

Criminal Justice Inspection
Northern Ireland
a better justice system for all



CORPORATE PLAN & BUSINESS PLAN 2026-27

A BETTER JUSTICE SYSTEM FOR ALL

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Criminal Justice Inspection Northern Ireland (CJI) is Northern Ireland's statutory inspectorate with responsibility for inspecting all aspects of the criminal justice system apart from the judiciary.

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FOREWORD

BY THE ACTING CHIEF INSPECTOR

It is important that Criminal Justice Inspection Northern Ireland's (CJI's) independent inspection and review work remains relevant and risk-based, reflecting the issues that are important to stakeholders and adding value to improve the criminal justice system for all of us.

That means aligning our Corporate and Business Plans strategic aims and objectives and Inspection Programme activity more closely with the Programme for Government and Department of Justice Corporate priorities and timeline. To support this, we have decided to extend our current Corporate Plan for a year.

This year, we welcomed two new Inspectors and developed a panel of Associate Inspectors with skills we can draw from when it is appropriate and affordable.

Staff development and wellbeing is important for the whole team, so effectively inducting and training new Inspectors and developing continuity and skills for everyone is critical.

We also need to leave our current offices and identify new office accommodation that meets our business needs and reflects our independence.

During the year we also want to continuously develop how we carry out our Inspections, use Artificial Intelligence (AI) in a secure and value-added way and continue to grow and improve our communications and engagement.

As usual, the new Inspection Programme (the programme) was developed following consultation with the Minister of Justice, Permanent Secretary and senior Department of Justice officials, leaders of organisations in our statutory remit, the Lady Chief Justice, Attorney General, political party justice spokespersons and various oversight bodies we work in partnership with, as well as a range of voluntary and community sector organisations with links to the criminal justice system.

Some of the programme reflects our known commitments to the United Kingdom National Preventive Mechanism and statutory requirements to monitor places of detention and the Domestic Abuse and Civil Proceedings Act Part 1 Annual Review, however there are also new and challenging inspections.

Great partnerships with other Inspectorates including the Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority, the Education and Training Inspectorate, His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services, His Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons, His Majesty's Crown Prosecution Inspectorate and His Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation are important to us and the quality of our inspections and reviews. We also have positive relationships with the Policing and Community Safety Authority in the Republic of Ireland and other Inspectorates across the globe who are interested in our work.

The uncertainty around an adequate budget is an ever-present issue we constantly need to manage, however, we remain committed to impartial and effective inspection that contributes to a better justice system for all.



JAMES CORRIGAN

Acting Chief Inspector of Criminal
Justice in Northern Ireland

July 2026

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VISION

CJI's vision is for
*'a better justice
system for all.'*

We are focused on ensuring the vulnerable are protected, strategy, governance and delivery can meet challenges within the criminal justice system and where outcomes lead to effective services and increased public confidence to the benefit of everyone.

OUR ORGANISATIONAL VALUES

INDEPENDENCE

IMPARTIALITY

COLLABORATION

COMPASSION

EXCELLENCE

INTEGRITY

FAIRNESS

We have retained and will actively apply our values in all aspects of our work.

We will carry out inspection work in an independent and impartial way. We will seek evidence of fairness and equality of treatment for everyone who engages with the criminal justice system. We will be fair and even-handed in our approach and how we present our findings. We will be compassionate listening to and reflecting the voice of those who have experience of engaging with and working in the criminal justice system. We will identify and pursue opportunities for collaboration with partner Inspectorates, oversight bodies and specialist experts both within and outside the criminal justice system to maximise learning and the delivery of better outcomes. We will act with integrity at all times. We will deliver excellence and quality standards in the work we undertake and promote organisational excellence among others.

CJI'S STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES AND KEY THEMES 2026-27

In reviewing and expanding our strategic objectives, we decided it was prudent to align more closely with the Programme for Government (PfG) *Our Plan: Doing What Matters Most* 2024-27 and the Department of Justice's (DoJ's) Corporate Plan 2025-28 timelines and priorities. We are extending our Corporate Plan for one year in the knowledge it remains relevant and reflective of our strategic priorities for the year ahead.

The PfG's focus on Safer Communities; Ending Violence Against Women and Girls and Reform and Transform Public Services and growing a Competitive and Sustainable Economy as well as the DoJ's vision of *working together for fairness, justice and safety* and its Strategic Priorities of reducing offending, community safety, supporting victims of crime, access to justice and empowering people, have been embedded across the new Inspection Programme.

