Police Service of Northern Ireland Customer Service

May 2011

Criminal Justice Inspection
Northern Ireland
a better justice system for all

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Contents

List of abbreviations

HMIC	Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary
NIPB	Northern Ireland Policing Board
OPONI	Office of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland
PSNI	Police Service of Northern Ireland

Chief Inspector's Foreword

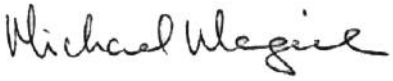
The way which a police service engages with the local community is a cornerstone of community confidence. A negative interaction can create a barrier between the police service and the community it is there to protect and serve. Alternatively, a positive engagement which encourages problem solving, courtesy, visibility and accessibility can have implications far beyond the behaviours of individual officers. A focus on improving customer service has been an important feature in recent years within police forces in England and Wales, and it is particularly important in the context of Northern Ireland.

This inspection report sets out our findings on customer service within the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI). The purpose of the inspection was to examine the quality of customer service provided by the PSNI. It examined the way in which the Police Service understands what is required from a customer perspective, the accessibility of services, standards for service delivery and achievement of better outcomes.

Our overall conclusion is that customer service is taken seriously by PSNI senior management and we commend the commitment shown to improving how the police engage with the local community by the Chief Constable. Initial steps had been taken within the Service to improve public confidence and the nature of the interaction between the police and those who would seek to use the services provided. These plans and developments were at an early stage and the Service still faced a number of challenges in implementing the Chief Constable's commitment to *'personal, professional and protective'* policing. Whilst the commitment to customer service from the top of the organisation was evident, it was too early to say what the ultimate outcome of these plans would be.

In moving the agenda forward it is important there is better co-ordination of projects within the PSNI to ensure greater consistency of service delivery across Northern Ireland. In particular there is a need to ensure that the values and behaviour of *'personal, professional and protective'* policing are clear to all officers with evident standards and consistency at the point of service delivery. The report also concludes that there is a need to reduce the levels of abstraction of neighbourhood officers to ensure neighbourhood policing is properly delivered.

This inspection was undertaken by Rachel Lindsay and William Priestley of CJI, with assistance from colleagues in Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC). I would like to thank all those involved in the inspection process.



Dr Michael Maguire
Chief Inspector of Criminal Justice
in Northern Ireland
May 2011

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Executive Summary

In recent years there has been a focus in policing on developing a culture where the needs and priorities of the *'customer'* as an end user are understood by staff and are always taken into account when designing and delivering policing services. This inspection focused on the way in which customers were dealt with by the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) and how their needs were met, particularly in relation to processes and how this will impact on outcomes for customers.

The Chief Constable has made clear his strategic intent for the organisation, which was a commitment to deliver *'personal, professional and protective'* policing in Northern Ireland. This strategic message was beginning to influence the work of the PSNI and at the time of this inspection the Service was developing their approach to customer service and service delivery. This work was mainly driven by the Service Excellence Programme Board.

In translating the Chief Constable's strategic aims, the PSNI were working on a number of projects under the banner of Policing with the Community using the Confidence Route Map (which outlines what drives public confidence) to improve customer service. Policing Commitments were being developed to set out the standards of service which the customer could expect to receive. The R4 Project (**R**ight people, in the **R**ight place, at the **R**ight time, doing the **R**ight job) addressed call handling and data capture processes, and aimed to address issues in relation to access to services; visibility; response; and updating. The R4 Project was being piloted at the time of this inspection and plans were being developed to roll it out across the Service. Better co-ordination of this with the other improvement projects within an overall programme plan is needed to fully realise their aims.

Access for the public was mixed with some excellent use of social networking, the PSNI website and improved enquiry office facilities; but there was a lack of consistency in approach across the Service. The PSNI should maximise efforts in this area in consultation with customers in order to reach out to the public. Some staff had received valuable training in the area of customer service or soft skills, but again there was a lack of consistency in approach. Some examples were provided of initiatives which focused on customer needs, for example between neighbourhood teams and other roles.

Officers and staff spoken to during this inspection demonstrated a high level of commitment in the main to delivering a good service to the public, albeit they highlighted challenges in being able to realise this. They perceived these challenges to be the increasing security threat, pressure of work and unnecessary bureaucracy. The PSNI senior management therefore faced challenges in disseminating and delivering a customer service ethos throughout the organisation.

Inspectors were advised by many officers and staff that there had been a delay in providing clarity as to what *'personal, professional and protective'* policing meant in reality, and how it should be operationalised into service delivery. In the main there were no standards for delivery which

staff could work to. This had led to some districts and departments developing their own strategies around this and therefore the message was in danger of being inconsistently interpreted across the PSNI. The PSNI were developing a communications plan at the time of inspection in this area and this is critical to ensuring the Chief Constable's message is disseminated consistently.

The PSNI faced challenges in developing a customer service focus as, at the time of the inspection, organisational culture did not place customers at the centre of service delivery. This was evidenced, for example, by the current approaches to call handling and to updating victims by some stakeholders. The PSNI had implemented National Call Handling Standards and the adherence to these was monitored by the Northern Ireland Policing Board (NIPB). The approach to call management was inconsistent with a variety of call handling centres dealing with switchboard calls, emergency calls and non-emergency calls. The PSNI's R4 Project aimed to streamline these processes as they did not provide a seamless process for managing calls. Improvements in the use of telephony solutions to enable switchboard operators to direct calls appropriately are needed.

Neighbourhood policing is a critical area of customer service and, where neighbourhood officers were able to undertake their role appropriately, it led to excellent local initiatives and partnership working. However abstraction of neighbourhood officers continued to be an issue and Inspectors would recommend that the reintroduction to the Policing Plan of the target for neighbourhood officers to spend 80% of their time on neighbourhood duties is required to address this.

Consultations were generally undertaken with District Policing Partnerships, local community partnerships or by paper exercise with consultees appropriate for the topic. Stakeholders welcomed the opportunity to engage with the PSNI but did not always feel the process was fully effective in enabling them to have a true influence on policy or strategy. The PSNI had a number of Independent Advisory Groups to enable them to engage with harder to reach and less visible groups, however some members did not feel their group had been fully utilised. The PSNI should develop a more consistent approach to the use of imaginative ways of undertaking consultation, including better engagement with Independent Advisory Groups.

The PSNI were developing methods to assess performance against the Policing Commitments including the use of surveys, call backs and mystery shopper exercises. In the absence of these measures already being in place, some districts had introduced victim call back systems. Feedback provided to Inspectors in relation to performance of the Service was mixed with positive views around the work of neighbourhood officers, but difficulties were raised with the approach of other officers such as Response and Tactical Support Group. Officers spoken to from these roles however, in the main, illustrated their awareness of the need to provide good customer service but cited difficulties in being able to deliver it due to other pressures.

Call handling systems were used to monitor call volume, answer times, abandonment rates and performance information. The PSNI did not collect data around non-attendance at calls for security or safety reasons, or provide guidance for officers tasked with making these decisions. This guidance and monitoring should be introduced in order to fully understand the scale of this type of non-attendance and enable reliable analysis to take place. In order to reduce duplication of effort supervisors should make better use of Niche Records Management System when reviewing initial responses to incidents.

The annual performance review process, which is used to manage performance and develop staff, was under review at the time of the inspection. Inspectors welcome the PSNI's plans to introduce an individual performance process which recognises the importance of customer service and focuses not only on performance targets in relation to '*personal, professional and protective*' policing but also on how staff perform in relation to the competencies for their role.

The PSNI and the Office of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland (OPONI) were piloting a process of local resolution where managers would be able to deal with minor complaints and dissatisfaction as soon as an issue was raised with them. This should be beneficial in terms of reducing the time required to deal with these types of issues and increase satisfaction with the process.

The PSNI used a variety of methods to communicate its plans and performance which included via the website, leaflets, posters and social media. Chief Officers and local and District Commanders were asked to account for performance at private and public meetings as well as neighbourhood officers outlining results at local meetings.

Recommendations

Strategic Recommendations

- As part of an overall communications strategy the PSNI should make clear to all officers and staff what the commitment for *'personal, professional and protective'* policing means at the point of service delivery *(paragraph 4.4)*.

- The PSNI should co-ordinate the ongoing Service Excellence Policing with the Community projects using project management principles (including dependencies and identification and management of risks) to accomplish the overall objective of Policing with the Community through *'personal, professional and protective'* policing *(paragraph 4.32)*.

- The PSNI should continue to develop and effectively implement a performance review system for all staff that recognises the importance of customer service for the next performance review cycle *(paragraph 5.14)*.

Operational Recommendations

- The PSNI should develop a corporate approach to maximising attempts to develop and utilise alternative forms of access for members of the public in consultation with customers *(paragraph 3.14)*.

- The PSNI should make better use of telephony solutions to enable switchboard operators to direct callers to the appropriate point of contact for their query *(paragraph 4.13)*.

- CJI recommends the reintroduction to the Policing Plan of the target that neighbourhood officers work at least 80% of their duty hours on neighbourhood policing duties to a definition of abstraction agreed with, and monitored by, the Northern Ireland Policing Board (NIPB) *(paragraph 4.19)*.

- The PSNI should develop a more consistent approach to the use of imaginative ways of undertaking consultation, including better engagement with Independent Advisory Groups *(paragraph 4.31)*.

- The PSNI should introduce guidance on the non-attendance of calls for security and safety reasons and implement a monitoring system to enable reliable analysis of such non-attendance to take place *(paragraph 5.10)*.

Suggestions for improvement

- It would be beneficial for the PSNI to thoroughly explore the use of alternative locations, such as in retail areas or community centres, as potential locations to interact with the public, which would be utilised by, and benefical to, members of the public (paragraph 3.10).

- Consideration should be given to the views of the customer when determining timescales for contact in addition to consideration of the seriousness of the crime (paragraph 4.7).

- A common definition and guidance on dealing with vulnerable callers would be beneficial to assist call handlers in their decision-making (paragraph 4.9).

- In order to ensure information is relevant and useful, neighbourhood profiles need to be comprehensive, user-friendly, up-to-date and contain details of key partnerships for neighbourhood teams and other district staff (paragraph 4.21).

- There is a need for better explanations to be given to communities as to why the presence of Tactical Support Groups are necessary in an area (for example to undertake searches) and to publicise successes in the district in order to recognise the role of the units whilst ensuring that the impact on communities is considered in every operation. In addition, monitoring the way that Tactical Support Groups engage with communities and ensuring it is line with the ethos of the Service (paragraph 5.6).

