

Roads Policing

A follow-up review of inspection recommendations

November 2010





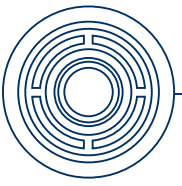
Roads Policing

A follow-up review of inspection recommendations

November 2010

Criminal Justice Inspection
Northern Ireland
a better justice system for all





Contents

List of abbreviations	iii
Chief Inspector's Foreword	iv
Section1: Follow-Up Review	
Chapter 1 Introduction	2
Chapter 2 Progress on recommendations	5
Chapter 3 Conclusion	12



List of abbreviations

ACC	Assistant Chief Constable
ACPO	Association of Chief Police Officers in England, Wales and Northern Ireland
ANPR	Automatic Number Plate Recognition
CJI	Criminal Justice Inspection Northern Ireland
DoE	Department of the Environment
DCU	District Command Unit (in police)
FSNI	Forensic Science Northern Ireland
HMIC	Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary in England and Wales
NI	Northern Ireland
PEACE 2	Planning, Engage, Account, Challenge, Evaluate
PSNI	Police Service of Northern Ireland
RTC	Road Traffic Collision
SPD	State Pathology Department
UK	United Kingdom





Chief Inspector's Foreword

The original inspection of Roads Policing in Northern Ireland, which was published in 2008, raised concerns about the ownership and leadership of roads policing enforcement in the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI). Inspectors were concerned that the enforcement of speed limits was less robust in comparison to England and Wales. The arrangements for investigating fatal and serious Road Traffic Collisions (RTCs) was assessed as weak and needed to be addressed urgently through the establishment of a specialist crash and collision unit.

This review has found that in 2010, the PSNI continues to make a valuable contribution to road safety through education and enforcement. We are encouraged by the ownership and leadership that is currently being given to roads policing and the contribution being made by the PSNI towards the new Road Safety Strategy. However, there has been only limited and recent progress made against the critical recommendation to improve the arrangements for the investigation of fatal and serious RTCs. While a Collision Investigation Unit has been established, it is still embryonic and will need the full support of the Assistant Chief Constable (ACC) Operational Support and the Head of Roads Policing if it is to reach its full potential and address the concerns raised in our original report.

The focus on improving road safety should continue despite the encouraging statistics so far this year and it is entirely appropriate that this area of police work is given the support and attention it deserves.

This review was conducted by Brendan McGuigan, Deputy Chief Inspector of Criminal Justice in Northern Ireland and Graham Johnstone on behalf of Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC). I would express my thanks to all who contributed to this follow-up review.

Dr Michael Maguire

Chief Inspector of Criminal Justice in Northern Ireland
November 2010

Section



Follow-Up Review



Introduction



In Criminal Justice Inspection Northern Ireland (CJI) and Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary's (HMIC) report on Roads Policing¹, we identified that the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI), who were primarily responsible for the enforcement of road traffic laws, were integrating this service with crime detection and had established partnerships with a range of law enforcement agencies, in particular the Driver Vehicle Agency in Northern Ireland.

However, Inspectors were concerned about the fragmentation in ownership and leadership of roads policing/enforcement in the PSNI and were calling for more robust enforcement action to tackle speeding and impaired driving² in particular.

The nine recommendations which related to the PSNI were about establishing the strategic ownership and leadership of roads policing and improving the investigation of fatal and serious Road Traffic Collisions (RTCs). Inspectors invited the PSNI to report on the progress made against the original recommendations and have incorporated their responses into this report.

This follow-up review will assess the continuing relevance of the original

recommendations and the progress made by the PSNI in delivering the Action Plan³ prepared and published as part of the original report. The Driver Vehicle Agency performance will be reported in the follow-up review of Enforcement in the Department of the Environment (DoE).

As part of this report, Inspectors conducted an examination of relevant reports, reviews, statistical reports and conducted interviews with:

- Assistant Chief Constable (ACC) Operational Support;
- Superintendent Roads Policing;
- Roads Policing policy staff;
- Roads Policing operational staff;
- District Command Unit (DCU) Community Safety Superintendents;
- Senior Investigating Officers (SIOs);
- Staff of the Fixed Penalty Processing Centre (FPPC);
- the Senior Coroner with the Coroners Service for Northern Ireland; and
- the State Pathologist for Northern Ireland.

