.1 Our Vision**

CJI's vision is summed up as 'A better justice system for all'. By that we mean a criminal justice system that works smoothly and efficiently, protecting everyone, working to reduce crime and helping to put offenders back on the right track so that they will not offend again; and a system that does all that with absolute fairness, promotes equality and human rights and is responsive to the real concerns of the community.

A justice system that can do those things is the foundation for a peaceful and cohesive community, and a prerequisite for health and prosperity.

That vision requires the collaboration of all the agencies of the criminal justice system and of voluntary sector, political and community-based organisations to bring it about. CJI contributes to it by conducting inspections of individual agencies and cross-cutting thematic reviews of aspects of the criminal justice system.

## **I.2 Our Values**

- Independence;
- Impartiality;
- Honesty;
- Integrity;
- Respect;
- Openness; and,
- Robustness.

## **I.3 Our mission**

The CJI mission is to work closely with the inspected agencies in a professional and mature way. To maintain our robustness and independence producing relevant, respected

inspection reports that add value to the CJS and enhance the public's experience of contact with every part of the criminal justice system.

We will achieve our mission by:

- maintaining our values at all times;
- communicating clearly and frankly;
- listening to all interested parties;
- identifying and communicating good practice;
- producing enabling, balanced, objective reports;
- taking account of sensitive issues;
- providing a supportive work environment that reflects our values; and,
- pursuing excellence.

#### **1.4 What we mean by 'inspection'**

CJI inspects for improvement in the pursuit of excellence. Inspection processes examine organisations for strengths and areas for improvement. Our reports will make recommendations designed to help an organisation to improve in any aspect of its performance. Improvement covers all the dimensions of the inspection framework. Inspection is not a mechanical process. The collection of data is essential and there will be factual observations to be made in the course of an inspection. Analysis of the data is an important element of any inspection so that scope for improvement can be identified.

#### **1.5 Securing independence**

Parliament has deliberately established CJI outside the civil service and specified that it is not a Crown body. The intention is plainly that it should report independently and that the public should be able to have confidence in its independence. One of CJI's core values is independence and we strive to maximise that independence through:

- our organisational status;
- being mature about our approach to reporting inspection findings;
- avoiding a sensationalist approach;
- being objective in our judgments;
- concentrating on enabling improvement;
- reporting as we find whilst taking into account contextual issues;
- working closely with agencies to identify areas for inspection based on risk.

CJI is funded by Government, who appoints the Chief Inspector and approves the terms and conditions of other staff. CJI's annual Corporate and Business Plans are subject to Government approval (additionally, in relation to the Public Prosecution Service, of the Attorney General and in relation to the Court Service, of the Lord Chancellor) and their approval is necessary before any report can be published. CJI proposes its own programme of work which is subject to Government approval who can ask CJI to undertake particular pieces of work. Moreover CJI is expected to inspect against the policies of the Government of the day, not to invent or advocate alternative policies, though it can comment (on the basis of evidence) on the effectiveness of Government policies.

There are limitations as to how CJI may exercise its independence. But the essential independence is to report as we find, without fear or favour. There is power for

Government to exclude a part of a report if it would be against the public interest, or might jeopardise the safety of any person. If a part of a report is excluded from laying or publication, the Government must lay or publish with the report a statement that it has been excluded.

## **1.6 Confidentiality and Freedom of Information**

As CJI is not a Government organisation it will seldom if ever hold officially classified information. Its own papers will not receive official classifications, and the spirit of CJI will be to make all its papers available to inspection, in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act, unless there are specific, lawful reasons not to. Some papers and electronic files will, however, be kept 'in confidence': particularly personnel files and the records of conversations with individuals who could be identified from them. It would be contrary to our assurance that people can talk to us freely without fear of being identified as the source of our information for us to release information that would identify them.

There are contexts, however, where such notes may need to be produced in evidence, though normally it should be possible to do that in a form which would protect anonymity. CJI will also need to respect and protect the confidentiality of documents supplied by other organisations on that basis, and will consult with the originating organisation regarding any requests for disclosure of them. CJI will not hold information supplied to it by other organisations for any longer than is necessary.

## 2 Inspection Processes

There are two main categories of inspection that CJI undertakes:

- **Single agency** inspections focus on the organisation themselves or the services they provide. Examples of the single agency inspections CJI has undertaken are:
  - Forensic Science Northern Ireland
  - the Office of the Police Ombudsman of Northern Ireland;
  - Public Prosecution Service;
  - the Juvenile Justice Centre (as a service provided by the Youth Justice Agency);
  - inspections of individual prisons;
  - Corporate Governance within the Probation Board for Northern Ireland; and
  - Belfast Harbour Police.
  
