



Avoidable delay still an issue for Northern Ireland's justice system



CJI's James Corrigan (pictured) – Lead Inspector in the Inspectorate's 2010 Avoidable Delay inspection – outlines the key findings of the inspection and the challenges facing the justice system in delivering a more streamlined justice system.

The negative consequences of avoidable delay affect all “users” of the justice system whether they are victims, witnesses or defendants.

As time passes, victims become increasingly frustrated with the system, the quality of evidence from witnesses can be diluted and defendants may be remanded in custody awaiting trial.

Avoidable delay also adds considerable additional costs to the public in the form of more police and prosecution time, greater numbers of court adjournments and higher legal aid payments.

Inspectors found that there was a general recognition among the justice organisations that the current slow pace of justice was not acceptable. This was reflected in the initial response to the first CJI inspection report on avoidable delay in 2006.

However, these initiatives have made a relatively limited impact as the length of time it takes the

justice system to process individuals through to disposal by a court remains too long and compares unfavourably with neighbouring jurisdictions.

This inspection considered what needs to be done differently to reduce the amount of time people spend in the justice system.

A starting point is the need for justice organisations to work more closely together in the delivery of a joined-up approach to criminal justice. In particular, there needs to be a stronger working relationship between the Public Prosecution Service and the Police Service of Northern Ireland including a shared vision on respective roles in areas such as pre-prosecution advice, police discretion on disposals and the streamlining of the process for the submission of files to the PPS.

Delivering the necessary improvements in performance will require changes at operational level in each of the

justice organisations.

The police will need to continue to make improvements in the quality and timeliness of files submitted to the PPS. Improved case management in the PPS will require flexibility to deal with backlogs and taking a lead on inter-agency case progression in areas such as the time spent on the summons process for court attendance.

The Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunals Service have a pivotal role in leading on issues such as the readiness of court users to proceed with cases including determining the causes of court adjournments.

All of these changes need to be underpinned at strategic level through improved Ministerial oversight of performance. This can be supported by a more focused role for the Criminal Justice Board and regular and appropriate management information.

CJI has worked closely with the justice organisations in discussing the nature of the problems and the way forward.

This has meant that a number of recommendations are already progressing and an action plan has been published in response to the report's recommendations.

The Chief Inspector will also be reporting to the Minister of Justice on an annual basis on the performance of the justice organisations in reducing avoidable delay. ■

The Fulbright Experience



At the start of 2010 Tom McGonigle from CJI's Inspection Team travelled to Minneapolis in the USA to learn more about the American custodial system and the treatment of dangerous offenders.

The opportunity to travel to the USA and learn about aspects of its justice system came about after Tom was awarded the prestigious UK Public Affairs Fulbright Fellowship for 2009-10.

In this exclusive article for the Spec, Tom gives an insight into his 12-week long internship when he swapped Belfast for the state of Minnesota.

"After I was awarded the UK Public Affairs Fulbright Fellowship for 2009-10 I had the opportunity to spend January - March 2010 in the USA. While there I was based at the University of Minnesota in Minneapolis, and registered as an intern with the Minnesota Department of Corrections (DoC). During my time in the USA, I also spent time in Seattle and with the South Carolina DoC as Fulbright encourages comparison with other US states.

"The basis of the Fellowship was to learn about management of dangerous offenders before and after their release from custody. I was with a group of 20 international Fellows who worked for a wide range of government and non-profit organisations, mostly in developing countries.

"Minnesota is recognised as relatively liberal and reformist in comparison to other US states. It does not have capital punishment and there are no private prisons. Its

rate of imprisonment is at a similar level to that of England and Wales, though twice as high as Northern Ireland's low rate of 88 prisoners per 100,000 population.

The DoC provided an opportunity to undertake a programme of visits and meetings which enabled me to participate in a wide range of correctional activity.

This included lifer reviews, meetings with politicians, prosecutors and judges, assessments for civil commitment, prison and hostel inspections, home visits to offenders under community supervision, prison disciplinary and parole revocation hearings and community notification meetings.

