



LAWFUL DUTY:

PUBLIC PROTECTION INSPECTION III: A THEMATIC INSPECTION OF THE PUBLIC PROTECTION ARRANGEMENTS NORTHERN IRELAND

October 2019





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October 2019





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List of abbreviations

ACE	Assessment, Case Management and Evaluation (scoring system/tool to assess likelihood of reoffending)
APs	Approved Premises
CJI	Criminal Justice Inspection Northern Ireland
DoJ	Department of Justice
DRM	Designated Risk Manager (within NIPS)
HSCT(s)	Health and Social Care Trust(s)
LAPPP(s)	Local Area Public Protection Panel(s)
NICTS	Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunals Service
MUST	Mid Ulster and South Tyrone hostel
NIHE	Northern Ireland Housing Executive
NIPS	Northern Ireland Prison Service
NGOs	Non-governmental organisations
NPIA	National Policing Improvement Agency
NSPCC	National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children
OBP(s)	Offending Behaviour Programme(s)
PCI	Presbyterian Church in Ireland
PDU	Prisoner Development Unit (within NIPS)
PBNI	Probation Board for Northern Ireland
PPANI	Public Protection Arrangements Northern Ireland
PPU	Public Protection Unit (within PSNI)
PPT	Public Protection Team
PSNI	Police Service of Northern Ireland
SCNI	Simon Community Northern Ireland
SCR(s)	Serious Case Review(s)
SMB	Strategic Management Board (within PPANI)
SOPO(s)	Sexual Offences Prevention Order(s)
ViSOR	Violent and Sexual Offenders Register (database)
VOPO(s)	Violent Offences Prevention Order(s)
UK	United Kingdom



Chief Inspector's Foreword

The management of sex offenders generates considerable public interest and concern and during its formative years, was the subject of regular inspection.

Criminal Justice Inspection Northern Ireland's (CJI's) last full inspection of the Public Protection Arrangements Northern Ireland (PPANI) was published in 2011. At that time I assessed that the partnership was the best example of inter-agency and cross-departmental working in the criminal justice sector and, safely located within a statutory framework and with a clear strategic vision, it was appropriate to allow the process to mature and develop.

Nine years later the arrangements have become embedded within the participating agencies and moved beyond the significant contributions of individuals to having become the accepted way of working.

The introduction of a statutory requirement on the PPANI agencies to cooperate in 2008 has been beneficial and could provide significant learning for others who might have concerns about placing partnership working within a legislative framework.

This inspection acknowledges the progress made and supports the future direction of the partnership which will have to tackle some immediate challenges, particularly in trying to manage the increasing numbers of lowest risk offenders at a time when the pressure on existing resources is increasing.

The participating agencies should now move to maximise their use of technology for information sharing and the Strategic Management Board (SMB) must provide clearer evidence of the benefit they add and their outcomes in managing the risk of reoffending.

The contributions of the Approved Premises (AP) and other voluntary and community sector bodies who support the work of the arrangements remains significant and must be protected.

We have made four strategic and two operational recommendations to support the continuing improvements and effectiveness of the arrangements.

This inspection was conducted by David MacAnulty and Tom McGonigle. My sincere thanks to all who supported this work.

Brendan McGuigan CBE
Chief Inspector of Criminal Justice
in Northern Ireland

October 2019

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Northern Ireland
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Executive Summary

This is Criminal Justice Inspection Northern Ireland's (CJI's) sixth inspection report of the Public Protection Arrangements for Northern Ireland (PPANI). It assessed the progress of the criminal justice agencies in fulfilling their responsibilities since the last inspection in 2011.

Governance of the PPANI had been strengthened with good levels of engagement among the PPANI agencies and its Strategic Management Board (SMB). The Probation Board for Northern Ireland (PBNI) and Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) remained central to the delivery of the arrangements. Contributions by the Northern Ireland Prison Service (NIPS), Social Services and the Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE) were more active and tangible than in 2011. The statutory agencies continued to dedicate experienced staff to the public protection arrangements, though it was especially challenging for the police to maintain an appropriate level of staffing. Police officers engaged in this area of work were well-motivated, but high levels of sick leave and staff turnover were causing considerable pressure. Similar staffing issues were found in the NIPS where officers were being taken away from PPANI duties to undertake other prison responsibilities.

