

Criminal Justice Inspection
Northern Ireland
a better justice system for all



PBNI Probation Board
for Northern Ireland

KEY FACTS

PROBATION PRACTICE IN NORTHERN IRELAND

A Follow-Up Review of
recommendation implementation

AUGUST 2024



KEY FACTS

WHAT IS A FOLLOW-UP REVIEW AND WHY DO CJI DO THEM?

- Follow-Up Reviews are carried out by Inspectors to assess if and how accepted inspection recommendations have been implemented by organisations. They are usually carried out around three years after an Inspection Report has been published.
- It allows organisations to demonstrate the improvements they have made.
- It fulfils CJI's commitment to return to assess progress in implementing agreed recommendations and provides a published independent assessment of the progress that has been made.

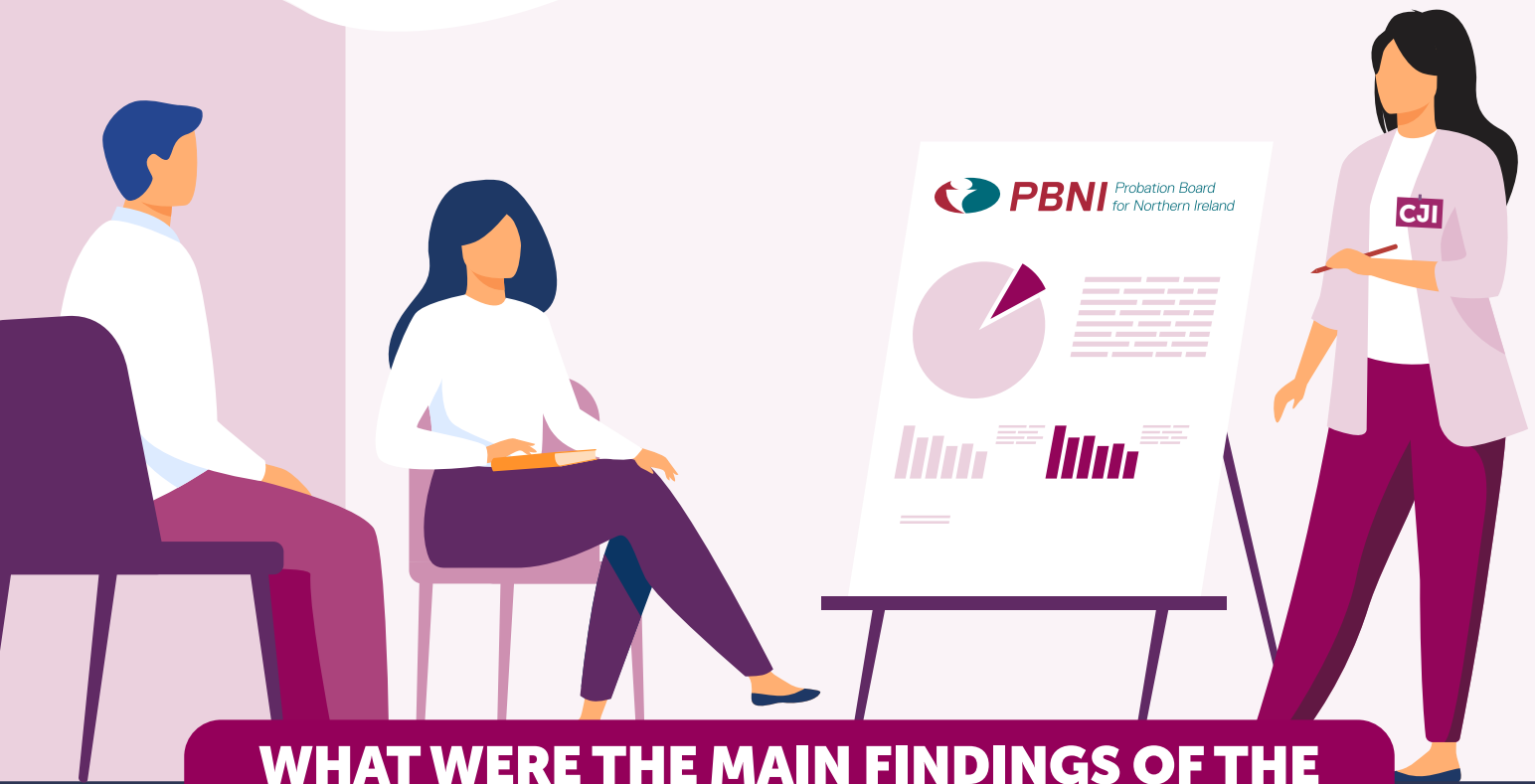


WHAT WAS THIS FOLLOW-UP REVIEW ABOUT?

