

**NORTHERN IRELAND POLICING BOARD**

**MINUTES OF MEETING OF PARTNERSHIP COMMITTEE HELD ON THURSDAY  
22 JANUARY 2026 AT 9.30AM IN JAMES HOUSE**

**PRESENT:**

- (1) Mr Peter McReynolds MLA (Committee Chair)
- Dr Kate Laverty (Committee Vice Chair)\*
- Mrs Linda Dillon MLA
- Mr Keith Buchanan MLA
- Ms Deirdre Hargey MLA
- Mrs Marian Cree
- Mr Patrick Nelson
- (2) Mr Colin McGrath MLA
- Mr Tommy O'Reilly

**POLICE SERVICE OF  
NORTHERN IRELAND IN  
ATTENDANCE:**

- (3) ACC Ryan Henderson
- (3) Chief Superintendent McMillan
- (3) Chief Superintendent McDonald
- (4) Chief Superintendent Piper
- (4) Superintendent Gibson
- (4) A representative from the Strategic Partnerships & Prevention Team

**NORTHERN IRELAND  
POLICING BOARD  
OFFICIALS IN  
ATTENDANCE:**

Mrs Paula Gow, T/Director of Partnership  
Seven Board Officials

- (1) On zoom from 11am on
- (2) From 9.40am on
- (3) Items 3.1 and 3.2 only
- (4) Item 3.2 only

\* Attended the meeting by video conference facility

**1. APOLOGIES**

Apologies were received from Mrs Cheryl Brownlee MLA.

The Chair welcomed Ms Deirdre Hargey MLA to her first meeting of the Committee, following the departure of Mr Cathal Boylan MLA in November 2025. The Chair thanked Mr Boylan for his contribution during his time on the Committee.

The Committee agreed the agenda for the meeting.

## **2. CONFLICTS OF INTEREST**

Mr Patrick Nelson declared a conflict in relation to item 5.1 Police Property Fund update.

Before PSNI joined the meeting, the Director of Partnership provided Members with an overview of agenda items 3.1 and 3.2, Right Care Right Person and Children & Young People's Strategy respectively and Members also viewed the presentational video supplied by ACC Henderson on Right Care Right Person.

The Director of Partnership also advised the Committee Vice-Chair had provided a list of her key reflections on the recommendations noted within the report on Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE) under agenda item 3.2 and advised this can be circulated if required.

### **3.1 PSNI RIGHT CARE RIGHT PERSON UPDATE**

The Chair welcomed ACC Henderson, Chief Superintendent McDonald and Chief Superintendent McMillan to the meeting and asked ACC Henderson to present the PSNI's update on progress towards implementation of the Right Care Right Person (RCRP) initiative - an operational model that is designed to ensure the right agency deals with health-related calls, rather than PSNI being the default first responder where there is a concern about a person's physical or mental health.

ACC Henderson reported that after a challenging two-year period working collaboratively with Department of Health (DoH) partners, the project is close to implementation. ACC Henderson noted the complex infrastructure required, in particular around governance, however both PSNI and DoH have joint accountability and responsibility and have recently issued the first joint communications bulletin highlighting the purpose of RCRP, the changes to both the PSNI and health services upon implementation, the phasing of the project and next steps.

Chief Superintendent McDonald outlined the RCRP governance structures, noting that several multi-agency governance groups have been established with partners in both the health and justice sectors and work has been ongoing to develop a Partnership Agreement. This Agreement sets out the principles the organisations will embed within their respective practices whilst supporting the RCRP approach. Senior officials in Department of Justice (DoJ), DoH, PSNI, Northern Ireland Ambulance Service (NIAS), Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service (NIFRS), Health and Social Care (HSC) Trusts and Public Health Agency (PHA) will all sign the Agreement when finalised. Chief Superintendent McDonald advised the Partnership Agreement is being considered at the Silver Multi-agency Working Group (which is co-chaired by himself and a senior DoH official) at its next meeting on 2 February 2026 and he advised he will provide Members with a copy of the signed Agreement once it has been ratified.

Chief Superintendent McDonald advised that alongside the work of the Silver Multi-agency Working Group, there are multiple other focused working groups which have developed Memorandums of Understanding (MOU) outlining the new roles and responsibilities for each agency, draft decision making models in place within PSNI Contact Management Centres and training plans that are

in place for PSNI staff. Chief Superintendent McDonald noted however, that there is still progress to be made on the referral mechanisms and alternative pathways under the DoH remit.