CJI's strategic objectives are to:

- effectively deliver a risk-based, responsive and relevant inspection programme;
- be an effective United Kingdom National Preventive Mechanism (UK NPM) body in support of the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment (OPCAT) international human rights treaty;
- focus on achieving better outcomes for those working in or engaging with the criminal justice system, particularly victims and witnesses, children and young people, and prisoners and detainees;



- promote better collaboration between criminal justice system organisations and relevant external organisations and across government Departments;
- clearly and consistently communicate Inspection and Review findings and develop CJJ's engagement and knowledge sharing with the criminal justice organisations, stakeholders and the community;
- value and invest in the professional development, training and wellbeing of our staff; and
- identify opportunities to reform and transform the criminal justice system.

These strategic priorities will be supported by objectives and targets in our annual Business Plans. We will report our performance against these Strategic Priorities and Business Plan targets in the Annual Report and Accounts.

The key themes of our Inspection Programme remain committed to:

BETTER SERVICES AND DELIVERY

BETTER EFFICIENCY AND EFFECTIVENESS

BETTER PROTECTION AND SAFEGUARDING

BETTER STRATEGY AND GOVERNANCE

BETTER COLLABORATION

BETTER COMMUNICATION AND ENGAGEMENT

BETTER OUTCOMES

DELIVERING OUR STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

CJI will deliver our strategic objectives with a focus on:

PARTNERSHIP

We will continue to:

- consult widely to develop and deliver a risk-based and relevant Inspection Programme including Inspections and Follow-Up Reviews as well as considering any Ministerial requested Reviews;
- continue to utilise the knowledge and professional expertise of other Inspectorates such as His Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons (HMI Prisons), His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS); His Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation (HMI Probation) and His Majesty's Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate (HMCPSI) to benchmark performance with England and Wales;
- maintain relationships with other Inspectorates in Scotland and the Republic of Ireland; and
- utilise Associate Inspectors and source independent specialists, when required and affordable, to provide expertise, and further enhance the professional expertise of the Inspection Team and the quality of our inspection reports.



We will continue to maintain effective partnerships with other oversight and regulatory bodies in Northern Ireland that also have a statutory obligation to carry out inspections involving organisations and bodies within CJI's remit or provide services in those organisations.



We will continue to develop our links with Queen's University, Belfast and Ulster University and pursue opportunities to collaborate, inform and engage with students and academia.

We will continue to adopt an explicit rights-based approach to inspections in our annual programme.



COMMUNICATION

Good communication enables CJI to make a positive impact on the criminal justice system and improve awareness and understanding of the work we do. Our website, podcasts and social media presence are vital to maintaining affordable and effective communication with inspected organisations, our stakeholders and the wider public.

In the next year we aim to:

- I** influence and affect/enable positive change within the organisations we inspect;
- M** maintain accountability and accessibility by making our Inspection Reports and Review Reports freely available on our website and through our digital communications activity;
- P** pursue opportunities to further develop partnership working with other Inspectorates, oversight bodies, regulators and members of the voluntary and community sector;
- A** advocate positive practice that leads to better outcomes for all who engage with the criminal justice organisations we inspect whether that is as a victim, witness, or someone convicted of a criminal offence;
- C** clearly and consistently communicate our inspection findings and recommendations in an accessible way to stakeholders and inspected organisations; and
- T** track our progress by setting objectives and targets for our communication activity that support CJI's Corporate and Business Plan objectives, that we will report on in our Annual Report and Accounts.

We will provide briefings to the Minister of Justice, the Permanent Secretary and Departmental officials, the Committee for Justice, All Party Groups and political parties that will enable a better informed and accountable criminal justice system.

We will remain responsive to feedback and mindful of the wider context in which inspected organisations are delivering their services without compromising our independence and professional practice.

INDEPENDENCE

CJI will continue to provide independent, impartial and evidence-based information and expert opinion to the public, political representatives and criminal justice stakeholders about the work and performance of inspected bodies and the entire criminal justice system.

PERFORMANCE

CJI aims to secure improvements to the effectiveness and efficiency of the criminal justice system through making strategic and operational recommendations which will be evidence-based, take account of benchmarking with other jurisdictions/ sectors and promote and secure innovation and best practice.

