Criminal Justice Inspection
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An Inspection of

COMMUNITY SAFETY AND LOCAL POLICING ARRANGEMENTS IN NORTHERN IRELAND

Including a Follow-Up Review of 'Working Together for Safer Communities - A Review of Policing and Community Safety Partnerships in Northern Ireland'

MARCH 2024

AN INSPECTION OF COMMUNITY SAFETY AND LOCAL POLICING ARRANGEMENTS IN NORTHERN IRELAND

INCLUDING A FOLLOW-UP REVIEW OF 'WORKING TOGETHER FOR SAFER COMMUNITIES – A REVIEW OF POLICING AND COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIPS IN NORTHERN IRELAND'

March 2024

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CONTENTS

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CHIEF INSPECTOR'S FOREWORD

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

RECOMMENDATIONS

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER 2: STRATEGY AND GOVERNANCE

CHAPTER 3: DELIVERY

CHAPTER 4: FOLLOW-UP REVIEW

CHAPTER 5: OUTCOMES

APPENDICES

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ACC	Assistant Chief Constable
ASB	Anti-Social Behaviour
CJI	Criminal Justice Inspection Northern Ireland
CoP	College of Policing
COVID-19	Official name issued by the World Health Organisation in 2020 for Coronavirus
CSB	Community Safety Board
CSN	Community Safety Network
DoJ	Department of Justice
DPCSP	District Policing and Community Safety Partnership
EA	Education Authority
HMICFRS	His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (previously known as Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary)
LPT	Local Policing Team
NICHE	Police Service's Records Management System
NIFRS	Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service
NIHE	Northern Ireland Housing Executive
NIPB	Northern Ireland Policing Board
NISCS	Northern Ireland Safe Community Survey
NISCTS	Northern Ireland Safe Community Telephone Survey
NPCC	National Police Chiefs' Council
NPT	Neighbourhood Policing Team
PBNI	Probation Board for Northern Ireland

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CHIEF INSPECTOR'S FOREWORD

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

RECOMMENDATIONS

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER 2: STRATEGY AND GOVERNANCE

CHAPTER 3: DELIVERY

CHAPTER 4: FOLLOW-UP REVIEW

CHAPTER 5: OUTCOMES

APPENDICES

PCSP	Policing and Community Safety Partnership
PfG	Programme for Government
POiNT	Police Service Intranet
Police Service	Police Service of Northern Ireland
POPT	Police Officer Part Time
REaL	Reference, Engagement and Listening events
SARA	Problem solving model
SOLACE	Society of Local Authority Chief Executives
UK	United Kingdom
YJA	Youth Justice Agency

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CHIEF INSPECTOR'S FOREWORD

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

RECOMMENDATIONS

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER 2: STRATEGY AND GOVERNANCE

CHAPTER 3: DELIVERY

CHAPTER 4: FOLLOW-UP REVIEW

CHAPTER 5: OUTCOMES

APPENDICES

CHIEF INSPECTOR'S FOREWORD

An effective community safety strategy underpinned by connected and trusted local policing and Policing and Community Safety Partnerships has the potential to transform communities in Northern Ireland.

The Police Service of Northern Ireland was created for all of us in a post conflict society and promised operationally independent, impartial policing we could be confident in, with a meaningful presence in, and real engagement with, citizens in local communities and the issues they face. Community policing became the cornerstone for the new service with ambitions for policing by consent and police legitimacy.

The Police Service of Northern Ireland have a critical role in how safe people are and how safe they feel in their communities. But they are not the sole owners of community safety; many other leaders and service providers like health and social services, housing, education, local councils, probation, political representatives and voluntary and community organisations are key to effective community safety wherever you live in Northern Ireland.

They form an important part of the community safety landscape where Departmental policies, strategy and priorities are intended to be delivered through a complex network of governance structures and organisations.

However, to do this there needs to be an effective strategy that is owned and known by all involved in its delivery.

This means investing in developing effective relationships and partnerships with local people and providing the local police presence they know and feel confident to engage with, share information with and get things done - together.

The value of effective neighbourhood policing was a golden thread throughout this inspection. This was well demonstrated in December 2023 when Neighbourhood Officers spotted suspicious activity and apprehended a £10 million drug haul in County Armagh.

Unfortunately, Northern Ireland is not where we hoped it would be in 2024 and there are still security threats and challenges that make policing some parts of our community particularly difficult. We have come a long way but there is still much to do. I am acutely aware of the impact of Department of Justice and Police Service of Northern Ireland budget pressures and the hard decisions needed about priorities and what services to stop or reduce, but it is also vital not to lose the ground gained.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CHIEF INSPECTOR'S FOREWORD

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

RECOMMENDATIONS

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER 2: STRATEGY AND GOVERNANCE

CHAPTER 3: DELIVERY

CHAPTER 4: FOLLOW-UP REVIEW

CHAPTER 5: OUTCOMES

APPENDICES

This inspection report makes one strategic and eight operational recommendations to strengthen Northern Ireland's vision for community safety and how it will be delivered. The continued implementation of the Hallmarks of Neighbourhood Policing and synergy between ambitious Police and Community Safety Partnerships, connected to each other and with a realistic and contemporary knowledge of issues in the communities they serve, are key to making the improvements needed.

I am grateful to the Lead Inspector, Dr Claire Feehan, and Inspector Rachel Lindsay, for their work on this inspection.

My particular thanks to the various community groups who shared their views and experiences with Inspectors. The valuable work they do, often facing tensions and challenges in their own communities, should not go unrecognised.

I am also grateful to the many Police Officers, Department of Justice officials, members of Policing and Community Safety Partnerships and others who contributed to and supported this inspection and Follow-up Review.

Jacqui Durkin
Chief Inspector of Criminal Justice in Northern Ireland

March 2024

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Re-building policing in the post-conflict era demanded a concerted effort to establish trust, confidence and the legitimacy of policing within all communities of Northern Ireland. Policing by consent and policing with the community were key defining principles of the Police Service of Northern Ireland which required policing to be based locally, within communities. While local policing in Northern Ireland has undergone various iterations over the last 22 years, the importance of local engagement has remained.

STRATEGY AND OVERSIGHT

Community safety

The Community Safety Framework (the Framework) was developed to ensure partnership working on community safety issues and to provide *'an operational roadmap'* for delivery.[1] While partnership working was effective, the Framework lacked analysis of key community safety issues and contained no action plan or objectives for delivery. Knowledge of the Framework was minimal among criminal justice partners, and there was no evidence of the use of the Framework to support priority setting or to assist with delivery. It is recommended that the Department of Justice develop and publicly consult on a new community safety vision, strategy and action plan for delivery.

The Community Safety Framework provided for a multi-agency governance model, however the Community Safety Board, recently renamed the Community Safety Network, did not have a governance role. A review of the Community Safety Board had identified several areas of improvement and progress was underway in the identification of shared priorities and a forward workplan. This work should continue, however the effective operation of the Community Safety Network should remain under review.

The community safety arena in Northern Ireland is a crowded space. Knowledge of existing community safety structures was fragmented; greater awareness was needed to avoid duplication and to maximise the impact of the Community Safety Network. It is recommended that a mapping exercise of the existing strategic and operational community safety fora in Northern Ireland is conducted.

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1   *Department of Justice, Community Safety Framework, October 2020,* available at
     https://www.justice-ni.gov.uk/community-safety-framework.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CHIEF INSPECTOR'S FOREWORD

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

RECOMMENDATIONS

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER 2: STRATEGY AND GOVERNANCE

CHAPTER 3: DELIVERY

CHAPTER 4: FOLLOW-UP REVIEW

CHAPTER 5: OUTCOMES

APPENDICES

Neighbourhood policing

Under the umbrella of 'service modernisation' the Police Service of Northern Ireland published a range of strategies including crime prevention, public engagement and neighbourhood policing. In their first year the Hallmarks of Neighbourhood Policing had provided a clear vision and structure for the delivery of neighbourhood policing, with evidence of targeted focus on key areas for development.

Oversight and governance of policing took place on a number of levels both external and internal to the Police Service of Northern Ireland. The Neighbourhood Delivery Board (the Board) was responsible for oversight of the Hallmarks of Neighbourhood Policing. Chaired by the Chief Superintendent for Local Policing, the Board provided an opportunity to discuss activities, developments and emerging trends in neighbourhood policing.

Delivery

In this inspection abstraction, or the withdrawal of Police Officers from their core function, was the key defining contextual feature of neighbourhood policing. Knowledge of the scale of abstraction was lacking and inconsistencies in the understanding and application of the Abstraction Policy were evident. Steps by the Police Service of Northern Ireland to amend the Abstraction Policy through a focus on 'change of duty' required further work to clarify 'secondary' duties which risked becoming a 'catch all' which diluted the role of neighbourhood policing. Increased focus was also required on protecting the function of neighbourhood policing through shielding 'primary' duties.

Inspectors were impressed by the dedicated, hardworking and passionate neighbourhood Police Officers they met. There was clear understanding of the importance of openness and transparency in interactions with the public. Community groups and representatives spoke highly of neighbourhood Officers noting that they were visible, accessible, responsive and community focussed. However, there were indications that this had started to reduce as Officer numbers fell. Targeting neighbourhood policing activity had become increasingly critical as resources depleted and a demand analysis was underway to help inform future decision making about neighbourhood policing. This analysis should include a re-evaluation of the 16-hour neighbourhood policing coverage commitment and a consideration of the calls Neighbourhood Policing Teams respond to and how their skillset can be optimised. The Service Procedure for Police Officers Part Time should also be published to provide clarity and ensure utilisation of an under-used resource.

The Hallmarks of Neighbourhood Policing had led to a notable shift in focus on the use of analytics, problem solving and developing and sharing learning, however further progress was needed. Inspectors were concerned about the sustainability of the police analyst function with increasing demand, including from Neighbourhood Policing Teams. Good examples of partnership working and problem solving within neighbourhood policing were provided, however enhanced guidance on the function of problem solving folders, and the threshold for opening and closing a folder, as well as on the identity and role of problem solving champions was needed.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CHIEF INSPECTOR'S FOREWORD

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

RECOMMENDATIONS

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER 2: STRATEGY AND GOVERNANCE

CHAPTER 3: DELIVERY

CHAPTER 4: FOLLOW-UP REVIEW

CHAPTER 5: OUTCOMES

APPENDICES

Neighbourhood policing was key to building and maintaining public trust in policing. A Service Procedure outlined that a Community Impact Assessment was required for all critical incidents where a police response was likely to significantly impact community confidence. Where possible this should include input from the local Neighbourhood Policing Team, however the Community Impact Assessment forms did not prompt this. The Service Procedure was not being followed and valuable information was being missed. It is recommended that the Police Service of Northern Ireland should ensure that Neighbourhood Policing Teams are consulted in all appropriate Community Impact Assessments and establish effective monitoring.

Defining and evidencing success in neighbourhood policing was a challenge and the Police Service of Northern Ireland had not yet established what 'good' neighbourhood policing looked like. There was no dedicated performance framework for neighbourhood policing and Inspectors questioned the appropriateness of the reliance on quantitative measures such as the number of Community Resolution Notices issued. This was ineffective and resulted in disparities across Districts. It is recommended that a dedicated performance framework is developed, based on bespoke performance data with a focus on quality of activity and outcomes.

Investment in the development of neighbourhood Officers was evident through the establishment of a neighbourhood training faculty in the Police College.

The first dedicated neighbourhood policing training programmes were to be rolled out in late 2023. A range of internal and external networks had been utilised to develop and share learning, including through secondments to Neighbourhood Policing Teams. This enabled cross-departmental knowledge sharing, however the often short periods fed into community frustrations regarding high Officer turnover in neighbourhood policing. The impact of high turnover was voiced most strongly and was most problematic when related to senior Officers, with improvements needed in the implementation of effective succession planning within neighbourhood policing.

Policing and Community Safety Partnerships Follow-up Review

An assessment of the progress made against the recommendations from the 2019 Criminal Justice Inspection Report *'Working Together for Safer Communities – A Review of Policing and Community Safety Partnerships'* was also undertaken within this inspection. Of the seven recommendations made, two were assessed as achieved, four partially achieved and one was assessed as not achieved.

Outcomes

Unanimous support for the Police Service of Northern Ireland was expressed throughout this inspection. Community groups and representatives reported engaged and supportive communities and neighbourhood policing was clearly articulated as key to this. Local engagement with known, named Police Officers produced a more personal service which was closer to communities than other police functions.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CHIEF INSPECTOR'S FOREWORD

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

RECOMMENDATIONS

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER 2: STRATEGY AND GOVERNANCE

CHAPTER 3: DELIVERY

CHAPTER 4: FOLLOW-UP REVIEW

CHAPTER 5: OUTCOMES

APPENDICES

In 2023 68% of respondents to the Northern Ireland Policing Plan Survey reported that the Police Service were engaged or very engaged in their local community. As a product of a post-conflict society still in transition, this view was not shared by the entire community and there remained some elements which did not accept the legitimacy of the Police Service of Northern Ireland. Inspectors heard of positive progress in areas which were traditionally viewed as hostile to the Police Service of Northern Ireland, where relations with, and the acceptance of, policing was improving.