- It is suggested that, in order to reduce bureaucracy, the use of Command and Control to undertake the daily search should cease as soon as possible, and officers should be advised that they no longer need to duplicate information into the two systems (paragraph 5.15).

Section 1

Inspection Report

CHAPTER 1:

Introduction

1.1 Customer service has been described as being *'the sum total of what an organisation does to meet customer expectations and produce customer satisfaction'* (Institute of Customer Service). Over recent years there has been a focus on the issues surrounding this area in both public services generally but also police organisations more specifically. This chapter aims to provide an overview of the approaches and inspection work in this area. It also aims to place the issues of customer service in the PSNI and this inspection in the context of work undertaken in other jurisdictions. There are many terms used in relation to this area such as *'citizen focus', 'public confidence'* and *'customer service'*. This inspection focused on the way in which customers were dealt with by the organisation and if their needs were met, particularly in relation to processes, as this will also have an impact on outcomes for customers.

1.2 The Customer Service Excellence standard identifies five criterions as the areas which research has indicated are a priority for customers. These are customer insight, the culture of the organisation, information and access, delivery and timeliness and quality of service. For the Police Service this translates into:

- knowledge of its customers (for example, victims of crime, witnesses, detainees and others who come into contact with the police);
- promoting an organisational culture of customer service;
- how easily accessible services and information about services are to customers and how the police work in partnership;
- setting standards for service delivery and achieving outcomes and solving problems for customers; and
- achieving outcomes within quality and timeliness standards.

The standard was developed to offer public services a practical tool for driving customer-focused change in their organisation. At the time of the inspection, four police forces in England and Wales and 17 organisations in Northern Ireland had been recognised as achieving Customer Service Excellence by being successfully assessed against the criteria of the standard. The standard is therefore a useful approach in assisting public services, including police organisations, to drive continuous improvement, develop skills and provide an independent validation of achievement.

1.3 In recent years police forces in England and Wales have been encouraged by the

United Kingdom Government to focus on quality of service issues, particularly in the form of public confidence and satisfaction. Outputs of this approach have included the introduction of the Policing Pledge (a set of promises from the police to the public about the services it will provide) in December 2008 and a public confidence target in 2009, the Quality of Service Commitment [1] and the concept of *'citizen focus'* in policing. Whilst the Coalition Government in 2010 has announced the abolition of Public Service Agreement 23.3 and the top-down *'confidence'* target, as well as the Policing Pledge, the question by which public confidence was measured in the British Crime Survey still exists ('how much would you agree or disagree that the police and local council are dealing with the anti-social behaviour and crime that matter in this area?'). It is therefore clear that confidence and public satisfaction in policing will continue to be a key issue and will be measured at a local level; albeit the detail of how this would be done was unclear at the time of writing. In Northern Ireland one of the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for the Comprehensive Spending Review *'Justice for All'* Delivery Agreement was *'to increase the proportion of victims and witnesses who are satisfied with the contact they have with the criminal justice system'*. The Northern Ireland Victims and Witness Survey assesses performance against this.

1.4 The Northern Ireland Policing Plan for 2010-13 included the following targets which are relevant to this area and which have not been affected by the changes in England and Wales as outlined above.

Performance Indicator	Target
3. The percentage of people who agree police and other agencies are dealing with the anti-social behaviour and crime issues that matter in local areas.	3.1 To increase the number of people who agree police and other agencies are dealing with the anti-social behaviour and crime issues that matter in local areas to 60% by March 2012*
5. The level of confidence in the fairness and effectiveness of the criminal justice system.	5.1 In partnership with other agencies, to increase the percentage of people confident in the fairness of the criminal justice system to 61% by 31 March 2011* 5.2 In partnership with other agencies, to increase the percentage of people confident in the effectiveness of the criminal justice system to 38% by 31 March 2011*

*as measured using data derived from the Northern Ireland Crime Survey.

1 The Quality of Service Commitment set the over-arching standards which the public could expect when making contact with the police. The Commitment was developed by the Association of Chief Police Officers and the Home Office, in agreement with the Association of Police Authorities for implementation by police forces by November 2006.

1.5 The PSNI has previously conducted quality of service surveys in conjunction with the Northern Ireland Policing Board (NIPB). These monitor victim/user satisfaction with the quality of service provided by police in relation to first contact, police actions to deal with the incident, follow-up, treatment by police staff and overall service. The surveys were conducted with victims of violent crime, vehicle crime, domestic burglary, racist incidents and road traffic collisions. Questionnaires were posted to a random sample of victims/users from these categories. In 2008-09 the questionnaire was posted to 10,583 victims/users and 2,062 were returned representing a response rate of 19.5%.

1.6 The results of the 2008-09 questionnaire can be summarised as:

- 79% of respondents indicated that they were *'satisfied'* with the overall service provided by the police for 2008-09 (2007-08: 80%);
- 87% of respondents stated that they were *'satisfied'* with the ease of contacting someone who could assist them. This was a statistically significant decrease from this level of satisfaction in 2007-08 (90%);
- overall, 81% of respondents were *'satisfied'* with the time it took for the police to arrive. This was a statistically significant decrease from this level of satisfaction in 2007-08 (85%);
- 74% of respondents stated that they were *'satisfied'* with the actions taken by police (2007-08: 76%);
- 69% of respondents who have had further contact with the police were *'satisfied'* with how well they were kept informed of progress (2007-08: 70%); and
- 86% of respondents stated that they were *'satisfied'* with the way they were treated by the police officers and staff that dealt with them (2007-08: 88%).

1.7 In August 2010 the NIPB published the results from its biennial District Policing Partnership Public Consultation Survey. This was the fifth time the survey had been undertaken by the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency on behalf of the Board and District Policing Partnerships. The Survey provided the Board and the PSNI with survey data at neighbourhood level for the first time. 15,765 of the questionnaires sent to 74,000 households were returned (a 21% response rate). As well as asking respondents about the issues that mattered most to them the survey asked about the service received from the PSNI. Results indicated:

- 42% of respondents stated that the police where they lived did an *'adequate'* job, with 26% stating they did a *'poor'* job and 15% a *'good'* job;
- 51% of respondents stated that they were *'dissatisfied'* with the levels of visible police patrols where they lived, 31% were *'neither satisfied nor dissatisfied'* and 11% were *'satisfied'*;
- 41% of respondents stated that they were *'satisfied'* that the police treat everyone fairly where they live, with 26% *'neither satisfied nor dissatisfied'* and 10% *'dissatisfied'*;
- 59% of respondents stated that they had *'some confidence'* in the police where they lived, with 17% stating that they had *'total confidence'* and 15% *'no confidence'*; and
- of those that had been in contact with the police in the last year, 50%

stated that they were *'satisfied'* with how they were treated by the police, 25% that they were *'dissatisfied'* and 22% that they were *'neither satisfied nor dissatisfied'*.

1.8 In addition 80% of respondents stated that they were not aware a neighbourhood policing team operated where they lived and 93% stated that they did not know the names of, or recognise the officers policing where they lived, although 72% stated that they knew how to contact their local police. The survey also provided details about what information the public would like to receive from local police and how they would like local police to inform them about their work. This research provides important information for the PSNI about their engagement with the public and provides statistical evidence of the need for the PSNI to improve performance in the areas of confidence and satisfaction. Whilst the statistics provide a mixed picture as to satisfaction levels none of the research conducted can be said to provide a comprehensive picture; for example victims of anti-social behaviour were not included in the 2008-09 PSNI research on quality of service (although they had been in 2006-07) even though anti-social behaviour accounts for 40% of calls to police.

1.9 Policing inspectorates have considered the issues around quality of service delivery in recent years. In 2008, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) published inspection reports on Neighbourhood Policing and Developing Citizen Focus, and in 2009, inspection reports on the Policing Pledge across all 43 forces in England and Wales. HMIC's latest method of inspection and reporting, Police Report Card, published in March 2010 also features assessments of forces in the extent to which they are meeting the pledge standards, public confidence in the police and local authorities (combined), public confidence in the police specifically and satisfaction with service delivery. In 2008, HMIC for Scotland published a thematic inspection report on the quality of service and feedback to users of police services in Scotland. This looked at the way police forces in Scotland engaged with, and provided feedback to, members of the public who call the police to report something, whether or not it was a crime.

1.10 This inspection took cognisance of work that has been undertaken, particularly in England and Wales, where the PSNI has reference to a most similar forces group[2], in relation to citizen focused policing. In citizen focused policing the needs and expectations of individuals and local communities are always reflected in police decision-making and service. There are five critical elements or key workstreams to the citizen focused policing programme. They are:

- improving the experience of those who have contact with the police;
- embedding neighbourhood policing into local communities;
- effective community engagement - which includes consultation,

2 For each police force HMIC has determined a set of 'most similar forces', which have similar social and geographic characteristics to the force in question. During 2006 the Police Standard's Unit developed a 'most similar force' group to assess the performance of the PSNI against peer forces in England and Wales. The PSNI's comparator forces are Greater Manchester, Northumbria, Nottinghamshire, West Midlands and West Yorkshire.

marketing and communications, and public involvement;
- public understanding and local accountability of policing; and
- organisational and cultural change to bring about increasingly responsive services where feedback from frontline staff and the public is used continuously.

1.11 This inspection aimed to assess the quality of customer service provided by the PSNI. In general terms the inspection focused on the three main elements of CJI's inspection framework as they apply to customer service. This area was therefore assessed regarding strategy and governance, delivery, and outcomes (or projected outcomes), underpinned by the constants of equality and fairness; and standards and best practice. Compliance with existing guidelines and relevant standards such as the Customer Service Excellence standard was used to evaluate this. CJI received assistance from HMIC in undertaking this inspection.

1.12 The PSNI did not have a specific strategy in relation to customer service. However the Chief Constable had an overall vision as to how he saw their approach and the PSNI were working on a series of initiatives designed to improve the service provided to customers. This inspection therefore assessed the PSNI's approach in this area. The PSNI had not implemented the Customer Service Excellence standard however it agreed to its use as the assessment tool for the purposes of this inspection. The inspection also took cognisance of previous CJI reports which have included work in this area (for example Policing with the Community and Police Custody) but avoided duplication of work that has already been completed. It also covered elements of call handling and management which impact on the service experienced by customers of the PSNI. However a specific inspection on call management will be undertaken in 2010-11 and this area will be inspected in greater detail at that point.

