



POST IMPLEMENTATION REVIEW

Northern Ireland Policing Board

PSNI – Enquiry Offices

Final Report – April 2009

ADVISORY



*Northern Ireland Policing Board
Post Implementation Review
Enquiry Offices
April 2009*

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Glossary	
ACC	Assistant Chief Constable
BVR	Best Value Review
DDA	Disability Discrimination Act
DCUs	District Command Units
NIPB	Northern Ireland Policing Board
PIP	Performance Improvement Plan
PIR	Post Implementation Review
PSNI	Police Service of Northern Ireland
SEA	Station Enquiry Assistant

1 Executive Summary

1.1 Background and Introduction

Enquiry Offices are the first point of contact for members of the general public calling at a police station. There are Enquiry Offices located within every police station which is open to the public. Individuals attend Enquiry Offices for a range of reasons, such as reporting a crime, handing in lost property, giving a statement, paying a fine following the issue of a warrant, signing bail conditions or handing in legally held firearms. In reality any person attending a police station for any reason will be directed to the Enquiry Office to be dealt with.

At the time of the review these Enquiry Offices were staffed only by police officers, but during the course of the review and subsequent to it, civilian Station Enquiry Assistants (SEAs) have been appointed.

The Best Value Review of Enquiry Offices was included in the Audit and Best Value Plan 2004/2005 and agreed by the Audit and Best Value Committee and the Northern Ireland Policing Board (NIPB).

The review focused on accommodation, staffing and services with the key topics in the review being compliance with disability legislation, staffing issues and challenging the need to retain Enquiry Offices.

1.2 Review Methodology

1.2.1 Objectives

The objectives of this Post Implementation Review (PIR) are:

- To identify the main drivers for the initial Best Value Review
- To identify and interview the key stakeholders in the review in order to assess progress
- To identify any other pertinent information and documentation which would be useful for this review

1.2.2 Approach

Following the completion of the Best Value Review a Performance Improvement Plan was developed to allocate responsibility for the implementation of the recommendations. Through the use of the agreed Performance Improvement Plan from the Best Value Review, this PIR will:

- Review the progress to date against each recommendation by interviewing key stakeholders and owners of the recommendations and examining the evidence provided.

- Consider the costs and benefits of the implementation where appropriate

1.3 Progress on Recommendations

In order to improve the systems and processes of Enquiry Offices, a total of 32 recommendations were made as a result of the Best Value Review of Enquiry Offices. 19 of these recommendations have been implemented/superseded during previous PIRs and the remaining 13 recommendations have been considered as part of this PIR. The outstanding recommendations can be grouped into three specific areas: Human Resources and Training, Internal Processes and Communication.

An extensive data collection and analysis process was carried out between December 2008 and February 2009. This included interviews with key stakeholders and a review of various documents. As a result of this it is concluded that six (46%) of the recommendations were implemented, one (8%) was superseded by external circumstances i.e. a change in working conditions and six (46%) were not fully implemented or insufficient evidence was received to confirm their implementation. These 6 recommendations will therefore be carried forward and reviewed in the next financial year. It is important to the success of this follow up review that the person responsible and the timescale for implementation are agreed in advance.

Category	Recommendation	Implemented	Superseded	Not fully Implemented
Human Resources and Training	27, 28, 30	-	1	2
Internal Processes	6, 13, 19, 20	2	-	2
Communication	10, 11, 14, 21, 23, 24	4	-	2
Total	13	6 (46%)	1 (8%)	6 (46%)

1.4 Summary

1.4.1 Summary of benefits achieved

Six (46%) of the outstanding recommendations have been implemented and the benefits obtained include:

- *Internal Processes*
 - PSNI have reviewed their policies and procedures to ensure that the needs of individuals with a disability are considered when the person is arrested, interviewed or detained. A new Policy Directive on Custody has been drafted and is due to be approved in the coming months. This Directive will formalise the advice given to Officers in relation to individuals with special needs. The PSNI approach to individuals with dyslexia has been reviewed by the Northern Ireland Dyslexia Association and has been assessed to be adequate. The implementation of the new policy directive and associated guidance

will assist PSNI Officers to ensure that their procedures adequately accommodate individuals with disabilities and special needs.

