

Policing and the Impact of Devolution

Change and Challenge: A New Conversation about Policing in Northern Ireland

University of Ulster at Jordanstown

Dr Michael Maguire
Chief Inspector
Criminal Justice Inspection Northern Ireland

17 and 18 November 2011

Criminal Justice Inspection
Northern Ireland
a better justice system for all



Devolution of policing and justice – be careful for what you wish for ?

The devolution of policing and justice is now a reality – there is a strong desire to show how devolution can make a difference. But:-

- The political context remains unsettled
- The budget deficit will place increasing strain on all service delivery
- The desire to develop a long term approach will be tempered by the potential for “punitive populism”
- The need to deal with the threat posed paramilitary activity sits uncomfortably with a desire to deliver on “bread and butter” issues (e.g. community policing and prison reform)



What issues will shape policing as devolution begins to bed down...

- Organisational narrative – specific areas for development within the PSNI
- Joining up justice narrative – the PSNI is inextricably linked with the future demands on the justice system
- Accountability narrative – how will accountability work in practice
- Things in the too difficult to do box – primarily dealing with the past

Areas specific to policing

- Some divergence away from the policing debate in England and Wales (eg Policing Commissioners) and the agenda in NI
- Value for money issues
 - Workforce modernisation
 - Doing more for less
- Developing the policing agenda
 - Personal, protective, professional policing
 - Policing with the community
 - Customer service and service delivery



Policing and joined up justice

- Delay – what happens in policing has an fundamental impact on the length of time from arrest/charge to disposal
- Dealing with victims and witnesses as they progress through the justice process – clarity on the role of police
- Getting the “connectivity” right will be critical
 - Enforcement
 - “policing the gap”
 - Impact on community confidence



Getting accountability right...

- Cluttered landscape
- How much of this is cosmetic and how much is effective in “holding the police to account”
- Risk of competing demands – follow through and delivery is what is important



Things in the too difficult to do box...

- Dealing with the past will not be going away (wishful thinking) – risks of contamination on modern policing agenda
- Controversy over the Police Ombudsman shows the heat that such issues can generate
- Strong Ombudsman is essential for policing and community confidence in policing – how it dealt with is critical

Some conclusions

- The future of policing is inextricably linked with the future success of the devolution of policing and justice
- A future justice landscape will place significant pressures on the police service – a PSNI agenda on its own will not deliver
- Getting the accountability mechanisms right will be critical to success
- How we deal with the past will continue to impact on the PSNI