Survey data indicated that confidence in policing was high with 73% of respondents to the 2021-22 Northern Ireland Safe Community Telephone Survey stating that the Police Service of Northern Ireland do a very or fairly good job as a whole. However, feedback from community groups was more nuanced and reflected the impact of high-profile events which damaged confidence in the Police Service of Northern Ireland more broadly. Local neighbourhood policing was experienced and perceived more positively, reinforcing the importance of the role of neighbourhood policing in the establishment and maintenance of confidence in policing. The percentage of survey respondents who reported that local police do a fairly or very good job was 94% in 2021-22.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CHIEF INSPECTOR'S FOREWORD

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

RECOMMENDATIONS

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER 2: STRATEGY AND GOVERNANCE

CHAPTER 3: DELIVERY

CHAPTER 4: FOLLOW-UP REVIEW

CHAPTER 5: OUTCOMES

APPENDICES

RECOMMENDATIONS

STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATION

STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATION 1

Within one year of report publication, the Department of Justice should develop and publicly consult on a new community safety vision, strategy and action plan for delivery. This should include an up-to-date, evidence-based analysis of current community safety issues and clear, timebound objectives for delivery.

(paragraph 2.7)

OPERATIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS

OPERATIONAL RECOMMENDATION 1

The Department of Justice should implement the remaining, agreed research actions on the operation of the Community Safety Network and review its operation bi-annually.

(paragraph 2.11)

OPERATIONAL RECOMMENDATION 2

Within nine months of the publication of this report, the Department of Justice, in conjunction with the Community Safety Network, should undertake a mapping exercise of the existing strategic and operational community safety forums which are operating across Northern Ireland. This should include an overview of purpose, membership, funding, governance and desired outcomes.

(paragraph 2.17)

OPERATIONAL RECOMMENDATION 3

Within six months of the publication of this report, the Police Service of Northern Ireland should review and update the current Abstraction Policy and reconsider the consultation on change of duty. The updated policy should be communicated and applied consistently across all Districts.

(paragraph 3.15)

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CHIEF INSPECTOR'S FOREWORD

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

RECOMMENDATIONS

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER 2: STRATEGY AND GOVERNANCE

CHAPTER 3: DELIVERY

CHAPTER 4: FOLLOW-UP REVIEW

CHAPTER 5: OUTCOMES

APPENDICES

OPERATIONAL RECOMMENDATION 4

Within three months of the publication of this report, the Police Service of Northern Ireland should ensure Neighbourhood Policing Teams are consulted in all appropriate Community Impact Assessments and establish effective consultation monitoring.

(paragraph 3.22)

OPERATIONAL RECOMMENDATION 5

Within six months of the publication of this report, the Police Service of Northern Ireland should review the 16-hour neighbourhood coverage commitment.

(paragraph 3.36)

OPERATIONAL RECOMMENDATION 6

The Police Service of Northern Ireland should complete and publish the new Police Officer Part Time Service Procedure within three months of the publication of this report. The Neighbourhood Delivery Board should provide oversight of the implementation of this Service Procedure across all Districts.

(paragraph 3.50)

OPERATIONAL RECOMMENDATION 7

Within three months of publication of this report, the Police Service of Northern Ireland should develop and communicate effective guidance for all Neighbourhood Policing Teams which outlines:

- the function of and process for opening and closing a problem solving folder; and
- the identity and role of problem solving champions.

(paragraph 3.60)

OPERATIONAL RECOMMENDATION 8

Within nine months of the publication of this report, the Police Service of Northern Ireland should develop and implement a dedicated performance framework for neighbourhood policing, based on bespoke performance data with a focus on quality of activity and outcomes.

(paragraph 3.84)

Areas for improvement identified by Inspectors during this inspection are included within the report.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CHIEF INSPECTOR'S FOREWORD

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

RECOMMENDATIONS

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER 2: STRATEGY AND GOVERNANCE

CHAPTER 3: DELIVERY

CHAPTER 4: FOLLOW-UP REVIEW

CHAPTER 5: OUTCOMES

APPENDICES

CHAPTER 1:
INTRODUCTION

WHAT IS MEANT BY COMMUNITY SAFETY?

1.1   Community safety is about creating communities where *'it is, and is perceived to be, safer to live and work, in particular by the reduction of actual and perceived levels of crime and other anti-social behaviour.'* [2] The Northern Ireland Community Safety Framework defines community safety as *'an approach to preventing, reducing and responding to risk taking behaviour and crime, and the impact of related harm in relation to vulnerable individuals and communities, which:*

- *provides local solutions to local problems;*
- *places prevention and early stage intervention as the primary aim;*
- *focuses on wider social issues, including anti-social behaviour, fear of crime, quality of life issues, and related public health, social and economic factors;*
- *is delivered through a partnership approach, involving the statutory, voluntary and private sectors, as well as community groups and individual citizens; and*
- *offers holistic and problem-orientated solutions.'* [3]

WHAT IS MEANT BY LOCAL POLICING?

1.2   The link between communities and the police has remained the bedrock of policing within the United Kingdom (UK), as originally instructed by the Peelian Principles.[4] These principles placed the concept of 'policing by consent' at the centre of policing[5] and in doing so located the delivery of policing locally, within communities.

1.3   The term 'local policing' is used to refer to the policing activities undertaken by frontline, uniformed Police Officers based in local communities, who deliver a *'community focused, local service to neighbourhoods and residents.* [6] Local policing is delivered across the two policing functions of neighbourhood policing and response policing. In Northern Ireland response policing is delivered by Local Policing Teams (LPTs).

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2   *Legislation.gov.uk, Justice (Northern Ireland) Act 2002, 24 July 2002,* available at
    https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2002/26/part/5/crossheading/community-safety.
3   *Department of Justice, Community Safety Framework, October 2020,* available at
    https://www.justice-ni.gov.uk/community-safety-framework.
4   *Law Enforcement Action Partnership, Sir Robert Peel's Policing Principles,* available at
    https://lawenforcementactionpartnership.org/peel-policing-principles/.
5   *House of Commons Library, Policing in the UK, September 2021,* available at
    https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CBP-8582/CBP-8582.pdf.
6   *Police Service of Northern Ireland, Local Policing,* available at **https://www.psni.police.uk/about-us/local-policing**.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CHIEF INSPECTOR'S FOREWORD

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

RECOMMENDATIONS

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER 2: STRATEGY AND GOVERNANCE

CHAPTER 3: DELIVERY

CHAPTER 4: FOLLOW-UP REVIEW

CHAPTER 5: OUTCOMES

APPENDICES

1.4   As the first line of response, LPTs are the *'teams of police officers that respond to emergency and non-emergency calls from members of the public.'*[7] This frontline role also requires LPT Officers to undertake investigations and to submit files to the Public Prosecution Service (PPS), as well as engaging with victims and witnesses and identifying and managing suspects. Neighbourhood policing refers to the *'teams of police officers…that police or support policing within the local community.'*[8] The work of Neighbourhood Policing Teams (NPTs) was linked to local priorities, with Officers working alongside partner organisations, statutory agencies and with communities to identify, understand and solve local issues. The key duties of LPT and NPT are shown in figure 1. The neighbourhood policing function was the focus of this inspection.

Figure 1: Local Policing Team (LPT) and Neighbourhood Policing Team (NPT) key duties

○ **The first line of police response, responding to emergency and non-emergency calls**

○ **Conduct investigations**

○ **Engage with victims, witnesses and vulnerable people**

○ **Identify and manage suspects**

○ **Collate and record information, intelligence and evidence**

Local Policing Teams (LPTs)   **Local Policing**   **Neighbourhood Policing Teams (NPTs)**

Work in a dedicated neighbourhood area ○

Provide a presence that is accessible, accountable and responsible for that community ○

Work collaboratively with partners to address community issues through problem solving ○

Develop trust and confidence in local policing ○

Identify threat, harm and risk through an understanding of local issues ○

Engage with partners to support and safeguard vulnerable people ○

Manage and divert those at risk of reoffending ○

Assist in the development of approaches to support crime prevention ○

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7   *College of Policing, Response policing career pathway*, available at
     https://www.college.police.uk/career-learning/career-development/career-pathways/response-policing.

8   *College of Policing, Neighbourhood policing career pathway*, available at
     https://www.college.police.uk/career-learning/career-development/career-pathways/neighbourhood-policing.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CHIEF INSPECTOR'S FOREWORD

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

RECOMMENDATIONS

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER 2: STRATEGY AND GOVERNANCE

CHAPTER 3: DELIVERY

CHAPTER 4: FOLLOW-UP REVIEW

CHAPTER 5: OUTCOMES

APPENDICES

COMMUNITY SAFETY AND LOCAL POLICING IN NORTHERN IRELAND

1.5 Entering a new post-conflict era and borne out of the 1998 Good Friday Agreement, police reform in Northern Ireland, as set out in the report of the Independent Commission on Policing (*the Patten Report*), was a key part of the Northern Ireland peace process. The transformation of the relationship between policing and society was viewed as critical to making progress in a divided society where acceptance, trust and legitimacy in policing was entwined with a history of conflict and ongoing tensions. The response was a vision which put Policing with the Community at the core of the Police Service as a means of enhancing its representativeness and inclusivity in its service delivery. The Patten Report defined this approach as '*…the police working in partnership with the community, the community thereby participating in its own policing and the two together, mobilising resources to solve problems affecting public safety over the longer term…*'[9]

1.6 This approach and the role of neighbourhood policing has been a focus for the Police Service of Northern Ireland (the Police Service) and those responsible for policing governance and accountability over the last 20 years. Neighbourhood policing was key to the development and maintenance of trust, confidence and legitimacy in policing, a fact which was most acute in post-conflict societies such as Northern Ireland where societal divisions remained and where acceptance of a Police Service for all required local engagement and an understanding of local issues and identities. The ongoing transitional nature of society in Northern Ireland saw progress in the implementation of Policing with the Community, as reported by Criminal Justice Inspection Northern Ireland (CJI) in 2012,[10] however this was not universal with small sections of society remaining less accepting of the Police Service.

1.7 The function of neighbourhood policing in Northern Ireland was formally established by a commitment in the 2007 Policing Plan[11] to provide every neighbourhood with access to local policing.[12] Following the Review of Public Administration in 2015, and in response to budget pressures, the Police Service revised its structures, establishing 11 police Districts and three Area Command structures. As part of this restructure, the Police Service created 26 LPTs, which, in areas of high policing need, were supported by 34 NPTs. [13]

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9   *Independent Commission on Policing for Northern Ireland, A New Beginning: Policing in Northern Ireland, The Report of the Independent Commission on Policing for Northern Ireland, September 1999,* available at **https://cain.ulster.ac.uk/issues/police/patten/patten99.pdf**.

10 *CJI, Policing with the Community, A follow-up review of inspection recommendations, September 2012,* available at **http://www.cjini.org/getattachment/50fd48fb-5a98-4d85-992f-b39680b6a99a/report.aspx**.

11 *NIPB, Policing Plan 2007-2010,* available at **http://drupal-nipb.nigov.net/files/nipolicingboard/media-files/policingplan2007-2010.pdf**.

12 *Police Service of Northern Ireland, Chief Constables Annual Report 2007-2008,* available at **https://www.psni.police.uk/sites/default/files/2022-07/chief%20constable%20annual%20report%202008.pdf**.

13 *Blaylock, D. & Hughes, J., QUB, Experiences of the new PSNI Local Policing Model, February 2018,* available at **https://pureadmin.qub.ac.uk/ws/portalfiles/portal/295996849/research_on_experiences_of_new_psni_local_policing_model.pdf**.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CHIEF INSPECTOR'S FOREWORD

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

RECOMMENDATIONS

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER 2: STRATEGY AND GOVERNANCE

CHAPTER 3: DELIVERY

CHAPTER 4: FOLLOW-UP REVIEW

CHAPTER 5: OUTCOMES

APPENDICES

The LPTs were established to respond to calls, conduct investigations and to deal with community problems, and although each LPT Officer had responsibility for a specific area, the demand from response policing greatly impacted the amount of time available to them to address local neighbourhood issues.[14]

1.8 In 2018 the Police Service and the Northern Ireland Policing Board (NIPB) launched a public consultation on local policing in Northern Ireland. The Local Policing Review[15] (*the Review*) sought to explore how the Police Service could best meet demand and deliver effective local policing. The Review included a priority simulator which enabled respondents to consider the allocation of police resources against local priorities. The findings identified that police visibility remained a high priority for the public, with analysis suggesting that '*the absence of visibility means the absence of policing.*' There remained strong support for neighbourhood policing, however evidence suggested that this function had declined in the preceding years. In 2019 the Police Service re-committed to increased investment in neighbourhood policing. This included additional neighbourhood Officers, neighbourhood policing responsibility allocated at ward level and a minimum of 16 hours daily NPT coverage. [16]

1.9 Community safety in Northern Ireland was sustained by collaboration, partnership working and through the dedication of local community groups. Unlike in England and Wales, where the Crime and Disorder Act 1998[17] enshrined in law a requirement for partnership working through Community Safety Partnerships, [18] at the time of this inspection there was no legislation underpinning and necessitating partnership working on crime and disorder in Northern Ireland. Similar to Scotland, where partnership working was given a statutory footing through Community Planning Partnerships[19] (under which Community Safety Partnerships operate), the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014[20] put community planning and partnership working on a statutory footing, with the Police Service a named statutory partner.