- In 2020, CJI published the Inspection Report on Probation Board for Northern Ireland (PBNI) Probation Practice.
- This Follow-Up Review looked at the progress the PBNI had made to implement the Inspection Report's four strategic and six operational recommendations for improvement and what the Department of Justice (DoJ) had done to implement one strategic recommendation.
- During the Follow-Up Review we spoke to Board members, senior leaders, managers and Trade Union representatives in the PBNI. We also spoke to a group of Approved Premises managers (hostels where high risk offenders live and are supervised by the PBNI after release from prison) and to the DoJ lead official for the strategic recommendation relating to the PBNI's founding legislation.



KEY FACTS



WHAT WERE THE MAIN FINDINGS OF THE 2020 PROBATION PRACTICE INSPECTION?

Our previous inspection found:

- the DoJ should review PBNI governance and how many Board members were needed;
- the PBNI needed to improve how its staff assess and manage the risk of harm to others, and focus more on the quality of work undertaken with service users;
- the PBNI had been through a period of significant organisational change and budget pressures but had embraced and successfully delivered some innovative projects and service developments;
- PBNI staff were committed to supporting service users to address their offending and change their lives, but many raised concerns about feeling valued, trusted and supported and that the delivery of new initiatives should not compromise the quality of core services;
- people consulted during inspection fieldwork were generally positive about the PBNI and their work with Probation Officers.



KEY FACTS

WHAT DID YOU FIND DURING THE FOLLOW-UP REVIEW?

- Inspectors found there had been an impressive focus on and commitment to addressing the Inspection recommendations with sustained efforts since inspection fieldwork was completed.
- The PBNI has continued to demonstrate that it is a learning organisation and to identify ways to improve its practice, even in the face of budget and staffing challenges. The absence of the Northern Ireland Assembly for two years had impacted on the PBNI's and the DoJ's ability to fully achieve the recommendations.
- A significant amount of work had been undertaken to address the issues of organisational culture and staff trust. Steps had also been taken to improve the quality of work to assess and manage the risk of harm to others. These are longer-term issues that will take time to embed but Inspectors believe the PBNI is moving forward positively and are already beginning to see the benefits of their efforts.
- There has been progress against all recommendations with some important achievements including improved information sharing arrangements with Health and Social Care Trusts and Approved Premises receiving referrals from the PBNI.

Progress against Recommendations

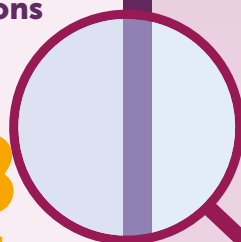
5 strategic recommendations and
6 operational recommendations
for improvement:



Achieved
(1 strategic
2 operational)



**Partially
Achieved**
(4 strategic
4 operational)

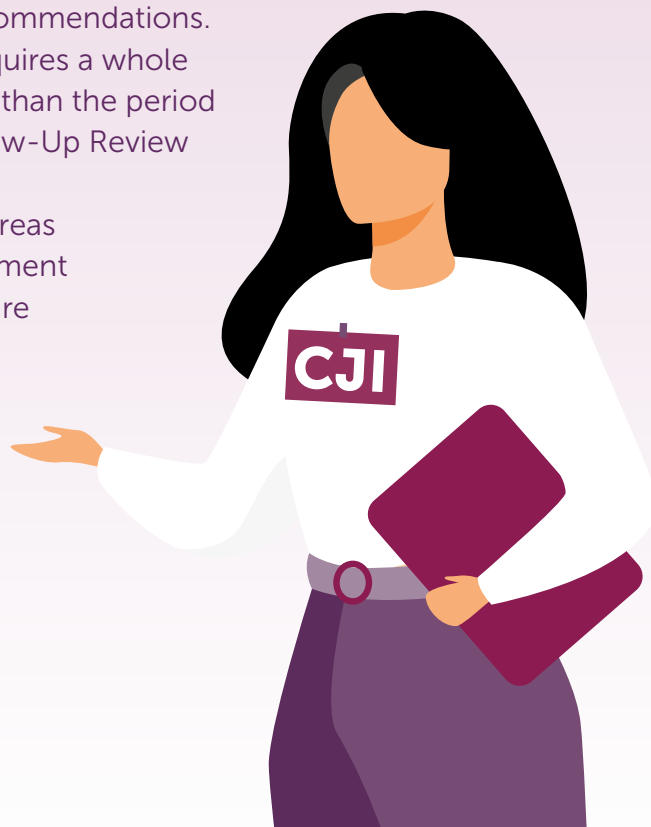




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WHAT HAPPENS NOW?

- We welcome the Chief Executive's committed leadership and significant steps taken to implement recommendations. We also recognise that some of this work requires a whole team approach, will take longer to complete than the period between the Inspection Report and this Follow-Up Review and will need continuous attention.
- The PBNI need to continue to focus on the areas they have identified as still requiring improvement or completion to ensure recommendations are fully achieved.
- Budgetary pressures and staff turnover are ongoing challenges for the PBNI and pay modernisation should help address some of these issues.
- CJI Inspectors plan to return to carry out a further inspection to fully assess the improvements in assessment and management of the risk of harm to others in a future Inspection Programme.



If you would like to know anything more about us or this inspection please get in touch with:

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