

## **Launch of 2009-12 Corporate Plan and 2009-10 Business Plan**

Dr Michael Maguire,

*Chief Inspector of Criminal Justice in Northern Ireland.*

**The Long Gallery, Parliament Buildings, Stormont**

**30 June 2009**

Many thanks Stephen and thanks also to our other sponsors for today's event - Dolores Kelly MLA, Basil McCrea MLA, Alex Maskey MLA, Ian Paisley Jnr MLA and Dawn Purvis – thank you for your support.

The Criminal Justice Inspectorate is a unique organisation. It is unique as the only integrated criminal justice inspection organisation – certainly in Britain and Ireland but also I think in the world. Those countries that have “inspection” bodies have single inspection organisations that look at probation, prisons, policing etc individually. In Northern Ireland the Criminal Justice Inspectorate cuts across all aspects of the justice system from policing and prosecution to the courts, prisons, probation and youth justice among others.

This allows us to:

- Provide an inspection agenda that meets the specific needs of organisations and the justice system; but also
- To develop a thematic approach across the justice system in a joined up manner that is the envy of others – we can reach parts of the justice system that others can't.

This organisation is unique in the range of skills and experience it can draw on to meet the challenges of the inspection process. Within CJI itself we can draw on the experience of those from a policing, probation, courts and private sector background – necessary to get under the skin of the issues we want to consider. We also work in close partnership with other Inspector organisations and experts in the field to exchange the latest thinking in professional practice as well as depth and breadth of experience. Working together we can think globally and use this information to act locally!!

It is also unique in that the inspectorate has the opportunity to participate in and contribute to, the improvement of the justice system in Northern Ireland at a time

of immense importance. It is particularly significant that we launch our corporate plan in these wonderful surroundings as it symbolises perhaps the most important change likely to take place within the justice system over the life of this corporate plan – the possible devolvement of policing and justice into the hands of locally elected politicians.

We have the opportunity to use our unique position within the justice system here to contribute to changes that will have a real impact on people's lives. Our inspection agenda – highlighted in our corporate plan today – I believe will help make a difference to how the justice system is delivered – it has been created to tackle real issues: for example,

- We will look at the length of time taken from arrest to sentence. This is important as justice delayed undermines confidence in the system – in our inspection programme we want to look across the system at how to reduce avoidable delay by examining how organisations work together – the police, public prosecution service, probation and the courts
- We want to understand the effectiveness of measures to reduce re-offending – it costs more to send someone to prison for a year than to public school – are we maximising the value of this expenditure to reduce re-offending and the number of victims of the future
- There is natural concern around how the justice system treats those who come into contact with it - be they victims, witnesses, offenders or prisoners. We will continue to examine the impact of the justice system across these groups
- Finally, we will be asking the question can we deliver more with less as we begin to compete with the demands of the devolved budget?

Looking over the life of the corporate plan the momentum provided by devolved government provides a “window of opportunity” to think differently about the justice system, what it does and how it delivers. CJI is fully committed to working with organisations to contribute to this debate and provide information upon which informed decisions can be made at a political and organisational level.

In developing our corporate plan we have adopted an approach that attempts to draw conclusions that can support Ministers, the Assembly and the wider community in understanding the workings of the justice system and its impact on victims and witnesses, young people and children and prisoners and detainees. We hope to look at the linkages between the justice system and devolved Departments.

One of the critical areas of change relates to local accountability - there is no doubt that all criminal justice organisations will come under increasing and relentless scrutiny – I want the scrutiny provided by CJI to add real value to the discussion and debate around the kind of justice system we all want to see and the steps that need to be taken to get there.

Our inspection agenda has been the product of widespread consultation with Ministers, justice agencies, voluntary and community sector and local politicians.

As we set out in our Plan our objectives are to:

- Promote efficiency and effectiveness through assessment and inspection to facilitate performance improvement by providing an inspection agenda that looks to the future – we are forward looking in our approach and want to work with organisations to plan for the future.
- Provide an objective and independent assessment to Ministers, Assembly Members and the wider community on the working of the justice system – we can provide a perspective with no axe to grind. In our work, we do not provide criticism for criticisms sake but in order to provide an independent perspective on what needs to be done – we offer praise where we find it – and there is much that is good about our system (although this is not always reported!).
- We also will provide independent scrutiny of the conditions for and treatment of users of the justice system in particular victims and witnesses, children and young people and prisoners and detainees – we can look at those issues of that are of real public concern in an authoritative and in depth way.
- We aim to work in partnership with all justice organisations to deliver a high quality, independent and impartial inspection programme – we are committed to providing an honest reflection of the strengths and areas for improvement using the widest range of skills and experience available to get the right answers to the questions we ask.

A final thought relates to the CJI as an organisation. Since I joined in September 2008, I have been immensely impressed with the work undertaken by the inspectorate – the volume and quality of what is produced can compete with any organisation anywhere. Last year there was an independent review of CJI by John Hunter that highlighted the strengths of the organisation and the value of the work we do. The Report made a number of recommendations which are now nearly fully implemented.

Our corporate planning process has provided us with a further opportunity to reflect on where we want to go as an organisation - to build on the excellent work that has been completed to date. We have set out in the document a number of objectives for ourselves. We continue to pursue continuous improvement and development around the way we do our business.

I hope you find our planning document a useful insight into where we want to go as an organisation. Its purpose is to give clarity on what we do and how we are going to do it. Our inspection programme is clearly outlined as is the areas for development within CJI.

Thank you all for coming.

***Dr Michael Maguire***  
**Chief Inspector of Criminal Justice in Northern Ireland**