Chief Superintendent McDonald noted that a workshop is planned for March 2026 to bring together all stakeholders to work through different examples of instances where RCRP would be initiated to test the new service delivery model. Chief Superintendent McDonald added that RCRP has been implemented in England and Wales and PSNI have been consulting with colleagues in Humberside Police and considering lessons learned. Chief Superintendent McDonald noted that colleagues from Humberside Police will also attend the March workshop to provide advice and assistance.

Chief Superintendent McDonald advised that is anticipated that the Draft Protocol for walk-outs from healthcare facilities (not just emergency departments) will be ready for implementation later in 2026 and noted that specific subgroups are currently considering suitable locations across NI to best locate suites for mental health assessments in the future.

ACC Henderson added that PSNI have systems in place to capture data for comparison purposes pre and post implementation.

During discussion Members raised the following with PSNI:

- How confident PSNI are that the same level of preparatory work for implementation is being undertaken by Health sector partners;
- The main risks to the RCRP project; noting that PSNI will provide the Committee with a copy of the RCRP risk register;
- The level of communication and training with Social Care partners and those partners outside of hospital settings; noting that only a small

percentage of RCRP referrals come from social workers; the principal demand is from hospital emergency departments and NIAS referrals;

- If the PSNI are confident that the appropriate training is being delivered to PSNI staff;
- The escalation protocol for any gaps in the service that are identified;
- The timeline for implementation; noting that it is anticipated Phase 1 (concern for safety) will begin implementation in the early part of the next financial year;
- If consideration has been given to including a threshold in the Partnership Agreement to prevent Health Service/ED staff from discharging individuals in mental health crisis before they receive the help they need, in order that PSNI will not have to attend further/repeated concerns for safety for that individual; noting the difficulties associated with challenging medical judgment calls/decisions;
- Plans for the roll out of the initiative across NI; and
- Any concerns PSNI may have regarding the consistency of RCRP implementation across the five Health Trusts in NI.

The Chair thanked Chief Superintendent McDonald for the briefing and he left the meeting.

Members **NOTED** the update provided. Board officials will follow up with PSNI in relation to obtaining a copy of the Partnership Agreement (once ratified) and the RCRP Risk Register. **(AP1)**

### **3.2 PSNI UPDATE ON THE CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE'S STRATEGY**

The Chair welcomed Superintendent Piper, Superintendent Gibson and a representative from the PSNI'S Strategic Partnerships & Prevention team to the meeting and invited them to present PSNI's update on the Children and

Young People Strategy, noting that the focus of today's briefing was Victims and Witnesses, including Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE).

ACC Henderson advised that this presentation was compiled following a research project carried out by Superintendent Piper as part of a Masters qualification at Queens University.

Superintendent Piper advised that the motivation for this research project was feedback from the 2022 His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) report around a lack of understanding within the PSNI around criminal exploitation of children and the desire to raise awareness of and put in place measures to combat this societal issue.

Superintendent Piper provided an overview of the project, outlining the key research objectives, key themes, the numbers and groups consulted with as part of the research, the methodology used, challenges encountered and the key findings and recommendations. Superintendent Piper noted that this issue is more prevalent in our society than people may realise and a nuance specific to NI is the influence of paramilitary groups which is not experienced in other areas of the UK.

Superintendent Piper highlighted positive examples of early intervention projects and initiatives that have taken place and are ongoing in NI which aim to address the role criminal networks play in encouraging and compelling children to engage in criminal behaviour. Superintendent Piper outlined the importance of educating communities in order to effect cultural and societal change and noted the key role community representatives have in this regard.

Superintendent Piper added that Criminal Justice Inspection NI (CJINI) are due to publish a report on CCE in February 2026 and welcomed the publication of this report.

Following the briefing, Members raised the following with the PSNI:

- Training in relation to the definition of CCE to ensure understanding and recognition of it;
- Lessons learned from cross departmental collaboration;
- Consideration to be given to consulting with youth workers and children in any future research projects relating to Children & Young People;
- The current approach to information sharing with youth services and consideration to be given to youth services' role in decision making;
- Organisations represented on the partnership meetings,;
- Acceptance of the recommendations in the report, noting that all recommendations were accepted;
- Plans for training across private sector businesses; and
- Any results/outworkings of the project in relation to children in care.

