



The true cost of delay in criminal justice

CJI published its report on avoidable delay on 18 May. The inspection found that delay is a major problem for the criminal justice system as Crown Court cases were taking on average about a year from first appearance to disposal. Cases involving defendants in the magistrates' courts are taking significantly longer than England and Wales.

The negative consequences of delay are particularly evident in cases involving young people, either as offenders or victims. CJI recommended that reducing delay in youth cases should be a higher priority and called for the introduction of a specific delay target. The report recommended that less serious youth offences, normally dealt with through warnings and cautions, should be expedited.

Delay can only be effectively tackled through a more joined-up approach by the criminal justice agencies. This involves a proactive role by Ministers and the Criminal Justice Board and the establishment of inter-agency case progression groups at local level. At publication of the report, Kit Chivers welcomed the commitment of Ministers and



Kit Chivers (centre) and James Corrigan (left) present the CJI report on Avoidable Delay to Lord Goldsmith, Attorney General, Peter Hain, Secretary of State, David Hanson, MP and Stephen Leach, NIO.

agencies to reducing delay and welcomed the announcement that a joint delay strategy is currently being developed.

Avoidable delay is most evident at the interfaces between criminal justice agencies. Poor quality and late submission of PSNI case files to the PPS has delayed prosecutorial decisions and added to the workload of staff in both organisations. Implementing the PSNI strategy of 'getting it right first time on time' is critical to the overall processing of criminal cases. CJI supports the further extension of prosecutorial advice to the PSNI.

The expansion of the PPS has led to bottlenecks at various

stages of case progression. The capacity of the PPS to respond to this problem can be improved through on-going changes to its business processes (e.g. file allocation systems) and by reducing its workload through the delegation of some responsibilities to the PSNI.

The culture of numerous court adjournments is a significant cause of delay. The courts should take the lead in establishing the reasons for adjournments, which should feed into the delay strategy. All the agencies as well as defence solicitors and barristers should have an input to changing this culture which adds considerable time and cost to many cases. ■

Compensation Agency Inspection Report Published

On the 31 January CJI published a report on the Inspection of the Compensation Agency in Northern Ireland.

The Inspection team led by Deputy Chief Inspector Brendan McGuigan carried out the inspection in September 2005.

The report commented favourably on the work being done within the Agency and commended the Chief Executive, Anne McCleary, and senior management for creating the balance between strong performance, culture and the needs of staff in a changing environment.

The Agency receives on average 8,000 claims a year under the headings of criminal damage, terrorism and personal injury. Most of the claims relate to victims of violent crime.

The overall assessment of the inspection report was that the Compensation Agency provided a valuable and necessary service to victims of violent crime.

The inspection report made a small number of minor recommendations designed to improve the Agency's relationship with major stakeholders.

These were accepted by the

Compensation Agency and an action plan was published as part of the report.

Feedback received by CJI from the Compensation Agency on how the interviews and focus groups were conducted showed that all staff found the CJI Inspectors to be polite, friendly, easy to understand and knowledgeable.

The majority of staff indicated the Inspectors have acted impartially, made efforts to fully explain the process and ensured there was enough time to answer questions. ■

Target setting and performance management

Targets set for public agencies tend to get a bad press. Everyone is aware of cases in the Health Service where targets have been applied unintelligently and led to nonsensical outcomes.

Yet, most people recognise that in the modern world, targets are necessary and a way for managers to highlight priorities and ensure these priorities are achieved.

CJI has looked at how the six main agencies of the criminal justice system in Northern Ireland – police, prosecution, courts, prisons, probation and the Youth Justice Agency – set targets and use them to improve performance.

The review asked the following questions:-

- Are they the right targets?
- Are there too many of them?
- Are they set at the right levels?
- Do they conflict with other agencies' targets?

- Are they set in consultation with staff?
- Are they used to support performance management?