While there I was also asked to make several presentations about the criminal justice system in Northern Ireland and mentored six undergraduate politics students.

"Overall I found the Fulbright Fellowship to be a very interesting experience, both its correctional component and time spent with the international group.

I learned a lot about societal and cultural differences between European and US justice systems; and I will watch with interest Minnesota's efforts to balance political demands for greater incarceration against financial pressures that can only be alleviated by reducing numbers of citizens held in custody."



Tom McGonigle receiving a certificate 'In recognition of cultivating a positive working environment in the area of international corrections' during a visit to South Carolina while on the Fulbright Fellowship.

For readers of The Spec, Tom has summarised the most interesting aspects and features of his experience in the USA. They were:

Civil Commitment: Although Minnesota has the second lowest rate of incarceration in the USA, it has the second highest rate of transfer to a Civil Commitment Centre (552 in March 2010) after California. This is a process whereby sex offenders who have completed prison sentences continue to be held in secure conditions (by the Department of Health and designated as 'patients') if they are deemed unsafe to live in the community. However, none have ever been felt sufficiently 'safe' to release since 1948, and following a notorious murder in 2003, the rate of commitment has escalated sharply.

Community notification: The extensive level of community notification relating to category 3 sex offenders in the community, which is required under Minnesota state law.

Life Sentence Prisoners: In 2004, life prisoners' minimum tariffs were uplifted from 17 years to 30 years. At the start of 2010 there were around 70 prisoners serving 'life without possibility of parole.' Overall incarceration rates have been driven up by an increasingly stringent approach to parole violation and high numbers sent to prison for driving while intoxicated.

The American Difference: Several aspects of the Minnesota custodial system are unfamiliar in the UK. These include extensive use of dormitory accommodation (often unsupervised), with many jail and prison staff carrying Taser guns or pepper spray, Segregation Units are routinely full, restraint chairs are regularly used, payphones are widely used to generate prison income and family 'visits' are often conducted via videolink.

Home visits: Probation home visits entailed donning a flak jacket before undertaking unannounced meetings with offenders on their doorsteps,

primarily to administer breathalyser or drugs tests. The consequence of a failed test was immediate removal to jail in handcuffs.

Positive experiences: While the legislative context is punitive, there are many creative and compassionate staff working within the system. There are also a range of imaginative initiatives such as specialist courts for mental health, domestic violence and drugs offenders, and Minnesota is also due to pilot a court for war veteran offenders. The juvenile custody and residential mental health populations have been driven down significantly in recent years.

Female offenders: Shakopee Prison (independently described as 'the best women's prison in the USA') has 650 prisoners including many serving lengthy sentences, and with all the social problems we would recognize here. Despite only being surrounded by a hedge, no woman has absconded from Shakopee since 2004, which was also the year of the last suicide there. ■

Be careful for what you wish for – devolution and closing the accountability gap

Locally elected politicians are now responsible for the delivery of policing and justice issues in Northern Ireland. The Minister has set out a challenging agenda for the justice organisations, the Justice Committee has been getting to grips with the issues across the system and we have a locally appointed Attorney General for the first time in a generation. Although it is early days there is a different and positive feel about local politicians taking control. From a CJI perspective it is a welcome development as the final pieces in the accountability framework have been put in place.

What does this increased accountability and scrutiny mean? Already there have been a number of positive changes. In simple terms the level and frequency of access to local decision makers has been greater in the last four months than in the previous 18 months put together. There has been much use of CJI reports in Assembly debates on specific issues. The Minister has praised the CJI for helping to raise standards across the justice system and we have provided detailed briefings directly on the work of the organisation and individual reports.

In a further example CJI appeared in front of the Northern Ireland Home Affairs Committee only once in the last 18 months and only then for a relatively short period. Already we have provided the Justice Committee with a full briefing on the work of the Inspectorate and



Dr Michael Maguire meets with the Minister of Justice David Ford MLA

provided our views on the challenges facing the justice system. We have also met with the newly appointed Attorney General to brief him on the work that we do.

It is a critical benefit to the Inspectorate that we have local decision makers to bring our reports to, who can act as they feel appropriate to ensure that real change is implemented. The Inspectorate looks forward to playing its role in the development of a first class justice system for the benefit of those who live here.

