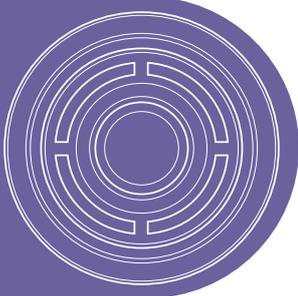


# DRIVING CHANGE FOLLOW-UP REVIEW

A FOLLOW-UP REVIEW OF  
THE 2016 ENFORCEMENT OF  
ROAD TRAFFIC LEGISLATION IN  
NORTHERN IRELAND INSPECTION

March 2020





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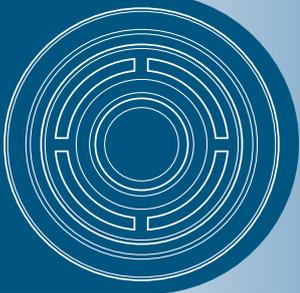
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## List of abbreviations

<b>ANPR</b>	Automatic Number Plate Recognition
<b>CIU</b>	Collision Investigation Unit (within PSNI)
<b>CJI</b>	Criminal Justice Inspection Northern Ireland
<b>Dfi</b>	Department for Infrastructure
<b>DoJ</b>	Department of Justice
<b>DVA</b>	Driver and Vehicle Agency (formerly Driver and Vehicle Testing Agency (DVTA)) in Northern Ireland
<b>DVSA</b>	Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (in Great Britain)
<b>FLO</b>	Family Liaison Officer (within PSNI)
<b>HGV(s)</b>	Heavy Goods Vehicle(s)
<b>KSI</b>	Killed or Seriously Injured
<b>MIB</b>	Motor Insurers' Bureau
<b>MoT</b>	(Derived from) Ministry of Transport – refers to annual vehicle test
<b>NICTS</b>	Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunals Service
<b>PF</b>	Prosecutorial Fines
<b>PPS</b>	Public Prosecution Service for Northern Ireland
<b>PSNI</b>	Police Service of Northern Ireland
<b>RoI</b>	Republic of Ireland
<b>RTC(s)</b>	Road Traffic Collision(s)
<b>SIO</b>	Senior Investigating Officer
<b>TICC</b>	Traffic Information and Control Centre
<b>TRU</b>	Transport Regulation Unit (within Dfi)
<b>UK</b>	United Kingdom



# Chief Inspector's Foreword

While a reduction in road deaths since 2016 is welcome, one death is too many. Incidents of serious injury remain high, particularly on our rural roads, with devastating consequences for individuals and their families.

It is not clear if the reduction in road deaths is down to the skills of emergency response professionals rather than improved driver behaviour. What is clear is that too many serious road traffic collisions are still occurring and too many uninsured drivers are on our roads.

Progress has been made and I am particularly encouraged by the Driver and Vehicle Agency's (DVA's) use of digital technology for detections and supporting prosecutions.

However, more progress could be achieved. Road traffic cases account for almost half of all court prosecutions. Real opportunities now exist to reform legislation where it is needed and improve enforcement and case progression to deliver better road safety for all.

I am grateful to all those who contributed to and supported Dr Stephen Dolan in completing this review.

**Jacqui Durkin**  
**Chief Inspector of Criminal Justice**  
**in Northern Ireland**

March 2020

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





# Follow-Up Review



# Introduction

## Background to the follow-up review

Criminal Justice Inspection Northern Ireland (CJI) published previous reports in 2008 and 2016 looking at Roads Policing<sup>1</sup> both of which recognised improvements were required to address the poor driving behaviour often seen on Northern Ireland's roads. Recommendations were made to improve collision investigation, co-operation among the various agencies and changes to legislation to assist enforcement. This follow-up review focuses specifically on the recommendations made in the 2016 CJI report *Driving Change*.

The Killed or Seriously Injured (KSI) figures remain the internationally recognised measure for road safety and, despite a downward trend in fatalities, the total number of casualties in Northern Ireland are still unacceptably high for such a small jurisdiction. Of all offence categories, motoring offences made up the largest proportion of prosecutions at all courts: 13,011 (44.4% of all prosecutions) in 2018.

The standards of driving and attitudes of some road users which is reflected in criminal prosecution particularly in relation to speeding, driving under the influence of alcohol and drugs and mobile phone usage while driving, demands a continuous campaign to improve roads safety.

