



Kit Chivers, Chief Inspector, reviews where CJI stands after its first full year of operation

One year since it came into operation, CJI is beginning to establish a track record. We now have a set of published reports to refer to, and it's like building a wall: every additional report we issue is another brick which makes the whole structure stronger. The reports strengthen one another, because they show that Inspectors know what they are talking about, produce quality work, and convey consistent messages.

Above all they show that CJI adopts a consistent approach. We said at the outset that CJI was not going to be a 'naming and shaming' inspectorate: it was going to work with the agencies. We have been as good as our word. We have proved that we can convey hard messages to the agencies when necessary, but that we can then write our reports in a way that does not put the agency down. Our reports, which wherever possible combine the Inspector's recommendations with the agency's agreed Action Plan, represent a win-win outcome.

In our thematic reviews on sex offenders and on victims and witnesses we have shown the value of being able to take a cross-cutting approach to inspections. And we have demonstrated the value of being a local, Northern Ireland

inspectorate, because we are uniquely able to put our reports into context. The report on Magilligan prison was a good example of that.

CJI still has a fairly modest public profile, but I am not sure that is a bad thing at this stage of development. Organisations that gain a high profile in Northern Ireland can easily become political footballs. The trick is going to be to raise the profile gradually without being labelled as partisan. When the Assembly resumes – whenever that may be – local politicians will be keen to seize on CJI's reports as material for questions and debates, and I am confident that CJI be able to be of service to politicians of all parties. Our strategy is to continue to build the 'wall' with solid, authoritative reports.

If the reports are the bricks, relations with our stakeholder are the cement. Reports are good in themselves, but to have real strength we need to make sure that stakeholders are taken along with us at every step. So communication and networking are of the essence. That is why CJI will be continuing a programme of outreach to DPPs, Community Safety Partnerships and other community groups in the coming months. And that is why the annual Stakeholder Conference in January will again be so important.



Stakeholder Conference

CJI will be holding its annual Stakeholder Conference in the Dunadry Hotel on 18 January 2006.

The conference is the occasion for CJI to report on its recent work and consult its stakeholders on its plans for the next couple of years. But in addition each year we like to give the conference a special theme. This year the theme will be 'The role of the voluntary and community sector in the criminal justice system'. The voluntary and community sector is particularly important in Northern Ireland.

Voluntary and Community Sector Review

The sorts of questions which the conference will be addressing, and which CJI will be following up in a thematic review, are:

- How have voluntary sector organisations responded to the challenge of working, in part, as agents of government?
- How difficult has it been for them to reconcile those functions with their charitable status and their voluntary sector ethos?
- How comfortable are they about their relations with their funders?
- Do they find the arrangements for supervision and accounting unduly burdensome?
- From the funders' point of view, what problems do they encounter in working through the voluntary sector?
- Do they consider that the voluntary organisations represent good value for money?
- How effectively can funders quality assure the services that are being delivered?
- What are the elements of best practice in managing service contracts involving the voluntary sector?

Would you like to send us a short article for publication in the Spec? Articles should be short, written clearly and relevant to the work of CJINI. We would welcome a picture or image to go alongside your article.

The Stakeholder Conference will launch a review of the voluntary and community sectors' contribution to the criminal justice system later this year. There are a number of features which are common to all voluntary and community organisations. Essentially, they do not generate profits, are independent of government, gain from a meaningful degree of voluntarism and exist for public benefit.

There is no formal register of voluntary and community organisations in Northern Ireland, so it is difficult to know how many exist or operate in support of the criminal justice system. However, we know from the Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action that the overall sector makes substantial contributions to Northern Ireland life:

- A 2002 survey recorded almost 30,000 paid workers (over 4% of the total Northern Ireland workforce) and 448,000 volunteers;
- Significant support is received from the public who give time, skills and financial support. In 2001 over £180 million was donated by people in Northern Ireland;
- The sector generated £657 million in 2001 through grants, donations and the delivery of public services for government and the statutory sector.