1.13 During the inspection fieldwork interviews were conducted with senior command, managers, officers and police staff across the PSNI, primarily across four Districts ('A', 'C', 'E' and 'G')[3] (for example, in response and neighbourhood policing, call handling and enquiry office functions, training, crime investigation and management). In addition, interviews took place with representatives of headquarters functions such as human resources, training, professional standards, crime departments and operational support functions. The fieldwork utilised a qualitative approach with Inspectors carrying out face-to-face individual or focus group interviews with staff at various levels within the organisation. In addition CJI spoke to PSNI stakeholder organisations who represented service users including Victim Support Northern Ireland, representatives from the Northern Ireland Policing Board's reference groups for older persons, younger persons and members of minority ethnic groups. Inspectors also spoke to members of

3 'A' District comprises North and West Belfast; 'C' District comprises Ards, Castlereagh, North Down and Down; 'E' District comprises Armagh, Craigavon, Banbridge and Newry and Mourne; 'G' District comprises Foyle, Limavady, Strabane and Magherafelt.

the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community as well as to officers from the Board itself, and the Board's Community Engagement Committee. Further details on the methodology can be found in Appendix 1.

CHAPTER 2:

Strategic intent

Strategy and policy

2.1 The PSNI did not have a specific strategy or policy around customer focus or citizen focus. This is in contrast to its most similar force peers which have specific strategies and programmes, for example in relation to the National Quality of Service Commitment. However, the arrival of the Chief Constable in September 2009 has led to a focus in direction at strategic level in this area.

2.2 The Chief Constable had made clear his *"commitment to deliver personal, professional and protective policing in Northern Ireland"*[4] via media briefings, conference speeches and internal communications. This was a consistent message which had been reiterated many times since his arrival. During the course of the inspection fieldwork several officers spoken with referred to these *'Three P's'* as they had become known and it was clear that this vision was beginning to filter through the organisation, albeit there was a greater awareness at Inspector ranks and above, and limited knowledge held by Constables working in operational roles. To reinforce his message all staff in the organisation had recently received a letter from the Chief Constable setting out this commitment to '*personal, professional and protective*' policing and providing an explanation as to what this meant in reality for service delivery. This was brief information but more detail would be required to ensure officers fully understood what this meant for their individual roles.

2.3 The PSNI were in a period of transition during the inspection. The organisation was engaged in developing their approach to customer service and service delivery and were formulating plans to embed the Chief Constable's commitment to '*personal, professional and protective*' policing. The Service had adopted the National Policing Improvement Agency's Confidence Route Map and were developing this as their Policing with the Community Strategy to be inclusive of community engagement and contact management. The Route Map was developed to assist police forces in England and Wales to deliver against the Public Service Agreement public confidence target by sign-posting forces towards what evidence suggests drive public confidence.

4 http://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/opinion/psni-chief-baggots-vision-for-policing-14725143.html#ixzz0v9xRfcze

2.4 The Confidence Route Map sets out the five themes of public confidence which are intrinsically linked. They are to:

- tackle anti-social behaviour and crime effectively;
- drive effective partnerships;
- deliver a high quality local service;
- develop an empowered, engaged, confident team; and
- work with, and for, the public.

These five themes were underpinned by the drivers of confidence (for example, effective community engagement, targeted patrolling, effective joint problem solving) and by the Policing Commitments (a series of commitments being developed which were similar to the Policing Pledge in England and Wales) which the PSNI were finalising at the time of the inspection. These are discussed in more detail below.

Governance arrangements

2.5 The projects being initiated under the banner of the Confidence Route Map were discussed at the Service Excellence Programme Board. This was chaired jointly by the Assistant Chief Constable Criminal Justice and the Assistant Chief Constable District Policing Urban, with representatives of various projects together with human resources, the Police Federation of Northern Ireland, media and public relations, information and communication services, process improvement unit and the professional standards department. Inspectors examined the minutes of the six meetings that had taken place between February and July 2010. The meetings did not have a structure with a review and update of each stage of the various projects as would flow from an overall programme plan, albeit general updates were given. The introduction of such a plan should enable such governance to be handled effectively.

2.6 In addition a Territorial Commanders' Forum had been set up which brought together District Commanders to share practice and escalate issues to one of the territorial Assistant Chief Constables, who chaired the Forum. Other forums also existed, for example for discipline and youth champions from each district and for Community Safety Superintendents. It is critical that there is an effective communication flow both from and to the centre of the organisation to ensure consistency of approach and that good practice is captured, communicated and implemented.

CHAPTER 3:

Management intent

Developing a customer service focus

3.1 The development of the Policing Commitments formed part of the work around the Confidence Route Map. These were similar in form to the Policing Pledge which was still in use by some forces in England and Wales and made commitments to the public around areas such as updating victims, contact with local police and visibility. The Commitments were planned for launch in April 2011. The details of the Commitments should help to underpin the delivery of good customer service by setting out the standards which the customer can expect to receive, for example, in relation to contact with and access to the PSNI, responsiveness and updating, and the Commitments should enable measurement of performance against these standards.

3.2 In addition to developing the Commitments the PSNI were also working on a number of other projects which should enable the delivery of '*personal, professional and protective*' policing. These included the resource to risk process which aimed to place more officers back in front-line roles, criminal justice streamlining (for example, through a discretion pilot), the redesign of the contact management process (initially termed 'Target Operating Model' but subsequently 'R4') and other local crime and justice initiatives such as developing an integrated offender management programme.

3.3 It was planned that pilot projects would be evaluated and refined in preparation for full delivery by April 2011. The R4 Project had been developed in response to the PSNI's identification of the four key areas which often led to cause for complaint by the public as being:

- access to services;
- visibility;
- response; and
- updating.

This therefore aimed to deliver the **R**ight people, in the **R**ight place, at the **R**ight time, doing the **R**ight job to make a difference. R4 was, at the time of the inspection, being piloted in 'E' District to support the roll out of the Commitments which were due to be communicated to the wider public in April 2011. This aimed to address the key areas for the public as outlined above by developing and delivering a new model for customer contact and management. In addition Project Puma aimed to support this by providing response and neighbourhood officers with smart-phones which were capable of capturing and accessing data whilst out on patrol, therefore primarily reducing errors and duplications regarding inputting, but also reducing time spent on administration in stations

and increasing officer visibility. This also provided officers with a direct number on which they could be contacted and they received a reminder to update victims at set intervals regarding the progress of the case. The plans for further roll-out of R4 were taken to the Chief Constable's Forum in August 2010 and were approved, pending a full business case being prepared. This would lead to R4 being rolled-out to 'F' District [5] in December 2010 and other districts during the start of 2011.

3.4 The PSNI, in preparing for the further roll-out of R4 had established a review team and a project manager who was planning the future stages of the project. The review team included representatives from relevant sections of the PSNI who could address issues arising such as human resources, information and communication services, the Process Improvement Unit and local managers responsible for implementation in 'E' District. Issues which had been identified included training implications, technological fixes needed and cultural issues which had meant that not all officers were compliant with the requirements of R4. Action was being taken to address these matters and learning was being captured for use in the roll-out.

3.5 The PSNI's Process Improvement Unit had also undertaken specific reviews relevant to the area of customer service, such as a review of the station enquiry assistant and station duty officer roles, together with a review of call management. These reports made a number of recommendations which aimed to address the issues outlined in relation to workloads of staff in the enquiry office, delays for customers in receiving a response to their query and the misdirection of calls. Inspectors were advised that the PSNI was addressing these recommendations through the R4 Project. This should result in a reduction in duplication and staff workloads and ultimately, a better service for customers.

3.6 The neighbourhood policing function was seen by most officers as key to the delivery of good customer service and of delivering a personal policing service, although many officers were clear that the whole service had a responsibility to deliver '*personal, professional and protective*' policing. Examples were provided of how the critical role of neighbourhood policing teams was being used to work in partnership with other areas of the service. For example, in two policing districts officers from Crime Investigation Departments had been co-located with neighbourhood teams in order to provide better intelligence and local knowledge to crime investigations. Tactical Support Groups spoken to who covered most PSNI districts had developed an 'adopt a neighbourhood' approach where each unit identified a neighbourhood in their locality which they would be connected with, for example, in attending community events and dealing with community problems in consultation with neighbourhood teams. These are good examples of the translation of '*personal, professional and protective*' policing into service delivery locally. However, the approach was not consistent across all districts and departments as districts were developing

5 'F' District comprises Cookstown, Omagh, Fermanagh, Dungannon and South Tyrone.

their own ideas for good practice on an individual basis with limited sharing across geographical and departmental boundaries.

3.7 The focus on delivering a good service was also promoted by recognition and publicity of good work done by police officers and staff. Internal awards and certificates were referred to such as local recognition and good police work certificates, the Chief Constable's commended and highly commended awards and the annual Policing with the Community Awards. In addition, officers provided examples of recognition and awards being provided by District Policing Partnerships, local communities being encouraged to nominate officers for awards and good police work being publicised in the local media.

3.8 Inspectors heard a high level of commitment from officers at all levels to delivering a good service to members of the public, albeit in many cases they highlighted challenges in being able to fully realise this commitment. More generally some officers described the standards they worked to as being guided by the Code of Ethics and the targets set out in the 2010-13 Policing Plan. The PSNI was moving away from a target-based culture which focused on quantity rather than quality, and the Policing Plan outlined the three objectives as service excellence, tackling serious harm and personal policing - dealing with local concerns. Within the objectives were performance indicators and targets. These had been localised in Local Policing Plans under the three objectives.

Access for the public

3.9 The PSNI had made improvements to their enquiry offices via a refurbishment programme to make them more user-friendly and easy to access. Inspectors found the enquiry office areas to be generally of a good standard of cleanliness with relevant information available to customers via posters and leaflets, albeit with little information on neighbourhood teams. The PSNI had also begun to explore alternative methods of access for customers in light of the reluctance of some communities to visit police stations and the uninviting nature of the external view of some stations. The need for such alternatives had increased with the closure of stations or the move to limited opening hours in some locations. The District Policing Partnerships were consulted by the PSNI in relation to such changes to local stations. Some districts had purchased mobile police stations or had set up police surgeries.