1.10 Policing and Community Safety Partnerships (PCSPs) were established under the Justice Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 (the 2011 Act)[21] to work with local people to identify and address local community safety issues. There were 11 PCSPs in Northern Ireland, one for each Council area. In Belfast there was one principal PCSP and four District PCSPs (DPCSPs). PCSP membership was comprised of

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14 *HMICFRS, PEEL: Police effectiveness 2017, An inspection of the Police Service of Northern Ireland, March 2018,* available at **https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmicfrs/wp-content/uploads/peel-police-effectiveness-2017-psni.pdf**.

15 *NIPB, Local Policing Review 2018, Consultation Response, November 2019*, available at **https://www.nipolicingboard.org.uk/files/nipolicingboard/media-files/local-policing-review-response-document.pdf**.

16 *Police Service of Northern Ireland, Annual Report and Accounts, for the year ended 31 March 2021, July 2021,* available at **https://www.psni.police.uk/sites/default/files/2022-07/chief%20constable%20annual%20report%202021.pdf**.

17 *Legislation.gov.uk, Crime and Disorder Act 1998,* available at **https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1998/37/part/I/chapter/I/crossheading/crime-and-disorder-strategies**.

18 A review of Community Safety Partnerships was initiated in 2023 following findings that local partnerships in England and Wales, including Community Safety Partnerships were not being used as effectively as they could be.

19 *Legislation.gov.uk, Local Government in Scotland Act 2003*, available at **https://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2003/1/part/2/enacted**.

20 Legislation.gov.uk, Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014,

21 *Legislation.gov.uk, Justice Act (Northern Ireland) 2011*, available at **https://www.legislation.gov.uk/nia/2011/24/contents**.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CHIEF INSPECTOR'S FOREWORD

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

RECOMMENDATIONS

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER 2: STRATEGY AND GOVERNANCE

CHAPTER 3: DELIVERY

CHAPTER 4: FOLLOW-UP REVIEW

CHAPTER 5: OUTCOMES

APPENDICES

political members nominated by the District Council, independent members appointed by the NIPB and representatives from seven designated organisations, including the Police Service, the Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE), the Probation Board for Northern Ireland (PBNI), the Youth Justice Agency of Northern Ireland (YJA), Health and Social Care Trusts, the Education Authority (EA) and the Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service (NIFRS). Attendance and participation of designated members at PCSP meetings was a statutory requirement, however attendance at Policing Committees was not.

1.11   The functions of PCSPs, as set out in the 2011 Act, were to:

- monitor the performance of the police;
- make arrangements for obtaining the co-operation of the public with the police;
- obtain the views of the public about matters concerning the policing of the District;
- prepare plans for reducing crime and enhancing community safety; and
- provide financial and other support to those involved in activities to reduce crime or enhance community safety.

1.12   Oversight of PCSPs was through a Joint Committee comprising representatives from the NIPB and the Department of Justice (DoJ). The Joint Committee also agreed and provided funding and set strategic priorities to ensure that PCSP activity was focussed on key areas of importance. Each PCSP had a Council employed PCSP Manager who was responsible for day-to-day management and administration. PCSPs monitored police performance through a Policing Committee, with public PCSP meetings held to facilitate contact between the Police Service and the public. Research conducted in 2019 on the Effectiveness of Policing Committees[22] identified the need for a clear, consistent and shared understanding of the role and purpose of the Policing Committees among all stakeholders, as well as a clearer understanding of what is meant by the term 'accountability'. Recommendations were also made regarding consideration of the potential to increase the role of independent members and more regular engagement between PCSPs, Policing Committees and the NIPB.

1.13   Community safety activities across Northern Ireland were further sustained through the activities of complementary bodies, including the work of the Community Safety Board (see Chapter 2), Multi-Agency Support Hubs, Anti-Social Behaviour Forums, the Rural Crime Partnership and the Business Crime Partnership. This was in addition to the significant number of localised community groups who work on the ground in local areas, delivering local community safety initiatives in partnership with statutory bodies, partner agencies and community representatives.

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22   *Morrow, D., Byrne, J., & Good, R., Ulster University, Research on The Effectiveness of Policing Committees, April 2019,* available at **https://www.nipolicingboard.org.uk/files/nipolicingboard/publications/research-report-on-the-effectiveness-of-policing-committees.PDF**.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CHIEF INSPECTOR'S FOREWORD

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

RECOMMENDATIONS

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER 2: STRATEGY AND GOVERNANCE

CHAPTER 3: DELIVERY

CHAPTER 4: FOLLOW-UP REVIEW

CHAPTER 5: OUTCOMES

APPENDICES

NEIGHBOURHOOD POLICING IN THE UK AND THE REPUBLIC OF IRELAND

1.14   Policing Vision 2025, the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) transformation vision for policing in England and Wales, reported that by 2025 *'Local policing will be tailored to society's complex and diverse needs – with the delivery of public protection being informed by community priorities.'*[23] The need for transformation in local policing emerged from a requirement to better understand and serve local communities which were increasingly diverse, alongside a necessity to work with partners to address increasing demand. Policing Vision 2025 envisaged increased investment in, and the modernisation of, neighbourhood policing to address these challenges. This included using uniformed Officers *'to help solve local problems, tackle anti-social behaviour and build trust and legitimacy in communities.'*

1.15   In 2016, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC), now His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS), cited *'evidence of the erosion of preventative policing in our neighbourhoods'* in England and Wales. [24] HMIC reported that policing suffered from a reduction in neighbourhood teams, high levels of abstraction from neighbourhood duties, inconsistent use of intelligence within neighbourhood policing to direct problem solving activities, a lack of analytical support and a confused picture of engagement in most forces. CJI also reported on similar issues, including the abstraction of Officers from neighbourhood duties in the Police Service in 2011.[25] HMIC criticised the lack of action to *'redefine'* neighbourhood policing in the context of reduced budgets and changed demand. It recommended national guidance was developed to outline the essential elements of neighbourhood policing.

1.16   The College of Policing (CoP) published the Neighbourhood Policing Guidelines in 2018.[26] This included guidance for frontline Officers, supervisors and senior leaders on engaging communities, solving problems, targeting activity, promoting the right culture, building analytical capability, developing Officers, staff and volunteers and developing sharing and learning. The guidelines noted that Chief Officers should work to deliver and support neighbourhood policing and *'ensure it is built on effective engagement and consultation with communities'*[27], this included:

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23   *NPCC, Policing Vision 2025, November 2016,* available at
      https://news.npcc.police.uk/releases/police-chiefs-and-pccs-set-out-a-vision-for-policing-in-2025.
24   *HMIC, PEEL: Police effectiveness 2016, March 2017,* available at
      https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmicfrs/wp-content/uploads/peel-police-effectiveness-2016.pdf.
25   *CJI, Police Service of Northern Ireland Customer Service, May 2011,* available at **http://www.cjini.org/
      getattachment/93329071-5912-41bd-9119-57f8e4ffc7a6/PSNI-Customer-Service.aspx**.
26   *College of Policing, Neighbourhood Policing,* available at
      https://www.college.police.uk/guidance/neighbourhood-policing.
27   *College of Policing, Engaging Communities, January 2021,* available at
      https://www.college.police.uk/guidance/neighbourhood-policing/engaging-communities.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CHIEF INSPECTOR'S FOREWORD

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

RECOMMENDATIONS

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER 2: STRATEGY AND GOVERNANCE

CHAPTER 3: DELIVERY

CHAPTER 4: FOLLOW-UP REVIEW

CHAPTER 5: OUTCOMES

APPENDICES

- Officers, staff and volunteers being responsible for and having a targeted visible presence in neighbourhoods;
- a clearly defined and transparent purpose for engagement activities;
- regular formal and informal contact with communities;
- working with partners;
- making information available about local crime and policing issues to communities;
- engagement that is tailored to the needs and preferences of different communities;
- using engagement to identify local priorities and inform problem solving;
- Officers providing feedback and being accountable to communities; and
- Officers supporting communities, where appropriate, to be more active in the policing of their local areas.

1.17   The size of the Police Officer workforce in England and Wales declined by 14% between 2009 and 2019. While Operation Uplift almost returned Officer numbers to 2009 levels by 2022,[28] the number of neighbourhood Officers in England and Wales remained 6,000 fewer than in previous years.[29] In 2022, HMICFRS again noted concerns about the decline in neighbourhood policing in England and Wales, including forces where NPTs had been removed altogether, high levels of abstraction from neighbourhood roles and linked this to reduced levels of public confidence in policing.[30]

1.18   In Scotland the 2020 Joint Strategy for Policing [31] and the 2023-24 Annual Police Plan[32] also included the need to understand and address the needs of local communities and the importance of effective engagement. This took the form of a public health approach and included community wellbeing as a key priority for policing. This was based on the core purpose of policing in Scotland, as set out in the Police and Fire Reform (Scotland) Act 2012, which was to *'improve the safety and well-being of persons, localities and communities in Scotland.'*[33] The Strategy and Annual Police Plan identified community policing as fundamental to the operation of Scottish policing.

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28   *Gov.uk, Police workforce England and Wales statistics, 30 September 2022*, available at **https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/police-workforce-england-and-wales**.

29   *UK Parliament Hansard, Crime and Neighbourhood Policing, Volume 727: debated on Tuesday 31 January 2023*, available at **https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2023-01-31/debates/8A1AA734-0ADD-4565-9A3D-768FB2976434/ CrimeAndNeighbourhoodPolicing**.

30   *HMICFRS, State of Policing, The Annual Assessment of Policing in England and Wales 2022*, available at **https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmicfrs/wp-content/uploads/state-of-policing-2022.pdf**.

31   *Police Scotland and the Scottish Police Authority, Joint Strategy for Policing (2020), Policing for a safe, protected and resilient Scotland, 2020,* available at **https://www.scotland.police.uk/spa-media/crhngr0e/joint-strategy-for-policing-2020-21.pdf**.

32   *Police Scotland and the Scottish Police Authority, Annual Police Plan 2023-24, 2023,* available at **https://www.scotland.police.uk/spa-media/qfubyb0z/annual_police_plan_23_24_10991_23_ar-final.pdf**.

33   *Legislation.gov, Police and Fire Reform (Scotland) Act 2012*, available at **https://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2012/8**.

1.19   In the Republic of Ireland the An Garda Síochána Strategy Statement 2022-2024[34] included community as one of its five pillars, aiming to *'strengthen connections with communities, working in partnership to keep people safe.'* A key strategic priority within the community pillar was a visible, responsive approach to problem solving with communities developed through a Community Policing Framework (the Framework). The Framework set out plans to ensure that *'every street, home, and business in Ireland is patrolled by a member of An Garda Síochána who is part of a* [Community Policing] *team.'*[35] The responsibilities of Community Policing Gardai under the Framework ranged from quality of life issues and school/college engagement, to non-emergency Garda response to community issues, to juvenile and adult case management and the monitoring of sex offenders in an assigned area.

INSPECTIONS AND REVIEW REPORTS

1.20   In 2015 HMIC inspected the Police Service's response to austerity and assessed that *'how the PSNI responds and keeps communities safe is at the heart of its choices.'* The inspection found that *'the PSNI has an explicit commitment to community policing and to improving public confidence in the police.'* [36] In 2017 HMICFRS assessed the Police Service as *'good at keeping people safe and reducing crime'* and noted that it *'works well with partner organisations to tackle problems of crime and anti-social behaviour.'*[37] An area for improvement was recorded in the Police Service's approach to problem solving, which was noted as inconsistent. In 2020 HMICFRS reported positively on the Police Service's community engagement referencing the variety of communication channels and initiatives utilised to reach all communities. In response to the 2017 area of improvement, HMICFRS identified that the Police Service had made good progress in problem solving, with a revised *'crime prevention strategy to encourage a culture of early intervention'*, investment in neighbourhood policing and the roll out of an Open University training course on problem solving.