In addition to these one-to-one interviews, Inspectors met with members of the Collision Investigation Unit (CIU) at Steeple in Antrim and the RTC unit at Forensic Science Northern Ireland (FSNI). Inspectors also

1 Roads Policing, Criminal Justice Inspection Northern Ireland and Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary, CJI June 2008 <http://www.cjini.org/CJNI/files/44/44ce2794-84e4-45fd-bbae-94b7a55b2177.pdf>

2 Impaired driving through the misuse of alcohol or drugs.

3 Roads Policing, Criminal Justice Inspection Northern Ireland and Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary, CJI June 2008 <http://www.cjini.org/CJNI/files/44/44ce2794-84e4-45fd-bbae-94b7a55b2177.pdf>



examined a random sample of fatal RTC investigation files involving both prosecution and no prosecution from 2009.

As we observed in our original inspection, the PSNI's partnership working is strong, particularly with the Driver Vehicle Agency, the Serious and Organised Crime Agency, Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs and the Social Security Agency. Joint operations are conducted on a regular basis and the sharing of information and intelligence has meant that several large criminal operations have been detected over the past 12 months.

The PSNI continues to provide in partnership with others, innovative educational programmes specifically targeted at young people and young drivers. During the period of this review, Inspectors noted three particular initiatives, which are described below.

Roadsafe Roadshow

The *Roadsafe Roadshow* continues to be the PSNI's flagship programme for providing advice to young people of the dangers on the road. The PSNI, Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service, Northern Ireland Ambulance Service, an Accident and Emergency Consultant, Road Trauma Support Group and a local commercial radio station, come together to produce a theatre-style show which highlights the sequence of events, the resources used and the impact on the emergency service personnel when a road traffic collision occurs. The show is usually presented in schools/colleges or local theatres and is directed at 16-18 year-old students. The show ends with a presentation by a young man confined to a wheelchair due to a RTC, who gives a very blunt and succinct account of what life is like for him since the collision.

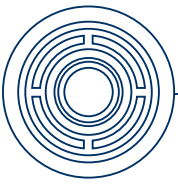
Project Evolution

In March 2010, the Roads Policing Unit within the PSNI launched their *Project Evolution* which involved the use of a Roads Policing patrol vehicle a Mitsubishi EVO VIII saloon car which has been heavily modified. The EVO VIII is at the heart of the campaign and has been designed to appeal to anyone with an interest in motoring and in particular the 17-25 year age group. It also provides information for those interested in modifying their car to look better, but who are not quite sure how to do it legally. The PSNI Roads Policing Unit have forged links with all the regional further education colleges and will be supplying them with road going cars, currently seized for having no insurance and due for scrapping, that can be easily converted into track day cars. These cars can be worked on as part of the student's course work with road safety educational input being given by their lecturers and Roads Policing Unit Education Officers. Once completed, the plan is to bring all these cars and the students involved in their production to compete in track day events at Kirkistown, Co. Down, under the control of Trackskills. The first of these days was due to take place in June 2010. The main thrust of this initiative is to change young driver's attitudes to driving and racing on the public roads.

Live to Play

Live to Play is a joint PSNI/Gaelic Athletic Association/An Garda Síochána/Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service educational initiative targeting young people in the border region who are affiliated to local Gaelic Athletic Association clubs. The overarching aim of the programme is to improve road user behaviour through a range of educational interventions. It is hoped through such interventions that attitudes and behaviours





towards risk taking and driving are changed. The following objectives are set in the programme:

- to examine the causational factors that lead to road death and serious injuries, for example excess speed, careless driving, non wearing of seatbelts;
- to encourage pedestrian safety for example when engaged in road running by wearing high visibility clothing;
- to adopt a more responsible attitude towards driving (especially travelling to/from matches) and use of motor vehicles;
- to remind young people that they are not indestructible and are as vulnerable as the next person; and
- to highlight that a mistake on the playing field could cost you the game but on the road, it could cost you your life.