CJI's preliminary thinking is that this should NOT be a review of organisation's efficiency; rather it should address the place of voluntary organisations within the criminal justice system, and their interfaces with other bodies. More specifically we suggest that the review should consider the added value of voluntary organisations in contributing to

outcomes of the Criminal Justice Review, and in promoting community confidence in the criminal justice system. We would wish to recognise the contribution of organisations which attract non-criminal justice resources to the sector, and which can "bridge" the community and formal systems – a particularly important issue in Northern Ireland. This would entail consideration of the added value of North/South and East/West dimensions (comparisons with ROI and GB), plus the national and international perspectives that voluntary organisations can bring to the criminal justice system. As well as considering their actual service delivery, we would also address the advocacy role of the voluntary and community sector in criminal justice matters.

CJI expects that there will be wide interest in this important review. Below are some key questions to be addressed in compiling the Terms of Reference:

- Are there important issues that should be taken into account in this review, which are not outlined above?
- What outcome(s) are desirable from this review e.g., a benchmark; a directory/map of services; policy and practice recommendations?
- How should the review's parameters be set, in relation to defining the criminal justice voluntary sector?
- How should the contributions of groups whose core, or sole role is not to support the criminal justice system, yet still make a significant contribution to it's work – e.g., victims groups, youth clubs, minority representative groups – be recognised?

WORK IN PROGRESS

<i>Subject of Inspection</i>	<i>Lead Inspector</i>	<i>Current Position</i>
Target Setting & Performance Management	Kit Chivers	Publication in January 2006
PBNI Corporate Governance	Tom McGonigle	Publication in January 2006
Compensation Agency	Brendan McGuigan	Publication in January 2006
Benefit Investigation Services	John Shanks	Publication in February 2006
Avoidable Delay	James Corrigan	Publication in February 2006
Human Resource Management PSNI	HMIC & Bill Priestley	Publication in March 2006
Maghaberry Prison	HMIP & Tom McGonigle	Publication in March 2006
Community Safety Partnerships and their relationships with District Policing Partnerships	Paul Mageean	Preparation-Fieldwork in March 2006
Role of the Voluntary Sector	Tom McGonigle	Preparation-Fieldwork in February 2006
Diversionary Schemes for Young People	John Shanks	Preparation – Fieldwork in February 2006
Realising the benefits of Causeway	Bill Priestley	Preparation-Fieldwork in March 2006

Joint CJI/HMIC inspection of Human Resources Management in the PSNI

Bill Priestley led for CJI on this joint Criminal Justice Inspection/Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary inspection and both he and the Deputy Chief Inspector Brendan McGuigan worked closely with HMIC during the preparatory phase.

An experienced team of HR experts and practitioners was assembled to enable the inspection to include five main thematic areas:

- Development
- Strategy & Planning
- Reward & Strategy
- Resourcing
- Individual and Corporate Health

In November members of District Policing Partnerships were invited to two consultation events, one in Omagh and the other in Belfast. The PSNI provided detailed pre-inspection information.

The fieldwork phase of the inspection took place in early December and involved a number of other inspectors from CJI as well as Brendan McGuigan.

The anticipated date of publication of the joint report is the beginning of March 2006.

Victims and Witnesses Thematic Inspection

Based on fieldwork undertaken during the first quarter of 2005 CJI issued the “Improving the Provision of Care for Victims and Witnesses within the Criminal Justice System” thematic inspection report in July 2005. Printed copies of the report were widely circulated and it is currently available for downloading from the CJI web site.

The report set out a range of findings based on an extensive programme of interviews, discussion groups with interested parties, and also in-depth consultations with the criminal justice agencies and voluntary bodies. The report makes a total of 37 recommendations designed to improve service:

- 10 key strategic recommendations;
- 8 recommendations in relation to the development of strategies, policies and plans;
- 15 recommendations to improve communication;
- 4 recommendations to enhance special measures.