Waiting for technological solutions and a change in driving behaviour while reasonable and pragmatic, does not deal with the pain, anguish and despair associated with unnecessary and avoidable death and injury. Hence the need for effective law enforcement.

Individual driver error continued to be the single major contributor to those killed or seriously injured on the roads in Northern Ireland.

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<sup>1</sup> *Driving Change*: An inspection of the enforcement of road traffic legislation in Northern Ireland CJI, September 2016, available at <http://www.cjini.org/TheInspections/Inspection-Reports/2016/July---September/DRIVING-CHANGE> and *Roads Policing*, CJI June, 2008, available at <http://www.cjini.org/getattachment/44ce2794-84e4-45fd-bbae-94b7a55b2177/Roads-Policing-June-2008.aspx>

**Table 1 Monthly Breakdown of Road Deaths<sup>2</sup>**

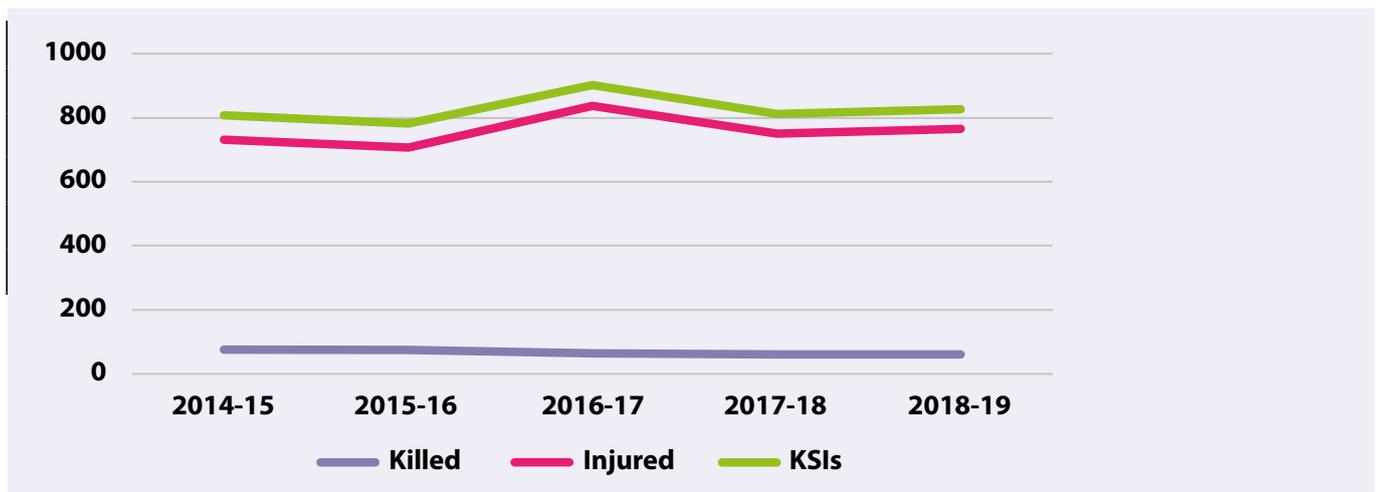
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
<b>2016</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>68</b>
<b>2017</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>63</b>
<b>2018</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>55</b>
<b>2019</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>56*</b>

\* provisional figure

**Table 2 Fatalities by Road Type - Northern Ireland Roads (2017-19)**

	Urban Road	Rural Road	Motorway/Dual Carriageway	Northern Ireland Total (to date)
<b>2017</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>63</b>
<b>2018</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>55</b>
<b>2019</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>56</b>

Deaths on rural roads remain the most common accounting for 65% of fatalities in the last three years. At the time of the previous report in 2016, the then Chief Inspector of Criminal Justice in Northern Ireland expressed concern that in the eight years since the original Roads Policing inspection, mutual recognition of penalty points, driving disqualification and the lowering of drink/drive limits [between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland] had not been achieved<sup>3</sup>.

**Figure 1 Killed and Serious Injured (KSI) on Northern Ireland Roads**

<sup>2</sup> Road Traffic Collision Statistics, PSNI, available at <https://www.psni.police.uk/inside-psni/Statistics/road-traffic-collision-statistics/>

<sup>3</sup> Ibid

Similar concerns surrounded the failure to maximise the use of the Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) system to improve road safety. Lengthy road closures and diversions were identified as significant issues for road users, particularly businesses which required the continued free flow of traffic. However, all road users were affected by lengthy delays. Inspectors found that communication between the organisations tasked to ensure the safe and free movement of traffic could be improved.

