



CARE AND SUPERVISION UNIT

KEY FACTS

**A REVIEW INTO THE
OPERATION OF CARE
AND SUPERVISION UNITS
IN THE NORTHERN IRELAND
PRISON SERVICE**

A Follow-Up Review of
recommendation implementation

SEPTEMBER 2023



BACKGROUND

In February 2022 Criminal Justice Inspection Northern Ireland (CJI) published a report on the Review into the Operation of Care and Supervision Units (CSUs) in the Northern Ireland Prison Service (NIPS). The Review was conducted in partnership with the Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority (RQIA) and the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI).

The 2022 Review found:

- The regime experienced by some CSU prisoners did not meet the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules. Some prisoners were spending too long in their cells without meaningful human contact and their regime amounted to solitary confinement.
- There was ineffective oversight of each CSU by senior leadership that led to an inconsistent approach to prisoner care and treatment that hampered opportunities to improve outcomes for prisoners.
- Some men and women with severe mental disorders were living in the CSUs.
- Inspectors met impressive and committed Prison Officers and Health Care staff. The NIPS need to develop appropriate staff selection and training to support Prison Officers.
- The regime, facilities and opportunities for purposeful activity in the CSUs were limited and the COVID-19 pandemic had led to further restrictions. Opportunities for prisoners to engage with others had become heavily dependent on NIPS and Health Care staff.

The Review Report made three strategic and 11 operational recommendations for improvement that were accepted by the NIPS, the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust (SEHSCT) and Belfast Metropolitan College (Belfast Met).





KEY FACTS

WHY CARRY OUT A FOLLOW-UP REVIEW?

CJI, RQIA and ETI Inspectors were concerned about the findings and different aspects of the operation of CSUs. We wanted to check on the progress the NIPS, the SEHSCT and Belfast Met were making to improve the treatment of, and conditions for, prisoners held in CSUs.

WHAT DID THE INSPECTION TEAM LOOK AT DURING THE FOLLOW-UP REVIEW?

We asked the NIPS, the SEHSCT and Belfast Met to assess their progress and provide us with information to support that assessment. We met with a number of stakeholders and visited each CSU again to view the facilities and meet with prisoners and staff.



WHAT PROGRESS HAD BEEN MADE?

- Overall, very good progress had been made and the pace of work undertaken by the NIPS was impressive.
- One strategic recommendation and seven operational recommendations had been achieved. The remaining two strategic recommendations and one operational recommendation were assessed as partially achieved and three operational recommendations were assessed as not achieved.
- Governance and oversight of CSU operations had improved and this was underpinned by the introduction of innovative technology.
- We had greater assurance that CSUs were increasingly being used as a place of last resort, prisoners were not being held in CSUs for longer than was necessary and people in CSUs did have access to a basic regime and to purposeful activity.
- Women were held separately from men.
- CSUs were well led and staff reported feeling better equipped and supported in their role.
- Prisoners mostly reported better experiences of being in a CSU.
- Sustainable improvement plans were in place for the recommendations that had not been implemented yet.
- Inspectors remain concerned about prisoners with complex mental health issues being managed in CSUs.



WHAT HAPPENS NOW?

- It is important that the progress made in response to the Review Report recommendations is sustained.
- Work should continue to make use of data, better information sharing and the investment in technology to improve oversight of the operation of CSUs.
- Work to develop and improve service provision for those with severe mental health disorders should be accelerated.
- Inspectors will continue to inspect CSUs as part of unannounced prison inspections.



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