While it would be unfair to generalise the conclusions because the agencies are so different in terms of size, scope and their current position in terms of change, CJI found considerable scope for improvement in most agencies and the system as a whole.

The review has encouraged agencies to think carefully about what they are choosing to target and urged them to focus on a smaller number of key targets for public presentation.

It has also suggested that agencies should check their targets are SMART i.e. specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time bound.

The CJI review showed the target setting process was too comfortable at present and that there needed to be more challenges presented in the

target setting process. In addition, it found some agencies were better at involving staff in the process of setting targets and some were more advanced than others in the way they use targets for the purposes of performance management.

The review indicated that there was further scope for officials to pull targets for the criminal justice system together to make them more coherent.

In short, there are many ways to go wrong while setting targets. They can never be perfect or cover everything and sometimes, the things that are not targeted can be just as important as those that are.

But for all the problems, targets are a key feature of modern management, and the agencies need to try to get them as right as they can. Making sure they are carefully thought through and discussed in advance both with staff and with other partners in the criminal justice system, offers the best hope of success. ■

CJI leads Common Purpose Crime Challenge Day

Criminal Justice Inspection set the ball rolling for a stimulating debate on the criminal justice system when they set the Crime Challenge for participants on the Common Purpose Challenge Day at Maghaberry Prison in April.

Kit Chivers and Paul Mageean from CJI kicked off the event with a presentation which urged those taking part in the development programme to think about the reasons why resistance to schemes such as community restorative justice existed and the challenges facing both the schemes and justice system in order to make them work.

During the presentation, Mr Chivers examined the motives of the victim in seeking justice. He identified the core agencies working within the criminal justice system and the role of other groups such as Community Safety Partnerships, the Assets Recovery Agency, voluntary and regulatory organisations.

Paul Mageean went on to highlight the issues surrounding falling public confidence in the justice system, the problems in measuring public confidence and the differences between Protestant and Catholic confidence.

He also encouraged the group to consider the issues which could affect public confidence and alternatives which existed to the formal criminal justice system.

Following the discussion, participants on the Common Purpose Challenge Day undertook a tour of Maghaberry Prison and had the opportunity to speak to prison officers about how their roles had changed and developed over the years.



Members of the panel who took part in the Challenge Day.

They also spoke with staff working within the Education Unit about the programmes on offer and the opportunities available to prisoners to develop numeracy and literacy skills and to study for qualifications they could use to gain employment on their release from prison.

Prior to leaving the prison, members of the Common Purpose group had the chance to talk to the Prison Governor Alan Longwell in a frank question and answer session.

During the afternoon, the group split into teams and met with a range of stakeholders with an interest in the criminal justice system including the restorative justice schemes. They later met up to discuss their findings and work in groups to generate potential solutions to the issues they uncovered.



The Challenge Day concluded with a panel discussion involving Kit Chivers, Adrian Arbuthnot (NIO), Pat Conway (NIACRO), Debbie Watters (Alternatives), Fiona Greene (Victim Support), Alice Chapman (Youth Justice Agency) and Fiona Bagnall (Presiding Resident Magistrate).

Anyone wishing to obtain more details on the Common Purpose development programmes can log onto their website – www.commonpurpose.org.uk ■

Survey shows growth in knowledge of CJI

An Omnibus survey carried out by Criminal Justice Inspection Northern Ireland has shown public knowledge and understanding of the work of the Inspectorate is growing.

This year's survey, carried out by Ipsos MORI on behalf of CJI, has revealed that 35% of people surveyed had heard of the organisation – an increase of 21% on the figures shown in a telephone survey conducted by Research and Evaluation Services (RES) in March 2005.

Over half (52%) of respondents had heard of CJI from the television, (see figure 1).

“Twelve per cent of the people surveyed who showed an understanding of the work of CJI responded positively by indicating that CJI assisted criminal justice agencies in Northern Ireland in becoming more efficient and effective,” explained Assistant Inspector Ian Craig who commissioned the Ipsos MORI survey.

