

CJINI Inspection Report- Abuse of Position Concerns and Complaints

Report Ref	Strategic Recommendations	Agency	Response	Proposed Action	Target Date
1.	<p>Within six months of publication of this report the Office of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • develop a definition of abuse of position; and • develop an Abuse of Position Strategy that includes an Action Plan, which incorporates a methodology for monitoring outcomes and timeframe for delivery of the Strategy (paragraph 2.14). 	PONI	Accepted	<p>Our organisation has accepted this recommendation, however given the range and breadth of complaints that could fall into the category of Abuse of Position, further consideration is required to ensure it is both comprehensive and effective.</p> <p>To support this process we will be discussing the matter with our colleagues at the upcoming Policing Oversight Learning Association Conference on 14 May 2025. These discussions will help shape development of a clear definition and explore how it can best benefit both our organisation and our stakeholders.</p> <p>As part of the Abuse of Position Strategy, there will be a focus on Abuse of Position for Sexual Purposes (APSP).</p> <p>The Office believes strongly that we have a significant contribution to make to the work to end violence against women and girls and for safer communities. To this end, we have included it as a strategic priority in our most recent Corporate Plan.</p>	By the end of Quarter 2 2025/2026

				<p>Analytical assessment of all APSP cases commenced in August 2024.</p> <p>This analysis will enable PONI to explore investigative capabilities to improve operational effectiveness, identify learning and development requirements and will serve as an important tool for external stakeholders and interested parties to inform /support their approach to matters concerning APSP.</p>	
2.	<p>Within three months of publication of this report the Office of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland and the Department of Justice should work together to improve their relationship and finalise a Partnership Agreement. (paragraph 2.30)</p>	PONI DOJ	<p>Recommendation accepted</p> <p>Timescale accepted subject to DOJ response</p>	<p>The Police Ombudsman believes that Partnership Agreement offers the opportunity to modernise the relationship between the office and our sponsorship department. The Partnership Agreement will remain on the agenda at the Police Ombudsman Governance meeting with Justice Sponsorship Branch.</p>	
3.	<p>Within six months of publication of this report the Office of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • develop a Workforce Strategy that includes an Action Plan and timeframe for delivery; and • develop a Learning and Development Strategy to include an Action Plan and timeframe for delivery (paragraph 3.19). 	PONI	Accepted	<p>The Police Ombudsman's People Strategy is a project within the Transformational Change Programme and will be developed during 2025. In the meantime, a Workforce Plan and Learning and Development plan are in place to address immediate resourcing and skills development challenges.</p> <p>Based on our draft budget allocation for 2025/2026 there is no opportunity for organisational growth. The recruitment of staff to replace vacancies will be agreed at ELT and</p>	<p>By the end of Quarter 2 2025/2026</p>

				<p>prioritised based on Organisational risk and demand.</p> <p>As detailed at SR1 above, the Learning and Development Strategy will be further informed by the APSP analysis once completed.</p>	
4.	<p>Within three months of publication of this report the Police Service of Northern Ireland should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • review Service Instruction 3217, Maintaining a Professional Boundary Between Police and Members of the Public, and make the necessary amendments to align with the National position that abuse of position for sexual purposes cases will be referred by them to the Office of the Police Ombudsman and to reflect the learning around abuse of position for sexual purposes since 2018; • review the abuse of position for sexual purpose cases identified by the Office of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland to establish if there is a training need for Police Officers regarding abuse of position for sexual purposes; and • monitor the recording and referral of abuse of position for sexual purpose cases to the Office of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland to identify if there are issues with the process. If issues are identified it must take the necessary action to address them (paragraph 3.27). 	PSNI		<p>Whilst this recommendation is for PSNI, to support this the Office have an improved mechanism for identifying APSP cases via our case handling system.</p> <p>The Police Ombudsman and PSNI PSD have agreed in principle to the development of an Operating Protocol, which will address any issues with this current process.</p>	Quarter 2 2025/2026