- A review of SEAs has been conducted and has provided various recommendations to improve the SEA role. The content of the review is currently under consideration.
- *Communication*
 - The introduction of loop systems and appropriate notices in relevant custody suites and interview rooms will assist individuals with hearing difficulties. PSNI are also meeting their DDA requirements through addressing this issue.
 - Where considered appropriate signage directing individuals to police stations and advising visitors with disabilities of the access, equipment and car parking facilities available to them have been erected. Signage explaining the role of the SEA has also been introduced. This improved visibility will help raise awareness of the facilities provided by PSNI and the role of the SEA.

1.4.2 Cost of benefits obtained

While some of the implemented recommendations related to qualitative improvements to services and internal processes, a number also had cost implications.

- The introduction of Induction Loop Systems and information signs for people with hearing difficulties cost approximately £126,500
- Notices highlighting that SEAs are not police officers were introduced at a cost of £100 per sign
- Signage directing the public to police stations and advising visitors of the availability of facilities for people with disabilities required expenditure, but as this process was not centrally managed no evidence of the total cost of implementing these recommendations was available for review.

While these recommendations have been assessed as implemented there has been no central mechanism for monitoring the total cost of implementation.

1.4.3 Impact of Non-Implemented Recommendations

PSNI are currently progressing the implementation of five out of the six outstanding recommendations and no evidence was provided to demonstrate that implementation of the sixth recommendation had begun.

Progress that has been made includes:

- The development of promotional material to highlight the role of the SEA

- Undertaking a review of the terms and conditions of employment of SEAs with a view to standardising their terms and conditions and identifying career progression routes
- Displaying the opening hours of Enquiry offices.

To completely implement these recommendations PSNI should ensure that the terms and conditions of employment for SEAs is standardised across the PSNI and career progression routes are developed. The role of SEAs and the opening hours of the enquiry offices should be communicated to the public and to secure continuous improvement mechanisms should be put in place to permit the public to provide feedback to staff in relation to the services provided by enquiry offices.

PSNI should progress the full implementation of these six recommendations to help promote enquiry offices and ensure that effective services are delivered to the public.

1.4.4 Overall impact of Best Value Review

The implementation of the recommendations provided in the Best Value Review of Enquiry Offices has produced a range of benefits in terms of the efficiency, economy, effectiveness and overall value for money of the services provided by Enquiry Offices. The impact of implementing the recommendations is evident and improved management, training and communication processes have been identified following the implementation of the recommendations.

As six recommendations have yet to be fully implemented, PSNI should progress the complete implementation of these recommendations to achieve the maximum benefit from the Best Value Review of Enquiry Offices.

1.5 Acknowledgement

We would like to thank the staff of the Police Service of Northern Ireland for their assistance in undertaking this review.

2 Background and Introduction

Enquiry Offices are the first point of contact for members of the general public calling at a police station. There are Enquiry Offices located within every police station in Northern Ireland which is open to the public. Their opening hours vary by location.

Individuals attend Enquiry Offices for a range of purposes, for example:

- To report a crime
- To hand in lost property
- To attend the station to give a statement
- To pay a fine following the issue of a warrant
- To sign bail conditions
- To hand in legally held firearms.

In reality any person attending a police station for any reason will be directed to the Enquiry Office to be dealt with.

At the time of the Best Value Review these Enquiry Offices were staffed only by police officers, but during the course of the review and subsequent to it, civilian Station Enquiry Assistants (SEAs) have been appointed to work within some of the Enquiry Offices.

3 Methodology

3.1 Objectives

The objectives of this Post Implementation Review (PIR) are:

- To identify the main drivers for the initial Best Value Review
- To identify and interview the key stakeholders in the review in order to assess progress
- To identify the evidence of implementation
- To identify any other pertinent information and documentation which would be useful for this review.

