Police Service of Northern Ireland

Criminal Justice Inspection NI Review:

Witness Attendance in Northern Ireland's Criminal Courts

Draft Action Plan

August 2026

Version:

Document Version	**1.0**
Date	**21/8/2026**

Key:

	Not started / significantly behind schedule — immediate escalation required.
	In progress — some risk to delivery, monitoring required.
	Progress on track / action completed.

Progress Summary:

CJI Recommendation	Overall Target Date	Lead(s)	RAG	Status
Strategic Recommendation 1 – Strategic grip on Police Officer attendance at Court	12 months from publication	PSNI	Amber	Draft action plan prepared. Baseline, governance and delivery leads to be confirmed.
Strategic Recommendation 2 – Electronic service of summonses and Court documents	12 months from publication	DoJ, supported by PSNI / PPS / NICTS	Red	DoJ-led recommendation. PSNI contribution to be confirmed.
Operational Recommendation 1 – Data methodology for witness evidence at trial/contest	6 months from publication	PSNI / PPS / NICTS	Red	Joint scoping required.
Operational Recommendation 2 – Notification to Operational Planning when Officers are no longer required	6 months from publication	PSNI / PPS	Red	Current process to be mapped and revised process agreed.

Strategic Recommendation 1 (PSNI / PPS)

Strategic Recommendation 1
Within twelve months of publication of this report the Police Service of Northern Ireland should achieve a strategic grip on Police Officer attendance at Court as witnesses and establish its impact on resourcing through better data collection, management and use to monitor performance.
PSNI
PSNI: • Overview Lead: TBC – senior PSNI lead for Criminal Justice. • Delivery Lead: TBC – Criminal Justice Branch. • Supporting Leads: Operational Planning Department; Strategic Performance and Insights; Digital Services / Information Services; Finance; relevant Districts, Departments and Commands.

Current Status
The draft CJI report identifies that PSNI requires a strategic and service-wide understanding of Police Officer attendance at Court, including the number of Officers detailed, the extent to which they give evidence, evidence agreed in advance, stand-down arrangements, use of remote evidence, extraction hours and the resulting operational impact. Some local and pilot data is referenced in the draft report, including data captured by the Belfast Contest Liaison Officer and findings from the Police Remote Evidence pilot. Before a formal baseline is adopted, PSNI will validate the underlying datasets, definitions, methodology and scope. Work is required to identify current data sources, map the end-to-end attendance process, establish common data definitions and develop a proportionate management-information and reporting approach. Delivery will be informed by, and aligned with, the joint work required under Operational Recommendation 1. •

Action	Owner	Target Date	Evidence to Close	RAG	Latest Update / Status
Governance and delivery arrangements Es tablish a PSNI task and finish group or equivalent delivery structure to oversee	Criminal Justice Branch	One month from publication	Agreed terms of reference; named membership; meeting schedule; risk and issue log.	Amber	Draft action plan prepared. PSNI lead and governance route to be confirmed.

implementation of the recommendation. Agree terms of reference, membership, milestones, risks, dependencies and reporting arrangements.					
Current-state process mapping Map the end-to-end process for Police Officer attendance at Court, from PPS request for availability to tasking, attendance, evidence outcome, stand-down and closure. Identify system, manual and local processes.	Criminal Justice Branch / Operational Planning Department	Two months from publication	Signed-off process map; identified data flows; list of gaps, duplication and improvement opportunities.	Red	Requires engagement with PPS, NICTS and relevant PSNI business areas.
Common definitions and minimum dataset Develop a PSNI data dictionary and minimum dataset for Court attendance. This should define, at minimum: detailed; tasked; attended; standby; remote evidence; gave evidence; evidence agreed;	Strategic Performance and Insights / Operational Planning Department / Criminal Justice Branch	Three months from publication	Approved data dictionary; agreed baseline specification; documented calculation rules.	Red	To align with joint methodology developed under Operational Recommendation 1.

stood down; ineffective hearing; cracked hearing; extraction; and cancellation notice period.					
Data-source review and baseline Identify current PSNI data sources and assess completeness, reliability and capability for routine reporting. Establish a baseline for Police Officer Court attendance and resource impact, clearly identifying limitations.	Operational Planning Department / Strategic Performance and Insights	Four months from publication	Baseline report; data-quality assessment; source register; actions to address identified data gaps.	Red	Local data will not be presented as service-wide data unless its scope supports this.
Interim management information Design and implement an interim PSNI management-information report or dashboard to support monthly monitoring of Officer attendance, evidence outcomes, stand-down, remote evidence and extraction.	Strategic Performance and Insights / Digital Services	Seven months from publication	Report or dashboard in use; reporting schedule; quality-assurance process; sample management report.	Red	Long-term automation may be dependent on future Causeway and other ICT capability.