1.21   In 2009 CJI published its first inspection of Policing with the Community[38] and reported on the substantial progress made in the implementation of the neighbourhood policing programme and against the recommendations from the Patten Report. However, work remained to fully embed policing with the community as the core function of the Police Service. CJI reported positively on the partnership working undertaken *'by the dedication of NhP* [Neighbourhood

34   *An Garda Síochána, Strategy Statement 2022-2024,* available at **https://www.garda.ie/en/about-us/publications/policing-plans/strategy/an-garda-siochana-strategy-statement-2022-2024-english.pdf**.

35   *Garda National Community Engagement Bureau, National Community Policing Framework, An Garda Síochána – Keeping People Safe, August 2023,* available at **https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/2b073ace02ec498f9aee9ff73db49183**.

36   *HMIC, Responding to austerity, Police Service of Northern Ireland, March 2015,* available at **https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmicfrs/wp-content/uploads/psni-responding-to-austerity.pdf**.

37   *HMICFRS, PEEL: Police effectiveness 2017, An inspection of the Police Service of Northern Ireland, March 2018,* available at **https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmicfrs/wp-content/uploads/peel-police-effectiveness-2017-psni.pdf**.

38   *CJI, Policing with the Community, An inspection of Policing with the Community in Northern Ireland, March 2009,* available at **http://www.cjini.org/getattachment/ccae1ea9-133f-4199-8c29-0ff8b48206b6/Policing-with-the-Community-An-inspection-of-Policing-with-the-Community-in-Northern-Ireland.aspx**.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CHIEF INSPECTOR'S FOREWORD

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

RECOMMENDATIONS

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER 2: STRATEGY AND GOVERNANCE

CHAPTER 3: DELIVERY

CHAPTER 4: FOLLOW-UP REVIEW

CHAPTER 5: OUTCOMES

APPENDICES

Police] *officers and community partners*' while acknowledging that placing partnership arrangements on a statutory footing would improve co-ordination and integration of services. A CJI Follow-Up Review published in 2012, noted further progress with the development of delivery guidelines for the 2011 Policing with the Community Strategy beginning '*to embed PwC* [policing with the community] *as the default style of policing across the PSNI*.' [39] However, CJI raised concerns about resourcing and the potential risk it may have on progress made. CJI also noted that the establishment of PCSPs partially fulfilled the recommendation of the need for a statutory basis for partnership working. A 2023 CJI review of Community Restorative Justice Ireland and its accredited schemes commented on the importance of consistency in police personnel in the establishment of positive working relationships within communities, recommending that the Police Service develop induction training for new community Police Officers to explain the ethos of community-based restorative justice.[40]

1.22   CJI conducted an initial inspection of PCSPs in 2014[41], following their establishment in 2012 and reported on bureaucratic and costly governance arrangements, significant '*variation in the nature and effectiveness of Policing Committees*' and a '*lack of measurable indicators to signpost improvement*.' The inspection highlighted the successful delivery of community safety projects and positive working relationships with partners. A 2019 CJI inspection[42] reported on a '*greater sense of cohesion within and across PCSPs*' alongside recognition of the vital role held by PCSP managers and support teams. CJI identified the need for a review of the strategic approach to communications, improvements in how policing was held to account by the Policing Committee and how the Police Service reported to them. CJI also recommended that Belfast PCSP be subsumed into the Belfast District PCSPs.

1.23   In 2012 CJI inspected the criminal justice systems approach to addressing Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB).[43] Acknowledging the importance of partnership working, CJI recommended greater encouragement of, and commitment by, justice and non-justice agencies to work together in the implementation of the Community Safety Strategy. The crucial role of PCSPs was also highlighted, with reference to community input into decision making and education opportunities.

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39   *CJI, Policing with the Community, A follow-up review of inspection recommendations, September 2012,* available at
      http://www.cjini.org/getattachment/50fd48fb-5a98-4d85-992f-b39680b6a99a/report.aspx.
40   *CJI, Review of Community Restorative Justice Ireland and its Accredited Schemes, 24 May 2023,* available at
      http://www.cjini.org/TheInspections/Inspection-Reports/2023/Apr-June/Review-of-Community-Restorative-Justice-Ireland-an.
41   *CJI, Policing and Community Safety Partnerships, A review of governance, delivery and outcomes, December 2014,* available
      at **http://www.cjini.org/getattachment/aacda6ac-11fa-4d0a-944a-4ba2cd4eed28/report.aspx**.
42   *CJI, Working together for safer communities, A review of Policing and Community Safety Partnerships in Northern Ireland,
      August 2019,* available at **http://www.cjini.org/getattachment/010eb06d-a1b7-46b9-85cd-50af58cb6f98/report.aspx**.
43   *CJI, Anti-Social Behaviour, An inspection of the criminal justice system's approach to addressing anti-social behaviour in
      Northern Ireland, October 2012,* available at
      http://www.cjini.org/getattachment/3e02e6eb-f2bd-446e-a3fe-5b72d4ee8a85/report.aspx.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CHIEF INSPECTOR'S FOREWORD

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

RECOMMENDATIONS

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER 2: STRATEGY AND GOVERNANCE

CHAPTER 3: DELIVERY

CHAPTER 4: FOLLOW-UP REVIEW

CHAPTER 5: OUTCOMES

APPENDICES

1.24   A 2020 investigation by the Office of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland reported that the handling of 'Black Lives Matter' protests had damaged confidence in policing within the Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities in Northern Ireland.[44] The Ombudsman further reported that, when contrasted against the prompt identification of suspects involved in the protest, the premature closing of a Police Service investigation into a 'Protect Our Monuments' protest further eroded confidence.[45] In 2020 HMICFRS investigated the Police Service's response to the funeral of Bobby Storey which took place during the first restrictions imposed in response to the COVID-19 pandemic (*the pandemic*). The investigation found that the Police Service took a consistent approach to investigating alleged Regulation breaches at similar events and that much of the public criticism was unwarranted due to the confusing nature of the Regulations.[46] However this event, the Police Service's response and the conclusions reached by the investigation team led to accusations of 'two-tier policing' in Northern Ireland, with implications for confidence in policing. More recent high profile events, including the outcome of the judicial review into the response by the Police Service to a commemoration event at Sean Graham's bookmakers during the pandemic and findings of political pressure within the process, alongside a number of significant data breaches, had further eroded public confidence.

THE 2023 INSPECTION

1.25   This inspection aimed to examine the effectiveness of the community safety and local policing strategic and operational structures, partnership working and the performance of the Police Service's neighbourhood policing function, as assessed against *The Hallmarks of Neighbourhood Policing*.[47] It also sought to assess progress made against recommendations made in CJI's 2019 inspection of PCSPs.[48] The full methodology for this inspection is contained in Appendix 2 and the terms of reference are provided in Appendix 3.

1.26   Inspection fieldwork with the Police Service took place in June 2023 and involved in-person and virtual interviews and focus groups with individuals and departments which operate on a regional basis as well as with LPT and NPT Officers and supervisors. The inspection focussed on four police Districts: Belfast, Derry City

44   *OPONI, An Investigation into Police Policy and Practice of Protests in Northern Ireland, December 2020,* available at **https://www.policeombudsman.org/PONI/files/85/858a4b0b-9b99-4921-b947-5fae248ba683.pdf**.

45   *OPONI, Police Ombudsman: Investigation Into 'Protect Our Monuments' Protest 'Closed Prematurely', February 2023,* available at **https://www.policeombudsman.org/Media-Releases/2023/Police-Ombudsman-Investigation-Into-%E2%80%98Protect-Our-M#:~:text=The%20Police%20Ombudsman%20has%20concluded,identification%20of%20the%20protest%20organisers.**.

46   *HMICFRS, The Police Service of Northern Ireland: An inspection into the Police Service of Northern Ireland's handling of the Bobby Storey funeral on 30 June 2020, May 2021,* available at **https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmicfrs/wp-content/uploads/inspection-into-psni-handling-of-the-bobby-storey-funeral-30-june-2020.pdf**.

47   *Police Service of Northern Ireland, The Hallmarks of Neighbourhood Policing, September 2022,* available at **https://www.psni.police.uk/sites/default/files/2022-09/npt-hallmarks-spreads.pdf**.

48   *CJI, Working together for safer communities, A review of Policing and Community Safety Partnerships in Northern Ireland, August 2019,* available at **http://www.cjini.org/getattachment/010eb06d-a1b7-46b9-85cd-50af58cb6f98/report.aspx**.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CHIEF INSPECTOR'S FOREWORD

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

RECOMMENDATIONS

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER 2: STRATEGY AND GOVERNANCE

CHAPTER 3: DELIVERY

CHAPTER 4: FOLLOW-UP REVIEW

CHAPTER 5: OUTCOMES

APPENDICES

and Strabane, Causeway Coast and Glens and Ards and North Down. These Districts were chosen to provide a geographic spread and to enable a focus on the urban/rural dimension to policing.

1.27   Interviews and focus groups were conducted with officials from the DoJ, the NIPB and with PCSP Managers, Chairs and Vice Chairs. Several PCSP meetings were also attended. Interviews with representatives from various representative bodies on the Community Safety Board (CSB) also took place.

1.28   Stakeholder consultation formed an important part of the inspection methodology. Interviews were conducted with representatives from various community groups involved in the delivery of local community safety initiatives within the four policing Districts referenced. Organisations from across a range of Section 75 groups were also invited to participate.

1.29   Information was augmented and triangulated against material provided by the Police Service and the DoJ through self-assessment and relevant information from all of the main organisations participating in this inspection.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CHIEF INSPECTOR'S FOREWORD

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

RECOMMENDATIONS

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER 2: STRATEGY AND GOVERNANCE

CHAPTER 3: DELIVERY

CHAPTER 4: FOLLOW-UP REVIEW

CHAPTER 5: OUTCOMES

APPENDICES

CHAPTER 2:
STRATEGY AND GOVERNANCE

COMMUNITY SAFETY LEGISLATION AND STRATEGY

2.1 Outcome 7 of the draft 2016-21 Programme for Government (PfG) *'We have a safe community where we respect the law, and each other'*[49] placed community safety as a key strategic focus of the Northern Ireland Executive. This outcome was about the creation of safe environments that give people the confidence they need to engage fully in society, linking community safety with wellbeing and to wider quality of life improvements. A new PfG underwent public consultation in 2021, the central justice outcome *'Everyone feels safe - we all respect the law and each other'*[50] was similar to the previous PfG. Departments remained working towards the indicators contained within the 2016-21 delivery framework.

2.2 The DoJ Corporate Plan 2022-2025,[51] contained four key strategic themes: support safe and resilient communities; address harm and vulnerability; challenge offending behaviours and support rehabilitation and deliver an effective justice system. Under the 'support safe and resilient communities' theme, the 2023-24 Business Plan[52] aimed to deliver *'enhanced collaborative working with statutory and community safety partners to deliver key community safety priorities, including tackling anti-social behaviour and hate crime, alongside progression of legislative reviews on these issues.'*

2.3 The Justice (Northern Ireland) Act 2002[53] provided for the development of a strategy to enhance community safety in Northern Ireland. The 2012-2017 Community Safety Strategy for Northern Ireland *'Building Safer, Shared and Confident Communities'*[54] contained more than 70 short, medium and long-term commitments on issues identified by local communities, including on early intervention, tackling alcohol and drug related crime, domestic and sexual violence, ASB and hate crime as well as safety issues at interface areas.

49 *Northern Ireland Executive, Draft Programme for Government Framework 2016-2021, May 2016,* available at **https://www.northernireland.gov.uk/sites/default/files/consultations/newnigov/draft-pfg-framework-2016-21.pdf**.
50 *Northern Ireland Executive, Programme for Government, Draft Outcomes Framework, Consultation Document, 25 January 2021,* available at **https://www.northernireland.gov.uk/sites/default/files/consultations/newnigov/pfg-draft-outcomes-framework-consultation.pdf**.
51 *Department of Justice, Corporate Plan 2022-2025 & Business Plan 2022-23*, available at **https://www.justice-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/justice/DoJ%20Corporate%20Plan%202022-25%20and%20Business%20Plan%202022-23.pdf**.
52 *Department of Justice, Business Plan 2023-24, Year 2 of DoJ Corporate Plan 2022-25,* available at **https://www.justice-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/justice/Department%20of%20Justice%20Business%20Plan%202023-24.pdf**.
53 *Legislation.gov.uk, Justice (Northern Ireland) Act 2002, July 2002*, available at **https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2002/26/section/71**.
54 *Department of Justice, Building Safer, Shared and Confident Communities, A Community Safety Strategy for Northern Ireland 2012-2017, July 2012,* available at **https://www.justice-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/doj/cs-strategy-20122017.pdf**.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CHIEF INSPECTOR'S FOREWORD

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

RECOMMENDATIONS

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER 2: STRATEGY AND GOVERNANCE

CHAPTER 3: DELIVERY

CHAPTER 4: FOLLOW-UP REVIEW

CHAPTER 5: OUTCOMES

APPENDICES

2.4   The Community Safety Strategy was replaced by the Community Safety Framework
(*the Framework*) in 2020.[55] The purpose of the Framework was to *'ensure effective
connectivity between the community safety work of the responsible agencies
and provide an operational roadmap on how to collectively deliver the safer
community objectives set out in the PfG and Community Plans, whilst providing
the mechanism to respond proactively and reactively to operational need.'*
The approach to delivery was through problem solving and partnership working.
The following four areas were the focus of Framework activity:

- Taking a preventative approach;
- Addressing volume crime and ASB;
- Addressing harm, vulnerability and repeat victimisation; and
- Enforcement and supporting reducing of re-offending.