There were 105 fatal collisions resulting in 115 deaths during 2009, an increase on the 2008 figures where 98 fatal collisions resulted in 107 deaths. This was the first time in 10 years that fatalities had increased. These results were mirrored in the number of seriously injured people which increased from 990 in 2008 to 1,035 in 2009. This year's statistics so far are encouraging with road deaths at their lowest levels since living memory (less than half of the total for the same period in 2009). Each one of these collisions represents significant loss and trauma to the families of victims and a substantial burden on health and rehabilitation services. In each and every case, families want to know how and why their loved ones died or were seriously injured, who was responsible and in appropriate cases, whether recourse should be sought through the criminal or civil justice systems. Each fatality is treated as an unlawful killing until the contrary is shown, so the police investigation becomes central in providing the answers and ensuring that where an unlawful killing has

occurred that the perpetrator is brought before the court. In 2008, there were 83 prosecutions in connection with deaths and serious injury, rising to 134 in 2009.

Road traffic offences represented almost 69% of all cases coming before the adult Magistrate's Courts in Northern Ireland in both 2008 and 2009. These figures reflect the contribution being made by the police in enforcing the traffic laws. In addition, the numbers of Fixed Penalty Notices for example for offences such as excess speed, not wearing seatbelts, and the misuse of a mobile 'phone, have increased from 71,599 in 2008 to 82,354 in 2009 and the trend continues upward for 2010.

CHAPTER 2:

Progress on recommendations

Recommendation 1

Ownership and strategic leadership for Roads Policing should rest with one ACC, with continuity in tactical command through a dedicated and experienced Chief Superintendent, who is centrally based and supported by a broad based experienced management team. Policy and operations should be combined.

Status: Achieved

PSNI Response:

Roads Policing became a centralised unit on 1 October 2008 under the ACC Operational Support Department. A Superintendent now leads the Roads Policing Department and work is underway to co-locate the Policy and Operations Branch at Castlereagh.

Inspectors Assessment:

The co-location of Roads Policing Policy and Operations is now complete and there is a clear connection to the strategic ownership of Roads Policing which now resides with ACC Operational Support. The current Head of Roads Policing has brought renewed vigour to the Department, as evidenced by the progress made against the recommendations since his appointment. The voluntary severance programme within the PSNI has created considerable changes in the leadership of police departments such as Roads Policing. This constant churn has undoubtedly impacted

on the vision and direction of travel for the Roads Policing Department. In addition, Roads Policing has not been immune from the various structural and functional reviews conducted over the last few years. The impact of these changes has resulted in a position where there are now fewer operational Roads Policing officers than at any time in the last 30 years and an under-investment in terms of training and equipment.

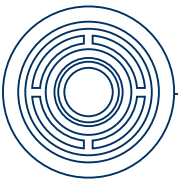
Recommendation 2

The PSNI should implement the ACPO advised speed thresholds.

Status: Partly achieved

PSNI Response:

A decision has been made by the PSNI to move in a staged approach towards the ACPO Guidelines on speed thresholds. The first stage was introduced on 1 June 2010. New software has been purchased for the Fixed Penalty Processing Centre in order to deal with the expected fourfold increase in detections. In addition, it is the PSNI's stated position that at the same time a Speed Awareness Course and a Young Driver Scheme was introduced on 1 June 2010 as a coping mechanism and educational tool to deal with those who are detected at the lower end of the speed threshold. It is hoped that these educational courses, as an alternative to a Fixed Penalty Notice and three points on the offender's



licence, will have a substantial impact upon driver behaviour and therefore result in reduced killed and seriously injured numbers on Northern Ireland's roads during 2010 and 2011. After a 12-month period, the threshold limit will be reviewed with a view to reducing it to the ACPO advised levels.