3.10 The increased security threat had impacted on the ability to deploy mobile stations or hold surgeries in some areas. However, in two districts Inspectors were given examples where the PSNI continued to direct officers at a specific time and to a designated place despite a lack of engagement by the local community; in one case apparently for two years. Whilst the District Policing Partnership had supported the setting up of this, it would appear that there was insufficient support from the wider community. Whilst acknowledging the difficulties in some areas due to the level of security threat, ***it would be beneficial for the PSNI to thoroughly explore the use of alternative locations, such as in retail areas or***

community centres, as potential locations to interact with the public, which would be utilised by, and beneficial to, members of the public.

3.11 The PSNI website provided advice and legal information for the public (for example regarding domestic abuse, drugs, firearms and parades), support information (for example reporting a crime, making a complaint) as well as updates (appeals for information, missing persons), information on the PSNI itself and careers within it and a specific section for young people. The website also had individual sections for each district which were generally kept updated with district news (such as arrests in the locality) and a welcome message from the Commander. The PSNI were in the process of appointing a Press Officer from the Media and Public Relations Department to each district and it would be useful if this individual were able to update local pages with current information, keeping to the corporate format, rather than this needing to be undertaken centrally by one individual. In addition there was a section for each area of the district together with pages for each neighbourhood sector. Every page relating to a sector contained details of the neighbourhood officers (for example the Inspector, Sergeant and Neighbourhood Constables) but there was variation as to whether named officers were listed for each specific ward or estate in the sector and the contact details provided (some sectors provided mobile telephone numbers for each individual officer whilst some simply provided the 0845 number).

3.12 There was no corporate approach to website content with some areas and sectors demonstrating an excellent use of the website with podcasts, photographs and detailed local information such as current issues being addressed, neighbourhood meetings and contact details for partner organisations, where others contained a minimum amount of information. Whilst some of this could be explained due to different levels of security threat across the districts there did not appear to be uniformity of information, even of that which would not have required naming individual officers.

3.13 One example of this is that not all sectors provided an email address to contact the neighbourhood team. Of a possible 88 sectors only 44 listed an email address on their section of the website for the neighbourhood team. In order to assess the ability of the public to access the PSNI via this method, CJI Inspectors contacted the neighbourhood teams by email (using a pseudonym to disguise the source of the request) asking for details of the next community meeting which a member of the public could attend to hear what police were doing in the area. Within a month an email had been received in response to 24 of the 41 emails sent (some areas used a common email address for more than one sector). Where responses were received these were useful and informative; in many cases requesting further information on the specific location of the resident but many also provided details of local meetings, named officers, an offer of discussions about issues or sought to gain the support of the resident to be involved in setting up a local group where none were in existence.

3.14 Some districts and departments

provided excellent examples of using social networking as a way of connecting with customers, particularly younger people, such as through Facebook and Twitter pages or via special interest websites, for example regarding safe car customisation. One Facebook page had 5,800 followers in the local area. The PSNI's social media activity at the time of the inspection was a pilot project and on continual assessment with a view to expanding to other areas. **Inspectors recommend the PSNI should develop a corporate approach to maximising attempts to develop and utilise alternative forms of access for members of the public in consultation with customers.**

Staff development and empowerment

3.15 Call handlers had received 'soft-skills training' which had been delivered prior to the setting up of call management centres. Call handlers described the training they had received, for example in dealing with aggressive or suicidal callers. The training had incorporated practical exercises where handlers were assessed. In addition some staff working on the main switchboard had attended training for district call handlers to enhance their awareness of the function. Switchboard operators had also received training from BT to refresh their skills. However, in the main, call handling training was not delivered until after call handling had gone live in districts.

3.16 Officers working in response or neighbourhood roles had not, in the main, received training which focused on customer service or how a good quality service should be delivered. References to this area were mainly incorporated into other forms of delivery such as in briefings to teams of officers (for example on the need to ensure victims are kept updated) or in district training sessions. One district training team had provided customer service training to about 500 officers in the district through a presentation on the citizen focus/customer service 'listen' (**L**isten, **I**nspire, **S**upport, **T**ake ownership, **E**xplain, **N**otify) principles. In developing this workshop, a questionnaire about the service provided to the community was sent to all staff in the district. The results were used to identify misconceptions held by staff, some of which were addressed through the 'listen' training. Feedback suggested that officers found this training useful although, regrettably, the programme ended due to pressure to move onto other training.

3.17 Some supervisors in another district and in Tactical Support Groups had received customer service training delivered by two retired senior officers from England which was felt to be useful. Their district trainers had also provided an input on the 'listen' principles as well as a community-based programme where police officers met with members of the community to discuss issues, address misconceptions and enhance understanding from both perspectives. Whilst CJI recognise the initiative demonstrated by training delivered in these districts and for the Tactical Support Groups this underlines the lack of a corporate approach to customer service training.

3.18 The PSNI had developed a Neighbourhood Management Programme which commenced in 2009 for officers involved in neighbourhood policing duties. This was a self-directed

learning programme containing eight modules which was accredited by the Chartered Institute of Management. A total of 22 officers had completed the programme and a further 117 were enrolled on it. There was a low level of awareness of this course from neighbourhood officers spoken to with a prevailing view that new officers had to learn the requirements on the job. This awareness should increase over time as more officers undertake and complete the course. Station enquiry assistants also reported that they had not received job-specific training and most could not definitively say who their line manager was. Stakeholder organisations commented that the input to training provided by community groups at the Police College had reduced in recent years, although these organisations still strived to offer training where possible. For example 400 officers had recently undertaken Islamic awareness training and one children's and young people's organisation had been involved in setting up youth consultation and engagement events for the College.

3.19 The CJI inspection of Policing with the Community[6] made suggestions for improvement in the area of training which included that:

"*skills identified by the Training Needs Analysis as being necessary for neighbourhood policing officers such as developing and managing community relationships, should be interwoven not just into initial officer training, but also into Detective training, Police-Officer Part-Time training and other operational training programmes, to fully embed PwC principles across the whole service (paragraph 4.14);*

and that:

"*Inspectors believe that a more overt approach to Policing with the Community principles throughout the training programme would assist officers and help to embed the principles in the wider police service" (paragraph 4.19).*

These suggestions would help to embed the customer focus into training for all officers by placing the emphasis on putting the user first. The follow-up of these suggestions will be undertaken by CJI in the 2010-11 inspection programme.

6 CJINI, *Policing with the Community: An inspection of Policing with the Community in Northern Ireland*, March 2009.

CHAPTER 4:

Implementation challenges

The impact of the operational context on staff behaviour

4.1 It was clear from interviews with a wide range of officers at the point of service delivery that they felt constrained by a variety of issues including perceived pressure of work, the security threat and unnecessary bureaucracy. The increasing security threat was a constant background to the work of PSNI officers and was seen as a major barrier to delivering a good customer service to communities. The impact of this was widespread, for example in relation to officers' priorities, the ability to patrol or attend requests for assistance, the continuing need to use officers for public order policing and the level of resources required to address the dissident threat. In addition whilst many officers stated that individually their wish was to deliver good customer service, they stated that in their estimation they had not been able to do so because of the perceived pressures of work and bureaucracy. Supervisors and other leaders spoken to concurred with these observations and indicated that their focus was on what the police could do with resources available to them rather than what could be achieved to meet customer needs. Overall there was a fragmented approach to many areas of service delivery which are discussed below.

Disseminating the 'Three P's'

4.2 Despite the leadership from the top of the organisation regarding the Chief Constable's commitment to the 'Three P's' many officers and staff commented on the delay in providing clarity as to what the commitment to *'personal, professional and protective'* policing meant in reality and how this should be operationalised into day-to-day service delivery. They highlighted this delay as being between the arrival of the Chief Constable in September 2009 and the circulation of the Chief Constable's letter in June 2010, which was the first guidance they had received. In the absence of a widely understood direction from the centre of the organisation some districts had developed their own strategies and approaches to this; for example one district had introduced the 'Five P's' (Pride; Punctual; Polite; Positive steps of investigation; and Progress updates) and in another an action plan had been developed based on the 'Three P's'.

4.3 This meant that the Chief Constable's commitment was already being interpreted in different ways across some of the eight districts and there was a danger this could spread to other districts and departments. This could lead to a lack of consistency for those receiving a service from the PSNI as the

message was not being fully understood by staff and may not be interpreted as the Chief Constable intends in future. In addition these different messages had led to confusion by officers and staff as to where the priority lay and was leading to disengagement with the overall strategic aim of the Chief Constable.

4.4 The PSNI had considered, in broad terms, the need for communication of the Chief Constable's message but this was yet to be formalised. The PSNI was developing a communications plan at the time of the inspection fieldwork as to how the Policing Commitments would be communicated both internally and externally. This included elements of activity as to how '*personal, professional and protective*' policing would underpin the Commitments and be communicated. Communication of this needs to be unambiguous with explanations as to how this fits with the vision of '*personal, professional and protective*' policing, in order that staff receive clear messages regarding the Chief Constable's ambition. Inspectors welcome the development of this plan and the out-workings of it and **suggest that as part of an overall communications strategy the PSNI should make clear to all officers and staff what the commitment for '*personal, professional and protective*' policing means at the point of service delivery.**

The challenge of delivering *personal, professional* and *protective* policing

4.5 Whilst the PSNI had recognised the need to make improvements in the area of customer service at the time of the inspection, organisational culture did not place customers at the centre of service delivery. This was evidenced in the approach to call handling, the approach to updating victims and by the evidence of stakeholders. The PSNI received 210,693 emergency calls and 2,701,970 non-emergency calls in 2009-10. A contract had been awarded in 2009 to begin undertaking mystery shopper exercises but this was designed to assess call handling of the 0845 number in relation to issues which did not require a police response (for example, the cost of a firearms licence). The PSNI did not however have any user groups or arrangements in place to assess their performance in relation to call handling from customers who had contacted the PSNI via the 999 or 0845 numbers. The PSNI had indicated to managers their intention to civilianise the role of call handling for emergency calls but did not appear, to interviewees in these functions, to have considered the impact of this change on the service provided.