2.5   Inspectors found the Framework had no up-to-date understanding or analysis of
the scale or scope of the community safety issues selected as areas of focus and
no specific targets, objectives or commitments on delivery. The Framework stated
*'consideration will be given to the requirement for separate implementation plans
and measurements on achieving outcomes, subject to theme/priority'* however
this had not materialised and there was no method of monitoring actions taken
towards delivery in priority areas or reporting on progress. The Framework did
provide for a multi-agency governance model to *'support a two-way information
flow between the strategic and operational response to emerging issues'*, however,
as will be addressed in the following section, the CSB did not hold a governance
role. Positively, the importance of tackling paramilitary activity and organised crime
in supporting safer communities was referenced with an acknowledgement of the
role of prevention and the requirement for collaboration on these important issues.

2.6   Stakeholders and individuals in the criminal justice organisations were asked about
their awareness of the Framework as well as questioning its utility to set direction for
the delivery of community safety priorities. With the exception of a small number of
stakeholder organisations, the responses indicated a lack of knowledge of both the
existence and content of the Framework. The DoJ explained that the focus of the
Framework was driving and ensuring partnership working on issues of community
safety, however no evidence was provided of the use of the Framework to support
priority setting or in assisting with delivery. The Framework did not feature within
local District Council Community Plans, the NIHE Community Safety Strategy, the
2020-25 Policing Plan, local Policing Plans, nor within the Police Service's strategies
for engagement, neighbourhood policing or crime prevention. A reference was
made within PCSP Action Plans which noted that cognisance had been taken of the
Framework in the development of the Action Plan, however this had been stipulated
in guidance issued to PCSPs by the Joint Committee that oversees PCSPs to assist
with Action Plan development. The Organised Crime Strategy 2021-2024 referred to
the development of a Community Safety Framework.

55   *Department of Justice, Community Safety Framework, October 2020,* available at
https://www.justice-ni.gov.uk/community-safety-framework.

2.7　The delivery of safer communities requires strong partnership working which not only reflects wider cross-Departmental objectives, but also has a robust strategic strand that pulls priorities together in a cohesive manner, enabling partners to understand and reflect on their role and responsibility for delivery. An effective community safety strategy should clearly align with the goals and strategies of the criminal justice system and partner organisations that contribute to community safety and be based on relevant and up-to-date best evidence. It should reflect the views and needs of the local population and set out clear commitments for delivery within measurable timescales. Effective partnership working should be encouraged and reflected at all levels, providing a top down strategic overview while allowing for bottom up involvement, participation and ownership of delivery at a local level. Details should be provided which outline the governance arrangements and the mechanisms for the monitoring and reporting of progress against the strategy.

STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATION 1

Within one year of report publication, the Department of Justice should develop and publicly consult on a new community safety vision, strategy and action plan for delivery. This should include an up-to-date, evidence-based analysis of current community safety issues and clear, timebound objectives for delivery.

COMMUNITY SAFETY BOARD

2.8　The CSB was established in April 2020 *'to provide a forum for a multi-agency partnership model aimed at linking the strategic and operational response to community safety'* as outlined in the Framework. The role of the CSB was to:

- Progress community safety issues under the agreed priority workstreams of People, Place and Powers (including Police and Procedure) using a public health approach for shared issues where appropriate;
- Agree to the set up and stand down of Community Safety Response Groups to respond to specific community safety concerns;
- Consider and confirm whether the necessary powers and 'tools' are in place to give effect to community safety (for example legislation and local council powers);
- Horizon scanning and agreement of research priorities on community safety issues (emerging trends);
- Agreed messaging on community safety issues and forward planning for known periods of significance (for example the summer and university freshers week); and
- Discuss thematic issues according to the forward workplan.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CHIEF INSPECTOR'S FOREWORD

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

RECOMMENDATIONS

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER 2: STRATEGY AND GOVERNANCE

CHAPTER 3: DELIVERY

CHAPTER 4: FOLLOW-UP REVIEW

CHAPTER 5: OUTCOMES

APPENDICES

2.9　The CSB was chaired by the DoJ and membership comprised of senior representatives from a range of justice and non-justice partners including the NIHE, the Northern Ireland Federation of Housing Associations, the EA, Department for Communities, the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives (SOLACE) and the Public Health Agency.

2.10　The CSB held an important role during the pandemic in bringing senior partners together to discuss issues and develop actions relevant to community safety within the public health context. However, as the context normalised after the pandemic, research was conducted by the Head of DoJ Community Safety Partnership Branch[56] to further develop a shared vision, to explore how shared priorities could be agreed and progressed and how the value of the partnership could be maximised and demonstrated. The results of the research were collated into five themes and a progress plan developed. The five themes were:

- Theme 1: Clarity of purpose;
- Theme 2: Aligning and progressing priorities;
- Theme 3: Membership;
- Theme 4: Communications; and
- Theme 5: Evidencing impact.

2.11　Actions were agreed and progress initiated against the first three themes, including a review of the terms of reference and agreement on the following shared statement of purpose; *'Working together to identify cross cutting community safety issues, facilitate partnership working; and enable a problem-solving approach (to addressing harm and vulnerability).'* Agreement was also reached on a change of name to the Community Safety Network (CSN) to more accurately reflect the partnership work undertaken and to extricate the association between 'Board' and a governance role, which the CSB did not hold. A consistent SOLACE representative for a period of two years was sought as a solution to the disruption of rotating representation and a PCSP representative was also sought. Inspectors acknowledge that the implementation of the research recommendations were at an early stage, however Inspectors believe that the effective operation of the CSN should remain under review post implementation to identify further areas for improvement.

OPERATIONAL RECOMMENDATION 1

The Department of Justice should implement the remaining, agreed research actions on the operation of the Community Safety Network and review its operation bi-annually.

56　*O'Neill, L., Action based research – An exploration of the Community Safety Board, unpublished.*

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CHIEF INSPECTOR'S FOREWORD

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

RECOMMENDATIONS

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER 2: STRATEGY AND GOVERNANCE

CHAPTER 3: DELIVERY

CHAPTER 4: FOLLOW-UP REVIEW

CHAPTER 5: OUTCOMES

APPENDICES

2.12   Following the review of agenda, minutes and associated reports, as well as meetings with CSN member organisations, further areas where improvements could be made were identified.

2.13   CSN members valued the opportunity to meet with other senior leaders on community safety issues. This was a good opportunity to share information and develop relationships. The desire for continued partnership working in this area was clearly articulated, however confusion remained over the function and purpose of the CSN as a strategic partnership. Inspectors were told that ASB and issues associated with young people were frequently discussed, together with a focus on issues that were operational in nature and often localised. Questions were raised about the use of the CSN as a forum for discussion on localised, operational issues.

2.14   Community Safety Response Groups could be set up by any CSN member. They were beneficial for sharing information, co-ordinating a response and seeking support on specific community safety issues, concerns or events. Examples of excellent collaborative working through these groups included specific bonfires and the Ards and North Down drugs feud. Community Safety Response Groups therefore offered a good solution to the issues raised by members about broader CSN discussions on localised, operational issues. **As an area for improvement, the Community Safety Network chair should encourage more use of Community Safety Response Groups to foster more strategic discussion at the Community Safety Network.**

2.15   The strategic potential of the CSN was not yet operating to its fullest possible extent, with further work required. While horizon scanning offered a means of forward planning and additional plans were in place to create a forward programme of work, there remained a lack of strategic direction within the CSN. The absence of a clear strategic vision for community safety and shared deliverables was a hinderance to developing and understanding the strategic role of the CSN. The implementation of Strategic Recommendation 1 would assist in providing clarity, understanding and direction in this area.

2.16   Inspectors reflected that the CSN had an opportunity to provide a strategic understanding of community safety delivery across Northern Ireland. The community safety arena is a crowded space, with top-down strategic oversight and priority setting involved in PCSPs, as well as engagement with the Support Hub Steering Group, ASB Forums, the Rural Crime Partnership and the Business Crime Partnership. This was in addition to bottom-up community-based collaborations and delivery mechanisms such as community safety teams and local community groups.

2.17   The second theme of the DoJ research recommended a mapping exercise of the existing forums operating to avoid duplication and maximise the impact of the CSN.   However, based on experience in commissioning a mapping exercise for ASB, for which the returns were voluminous and localised, a decision was taken and communicated to the CSN, not to progress with this recommendation.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CHIEF INSPECTOR'S FOREWORD

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

RECOMMENDATIONS

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER 2: STRATEGY AND GOVERNANCE

CHAPTER 3: DELIVERY

CHAPTER 4: FOLLOW-UP REVIEW

CHAPTER 5: OUTCOMES

APPENDICES

CJI Inspectors were disappointed with this decision. Inspectors were told that the scale and scope of the community safety sphere, as applied from a strategic position to implementation at a local neighbourhood level, was so broad that a mapping exercise would be problematic in itself. The DoJ reported that the establishment of 'task and finish' groups in the future may involve a mapping exercise on specific community safety topics. However, Inspectors did not feel that this provided an adequate understanding nor a sufficient overview of the community safety landscape and structures. Feedback from CSN members was that such an overview would be welcome and would assist in further developing the strategic role of the CSN.

> ## OPERATIONAL RECOMMENDATION **2**
>
> **Within nine months of the publication of this report, the Department of Justice, in conjunction with the Community Safety Network, should undertake a mapping exercise of the existing strategic and operational community safety forums which are operating across Northern Ireland. This should include an overview of purpose, membership, funding, governance and desired outcomes.**

Partnership working

2.18   Criminal justice partners were asked about the effectiveness of community safety partnership working. Responses were generally very positive, with good and effective working relationships noted alongside positive outcomes on key issues. Attendance at meetings, the resourcing implications of attendance and the potential for overlap between various groups and partnerships were cited as key areas of concern.

2.19   CSN representatives told Inspectors about the value of attendance at a meeting which brought together senior representatives from various organisations. However, although networking, relationships and partnership working within the CSN was reflected upon positively, it suffered from a lack of face-to-face meetings. This changed with the first face-to-face CSN meeting held in September 2023. Frequent changes in representatives attending meetings were reported as problematic and impacted on consistency and decision making and the development of working relationships.

2.20   Concerns were raised about the 'coalition of the willing' approach to community safety more generally, which can lead to inconsistencies and which, in a period of significant budget constraint, has the potential to see agencies retreat to their core functions. This was seen as being at the expense of partnership working on shared priorities. Evidence of inconsistencies in partnership working have been reported previously by CJI, including within the 2012[57] and 2019[58] reviews of PCSPs, as well

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57   *CJI, Policing with the Community, A follow-up review of inspection recommendations, September 2012,* available at **http://www.cjini.org/getattachment/50fd48fb-5a98-4d85-992f-b39680b6a99a/report.aspx**.

58   *CJI, Working together for safer communities, A review of Policing and Community Safety Partnerships in Northern Ireland, August 2019,* available at **http://www.cjini.org/getattachment/010eb06d-a1b7-46b9-85cd-50af58cb6f98/report.aspx**.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CHIEF INSPECTOR'S FOREWORD

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

RECOMMENDATIONS

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER 2: STRATEGY AND GOVERNANCE

CHAPTER 3: DELIVERY

CHAPTER 4: FOLLOW-UP REVIEW

CHAPTER 5: OUTCOMES

APPENDICES

as the 2009 Policing with the Community[59] inspection. In 2009 CJI recommended that *'legislation is introduced, equivalent to the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, to establish obligatory partnerships so that a more cohesive approach to local policing and community safety strategies can be implemented.'* At the time of this inspection this recommendation had not been implemented.

POLICING STRATEGY

2.21   The DoJ have a duty to set Long Term Policing Objectives as part of the Police (Northern Ireland) Act 2000.[60] Objective two was that *'the community has an effective, accessible and accountable policing presence to address the identified and understood needs of the community, to enhance public confidence in the police, and to deter criminality and reduce harm.'* Objective three included that policing is *'a shared responsibility that involves effective partnership working between police services, the public, and statutory, voluntary and private partners.'* Objective five included accountability mechanisms such as the Police Service being *'answerable to the community through the Policing Board…and locally to Policing and Community Safety Partnerships (PCSPs).'*

2.22   The Police Service reported their purpose as *'keeping people safe'* and their vision as assisting in building a *'safe, confident and peaceful Northern Ireland.'* In order to achieve this, the Police Service placed policing with the community at the centre of their approach to delivery, by providing *'visible, accessible, responsive and community focused policing'* based on courtesy, respect and fairness.[61] This was further reinforced through collaboration, partnership working and transparent internal and external accountability mechanisms.