When appropriate, we will encourage and support inspected organisations to deliver recommendations and implement the required changes - this can involve facilitating cross-agency/ departmental working in line with the priorities and outcomes contained in the DoJ Corporate Plan and the PfG.

We will continue to monitor the implementation of recommendations through organisation's self-assessments and inform the planning of future Follow-Up Reviews.

WHO WE ARE

CJI was established in 2003 as an executive Non-Departmental Public Body (NDPB), a Corporation Sole, and is sponsored by the DoJ.

The delivery of our services is subject to continuous performance improvement.

Effectiveness and efficiency are embedded in our ISO 9001:2015 accredited methodology and working practices.

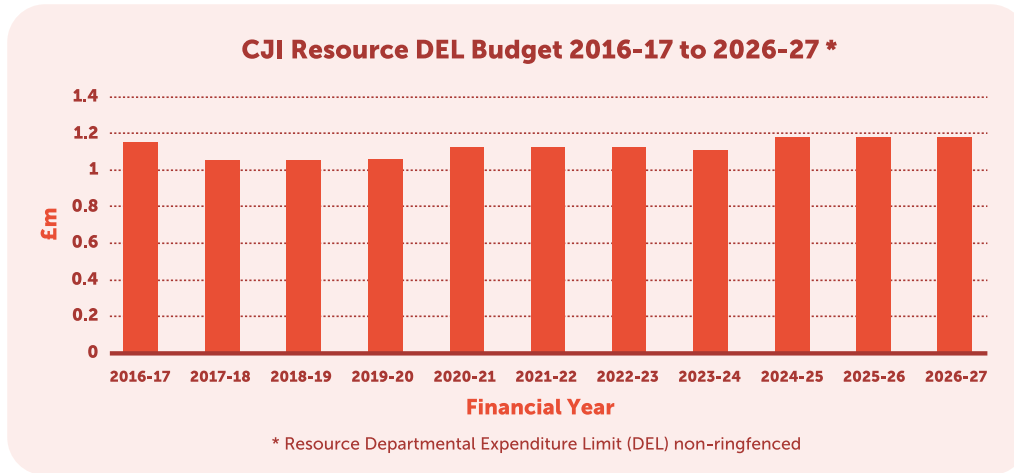
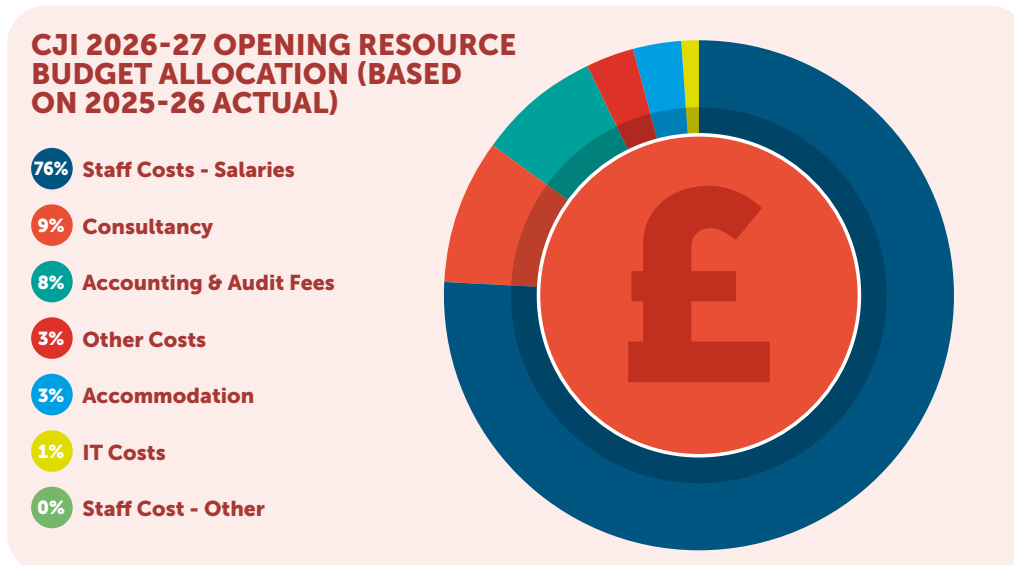
OUR BUDGET

CJI is financed by revenue grants from the DoJ.