The main cause of road traffic collisions remained driver error which may be more responsive to programmes aimed at improving driver behaviour. Uninsured drivers were five times more likely to be involved in collisions and many are more likely to be involved in criminal activity. A recent campaign, *Operation Drive Insured*, targeting uninsured drivers was launched across the United Kingdom (UK).

It was aimed at reducing the estimated 130 people killed and 26,000 injured each year in the UK by uninsured or untraced drivers<sup>4</sup>. The Motor Insurers' Bureau (MIB) estimated there were 31,000 uninsured drivers on Northern Ireland's roads during 2018-19. This was particularly significant as uninsured drivers caused a disproportionately high level of fatalities. Collision rates caused by drivers without valid insurance were also increasing according to MIB figures.<sup>5</sup> In October 2019 the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) launched a month-long intensive campaign to seize uninsured cars and mobile access to the insurers' database assisted with this.

**Table 3 Most common principal causation factors in injury road traffic collisions (2018)**

Principal Factor	Casualties			
	Number of Injury Collisions	Total KSI	Slightly Injured	Total Casualties
Inattention or attention diverted	962	88	1,330	1,556
Driving too close	788	12	1,237	1,249
Emerging from minor road without care	384	41	570	611
Wrong course/position	278	83	408	491
Crossing or entering road junction without care	268	36	419	455
Turning right without care	290	51	441	492
Impaired by Alcohol/Drugs - Driver/rider	276	78	350	428
Excessive speed having regard to conditions	203	71	244	315
Overtaking on offside without care	182	41	256	297
Changing lane without care	179	6	243	249

4 *Uninsured drivers targeted in operation*, Metropolitan Police, 4 October 2019 available at <http://news.met.police.uk/news/uninsured-drivers-targeted-in-operation-383703>

5 PSNI to seize uninsured cars as clampdown begins, *Belfast Telegraph*, 3 October 2019, available at <https://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/northern-ireland/psni-to-seize-uninsured-cars-as-clampdown-begins-38553420.html>

## Changes since the 2016 inspection

- The mutual recognition of driving disqualifications by the Republic of Ireland (RoI) and Northern Ireland was reinstated in August 2017.
- The prosecution of drivers from other jurisdictions suspected of speeding offences is recognised but hampered by the need for the PSNI to stop the vehicle and ascertain the identity of the driver. Without proof of address or acknowledgement of proceedings there was little chance of a conviction.
- The scope of ANPR had been extended to provide officers with data on lack of insurance, MoT certificate and car tax.
- Training around the management of Road Traffic Collisions (RTCs) with emphasis on the impact of delays on road users was aimed at improving the management of road closures and diversions arising from RTCs.
- The DVA had undertaken a business transformation project to improve data capture, sharing and usage.
- The Public Prosecution Service for Northern Ireland (PPS), Transport Regulation Unit (TRU - within the Department for Infrastructure (DfI)) and DfI had agreed clearer guidance on the civil and criminal aspects of legislation.



# Progress against recommendations

## Strategic recommendation 1

**The Department for Infrastructure (DfI), the Department of Justice (DoJ), and the Roads Safety Partnership, through the North/South Ministerial Council should:**

- **advocate the policy position of mutual recognition of driving disqualifications with the Republic of Ireland (RoI), with the aim to achieve compliance by the end of 2016; and**
- **develop an action plan for mutual recognition of penalty points with the RoI.**

**Status: Partially achieved**

## Agency response

*The mutual recognition of driving disqualifications has been in place since 1 August 2017. PSNI officers have been briefed accordingly.*

*The mutual recognition of penalty points cannot be progressed due to different tariff being applied and no reasonable prospect of aligning these or creating an equivalence value.*

## Inspectors' assessment

Although the mutual recognition of driving disqualifications was in place since August 2017 there remained a number of risks to be remedied. The PSNI and An Garda Síochána do not have automatic access to each other's database of disqualified drivers. This limits the detection of disqualified drivers crossing jurisdictions. There are also a significant number<sup>6</sup> of drivers in the RoI that are using United Kingdom (UK) licences. These licences may be subject to penalty points that are not recorded against the licence making it impossible for the PSNI to detect offenders that may have reached the threshold of penalty points that would see their licences revoked under normal circumstances.