2.23   In 2020 the Police Service published the service modernisation plan 'Horizon 2025' which included, as foundation principles for transformational change, the need to prioritise community policing, embed crime prevention and problem solving, reflect community needs and expectations and involve communities to build trust, cohesion and respect for the rule of Law.[62] A series of strategies followed which set out the organisational direction and approach to the delivery of local policing in Northern Ireland. These included 'Prevention First' the Crime Prevention Strategy, 'Here for You', a Public Engagement Vision and the Hallmarks of Neighbourhood Policing.

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59   *CJI, Policing with the Community, An inspection of Policing with the Community in Northern Ireland, March 2009,* available at **http://www.cjini.org/getattachment/ccae1ea9-133f-4199-8c29-0ff8b48206b6/Policing-with-the-Community-An-inspection-of-Policing-with-the-Community-in-Northern-Ireland.aspx**.

60   *Legislation.gov.uk, Police (Northern Ireland) Act 2000, November 2000,* available at **https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2000/32/part/IV**.

61   *The Police Service of Northern Ireland, Our Strategies and Vision,* available at **https://www.psni.police.uk/about-us/our-strategies-and-vision**.

62   The *Police Service of Northern Ireland, Horizon 2025, Service Modernisation Plan*, available at **https://www.psni.police.uk/sites/default/files/2022-09/horizon-2025-spreads.pdf**.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CHIEF INSPECTOR'S FOREWORD

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

RECOMMENDATIONS

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER 2: STRATEGY AND GOVERNANCE

CHAPTER 3: DELIVERY

CHAPTER 4: FOLLOW-UP REVIEW

CHAPTER 5: OUTCOMES

APPENDICES

2.24   'Prevention First' aimed to place crime prevention at the centre of policing in Northern Ireland and represented a mindset change in the approach to policing, based on proactivity and a rebalance of strategic and tactical efforts towards a prevention approach.[63] Awareness of 'Prevention First' within the Police Service was generally good, including from Supervisors and frontline Officers. Neighbourhood Officers frequently outlined the crime prevention activities undertaken as part of their role. LPT Officers were less likely to report crime prevention as a core part of their function, often related to high levels of demand and significant time constraints.

2.25   The 'Here for You' public engagement vision identified *'meaningful community engagement'* as a core element of all policing activity and one in which everyone has an important role to play.[64] As a strategic vision for community engagement, 'Here for You' was less well known outside of senior management within the Police Service. Frontline Officers were, however, conscious of the important role of engagement within their core functions. This was particularly evident for neighbourhood Officers who reported engagement as centrally embedded to their core function and driven locally through local engagement activities. Response Officers also noted the importance of engagement, but as with crime prevention, were less likely to report on a proactive approach to engagement. 'Here for You' included five pillars to define the Police Service's approach to community policing:

- attraction and recruitment;
- engagement;
- procedural fairness;
- effective neighbourhood policing; and
- local accountability.

2.26   Underpinning the 'effective neighbourhood policing' pillar was the Hallmarks of Neighbourhood Policing which provided *'a basis for a sustained investment in neighbourhood policing'* and *'clarity of expectation for communities and partners and to frame policing delivery, decision-making and leadership culture.'*[65] The eight Hallmarks are closely aligned with the neighbourhood policing guidelines[66] issued by the CoP in 2018 and include:

- Hallmark 1: Embedding the right culture;
- Hallmark 2: Engaging neighbourhoods;
- Hallmark 3: Building analytical capability;
- Hallmark 4: Solving problems;

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63   *The Police Service of Northern Ireland, Crime Prevention Strategy, 2025 'Prevention First',* available at **https://www.psni.police.uk/sites/default/files/2022-09/crime-prevention-strategy-spreads.pdf**.
64   *The Police Service of Northern Ireland, Here for You, Public Engagement Vision,* available at **https://www.psni.police.uk/sites/default/files/2023-06/Here%20for%20You%20-%20Public%20Engagement%20Vision.pdf**.
65   *The Police Service of Northern Ireland, The Hallmarks of Neighbourhood Policing,* available at **https://www.psni.police.uk/sites/default/files/2022-09/npt-hallmarks-spreads.pdf**.
66   *College of Policing, Neighbourhood Policing,* available at **https://www.college.police.uk/guidance/neighbourhood-policing**.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CHIEF INSPECTOR'S FOREWORD

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

RECOMMENDATIONS

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER 2: STRATEGY AND GOVERNANCE

CHAPTER 3: DELIVERY

CHAPTER 4: FOLLOW-UP REVIEW

CHAPTER 5: OUTCOMES

APPENDICES

- Hallmark 5: Targeting activity;
- Hallmark 6: Accountability;
- Hallmark 7: Developing Officers and staff; and
- Hallmark 8: Developing and sharing learning.

2.27　There was a high level of awareness of the Hallmarks across all the ranks and roles Inspectors met with. Inspectors assessed that within their first year the Hallmarks had provided a clear vision and structure for the delivery of neighbourhood policing, with clear evidence of enhanced focus on key areas for development, and in assisting attempts to deliver greater consistency across Districts. However, further progress was required, including the development of a dedicated performance framework and performance indicators for neighbourhood Officers (see Hallmark 6) as well as the continued development and roll out of a bespoke neighbourhood training programme (see Hallmark 7). Work was underway and plans were in place to progress some of these areas, however Inspectors were concerned that much of this work and the positive developments which have taken place may stall or risk being lost entirely due to the impact of significant resourcing and budget constraints.

GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS

External governance

2.28　As the oversight body for policing in Northern Ireland, the NIPB had a legislative responsibility to monitor police performance and publish a Policing Plan which identified key priority areas for policing in Northern Ireland. The 2020-2025 Policing Plan[67] was developed in collaboration with the Police Service and had the following key outcomes:

- Outcome 1: We have a safe community;
- Outcome 2: We have confidence in policing; and
- Outcome 3: We have engaged and supportive communities.

2.29　The Police Service's Service Executive Team reported to the NIPB monthly on issues of governance and police performance. In addition, the Assistant Chief Constable (ACC) for Local Policing, who had responsibility for neighbourhood policing, reported monthly to the NIPB Partnership Committee.[68]

2.30　The NIPB monitored and assessed police performance against the three 2020-2025 Policing Plan outcomes and the Annual Performance Plan. The indicators and measures included under outcome three specifically covered local policing

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67　*NIPB, The Northern Ireland Policing Plan 2020-2025 and Annual Performance Plan 2023-24, March 2023*, available at **https://www.nipolicingboard.org.uk/files/nipolicingboard/2023-03/annual-assessment-policing-plan-2020-25-and-annual-performance-plan-202324.pdf**.

68　The NIPB Partnership Committee supported the NIPB in its statutory responsibility for partnership working, including oversight of strategic engagement and community consultation.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CHIEF INSPECTOR'S FOREWORD

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

RECOMMENDATIONS

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER 2: STRATEGY AND GOVERNANCE

CHAPTER 3: DELIVERY

CHAPTER 4: FOLLOW-UP REVIEW

CHAPTER 5: OUTCOMES

APPENDICES

arrangements. Indicator 3.1, which previously focussed on delivery against the outcomes from the 2018 Local Policing Review, was updated in the 2023-24 Performance Plan and placed a requirement on the Police Service to report to the Partnership Committee on 'Here for You' and the Hallmarks of Neighbourhood Policing (Table 1 below refers). This will provide oversight of key commitments made and will assist in continuing to drive delivery in these key areas. NIPB Board meetings were usually held in public, and meeting minutes were available on the NIPB website.

Table 1: NIPB Annual Performance Plan 2023-24, Outcome Three Indicator and Measures

Outcome Three — We have engaged and supportive communities	
Indicator	**Measures**
3.1 Police, in partnership with local communities, including PCSPs, identify and deliver local solutions to local problems.	*3.1.1 Demonstrate progress against the 'Here for You' Public Engagement Strategy and the associated Hallmarks of Neighbourhood Policing.* *3.1.2 Identify and report on the Neighbourhood Policing Team initiatives to address local problems and tackle local issues, including co-designed solutions, in line with Neighbourhood Policing Guidelines.* *3.1.3 Assess and evaluate the impact of partnership working with local communities, including but not exclusively, in areas of high deprivation and areas that have been repeatedly victimised.*

2.31 District Commanders developed local Policing Plans in consultation with PCSPs. These were aligned with the outcomes from the Policing Plan and included District specific indicators and local measures as identified through public consultation. District Commanders provided a monthly report to PCSP Policing Committees using a new, agreed reporting template, which had been rolled out across all PCSPs in 2022 and which had been received positively by all stakeholders (see Chapter 4).

Internal governance

2.32 Internal governance of local policing occurred on a number of levels (see Figure 2 below). A monthly Service Performance Board, chaired by the Deputy Chief Constable, focussed on the internal assessment of performance and delivery against the Policing Plan outcomes. This was supplemented by a monthly Strategic Tasking and Co-ordination Group, jointly chaired by the ACCs for Local Policing and Crime. Together these offered an opportunity to review Police Service strategic community safety priorities and ensure alignment with the Policing Plan.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CHIEF INSPECTOR'S FOREWORD

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

RECOMMENDATIONS

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER 2: STRATEGY AND GOVERNANCE

CHAPTER 3: DELIVERY

CHAPTER 4: FOLLOW-UP REVIEW

CHAPTER 5: OUTCOMES

APPENDICES

Figure 2: The Police Service of Northern Ireland internal governance arrangements

Service Performance Board	Strategic Tasking and Co-ordination Group	Tactical Tasking and Co-ordination Group	Area and District Management Meetings
Internal assessment of performance and delivery against Policing Plan outcomes	Review of strategic community safety priorities and alignment with Policing Plan	Identification of current and emerging trends and the co-ordination of response and resourcing in support of strategic priorities	Monitoring of activity and tasking against community safety priorities

2.33 A bi-monthly Police Service Tactical Tasking Co-ordination Group meeting was chaired by the ACC for Local Policing or the ACC for Crime. An evidence-based approach to the identification of current and emerging issues, a Tactical Assessment enabled senior Officers to co-ordinate responses and direct resources in the support of strategic priorities. There was evidence of tasking key functions including engagement activities and neighbourhood policing, that were tailored to hotspot locations, timings and people of interest. Meeting minutes identified that directions were given for taskings to be shared with LPTs to ensure coverage was maintained if the relevant NPT was not on duty. Activity against community safety priorities was monitored daily through Area and District Management Meetings. Threat, risk and harm was central to taskings from these, with local data used to direct resources towards repeat victims, repeat offenders and hotspot locations.

2.34 The Neighbourhood Delivery Board (*the Board*) was originally established in 2019 to oversee the actions from the 2018 Local Policing Review and to incorporate recommendations from an internal 'Neighbourhood Policing Proposal' paper including the adoption of the CoP's 2018 Neighbourhood Policing Guidelines. The Board evolved to embed and oversee activities against the Hallmarks of Neighbourhood Policing. It was chaired by the Chief Superintendent for Local Policing and membership included Engagement Chief Inspectors from each District instead of District Commanders. This was to provide an operational approach to delivery and governance. Each Engagement Chief Inspector provided information to the Board outlining activities against each Hallmark.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CHIEF INSPECTOR'S FOREWORD

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

RECOMMENDATIONS

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER 2: STRATEGY AND GOVERNANCE

CHAPTER 3: DELIVERY

CHAPTER 4: FOLLOW-UP REVIEW

CHAPTER 5: OUTCOMES

APPENDICES

In addition to further embedding the eight Hallmarks within each District, this challenged Chief Inspectors to identify neighbourhood policing gaps and areas that needed focus including, for example, delivery against the Police Service's Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy by NPTs.

2.35 The Board provided an opportunity to discuss activities, developments and emerging trends as well as shared learning and the tasking of NPTs towards priority areas. The Board meeting agenda benefits from a focus on the eight Hallmarks, ensuring that all key priority areas were covered and embedding and aligning the operational delivery of neighbourhood policing with the Hallmarks. This also assists Chief Inspectors with structuring the information provided to the Board and aids discussions.

2.36 The Strategic Community Engagement Group provided governance and co-ordination of services against the 'Here for You' Public Engagement Vision. Chaired by the ACC for Local Policing, the Strategic Community Engagement Group enabled and encouraged *'greater co-ordination, information sharing and organisational learning in the sphere of community engagement.'* Key responsibilities included the co-ordination and development of engagement activity, co-ordination and prioritisation of strategic engagement with partners and communities and to serve as a consultative forum/resource for informing the development of supporting material and initiatives. A representative of the Strategic Community Engagement Team was present at Neighbourhood Delivery Board meetings, providing a link between strategic community engagement activities and local engagement activities undertaken by NPTs.