The Indicative draft Resource Allocation for 2026-27 is £1.325 million. The Department of Finance has issued all Departments with a Contingency Planning Envelope for 2026-27 in the absence of a budget agreed by the Northern Ireland Executive; any implications for CJI's budget are not yet known.

This Indicative draft Resource Allocation represents a flat settlement compared to the opening 2025-26 Resource budget and in reality, represents a larger funding cut when pay awards and inflationary costs are considered. CJI's budget is 0.1% of the DoJ Resource budget and the second smallest budget of all DoJ's NDPBs.

As CJI's costs primarily relate to salaries and other staff, contractual and operational costs. The organisation has little scope to reduce spending elsewhere without impacting on our Inspection Programme.

FIGURE 1: CJI RESOURCE DEL BUDGET 2016-17 TO 2026-27***FIGURE 2: CJI BUDGET ALLOCATION IN 2026-27**

OUR PEOPLE

The Acting Chief Inspector James Corrigan and the Acting Deputy Chief Inspector and Chief Executive and Accounting Officer have responsibility for the management of CJI.

Our team of six Inspectors (four Full-Time and two Part-Time) are supported by a Business and Communications Manager, Digital Communications and Business Officer and Corporate Secretariat Officer (Part-Time). We have recently been joined by two new Full-Time Inspectors who bring valuable and relevant experience to our team.

Staff training and development through an investment in skills, knowledge and support is important to us. Providing opportunities to develop experience in a small team is vital to ensure we have sufficient Inspectors with the right skills to deliver our programme as is an effective Business Support Team to support this.

ORGANISATIONAL MAP

Corporate governance and risk management forms a core part of the work of CJI. There are established arrangements in place for audit and accountability together with external accreditation through ISO 9001:2015.

We will continue to maintain good working relationships with our DoJ sponsor team. In June 2025, CJI signed a revised Partnership Agreement with the DoJ that reflects proportionality and risk appetite.

An Audit and Risk Assurance Committee is chaired on a rotational basis by one of our three independent members. The Accounting Officer's responsibility is delegated from the DoJ Permanent Secretary to the Chief Executive. Two new independent members joined our Audit and Risk Assurance Committee in April 2026 bringing valuable insight and experience gained in other roles.

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BUSINESS PLAN 2026-27

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BUSINESS PLAN TARGETS

INSPECTION PROGRAMME

To undertake the approved annual Inspection Programme and respond to any Ministerial Requests:

- Commence 90% of Inspections and Follow-up Reviews and progress in line with the Terms of Reference;
- consider and respond to any Ministerial and Departmental Requests for a Review, including resource implications;
- monitor the acceptance of published Inspection Report recommendations and the implementation of progress of previous report recommendations;
- maintain effective working relationships with criminal justice organisations in our statutory remit, relevant community and voluntary organisations and partners, and review and explore opportunities for agreed joint cross cutting inspections;
- effectively fulfil our responsibilities as a member of the UK National Preventive Mechanism (NPM) and Chair the Northern Ireland NPM Subgroup;
- effectively engage with the DoJ on future inspection arrangements for accredited restorative justice organisations; and
- consult on the 2027-28 annual Inspection Programme.

COMMUNICATIONS

To develop and implement an effective Communications Strategy:

- Publish all approved Inspection Reports and Follow-Up Review Reports by laying or presenting before the Northern Ireland Assembly and publishing on the CJJ website;
- maintain effective engagement and obtain feedback on CJJ's work from key stakeholders including the heads of the main criminal justice agencies; the Minister of Justice for Northern Ireland; the DoJ Permanent Secretary, the Attorney General for Northern Ireland; the Lady Chief Justice, Committee for Justice and the justice spokespersons of the main political parties represented in the Northern Ireland Assembly and All Party Groups;
- continuously develop the use of digital communication including social media;
- contribute to relevant conferences and events as guest speakers on CJJ's work;
- develop and publish a new policy on our use of Artificial Intelligence;
- effectively brief the Minister of Justice, DoJ Permanent Secretary, Committee for Justice, All Party Groups and other political representatives on request; and
- develop and implement a new public sector model complaints handling procedure.