5.	<p>Within six months of publication of this report;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Office of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland should develop and implement a system of monitoring the effectiveness of policy recommendations in improving the service delivery of the Police Service of Northern Ireland; and <p>the Police Service of Northern Ireland should develop and commence a system of monitoring performance following policy recommendation implementation and periodically report this to the Northern Ireland Policing Board Performance Committee (paragraph 3.56)</p>	PONI PSNI	Accepted	<p>The Police Ombudsman has only limited powers and no current capacity to inspect PSNI and evaluate the effectiveness of any declared change.</p> <p>By the end of Quarter 2 2025/2026, the Director of Impact will develop a risk-based strategy to address the implementation of PONI recommendations. This will include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Sharing insights and recommendations with HMICFRS and CJINI to inform their inspections 2. Sharing trends and recommendations with NIPB to inform targeted oversight 3. Testing the implementation of our recommendations through our investigations. 4. Conducting regular structured meetings with Senior PSNI management to review the implementation of prioritised recommendations and explore any evidence of continued systemic weakness with them. 	By the end of Quarter 2 2025/2026
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Report Ref	Operational Recommendations	Agency	Response	Proposed Action	Target Date
1.	Within three months of publication of this report the Public Prosecution Service for Northern Ireland should:	PPS			

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • issue up to date guidance to Prosecutors regarding the Director of Public Prosecution's power of referral to the Office of the Police Ombudsman of Northern Ireland; and • develop guidance for Prosecutors in respect of abuse of position for sexual purposes (paragraph 2.37) 				
2.	The Department of Justice should, as soon as possible, progress a legislative amendment to Section 59(3) of the Police (Northern Ireland) Act 1998 to facilitate the application of regulation 20(3) of The Police (Conduct) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2016 (paragraph 2.41)	DOJ		Whilst this recommendation is for DOJ, in 2020 the Police Ombudsman made a recommendation for legislative change in her 5-year review to allow for fast-tracked disciplinary proceedings. The Office, in a recent case specific public statement also highlighted this issue.	Quarter 3 2025/2026
3.	Within six months of publication of this report, the Department of Justice, in partnership with the Office of the Police Ombudsman in Northern Ireland, should review the Northern Ireland Victim Charter rights and obligations to ensure its entitlements are guaranteed for all victims of crime including victims who report a crime to the Office of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland (paragraph 3.43)	DOJ		The Office will support the Department in this endeavour.	
4.	To improve its effectiveness in supporting victims, the Office of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland should, within three months of publication of this report, produce an action plan to include guidance, a needs assessment and engagement with specialist support services (paragraph 3.47)	PONI	Accepted	A Project Team (with internal and external expertise) will be established to address this recommendation.	Quarter 2 2025/2026

5.	Within one month of publication of this report the Office of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland and the Public Prosecution Service for Northern Ireland should finalise and sign their working Protocol (paragraph 3.52)	PPS PONI	Accepted	A draft Operating Protocol has been prepared and is in the final stages of approval.	Quarter 1 2025/2026
6.	Within two months of publication of this report the Police Service of Northern Ireland Professional Standards Department should develop and submit a business case for the resource required to address the delay in disciplinary proceedings (paragraph 3.60)	PSNI			

No	Areas for improvement	Agency	Response	Proposed Action	Target Date
1.	<u>Transformational change</u> As an Area for Improvement, the Office should update their governance documents to reflect the current organisational structure. Governance and accountability	PONI	Accepted	An internal audit into Corporate Governance is currently underway and on completion the Office intends to update its Governance Statement along with any other relevant recommendations	Quarter 2 2025/26
2.	<u>Case Triage Process</u> As an area for Improvement, the Office should review their guidance on the Case Triage Process and the current practice to ensure that each aligns and reflects the most effective case triage mechanism.	PONI	Accepted	Business Process Maps are currently under development.	Quarter 3 2025/2026
3.	<u>Investigations</u> As an Area for Improvement, the Office should remind staff of the Quality Assurance and Processes strategy and the	PONI	Accepted	This has been completed as part of the action plan following internal audit of the Quality Assurance and Processes strategy in early 2024. Investigation staff and managers have been	Complete

	importance of recording the occurrence of meetings and reviews on the progress log. They should also be reminded to update the progress log with explanations for delay.			reminded frequently via team meetings, management meetings and one to ones about the importance of this strategy being implemented.	
	<p><u>PPS</u> As an Area for Improvement, the PPS should give particular consideration on how it prioritises the allocation of and decisions in abuse of position cases received from the Police Ombudsman in an effort to reduce delay</p> <p>As an Area for Improvement, the Office and the PPS should review the current process and practice regarding notification from the Office that they have received a complaint about an officer that is connected to a crime file that has been, or will be, submitted to the PPS.</p>	<p>PPS</p> <p>PONI</p>	Accepted	This is included in PPS/PONI Operating Protocol, which is in the final stages of approval.	Quarter 1 2025/2026