



KEY FACTS

AN INSPECTION OF THE POLICE SERVICE OF NORTHERN IRELAND'S USE OF COMMUNITY RESOLUTION NOTICES

OCTOBER 2025



WHAT ARE COMMUNITY RESOLUTION NOTICES (CRNs)?

CRNs deal with 'lower level' offences and are a type of out of Court disposal issued at the discretion of the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI). They don't result in a criminal record but could be disclosed as part of enhanced disclosure checks for some types of employment.

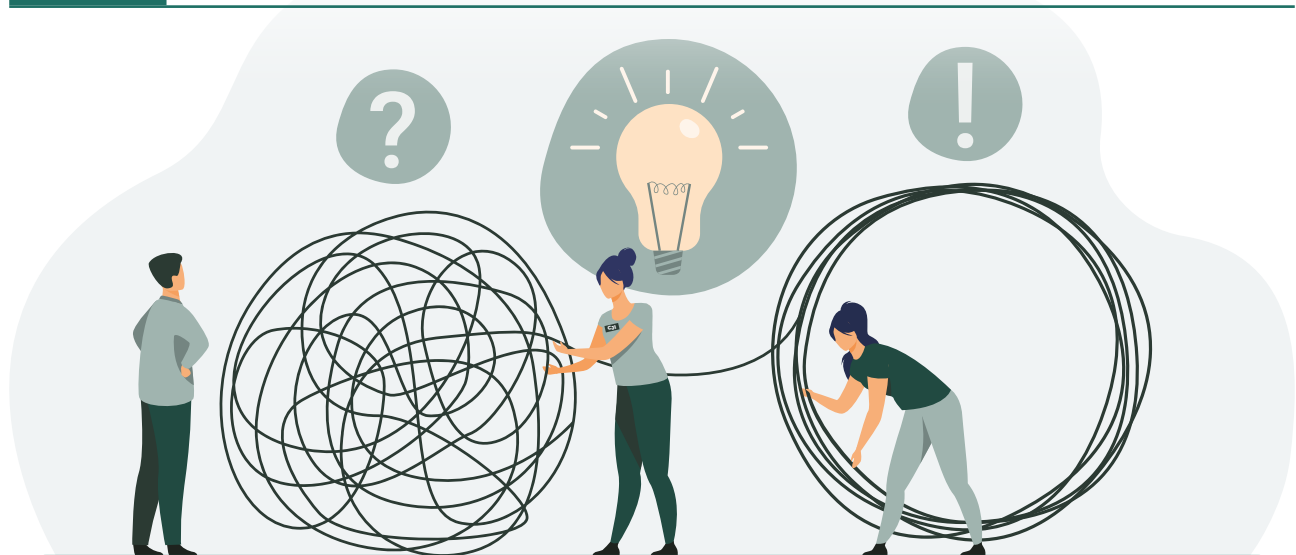
CRNs were used mostly for drugs offences, theft and violence against the person and had become the most frequently used out of Court disposal; nearly 7% of crimes recorded by the PSNI were dealt with by CRNs and over 8,000 were completed in 2023-24. They can be used for domestic abuse and hate crime offences in certain circumstances.

WHAT DID INSPECTORS LOOK AT?

Inspectors looked at strategy and governance, delivery and outcomes around the use of CRNs.

They examined a range of information and data, and interviewed PSNI, Department of Justice (DoJ), Public Prosecution Service for Northern Ireland (PPS) and Youth Justice Agency (YJA) representatives. They engaged with stakeholders including the Commissioner for Victims of Crime Designate and Victim Support Northern Ireland.





WHAT DID INSPECTORS FIND?

- The Criminal Justice Board had a Speeding Up Justice Programme with five priority projects; these included an Out of Court Disposals (OOCDD) workstream with a Working Group that provided strategic oversight and had committed members from organisations across the criminal justice system.
- The PSNI led on the operation of CRNs and had Guidance that provided objectives and criteria for how Police Officers used CRNs.
- The compliance of CRNs was monitored by the PSNI's Criminal Justice Branch. There was an opportunity to engage stakeholder organisations in reviewing how the Guidance was working.
- The DoJ carried out a three-month consultation on the use of Out of Court Disposals that ended in September 2025. It had a lead policy role in ensuring their use delivered on aims to speed up justice, reduce avoidable delay and provide better outcomes for victims.
- The equitable use of CRNs and outcomes achieved needed better monitoring that was understood across the PSNI. This needed to drive direction and develop a suite of performance measures to enable it to assess if CRNs were addressing the issues it had identified related to improving victim satisfaction and timeliness of outcomes.
- Inspectors found most children who received a CRN were referred to the YJA to complete a programme, but programmes for adults were limited.
- A drugs awareness programme was available in one Police District and a promising Community Based Restorative Justice Community Resolution pilot programme was available in another Police District but needed further development.
- Most of the files reviewed by Inspectors were compliant with the PSNI's CRN Guidance. Reasons for non-compliance were related to recent offending and/or the offender being subject to bail conditions or a Court Order. Some CRNs were issued for offences that were permitted by the PSNI's Guidance but wholly inappropriate for the circumstances of the offence or offenders' background.
- Inspectors evidenced the importance of PSNI supervisor oversight, detailed rationale to justify decisions and quality assurance checks. The PPS was an important partner in providing independent oversight through joint quality assurance with the PSNI; at the time of inspection, this had not been undertaken in almost two years and needed to resume.
- The Inspection Team also observed the opportunities to engage with victims, children who had offended and their parents as well as referrals for support in some cases.



WHAT NEEDS TO BE BETTER?

Inspectors have made three Strategic and two Operational Recommendations.

At a Strategic (leadership) level:

- Improving PSNI governance and strategic accountability arrangements for the use of out of Court disposals including CRNs with regular reporting, analysis of equality data and monitoring of how and on who they are used.
- The OOC Working Group needs to develop a strategic framework with performance measures and assessment, consult with stakeholders and ensure there is better public information about CRNs, what they are used for and what checks and balances are in place to ensure they are used appropriately to foster public confidence in justice.
- The OOC Working Group also needs to look at how CRNs help prevent reoffending, how satisfied victims are with them and how effective they are as an outcome.

At an Operational (on the ground) level:

- Joint quality assurance and oversight by the PSNI and PPS needed to restart.
- The PSNI needed to re-examine and assure themselves that domestic abuse and hate crimes should be retained on the list of offences suitable for disposal by a CRN.



WHAT DO INSPECTORS WANT TO SEE HAPPEN NOW?

We want to see the accepted recommendations being fully implemented to improve how CRNs are used, as part of effective out of Court disposal options, to support better outcomes for offenders and victims, contribute to safer communities and improve confidence in the criminal justice system.

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

Criminal Justice Inspection Northern Ireland

Block 1, Knockview Buildings
Belfast BT4 3SJ



www.cjini.org



info@cjini.org



028 90 765764



Scan here to visit
the CJI Website