3.2 Approach

Following the completion of the Best Value Review a Performance Improvement Plan was developed to allocate responsibility for the implementation of the recommendations. Through the use of the agreed Performance Improvement Plan from the Best Value Review, this PIR will:

- Review the progress to date against each recommendation by interviewing key stakeholders and owners of the recommendations and examining the evidence provided
- Comment on the costs and benefits of the implementation where appropriate.

After analysing the information and consulting with stakeholders we will then highlight any clear improvements that have been achieved since the Best Value Review of Enquiry Offices was carried out and whether any corrective action needs to be taken in order to realise the benefits identified. We will also assess whether the changes that have occurred have been controlled in a systematic manner to ensure that the Enquiry Offices attain the full benefit of the recommendations.

4 Best Value Review of Enquiry Offices

The Best Value Review of Enquiry Offices was included in the Audit and Best Value Plan 2004/2005 and agreed by the Audit and Best Value Committee and the Northern Ireland Policing Board (NIPB).

The review focused on accommodation, staffing and services with the key topics in the review being compliance with disability legislation, staffing issues and challenging the need to retain Enquiry Offices.

In relation to disability legislation, the review examined whether stations were compliant with the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA). The minimum standards expected by DDA are found in Part R of the Northern Ireland Building Regulations. Estate Services outsource the implementation of this legislation to consultants and contractors who in turn report compliance.

In relation to staffing, the review examined the role of the Police in relation to Enquiry Offices to examine whether civilianisation was appropriate. Enquiry Offices are mainly staffed by police officers, although in some locations, civilian Station Enquiry Assistants (SEAs) are now used.

The review also examined the services provided at Enquiry Offices to determine whether there was a need to retain the Offices. This incorporated a review of other avenues of service provision which could be explored and the possibility for introducing formalised joint service provision with other agencies.

The main aim of the review was to provide recommendations for the improvement in the service provided by Enquiry Offices.

5 Progress on Performance Improvement Plan




- Recommendation not fully implemented, to be carried forward
- Recommendation superseded by other events
- Recommendation implemented, evidence of improvement found

Recommendation Number	Recommendation Description	Management Response	Progress Evidence	Performance Status
6	Research should be undertaken into the impact of dyslexia upon police procedures at the time of arrest, interviewing and recording of statements to ensure that people with dyslexia are not disadvantaged as a result of such procedures.	Accepted	<p>PSNI has a range of measures in place to ensure that the needs of people with disabilities or other special needs are met while they are in custody. This includes the Police and Criminal Evidence (NI) Order 1989 and the ACPO Safer Detention and Handling of Persons Guidance. A new PSNI Policy Directive on Custody has recently been completed and is currently in the process of being approved.</p> <p>PSNI undertook consultation with the Northern Ireland Dyslexia Association in relation to the procedures which have been put in place and were advised that the Association was satisfied that appropriate provision had been made for people with Dyslexia.</p>	●●●
10	Where appropriate, DCU Commanders should erect signs to police stations.	Accepted	PSNI Officials informed us that where this is considered appropriate signage has been erected. This encompasses all main stations.	●●●
11	Where appropriate, signs should be erected advising visitors to PSNI establishments that access, equipment and car parking facilities for disabled are available.	Accepted	PSNI Officials informed us that where this is considered appropriate signage has been erected. This encompasses all main stations.	●●●