<sup>6</sup> There were estimates that 40,000 drivers were using UK and Northern Ireland licences that would be no longer valid when the UK was due to leave the EU. Further information is available from the RoI's Road Safety Authority (RSA) via this link <https://www.rsa.ie/en/RSA/Brexit/>.

There is also the potential that even with a reciprocal agreement the disqualification in the RoI is not being enforced.

The UK's exit from the EU on 31 January 2020 had prompted the RoI authorities to recall all UK licences for anyone resident in the RoI. At the time of writing there were an estimated 40,000 licences still to be surrendered.

The number of detections for driving in Northern Ireland whilst disqualified in the RoI was not readily available. The figures were included with other offences such as driving without a valid licence making it difficult to differentiate.

The mutual recognition of penalty points was examined and subject to discussions among the relevant agencies. The conclusion was the different tariffs for offences and the award of points in the RoI for offences that would not attract points in the UK made the two systems incompatible.

*Penalty points and endorsements on driving licences acquired in other states (including EU/EEA member states) are not recognised in Ireland. This is because these penalties have been issued by courts in other jurisdictions. In practice, this means that if you acquired penalty points or an endorsement on a driving licence before coming to Ireland, these penalty points or endorsements do not transfer over to an Irish driving licence.<sup>7</sup>*

There has been limited progress. The mutual recognition of disqualification is hampered by a lack of shared data and prosecutions for this offence were recorded within the overall figures. This makes it difficult to assess any improvement. The incompatibility of the penalty points system of the two jurisdictions renders any mutual recognition very unlikely.

## Strategic recommendation 2

**The Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) and the Driver and Vehicle Agency (DVA), should maximise the use of technology in the enforcement of road traffic laws. In particular:**

- **the use of Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) by the PSNI should be extended to allow for the enforcement of the full range of road traffic laws; and**
- **the use of an integrated database system, against which to verify compliance with road traffic regulations, should be established by the DfI and made easily accessible for roadside enforcement staff.**

**Status: Partially achieved**

<sup>7</sup> Information provided on exchanging foreign licences for RoI licences. More information is available here. [https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/travel\\_and\\_recreation/motoring\\_1/driver\\_licensing/exchanging\\_foreign\\_driving\\_permit.html](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/travel_and_recreation/motoring_1/driver_licensing/exchanging_foreign_driving_permit.html)

## Agency response

The DVA adopted CJJ's recommendations and has frequently utilised Police ANPR in Northern Ireland and Great Britain to support its investigative work. This has included:

- Tripartite Operations which involve the coordinated regular participation of the DVA, Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) and Road Safety Authority (RSA) in each respective jurisdiction over a seven-day period;
- In-depth tachograph fraud investigations;
- MoT fraud investigations which are continuously running live in Northern Ireland; and
- Retrospective vehicle movements in support of investigating complaints.

The DVA has developed a new Intelligence Management System as part of its IT transformation development programme which is fully integrated with roadside tablet devices. The new IT system automates existing manual processes available to enforcement officers at the roadside including admin office, replacing the requirement for the manual completion of paper enforcement documentation and back office processing. The requirement for carrying out radio/telephone checks on vehicle, operator and driver information is significantly reduced improving the efficiency and effectiveness of roadside encounters to the benefit of our customers. This fast, easy, secure digital service has been welcomed by key stakeholders within the transport industry as it enables a greater number of compliance checks to be conducted and reduces the unnecessary stopping of compliant vehicles for inspection purposes.

We anticipate that there will be a significant increase in the number of non-compliant vehicles stopped and scrutinised for compliance at the roadside based on enforcement officers having access to Operator Compliance Risk Scoring and road traffic intelligence information through the use of roadside tablet devices and more efficient processing of cases electronically to the PPS.

The DVA has recently procured Inelo Tachograph software for all enforcement officers which enables digital tachographs and driver cards to be interrogated at the roadside and at operator premises. This has increased the volumes of records checked.

It is envisaged that a benefits realisation exercise considering all aspects of digital transformation will be undertaken once sufficient data becomes available.