- Cross-cutting **thematic** inspections consider how a particular service is dealt with by all or relevant parts of the criminal justice system. Examples of the thematic inspections CJI has undertaken are:
  - Avoidable delay;
  - Victims and witnesses;
  - Hate crime;
  - Impact of Section 75; and
  - Management of sexual offenders.

**Action plan/follow up reviews** In addition CJI revisits both categories of inspection to assess how organisations and the system have implemented recommendations. This work is normally conducted 12 to 18 months after the original inspection to assess progress against accepted recommendations and is initiated by the Chief Inspector and/or Deputy Chief Inspector

In addition to the two main categories CJI undertakes other work inspecting the CJS.

- **Reviews** requested by the Minister of Justice and conducted under Section 47(4) of the Justice Act 2002. These can refer to any matter relating to the CJS in Northern Ireland (apart from a matter relating to a court or tribunal). An example of this would be the inspection of the management of life sentence prisoners. These reviews will follow the processes set out in the CJI core processes.
  
- **Other ad-hoc inspections** requested by agencies such as the Northern Ireland Policing Board (NIPB). In these cases the CJI inspection process will be applied to any work undertaken unless otherwise authorised by the Chief Inspector of Criminal Justice on the recommendation of the lead Inspector. The [authorisation](#) should be stored with the Inspection records and should be retained along with any inspection correspondence.

### 2.1 Inspection Stages for Single Agency Inspection

The following information provides an overview of the stages which are usually undertaken during the inspection of a single agency. As each individual inspection is designed in a bespoke manner the order of the stages and details of each stage may vary according to the specific topic and requirements of the inspection. Flowcharts showing detailed processes

are contained in Annex B. In addition there are some differences to this process for thematic inspections, reviews and action plan reviews which are explained below.

## **Design and Planning**

### **2.1.1 Inspection programme is developed and approved**

CJI conducts research with the agencies and stakeholder organisations to inform the priorities for inspection. The factors influencing these priorities include resources, risks, statutory obligations and public confidence. A draft programme is discussed with stakeholders before and during the annual stakeholder conference and amended following feedback. The programme is presented to the minister for approval.

### **2.1.2 Lead, Deputy and inspection support allocated to inspection**

The allocation of inspections is based on specialised skills and knowledge requirements which will be sourced from CJI, other inspectorates and individuals.

### **2.1.3 Partner Inspectorates identified as appropriate**

Areas of skills shortage where assistance is required from partner inspectorates/associates are identified and an initial request for support from partner inspectorates/associates for specific inspection topics.

### **2.1.4 Preliminary research to determine scope/standards**

This includes initial background reading of reports, business plans, websites, strategies/action plans, relevant academic research, previous inspection reports and relevant documentation from other jurisdictions. Identification of and meetings with key personnel in criminal justice agencies/stakeholder organisations or knowledge experts. Communication with partner inspectorates as to key areas within the inspection topic. Confirmation of arrangements for support from partner inspectorates/associates (timings, roles etc). This element includes desktop research and meetings with interested parties.

### **2.1.5 Agency Contact and liaison established**

The individual identified by the agency to support the inspection process should be of a sufficiently high level in the organisation to facilitate appropriate access to people and information. A letter is sent to the Head of Agency informing of Inspection, commencement, title and timescales. A request for documentation/data to assist in preparation for fieldwork and asking for nomination of agency contact person is also sent. The nominated inspection support officer leads liaison with agency contact.

### **2.1.6 Inspection Risk Assessment**

An Inspection risk assessment is completed as per CJI risk assessment template and kept updated as the inspection progresses.

### **2.1.7 Benchmarking, research and data collection**

This is undertaken to inform the analysis stages of the inspection. Benchmarking can be undertaken against comparators in best practice jurisdictions and similar service providers. This element also includes identification of best practice/national guidance/policies/standards from other jurisdictions. At this stage further reading of reports, business plans, websites, strategies/action plans/ relevant academic research, previous inspection reports and relevant documentation from other jurisdictions is undertaken. Inspectors review documentation

and other data provided to date from agencies and comparative data from other jurisdictions.

### **2.1.8 Development and agreement of Terms of Reference (ToR)**

Using the CJI template ToR are developed based on research undertaken. Draft ToR are shared with other Inspectors and further developed following feedback. The ToR are further refined by sharing with the Deputy Chief Inspector and Chief Inspector before being shared with the inspected agency (ies). The ToR includes a plan for the inspection based on the anticipated time for inspection to be undertaken. Timing of the inspection is based on Inspectors' commitments, discussion with agencies and other events in financial year. A system of updating progress on inspections and reviews applies and this should be updated before each Management team meeting and Inspectors' meeting. A final **QA Check** is undertaken of the ToR and they are then signed off by the CI for use in the inspection.