Inspectors Assessment:

The PSNI response to this recommendation has been much slower than expected however, Inspectors welcome the efforts made by the current Head of Roads Policing, who has clearly understood both the importance and urgency of this matter. The benefits to road safety from speed reduction, particularly in built-up areas cannot be underestimated and the sooner the ACPO speed thresholds are applied, the safer the roads will be. The first stage reduction was introduced on 1 June 2010 some two years behind the timeline included in the PSNI Action Plan. In tandem with the first stage reduction in the speed threshold, is the introduction of speed awareness training courses as an alternative to penalty points. Drivers who commit a lower-end speeding offence in Northern Ireland will be offered a one-off opportunity to participate in a driver awareness programme instead of receiving a fine and penalty points on their driving licence. Those detected speeding, aged 25 years and over, will be able to attend a Speed Awareness Scheme, while those under 25 years detected speeding, will be offered the chance to complete a Young Drivers Scheme. The four-hour classroom based Speed Awareness Scheme, run by Drive Tech (UK) Ltd (a subsidiary of the AA), follows a nationally approved syllabus and will be delivered by road safety specialists. Courses will be held at four venues across Northern Ireland. The Young Drivers Scheme aims to target vulnerable motorists and reduce the risk of young drivers becoming involved in serious injury and fatal road traffic collisions.

Following the review of the Fixed Penalty Processing Centre by the Continuous Improvement Unit, ownership has been transferred to the Criminal Justice Department. A number of performance improvement measures have been implemented and the Centre is confident that it is now prepared to deal with the spike expected after the reduced thresholds come into operation.

Recommendation 3

The joint PSNI/An Garda Síochána protocol should be used to enhance the co-operation and communication at operational level and facilitate sharing of information for roads policing purposes.

Status: Achieved

PSNI Response:

There are now regular bi-monthly meetings between the PSNI and An Garda Síochána at which previous joint cross-border operations are debriefed and new dates and locations for joint operations are identified. In January 2010, a joint training day was held at Maydown where officers from An Garda Síochána Traffic Corps and Roads Policing officers identified joint areas of concern, shared information and received training in relation to tachographs. The Superintendent from Roads Policing now sits on the Cross Border Superintendents' Meetings.

Inspectors Assessment:

Inspectors examined the minutes of the bi-monthly meetings which focus on areas of mutual interest and in planning future operations. They also spoke to a number of officers who have been involved in these joint operations, all who supported the initiative believing that they were helping to improve road safety particularly in border areas. The current level of threat from dissident



republicans has however had an impact on the frequency, location and duration of these operations. Positive relationships have been developed between operational officers on both sides of the border particularly in the North West where officers meet at the border to share intelligence and provide feedback on the effectiveness of the operation. More needs to be done to establish secure radio communication between operational officers operating on both sides of the border as mobile phone communication is not always guaranteed. Two Garda Traffic Corps officers were at the time of the inspection fieldwork on secondment to the PSNI Roads Policing team in Omagh. Officers from both the PSNI and An Garda Síochána are involved in delivering road safety education to GAA clubs in the border region through the *Live to Play* initiative.

Recommendation 4

The PSNI should set up a properly resourced unit for fatal and serious vehicle crashes and collisions, to reflect the service which currently exists in Great Britain, i.e. a dedicated Crash and Collision Investigation Unit. A sufficient number of roads policing staff should be adequately trained in collision investigation, commensurate with training provided in England and Wales which follows the ACPO Road Death Investigation Manual. The unit should be fully operational within two years.

Status: Partly achieved

PSNI Response:

It has been agreed that 14 officers from within the current establishment of the Roads Policing Units will be formed into two Collision Investigation Units. Each unit will consist of one

Sergeant and six Constable Investigators, which will be based at Mahon Road and Steeple. There will be a phased implementation of these units, the first of which will be based at Steeple. An expression of interest has been circulated within Roads Policing and a number of officers have come forward expressing an interest in this type of work. At the recent Resource to Risk Forum, PSNI Senior Management agreed to increase the establishment of Roads Policing by two Sergeants to enable the formation of these units without substantially affecting the operational capability of the Roads Policing Department. When a selection process to recruit Sergeants into Roads Policing has been completed within the next few months, the Steeple unit will be set up and be in a position to investigate fatal collisions for the PSNI to a much greater depth and professional standard than was previously possible.