Some of the fundamental themes which influenced the report’s recommendations included the need:

- for a central strategy to develop accountability, control and direct a joined-up service between the statutory agencies and voluntary sector for victims across the criminal justice system;
- to ensure that victims and witnesses issues are actively addressed, kept under review and if necessary a Criminal Victims Advocate for Northern Ireland be created;
- to develop a Witness Service Strategy based on assessment to ensure that witness needs are identified and satisfied when required irrespective of which type of court they are due to appear in;
- to enhance the quality and promptness of information exchange for victims and witnesses through one central information point;
- to review the victim referral system to enhance quality and timeliness of information exchange;
- to evaluate the effectiveness of the working of special measures for vulnerable or intimidated witnesses.

The report found that although agencies have accepted their new responsibilities and there has been worthwhile progress in some areas, the success of the policy initiative had so far been patchy. Victims and witnesses still ranked low in the order of priorities for some agencies, and there was insufficient ownership of the policy at senior levels.

The inspection highlighted that victims and witnesses had little knowledge of the Criminal Justice System and

indicated what experience they had was more likely based on fictional television programmes rather than information from the official agencies. This may have been unfair to the agencies and voluntary bodies who had invested in promotional material, conferences and outreach programmes. But a clear message was coming across that initiatives to date had not met some of the basic needs of victims including:

- their understanding of the system;
- they did not feel valued in terms of their role;
- the desire to have equal rights and status as others in the system;
- the need for improved contacts and information exchange;
- keeping them up-to-date with progress of their case;
- they felt aggrieved that they had to go searching for information themselves; and
- the level of support they received compared to what is on offer for the perpetrator of crime.

A particular concern was the lack of success to date in relation to some of the most vulnerable groups in society. Even where, as in the case of the ethnic minority community, agencies believed that they had gone out of their way to be helpful, the perception on the ground was different. The initiatives undertaken had not had the desired effect of raising public confidence among these groups.

The policies and procedures of the CJS relevant to victims and witnesses are not well understood by the public. There is a perception – not entirely unfounded – that the CJS is driven more by the needs of the legal practitioners and the rights of the defendant than by those of victims and witnesses.

Inspectors found that each victim is unique in how they react to a crime against them. The impact it has on their emotional and physical needs and their perceptions of how best to deal with the event are highly individual. However, their views are not actively sought or properly assessed to determine service delivery appropriate to their needs.

Standards of service vary within and across agencies, often influenced by the level of autonomy within organisations, the degree of awareness of policies and procedures, the level of experience of staff delivering the service, and the geographical location.

The Criminal Justice Board are co-ordinating activities in response to the report and developing an action plan. CJI will be working with agencies and voluntary bodies to assess how the recommendations contained in the report are being actioned.



Police Ombudsman's Report

CJI published its inspection report on the Office of the Police Ombudsman on 6th December, 2005.

The report described OPONI as “an effective and efficient organisation, which is keen to improve further”. CJI recognised that the task of the Police Ombudsman is a unique one and concluded that in the current situation devoting around one per cent of the cost of policing to providing a genuinely independent police complaints service cannot be regarded as disproportionate.

The inspection report identified many positive elements:

- The staff of OPONI are motivated by the work they do and are enthusiastic about it.
- Staff see their work in the wider context of the normalisation process in Northern Ireland.
- Equality and human rights are given high priority within the organisation and are actively promoted by Senior Management.
- It is a learning organisation, showing a real commitment to continuous improvement.
- The accredited training programme for investigators (ATP) is now well established and has enhanced the skills and knowledge of investigators.

- There is a comprehensive outreach programme that has yielded positive results with the public and stakeholders.
- OPONI has gained international recognition as the ‘gold standard’ for police complaints systems.
- The Senior Management team gives a strong lead to the organisation and manages it tightly.