## **Delivery**

### **2.1.9 Stakeholder consultation**

This element is undertaken to ascertain the experiences of partners and users of the service(s) provided by the agency. Relevant stakeholders are identified based on research and knowledge of topic area. A list of stakeholders is provided to the inspection support officer who arranges stakeholder interviews. Prior to the interviews stakeholders are given a copy of the ToR. Question areas for stakeholders are developed based on research and the ToR. Stakeholders are interviewed and information obtained is analysed to identify key issues.

### **2.1.10 Self-assessment**

Agencies can be requested to complete a self-assessment in preparation for the inspection which can provide them with the opportunity to identify development activities. CJI can provide guidance for agencies on undertaking self-assessment. The CJI inspection framework and ToR are used to develop self-assessment framework for use by the agency. A self-assessment tool is developed which may be a spreadsheet, word document etc. Support is offered to the agency regarding self-assessment eg training/briefing by CJI inspector and if requested briefing or training is delivered. Agencies agree to provide the self-assessment within an identified timeframe after which inspectors analyse it and the stakeholder analysis to further inform preparation for fieldwork. A hypothesis document based on stakeholder key issues and agency self-assessment is prepared and quality assured by Deputy CI and CI.

### **2.1.11 Fieldwork Plan/methodology**

Key personnel/roles within agency to be interviewed are identified with assistance from the agency contact. A fieldwork plan is prepared which sets out a refined list of interviews, methods of interview (e.g. one-to-one, focus group), timescales and logistical arrangements. A schedule of meetings is drawn up by the agency contact(s) in consultation with the inspectorate team. The Lead Inspector identifies times for review meetings between inspection team to be included in the fieldwork plan as well as overall topic areas to be covered in interviews. Relevant questions/specific topics are developed based on the inspection framework, background research and stakeholder consultation. The Lead inspector identifies the methodology for recording/analysis of findings (e.g. written notes, spreadsheet etc).

### **2.1.12 Fieldwork Completion**

Interviews/focus groups with key agency personnel are carried out. Inspection questions are adjusted and refined as they are tested with interviewees. The inspection team regularly discuss findings/question refinement and any further key personnel required for interview are identified and interviews arranged through the agency contact and evidence is triangulated. An end-of-fieldwork review meeting is held to identify key areas of good practice, development and areas requiring recommendations. Inspection findings are recorded as per method determined by the lead inspector.

### **2.1.13 Initial feedback to agency**

Feedback is provided to agencies on emerging issues only having identified the appropriate agency group or individual to receive it. The most appropriate method of delivering feedback is identified by the lead inspector who then provides the feedback to the agency.

### **2.1.14 Analysis and drafting of report**

The lead inspector reviews evidence sources and triangulates evidence obtained during the inspection. Inspection findings are analysed against the pre-determined framework, best practice and the agency's own policies. The lead inspector determines the most appropriate structure for presentation of the report within the CJI inspection report template.

### **2.1.15 Draft Reports – QA Documented**

The draft report is shared with CJI colleagues and others from partner inspectorates or associates involved in fieldwork. The report is amended appropriately following feedback. The draft report is shared with the media and communications officer (BCM) and Deputy Chief Inspector and updated based on their feedback. An amended report is then shared with the CI and updated based on feedback received. The CI develops the report foreword and this is included in the report. The final draft report is **Quality Assured and Approved** by the CI for release to agency/agencies.

### **2.1.16 Factual accuracy check with agency**

The draft inspection report is shared with inspected agency/agencies for factual accuracy and updated based on their feedback. Where appropriate the CI will discuss and review amendments made to the draft at this stage. To maintain a record of factual accuracy issues raised by the agency/agencies, the lead inspector should notate the margin of the agency response correspondence to indicate whether the specific point(s) raised by the agency as factually inaccurate has (have) been accepted or not accepted. A copy of the correspondence with the handwritten annotations should be signed-off by the Chief Inspector/Deputy Chief Inspector and retained in the hard copy inspection folder, and will then be subject to the organisation's disposal policy. This does not preclude the inspector completing a FAC response table, where considered necessary, to record agency comments, CJI response and supporting rationale. The final draft report is agreed with the agency/agencies and an action plan is requested. If provided by the agency/agencies the action plan is checked by the lead inspector to ensure all recommendations have been considered. If available the action plan is included with the final version of the report as an appendix. If the action plan is not available the schedule for publication should continue.

### **2.1.17 Final draft and proof reading**

The final draft of the report is checked using the Business Communication Manager (BCM) check list prior to a final **QA check of final draft and approval by the CI** to send the report to the Minister for approval.