CHAPTER 3:
DELIVERY

OPERATING CONTEXT

Security situation

3.1   Policing in post-conflict Northern Ireland continued to be impacted by the prevailing security situation. Throughout inspection fieldwork the threat from Northern Ireland related terrorism was categorised as 'severe', meaning an attack was highly likely. This was temporarily reduced to 'substantial' in March 2019, however it was reinstated as 'severe' six days later.[69] While the security situation had improved significantly, during 2022-23 there was one security related death, 37 shootings and six bombing incidents, alongside 32 casualties of paramilitary style assaults and 11 casualties of paramilitary style shootings.[70] Fourteen of the 37 shooting incidents were in Derry City and Strabane, with 10 in Belfast and six in Ards and North Down. Half of the bombing incidents were in Derry City and Strabane and one each in Belfast, Ards and North Down and Mid Ulster. NPT and LPT Officers and supervisors reflected on the different approaches adopted in the provision of visible, proactive policing and engagement which were more constrained in some areas.

Budget

3.2   Unlike other UK police forces, the Police Service was unable to raise funds, hold a strategic reserve or carry forward savings or under-spends. A reliance on single year budgets hampered its ability to develop and implement long-term plans and this had constrained *'its ability to drive change in a...sustainable way.'*[71] The budget had become increasingly fragmented, relying on pockets of in-year funding and/or ring-fenced funding for specific programmes.

3.3   The Police Service's total resource departmental expenditure limit budget[72] fell by £153.4 million between 2011-12 and 2018-19, equivalent to 18% of the 2011-12 budget. While it recovered to 2011-12 levels in 2021-22, this included £9.9 million in pandemic related funding and £14.3 million for European Union exit costs.[73]

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69   *MI5, Threat Levels*, available at **https://www.mi5.gov.uk/threat-levels**.
70   *Police Service of Northern Ireland, Police Recorded Security Statistics, 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023, 16 May 2023,* available at **https://www.psni.police.uk/sites/default/files/2023-05/Security%20Situation%20Statistics%20to%20March%20 2023_0.pdf**.
71   *Police Remuneration Review Body, Sixth Report on Northern Ireland 2020, 22 June 2020,* available at **https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/966932/2020_ PRRB_NI_Report_-_accessible_pdfa.pdf**.
72   Excluding costs of the Police Pension Scheme and Annually Managed Expenditure (AME) impairments.
73   *Police Service of Northern Ireland, Police Service of Northern Ireland Annual Report and Accounts,* available at **https://www.psni.police.uk/about-us/our-departments/corporate-services/financial-services-branch**.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CHIEF INSPECTOR'S FOREWORD

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

RECOMMENDATIONS

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER 2: STRATEGY AND GOVERNANCE

CHAPTER 3: DELIVERY

CHAPTER 4: FOLLOW-UP REVIEW

CHAPTER 5: OUTCOMES

APPENDICES

These were non-recurring funding steams. The 2023-24 budget included a cut of 1.7% on 2022-23, which when combined with rising costs and pay awards, produced a funding gap of approximately £107million.[74] This had resulted in a range of cuts to recruitment, overtime and promotions.

Resourcing

3.4   The total number of Police Officers[75] was 6,584 as at 1 October 2023, with an additional 181 Police Officer Part Time (POPT) and 2,382 police staff.[76] This was the lowest number of Police Officers since the formation of the Police Service; 916 fewer than that envisaged in the Patten Report[77] and than that stipulated within the 2020 New Decade, New Approach Agreement.[78] Projected headcount figures, based on forecast recruitment and leavers, reported a fall to 5,954 by March 2025.[79]

3.5   The number of NPT Officers reduced from 905 in March 2015 to 310 in March 2016. This was an operational decision which was partly offset by an increase in LPT Officers, who, as reported in Chapter 1, held dual functions including response and responsibility for a local community area. Following the 2018 Review of Local Policing, the number of NPT Officers increased by approximately 400, bringing the total number to 699 by March 2022. These posts were funded through a non-recurring European Union exit funding stream and decisions taken about their location were based on initial assessments of the impact of the UK's exit from the European Union on local communities, which at the time was largely focussed on border areas.

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74   *Police Service of Northern Ireland, Chief Constables Accountability Report to Northern Ireland Policing Board, Covering Period of 30 May 2023 to 30 June 2023, 6 July 2023,* available at **https://www.nipolicingboard.org.uk/files/ nipolicingboard/2023-06/chief-constables-report-northern-ireland-policing-board.pdf**.

75   Full-Time Equivalent.

76   *Police Service of Northern Ireland, Strength of Police Service Statistics, 1 October 2023,* available at **https://www.psni.police.uk/our-publication-scheme/who-we-are-and-what-we-do/strength-police-service-statistics**.

77   *Independent Commission on Policing for Northern Ireland, A New Beginning: Policing in Northern Ireland, The Report of the Independent Commission on Policing for Northern Ireland, September 1999,* available at **https://cain.ulster.ac.uk/issues/police/patten/patten99.pdf**.

78   *UK Government and Irish Government Agreement, New Decade, New Approach, January 2020,* available at **https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/856998/2020-01-08_a_new_decade__a_new_approach.pdf**.

79   *Police Service of Northern Ireland, Resource Plan 2023/24,* available at **https://www.psni.police.uk/sites/default/ files/2023-07/Police%20Service%20of%20Northern%20Ireland_Resource%20Plan%202023-24.pdf**.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CHIEF INSPECTOR'S FOREWORD

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

RECOMMENDATIONS

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER 2: STRATEGY AND GOVERNANCE

CHAPTER 3: DELIVERY

CHAPTER 4: FOLLOW-UP REVIEW

CHAPTER 5: OUTCOMES

APPENDICES

Figure 3: Total Police Officer Headcount as at 31 March each year 2014 to 2023 and December 2023, NPT and LPT

3.6   The reduction in Police Officer headcount during 2022-23 affected both NPT and LPT, with the number of LPT Officers declining to 1,990 and NPT Officers to 583 in December 2023. Of the NPT Officers 80% were at the rank of Constable, 12% at the rank of Sergeant and 8% at the rank of Inspector. The service length profile of NPT Officers was varied; 23% had less than five years' service, 25% had between six and ten years' service, 41% were mid-career Officers with between 11 and 20 years' service and 11% had more than 21 years' service.

3.7   The reduction in NPT Officers occurred by not filling vacancies from retirement or resignation. This meant that at the time of the inspection no NPT Officers had been permanently re-deployed from their core role. However, this approach had impacted teams and Districts differently, with some teams continuing to operate at full strength, while others had been restructured to deal with reduced Officer numbers. Temporary measures had been applied in areas and periods of high demand, with the creation of temporary NPTs during the summer months in Portrush and in Ards and North Down. The Police Service told Inspectors it believes this is an effective and agile use of resources based on need. While this has some merit, Inspectors assessed that the important engagement and relationship building role of neighbourhood Officers was unlikely to be adequately fulfilled over such short time periods.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CHIEF INSPECTOR'S FOREWORD

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

RECOMMENDATIONS

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER 2: STRATEGY AND GOVERNANCE

CHAPTER 3: DELIVERY

CHAPTER 4: FOLLOW-UP REVIEW

CHAPTER 5: OUTCOMES

APPENDICES

3.8   A 90-day review had commenced during July 2023 to include a fresh demand analysis, at ward level, of neighbourhood policing across Northern Ireland. This demand analysis was to inform future decision making about the size, scope and shape of neighbourhood policing over the coming years.

Abstraction

3.9   Throughout Inspectors engagement with the Police Service the issue of abstraction emerged as a key defining contextual feature of neighbourhood policing. The Police Service defined an abstraction as *'any activity which withdraws a neighbourhood officer from their core function within their NPT area on a short, medium or longer term basis.'*[80]

3.10   Neighbourhood Officers reported on being withdrawn from neighbourhood duties for a range of reasons including pre-detailed, planned abstractions such as to police events/parades in areas outside their own neighbourhoods, as well as spontaneous duties including to backfill LPTs when minimum strength could not be achieved (often in a driver role which had become more common as the overtime budget reduced), to fill detention Officer gaps in police custody and to provide security duties. Inspectors asked for data on the level of abstraction across the Police Service, however this could not be provided. Although Operational Planning record data relating to pre-detailed abstractions, it was felt that this did not reflect the scale of the issue and that there was limited understanding of the scale of spontaneous abstractions.

3.11   There were varying accounts of the level of abstraction Officers and teams were carrying. Across the North Area the abstraction rate was reported as between 20% to 30%, a rate of more than 50% had been recorded within the South Area, alongside a rate of between 50% and 75% in the Causeway Coast and Glens District. NPT Officers provided anecdotal evidence of having had only one or two full days dedicated to their NPT role within the previous four weeks. In common across these examples was a significant level of uncertainty regarding the scale of the issue and the reliability of the data. Central to this uncertainty were differences in interpretation of what an abstraction is.

3.12   The NPT Abstraction Policy (the Policy) was updated in 2022 in advance of the publication of the Hallmarks of Neighbourhood Policing. The Policy aimed to provide clarification on activities classed as abstraction (Police Support Unit duties, security patrols, parade/events and Evidence Gathering Team duties outside of their own area, explosives escort, custody duties and LPT backfill) and those not considered an abstraction (community forums, business continuity management, service-wide surge activity, Court attendance, calls for service in their own area and critical incidents/major crime incidents). However, interpretations of abstraction differed by District and also within NPTs and typically focussed on a broader debate

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80   *Police Service of Northern Ireland, NPT Abstraction Policy, 24 January 2022, unpublished*

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CHIEF INSPECTOR'S FOREWORD

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

RECOMMENDATIONS

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER 2: STRATEGY AND GOVERNANCE

CHAPTER 3: DELIVERY

CHAPTER 4: FOLLOW-UP REVIEW

CHAPTER 5: OUTCOMES

APPENDICES

about what the core function of neighbourhood policing was. For example, despite the clarity within the Policy, Officers reported requirements to attend events outside their own neighbourhoods as non-abstracted duties, based on the wider role of engagement with members of the public at such events.

3.13   Senior management within the Police Service were aware of the issues in recording abstractions and the requirement for further clarity in the definition of an abstraction. A draft policy change had been sent for consultation within the Police Service which aimed to shift focus from 'abstraction' and towards monitoring a 'change of duty' for neighbourhood Officers across three categories:

- *primary – the neighbourhood officer is detailed their normal NPT duty i.e. they are available to their supervisor to perform the role required in their respective neighbourhood area;*
- *secondary – the neighbourhood officer is detailed any duty in their District i.e. they are still working for the community they serve, however they are not primarily working in the geographic area they have been aligned; and*
- *auxiliary – the neighbourhood officer is detailed a duty outside their District: they are not present in their respective neighbourhood area or District.*

3.14   Inspectors recognise the initial steps taken by the Police Service to address some of the issues raised about abstraction and the early stage of the consultation. The three categories above were based on two elements: duty type and location. The categories were helpful in providing additional clarity on the impact of location as a descriptor of an abstraction/change of duty, with duties undertaken outside of dedicated neighbourhood areas becoming detectible as a change from primary to secondary duty, or those outside of the District recorded as an auxiliary duty. However, further clarity is required on secondary duties which, with the inclusion of 'any duty', remains ill-defined and risks becoming a 'catch all' category which broadens the focus of neighbourhood activity beyond the key duties of neighbourhood Officers. Inspectors are concerned that this risks diluting the role of a neighbourhood Officer. For example, an NPT Officer working in a custody suite or on a security gate within their District could be viewed as *'working for the community they serve.'* This is not a primary or secondary duty of neighbourhood policing, regardless of location.

3.15   In addition, concerns remain about the scale of abstraction from neighbourhood duties, an issue which this change of terminology does not address. More detail is required within the Abstraction Policy on protecting the function of neighbourhood policing through efforts to protect neighbourhood Officers from abstraction, where possible. Should the change of terminology be implemented, it should be based on protecting primary duty time. The Neighbourhood Delivery Board should monitor abstraction/change of duty data and feedback from Engagement Chief Inspectors and the Annual NPT Self-Assessment Survey should be used to analyse the scale of abstraction/change of duty.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CHIEF INSPECTOR'S FOREWORD

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

RECOMMENDATIONS

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER 2: STRATEGY AND GOVERNANCE

CHAPTER 3: DELIVERY

CHAPTER 4: FOLLOW-UP REVIEW

CHAPTER 5: OUTCOMES

APPENDICES

> **OPERATIONAL RECOMMENDATION 3**
>
> Within six months of the publication of this report, the Police Service of Northern Ireland should review and update the current Abstraction Policy and reconsider the consultation on change of duty. The updated policy should be communicated and applied consistently across all Districts.