A good example of this is our recently published work on the need to reduce avoidable delay across the justice system. This report highlighted that it takes too long in Northern Ireland from arrest through to disposal by a court. This is not good for victims and it's not

good for those who are defendants. Justice delayed can be justice denied. A resolution to this difficult and complex issue will require considerable effort across the justice system as individual organisations come to grips with the causes of avoidable delay. I have no doubt as to their commitment to make the changes required. The process can only be helped, however, with a locally accountable Minister and a Justice Committee taking interest in progress and the delivery of real improvements on the ground. CJI will, as with all the work that we do, provide a follow-up review on the progress that has been made in delivering real change.

The devolution of policing and justice reinforces the need for an independent and impartial Inspectorate. The justice system has



Lord Morrow of Clougher Valley,
chairman of the Northern Ireland
Assembly's Committee for Justice.

been a contested space and will continue to excite political controversy – that is right and proper. The role of the Inspectorate in this context is to help provide information that will inform decision makers on the operation of the system and its strengths and weaknesses. We offer independent, impartial and evidence based advice on the operation of individual organisations and how the justice system links together.

There is a tension, however, that the Inspectorate must deal with. While we are clearly part of the justice system in Northern Ireland we are not the cheer leaders for the justice system. At the same time we have a responsibility and real desire to work with justice organisations to achieve real change. There is a shared goal to make change happen where it is necessary. This responsibility means we highlight good practice as well as identify areas for development. The purpose of inspection is not to provide criticism for the sake of it but rather to hold a mirror up to the system so we can see what improvements are required. This is an essential part of the accountability mechanisms set up after the Criminal Justice Review.

Dr Michael Maguire
*Chief Inspector of Criminal Justice
in Northern Ireland*

Follow-up inspection notes progress made by Northern Ireland Alternatives

Criminal Justice Inspection (CJI) has carried out a follow-up inspection examining the work of community-based restorative justice schemes operated by Northern Ireland Alternatives (NIA).

The follow-up review assessed the progress made by NIA's five community-based restorative justice (CBRJ) schemes since CJI's original inspection report was published in 2007.

It involved a full examination of all files opened by NIA since the last inspection where evidence was sought that were criminal offences were identified they were correctly referred through the Government Protocol for community-based restorative justice (CBRJ) schemes to the police for investigation and submission to the Public Prosecution Service for Northern Ireland (PPS).

Of the 14 individuals whose cases were referred through the Protocol, CJI found all files were satisfactory and all cases had been handled in line with the requirements of the Protocol.

As part of the review CJI assessed NIA's CBRJ schemes against the criteria it has developed to ensure that human rights, the rights of the child, and UN Principles on Restorative Justice are observed.

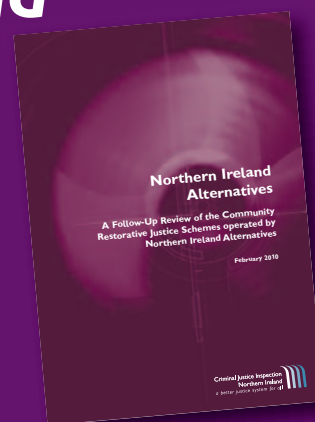
As part of the follow-up inspection, Inspectors spoke with representatives from statutory and voluntary organisations, local

politicians and community leaders who have links with the areas in which the schemes operate. Inspectors also sought the views of victims of crime and offenders who had engaged with the schemes.

Since 2007, NIA has secured accreditation under the Government's Protocol for CBRJ schemes which, has assisted the organisation in accessing funding from Government departments, statutory agencies and charitable bodies. The organisation has recruited additional staff, developed new programmes and strengthened its operational relationships and partnerships with statutory agencies.

It was evident to CJI that NIA is now operating at a different level than when it was first inspected three years ago and Inspectors were pleased to note that all of the recommendations made by the Inspectorate in its original report, had been achieved.