4.6 Several officers were asked about the issue of updating victims. Specific questions were asked as to who made decisions, how often victims are updated and whether any consideration had been given to the victim specifying how frequently they would like to be updated on the progress of their case. Most officers did not appear to have given consideration as to whether victims should specify the frequency of update. Whilst most were fairly open-minded about it one commented that *"it would be dangerous to ask the victims how often they want to be kept updated"* and went on to suggest that some people would want to be kept updated every couple of days or so.

4.7 Louise Casey, the first Victims Commissioner has stated[7] *'Nearly every victim of crime wants the system to deliver justice for their individual case. The vast majority of victims, however – around 80% – say they don't want additional help from that system. And among those that do, the majority just want information about their case. However, with very few exceptions, there is no targeting of support for those with the most needs – some people in desperate need get no help, while help and support are offered to those who do not require it'.* Inspectors would advise that ***consideration should be given to the views of the customer when determining timescales for contact in addition to consideration of the seriousness of the crime*** (for example, a homicide case may require several updates to be provided in one day whereas an incident of criminal damage or shoplifting may only require one or two updates, particularly if no offender is detected).

4.8 In addition stakeholder representatives gave examples of how they perceived officers did not have the service provided to the customer as their primary focus. For example it was suggested that in cases where members of a minority ethnic community were the subject of hate crime that the initial reaction from police officers was that the best option for their safety was to move, rather than dealing with threats in a pro-active manner.

Call management

4.9 The PSNI had issued a Service Procedure in relation to call handling and management, as well as a policy on call grading. These made reference to the National Call Handling Standards as introduced by the Association of Chief Police Officers which the PSNI had implemented. The standards provided targets in relation to answering emergency and non-emergency calls and in grading calls as priority, scheduled and resolution without deployment. The service procedure also set out best practice in answering telephone calls, handling calls and use of voicemail. Staff working in call handling functions were aware of the appropriate standards in relation to answering calls and were observed in a standardised manner. The PSNI provided training to call handlers using examples of callers requiring different levels of response as relating to the call grading policy. Training had also been delivered around suicidal callers and this is to be welcomed. There was however no common definition or understanding around vulnerable callers (for example, in relation to specific categories of caller or repeat victims) or specific actions to be taken if a caller was determined to be vulnerable, other than grading the call as emergency or priority. It is suggested ***that a common definition and guidance on dealing with vulnerable callers would be beneficial to assist call handlers in their decision-making.***

4.10 Call management centres had been set-up on a district basis. Callers who dialled 999 were directed to Belfast Regional Control if they were calling within the Greater Belfast region or to their local call management centre (in each district) if outside of Greater Belfast. All emergency calls were

7 Commissioner for Victims and Witnesses 2010, *The poor relation - victims in the criminal justice system*, 20 July 2010.

answered by police call handlers and they then dispatched a police crew to the incident, if appropriate. Calls to the PSNI non-emergency 0845 number were directed to their local call management centre if it was possible to identify the area in which the call originated from. Calls to the local (028) 90 telephone number were directed to the main switchboard in PSNI headquarters as well as internal calls and calls to the 0845 number where the call could not be directed to an appropriate call management centre (for example calls made from mobile telephones or outside of Northern Ireland). Many members of the public still continued to use the (028) 90 number, despite the wide publication of the 0845 number, possibly because of a lack of awareness or concerns around the cost of call charges to this number. Non-emergency calls were answered by police staff or police officers in call handling but any dispatch of a police crew was undertaken by a police officer.

4.11 The PSNI's policy on victims and witnesses stated that the Investigating Officer should leave a business card with victims including their contact name. It stated that the victims should be advised to make contact with the Investigating Officer as soon as they have any further information about the crime or if they need information on the progress of the investigation. The policy also stated that the victim should be informed that if the Investigating Officer is not on duty the Occurrence Case Management Team, which operates 9am - 5pm Monday to Friday, may be able to assist. It was unclear from the policy, however, who should deal with such queries out of hours when the Investigating Officer was off duty. As outlined below the PSNI were moving towards provision of individual contact numbers for officers and Contact Management Centres to deal with such queries when officers were off duty.

4.12 When passing calls operators did not provide a 'warm handover' which involves explaining to the recipient who the caller is and what service they require. This meant therefore that callers may have had to state their request on several occasions, particularly if they or the operator were unclear as to who was best placed to handle their query initially. This was exacerbated by the limited use of the voicemail facility, telephone call diverts and 'hunt' groups (the ability to distribute phone calls from a single telephone number to a group of several phone lines), missing or out-of-date information on the 'white' pages telephone directory along with front-line police officers listing the enquiry office number as their personal contact number. This led in some areas to long wait times to speak to enquiry office staff, where many calls were directed from switchboard or elsewhere. Although efforts had been made to reduce call volume to enquiry offices some staff still raised this as an issue, particularly in busy stations.

4.13 Inspectors were advised that informal assessment of the call volume to switchboard by staff from BT had indicated that a handover where the PSNI switchboard operator explained the caller's requirements when transferring the call to another PSNI call handler, specific department or individual extension would not be possible due to the high volume of calls received. Analysis of a sample of 1,958

calls received by the headquarters switchboard, undertaken for a internal PSNI report, revealed 14.9% (292) of calls were unable to be transferred and were consequently returned to the switchboard. The subject of call handling will be returned to in a specific inspection by CJI in its 2010-11 inspection programme. In the meantime **it is recommended that the PSNI should make better use of telephony solutions to enable switchboard operators to direct callers to the appropriate point of contact for their query**.

4.14 The issue of directing customers to the relevant point of contact also caused difficulties in the operational environment where the needs of the police appeared to be put before the needs of the service user. One example of this was where, on occasions, a member of the public arrived at the enquiry desk to meet with the Investigating Officer for a pre-arranged appointment to find that the Officer was out on patrol or unavailable. The enquiry assistant would then have to contact the Investigating Officer or another response officer out on patrol and request that they return to the station to take a statement despite warranted officers being in the station. This caused delays and frustrations for the member of the public as well as frustration for the PSNI staff involved. In addition the lack of accurate or up-to-date information on officers' locations, contact details or shift patterns in internal directories as outlined above, made it difficult for one part of the organisation to direct customers to an appropriate point of contact. This emphasises the need for placing the customer at the heart of service delivery.

Neighbourhood policing

4.15 The National Policing Improvement Agency's Local Policing and Confidence Unit provides a useful outline of the purpose of neighbourhood policing stating:[8]

'Neighbourhood Policing aims to provide people who live or work in a neighbourhood with:

- ***Access** - to local policing services through a named point of contact;*
- ***Influence** - over policing priorities in their neighbourhood;*
- ***Interventions** - joint action with partners and the public; and*
- ***Answers** - sustainable solutions and feedback on what is being done.*

This means that neighbourhood teams:

- *publicise how to get in touch with them;*
- *find out what the local issues are that make people feel unsafe in their neighbourhood and ask them to put them in order of priority;*
- *decide with partners and local people what should be done to deal with those priorities and work with them to deliver the solutions; and*
- *let people know what is being done and find out if they are satisfied with the results.*

Neighbourhood policing is about engaging with local communities to identify their concerns and priorities, increasing police

8 Local Policing and Confidence Unit website: www.neighbourhoodpolicing.co.uk/neighbourhood, National Policing Improvement Agency.

visibility but also, and crucially, working with local communities to solve problems that matter to them.'

It is critical that the PSNI has a corporate understanding of neighbourhood policing in terms of its definition, how it should be implemented and how it knows that delivery is effective.

4.16 Neighbourhood policing is therefore a critical area of customer service in that the functions of neighbourhood policing are key to engaging with customers, working with communities and delivering customer-focused solutions. Increasingly neighbourhood policing is providing a link between communities and the police when elements of investigation such as searches are being carried out. Under the Service Excellence objective of the Policing Plan two of these targets were:

- to increase the number of police officers assigned to neighbourhood and response policing roles by 600; and
- to increase the percentage of time spent by police officers on operational duty outside stations by 6% points.

Inspectors were advised by representatives from the Policing Board that the target from the 2009-12 Policing Plan *'to ensure that Neighbourhood Officers work at least 80% of their duty hours on neighbourhood policing duties'* had proved unworkable because of the discrepancies around what constituted *'neighbourhood policing duties'*. The PSNI's abstraction policy contained a definition of abstraction and listed activities which would not be recorded as an abstraction (for example, annual leave or a rest day).

4.17 The continued abstraction of officers from neighbourhood policing duties undermines the Chief Constable's commitment to '*personal, professional and protective*' policing. Some officers told Inspectors that this continued to be an issue (as the target was still in operation in some Local Policing Plans) with neighbourhood officers being tasked to undertake prison runs, perform security duties for quarry blasting or to provide cover for shortages in response sections. One officer commented *"this organisation sees neighbourhood policing as polyfilla; just waiting to be used on other tasks"*. Issues such as shortages in response sections, bureaucracy and the delineation of roles and responsibilities all impact on the abstraction of officers. The PSNI were beginning to address some of these issues through the Resource to Risk Project, which aimed to place officers back onto front-line duties.

4.18 When neighbourhood policing was able to function effectively, Inspectors heard excellent examples of local initiatives undertaken to address anti-social behaviour and local concerns, including in areas where police would previously not have been welcomed. Stakeholders also described some excellent projects in which they were working in partnership with the PSNI. Examples were provided in relation to a 'marginalised youth forum' in North Belfast between youth workers, police and young people and organisations working as a 'critical friend' to improve service delivery. However they also described barriers which they felt diluted the efforts police had gone to,

for example the moving of Hate Incident Minority Liaison Officers to roles perceived as no longer regularly visible in the community (although the majority had moved to Neighbourhood Policing Teams it was suggested by some stakeholders that some had moved to less visible response roles), the abandonment of network support officers or the use of neighbourhood officers to perform public order duties at parades. Whilst it is appreciated that there are operational requirements for the use of officers in this way, it is important that the potential impact in the confidence of communities is considered when detailing officers to duties which may bring them into conflict with the public.

