



TOURISM
NORTHERN
IRELAND



Department for the
Economy
www.economy-ni.gov.uk

**Trading
Standards
Service**



Department for
Communities
www.communities-ni.gov.uk

Child Maintenance Service



Department of
**Agriculture, Environment
and Rural Affairs**

**Welfare Enforcement Branch of the Veterinary
Service and Animal Health Division**



Department for
Communities
www.communities-ni.gov.uk

Benefit Security Division



KEY FACTS

AN INSPECTION OF OFFENCE INVESTIGATION AND CRIMINAL CASE PROCESSING BY NORTHERN IRELAND'S DEPARTMENTS AND ORGANISATIONS

JUNE 2025



KEY FACTS

WHAT WAS THIS INSPECTION ABOUT?

CJI has a wide range of organisations in its statutory remit, including some that investigate and prosecute offences against individuals and organisations and contribute to keeping our community safe. This inspection looked at the work of:

- the Health and Safety Executive for Northern Ireland (HSENI);
- the Child Maintenance Service in the Department for Communities (DfC);
- the DfC Benefit Security Division;
- the Welfare Enforcement Branch of the Veterinary Service and Animal Health Division in the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA);
- Tourism Northern Ireland (Tourism NI); and
- the Northern Ireland Trading Standards Service.

- Each of these six organisations plays a role in ensuring laws are upheld, the prevention of criminal activity and protecting the public through engagement and guidance. They undertake their law enforcement responsibilities by investigating and preparing criminal cases that are prosecuted in Court by the Public Prosecution Service for Northern Ireland (PPS); except Tourism NI that uses private solicitors for their prosecutions.
- These prosecutions are commonly known as 'Departmental cases' and while in 2023-24 they only made up 1% of all criminal prosecutions in Northern Ireland, they include some of the most serious offences and public safety issues.





KEY FACTS



HOW DID WE CARRY OUT THIS INSPECTION?

- Inspectors interviewed leaders in each of the inspected organisations and other stakeholders to hear their views. They also met with staff involved with engagement and/or enforcement activities and the investigation and preparation of criminal cases.
- We examined a wide range of documents and information from each inspected organisation.

WHAT DID WE LOOK AT?

- Inspectors assessed each organisation's policy and strategy on the investigation and prosecution of criminal cases.
- They examined how enforcement and engagement activities were carried out and influenced by each organisation's strategic direction. Engagement included education to encourage positive actions or behaviours or reaching an agreement to avoid enforcement action or prosecution.
- Inspectors reviewed case files and assessed how investigations were conducted and cases were prepared for prosecution.
- The Inspection Team analysed data and evidence provided by the organisations and considered the outcomes achieved. They looked at how the inspected bodies used and monitored this data and information and how it helped shape their strategic direction.