Performance review and improvement Es tablish routine review arrangements to identify avoidable attendance, late stand-down, recurring issues, remote-evidence opportunities and local variation. Agree escalation thresholds and action ownership.	Criminal Justice Branch / Operational Planning Department	Eight months from publication	Review terms of reference; minutes; action tracker; evidence of appropriate escalation.	Red	To be aligned with relevant PPS and NICTS performance arrangements where appropriate.
Resource impact assessment Prod uce a strategic assessment of the resource impact of Police Officer attendance at Court. This will include extraction hours and costs where data is sufficiently reliable, and will explicitly state methodology, assumptions and limitations.	Strategic Performance and Insights / Finance / Operational Planning Department	Ten months from publication	Approved assessment; documented costing methodology; senior-leadership briefing.	Red	Backfill and opportunity costs will be reported only where valid data and an agreed methodology are available.
Business-as-usual arrangements A gree business-as-usual ownership, reporting frequency and accountability	Senior Responsible Owner / Criminal Justice Branch	Twelve months from publication	Business-as-usual operating model; final implementation report; evidence of senior oversight.	Red	Subject to management of identified partner, data and ICT dependencies.

arrangements for Court-attendance performance and resource impact.					

Strategic Recommendation 2 (DOJ / PSNI SUPPORTING ROLE)

Strategic Recommendation 3
Within twelve months of publication of this report the Department of Justice should develop proposals for draft legislation to enable the service of summonses and other Court documents electronically and its incorporation in the Public Prosecution Service Case Management System, Themis and the Causeway Programme functionality.
DOJ Leads/PSNI

• **DOJ TBA**
  • **PSNI:** Delivery Lead: TBA – Criminal Justice Branch.
  • Supporting Areas: Legal Services; Information Assurance; Operational Planning Department; Digital Services; relevant operational commands.

Current Status
This is a Department of Justice-led recommendation. PSNI's role is to provide evidence and operational advice on current witness-summons service processes; resource demand; service outcomes; data availability; information assurance; safeguarding; accessibility; digital exclusion; and circumstances where personal service may remain necessary. The draft CJI report identifies that data on witness summonses and outcomes is limited across the criminal justice system. PSNI will establish the extent and quality of its own available data before contributing to any DoJ-led legislative or system-design work.

Action	Owner	Target Date	Evidence to Close	RAG	Latest Update / Status
PSNI summons service evidence base Identify available PSNI data and information on witness summons service, including volumes, service outcomes, repeat attempts, resource demand, geographical issues and limitations in	Criminal Justice Branch / relevant commands / Strategic Performance and Insights	Four months from publication	PSNI evidence paper; data-quality statement; summary of operational demand and issues.	Red	Scope to distinguish witness summonses from other documents served by PSNI.

current recording.					
Operational requirements and safeguards Identify operational, evidential, safeguarding, accessibility, information-security and digital-exclusion considerations for electronic service of Court documents.	Criminal Justice Branch / Legal Services / Information Assurance	Six months from publication	Requirements and risk paper; documented circumstances where personal service may remain necessary.	Red	DoJ retains responsibility for legislation and related policy.
Contribution to DoJ proposals Provide agreed PSNI operational and technical requirements to the DoJ-led work on legislative proposals and integration with PPS Case Management System, Themis and Causeway replacement.	PSNI nominated representative	Ten months from publication	Formal submission to DoJ; record of engagement; requirements logged with relevant programmes.	Red	Dependent on DoJ establishing the project and engagement arrangements.
PSNI implementation position Assess proposed operating model, implementation implications, training requirements, process changes and data-	Senior Responsible Owner / Criminal Justice Branch	Twelve months from publication	Signed-off PSNI implementation response or position paper.	Red	Dependent on receipt of sufficiently developed DoJ proposals.

recording needs for PSNI.					

Operational Recommendation 1

Operational Recommendation 1 (PSNI/PPS/NICTS)
Within six months of publication of this report the Police Service of Northern Ireland, the Public Prosecution Service for Northern Ireland and the Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunals Service should scope a methodology to extract and share data on witness evidence at trial/contest to monitor and report on ongoing criminal justice system delivery and inform the development of management information capability, Themis and the Causeway Programme.
PSNI Leads
• Overview lead – Chief Inspector, Criminal Justice Branch. • Inspector, CJB — Delivery Lead. • Data performance and Insight to provide support. • PPS LEAD TBA • NICTS LEAD: TBA

Current Status
The draft CJI report identifies that relevant data is held across multiple organisations and that existing systems do not provide a complete or readily extractable picture of which witnesses attend Court and give evidence. The three organisations will need to agree common definitions, the purpose and scope of data collection, the lawful basis and controls for sharing information, quality assurance, ownership, reporting arrangements and requirements for future systems. The recommendation requires a scoped methodology within six months. It does not require full future-system functionality to be delivered within that period. An interim manual or semi-automated process may therefore be necessary, provided it is proportionate, auditable and compliant with information-governance requirements

Action	Owner	Target Date	Evidence to Close	RAG	Latest Update / Status
Establish joint delivery arrangements Nominate senior and technical representatives from PSNI, PPS and NICTS. Agree terms of reference, reporting	PSNI / PPS / NICTS	One month from publication	Agreed terms of reference; named representatives; meeting schedule; joint	Red	Partner agreement required.