The PSNI as part of DVA Transformation will be provided with a web based service to allow officers to access integrated data in relation to road traffic legislation i.e. taxi driver information etc.

The DVA participated in initial scoping discussions with other key stakeholders regarding the establishment of a road traffic prosecutions team to operate within a centralised Traffic Court.

## Inspectors' assessment

The ANPR system was being used by the police to detect non-compliance with insurance, tax and MoT. As the system does not provide photographic identity of the driver, it does not allow the automatic issue of a notice to prosecute unlike the static average speed cameras or the mobile cameras. The ANPR cameras have provided officers with the opportunity to detect and stop those breaking the law. Inspectors spoke with officers who confirmed that this system was operating. The figures for these specific detections were included in overall figures and were not open to disaggregation at this time. Also the use of the ANPR system for this purpose was in the process of being rolled out and an assessment of the impact on the overall number of detections will not be evident until more time has elapsed.

The PPS had received some assistance in tracking retrospective vehicle movements to support an investigation but felt there was room for improvement.

The trialling of the DVA Intelligence Management System as part of its IT transformation development programme commenced as planned in September 2019. This mobile system allowed enforcement officers to access workflow programmes and web-based documents to quickly capture details about Heavy Goods Vehicles (HGVs) and other vehicles. The system also formatted documents in a manner compatible with PPS casework and transmitted said documents without further transcription. This was a significant improvement on the previous paper based system and provided not only efficiency gains but also improved the quality of the evidence. Coupled with body worn video enforcement officers stated that they were significantly more confident of successful and speedier prosecutions. The evaluation of this project requires time to establish an evidence base.

There is further potential through the transformation project with mobile downloading of data from suitably equipped vehicles. The UK withdrawal from the EU raises the prospect of increased checks of vehicles entering and leaving Northern Ireland. This will present challenges to enforcement agencies in both jurisdictions although without knowing the nature of the conditions of withdrawal it is difficult to predict the impact.

**Table 4 DVA Enforcement Section – Checks carried out**

Enforcement Activities	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18
<b>Heavy Goods Vehicles Inspected</b>	3,532	2,534	2,589	2,969	2,777
<b>Trailers*</b>	957*	816*	944*	1,042*	953*
<b>Taxis Inspected</b>	1,965	1,445	1,821	1,935	1,939
<b>Buses Inspected</b>	764	750	1,083	642	646
<b>Cars Inspected</b>	301	406	312	439	517
<b>Total Vehicle Checks*</b>	<b>6,562*</b>	<b>5,135*</b>	<b>5,805*</b>	<b>5,985*</b>	<b>5,879*</b>
<i>Tachograph Checks (Premises)</i>	<i>1,017</i>	<i>1,936</i>	<i>3,891</i>	<i>1,882</i>	<i>4,047</i>
<i>Tachograph Checks (Roadside)</i>	<i>22,179</i>	<i>33,712</i>	<i>30,426</i>	<i>22,308</i>	<i>56,459</i>

\*The total vehicle check figure does not include trailers.

### Strategic recommendation 3

**The PSNI and the Public Prosecution Service (PPS), along with the Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunals Service (NICTS), the DfI and the Department of Justice (DoJ), should scope and deliver a road traffic prosecutions team to operate within a centralised Traffic Court in Northern Ireland.**

**Status: Not achieved**

### Agency response

*Although a dedicated Roads Traffic Court was not in place a working group to undertake options analysis was established. Within the framework of streamlining the management of court business improvements in dealing with motoring offences could also be achieved. Already around 1,000 postal guilty pleas out of 13,000 motoring offences are received. Through digital transformation there is a prospect of online guilty pleas and also online bundles to further reduce the amount of files going to court.*

*There were discussions around the management of court business in the Magistrates' and Crown Courts. The vision being releasing Crown Court time to deal with more complex cases by increasing the remit of the Magistrates' Courts. This in turn would require efficiencies within the Magistrates' Courts and efforts to streamline the processing of motoring offences through improved listing arrangements. In addition, the use of Prosecutorial Fines (PFs) is viewed as a means to reduce overall caseloads in the Magistrates' Courts.*

*However in order for PFs to be used in respect of motoring offences, the PPS need to be able to levy penalty points and legislative change is required to bring this into effect.*

## Inspectors' assessment

The Traffic Court arrangements were not in place at the time of the follow-up review. However, there have been ongoing discussions between the NICTS and the Lord Chief Justice's Office around the volumes of court business in the Crown Courts and the Magistrates' Courts to identify a means of streamlining court business.

