

Summary of Criminal Justice Inspection Report Findings

January – December 2009

Criminal Justice Inspection
Northern Ireland
a better justice system for all



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Introduction

Criminal Justice Inspection Northern Ireland is a unique organisation that cuts across all aspects of the justice system from policing and prosecution to the courts, prisons, probation and youth justice among others. Our inspection agenda is designed to provide assurance to the community in Northern Ireland that justice organisations are subject to independent scrutiny. In addition, we seek to highlight good practice as well as focus on areas which require improvement. In all our inspections and reviews we want to work with justice organisations in their development.

2009 was a busy year for Criminal Justice Inspection. This brief document attempts to give the reader an overview of the breadth of work undertaken during the year by the Inspectorate and the key findings. The inspection work is a mix of organisation specific studies, follow-up work on previous inspections and thematic inspections that involve more than one organisation.

All our work is undertaken in order to meet the objectives of CJI. Full reports are available on our website www.cjini.org.

Michael Maguire

Dr Michael Maguire

Chief Inspector for Criminal Justice in Northern Ireland
January 2010



POLICE SERVICE OF NORTHERN IRELAND

Police Custody: The detention of persons in police custody in Northern Ireland (June)

- Custody services confirmed to be to an acceptable standard.
- Value for money issues identified around the role of Forensic Medical Officers.

Policing with the Community: An inspection of policing with the community in Northern Ireland (April)

- Significant challenges ahead to implement the critical dimensions of community policing.
- This means more effective call management and making community policing central to the work of every police officer.
- Policing with the Community not regarded as the core function of every police station.

Handling Volume Crime and the Use of Police Bail Follow-Up Inspection (July)

- Significant progress made on delivering recommendations.
- Relationship between PPS/PSNI remains an issue.

Scientific Support Services in the Police Service of Northern Ireland Follow-Up Inspection (October)

- Significant progress made in implementing recommendations from previous studies – progress in tracking and storing of exhibits and new management structure.
- Remaining work around quality control and working environment – left to the PSNI to deliver. No further follow-up work required.



PUBLIC PROSECUTION SERVICE FOR NORTHERN IRELAND

Public Prosecution Service for Northern Ireland Follow-Up Inspection (June)

- Most progress in legal areas – decision making assessed as sound.
- Only some progress on efficiency/management agenda.
- Treatment of victims and witnesses required further development.



NORTHERN IRELAND PRISON SERVICE

Vulnerable Prisoners: An inspection of the treatment of vulnerable prisoners by the Northern Ireland Prison Service (December)

- Service worked to address negligence and operational failures arising out of the death of Colin Bell.
- Concerns remain around Maghaberry Prison – regime for vulnerable prisoners has changed little.
- Continued disconnect between strategic intent and reality.
- Changes to be seen as a starting point for further action.

Prison Staff Training and Development: An inspection of the training and development of operational staff in the Northern Ireland Prison Service (June)

- Significant disconnect between training and reality – focus of operational training does not reflect stated intent.
- Much remains to be done in changing the role of the prison officer.

Report of an unannounced full follow-up inspection of Maghaberry Prison (July)

- Prison not performing well in any of the healthy prison tests – in bottom third of performance when compared with other establishments in England and Wales inspected by our inspection partners HMIP.
- Limited follow through on previous inspection reports – 54% of recommendations not implemented.
- Disconnect between intent and reality.
- One of the most expensive prisons in the UK.
- Major change programme required with clear accountability – current situation cannot be allowed to continue.



OTHER JUSTICE ORGANISATIONS

Inspection of Forensic Science Northern Ireland (July)

- FSNi emerging with a renewed focus on delivering an effective forensic science service.
- Management challenges remain around working practices and demonstrating value for money.
- Need for a more strategic view on the role of forensic science and the role it plays across the system.

Coroners Service for Northern Ireland Follow-Up Inspection (November)

- Considerable progress made in relation to meeting recommendations from previous studies.
- Service to bereaved families particularly good.
- Concerns remain on areas outside the control of the Coroners Service – including State Pathology.



THEMATIC STUDIES

A Review of Transition to Community arrangements for Life Sentence Prisoners in Northern Ireland (April)

- Risk assessment and risk management compares favourably with other jurisdictions.
- Current system is not sustainable should there be a significant increase in the number of life sentence prisoners.
- Parole Commissioners for Northern Ireland should review current operations to reflect changing circumstances.

Section 75: The impact of Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 on the criminal justice system (May)

- Monitoring is central to the delivery of the equality agenda – very limited data exists.
- Concerns raised in relation to the employment profile of prison staff and the treatment of prisoners based on religious background.



OTHER ORGANISATIONS

Community Restorative Justice Ireland: Newry and South Armagh Scheme (October)

- Scheme met the standards for community restorative justice – recommended for consideration by Government for accreditation (subject to findings of the Suitability Panel).

Evaluation of West Belfast Community Safety Forum (November)

- The Forum made a positive contribution to the delivery of a safer community in West Belfast.
- It helped to target and accelerate work of statutory agencies in the local area.
- Potential to undermine existing agencies and its future should be decided in the context of decisions around other agencies involved in similar work.

Approved Premises and the Juvenile Justice Centre

- We also undertook unannounced inspections of the approved premises (hostels) and the Juvenile Justice Centre during the year, with the aim of ensuring that child custody was well managed and there was best practice in public protection. We found children were being well managed in custody and approved premises were making a strong contribution to public protection.



How we work

A Better Justice System for all

Promote efficiency and effectiveness through assessment and inspection to facilitate performance improvement.

Provide an independent assessment to Ministers and the wider community on the working of the criminal justice system.

Provide independent scrutiny of the outcomes for, and treatment of, users of the criminal justice system.

Work in partnership to deliver a high quality, independent and impartial inspection programme.

Delivery of the Inspection Programme
Publication of Inspection Reports
Completion of Action Plan/Inspection Follow-up Reviews
Community Consultation