Inspectors found that police at higher management levels had concerns that confidence in OPONI investigations within CID is lower than amongst other officers but Inspectors found no evidence to suggest that OPONI investigations were less than professional.

The report identified the main issue as the Ombudsman’s relationships with the Policing Board, some (but not all) police officers and the police staff associations. CJI recommended that, “The Ombudsman should take the opportunity of the forthcoming five-year review of the operation of legislation concerning the discharge of her functions to engage afresh with all the interested parties to establish better understandings about respective roles, objectives and methods of operation”.

The report made 13 main recommendations and 14 minor ones aimed at further improving the good level of service provided by OPONI to the public. OPONI responded positively to many of the recommendations and their responses have been published as an appendix to the CJI report.

Feedback on CJI's Inspections

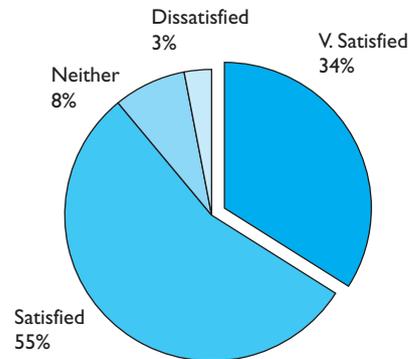
An integral part of all inspections conducted by the Criminal Justice Inspection Northern Ireland (CJI) is that the agency is invited to feedback on its corporate experience of the inspection. CJI has developed questionnaires to request corporate feedback about:

- Pre-inspection processes and fieldwork; and
- Post-publication experiences

Additionally, each and every person interviewed by CJI inspectors is asked for their feedback on how the interview was conducted by way of a separate questionnaire.

CJI expresses its thanks to OPONI for reviewing the draft questionnaires and for taking part in the first evaluation of an inspected organisation. The results of the evaluation of thirty-eight staff members from OPONI are presented below:

Opportunity to raise issues



Question	Yes	No
Explain the process	97%	3%
Polite	100%	0%
Friendly	97%	3%
Rushed	5%	95%
Impartial	97%	3%
Easy to understand	92%	8%
Enough time to answer	97%	3%
Rude	0%	100%
Pressured	10%	90%
Knowledgeable	83%	17%
Patient	97%	3%

Copies of forms are available on www.cjini.org

Inspection of Forensic Science Northern Ireland

The CJI report on Forensic Science Northern Ireland was published in December. It contains a number of recommendations which are aimed at sustaining and strengthening the laboratory as it undertakes a programme of modernisation and change and prepares for the building of a new laboratory. This includes a review of its governance strategy, including its relationship with the Northern Ireland Office and the strengthening of its customer relationships.

The report recommends a strengthening of the laboratory's management and scientific expertise and calls for the appointment of a change manager as well as the implementation of succession strategies. Improvements to service delivery are recommended in areas such as crime scene attendance, management and use of forensic science databases, fingerprints, accreditation and the turnaround times for reports – major improvement has already been achieved in timescales for DNA analysis.

Inspection of Scientific Support Services in the PSNI

An inspection of scientific support services in the PSNI was jointly undertaken by CJI and HMIC and published in December. Inspectors' overall assessment is that the PSNI is providing a valuable forensic science service, though some important changes and improvements are necessary.

The increasing reliance on forensic science in the investigation of crime requires an enhancement of its status and capability within the Service including the nomination of a 'champion' for volume crime (e.g. theft; burglary; care crime) and improved communication and conditions of employment for civilian scientific staff such as Crime Scene Investigators.

The report recommends that an urgent review should be carried out of all critical forensic science policies and that a comprehensive, corporate suite of policies is readily available to all staff. Inspectors drew particular attention to the storage, retention, management, weeding and destruction of forensic science exhibits from crime scenes.

An improved working relationship between PSNI and the Forensic Science laboratory is noted and it is recommended that more joint strategic planning should be undertaken in areas such as the submission of exhibits.