When asked, the majority of respondents were satisfied with the

*“Not strict enough/too lenient”
(Probation 43 respondents, Youth justice Agency 41 respondents)*

*“Don't go after right people”
(DPP/PPS, 50 respondents)*

The survey also showed that 93% of people spoken to indicated that it was either very important or important that the criminal justice system in Northern Ireland was open and accountable. Over 75% of respondents also thought it was very important or important that the criminal justice system in Northern Ireland worked in partnership and co-operation with other agencies.

“CJI is working to promote a co-operative approach between the different groups that contribute to the criminal justice system here in Northern Ireland. We are pleased that the survey has shown the organisation is in line with public the thinking,” added Mr Craig.

The survey also revealed that two-thirds (66%) of respondents who provided an answer to the independence of the CJI were fairly confident (56%) or very confident (10%) CJI would act independently of government. This is slightly down from the results for March 2005 when 72% of respondents were fairly confident (61%) or very confident (11%) that CJI would act independently of Government.

In addition, 76% of those surveyed who provided an answer felt it would inspect the criminal justice system fairly. This is higher than the 71% of respondents recorded during the March 2005 survey.

Commenting on the findings of the Omnibus survey, Deputy Chief Inspector Brendan McGuigan said he was pleased that public knowledge of CJI was increasing and that greater understanding of the role of the organisation and what it could contribute to the justice system was developing. ■

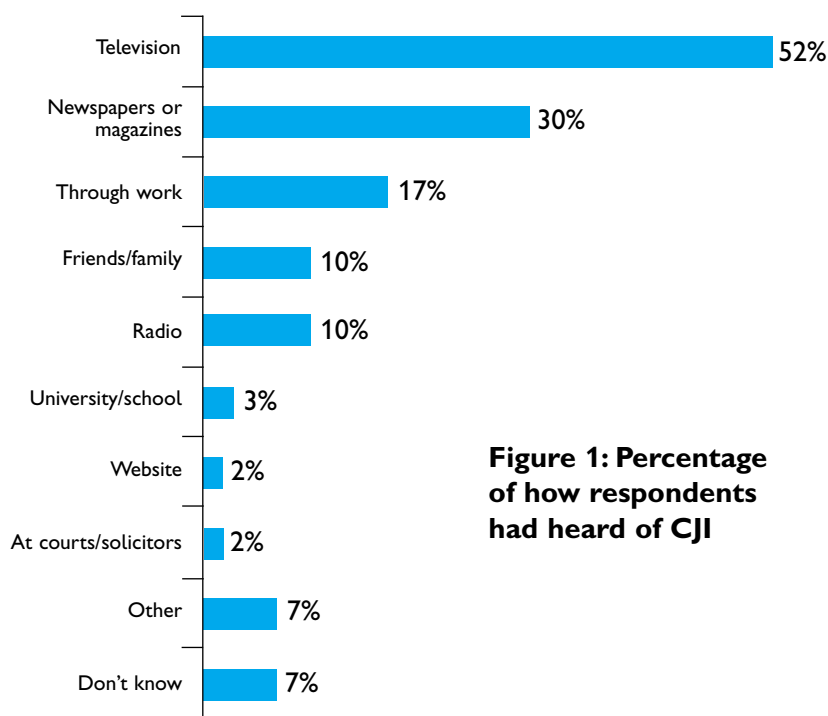


Figure 1: Percentage of how respondents had heard of CJI

Of the 1009 respondents spoken to by Ipsos MORI, 16% (166) indicated they knew what CJI did. Thirty-four per cent of these respondents indicated that they believed CJI inspected the main areas of the criminal justice system such as police, prisons, probation, PPS, youth justice agency and courts while 31% said they believed CJI ensured a fair and impartial system of justice to the community.

main agencies of the Criminal Justice System (CJS). However, those respondents who indicated that they were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with parts of the CJS provided some comments:

*“Poor response time”
(Police, 40 respondents)*

“Conditions to cushy for inmates/should be tougher” (Prisons, 55 respondents)

INSPECTION OF MAGHABERRY PRISON

A team of Inspectors from CJI, the Prisons Inspectorate, the Northern Ireland Education and Training Inspectorate and the Adult Learning Inspectorate undertook an announced inspection of Maghaberry Prison in October 2005.