Offender hostels, which were all run by voluntary sector organisations, continued to provide a very important public protection service in support of the PPANI. Those offenders assessed as posing the greatest risk (Category 3) were rigorously managed by the co-located Public Protection Team (PPT), which comprised police, probation and social services staff.

The PPANI caseload had been increasing steadily since 2011. This was particularly true for the lowest risk level offenders (Category 1). They numbered around 1,400 in October 2018, compared to around 1,000 in 2011, and the PSNI were solely responsible for managing nearly all of them. As a result, the PSNI had begun to examine ways of de-registering¹ cases, but this was not yet making a meaningful impact.

Measures to target resources towards the offenders who were most in need of supervision (Categories 2 and 3) appeared to be working well. Close attention was paid to ensure proper management of public protection cases.

¹ De-registration involves an offender applying to Court for early removal of the requirement to be monitored within the public protection arrangements.

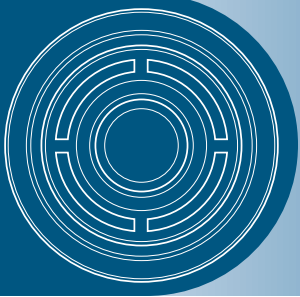
There were quarterly file audits and Serious Case Reviews (SCRs) were commissioned to identify learning when things went wrong.

The ViSOR IT database² was an example of a powerful United Kingdom (UK)-wide database for managing public protection cases. Although available to the police, probation and prison services in England and Wales, it was only used by the PSNI in Northern Ireland. There was no obvious reason for the other agencies not accessing ViSOR and/or a similar type of shared database IT system and we recommend that all of the PPANI agencies have access to this type of system. Front line PSNI officers and PBNI staff also required greater technical support in carrying out their duties.

The PPANI agencies worked hard to address public concern about high profile cases. However, it was a constant struggle to promote informed debate in this area of work which aroused considerable public emotion.

Overall Inspectors found the PPANI and the constituent agencies were delivering a good level of public protection in Northern Ireland. There is no room for complacency and as numbers grow, it will be increasingly important that the agencies provide consistency in relation to key personnel, smooth succession planning and an ongoing commitment to resourcing - in particular - the PSNI's Public Protection Unit (PPU) to risk assess and manage with Category 1 offenders.

2 ViSOR (the Violent and Sex Offender Register) is a database of records of offenders who are required to register with police throughout the United Kingdom (UK). ViSOR enables sharing of risk assessments and risk management information in a timely way. It enhances capacity to share intelligence and allows for secure and immediate transfer of key information for example when offenders move to another area. It is available to criminal justice agencies throughout Scotland, England and Wales but in Northern Ireland only the PSNI was using ViSOR.



Recommendations

Strategic recommendations

1

The PSNI, should develop an action plan to sustain the resourcing of the Public Protection Units (PPUs) and a system to cope with the demands of Category 1 offenders within six months of the publication of this report (*paragraph 2.20*).

2

The PPANI Strategic Management Board (SMB) should consider the potential to proactively influence member agency issues which affect the delivery of corporate PPANI objectives. The SMB should also identify any risks posed by all member agencies withdrawing resources and devise an action plan to manage these risks (*paragraph 2.41*).

3

Within six months of the publication of this report, the PPANI SMB should develop an action plan for the roll-out and adoption of a multi-agency information sharing system by all core PPANI agencies (*paragraph 3.20*).

4

Within six months from publication of this report, the SMB should conduct an outcomes review to:

- better understand the causes of increasing/decreasing numbers of offenders in each risk category;
- develop performance indicators which feature in the business plans of the SMB agencies;
- introduce performance indicators for PPANI's public engagement outcomes; and
- commence reporting on all performance indicators on an annual basis (*paragraph 4.10*).

Operational recommendations


1

The PSNI should develop the capability of officers to access and interrogate technology held by PPANI offenders (*paragraph 3.12*).

2

The PPANI Coordinator should report to the SMB regarding the roll out of the unified process for Category 1 reviews on:

- progress of the roll-out on a quarterly basis;
- lessons learned once the roll-out is complete; and
- a review six months post roll-out of implementation (*paragraph 3.13*).



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