The Chair thanked all PSNI representatives for their briefing and they left the meeting.

Members **NOTED** the update provided.

#### **4. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 20 NOVEMBER 2025**

The Committee considered the draft minutes of the Committee meeting held on 20 November 2025.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- The minutes of the Committee meeting held on 20 November 2025 be approved.

## **5. COMMITTEE ACTION LOG**

The Committee **NOTED** the updates detailed within the Action Log and the Director of Partnership advised that following the previous meeting on 20 November 2025, all open action points had been actioned and subject to Members' agreement could now be closed.

Members **AGREED** that all Action Points from the meetings on 18 September 2025 and 20 November 2025 could now be closed.

### **5.1 Verbal Update on Police Property Fund**

The Partnership Manager advised that since the previous Committee meeting in November 2025, Board Members approved the Committee's recommendation to award funding to the six successful projects and to hold one project in reserve at the Board meeting on 11 December 2025 and Board officials issued the notification letters to successful and unsuccessful applicants on 12 December 2025.

The Partnership Manager advised that to date, four applicants requested and have received a debrief with the Programme Manager and two applicants requested written feedback on their application. The Partnership Manager noted that the deadline for requesting a review for those applicants who have undertaken a debrief is 29 January 2026.

The Partnership Manager advised that information workshops are scheduled with representatives from the successful projects in early February 2026 and subject to a satisfactory review of their accounts by the Board's Finance team,

it is anticipated that funding will be issued throughout February with a view to all projects commencing on 1 March 2026.

Members **NOTED** the update provided.

## **6. CHAIRPERSON'S BUSINESS**

The Chair advised there are no items for consideration under Chair's business today.

### **7.0 ITEMS FOR COMMITTEE BUSINESS**

#### **7.1 Independent Observers Report on 2025 Recruitment Campaign**

The Engagement Manager presented a paper on the Independent Community Observer Scheme (ICO) Annual Report for 2025.

The Engagement Manager provided background information to the scheme and explained that ICOs are impartial volunteers from the community, monitoring key aspects of the PSNI recruitment process and reporting to the Board. The Engagement Manager advised that, working in pairs to carry out unannounced visits, ICOs focus on observing that the same procedures are applied to all candidates and that the facilities and arrangements are adequate to support a recruitment process that is independent, transparent and fair.

The Engagement Manager explained that due to several ICOs withdrawing from the scheme since the last PSNI recruitment campaign in 2021, an additional ICO recruitment process was undertaken to ensure adequate capacity. Four ICOs were successfully appointed following interviews conducted in March 2025. This increased the total number of active ICOs to nine, which is the minimum number of volunteers to ensure the continued operation of the scheme.

The Engagement Manager noted that ICOs are involved at the Assessment Centre stage to observe a sample of the recruitment process for the post of PSNI Police Constable. ICOs report to the Board on the adequacy of facilities and arrangements and whether, as far as practicable, the same procedures were applied to all candidates.

In respect to this Annual Report, the Engagement Manager advised applications for the 2025 PSNI recruitment campaign for Police Constables opened on 22 January 2025, with assessments taking place in a new venue namely, Newforge Sports Complex. The assessment stage of the process commenced on 30 April 2025 and concluded on 3 July 2025.

The Engagement Manager highlighted some key facts in the report such as:

- ICOs carried out 35 visits and observed 35 Sergeant's Briefings and 157 role plays.
- During this campaign ICOs reported that in 89% (31) of their visits the same procedures were being applied across all assessments. This is a reduction of 7% from the previous campaign (96% from 53 visits).
- In relation to facilities, ICOs indicated that these were "good" in 60% (21) of the visits which was a 38% decrease from the previous campaign (98%).
- ICOs rated 40% (14) of the facilities as acceptable compared to 2% from the previous campaign.

The Engagement Manager noted that following a debrief session with the ICOs in October 2025, it was reported that Newforge was more than adequate and a preferred option to hotel settings used in previous campaigns, however some ICOs cited that the external noise from nearby sports pitches and adjoining rooms, impacted their decision to rate the facilities as 'acceptable' rather than 'good'.

