

NORTHERN IRELAND POLICING BOARD

**Response to the inspection
conducted by His Majesty's Inspector
of Constabulary and the Fire and
Rescue Service on the PSNI**

**The Police Service of Northern Ireland –
An Inspection of Police Effectiveness
and Efficiency**

INTRODUCTION

The Northern Ireland Policing Board has a statutory duty to hold the PSNI to account for the delivery of an effective and efficient policing service for the whole community. The Board carries out this work in a number of ways through engagement with the community and key stakeholders and Committee and Board meetings. However, with the exception of information gathered through research about the PSNI's policy and practice on the ground, the Board is largely reliant on information provided by the PSNI. Information is received either through scrutiny at Board and Committee meetings, correspondence with the Chief Constable, face to face meetings between the PSNI and through questions from the Board on particular issues.

The Board's accountability function is strengthened by having access to independent professional policing assessments from relevant bodies such as His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) and the Criminal Justice Inspection Northern Ireland (CJINI) on how the PSNI is performing and discharging its responsibilities in a number of key areas. This enables the Board to hold the Chief Constable to account using an evidence-based approach.

As there is a statutory obligation on HMICFRS to undertake an annual efficiency and effectiveness inspection of the PSNI, the Board agreed with the Department to commission HMICFRS to undertake this inspection. The objective was to inform the public, the Board and the Department of the PSNI's strengths and areas for improvement in a number of key areas.

THE 2024/25 HMICFRS PEEL INSPECTION

HMICFRS Inspection Report – “An inspection of police effectiveness and efficiency” 2024/25

The inspection assessed the Police Service of Northern Ireland in two areas:

- 1) Preventing and deterring crime, antisocial behaviour and vulnerability;
- 2) Managing offenders and suspects.

It made two graded judgments that the PSNI's Preventing and deterring crime, antisocial behaviour and vulnerability is **Adequate** and Managing offenders and suspects **Requires Improvement**. The Inspection fieldwork was carried out in November 2004 and the following areas of inspection were set out in the terms of reference:

- How good is the service at preventing and deterring crime and antisocial behaviour, and reducing vulnerability?
- How good is the service at managing offenders and suspects?

Overall, the HM Inspector observed:

“ I have concerns about the performance of the service in keeping people safe, preventing crime and providing victims with an effective service. There are some areas for improvement in its prevention and deterrence work. I also have concerns about how the service is managing offenders and suspects.”

BOARD ANALYSIS

Members considered the Inspection Report at Board, Performance and Partnership Committee meetings and observed that:

- Members expressed concerns regarding the delay in investigations involving online child abuse images due to a backlog of work and how the PSNI plan to tackle this with limited resources;
- Members sought further explanation on offender management ratios within PSNI and what they view as a realistic/feasible ratio;
- Members sought clarity on the barriers to effective use of electronic devices in tracing offenders;
- Members queried information sharing about children at risk and why there is a delay in this area;

- Members asked if the HMICFRS inspection findings is relayed to all officers in the organisation;
- Members queried PSNI reluctance to provide completion dates on actions;
- A Member expressed their view that strategic decisions need to be made to look at the structure of the PSNI in its entirety to adequately address areas of risk;
- Members referred to the significant decrease in neighbourhood policing which can impact confidence in policing and relationships with communities; and
- Members reinstated their support for the Workforce Recovery Plan to keep neighbourhood policing numbers at 517.

A progress report in relation to addressing all the recommendations was made available to Board Members for consideration at the June 2025 Performance Committee meeting and the September 2025 Partnership meeting.

CONCLUSIONS

Overall, the Board expresses concern at the findings of the HMICFRS report and in particular the rating of the PSNI as “Requires improvement” in managing offenders and suspects. The Board acknowledges the Chief Constable’s concerns that underfunding, reduced neighbourhood visibility and degraded offender management capacity have contributed to the findings in the report. The Board also discussed the finding regarding neighbourhood officers being diverted away from their duties to manage demand in response teams. The Board is concerned that neighbourhood officers have dropped almost 50% since 2014 and supports the workforce planning model to maintain the number of NPT officers at 517. This can impact on keeping people safe, public confidence and relationships with communities. The Board’s Chair has written to First and Deputy First Ministers to urge the Executive to prioritise funding for the delivery of the PSNI Recovery Plan to allow the increase of officer and staff numbers to progress. The report also suggests a number of areas for improvement for the PSNI and the Board will follow up to ensure the outcomes from

the Internal Review and the Task and Finish Group in relation to Offender Management are fully implemented. The Board will also continue to monitor the implementation of all the recommendations through the work of the Performance and Partnership Committees.

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DOCUMENT TITLE

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