KEY FACTS

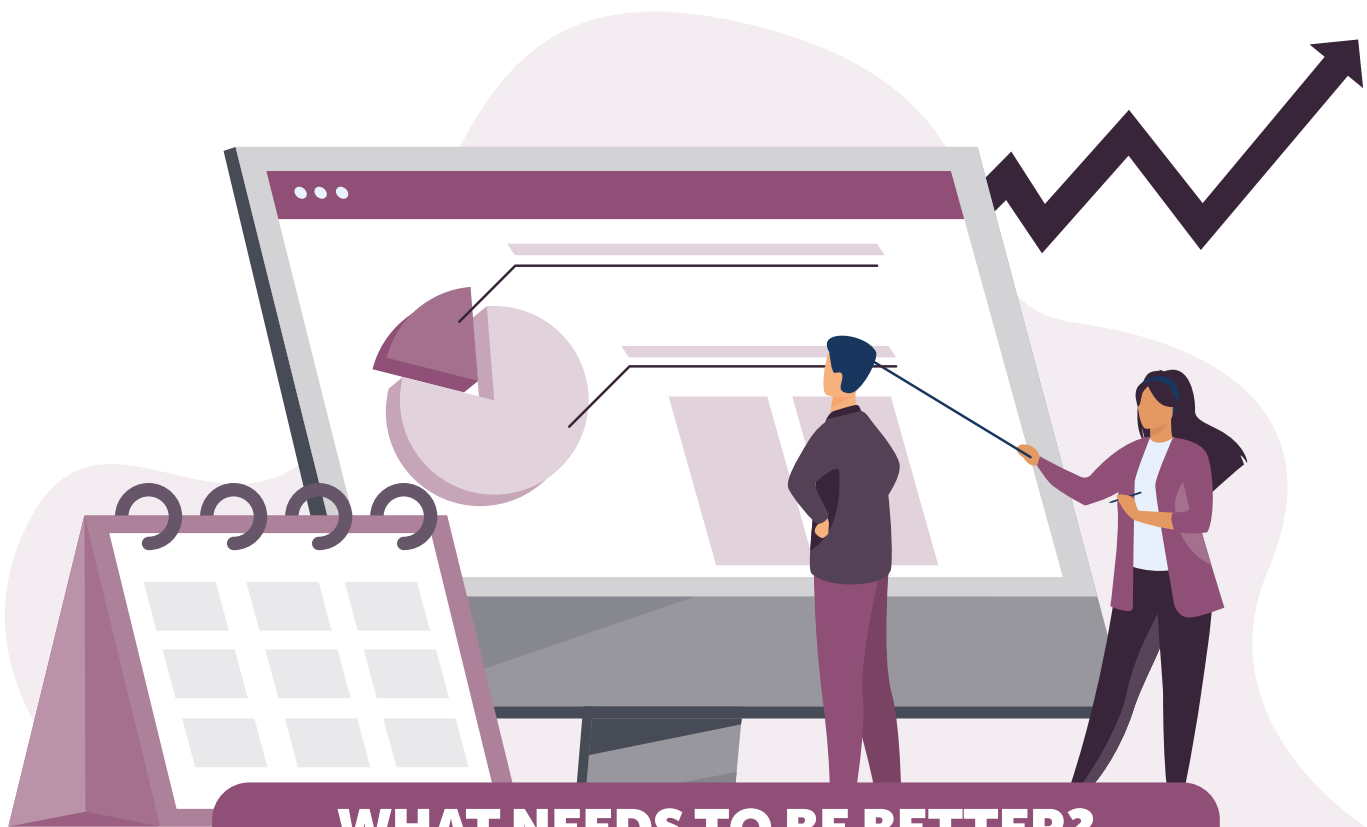


WHAT DID INSPECTORS FIND?

- Inspectors found dedicated and professional teams who were engaged in producing good quality case files. There was good communication with PPS Prosecutors and the Police Service of Northern Ireland when needed.
- There was a wide variation of statutory remits and responsibilities, dealt with by relatively small teams.
- Greater and more transparent strategic direction around enforcement activities would be of benefit, especially within Tourism NI and the Child Maintenance Service.
- Some inspected organisations had clearly identified thresholds to trigger enforcement action, like the monetary limits set by the Benefit Security Division. Others, like the Child Maintenance Service, focussed almost all their efforts on engagement, with the best interests of the child/children at the centre of their approach.
- All inspected organisations would benefit from more clearly established thresholds on when engagement should take place and when enforcement action was necessary.
- There were opportunities for greater resource, skills and knowledge sharing with others working in similar criminal justice related roles. Regular contact with the PPS around investigative expectations and file build quality standards would be beneficial to improve consistency.
- There was an over-reliance on paper-based files that needed to be addressed. Better use of Information Technology (IT) to improve the digital interface with the criminal justice system when prosecuting cases would improve file recording and analysis of case files.
- Recording and publication of criminal case outcomes should be used to increase awareness internally and externally about this important part of the criminal justice system. Success stories could be better used to inform and build public confidence about the high quality of work being undertaken.
- This inspection confirmed the need to review our statutory remit to ensure it accurately reflects the changes to Northern Ireland Departments and organisations over the years.



KEY FACTS



WHAT NEEDS TO BE BETTER?

Inspectors have made four recommendations for improvement including:

At a strategic (leadership) level:

- The Department of Justice should review CJI's statutory remit and plan to update it through a suitable legislative vehicle.
- All the inspected organisations, specifically Tourism NI and the Child Maintenance Service, should have clear strategy and guidance documents to ensure compliance with their statutory requirements for criminal case processing, enforcement responsibilities and engagement processes.

At an operational (on the ground) level:

- The inspected organisations, in conjunction with the PPS, should explore and implement technology to support criminal case file processing including recording key decision-making processes and rationale, provide live updates of case status and track issues that arise during a case.
- The inspected organisations should establish and monitor timeliness targets for both processing and prosecuting cases from offence to outcome and report on them each year.



KEY FACTS

WHAT DO INSPECTORS WANT TO SEE NOW?

- The inspection recommendations implemented and an improved understanding of outcomes to inform how the inspected organisations take forward criminal investigations.
- Each organisation set clear strategic direction for engagement and enforcement activity.
- More collaborative working to inform case preparation and better use of IT to create improved links with the criminal justice system and its digital systems.
- Case outcomes and successes published to inform our community about the important work being undertaken to protect them and improve their safety.



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

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