CJI commended NIA for the way in which it has developed since the first inspection was carried out. The Inspectorate also encouraged NIA to consolidate its progress to ensure it retains the capacity to meet the increasing demand for its interventions. ■



Inspectors call for review of the current fine enforcement system

Inspectors have called for the fine enforcement system in Northern Ireland to be reviewed in an effort to reduce the pressure it places on the police and prison services, while retaining the current high levels of compliance.

An inspection report by CJI published in March 2010 found that with over 35,000 fines imposed in 2008, fines are the mainstay of the criminal justice system, and are by far the most frequently used penalty in Northern Ireland's Courts.

Northern Ireland currently has an enforcement system which has a compliance rate of 90%, where 45% of fines are paid within the current 28 day limit, and most

of the rest are accounted for by enforcement action.

The high levels of compliance compared favorably with the position in Scotland, England and Wales and should provide confidence that the system here is working. However, the high levels of compliance around fine enforcement comes at a cost with Northern Ireland currently imprisoning more people for fine default than most other countries.

Inspectors believe the number of people going to prison for fine default needs to be reduced as defaulters serving short sentences currently make up nearly 30% of prison admissions

In addition to consuming the financial and human resources of the Prison Service, the enforcement of small fines places a burden on the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI), which sees it as a poor use of a police officer's time.

Inspectors recommend that police attention should be focused on dealing with the persistent fine defaulter, which would in turn, cut the number of warrants passed to the PSNI for enforcement action, and reduce the amount of paper in the system which can often go astray.

Inspectors believe the role of the Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunals Service (NICTS) can also be enhanced. They have welcomed the initiatives already taken by the NICTS to improve compliance, and the effectiveness of fine collection in the early days, after the time for payment has elapsed.

The report also called for a more co-ordinated approach to the enforcement of fines to be adopted across the criminal justice system. The challenge will be to create a system which reduces the calls on the police and prison services, without affecting the rate of compliance. ■



CJI presents Annual Report and Accounts to Parliament

On 26 July CJI laid its 2009-10 Annual Report and Accounts before the Houses of Parliament.

The Annual Report and Accounts were approved by the Comptroller and Auditor General of the National Audit Office on 6 July and CJI's Accounting Officer Brendan McGuigan was delighted the organisation had once again, secured a favourable audit report.

"I am pleased to say that CJI secured a clean audit certificate from the Comptroller and Auditor General in relation to the financial statements and information presented to him.

"We are also pleased that following that CJI was able to produce this Annual Report and Accounts under the new IFRS processes in a quicker time frame this year. This allowed the audit to be completed and the document to go before Parliament prior to the start of the summer recess period.

"This was achieved in no small part thanks to the efforts of CJI's staff and colleagues within the Department of Justice and the Northern Ireland Audit Office working collectively to complete all work as swiftly as possible," he said.

"We look forward to building on this success in the 2010-11 financial

year when we will be presenting our Annual Report and Accounts to the Northern Ireland Assembly," he concluded.

Copies of CJI's 2009-10 Annual Report and Accounts can be downloaded from the CJI website – www.cjini.org.

Should you wish to request a hard copy of the document from CJI, please call the Business and Communication Manager on 028 90 258000, email meloney.mcveigh@cjini.org or write to Criminal Justice Inspection Northern Ireland, 14 Great Victoria Street, Belfast, BT2 7BA. ■



Report shows mental health is ‘not a marginal issue’

The treatment and care of people with mental disorders presents enormous challenges to the criminal justice system.

Evidence suggests that one in eight people arrested in Northern Ireland are experiencing mental health issues. In addition, 78% of male prisoners on remand and 50% of female prisoners are personality disordered – a figure seven times that of the general population.

This means the treatment and care of people with mental health problems is not a marginal issue. It is one which affects all aspects of the criminal justice system from the police service through to the prosecution and court services, concluding with the prison service and probation.

CJI's inspection report on how people with mental health issues are treated by the criminal justice system indicated that Northern Ireland's prisons hold a number of people with mental health problems who, it could be argued, should not be there.

In some cases, imprisoning people who are mentally disordered is not always the best response to their re-offending. It does them no good and risks further harming their mental health.



