Northern Ireland Policing Board

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

Publication of the Northern Ireland Policing Board's response to the inspection conducted by His Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary and the Fire and Rescue Service on the Police Service of Northern Ireland

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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 (CJI NI) 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 of Justice 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 2025/26 HMICFRS PEEL inspection

HMICFRS inspection report – "An inspection of police effectiveness, efficiency and legitimacy" 2025/26

It examined two areas within the PSNI, namely:

- attracting, developing and retaining the workforce and creating a diverse and inclusive workplace
- using powers fairly, appropriately and with justification

HMICFRS has graded the PSNI as **Adequate** in both these areas.

Overall, the HM Inspector observed:

"We found that officers' use of force and stop and search powers was reasonable and proportionate. They were courteous while using these powers. However, officers' record keeping and standards of supervision need to improve."

And in relation to Workforce, the HM Inspector states that, "The Service is committed to supporting workforce health and well-being and has received external recognition for this."

Board analysis

Members considered the inspection report at board and performance committee meetings and observed that:

The board will examine the work of the new Task and Finish Group (TFG) which PSNI established to address the use of police powers including enhancing accurate reporting and improving its supervision and quality assurance of officers' use of force and stop and search powers.

The PSNI has taken steps to address the IT systems recording issues of undercounting within the use of force data that was identified as part of this inspection.

Members welcomed the inspection's area of improvement that PSNI progress the implementation of their new professional development review system and suggested there was a strong linkage between professional development reviews (PDRs) and outcomes.

Members raised concerns around supervisors having enough time to carry out PDRs and one-to-one obligations and insisted that the PSNI would ensure that managers have proper training and time to tackle professional development issues.

Members welcomed the inspection's area of improvement that the PSNI should assess psychological risks associated with its roles and introduce a screening

programme but concern was raised in that this work would not be completed until July 2027.

Members welcomed HMICFRS's finding that the PSNI require more accredited detectives and need to provide officers with specialist skills required for investigative work.

Members welcomed HMICFRS's finding in relation to the levels of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and trauma from public protection branch staff and consideration of potential limits on the length of time an officer could remain in a high-risk/stress department and the increased likelihood of this type of work taking a toll on wellbeing in the longer term.

A progress report in relation to addressing all the recommendations was made available to board members for consideration at the October 2026 performance committee meeting.

Conclusions

Overall, the board welcomes the findings of the HMICFRS report and acknowledges the ratings of the PSNI as "Adequate" in "attracting, developing and retaining the workforce and creating a diverse, and inclusive workforce" and "using powers fairly, appropriately and with justification." However, concerns were raised by members at some of the findings, in particular, no professional development reviews had been completed by PSNI for two years and the lack of psychological screening for those in vulnerable roles. There were also concerns raised with recording issues that led to undercounting within the use of force data. This has led to some board members questioning the rating of the PSNI as 'Adequate' in both of the areas inspected.

The board welcomes the identification of a number of areas of improvement by the HMICFRS inspectors. These include the implementation of a new professional development review system, ensuring that managers have proper training and time to tackle professional development issues, improvements to officer wellbeing and addressing IT issues with the recording of use of force data. The board is committed

to continuing to monitor the implementation of these areas of improvement within PSNI through its ongoing scrutiny work and the work of its committees.

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