The inspection looked at all aspects of prison life including education, offending behaviour programmes, regimes and healthcare, taking into account the views of external organisations involved in the work of Maghaberry as well as those of staff, prisoners and their families.

The inspection found that while the policy of separating Loyalist and Republican prisoners was addressing the politicization of imprisonment in Northern Ireland, it has been costly in terms of money and the service offered to other prisoners.

The inspection showed the number of prison officers required to staff the separated accommodation meant other prisoners were likely to be confined to their cells for longer periods of time, with less opportunity to take part in purposeful activities such as education, training and sport.

It also recognised more needed to be done to improve the working practices of staff to ensure a better service that would help reduce the likelihood of prisoners re-offending after release.

The report stated that the average cost per prisoner place in Northern

Ireland was about £86,000 a year, and that in Maghaberry it is undoubtedly higher. This makes it at least twice as expensive as the highest security prison in England and Wales.

Maghaberry was recognised by the Inspectors as a particularly complex prison. There are inherent problems managing it, as it holds all security levels of prisoners, both on remand and serving sentences. The Governor and his Management Team are taking many commendable initiatives, especially their pioneering work to prepare prisoners for their eventual return to the community and in helping them maintain family links.

The Inspectors made 171 recommendations for improvement, and suggested the main changes cannot be delivered by Maghaberry alone. A culture shift is needed throughout the NI Prison Service to ensure that its substantial resources are used more effectively. Firm management and a reorganised new prison estate would be key.

In response the NI Prison Service has drawn up an Action Plan. The inspection report is available via the CJI website: www.cjini.org ■

Inspection of Human Resource Management in the PSNI



Inspectors from CJI and HMIC carried out a joint inspection of the function of Human Resource management in the PSNI during the autumn and early winter of 2005.

Preparation for this extensive inspection began in September 2005 when a team of HR experts were brought together from police services across England and Wales.

The HR experts took part in a week-long training session led by Inspectors from CJI and HMIC at the HMIC Training premises in Woking, Surrey, to provide them with the necessary skills and context to carry out the inspection.

Fieldwork for the inspection took place throughout the PSNI between 5-9 December 2005. During that time, Inspectors focused on strategy and planning, diversity, resourcing, reward and recognition, development and individual and corporate health.

Agreed pre-inspection evidence was provided by the PSNI to the Inspectorates to enable a full programme of inspection to be developed.

As part of the inspection, two focus group meetings were held in Omagh and Belfast to enable consultation with District Policing Partnership members to take place. The Policing Board was also consulted during the process.

Fieldwork was completed in December 2005 and initial findings were presented to the Policing Board in January 2006.

A draft report has been forwarded to the PSNI and publication is expected in the near future. ■



Inspection of Benefit Investigation Services

As reported in the last edition of The Spec, CJI has undertaken an inspection of Benefit Investigation Service (BIS). The report on the inspection, including the Agency's action plan in response to the recommendations, was published in May 2006.



Overall, Inspectors found examples of professional and dedicated work. It was established that while there had been an improvement in the effectiveness of fraud investigations over the past few years, there is significant scope to better utilise available information to improve the allocation of available resources to intelligently target the risks of benefit fraud. Inspectors found a need to better co-ordinate and communicate a “joined-up approach” within the Agency to more effectively counter benefit fraud.

BIS, a discrete unit within the Social Security Agency has approximately 175 staff. These include specially trained investigation staff who have access to significant statutory powers through the Social Security Fraud Act (NI) 2001 and the Proceeds of Crime Act 2002. This facilitates investigators to pursue claimants suspected of committing the crime of benefit fraud. BIS focuses their resources on three key functions:

- gathering intelligence;
- investigating fraud;
- prosecuting offenders.