The inspection findings suggest that the criminal justice system needs to develop its screening and assessment processes to identify, at an early stage, those people who are experiencing mental health issues.

Where possible, these individuals should be diverted away from the criminal justice system and custodial care and provided with suitable care in the most appropriate setting.

To do this, the inspection report indicated that staff awareness, in relation to mental health in all agencies within the criminal justice system needed to be strengthened, and more training provided. This increased level of knowledge would help criminal justice agencies to successfully identify those people who should be diverted away from the criminal justice system.

For those individuals who are imprisoned, the aim should be to improve the quality of care within the system so that it is in a position to deal appropriately with a smaller number of people who may have complex needs.

This could involve the establishment of a high secure hospital in Northern Ireland to which the most dangerous mentally disordered offenders could be referred for treatment.

The report indicated that steps also need to be taken to enhance the partnership arrangements between the agencies within the criminal justice system. This is to ensure a more connected service is provided, which deals with the needs of a mentally disordered offender at each critical stage of



the justice process, such as arrest or appearance before a court.

Greater co-operation and collaboration between the criminal justice system and the Health Service would also be important in addressing the issues identified in the inspection report.

It is because a co-ordinated and focused approach to the delivery of mental health services is so important, CJI has recommended a joint Health and Criminal Justice Programme Board should be created.

This Board will, if established, bring together all the relevant organisations to develop a clear approach to the needs of mentally disordered offenders.

A co-ordinated, collaborative approach between the criminal justice system and the Health Service would have dual benefits. It would help contribute to better outcomes for the individual, in terms of fairness and appropriate clinical treatment.

And it would have benefits for the community in relation to improving public protection arrangements, reducing re-offending levels and cutting the substantial amount the system spends on mentally disordered people who are repeat offenders. ■

Community Service found to make a positive contribution to local communities

CJI's inspection of the Probation Board for Northern Ireland's Community Service Schemes was published in March this year.

The inspection found that Community Service was socially useful and made a positive contribution to local communities.

Beneficiaries – which could range from local charities and church groups to community development organisations, resource centres and individuals who were unable to undertake or pay for the work themselves – reported they were satisfied with the work undertaken.

Inspectors also reported that reconviction rates were relatively low in comparison with other disposals, and the courts' usage of Community Service avoided additional pressure on the prison system.

The inspection found there were no evident concerns about public safety or undue risks associated with the Community Services Schemes, and practice was shown to be consistent between both urban and rural areas.

The inspection concludes Community Service was well managed in relation to the Northern Ireland Standards and Service Requirements which the Probation Board uses to assess the quality of its practice.

In an effort to further strengthen management of Community Service, CJI Inspectors made 15 recommendations. These included a recommendation for the Probation Board to improve the number of offenders commencing work within 10 days of a Community Service Order being made.

The report also suggested the Probation Board should also seek



Community Service participants involved in clean up activity in Belfast's Holylands.

to improve the average number of hours worked by offenders, and the number of individuals fully complying with their Order.

Inspectors were pleased to note that work was underway within the Probation Board to address the recommendations contained in the report by the time of publication. ■

Youth Conference Service follow-up review

In April 2010, CJI published a review of its inspection of the Youth Justice Agency's Youth Conference Service.

The original report – published in February 2008 – made 14 recommendations aimed at improving the Youth Conference Service including a key recommendation that a system wide review of current practices within youth offending should be completed.

In its review CJI praised the Youth Conference Service for the work it had carried out in the last two years to substantially progress the majority of recommendations made by the inspectorate in its original inspection report.

Inspectors found seven of the 13 inspection recommendations had been completed and four had been partially completed. All of the partially complete recommendations had

shown substantial progress and Inspectors felt they should be fully implemented in the near future.

Unfortunately, two of the inspection recommendations were incomplete and had little prospect of being completed in the short term. This included a recommendation relating to providing training to solicitors being implemented due to budget and resource pressures and the need to prioritise activities.

Inspectors found that the review of services had resulted in a close partnership being developed between the Youth Conference Service and the Probation Board for Northern Ireland.

