

Transforming Justice

Terms of Reference

Introduction

Criminal Justice Inspection Northern Ireland (CJI) proposes to undertake an inspection of how the criminal justice system works together in Transforming Justice.

The main organisations to be inspected will be the Police Service of Northern Ireland, the Public Prosecution Service, the Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunals Service, the Probation Board for Northern Ireland, the Northern Ireland Prison Service, the Youth Justice Agency and Forensic Science Northern Ireland. For the purpose of these Terms of Reference (ToR) they are referred to as the criminal justice system operational organisations. However, the Department of Justice (DoJ) is central and key to Transforming Justice and the inspection will incorporate their role in providing strategic direction, governance and co-ordination. The inspection will focus on strategic co-operation and arrangements between the criminal justice system operational organisations and how effective these are at supporting system wide transformation.

Context

Transforming Justice requires effective planning, resourcing and development of policies and strategies that address key issues across the criminal justice system, rather than focus on single organisational priorities and improvement agendas. Organisations are required to work collaboratively on an agreed vision to improve services and achieve better outcomes by making a tangible difference to the effectiveness and efficiency of the criminal justice system. A collaborative strategic approach enables organisations to align shared priorities and at the same time meeting their own individual corporate objectives. The outcome should be improved experiences for service users, their staff and the public with a focus on the system working as a system with an end-to-end criminal justice process.

Aims of the Inspection

The aim of the inspection is to examine the collaborative strategic approaches across the criminal justice system in Northern Ireland to secure system transformation and improvement.

The objectives of the inspection are to:

- examine the cohesiveness and effectiveness of DoJ and criminal justice system organisational transformation strategies and programmes;
- examine the effectiveness of the governance arrangements in place;
- examine and assess the actions and outcomes of Transforming Justice against targets and expectations;
- examine how the strategy, governance and outcomes of Transforming Justice in Northern Ireland are benchmarked against good practice; and
- make recommendations for improvement and identify areas of good practice.

Other matters of significance as they arise during inspection will also be considered. This inspection will be a high-level review across the criminal justice system, it will not be an inspection of individual projects.

Methodology

The inspection will be based on the CJI Inspection Framework for each inspection that it conducts. The three main elements of the inspection framework are:

- Strategy and governance;
- Delivery; and
- Outcomes.

Constants in each of the three framework elements and throughout each inspection are equality and fairness, together with standards and best practice. The CJI inspection methodology can be found at www.cjini.org¹.

Research and review

Collection and review of relevant documentation such as previous inspection and other reports, DoJ and criminal justice system operational organisation strategic documents, policies and procedures, management information, data, minutes of meetings and related documentation.

Fieldwork

- In conducting the inspection CJI will comply with Northern Ireland Assembly regulations and guidance to control the spread of COVID-19 as appropriate at the time of the on-site fieldwork.
- Terms of Reference will be prepared and shared with each organisation prior to the commencement of the inspection. Liaison Officers from each criminal justice system operational organisation should be nominated for the purposes of this inspection.
- Criminal justice system operational organisations will be given the opportunity to complete a self-assessment of their approaches to dealing with Transforming Justice and any management or other information deemed relevant.
- Interviews and focus groups will be conducted with the criminal justice system operational organisations, the DoJ and relevant stakeholders to give an insight into the key issues.
- Progress in the development of management information and performance management data will be examined.
- Evidence of planning and decision-making leading to performance improvement and recognition of future development will be gathered.
- Where appropriate benchmarking and identification of best practice within and outside Northern Ireland.

Feedback and writing

Following completion of the fieldwork and analysis of data a draft report will be shared with the criminal justice system operational organisations and the DoJ for factual accuracy check. The Chief Inspector will invite each organisation to complete an action plan within six weeks to address any recommendations. If the action plan has been agreed and is available, it will be published as part of the final inspection report. The inspection report will be shared, under embargo, in advance of the publication date with each inspected organisation.

¹ Available at <https://www.cjini.org/SearchResults.aspx?searchtext=benefits&searchmode=anywordorsynonyms>.

Inspection publication and closure

- The final report was initially scheduled to be completed in late 2021, however, the pausing and recommencement of this inspection has significantly impacted on that timeline.
- A report will be sent to the Minister of Justice for permission to publish.
- When permission is received the report will be finalised for publication.
- Any CJI press release will be shared with each organisation prior to publication and release.
- A suitable publication date will be agreed and the report will be issued.