Inspectors Assessment:

Inspectors are disappointed that despite the critical nature of this recommendation limited progress has only recently been made, and we believe that it continues to be a serious corporate risk to the PSNI. The PSNI Action Plan prepared in 2008 had committed the service to develop a Collision Investigation Unit comparable to those that operate in many other United Kingdom police services. The initial research was completed according to the Action Plan timetable however, the rejection of an initial business case meant that the project was on hold for over 12 months. In the interim period, the ACC Operational Support decided to support the further development of FSNI RTC services to meet future PSNI needs. This caused a rethink on what a PSNI Collision Investigation Unit should look like and how it should be resourced. A further slimmed down business case was prepared in 2009. The submission of this business case coincided with the review of police activity directed by the PSNI Chief Constable which placed a moratorium on recruitment to specialised Departments such



as Roads Policing. The current Head of Roads Policing recognised the need to move ahead and establish the Collision Investigation Unit, however it would have to be resourced from within Roads Policing. To enable this he has been prepared to challenge a number of issues to do with the allocation of resources to enable the establishment of one of the two units that will be required to fulfil the current and future needs. The Collision Investigation Unit based at Steeple became operational at the end of June 2010 and is made up of one Sergeant and five Constables. Inspectors visited the Unit and spoke to those on duty, they were shown samples of cases under investigation and the equipment that staff had managed to obtain to help them in their role. Inspectors were impressed with the enthusiasm and commitment of these officers who clearly want to deliver a more professional and thorough investigation, to establish not only the effects of the collision but also causation factors, educational issues and engineering solutions to reduce the risk of further collisions. However, the delay in establishing the units will mean that they are unable to realise their full potential in the short to medium-term particularly in respect of serious collisions. The current levels of fatal RTCs have meant that the unit is dealing with all fatal collisions. Whilst the reduction in fatal RTCs is to be welcomed, it is hard not to view this years figures as an aberration and Inspectors would concur with the concerns voiced by Roads Policing Inspectors, that the workload based on previous years figures could mean that each officer investigates 12 fatal collisions per year. If this is the case, the capacity for officers to look at serious (near fatal) collisions will be very limited if 'burnout' is to be avoided. In these circumstances, the PSNI plan to establish a further unit in Mahon Road should be pursued without delay. Training for investigators will include an Investigative Officer's course which contains many of the elements of the current Senior

Investigative Officer course and Authorised Officer Training for those who do not hold the qualification. PEACE Level 2 training for investigative interviewing will also be provided to those who have not been trained to that level.

Recommendation 5

Partner organisations for the Road Safety Strategy should renew their policies on traffic management and implement co-ordination arrangements to manage the free flow of traffic for planned and spontaneous road closures.

Status: Achieved

PSNI Response:

In February 2010 a multi-agency workshop led by the PSNI was conducted regarding the joint protocol arrangements for road closures covering identified road networks outside the Belfast region. As a result of this, these policies are to be updated and republished with a view to minimising the disruption to the motoring public in the event of a major incident on any of these identified road networks.

Inspectors Assessment:

The PSNI and Roads Service have agreed a Joint Protocol for the Management of Major/Critical Incidents on the Strategic Road Network. The protocol deals particularly with serious and fatal road traffic collisions and the roles and responsibilities of each organisation, to ensure a comprehensive investigation can be carried out, while at the same time, minimising disruption to traffic and reopening the roads as soon as it is safe to do so. Inspectors are not aware of any repetition of the serious disruptions experienced on both the M1 and M2 motorways in 2007-08 following a fatal collision and a serious road traffic collision. Up-grades to the M1, M2, A1



and Westlink have undoubtedly improved traffic flow on the main arterial routes and reduced the number of serious collisions. Further major road infrastructural projects are planned and Inspectors are aware of the regular meetings being held between Roads Service and the PSNI in the planning of such work. In August 2009, Belfast hosted the Tall Ships event which attracted over 800,000 visitors. It presented unprecedented logistical challenges to the road and rail infrastructure. The event surpassed all expectations and was assessed as an outstanding success. The PSNI had worked closely with the Road Service, Translink and the event organisers in ensuring that the normal life of the city continued without disruption.