4.19 Whilst time spent on neighbourhood duties was no longer an overall target in the Policing Plan the difficulties in ensuring neighbourhood officers were able to undertake effective community engagement in their areas illustrates the disconnect between the strategic intent of the PSNI and the operational realities as experienced by customers. It is clearly critical to the success of neighbourhood policing that the PSNI utilises the skills and knowledge of neighbourhood officers to deliver neighbourhood policing in their communities and ensures they are not abstracted to provide support to other parts of the service. **CJI recommends the reintroduction to the Policing Plan of the target that neighbourhood officers work at least 80% of their duty hours on neighbourhood policing duties to a definition of abstraction agreed with, and monitored by, the Northern Ireland Policing Board (NIPB).**

Working in partnership

4.20 Local initiatives at neighbourhood area or district level had led to some formal and informal partnership arrangements being developed to deal with neighbourhood issues through local forums or to address specific types of crime (for example, the co-location of a Women's Aid worker with Domestic Abuse Officers in three districts). There was not a strategic approach to joined-up service delivery with partners or standards relating to how customers of the PSNI could be directed to the relevant partner for the service they required. The CJI inspection of Policing with the Community recommended the introduction of legislation, equivalent to the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, to establish obligatory partnerships. The introduction of the Act in England and Wales established obligatory partnerships between the police, local authorities, probation service, health authorities, the voluntary sector, as well as local residents and businesses. The PSNI believe this will bring benefits in ensuring that all partners have a responsibility for crime and disorder which will lead to better co-ordination of effort.

4.21 Neighbourhood teams had been asked to develop neighbourhood profiles during the implementation of Policing with the Community. These included social, economic and demographic details of the community as well as details of neighbourhood officers and, in some, key partners and individuals in the community. There was a wide variation in awareness, accessibility, usefulness and currency of these profiles. In addition, they did not map out vulnerable communities within the neighbourhood

sectors and in some areas there was a lack of clarity as to who was responsible for keeping them updated. ***In order to ensure information is relevant and useful, neighbourhood profiles need to be comprehensive, user-friendly, up-to-date and contain details of key partnerships for neighbourhood teams and other district staff.***

Lack of delivery standards

4.22 At the time of the inspection officers did not have any standards or targets which focused on delivering a good customer service, or which assisted to ensure the organisation had a customer-focused culture and attitudes. Other than in relation to call handling as outlined above, other areas of initial contact with the PSNI did not have associated delivery standards. For example Inspectors were told there were no standards in place regarding response times for letters or emails. There had been no articulation as to how the ethos of delivering '*personal, professional and protective*' policing provided minimum standards for delivery although the development of the Policing Commitments aimed to fill this gap. Enquiry office staff described the difficulties faced in providing a good service to customers when balancing the demand of callers to the station (for example to sign bail, to make a statement, to speak to an officer or to make a general enquiry), telephone calls to the office from internal numbers, those forwarded from the switchboard or call handling plus administrative duties.

4.23 The PSNI had identified issues in relation to workload of the enquiry office, such as those outlined above, and had put some steps in place to attempt to reduce this, for example by removing one of the two telephone lines into each enquiry office, repositioning the computer terminal and attempting to avoid the use of the enquiry office as the default destination for telephone calls. This should assist in reducing the workload but the PSNI needs to continue to strive to manage this better.

Consultation and strategy development

4.24 Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 requires the PSNI to consult with the public in a meaningful way regarding the development of policy. The standards for a proper consultation exercise are known as the Sedley Requirements (having been set out by Stephen Sedley, QC in the case R v Brent London Borough Council, ex parte Gunning (1985) 84 LGR 168). The Sedley Requirements are:

- consultation must be made at a time when proposals are at a formative stage; sufficient reasons for the proposal must be provided to allow intelligent consideration and response;
- adequate time must be given for response; and
- the product of the consultation must be conscientiously taken into account in finalising proposals.

4.25 Consultations on policies and some strategies were generally undertaken by way of a paper exercise with the PSNI circulating a drafted document around a list of consultees appropriate to the topic. The PSNI also had a 'consultation zone' on their website where consultations could be accessed. Whilst organisations involved in such

consultations welcomed the opportunity to provide comment they indicated that they did not feel the consultation process was always effective in giving them an opportunity to truly influence the PSNI's policy or strategy. For example interviewees from two of the Policing Board's Reference Groups who were also members of the PSNI's Independent Advisory Groups stated that PSNI consultations were not always written in user-friendly language and therefore it was difficult for them to comment on things they did not necessarily understand. A representative from one voluntary organisation also commented that consultation should be undertaken sooner in the process of policy development. This supports views expressed previously in CJI's inspection of *Policing with the Community*[9].

4.26 At a strategic level the NIPB was responsible for agreeing and publishing the Policing Plan and monitoring police performance against annual targets. One of the major sources of input in developing the Policing Plan priorities was District Policing Partnerships with whom both the PSNI and Policing Board consult. District Policing Partnerships also input to the development process for Local Policing Plans by engaging with Area and District Commanders. District Policing Partnerships were highlighted by the majority of interviewees as their primary source of local consultation.

4.27 In most areas there were other groups or partnerships which provided consultation mechanisms at different geographical levels such as:

- Community Safety Partnerships (at council area level);
- Community Police Liaison Committees (at neighbourhood level);
- 'Partners and Communities Together' meetings and panels (at neighbourhood level) which all provided the opportunity for police to engage with communities or partners to address issues at a local level.

Some neighbourhood officers outlined how they had been asked to set up Partners and Communities Together in their neighbourhoods but already had pre-existing engagement mechanisms which were working well, for example Community Police Liaison Committees, and therefore they had continued with that model. In this respect the terminology that is used is unimportant; it is whether the engagement process is effective (for all parties) that matters most and whether there is appropriate accountability and governance structures in place.

4.28 At the time of the inspection the PSNI was developing a stakeholder strategy, which was considering the ways the service could engage better with harder to reach and less visible groups. The PSNI set up Independent Advisory Groups for the Service in respect of older persons, disability and multicultural communities in 2004, the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community in 2007 and a youth Independent Advisory Group more recently. Independent Advisory Groups are recognised throughout the police service, in England, Wales and Scotland, as an effective means of working with members of the community to solve problems, deal effectively with critical

9 CJINI, *Policing with the Community: An inspection of Policing with the Community in Northern Ireland*, March 2009.

incidents and improve the way the police deliver their services. Inspectors spoke to a youth Independent Advisory Group in one district visited who had been involved in reviewing policies and strategies which impacted on young people and were highly motivated to provide a service to the police. Inspectors also spoke to members of the Policing Board's various Reference Groups (which perform a similar function to Independent Advisory Groups), many of whom were also members of the police's Advisory Groups.

4.29 There was a general sense that members of these groups did not feel sufficiently valued by the PSNI and believed they could contribute more than they were presently being enabled to. Members of one group provided an example where a member of the community who they represented was badly assaulted and the group contacted the PSNI to ask if they should meet (to perform the critical incidents function as outlined above) but the perception of the group was that the police seemed uninterested and they received no further feedback as to actions taken. The PSNI had consulted some of the Independent Advisory Groups on service procedures although it may have been beneficial to provide more feedback to members on the outcome of these consultations in order that they are better informed of the outcomes of their contributions. Independent Advisory Group members had completed critical incident training. Community Safety Branch had also developed networks for engaging with young people, particularly in specific areas where there was a difficult relationship between police and young people. Inspectors look forward to the longer-term impact of this engagement.

4.30 It was also highlighted by one stakeholder that whilst District Policing Partnerships provide a consultation mechanism for the policing area, it is unlikely that in most locations the full range of Section 75 groups[10] are represented. In 2008, 23 of the 26 District Policing Partnerships were reconstituted to ensure that the political membership reflected that of the local Council. This process triggered the recruitment of independent members to the 23 affected District Policing Partnerships to ensure that the overall membership was representative of the district. The results of this recruitment exercise indicated that of the 211 independent members across the 23 Partnerships, 13% stated they had a disability, 2% were from an ethnic minority background and 2% described themselves as lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender with only 6% being aged 25 or under and 16% aged 61 or over[11]. The Independent Advisory Groups are therefore well placed to fill these gaps in relation to specific Section 75 groups. In addition, Hate Incident Minority Liaison Officers could provide a source

10 Section 75 and Schedule 9 to the Northern Ireland Act 1998 came into force on the 1 January 2000 and placed a statutory obligation on public authorities in carrying out their various functions relating to Northern Ireland, to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity:
- between persons of different religious belief, political opinion, racial group, age, marital status or sexual orientation;
- between men and women generally;
- between persons with a disability and persons without; and
- between persons with dependants and persons without.

11 'Forming new partnerships', DPP News, Summer 2007, Northern Ireland Policing Board.

of information obtained from specific community groups but appropriate co-ordination is needed to capture this.

4.31 Inspectors were also advised of specific methods of consultation and engagement in different districts where mechanisms had been set up, often informally, to engage with specific groups. A group had been set up whereby 'Children's Champions' from each district met with representatives from the Policing Board and youth organisations to discuss issues impacting on children and young people. Inspectors also heard about examples of engagement with business groups, a youth council, a community forum (with local churches and organisations) and with local residents via housing associations. There was no evidence however that these examples of good practice were shared across the organisation so that the benefits could be fully exploited and a consistent approach could be developed. **Inspectors recommend that the PSNI should develop a more consistent approach to the use of imaginative ways of undertaking consultation, including better engagement with Independent Advisory Groups.**

Project management

4.32 The ongoing projects had individual plans which identified the actions, timescales and owners required for implementation. However, there was not an overall programme plan which drew all the strands together indicating the dependencies between the projects, the overall risks and assumptions, the overall schedule showing the sequencing of projects and the monitoring and control activities. For example the civilianisation of call handling functions could potentially lead to an initial dip in the quality of customer service delivery if enough staff with the right skills are not recruited. Therefore plans to implement this project at the same time as the introduction of the Commitments could be an overall risk which needs to be escalated and managed appropriately. Whilst the 'Target Operating Model' (R4) or the Confidence Route Map were suggested as the way of co-ordinating all the activities and projects, the PSNI could not describe to Inspectors how this would be achieved in practice. Representatives from the Policing Board also indicated that they would welcome such a plan. **The PSNI should co-ordinate the ongoing Service Excellence Policing with the Community projects using project management principles (including dependencies and identification and management of risks) to accomplish the overall objective of Policing with the Community through '*personal, professional and protective*' policing.**

CHAPTER 5:

Outcomes

Measuring outcomes

5.1 The remit of the Northern Ireland Policing Board (NIPB) includes undertaking overall monitoring of the Policing Plan and holding the Chief Constable to account. The Board advised that it had set up mechanisms by which to monitor the target regarding the number of officers returned to front-line service delivery roles and were developing a performance framework to monitor Policing with the Community and the Policing Commitments. They also identified a role for the District Policing Partnerships to monitor this locally, as well as to monitor the PSNI's delivery of the Policing Commitments locally when they are rolled-out.