A two-year priority youth offending pilot that places restorative practice at its core had been developed. The pilot project involves Youth Conference Service and Probation Board staff working alongside one another in the greater Belfast area to deal with young people who are viewed as the most

challenging in terms of the offences they have committed and their re-offending behaviour.

Implementation of other recommendations had secured appropriate training for Youth Conference Service staff who deal with sexually offending behaviour and better provision of information to conference coordinators to enable them to formulate effective conference plans for young people.

Inspectors identified that progress had not been made with the recommendation that directing lawyers should provide reasons for their decisions to the Youth Conference Service and to victims.

This issue will form part of an inspection of the giving of reasons and communication with victims and witnesses as part of CJI's 2010-11 Inspection programme. ■

Mental Health Symposium - the benefits of partnership working

The recent CJI inspection report “Not a Marginal Issue” highlighted the challenges faced by the criminal justice system in dealing with people with mental health issues. Evidence suggests that one in eight people arrested in Northern Ireland have mental health problems.



Lord Bradley

In order to help with the implementation process CJI participated in a mental health symposium in line with the publication of the report. The purpose of the symposium, held in Hillsborough Castle and organised by the Northern Ireland Office, was to present the findings of the inspection to delegates from within the criminal justice agencies and the health service. The latter were represented by individuals from the Department of Health, RQIA and the Trusts.

The meeting was chaired by Brendan McGuigan, Deputy Chief Inspector CJI and was opened by the then Justice Minister Paul Goggins MP who highlighted the magnitude of the challenge facing those in the criminal justice system dealing with and caring for offenders with mental health issues.

Participants then received two presentations. The first was from Lord Bradley on the work undertaken in England and Wales which examined the extent to which offenders with mental health issues could be diverted from prison to other services (The “Bradley Report”). Lord Bradley also considered the effectiveness of court and diversion arrangements and the services needed to support them.

The second presentation was from Dr Michael Maguire, CJI Chief Inspector, who presented the findings of the CJI inspection on the treatment of people with mental health issues within the criminal justice system.

The inspection report indicated that prisons hold a number of people with mental health issues who it could be argued should not be there. The report recommended improved screening arrangements and improvements in the quality of care within the system. It also recommended a more co-ordinated and focused approach by agencies within the criminal justice system and the health service.

Participants then considered a number of practical questions around how to improve early intervention and assessment, mental health issues at court, prisons and hospitals, community provision and oversight and management arrangements. Speaking about the symposium Dr Maguire said “This was a very worthwhile exercise in cross departmental working – a critical factor in the improvement of current arrangements.” ■

Inspectorate issues Business Plan for 2010-11

Criminal Justice Inspection has recently issued its Business Plan for 2010-11.

The plan – which was delayed to take account of the impact of changes within the justice system following the devolution of policing and justice matters in April 2010 – outlines the areas of work the Inspectorate intends to focus on during the financial year.

The topics and subjects contained in the inspection programme

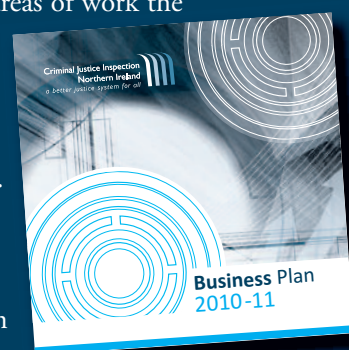
have been identified through CJI’s corporate planning process or have arisen as a result of previous inspection work.

The focus of the work carried out in 2010-11 will involve working with the criminal justice agencies to raise standards while providing independent, impartial assurance to Ministers and the wider community, on the working of the justice system.

Speaking after the document was published and made available to view or download from the CJI website – www.cjini.org – Dr Michael Maguire said his desire was for the work of CJI to be widely read and debated to help inform and shape the direction of the justice system in Northern Ireland.

“I welcome comments from all stakeholders on the work of CJI and the contribution that we make to the development of the justice system in Northern Ireland,” said Dr Maguire.