Recommendation 6

A lowering of the drink drive limit should be simultaneously introduced on both sides of the border.

Status: Partly achieved

PSNI Response:

This is a matter which the current Environment Minister is keen to see progressed. It is our understanding that this issue will be taken forward by the DoE Road Safety Branch and we in the PSNI will support and assist in any way possible to achieve the necessary change in legislation.

Inspectors Assessment:

The Environment Minister initiated a public consultation on drink driving in 2009 not only to look at lowering the existing limits, but also the introduction of random breath testing and revising the penalties for drink drive offences. In response to a Parliamentary Question, the current Minister indicated that he had received strong support for lowering the limits and indicated his willingness to

reduce the limit. Events in the Republic of Ireland have moved at a much quicker pace with legislation already passed lowering the limits from 80mgs to 50mgs, however the law will not take effect until September 2011. The ACC Operational Support in the PSNI has also indicated that he will assist in any way possible and has opened up a debate for the introduction of powers to seize vehicles from drink drive offenders similar to those that exist in Scotland.

Recommendation 7

The formation of a small cadre of highly trained fatal and serious RTC Senior Investigating Officers should be implemented as a priority action.

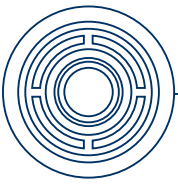
Status: Partly achieved

PSNI Response:

The PSNI did not fully accept the recommendation, committing only to identifying a cadre of Senior Investigating Officers and to training them to a recognised standard.

Inspectors Assessment:

The PSNI have continued to train District Response Inspectors to act as Senior Investigating Officers. The PSNI database shows that over 200 Inspectors have been trained in the role. However, the constant churn within the organisation means that some of those trained have now been transferred to other roles without ever having had cause to use their skills. There is also a concern that some officers who were trained a few years ago and never fulfilled the role, will have suffered from 'knowledge fade'. The PSNI provided Inspectors with a list of those officers who have been appointed Senior Investigating Officers for fatal collisions in 2009. Of the 104 fatal collisions (a small number of which involved more than one



death) there were 63 different Senior Investigating Officers. A small number of these Senior Investigating Officers have dealt with several fatal collisions in the last two years and confirm that their confidence and ability had increased with each new case. The rationale for the original CJI recommendation was based in the belief that as the Collision Investigation Unit became increasingly proficient, the role of Senior Investigating Officers could become more specialised. Provided the Collision Investigation Unit reaches its full potential the PSNI should then review its arrangements for appointing Senior Investigating Officers and consider moving to our original recommendation. The file read conducted by Inspectors showed that file quality had improved, they were more comprehensive and of a higher standard than those examined in 2007. It also showed that where Roads Policing officers are involved as either investigators or Senior Investigating Officers there is marked improvement in the quality of the investigation. The Sergeant in charge of the Collision Investigation Unit provided Inspectors with a template that she has developed for her officers to use when investigating a fatal collision. Inspectors accept that if used universally it will raise the standard of investigation to a new level. Inspectors also accept that it will take some time before the new arrangements begin to have an impact particularly in respect of the Coroners Court, however it is crucial that the Collision Investigation Unit is supported to enable its full potential.

Recommendation 8

The PSNI should seek to update their Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) strategy to reflect best practice developed in England and Wales.

Status: Partly achieved


PSNI Response:

The PSNI continue to attend National ANPR User Group meetings and work with the National Police Improvement Agency Implementation Team.