## **Publication and Closure**

### **2.1.18 Submission to Minister for approval to publish**

The final version of the report is sent with to the Minister with an accompanying letter from the CI seeking permission to publish.

### **2.1.19 Permission to Publish Received from Minister**

Responses from the Minister to the request are tracked by PA to the CI and include recording the terms of the final approval. The report together with a covering letter is sent to other agencies identified as needing to see report prior to publication by lead inspector.

### **2.1.20 Report finalised for publication using BCM checklist**

**This is the final Quality Assurance check of the report**

### **2.1.21 Press Release Prepared and shared with Agency**

A press release is drafted by BCM and shared with the lead inspector for checking and amendment as appropriate. The press release is shared with DC/I and C/I before being finalised and approved for release by the CI.

### **2.1.22 Publication Date Agreed and Report Issued**

A date for publication of the report is identified by BCM and final arrangements for publication are overseen by BCM using the checklist. The report is laid before parliament and released embargoed  
The report is published.

### **2.1.23 Communication channels identified and communications plan completed**

The BCM continues to manage any media interest in report and to collate media coverage and articles. Responses to any further media requests for further articles/interviews are managed by the BCM.

### **2.1.24 Lessons learned report**

Following a lessons learned meeting the lead inspector prepares a lessons learned report and any actions resulting from it are taken forward into the inspectors meeting process to update the inspection process accordingly.

## **2.2 Cross-cutting thematic inspection**

The stages for undertaking a cross-cutting thematic inspection are broadly similar to those for a single agency inspection although obviously will involve research and data collection, establishment of agency contacts, fieldwork and report clearing with more than one agency. In addition CJI inspectors may seek to form an advisory group to provide guidance during

the inspection. Members of the advisory group may be drawn from the agencies themselves or from stakeholders or organisations with a specific knowledge of the topic area to be examined. The advisory group will meet during the course of the inspection, usually to provide advice on the Terms of Reference, emerging findings and the inspection report.

### **2.3 Reviews requested by the Minister of Justice**

Generally reviews fall outside the predetermined inspection programme as they are undertaken at the request of the Minister of Justice in response to a specific issue that has come to light. Reviews broadly follow the same process as an inspection although by nature of the fact that a specific topic for inspection has been requested the scope of the inspection may have already been defined to some extent.

### **2.4 Action Plan/Follow Up Reviews**

An Action Plan Review is primarily conducted to review the progress of the organisation(s) in working towards recommendations made in the initial report. Research in preparation for the inspection is therefore focused on progress made by the agency towards implementing recommendations contained in the initial report. This may involve consulting with stakeholders and other interested parties as in the preparation phase of the initial inspection. The process of establishing an agency contact and undertaking fieldwork remains useful in determining an agency's progress towards implementing recommendations. A report is then drafted and published on the CJI website. There is no requirement to lay the report before parliament. The primary focus is to report on whether recommendations have been achieved.

## **Appendix A: Relevant legislation and list of bodies subject to inspection by CJI**

The Office of the Chief Inspector of Criminal Justice in Northern Ireland (CJI) was established as an executive Non-Departmental Public Body under s.45 of the Justice (Northern Ireland) Act 2002.

The Chief Inspector was appointed by the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland in August 2003 to inspect or ensure the inspection of all aspects of the criminal justice system in Northern Ireland and to contribute in a significant way to the efficient and effective running of the criminal justice system, while helping to guarantee that it functions in an even handed way. CJI went live in October 2004 and since that time has conducted a programme of inspections which are agreed annually with the Secretary of State.

### **Remit of Criminal Justice Inspection**

Under section 46 of the Justice (Northern Ireland) Act 2002 (as amended), CJI must inspect the following agencies unless it is satisfied that they are subject to a satisfactory existing inspection regime<sup>1</sup>.

- Police Service of Northern Ireland
- Forensic Science NI
- State Pathology Department
- Public Prosecution Service for NI
- Probation Board for NI
- NI Prison Service
- Youth Justice Agency
- Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety
- Compensation Agency
- NI Child Maintenance & Enforcement Division
- Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment
- Department of the Environment
- Health and Safety Executive
- NI Tourist Board
- Police Ombudsman for NI
- NI Social Security Agency
- Royal Mail Group
- Belfast International Airport Ltd

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<sup>1</sup> This provision means that CJI has to work co-operatively with HM Inspectorate of Constabulary in relation to the Police Service of Northern Ireland.

- Belfast Harbour Commissioners
- Larne Harbour Ltd
- Northern Ireland Court Service
- Legal Services Commission
- Parole Commissioners
- Community Based Restorative Justice Schemes
- Probation & Bail Hostels (Approved Premises)