5.2 The PSNI were also developing a mechanism to monitor their performance against the Policing Commitments internally after roll-out. This included a variety of pre-existing measurement methods depending on the individual Commitment including survey data (for example, from the Policing Board's survey and the Northern Ireland Crime Survey), user satisfaction surveys, call backs at district level and mystery shopper exercises. The need for and importance of such measurement was recognised at a senior level with plans for the PSNI chief officer team to undertake call backs during the year. The PSNI planned to have a 'watchdog' or inspection team to collate the measures and disseminate learning across the organisation. The overview provided of the justification for using these measures, the manner in which they would be used to assess performance and the frequency of measurement appeared to give good coverage and ensure regular assessment of the quality of service delivered. Greater detail however would be required prior to its implementation.

5.3 The PSNI were planning to undertake user satisfaction/public perception surveys on a monthly basis once the Commitments were implemented in April 2011. These were planned to provide an assessment of the satisfaction levels associated with the service provided by the police in an area as reported by victims of:

- offences against the person;
- domestic burglary;
- hate crime;
- anti-social behaviour; and
- criminal damage.

These would replace previous surveys undertaken known as the 'Victims Survey' (the Quality of Service Survey) which provided an assessment of satisfaction levels in specific areas (for example domestic burglary, violent crimes etc.). An alternative approach

however could be to add more detailed and specific questions to the Northern Ireland Victims and Witnesses Survey already in existence, with the caveat that this is a broader survey covering the whole of the criminal justice system. Whilst these 'Victims Surveys' (the Quality of Service Surveys) showed a positive start in seeking feedback from victims there was no evidence as to how the information obtained by these surveys was used to inform or improve working practices. In addition, the information obtained was not sufficiently detailed to enable the PSNI to identify where issues regarding dissatisfaction lay. This type of information is important as it enables the PSNI to identify where improvements in service delivery can be made in volume crime areas which cut across districts. Inspectors look forward to future outputs of work in this area.

5.4 In the absence of such measures of service delivery being in place already, some districts had implemented their own quality assurance measures. Inspectors were advised by representatives from several districts and Belfast Regional Control that dip-sampling processes had been introduced to assess the quality of service provided by using a victim call back system. One district, for example, had introduced this in relation to victims of burglary as it was a priority issue for the locality. Some districts had undertaken community surveys to assess local confidence, in some areas supported by District Policing Partnerships. Again there had been a lack of corporate approach to such quality assurance of service delivery in the past but the work ongoing should address this issue and implement such procedures as standard. The treatment of detainees was assessed by Independent Custody Visitors, a Scheme managed by the Policing Board which oversees the operation of the Scheme and provides feedback to the PSNI on issues of concern or requiring remedial action.

5.5 In the absence of quantitative data Inspectors obtained qualitative information from PSNI officers and from stakeholders about the quality of service delivered. The vast majority of interviewees commented that neighbourhood officers provided a good quality of service in the main by engaging with customers, supporting local community initiatives and dealing with problems. Difficulties were outlined with the service provided by response officers; for example one neighbourhood officer described part of their role as being to *"pick up issues that Response has dealt with badly"*. All response officers spoken to however appeared aware of the need to provide a good quality service and focus on the customer. The pressure of needing to move quickly from one incident to the next was cited as being a barrier to spending more time with victims and being able to explain things thoroughly. The increase of officers in response roles and the focus on delivering '*personal, professional and protective*' policing should assist with this issue but only if the approach is explained to officers clearly in operational terms.

5.6 In addition officers in Tactical Support Groups were highlighted by stakeholders as causing concerns in being seen by some communities to use heavy handed tactics and pay little attention to the need for customer engagement. Again officers in these units spoken to demonstrated their awareness

of the need to deliver a good service for communities and work in partnership with neighbourhood teams. However, they suggested that districts needed to manage community expectations better and support their work rather than pass responsibility for action taken to Tactical Support Groups as 'outsiders'. ***There is a need for better explanations to be given to communities as to why the presence of Tactical Support Groups are necessary in an area (for example to undertake searches) and to publicise successes in the district in order to recognise the role of the units whilst ensuring that the impact on communities is considered in every operation. In addition, monitoring the way that Tactical Support Groups engage with communities and ensuring it is line with the ethos of the Service.***

5.7 The PSNI utilised technology within switchboard and call management which enabled them to monitor quantitative data regarding call handling, call volumes per day, overall average answer times and abandonment rates together with performance information for operators. Supervisors could use this quantitative analysis for performance discussions with operators. Assessments of the quality of the way in which the operator dealt with the call could be undertaken by the supervisor listening into the call, via a second line provided next to the operator for that specific purpose. Regular dip-sampling of calls after their conclusion was not undertaken however; although calls were recorded they were not routinely listened back to by the supervisor. This type of dip-sampling would be beneficial to ensure a good quality of service is being provided. The Policing Board also monitored the PSNI's adherence to National Call Handling Standards. In 2009-10 the PSNI received 210,693 999 calls and 2,701,970 non-emergency calls. Of these the PSNI answered 89.7% of emergency calls within 10 seconds (against a National Minimum Standard of 90%) and 90.4% of non-emergency calls within 30 seconds (against a National Minimum Standard of 90%). The abandonment rate was 0.5% for 999 calls and 2.85% for non-emergency calls.

5.8 An issue that arose during the inspection which CJI considers will have a significant impact on confidence in the police by all communities, was the delayed or non-deployment to a request for police attendance because of fears for the safety of officers. This impacts on customer service outcomes.
The level of security threat against officers was highlighted as a constant background to decision-making in the PSNI. This is understandable given the significant increase in the dissident republican threat and activities which has been at 'severe' since February 2009 and described as a *"very real and serious security threat"* by the Chief Constable[12]. Officers and staff were aware of the potential that a call could be made to the PSNI to report a hoax incident designed to draw police into an area and some hoax or false calls had led to tragic consequences for some officers in the past. Media reports had been disapproving of the PSNI for non-attendance at some incidents. For example there was wide reporting of an issue in Derry/Londonderry in June 2010 where police were criticised for not

12 *'PSNI Chief Constable Baggott pushes on with normalisation of policing'*, Belfast Telegraph, 10 November 2009.

responding to reports that a family was being held at gun point because officers were concerned it may have been an attempt to lure them into the area. Whilst the safety of the public and officers is clearly paramount, the PSNI also has a responsibility to consider the impact on the community of non-attendance and how they can best manage such situations.

5.9 The decision to delay attendance or not to attend a call was based on local intelligence and made by the Duty Inspector. However there was no guidance to assist them in making decisions about deployment and therefore it was at their discretion and judgement using the intelligence available and local knowledge. Whilst it is appreciated every scenario cannot be catered for, PSNI officers would benefit from guidance on this issue and clarity as to where accountability sits in deciding whether to attend a call or not. This would be particularly helpful where Inspectors may be lacking in local knowledge, for example if an officer were to transfer in from another police service. In addition the recording of the reasons for such decisions would allow organisational learning to take place and inform future guidance.

5.10 The PSNI did not have data to fully understand the scale of delayed attendance or non-attendance for security and safety reasons (as opposed to grading of calls as resolved without deployment). Officers from Chief Officer to Constables had different views on how many calls resulted in this type of delayed or non-attendance with varying comments suggesting the scale of non-attendance was 'small', 3% or 4% of calls or approximately two calls in a six-week period. The Policing Board did not monitor the scale of this issue. The lack of understanding about the extent of this issue means that the PSNI is unable to fully consider the impact on communities (which is likely to be greater in some areas where the threat is more severe than in others) and take a pro-active approach to managing the situation so that they are able to reassure the public. The lack of such information also leaves the service unable to undertake analysis to look for patterns of call types or inform guidance regarding deployment.
It is recommended that the PSNI should introduce guidance on the non-attendance of calls for security and safety reasons and implement a monitoring system to enable reliable analysis of such non-attendance to take place.

Managing information

5.11 The inspection also considered the PSNI's approach to confidentiality and dealing with sensitive information as part of the Customer Service Excellence standard. The PSNI had a policy in relation to data protection which outlined appropriate procedures in relation to data access, transfer, sharing, retention and weeding. Inspectors were advised that internal audits were undertaken of data systems and a protective marking scheme was in place. In respect of confidentiality, officers spoken to demonstrated an awareness of a privacy need for those who availed of their services. However some concerns were raised by officers and staff about the lack of privacy afforded for members of the public in enquiry offices (for example at the desk or in interview rooms just off the enquiry

office). Whilst interview rooms adjoining enquiry offices were a separate room and therefore afforded some privacy enquiry staff raised concerns that the thin nature of the walls meant that sometimes conversations could potentially be overheard.

Managing performance

5.12 The PSNI had in place a policy regarding the performance management and development system (the annual performance review) for police officers and police staff. The performance management system in place at the time of the inspection was not well regarded by staff Inspectors spoke to, as it was considered by officers to be bureaucratic and ineffective. The PSNI had recognised there was a need for improvements. In addition the PSNI had a specific policy in relation to managing unsatisfactory performance of police officers. This outlined the procedures to be used where the standards of a police officer's work failed to improve by using the annual performance review system and where there was a failure to carry out the role of a police officer to the agreed standard. The Unsatisfactory Performance Procedure could ultimately lead to a police officer being required to resign, reduced in rank with a written warning or being issued with a written warning to improve performance and/or redeployment to alternative duties. In the last three years 16 officers had been dealt with under the unsatisfactory performance regulations.

5.13 As outlined above the PSNI were working to the 2010-13 Policing Plan that focused on service excellence, tackling serious harm, and personal policing - dealing with local concerns. For the year's performance review process however, there was a lack of corporate direction as to how the objectives, performance indicators and targets fitted with the Chief Constable's commitment for *'personal, professional and protective'* policing. In the absence of this most supervisors were using similar targets to previous years (such as numbers of fixed penalty notices issued, number of intelligence reports submitted) but with limited assessment of quality of service delivery.