One strand of these discussions centred on moving less complex cases from the Crown Courts to the Magistrates' Courts. To facilitate this, aggregating motoring offences in a specific court in similar fashion to Courts dealing with Departmental business was raised as a possible option and the PPS have indicated a willingness to engage with this. The caveat that legislative changes was required should be noted. This had not been progressed in the absence of a Northern Ireland Executive however with effect from 11 January 2020, a new Executive was formed and the Northern Ireland Assembly reconvened.

## Operational recommendation 1

**To improve communications and road diversions, CJI recommends the revised protocol on road closures should be agreed between the PSNI, Transport NI, the DfI and all relevant organisations, and implemented within six months of the publication of this report.**

Status: Achieved.

## Agency response

*A Service Level Agreement between the PSNI and the DfI - Roads Service was agreed and reviewed in August 2017. A further review is scheduled. The Traffic Information and Control Centre (TICC) provides real time data on traffic incidents to the PSNI and in serious incidents, the PSNI can co-locate with the TICC to manage incidents.*

*A series of table top scenarios were completed to inform the management of major incidents with specific emphasis on maintaining traffic flow on the strategic roads network.*

*Diversion maps were being reviewed e.g. diversion maps for southern district were created and reviewed to improve flow of traffic. This model has been sent to other regions to improve diversion maps. The PSNI and AMEY<sup>8</sup> have agreed protocols for establishing diversions especially to ensure suitability for diversion of HGVs.*

8 AMEY is the contractor employed to assist with RTCs.

## Inspectors' assessment

There has been an improvement in the handling of incidents and the negative impact of road closures on the roads network has also lessened. Inspectors witnessed the management of a number of incidents and also navigated a number of diversions during road traffic incidents – including one fatality. The management of the scene resulted in less delay and the diversion routes appeared to be better planned. The information available at active road signage and through broadcast bulletins had also improved.

The management of incidents was well understood and the escalation to Silver Command procedures was consistent across the policing Districts. There was some inconsistency around accessing Silver Command at night and also getting cover for Duty Inspectors when they were called upon to become Senior Investigating Officers (SIOs).

There was feedback from SIOs by means of both hot debriefs and critical debriefs and this could be enhanced by formally sharing lessons learned among all the Collision Investigation Unit (CIU) and SIOs. There may also be potential for overall learning to be incorporated into corporate training. There was some evidence that debriefs from the CIU were incorporated into refresher training.

The attendance of the CIU team at the most serious incidents assisted with the management of the scene, the investigation and co-ordination of other resources and this in turn lessened the negative impact on traffic flow arising from an incident.

A positive point was the practice in one district of giving front line supervisors local briefings on the possible choke points in the event of an incident and also the strategic importance of harbour ports and airports.

The SLA between the PSNI and the DfI established the protocols and also the adherence to JESIP principles<sup>9</sup>. Within this protocol one of the main objectives was defined as (to):

*"Ensure traffic flow is managed effectively and where possible necessary measures taken to mitigate the effects of any traffic congestion."*

Although the interaction between the two agencies was not observed during the course of this follow-up review, Inspectors were informed that liaison between the PSNI and the contractor employed to assist with RTCs (AMEY) had improved. Diversion routes were agreed in advance and incorporated advice from AMEY on the suitability of routes for use by HGVs.

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<sup>9</sup> Joint Emergency Services Interoperability Programme (JESIP) was primarily developed to improve and standardise the way the police, fire and rescue and ambulance services work together when responding to major multi-agency incidents.

## Operational recommendation 2

**CJI recommends that the DVA, with input from the PPS, should provide clear guidance for staff on the appropriate use of civil and criminal law in regulation and enforcement processes, within six months of publication of this report.**

Status: Achieved.

### Agency response

*The PPS were consulted on the matter by the DVA and the TRU and guidance sought. The legal position was clarified, staff notified and the compliance referral policy and procedures amended accordingly.*

### Inspectors' assessment

The original recommendation arose due to a small number of cases where some operators continued to have licences because the decision to remove their licence (a civil action) was held back whilst criminal cases were concluded. The PPS were clear that the criminal cases had priority. To eradicate any possible confusion it was recommended that agreed guidance be issued to all staff.

