

**‘Not a marginal issue’
CJI inspection of mental health
and the
criminal justice system**

Criminal Bar Association Annual Conference

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Criminal Justice Inspection
Northern Ireland
a better justice system for all



Treatment of those with mental health issues presents enormous challenges to the justice system

- It is a 'wicked subject' – one that requires a cross departmental approach to ensure success.
- There is little disagreement on the nature of the problem to be addressed:

People in prison who should not be there

Clear need to improve how we deal with people as they progress through the justice system



It is a complicated problem.. .

- Requires resources that are in short supply.
- Puts pressure on already very busy staff.
- Demands collaboration across organisations and Departments that have different objectives, priorities and ways of doing business.

The question I want to address this morning is how do we develop an approach that recognises the constraints under which organisations operate but builds on a requirement to improve service delivery to those with mental health issues.



The findings of our inspection point to a need for a more **co-ordinated** and **focused approach** to the delivery of mental health services, that concentrates on the need to **divert people away from custody** where appropriate and **provide the right care in the right setting.**



Clear need for justice organisations to improve how they engage with people

- Mental health not a priority issue across CJS.
- Training and awareness of the implications of mental health could be improved.
- Monitoring and recording weak.
- Accommodation within police stations not suitable.
- Early screening and treatment problematic.
- Treatment of vulnerable prisoners.



Justice organisations need to work more closely together

- Information sharing could be developed – better flagging of the issue within organisations.
- Need to focus more clearly on the ‘connectivity’ of the system as people progress through it.
- Improved use of ‘pre-trial’ hearings to address mental health issues - better information and expert advice to judges.
- Integrated support for people leaving prison.
- Identifying problems earlier and developing alternative disposals.



The interface between justice and health is critical

- Resources available for early screening and assessment (MDO scheme).
- Provision of multi-disciplinary care within a prison environment.
- Development of 'places of safety' which are not police cells.
- Information sharing between health and justice.
- Strengthening linkages with care in the community.



There are implications for the Health Service and the ways services are provided

- Resources available to meet the demands for improvements in prison care.
- Need for a secure hospital facility.
- Development of the MDO scheme.
- Personality disorder strategy.
- Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services.
- Improving the continuity of care.



CJI makes recommendations aimed at...

- The priority and focus given to mental health within justice organisations.
- The need to improve how justice organisations link together.
- Improving the interface between justice and health.
- Suggestions for improvement within the health service.



In particular...

- Establish clear rules about where people are to be taken.
- Make sure people are assessed properly at a place of safety.
- Improve recording and information sharing.
- Mental health issues brought to the attention of judges at earliest opportunity.
- Care of prisoners around 'healthy prison' agenda.
- Need for suitable accommodation to help with integration back into the community.
- The establishment of a joint criminal/health programme board – developing partnership in the design and delivery of services.



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