The Chief Inspector also gave a commitment during 2010-11 to obtain feedback on the work of the Inspectorate. ■



Inspectorate reports on handling of sexual violence and abuse

In July 2010 CJI published its thematic inspection report on the handling of sexual violence and abuse cases by the criminal justice system in Northern Ireland. The inspection fieldwork was undertaken between March and July 2009 by Inspectors Rachel Lindsay and Bill Priestley.

During the fieldwork interviews were undertaken with staff from the criminal justice agencies and other justice stakeholders, with representatives of voluntary and community organisations who support victims of sexual violence and abuse and with some victims who had experience of the criminal justice system. In addition support was received from colleagues from Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Her Majesty's Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate to undertake case file reviews.

In the report CJI called on the criminal justice agencies to collectively work to strengthen how they engage with victims of sexual violence and abuse. The recommendations aimed to increase the level of support provided to victims of sexual crimes including rape, attempted rape and child abuse, who choose to pursue a criminal prosecution.

"This inspection into how sexual violence and abuse cases are handled by the criminal justice system identified some excellent examples of good practice. We found many examples of dedicated staff working with victims in a professional and sensitive manner throughout the system," said Dr Michael Maguire, Chief Inspector of Criminal Justice in Northern Ireland.

"We also found that more could be done collectively by the organisations that make up the criminal justice system in Northern Ireland to support victims of sexual offences," he said.

Dr Maguire urged the Police Service of Northern Ireland and the Public Prosecution Service for Northern Ireland to improve communication with victims and their representatives. Dr Maguire also indicated that improving the speed at which a case progressed through the justice system, would help reduce the level of trauma and anxiety involved for both victims and the accused.

The report also addressed the issue of attrition rates in relation to sexual crimes. Crimes of sexual violence and abuse are often complex and can be notoriously difficult to investigate and prosecute.

As a result, a large number of those cases which are reported to the police, drop out as they progress through the criminal justice system. This inspection found that while the conviction rate for crimes of sexual violence in Northern Ireland is not good in relation to the numbers that are reported, it is no worse than elsewhere in the United Kingdom.

In an effort to address attrition rates the inspection report made a number of specific recommendations in relation to police call



management, investigating reasons why the majority of rape cases are directed for 'no prosecution' and the holding of case conferences involving counsel (where instructed), the investigating police officer and the public prosecutor to analyse the available evidence and explore ways of overcoming any difficulties which may exist.

In conclusion, the Inspectorate welcomed the steps already taken to improve the way sexual violence and abuse cases were handled.

Further improvements however can and should be made, to ensure victims of sexual violence and abuse experience the best possible service from the justice system in these demanding circumstances. ■

The use of consultants by the Criminal Justice System

The use of consultants within the criminal justice system was the subject of an inspection report published by CJI in March 2010.

The inspection looked at spending on consultancy and staff substitution services over a three-year period between 2005-06 and 2007-08.

The report found that £37.2m was spent on external consultants for both consultancy projects and staff substitution during this time, which equated to about one per cent of the total operating budget of the criminal justice system.

Inspectors found that robust systems were in place in relation to the authorisation, approval and monitoring of expenditure on consultancy work but that there was a need to focus more on staff

substitution arrangements.

This was made more apparent by the increasing expenditure on staff substitution which went from £10.9m to £17.8m during the three-year period. During the same time, spending on consultancy decreased from £10.5m to £7m.

The inspection report called on the criminal justice system to develop a more open, competitive market place in order to increase the number of potential suppliers available.

It was found that 60% of spending on consultancy and staff substitution work had been awarded to five companies over the three financial years, with one receiving £17.8 in expenditure – nearly half of all spending in the period 2005-06

to 2007-08.

The creation of dominant suppliers, the report indicated could lead to the clustering of skills, experience and expertise within a small number of consultancy firms.

The inspection report recognised that external consultants are providing innovative thinking, professional insight and technical skills beyond what is available within many public sector organisations. However, it indicated that the use of consultants was an expensive resource that requires effective procurement, project management and realisation of benefits.

This also means that skills should be transferred from the consultant to staff within the organisation to enhance organisational learning. ■

Juror management comes under inspection spotlight

CJI conducted an inspection of Jury Management focused on assessing the provision of effective and efficient, high quality administrative (non-judicial) services for those notified and summoned as jurors.