There is also a need to improve the work management systems. At present large numbers of potential cases go into ‘overload’ due to other priorities, which can effectively mean that nothing is done about them. A particular concern, which has been picked up by the media, is the low rate of prosecutions for fraud and the even lower rate of convictions. Approximately one in ten fraud referrals in Northern



Ireland lead to a form of sanction: formal caution, administrative penalty or prosecution of the suspect. It is important that where the case is proven, sanctions are sufficient to act as a deterrent to others.

CJI Chief Inspector Kit Chivers welcomed the Agency's Action Plan noting the acceptance of all recommendations and CJI look forward to working with the Agency to review implementation next year. ■

WORK IN PROGRESS

Subject of Inspection	Lead Inspector	Current Position
Community Safety Partnerships	Paul Mageean	Fieldwork in May 2006
Role of Voluntary Sector	Tom McGonigle	Fieldwork in May/June 2006
Realising the benefits of Causeway	Bill Priestley	Publication in July 2006
Procurement of goods and services in CJS	James Corrigan	Fieldwork in June/July 2006
Hate Crime	John Shanks	Fieldwork in June/July 2006
Use of Police Bail	Paul Mageean	Fieldwork in July/August 2006
Investigation of volume crime	Bill Priestley	Fieldwork in July/August 2006
Co-terminosity	John Shanks	Fieldwork in September 2006
Department Of Environment	James Corrigan	Fieldwork in October 2006

Stakeholder Conference helps shape CJI thinking for 2006-07

The theme for this year's annual CJI Stakeholder Conference was the role of the community and voluntary sector in the criminal justice system.

The conference, which was held in the Dunadry Hotel on Wednesday 18 January, marked the beginning of a review of this topic led by Tom McGonigle.

Around 100 people from across the formal criminal justice system joined members of the community and voluntary sector for the event.

The conference was opened by David Hanson, MP, who highlighted the important role the community and voluntary sector played in Northern Ireland. He also paid tribute to the work which CJI has carried out over the last year.

Conal Devitt, head of the Community Safety Unit, and Olwyn Liner from NIACRO offered their perspectives on the challenges and

opportunities presented when the community and voluntary sector engaged with the criminal justice system.

From CJI's perspective, the stakeholder conference provided an opportunity to receive feedback on its performance and plans for future inspections. With this in mind, conference participants had the opportunity to discuss the upcoming review of the community and voluntary sector and to offer their views on the proposed inspection programme for 2006-07.

A number of interesting issues arose during each of these discussions. Some concerns were expressed that state-funding of community and voluntary groups could undermine the independence of the critique offered by those groups. There was also a feeling that government did not properly engage the sector in the way it was obliged

to under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act.

During the afternoon a lively discussion took place around the future inspection programme outlined by CJI. A number of participants raised the possibility of CJI undertaking an inspection relating to the treatment of young people and the criminal justice system. As a result of the Stakeholder Conference, CJI has now agreed this theme will be a regular feature of future inspection work.

Suggestions to improve CJI's consultation process for those inside and outside the system have also been taken into account. ■

**Criminal Justice Inspection
Northern Ireland**
a better justice system for all



CJI Publishes Business Plan for 2006-07

Criminal Justice Inspection Northern Ireland has published its Business Plan for the financial year 2006-07.

The Business Plan, which is linked closely with the Corporate Plan for the next three years, sets out the work CJI plans to undertake over the next 12 months.

The plan has indicated that CJI intends to carry out 13 key inspections tackling subjects as broad ranging as the procurement of goods and services in association with the National Audit Office to how hate crime is dealt with by the criminal justice system.

Plans are also in place to look at the use of police bail, the investigation of volume crime and a review of practice regarding the disclosure of evidence to the defence.