Work in Progress:

"Delay" Inspection

Fieldwork for the inspection of avoidable delay in the processing of criminal cases was undertaken in October. A wide range of meetings and focus groups were held with staff from all the criminal justice agencies, the judiciary and representatives of the voluntary sector. The objective of the inspection is to assess agency and collective responses to reducing avoidable delays and to focus in particular on youth cases, where the consequences of delay can be more serious. A final report will be published in February.



Inspection of the Social Security Agency's Benefit Investigation Services

This inspection forms part of the 2005/06 CJI work programme. The Justice (Northern Ireland) Act 2002 and subsequent Orders set out the organisations within the remit of the Chief Inspector of Criminal Justice. The Social Security Agency's role in terms of investigation and prosecution of fraud falls within the remit of the inspectorate.

Benefit Fraud has not always been appreciated as a real crime but following recent initiatives including the high profile SSA publicity campaign "It's a Real Rip Off" evidence would suggest that the public are now increasingly seeing it as a crime. Benefit fraud can take many forms, some of the most common types include:

- working while claiming benefit
- living together
- cashing benefit payment when not entitled
- multiple-identity fraud
- falsely claiming benefit
- failing to report a source of income
- failing to report savings above the benefit level
- failing to report a change of circumstances

Benefit Investigation Service (BIS) is the integral business unit within the Social Security Agency with responsibility to investigate suspected fraud and develop strategic links to the Criminal Justice System. (CJS). It has key responsibilities for enhancing public confidence that allegations of benefit fraud will be promptly actioned, effectively investigated and appropriately managed in terms of fairness and equity through to prosecution or other relevant conclusion.

The overall objective of the inspection is to evaluate the contribution that BIS makes to the CJS. This will include a review of the benefit fraud investigation processes and the effectiveness of interactions between BIS and their CJS partners in relation to both investigation and prosecution activities.

As part of the pre-inspection process BIS completed a self-assessment against the inspection framework, discussions also took place with stakeholders, for example, financial institutions, DVLNI, ARA, NIHE and the PPS and some individuals who had been investigated by BIS. Meetings were also held with BIS management to help focus and plan the inspection.

The main fieldwork phase was undertaken during September and October 2005. The work of the CJI team was assisted by the secondment of an operational manager from BIS and the acquisition of a consultant with senior Department of Works and Pension/Benefit Fraud Inspectorate expertise.

The first week of the fieldwork was concentrated on meetings with staff from all sections of BIS based in York House, Belfast. The second week of fieldwork saw the team visit both BIS and SSA staff located in Coleraine, Ballymena, Banbridge, Omagh and other SSA offices in Belfast. These meetings were planned to look at the wider fraud management and support issues including decision making processes, fraud liaison officer involvement and also to ascertain the views of investigators and their managers based in various regions.

NIACRO have co-ordinated meetings for CJI with people who have been investigated for benefit fraud.

The inspection team have recorded their findings and undertaken evaluations in November to enable emerging findings to be agreed with BIS management. It is intended that a draft report will be available to be discussed with BIS by the end of December and a final report will be published in February 2006.

RESULT OF CHRISTMAS CARD COMPETITION

CJI organised a Christmas card design competition among some organisations that work with young people.

There was a good response to the competition with some innovative designs. The winning entry (below) was designed by Dermott Bell.

Dan Mulholland presented the winner and runners up with their prizes and copies of the card featuring the winning design.



SKILLS FOR JUSTICE

Licensed as the Sector Skills Council for the Justice Sector in April 2004, Skills for Justice is coming towards the end of its second year of operation.

The team in Northern Ireland consists of Judith Thompson, NI Manager, Liz McCrystal, Implementation Officer, and Karen Alderdice, Administrator, and are now based in Great Victoria Street, within the offices of the Criminal Justice Inspectorate.

A key issue in establishing the organisation is to work with employers to establish their needs and priorities in terms of skills development. The work of Skills for Justice in Northern Ireland is overseen by the Northern Ireland Country group, which has representation from each organisation within the NI Justice system. It is chaired by Joe Stewart of PSNI, with Graham Kelly of PBNI as deputy.