The inspection examined each stage of the juror experience; notification and summons, arrival at court, in court information, pre-trial, trial and post-trial activity. Fieldwork for the inspection commenced in October 2009 and was completed during December 2009 with the inspection report published in April 2010.

As part of this inspection, CJI conducted a juror survey across five Crown Court areas to establish the main issues faced by jurors as they

progressed through the system. Jurors surveyed and spoken to by Inspectors reported generally positive experiences of how they had been managed and helped.

Inspectors found that Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunals Service (NICTS) was meeting the demands of the system by providing sufficient numbers of jurors to ensure the smooth running of criminal trials and avoiding unnecessary delay due to insufficient juror numbers.

NICTS had reformed the way it dealt with the management of jury service and had introduced many initiatives following a report into the quality of service provided for jurors in England and Wales published in 2006. The customer service excellence approach had been

adopted and jurors had been identified as a specific customer group in this process.

A consultation exercise into widening the jury pool had been completed and a summary of responses to the consultation was published in January 2010.

Policy decisions however had been reserved until after the devolution of responsibility for justice matters to the Northern Ireland Assembly.

The inspection report made eight recommendations for improvement including the need to ensure that jurors are not left unused at the end of their jury service, and that work already under way to improve accessibility should continue to ensure ease of access for jurors with disabilities. ■

Findings of PSNI Training Strategy inspection published

In March this year CJI published the findings of its inspection of the PSNI Training Strategy and its linkages to the overall objectives for policing in Northern Ireland.

An effective training strategy should enable the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) to determine priorities for learning and development and demonstrate clear linkages with the delivery of the Policing Plan.

This needs to be underpinned by a robust governance process that sets priorities, manages risk, allocates resources appropriately and reviews outcomes.

Inspectors found the framework for governance of the Training Strategy was strong but required further development. Improving governance was high on the agenda of leaders at the Police College who had started to work towards developing better analysis of information provided to the governing bodies. There was a clear intention to further improve all aspects of training within the PSNI.

The inspection found a number of gaps in the PSNI's Training Strategy and the approach to training and development. The Strategy only covered the training provided by the Police College which accounted for only 60% of the overall training budget delivering around 80% of all training.

The remaining 40% of training budget was expended at District Command and Departmental level, delivering around 20% of all training but sitting outside of the Training Strategy.



As a consequence, the PSNI could not be assured that the training provided across the organisation is directly aligned with the strategic intent of the organisation.

Around 80% of all training delivered by the College was identified as mandatory. Inspectors felt that this category could grow, potentially to a point where the proportion of training delivery leaves no capacity for targeted training in support of specific policing plan objectives, unless robust analysis is applied.

The inspection report made five strategic recommendations and eight others aimed at:

- strengthening the governance and management of the training agenda;
- ensuring greater alignment of the Training Strategy; and
- planning to meet the overall needs of the organisation.

Inspectors recommended that any revised training strategy should encompass all training and the Police College should engage more effectively with the wider organisation in a way which secures the support of key stakeholders.

The inspection report was designed to compliment the PSNI internal strategic review and the work of the leaders at the Police College to strengthen governance arrangements. ■

CJI fundraising for Northern Ireland Hospice

Members of staff from CJI will be testing their head for heights when they abseil down the Europa Hotel on Sunday 19 September 2010 to raise money for the Northern Ireland Hospice.

Northern Ireland Hospice is a local charity caring for local people. Each year they care for over 3,000 adults, children and young people with life-limiting and life threatening conditions. Northern Ireland Hospice also support their families and carers. Care is provided in the hospice and in the community. It is available 24-hours a day, every day of the year.

The CJI team hope to raise money for this valuable charity. Every £100 raised will fund a night of hospice care for a patient.

If you would like to sponsor the team by making a donation, however small, please contact Rachel Lindsay at CJI on 02890258010 or via email rachel.lindsay@cjini.org or go to our fundraising page <http://www.justgiving.com/CJINI>