The Engagement Manager noted PSNI have recently launched a Police Officer Constable recruitment campaign on 14 January 2026. As such, the ICO Scheme will remobilise and carry out observations at the assessment centre stage for this upcoming campaign, the timescales for which are likely to be similar to the 2025 recruitment campaign.

Following questions from Members, the Engagement Manager outlined what is involved at the Sergeant briefings and roleplay stages of the process, highlighted potential factors contributing to the variance between the data of the previous ICO campaign and this most recent campaign and explained that the venue for the assessment centres is chosen by PSNI.

Members **NOTED** the update provided.

It was AGREED to:

- **Approve** the 2025 ICO Annual Report and made a Recommendation to the Board to publish the report on the Board's website.

## **7.2 Advocacy Research Update**

The Director of Partnership presented a paper which provided Members with an update on the progress of the Advocacy deep dive research.

The Director of Partnership noted that at the June meeting of the Committee and in response to recommendation 16 of the Sweeney review, Members agreed to commission a deep dive into how the Board can advocate and support policing with the community, especially within communities where trust in policing has been historically low. The Director of Partnership added at the Board meeting on 4 July 2025, Members agreed to support this piece of work

through academic research, and they also considered that such work should not be limited to the role the Board can play but should look in its widest sense at the advocacy that is needed and consider who has a role to play in that. The Terms of Reference for this research were agreed by the Committee in September 2025.

The Director of Partnership advised that Policing Research Partnership has been established with University of Ulster (UU) and Queen's University with the governance arrangements and partnership agreement having been agreed in December 2025. The Director of Partnership noted that Board officials have met with UU and Queen's colleagues and UU are taking the lead. The Director of Partnership advised stakeholders have been invited to participate in either an interview or focus groups which will commence in late-January to March 2026 with a draft report ready for consideration in May 2026.

The Director of Partnership encouraged all Committee Members to take part in the interviews with the UU representatives and advised that Board officials will liaise with Members to agree suitable dates for any interviews. **(AP2)**

Following discussion, Members **NOTED** the Terms of Reference and associated timescales for the research.

### **7.3 Joint Committee – Verbal Update**

The Partnership Manager advised that the Joint Committee meeting that had been scheduled for 7 January 2026 had to be rescheduled for 24 April 2026. The Partnership Manager advised that the minutes of the previous Joint Committee meeting in April 2025 were approved by written procedure and are available for Members to view on Decisiontime.

The Partnership Manager reminded Members that the PCSP Meeting Schedule for January - February 2026 was circulated on 12 January 2026 which also included details of the latest PSNI student officer recruitment campaign.

Following a query from a Member in relation to an item in the minutes of the April 2025 meeting regarding the Joint Committee position on Speed Indicator Devices (SIDs) , the Partnership Manager clarified the current Joint Committee position that while funding may continue to be used to maintain existing devices, no new SIDs should be procured by PCSPs during the 2025/26 financial year using Joint Committee funding. The Partnership Manager added that there was a recent Assembly Oral Question to the Justice Minister on the issue and she will circulate the question and the Minister's response to Members for their information. **(AP3)**

Members **NOTED** the update provided.

#### **8. QUESTIONS FOR THE CHIEF CONSTABLE**

Members **NOTED** the follow up response from PSNI in relation to a query the Committee Vice Chair had raised at the previous meeting in November 2025. The Vice-Chair confirmed she is content with the response provided.

#### **9. COMMUNICATIONS ISSUES / OPPORTUNITIES**

Following agreement of the Terms of Reference (ToR) at the September 2025 meeting of the Committee, the Communications Manager advised Members that a Communications and Engagement audit had now been procured and the audit has commenced. The Communications Manager advised that as part of the audit, Members will be asked to meet with the appointed company and

provide their feedback. The Communications Manager noted that it is anticipated that this audit will be completed by the end of this financial year.

The Communications Manager also advised that the Board will support PSNI in the launch of the Right Care Right Person initiative when it is to be launched.

**10. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

The Engagement Manager reminded Members of the Problem Solving in Partnership Awards event on 19 February 2026 and advised if Members would like to attend to let him know.

**10. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting of the Committee is scheduled for **Thursday 26 February 2026** at 9.30 am in James House.

The meeting ended at 12.10pm.

**CHAIR**

**PARTNERSHIP DIRECTORATE**

**JANUARY 2026**