



## KEY FACTS

# CYBER CRIME:

AN INSPECTION OF HOW THE CRIMINAL  
JUSTICE SYSTEM DEALS WITH CYBER  
CRIME IN NORTHERN IRELAND

A Follow-Up Review of Recommendation Implementation

NOVEMBER 2023



## WHAT IS A FOLLOW-UP REVIEW AND WHY DO CJI DO THEM?

- Follow-Up Reviews are carried out by Inspectors to assess the implementation of accepted inspection report recommendations.
- It allows organisations to demonstrate the improvements they have made.
- CJI usually carry out Follow-Up Reviews around three years after an Inspection Report is published, but other Inspections and Reviews had to be prioritised and the self-assessment process took longer than we had hoped before we could complete this one.



## WHAT DID THE INSPECTION REPORT FIND?

- In 2017 CJI published an Inspection Report on how the criminal justice system deals with Cyber Crime in Northern Ireland. Cyber crime involves the use of technology to cause harm and loss to organisations, businesses, services and individual citizens; the cost to the United Kingdom (UK) economy is estimated to be billions.
- As a society most of us now use a mobile phone, tablet, laptop or other device to communicate personal information and access services like shopping, banking, social media and more. Like many crimes, cyber crime is under reported but can cause significant financial loss and emotional damage to victims.
- The Inspection Report made one strategic and five operational recommendations to the Police Service of Northern Ireland (Police Service) and one operational recommendation to the Department of Justice (DoJ) and the Police Service jointly for improvement; all were accepted for implementation.
- These recommendations included:
  - The Police Service undertaking a comprehensive strategic analysis of cyber crime as it affects Northern Ireland;
  - a reduction in the backlog of digital forensic examinations and actions to support this;
  - a review of how well fraud and financially motivated cyber crime is recorded and investigated;
  - a review of Digital Evidence Support Unit function and staffing;
  - better training for Police Officers and police staff; and
  - the DoJ and Police Service working together to ensure the Cyber Strategy for Northern Ireland contained a comprehensive approach to address concerns and increase cyber crime awareness and internet security.



## WHAT DID INSPECTORS FIND DURING THE FOLLOW-UP REVIEW?

- Since the 2017 Inspection Report, the Department of Finance (DoF) working with the Department for the Economy, DoJ and Police Service, had led the development of a Strategic Framework for Action on Cyber Crime (the Framework) in 2018 as part of the overall UK response to cyber crime. A Cyber Security Centre was launched in 2020 to deliver against the Framework with a cross departmental Cyber Leadership Board. The Framework had been reviewed in 2022.
- The UK wide Action Fraud cyber crime reporting system was to be replaced.
- The Police Service and its Cyber Crime Team had a role to play in the wider cyber crime threat across the UK including input to the National Fraud Intelligence Bureau, Fraud and Cybercrime Annual Assessment 2022-23.
- The Inspection Team also acknowledged the key role that the Police Service played in the wider Organised Crime Task Force, in which cyber crime was one of the key elements. The Police Service and DoJ had refreshed the Organised Crime Task Force Cyber Crime subgroups and created a single Cyber Engagement Sub group, chaired by the Police Service.
- The Police Service treated cyber crime under two main sections, cyber dependent crimes (crimes that needed technology to commit like hacking into a computer or network) and cyber enabled crimes (crimes that could be committed other ways but using technology increased their scale or impact like malicious communications and indecent images).





- A new Cyber Crime Centre had a Cyber Crime Team who investigated cyber dependent crimes including on line fraud. Four Cyber Support Units had been created and analysed devices like mobile phones and CCTV footage used in cyber enabled crimes. However, the strategic position of cyber crime in the Police Service was under review along with consideration of what functions and services were carried out by Police Officers and police staff with specialist skills.
- Better statistical analysis and management information was still needed to support a demand model for cyber crime.
- Case delay at Court stages were attributed in part to difficulties in retrieving digital evidence from devices.
- There was a significant number of requests for mobile phone analysis not being processed in an appropriate timescale and Cyber Support Unit performance was well below the Cyber Crime Team.
- There was a steady increase in requests for CCTV analysis but both computer and mobile phone requests were reducing year on year.
- Increasing demands on the Police Service to develop technology and training to keep pace with an ever-changing landscape. Training for front line Police Officers still needs to be considered and resourced appropriately.
- Progress against the recommendations has been assessed by Inspectors as three operational recommendations achieved and one partially achieved and the strategic recommendation and two operational recommendations not achieved.



## WHAT HAPPENS NOW?

- Cyber crime continues to grow in complexity with developments like crypto currency and artificial intelligence evolving all the time. Awareness of the scale and service demands arising from cyber crime in our community and effectively responding to it is a challenge across the criminal justice system.
- The Police Service should continue to review how services and resource capability are strategically organised, their technology keeps pace with developments as well as continued engagement with partners to effectively prevent and investigate cyber crime in Northern Ireland.
- CJI is likely to carry out another full inspection of this topic in a future Inspection Programme.



If you would like to know anything more about us or this inspection please get in touch with:

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