Inspectors will also look at the resettlement of offenders and the issue of persistent young offenders as part of its work in the field of children and the criminal justice system. They will also produce a report following an inspection of the Airport and Harbour Police in Northern Ireland.

The proposed programme of work will include follow up inspections of Magilligan Prison – which was first inspected by CJI in March 2005 – and women prisoners at Hydebank Wood Prison on the back of its original inspection in May 2005.

“In our Corporate Plan, CJI stated that it intended to contribute to the aim of improving public confidence in the criminal justice system by assisting the criminal

justice agencies in Northern Ireland to become more efficient and effective and by ensuring that they are even-handed in all their policies and operations,” explained Kit Chivers, Chief Inspector of Criminal Justice Inspection.

“We believe the inspection programme that has been drawn up for the next 12 months which is included in our 2006-07 Business Plan will contribute towards this goal and will be of benefit to the criminal justice system as a whole,” he added.

The CJI Business Plan has indicated the organisation is ready to carry out inspections of community-based Restorative Justice Schemes if invited to do so by the Minister when the recently published guidelines have been finalised. ■

Spreading the word

Criminal Justice Inspection Northern Ireland is looking forward to developing a higher profile following the appointment of Meloney McVeigh as a dedicated Media and Communications Officer.

Meloney joined the CJI team in April after spending three and a half years as a Press Officer within the PSNI Department of Media and Public Relations in Belfast.

Her position at CJI means she is responsible for handling and co-ordinating media enquiries on all aspects of the CJI's work and publicising, in partnership with other interested parties, the findings of inspections carried out by Criminal Justice Inspection.

"I am delighted to have joined Criminal Justice Inspection and hope my background in internal and

external communications will ensure that over the coming months members of the public develop a greater awareness of the work CJI is undertaking.

"I hope my professional background as a journalist will enable me to develop good relations with the members of the media throughout Northern Ireland and those working outside it," she said.

Meloney is also keen to work in partnership with other communication professionals, public bodies and members of the community with an interest in the Criminal Justice system.

"I hope to develop strong working relationships which will be mutually beneficial and will reflect the desire of everyone within Criminal Justice Inspection to work hand in hand with other organisations," she concluded. ■

CJI volunteers to help with Special Olympics in Belfast

Four members of CJI staff have volunteered to assist with the 2006 Special Olympics Ireland Games which take place in Belfast between 21-25 June 2006. Ann Duncan, Brendan McGuigan, Bill Priestley and Tom McGonigle will be among 5,500 people who will fulfil a variety of roles during the Games.

Many people remember the wonderful atmosphere of the 2003 Special Olympics World Summer Games that were held in Dublin and Belfast, and particularly the spectacular opening ceremony in Croke Park. The entire event was a positive experience for the athletes, their families and friends and the volunteers, and we have high hopes for the Belfast event in June.

CJIs volunteers have already identified a range of roles they could take on such as catering, transporting, event supervision and scorekeeping. They are all looking forward to the privilege of participating in an occasion which has already begun to grip the imagination of many local people. For more information on the event visit www.2006games-belfast.com ■



Inspection triggers Conference on Victims Needs

The Deputy Chief Inspector of Criminal Justice Inspection Northern Ireland Brendan McGuigan provided a focus for a one-day conference in Ballymena on the needs of victims of sexual assault.

Mr McGuigan was invited to open the conference entitled 'Issues for Survivors of Sexual Assault' as it came about as a direct result of a recommendation included in the CJI inspection report on the Management of Sex Offenders.

"Our inspection report suggested that practitioners needed to be assisted to adopt a more victim-centred and less process-

driven approach to their case management.

"This recommendation was taken on board by the Northern Ireland Sex Offender Strategic Management Committee and its co-ordinator, Willie McAuley, and the conference organised for Friday 31 March," he said.

The conference was attended by over 70 practitioners from the statutory and voluntary sector and formed part of the on-going victim awareness programme that aims to develop greater understanding of victims' needs and the impact sexual crimes have on their lives. ■