Officials confirmed that the guidance had been issued and documentation was reviewed by Inspectors. In interviews with Inspectors, the PPS and DVA confirmed that all detections are prosecuted by the PPS in the first instance. Inspectors found no evidence to the contrary.



# Conclusion

## Strategic objectives

2 Partially achieved; and  
1 Not achieved.

## Operational objectives

2 Achieved.

Although only two operational recommendations were fully achieved this follow-up review should be viewed within the context of a reducing level of road traffic collisions.

In 2019, there were 56 fatalities recorded an increase of one on the previous year but 59 less than in 2009<sup>10</sup>. In 2018 there were 5,749 injury road traffic collisions recorded by the PSNI resulting in a total of 8,720 casualties. Of these casualties, in addition to the 55 people killed, 730 were seriously injured and a further 7,935 were slightly injured as a result of collisions in Northern Ireland. The 2018 figures were the lowest number of collisions observed since 2011 and the total casualty figure was the lowest recorded since 2005<sup>11</sup>.

There have been improvements since the last inspection was published over and above the numerical achievement of the recommendations or even the reported KSIs. For example, the discussions with the PPS and the NICTS regarding a dedicated Court for motoring offences whilst not achieving that end result, laid the groundwork for such an eventuality. There was evidence of a more positive approach to examining options to court business that could lead to streamlining the handling of motoring offences. Potential around the use of on-line guilty pleas and digital bundles with listing arrangements in similar fashion to the management of Departmental Court business were considerations within a wide ranging vision for delivering justice.

10 *Road Traffic Collision Statistics*, PSNI, March 2019, available at <https://www.psnipolice.uk/globalassets/inside-the-psni/our-statistics/road-traffic-collision-statistics/2018/police-recorded-injury-road-traffic-collisions-and-casualties---key-statistics-report-2018.pdf>

11 *Ibid*

Cross-Border co-operation had led to recognition of mutual disqualification of driving. Although providing a reliable figure for the number of offences detected or prosecuted was challenging and would require disaggregating overall figures, officers indicated the numbers were low. It would be useful if the actual figures for this particular offence were recorded in a manner that allowed some overview to assist in assessing the effectiveness of the mutual recognition.

Uninsured drivers cause a disproportionately high level of fatalities and collision rates caused by drivers without valid insurance are increasing. According to MIB figures,<sup>12</sup> there were an estimated 31,000 uninsured drivers on Northern Ireland's roads during 2018-19. The PSNI launched an intensive campaign in 2019 aimed at removing uninsured drivers from the roads. The use of mobile data access assisted in this campaign.

The network of unlit rural roads in Northern Ireland contributed to the level of RTCs as rural roads account for over 65% of all collisions. Despite the limitations of ANPR, its widespread nature could provide valuable data to retrospectively trace cars that are driving illegally and Inspectors believe the partially achieved recommendation could be fully achieved.

The management of diversionary routes, co-ordination of the resources and agencies at RTCs had definitely improved. There was less criticism of the handling of incidents, specifically around the closure of roads for disproportionate amounts of time.

The reorganisation of the PSNI Family Liaison Officers (FLOs) was a positive step with dual working and a Family Liaison Co-ordinator responsible for ensuring adequate coverage and also managing what can be stressful working conditions. The FLOs provided a valuable service both to the SIOs and the families of victims of RTCs.

Perhaps the most obvious improvement was the IT digitisation project led by the DVA. The access through handheld devices significantly reduced the workload for enforcement officers with the scope to increase the number of detections. The workflow element of the digitised system opened the potential to have a digitised process from detection right through to the Magistrates' Courts.

Similarly, remote access to data from various databases meant a realistic prospect of risk assessing operators and focusing on the most likely offenders. This also opened the potential to introduce an earned recognition scheme similar to England and Wales whereby operators installed mobile equipment in their vehicles that allowed wireless connection to enforcement officers. This meant they would be less likely to be stopped with consequent economic benefit.

Progress is evident and a concerted effort to utilise all the available resources and target the persistent offenders could see Northern Ireland roads becoming the safest in the UK.

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12 *Belfast Telegraph digital*, 3 October 2019, available at <https://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/northern-ireland/psni-to-seize-uninsured-cars-as-clampdown-begins-38553420.html>





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