CORPORATE GOVERNANCE

To effectively fulfil required Corporation Sole governance requirements:

- Publish an annual Business Plan incorporating an Inspection Programme which has been approved by the Minister of Justice;
- maintain effective and proportionate sponsor arrangements and relationships with the DoJ sponsor team in support of the Corporation Sole Partnership Agreement and implement appropriate recommendations falling to CJJ from the 2022 DoJ Review of CJJ;
- maintain an effective and proportionate Audit and Risk Assurance Committee including non-executive membership in line with best practice;
- effectively manage known financial pressures in partnership with the DoJ sponsor team by bidding for adequate funding to deliver the agreed Inspection Programme and Ministerial or Departmental Review requests;
- process all payments in line with DoJ targets and submit all financial management and governance returns to the DoJ in line with required timeframes;
- obtain an unqualified audit certificate from the Comptroller and Auditor General for Northern Ireland and publish, by laying before the Northern Ireland Assembly, CJJ's Annual Report and Accounts for the year in the required timescale;
- effectively respond to requests for information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000, input to DoJ Assembly Questions and Committee for Justice briefings;
- maintain a quality management system (ISO 9001:2015);
- comply with our Raising Concerns guidelines and processes; and
- identify and secure new office accommodation that reflects our independence and meets our business needs.

PEOPLE

To effectively develop and deploy the CJI team to achieve business objectives:

- Develop and deliver an effective Training and Development Plan and Wellbeing Strategy and Plan for all staff and provide development and training opportunities for all staff to enhance their skills and experience including placements with partner Inspectorates;
- utilise Associate Inspectors to provide contingency and supplementary capacity if required and affordable;
- deliver an effective Induction Programme for our new Inspectors;
- effectively manage any vacancies that arise in-year; and
- maintain effective contingency arrangements to support the delivery of core business activity and Inspection Programme and mitigate risk.

INSPECTION PROGRAMME

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The 2026-27 Inspection Programme was subject to consultation with a wide range of leaders of organisations in CJJ's statutory remit and stakeholders including community and voluntary sector organisations and political representatives, as well as the Minister of Justice, DoJ Permanent Secretary, Attorney General and the Lady Chief Justice.


It reflects PfG and DoJ priorities, issues raised by external stakeholders and internal consultation. Aligning with the PfG, we aim to inspect what matters most, provide assurance and identify opportunities for improvement.

The 2026-27 Inspection Programme sets out:


- ongoing Inspections and Follow-Up Reviews scheduled for publication in 2026-27;
- new Inspections and Follow-Up Reviews being planned or to commence in-year;
- detention monitoring and UK NPM related Inspections; and
- Inspection development.


CURRENT INSPECTIONS AND REVIEWS

SAFER COMMUNITIES


 Adult safeguarding arrangements across the criminal justice system.

 Contact management in the Police Service of Northern Ireland – supported by HMICFRS.

 Public protection arrangements across the criminal justice system.


 Driving Offence enforcement and prosecution in Northern Ireland.

SPEEDING UP JUSTICE AND TRANSFORM PUBLIC SERVICES

 Witness attendance at criminal Courts in Northern Ireland.





FOLLOW-UP REVIEWS

SAFER COMMUNITIES


 Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland Investigation of Abuse of Position Concerns and Complaints.

NEW INSPECTIONS AND REVIEWS 2026-27



SAFER COMMUNITIES AND ENDING VIOLENCE AND ABUSE

-  The experience of minority adult and child victims and offenders in Northern Ireland's criminal justice system.
-  The implementation and operation of the Protection from Stalking Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 by the criminal justice system.
-  Part 1 of the Domestic Abuse and Civil Proceedings Act (Northern Ireland) 2021 Year Four Review (subject to adequate funding).
-  The criminal justice system's response to drug offences and offenders in Northern Ireland.

SPEEDING UP JUSTICE AND TRANSFORM PUBLIC SERVICES


-  The effectiveness of no prosecution decision-making by the Police Service of Northern Ireland.


DETENTION STANDARDS AND UK NPM MONITORING

-  An unannounced prison inspection.
-  Court custody and escorting arrangements.

FOLLOW-UP REVIEWS

SAFER COMMUNITIES AND ENDING VIOLENCE AND ABUSE

 The policing of harbours and airports in Northern Ireland.

 Child Criminal Exploitation in Northern Ireland.

INSPECTION DEVELOPMENT

- Maintain liaison with the RQIA, Department of Health and DoJ on the development and implementation of cross-Departmental collaboration, new structures and programmes to improve child safeguarding and protection in Northern Ireland.
- Engage with the DoJ on future inspection arrangements for accredited restorative justice organisations.



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