5.14 In order to emphasise the customer service focus and fill this gap the PSNI was developing a new individual performance review which aimed to take a holistic view. This would appraise not only the officers ability to deliver on their performance targets (related to *'personal, professional and protective'* policing) but also to consider how officers performed in relation to the competencies relevant to their role and what their individual development needs were. It was planned that this would be an on-line tool which would strive to reduce the bureaucracy that staff associated with previous systems. The PSNI aimed to introduce this for the start of the April 2011 annual performance appraisals. This type of system is critical to support the ethos where the customer is the main focus for staff, particularly for those in customer facing roles. **The PSNI should continue to develop and effectively implement a performance review system for all staff that recognises the importance of customer service for the next performance review cycle.**

5.15 In addition to the formal performance management procedures, supervisors

outlined to Inspectors how performance was monitored on a daily basis. The Command and Control system was used on a daily basis by Sector Inspectors, Area Commanders and the District Commander to review actions taken in initial response to incidents and address any outstanding actions or deal with any issues of concern. Some officers raised concerns with this as it led to duplication of effort as information was required to be inputted into the Niche Records Management System (which was used for case preparation) as well as Command and Control (which was used for deployment) for the purposes of these daily reviews. A presentation delivered in March 2010 had outlined to Commanders how Niche could be interrogated to provide this information, leaving Command and Control to be used purely for deployment, and therefore reduce the need for such duplication. ***It is suggested that, in order to reduce bureaucracy, the use of Command and Control to undertake the daily search should cease as soon as possible, and officers should be advised that they no longer need to duplicate information into the two systems.***

Dealing with mistakes

5.16 The Office of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland (OPONI) aims to provide an independent, impartial police complaints system for the people and police of Northern Ireland. The Police Ombudsman's duty is to investigate complaints about the conduct of police officers and, where appropriate, make recommendations in respect of criminal, disciplinary and misconduct matters. The PSNI must, as set out in legislation, refer all complaints against police officers to the Police Ombudsman. It therefore had, at the time of this inspection, no scope to address minor complaints or dissatisfaction with the actions of police officers internally until the conclusion of the investigation. In 2009-10 the Police Ombudsman received 3,528 complaints and 6,419 allegations. Figures from 2008-09 indicate that 38% of these related to failure in duty, 29% to oppressive behaviour and 14% to incivility. The Police Ombudsman provided the PSNI's Professional Standards Department with reports highlighting any officers who had received three or more complaints or allegations in a 12-month period in order that discipline champions in districts could monitor potential performance issues and discuss these with officers at an early stage. During 2009-10 376 police officers had been subject to three or more complaints. Examples were provided of where officers who had been highlighted in this manner and senior managers in the district had held a management meeting with them to bring the matter to their attention and discuss any underlying issues.

5.17 The Police Ombudsman could decide that some complaints (for example incivility or low-level failure in duty) would be suitable for informal resolution by the PSNI. In such circumstances the complainant would be invited to meet with a senior PSNI officer to discuss the complaint and, in consultation with the police officer who had been complained about, seek a resolution such as an apology, explanation or words of advice being given to the officer. The benefit of this approach was that it could enable lower

level issues of dissatisfaction to be resolved more quickly than by undertaking a formal investigation. In 2009-10 11% of complaints were informally resolved by the PSNI. There had been a recognition by both the Police Ombudsman and the PSNI that there could be improvements made to this system to reduce delay and bureaucracy still further in such lower level cases and increase the satisfaction of the complainant. For example, a PSNI Inspector showed CJI Inspectors a letter from the Police Ombudsman's office noting a complaint received on 21 March 2010 which had arrived with him for information resolution on the 9 June 2010. Although the issue had been resolved that same day via the informal resolution process it had taken two and half months for a relatively minor matter to be processed fully in order for it to be dealt with.

5.18 In June 2010, a six-month pilot had commenced in one district between the Office of the Police Ombudsman and the PSNI of a process called 'local resolution'. This devolved responsibility for dealing with complaints of incivility or lower-level cases of failure in duty to first line managers. Once a complaint was received by the Duty Sergeant the approval of the Office of the Police Ombudsman was sought to undertake the local resolution process, once the agreement of the complainant was obtained. The local resolution officer (of Sergeant rank) would then aim to resolve the complaint in a similar manner to that set out for informal resolution above. This would benefit the complainant as quality of service issues could be addressed in a much quicker way at the time of the incident. It would also benefit the Police Ombudsman's office and the PSNI by significantly reducing the time spent on such complaints.

5.19 In 2009 there had been 504 complaints received from the district selected for the pilot. Of these, 156 (31%) had been deemed suitable for informal resolution and 63 (76%) had been successfully informally resolved. As the same selection criteria was being applied for local resolution, this indicates that just under a fifth of complainants could benefit from this process which would be beneficial if it was rolled out across the PSNI. The Office of the Police Ombudsman planned to fully evaluate the pilot at the end of the six-month period. Initial evaluation forms sent to the complainants after their complaint was resolved had resulted in positive feedback. CJI fully supports any process that delivers a more effective and speedier response in resolving complaints deemed suitable for local resolution and looks forward to the formal evaluation of this pilot.

5.20 In addition the PSNI had incorporated a mechanism for dealing with cases of dissatisfaction into the Policing Commitments. The final Commitment proposed for inclusion was that the PSNI would discuss with and try to reach agreement on a resolution with a customer who was dissatisfied with the service they had received but did not want to formally complain to the Police Ombudsman.

Communicating results

5.21 The PSNI website contained information about their performance and achievements by way of reports and publications, latest news updates,

statistics and the Deputy Chief Constable's blog. The statistical reports for example provided statistics on crime, anti-social behaviour, stop and search, drugs and quality of service surveys as well as in-year performance against the Policing Plan. Local Policing Plans were available to the public in leaflet format and the PSNI Annual Report was available on the PSNI website. Publications and posters were often available in a variety of different languages. Other methods to raise awareness of PSNI work included use of local media publications, leaflets and posters about neighbourhood teams, articles in specialist publications and use of social media and digital technology.

5.22 The PSNI also provided information on results in person at various forums. The Policing Board held both private and public meetings where the Chief Constable and Chief Officers were asked to account for performance. The District Policing Partnerships performed similar functions with both District and Area Commanders and minutes of these meetings were available on-line. Local police also provided information about action taken to address local concerns at neighbourhood meetings such as Partners and Communities Together or Police Community Liaison Committees.

5.23 The Policing Board and District Policing Partnerships also communicated the work undertaken by the PSNI both on the websites and through newsletters such as 'DPP News'. These outlined work undertaken by the PSNI in partnership with District Policing Partnerships and success stories in local districts.

Section 2

Appendix

Appendix 1: Inspection methodology

Desktop research and development of inspection Terms of Reference and question areas

Research literature and guidance documentation was reviewed in relation to customer service. The Customer Service Excellence standard provided guidance in determining the scope of the inspection and topic areas within which questions were developed. Other relevant documents included guidance documents on issues within this area such as the Quality of Service Commitment, the Policing Pledge and guidance documents on Citizen Focus.

Document review

A review was conducted of documentation and data provided by the PSNI. Copies of all policies, procedures and other documentation relating to customer service issues were requested and received as well as organisational reviews and project documentation in this area. A review was undertaken of this documentation to cross-reference information against the topic areas later obtained during the fieldwork. This was also used to inform interview questions during the fieldwork phase.

Self-assessment

A self-assessment framework was developed based upon the Customer Service Excellence standard which the PSNI was requested to complete. This was reviewed prior to the inspection fieldwork and also used to inform the interview questions and later analysis.

Fieldwork

The questions used during the fieldwork for this inspection were informed by the five criteria in the Customer Service Excellence standard. The criteria and indicators considered were:

Criterion 1: Customer insight:

- 1.1 Customer Identification;
- 1.2 engagement and consultation; and
- 1.3 customer satisfaction.

Criterion 2: The culture of the organisation:

- 2.1 Leadership, policy and culture; and
- 2.2 staff professionalism and attitude.

Criterion 3: Information and access:

- 3.1 Range of information;
- 3.2 quality of information;
- 3.3 access; and
- 3.4 co-operative working with other providers, partners and communities.

Criterion Four: Delivery:

- 4.1 Delivery standards;
- 4.2 achieved delivery and outcomes; and
- 4.3 deal effectively with problems.

Criterion Five: Timeliness and quality of service:

- 5.1 Standards for timeliness and quality;
- 5.2 timely outcomes; and
- 5.3 achieved timely delivery.

One-to-one and focus groups interviews were conducted with a range of personnel within the PSNI. Interviews were also conducted with stakeholders who could provide evidence of the experience of PSNI customer service from different perspectives.

Representatives from the following were interviewed during the fieldwork:

PSNI:

Headquarters/centralised functions

- Deputy Chief Constable;
- Assistant Chief Constable Criminal Justice;
- Assistant Chief Constable Urban;
- Chief Superintendent Target Operating Model Project;
- Detective Superintendent Crime Operations;
- Chief Inspector Belfast Regional Control;
- Police College trainers;
- Superintendent Professional Standards Department;
- Switchboard operators and supervisor;
- Chief Inspector and Inspector Policing with the Community Department; and
- Human Resources.

Districts ('A', 'C', 'E', 'G')

- District Commander;
- Superintendent Community Safety;
- Area Commander;
- Crime Manager;
- Sector Commanders (focus group);
- Neighbourhood Sergeants (focus group);
- Neighbourhood Constables (focus group);
- Call handlers and Station Duty Assistants (focus groups);
- District trainers; and
- Detective Constables from Crime Investigation Department (focus group).

Stakeholders

- Northern Ireland Policing Board officials and Community Engagement Committee;
- Northern Ireland Policing Board Reference Groups (older persons; young people; minority ethnic groups*; lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender persons*);
- Office of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland;
- Victim Support Northern Ireland; and
- Young people's Independent Advisory Group (in 'C' District).

*members of these groups were also on the PSNI's Independent Advisory Groups.

In addition visits were undertaken to the Contact Management Suite in Ardmore PSNI station in Newry and to the central switchboard in police headquarters.

Testing ease of access to the PSNI

A review was undertaken of the PSNI's website in order to assess the ease of access for members of the public to neighbourhood policing teams. As a result of this emails were sent to the 41 email addresses provided (44 of the 88 neighbourhood teams provided an email address and of these three sectors had a shared same email address) from an email address set up for the purpose. As a result 24 responses were received either asking for further details of where the emailer lived or providing details of meetings with the police in the local area.

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