Recommendation Number	Recommendation Description	Management Response	Progress Evidence	Performance Status
13	Policy should be reviewed and developed for custody staff in determining the needs of detained persons who are disabled. This should include guidance as to action taking account of possible repercussions of an individual's disability and needs pertaining to that condition.	Accepted	A draft Policy Directive on Custody has been produced and is currently awaiting approval by the ACC Operational Support. It makes reference to ensuring that PSNI minimise the risk to vulnerable people who have been detained and providing the safest possible conditions where evidence can be collected. This includes procedures/guidance in relation to medication/clinical treatment and attention and interpreting and translating within the Police Service.	●●●
14	Every custody suite and interview room should have access to equipment that is readily available in Enquiry Offices, for example portable hearing loop system, British Sign Language (BSL) charts. A notice indicating that such equipment is available for use should be displayed in a prominent position. Training in the use of such equipment is therefore necessary.	Accepted	PSNI Officials informed us that loop systems and appropriate notices have been installed in all relevant custody suites and interview rooms. 22 Induction Loop Systems have been installed to date at a cost of £2,000 per system and 150 Information Signs have been placed in relevant locations at a cost of between £500 and £600 per sign.	●●●
19	Further research should be undertaken in the area of formalised joint service provision with other agencies in a corporate capacity. In the interim, in light of the success with Fife Constabulary, it is suggested that the partnership should be researched with various independently owned Post Offices as a means of developing a province-wide service.	Accepted	No evidence was available to demonstrate that this recommendation had been progressed.	●

Recommendation Number	Recommendation Description	Management Response	Progress Evidence	Performance Status
20	Public satisfaction with Enquiry Offices should be measured as a means of obtaining feedback on both service provision and facilities provided therein. This in turn should be fed back to personnel deployed in Enquiry Offices as a means of development and recognition where appropriate.	Accepted	PSNI are currently identifying mechanisms to review the service provided by those working in the Enquiry Offices to ascertain how continuous improvement can be delivered.	●
21	Opening hours for Enquiry Offices should be clearly advertised, both at the station itself and through other media. Consideration should be given by Media and PR Branch to identify ways to provide better access to information about the location of police stations and opening hours.	Accepted	<p>PSNI Officials informed us that Enquiry Offices opening hours are now clearly displayed within most stations. The role of SEAs was due to be highlighted in 'Callsign' and through various other external routes in late 2008 and an article was prepared for this purpose.</p> <p>PSNI Officials advised that an ongoing review of the status of SEAs is due to be completed in Mid 2009. The publication of the article on SEAs has therefore been deferred pending the outcome of this review.</p>	●
23	There should be communication to inform the public of the role played by SEAs within the organisation, explaining the rationale behind their employment and reassurance of their competence to deal with matters, particularly in light of the impending appointment of personnel enabling complete civilianisation within the Enquiry Office.	Accepted	PSNI Officials advised that an ongoing review of the status of SEAs is due to be completed in Mid 2009. Planned communication with the public in relation to the role of SEAs was therefore deferred pending the outcome of this review.	●

Recommendation Number	Recommendation Description	Management Response	Progress Evidence	Performance Status
24	Notices should be displayed in public waiting areas highlighting the fact that whilst an SEA is not a police officer, s/he is able to deal with their query. The notice should also indicate that there might be a delay in dealing with their enquiries at busy times.	Accepted	PSNI Officials informed us that this has been completed in those DCUs where SEAs are employed at a cost of approximately £100 per sign. A sample of locations was visited and notices were appropriately displayed.	●●●
27	It is recommended that external and internally appointed SEAs are appointed on comparable terms and that discrepancies between current staff are rectified as soon as possible.	Accepted	Grafton Employment Solutions Portfolio conducted a review of SEAs in 2008. The draft report highlighted consistencies and variations in SEA duties and terms and conditions of employment across the DCUs. A new job description was recommended and PSNI Officials informed us that the Heads of HR are currently considering the content of the draft report prior to developing a plan of action to resolve discrepancies.	●
28	It is recommended that SEAs replace other colleagues in their absence. Therefore, the practice of replacing SEAs with police officers should stop.	Accepted	PSNI Officials informed us that due to insufficient numbers of SEAs in each location this recommendation cannot be implemented and will therefore not be adopted.	●●
30	Review the career development strategy within the PSNI so that those SEAs have a clear plan as to where and in what capacity they can apply for promotion.	Accepted	Grafton Employment Solutions Portfolio conducted a review of SEAs in 2008. The draft report highlighted issues in relation to career advancement and noted that PSNI are undertaking a 'job family project' which may help identify job progression routes for SEAs.	●

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6 Summary

6.1 Summary of benefits obtained

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6.2 Cost of benefits obtained

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