During 2004-5 Skills for Justice have completed a labour market information report for each strand of the sector, enabling NI organisations to begin to make comparisons with their counterparts in England, Scotland and Wales.

At the request of the NI Country group we have completed a study into the current opportunities offered to Justice Sector organisations in relation to management and leadership development. Its findings will be discussed at a workshop on 17th January.

We are also commencing work on a similar study to identify what is currently being used by the Justice Sector in Northern Ireland to develop best practice in relation to equality, diversity and rights. This should be completed by the end of March 2006.

Skills for Justice is working with key partners in Northern Ireland to identify & implement new qualifications to meet the needs of the Justice Sector here, using a collaborative approach between organisations where this is appropriate. This approach has already been applied to community safety, and a learning providers' forum has been established in Northern Ireland to promote further work.

Further details on all of the above can be found on our website: www.skillsforjustice.com or contact our office on 028 90 258028.

Community Based Restorative Justice Schemes

On 5 December the Government published for consultation its proposed guidelines for community based restorative justice schemes.

The Criminal Justice Review of 2000 concluded that community based restorative justice schemes could have a useful part to play in dealing with low-level crime, provided they met the strict criteria specified by the Review. The criteria were that community based restorative justice schemes should:

- Receive referrals from a statutory criminal justice agency, rather than from within the community;
- Be accredited by, and subject to standards laid down by, the Government in respect of how they deal with criminal activity;
- Be subject to regular inspection by the independent Criminal Justice Inspectorate;
- Have no role in determining the guilt or innocence of alleged offenders.

CJI has always known that it might be called upon to perform the role of providing independent inspection of the schemes, and it is prepared for it.

CJI will be talking with the schemes and with the police and other statutory agencies during the consultation period to make detailed plans for what will be involved. Following the consultation period CJI will publish its proposed inspection framework, drawing on its standard inspection approach and applying it to the guidelines as they are eventually finalised.

CJI will be taking on this task in the belief that the schemes have the potential to succeed in meeting the criteria; and CJI will, as it always does, inspect in a supportive manner. But if any scheme fails to meet the criteria Inspectors will not hesitate to say so. CJI will report publicly the results of its inspections.

If you want to add your name to our mailing list, please visit our website www.cjini.org and fill out the form.

The Spec - Newsletter of Criminal Justice Inspection for more information regarding contributions to the newsletter please contact:

Criminal Justice Inspection Northern Ireland,
14 Great Victoria St., Belfast BT2 7BA Northern Ireland
Email: info@cjini.org Tel: 028 9025 8000
Fax: 028 9025 8033

Staff Changes

Farewell to Linda

CJI said farewell to Linda McGookin who has been Kit's PA since his appointment in June 2003 and who has contributed to the strong network which has developed between CJI and the Criminal Justice system. Besides being an excellent secretary Linda has also been the smiling face that greeted visitors to our office and friendly voice responding to callers on our switchboard. Linda is now PA to Brett Hannam the Head of I.T. in the NIO and will be based some of the time just across the road at Millennium House.

Away Day



CJI took time out of the office in September and spent a day at Lorne House (the Girl Guide HQ) to plan an outline inspection programme for the next three years and to consider risks that could prevent us meeting our objectives. These were very worthwhile exercises and generated a lot of ideas for what should be an interesting programme for the years ahead.

Aerial Zip Slide

Three members of CJI 'dared for RNIB' by hurtling across the Lagan on a zip wire suspended over 100 feet above the river to land safely at the blue fish on Laganside. Martina White, Dan Mulholland and Bill Priestley (pictured below), suitably dressed for the occasion in their CJI outdoor wear, took up the challenge and with support from colleagues and friends managed to raise a total of over £600 for the Royal National Institute for the Blind.



Bill Priestley; Martina White; Dan Mulholland