arrangements, risks, dependencies and escalation route.			risk and issue log.		
Define the dataset and terminology Agree the purpose, scope and minimum common dataset. This should include, where available: witness category; Court tier; hearing date; attendance outcome; whether evidence was given; whether evidence was agreed; whether evidence was heard remotely; and cancellation or stand-down information.	PSNI / PPS / NICTS	Two months from publication	Joint data specification; data dictionary; agreed definitions and calculation rules.	Red	Data fields must be capable of consistent application across organisations.
Information and data-flow mapping Map current data sources, data flows, legal bases, information-sharing controls, data-quality limitations and gaps.	PSNI Information Assurance / PPS / NICTS	Three months from publication	Data-flow map; information-sharing assessment; data-quality and risk log.	Red	Any new sharing arrangements will be subject to appropriate governance and assurance.
Test extraction options Pilot possible extraction and reconciliation methods using a representative sample of Crown, Magistrates' and Youth Court hearings. Assess accuracy, manual effort, reporting value and feasibility.	PSNI / PPS / NICTS	Four months from publication	Pilot report; reconciliation findings; proposed interim process; identified limitations.	Red	Sample and methodology to be agreed by partners.
Develop joint methodology Produce an agreed methodology for interim extraction, quality assurance, aggregation, sharing, reporting frequency,	PSNI / PPS / NICTS	Five months from publication	Approved methodology; operating procedure; reporting template.	Red	Must differentiate management information from case-record information.

ownership, retention and audit.					
Future-system requirements Develop and submit a joint requirements paper to inform Causeway replacement and Themis development. Include necessary data fields, reporting capability, interoperability and audit requirements.	PSNI / PPS / NICTS with DoJ programme engagement	Six months from publication	Joint requirements paper submitted; partner sign-off; next steps agreed with relevant programmes.	Red	Future-system delivery is a dependency but does not prevent the scoping recommendation being completed.

Operational Recommendation 2

Operational Recommendation 1 (PSNI)
Within six months of publication of this report the Police Service for Northern Ireland and the Public Prosecution Service for Northern Ireland should develop and implement an effective process to notify the Police Service of Northern Ireland Operational Planning Department when Police Officers are not required to attend Court.
PSNI Leads
• Overview Lead: TBC – senior PSNI lead for Criminal Justice. • Delivery Lead: TBC – Operational Planning Department / Criminal Justice Branch.

Current Status
The draft report identifies that Operational Planning may not consistently be informed when a Police Officer's evidence is agreed or the Officer is otherwise no longer required to attend Court. This may limit PSNI's ability to release Officers for operational duties and understand the level of avoidable resource extraction. PSNI and PPS will map the existing process, establish the baseline position, agree clear responsibilities and implement an auditable notification process. The process must account for Crown Court, Magistrates' Court and Youth Court arrangements, and for circumstances in which officers are notified directly by PPS or counsel. An interim process will be developed first. Opportunities for future automation will be captured as part of wider system requirements.

Action	Owner	Target Date	Evidence to Close	RAG	Latest Update / Status
Map current arrangements Map the existing processes for agreement of Police evidence, guilty pleas, case disposal, hearing cancellation and Officer stand-down. Identify routes of communication between PPS, counsel, Officers, Court liaison staff and Operational Planning.	Operational Planning Department / PPS	One month from publication	Current-state process map; identified failure points; baseline measures where available.	Red	Must cover Crown, Magistrates' and Youth Court arrangements.
Agree notification standard Agree who must notify Operational Planning, what information must be provided, the required timescale, acknowledgement process and escalation route for late or incomplete notification.	PSNI / PPS	Two months from publication	Joint protocol or service instruction; agreed information fields; escalation process.	Red	Must support rather than duplicate legal and prosecutorial case-management requirements.
Implement interim notification channel Establish an accessible, monitored and auditable interim notification channel, such as a secure shared mailbox or workflow, pending longer-term integration.	Operational Planning Department / PPS	Three months from publication	Interim channel live; operating procedure; access controls; test evidence.	Red	Information-security and data-protection requirements to be met.
Communications and guidance Update relevant PSNI guidance and brief Officers, supervisors, Court liaison staff and Operational Planning personnel on the agreed	Criminal Justice Branch / Operational Planning Department	Four months from publication	Published guidance; briefing material; communication record; training or awareness evidence.	Red	Must make clear what Officers should do if notified directly that attendance is no longer required.

process and their responsibilities.					
Pilot and evaluate Pilot the revised process in agreed Court locations. Evaluate notification timeliness, completeness, operational benefit and unintended consequences.	PSNI / PPS	Five months from publication	Pilot evaluation; comparison with baseline; agreed improvement actions.	Red	Court locations and pilot period to be jointly agreed.
Implement and assure Roll out the agreed process across Northern Ireland and introduce monthly quality assurance and exception reporting.	Operational Planning Department / PPS	Six months from publication	Roll-out confirmation; first performance report; QA process; remedial-action tracker.	Red	Longer-term automation requirements to be incorporated into relevant system development.