Inspectors Assessment:

ANPR is recognised by the PSNI as an essential tool in tackling crime and criminality and in dealing with road traffic offences. ANPR is still sitting within Crime Operations Department who control and monitor the usage of the system across the organisation. Cameras have now been up-graded on fixed sites and new technology has been introduced to provide live time information and intelligence to operational officers. The capacity of the system has also been enlarged not only in terms of fixed sites but also with the purchase of 'CLEARTONE', a new back office system that speeds up the feed of live-time information and intelligence to frontline enforcement teams. The National Police Improvement Agency has published a Benefits Realisation Plan for ANPR which details five direct benefits from ANPR. They are:

- reduced crime and terrorism;
- an increase in the number of offences brought to justice including for serious and major crime;
- reduced road casualties;
- to make the public feel safer and more confident in the police service; and
- to make more efficient use of police resources.



The PSNI ANPR benefits have now been aligned to the ACPO National ANPR Strategy and the current version of the National ACPO ANPR Standards. The emphasis on reducing terrorism has increased in the UK in preparation for the 2012 Olympic Games and means that it is now more akin to the existing PSNI Strategy. Inspectors assess that ANPR is being used as a very effective tool in a number of areas from Roads Policing, through to serious crime and anti-terrorism measures.

Officer is not attending the autopsy in every case and that it is very often left to the Family Liaison Officer whose purpose in attending is entirely different. The PSNI have issued recent instructions to Senior Investigating Officers to ensure that the Investigating Officer attends the autopsy. The current protocol is silent on this issue; Inspectors suggest that more explicit commitments should be considered when the document is next reviewed.

Recommendation 9

A formal protocol should be agreed between the State Pathology Department (SPD) and the PSNI.

Status: Achieved

PSNI Response:

The protocol between the State Pathology Department and the PSNI has now been agreed.

Inspectors Assessment:


The PSNI conduct investigations of all fatal and serious RTCs to determine how the collision occurred, who may have been responsible and in the case of an unlawful killing to ensure that where possible those responsible are brought before the criminal courts. The Coroner has responsibility for investigating unexpected, unexplained deaths or a death attended by suspicious circumstances and directs the State Pathology Department to conduct an autopsy. The protocol deals directly with the relationship between the State Pathology Department and the PSNI setting out the expectations and services that will be provided by both parties. Although the document is primarily geared towards homicide investigation, the basic principles can be applied to fatal RTCs. However, the State Pathologist continues to be concerned that the fatal Investigating

Conclusion

Inspectors are encouraged with the progress made by the current Head of Roads Policing on two of the three most critical recommendations, the lowering of the speed thresholds and the establishment of a fatal collision unit. However, more work needs to be done on the development of a small cadre of Senior Investigating Officers. We do acknowledge that file quality has improved and provided the Collision Investigation Unit is fully supported, will, in time, raise the standards of fatal and serious collision investigation to a new level. Of the nine recommendations made in the original report, four have been achieved and five partly achieved. Of the five partly achieved, significant progress has recently been made in lowering the speed thresholds. The recommendation in respect of lowering the drink drive limit is not within the gift of PSNI, though progress is visible.

The PSNI clearly spend a great deal of time policing the roads as almost 70% of all adult cases in the Magistrates' Court are motoring offences. Changing driver behaviour through education and enforcement is a key challenge for the PSNI. We are fortunate to be reporting at a time when the lowest figures for death and serious injury have been recorded. The reasons for this welcome change are as yet not totally clear though the disruption to road travel in February and March through snowfall has contributed.

Fatal and serious injury collisions have an enormous impact on our society, particularly for families, but also in terms of the demands that it makes on the acute health services and other emergency services. The PSNI are continuing to make an important contribution to road safety in Northern Ireland not only in terms of prosecuting offenders but more vitally in helping change driving behaviour and promoting greater care on the roads. The PSNI is showing no signs of complacency and Inspectors are encouraged by the desire of Roads Policing officers to make an even greater contribution through education and enforcement to road safety in Northern Ireland.



Copyright© Criminal Justice Inspection Northern Ireland
All rights reserved

First published in Northern Ireland in November 2010 by
CRIMINAL JUSTICE INSPECTION NORTHERN IRELAND
14 Great Victoria Street
Belfast BT2 7BA
www.cjini.org

Typeset in Gill Sans
Designed by Page Setup