ROLE PROFILE

3.16   The Neighbourhood Policing Constable role profile, which was available on the Neighbourhood Policing Hub on POiNT (the Police Service intranet) was based on the CoP role profile.[81] The role purpose was to *'provide a presence that is accessible to, responsible for, and accountable to that community'* and to work *'collaboratively to address community issues through the use of problem solving by integrated working with a range of public and private partners, building trust and confidence and developing a detailed understanding of the community.'*

3.17   The profile contained six key accountabilities, including:

- the identification of threat, harm and risk through an understanding of local issues;
- engagement with partners to support and safeguard vulnerable individuals and groups within the community to prevent them becoming victims or repeat victims of crime or disorder;
- the management and diversion of those at risk of reoffending to reduce community impact;
- to support community engagement and participation in policing through approaches to support crime prevention, build social cohesion and community confidence in policing;
- the use of problem-solving techniques to develop targeted approaches to reduce the impact of crime and disorder on the community; and
- the use of policing powers to solve community problems in a just and fair way.

3.18   Neighbourhood Officers reported confusion regarding what the role of a neighbourhood Officer is. High levels of abstraction across a wide range of duties had led to uncertainty in the purpose of the role. This was characterised by the terms used by Officers and supervisors to describe the function, including the *'department of everything'*, the *'strategic reserve'*, *'response light'* or simply a *'gopher.'* This continued pull on neighbourhood resources and the subsequent impact on the provision of a neighbourhood function as detailed in the role profile, was having a significant impact on morale and motivation.

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81   *College of Policing, Neighbourhood Policing Constable,* available at
      https://profdev.college.police.uk/professional-profile/neighbourhood-policing-constable/.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CHIEF INSPECTOR'S FOREWORD

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

RECOMMENDATIONS

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER 2: STRATEGY AND GOVERNANCE

CHAPTER 3: DELIVERY

CHAPTER 4: FOLLOW-UP REVIEW

CHAPTER 5: OUTCOMES

APPENDICES

HALLMARK 1: EMBEDDING THE RIGHT CULTURE

3.19   Hallmark 1 of the Police Service's Hallmarks of Neighbourhood Policing was: *'We will embed an organisational culture in which all our encounters with the public demonstrate procedural justice, reinforcing the presumption that policing is a fair, impartial and universal service.'*

3.20   Inspectors were impressed by the dedicated, hardworking, knowledgeable and passionate neighbourhood Officers they met during fieldwork. Officers displayed a clear understanding of the importance of openness and transparency in their interactions with the public and this was driven by their pursuit in developing trusting and lasting relationships within local neighbourhoods. Officers clearly articulated the need for two-way, open lines of communication with individuals, community groups, businesses and community representatives. The term 'procedural justice' was less well understood outside of early career Officers who had recently completed their foundation training, however Inspectors reflected that the underlying concept was widely understood and accepted.

3.21   Neighbourhood Officers discussed the key role they played in building and maintaining trust and confidence, not only in their own policing activities within their dedicated neighbourhoods, but also in the Police Service as a whole. Feedback from the community groups reported favourably on the interaction, engagement and assistance of individual neighbourhood Officers, yet they were often less positive about policing more generally or the activities of other policing functions. Neighbourhood Officers reported frustration with other police departments who had undertaken operations in their neighbourhood area with no prior consultation or advance notice given to the neighbourhood Officer responsible for the area. This was particularly evident, although not confined to, the work of the Paramilitary Crime Task Force. Neighbourhood Officers and community representatives noted the damage to community confidence which operations had caused, some of which had yet to be repaired more than a year later. Neighbourhood Officers reported that these events undermined their role within neighbourhoods and damaged relationships which had taken significant time to develop and impacted public confidence.

3.22   Confidential policing operations are needed to protect communities from harm and to bring offenders to justice. Inspectors were advised that the Strategic Community Engagement Team provided a monthly Strategic Community Impact Assessment to all Police Service Gold and Silver Commanders to inform preparations for complex incidents and operations. In addition, a Community Impact Assessment, which is *'used to identify and manage any factors relevant to an incident of policing activity that may impact upon the community'* was required for all critical incidents under a Police Service Service Instruction. [82]

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82   *Police Service of Northern Ireland, Corporate Policy Service Instruction, SI0521, Critical Incident Management and Community Impact Assessments, 2 December 2021,* available at **https://www.psni.police.uk/sites/default/files/2022-09/Critical%20 Incident%20Management%20and%20Community%20Impact%20Assessments%202%20December%202021.pdf**.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CHIEF INSPECTOR'S FOREWORD

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

RECOMMENDATIONS

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER 2: STRATEGY AND GOVERNANCE

CHAPTER 3: DELIVERY

CHAPTER 4: FOLLOW-UP REVIEW

CHAPTER 5: OUTCOMES

APPENDICES

A critical incident was defined as *'any incident, where the effectiveness of the police response is likely to have a significant impact on the confidence of the victim, their family and/or the community.'* Adherence to the Service Instruction required assessment by District Command which included *'consultation with local Neighbourhood Policing Teams where possible'* however this was not included as a prompt on the short or full Community Impact Assessment forms. It was clear to Inspectors that the Service Instruction was not being fully adhered to and that consultation with NPTs was not routinely sought. This meant that valuable information from NPT Officers was being missed. The requirements of the Service Procedure needed to be re-emphasised across the Police Service and the process for capturing lessons learned needed to be reviewed.

OPERATIONAL RECOMMENDATION 4

Within three months of the publication of this report, the Police Service of Northern Ireland should ensure Neighbourhood Policing Teams are consulted in all appropriate Community Impact Assessments and establish effective consultation monitoring.

HALLMARK 2: ENGAGING NEIGHBOURHOODS

3.23   Engagement was critical to effective neighbourhood policing, as understood and applied by all of the neighbourhood Officers Inspectors spoke with. Officers were keen to engage with communities and displayed confidence in their engagement skills which enabled and empowered communities to participate in the policing of their local area. Many community organisations noted the lengths neighbourhood Officers went to in order to provide communities with 'good' neighbourhood policing, often remaining contactable when off-duty. Individual Officers were reported to make a considerable contribution to community safety and community life more generally. The following is an excerpt from a speech made by a young person at the launch of the Police Service's *Children and Young People Strategy:*[83]

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83   *Police Service of Northern Ireland, Children and Young People Strategy,* available at **https://www.psni.police.uk/sites/default/files/2023-05/Children%20and%20Young%20People%20Strategy%20Booklet.pdf**.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CHIEF INSPECTOR'S FOREWORD

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

RECOMMENDATIONS

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER 2: STRATEGY AND GOVERNANCE

CHAPTER 3: DELIVERY

CHAPTER 4: FOLLOW-UP REVIEW

CHAPTER 5: OUTCOMES

APPENDICES

> *As a young person in Northern Ireland policing used to be something I didn't really think or care about and would actively avoid engagement with Police Officers, but then I got the chance to meet the neighbourhood police while participating in the DARE programme.[84] I realised how hard of a job it can be and that they are putting their lives on a line to protect us and the community. A neighbourhood Police Officer named Billy helped me and my friends to realise that they are on our side. Taking the time to engage and get to know us, and explaining the processes that he and the other officers must adhere to whilst doing their job.*
>
> *...The Police Officers I have engaged with through DARE understand why young people might not like them from past first-hand experiences, family history or unrealistic viewpoints based on fictional portrayals in movies and TV. Like in any job there are those that shouldn't be in that profession, not all teachers can teach, some nurses don't have a good bedside manner and some Police Officers aren't great at engaging with young people and don't really know how to but the ones that do their jobs and care about us and the communities we live in help us understand what Police Officers should be like.*
>
> *With this strategy being rolled out, there is an opportunity for greater connections to be made between the police and young people across Northern Ireland. I feel like the police hope that one day young people will finally understand what it's like in their shoes like my friends and I have been taught by Billy. He has not only taught us about the police, their role and duty to the public and communities they serve but has changed our entire perspective on them, and I hope every district and area had a Billy, to do the same with the young people living there.*

3.24 Many community organisations expressed considerable concern about any reduction in neighbourhood policing, stemming from reports of budget cuts. As one organisation put it: *'if NPT was cut it would be devastating...all those relationships would be lost.'*

3.25 A self-assessment survey distributed to all NPTs identified that almost three quarters of NPTs rated themselves as effective or highly effective at engaging with local communities and partners in the identification of problems and solutions. This included 73% of NPTs in 2021 and 74% in 2022. Results from 2022, available by area, identified that this was highest in Derry City and Strabane, at 92%, and lowest in North Area at 59%.

3.26 Central to the Hallmarks of Neighbourhood Policing was the commitment to *'modernise local policing delivery so that it is increasingly visible, accessible, responsive and above all community focussed.'* There was clear evidence of delivery against each of these strands, however there were also early signs of a contraction in these areas as resourcing constraints began to impact delivery.

84 Dream, Achieve, Respect and Engage community programme funded by Communities in Transition.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CHIEF INSPECTOR'S FOREWORD

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

RECOMMENDATIONS

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER 2: STRATEGY AND GOVERNANCE

CHAPTER 3: DELIVERY

CHAPTER 4: FOLLOW-UP REVIEW

CHAPTER 5: OUTCOMES

APPENDICES

Visible

3.27   NPT Officers were visible within communities in a variety of ways. Patrol by motor vehicle played an important role in enabling broad coverage and the increased number of liveried patrol cars had improved visibility. However, Officers reflected that engagement opportunities while in police cars were reduced. The use of foot and bicycle patrols enabled greater engagement opportunities and increased visibility in local areas relative to patrolling in a police motor vehicle. In some areas, including East Belfast, the roll-out of e-bikes had assisted with bicycle patrols becoming the default patrol method. Some NPTs voiced a strong desire for some or increased levels of bicycle patrols, however the availability of e-bikes was a problem in some areas. While the sharing of resources did occur this was often difficult and left some teams without access. **As an area for improvement the Police Service should address this imbalance and put in place an improved system for sharing resources such as e-bikes.**

3.28   The patrol method was typically determined by the nature of the activity and local circumstance. For example, rural areas were considered too big to patrol using any other method than by motor vehicle. Community groups in rural areas reported lower visibility than those in urban areas and this appeared to be exacerbated by low Officer numbers and high levels of abstraction in some rural areas, including within North Area. The security context in some parts of Northern Ireland, such as in Derry City and Strabane, also impacted the patrol method used, including inhibiting the use of bicycle patrols in some areas. However, communities reported that they gave the Police Service feedback on patrol methods and this was responded to where possible.

3.29   Social media was well used by NPTs to provide a virtual visible presence. National Neighbourhood Policing Week was used to raise awareness of neighbourhood policing. A social media campaign highlighted the proactive work of neighbourhood Officers in tackling crime, protecting vulnerable residents and building strong relationships within communities.

3.30   Neighbourhood Officers also attended a significant number of pre-planned community events, including meetings with community groups and organisations as well as information events and community fun days. As an indicator of the scale of potential engagement opportunities, in North Belfast there were 150 community groups in operation, while in Causeway Coast and Glens District over 200 groups existed which held a role in dealing with ASB. Community groups reflected on the important role neighbourhood Officers played during such events and how their presence was vital in building relationships and trust. However, police non-attendance at events was reportedly increasing in frequency, with examples including the need to pack up a stall at a pre-arranged event almost immediately on arriving, after receiving an urgent call for service. Significant community disappointment was subsequently relayed to the District Commander.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CHIEF INSPECTOR'S FOREWORD

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

RECOMMENDATIONS

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER 2: STRATEGY AND GOVERNANCE

CHAPTER 3: DELIVERY

CHAPTER 4: FOLLOW-UP REVIEW

CHAPTER 5: OUTCOMES

APPENDICES

3.31   External visibility of Sergeants, Inspectors and Commanders was varied and tended to involve attendance at pre-planned engagement meetings with community groups and elected representatives. Internally, NPT Officers reported good visibility of their supervisors and senior Officers who were reported as available and accessible.

Accessible

3.32   There were a variety of ways of accessing the Police Service, from emergency 999 calls to non-emergency 101 calls, online reporting and social media. In addition the names and mobile telephone numbers of all NPT Officers were available on the Police Service website. Although awareness of this was low among community groups, confidence in the personal relationships with NPTs was such that most community representatives reported direct lines of contact by mobile phone. Community representatives said that they frequently called neighbourhood Officers directly and that, depending on the severity of the issue, they would also contact senior Officers, including the District Commander, directly when required. The accessibility of NPT Officers by mobile phone therefore directed demand away from the 101 system.

3.33   In some communities there remained a reluctance to access the Police Service, even to report certain lower-level criminal incidents or patterns of behaviour. Community representatives explained that they encouraged members of the public to contact the Police Service using the 101 number in a non-emergency situation. Feedback reflected that 101 was not popular, had low levels of satisfaction and was off-putting, however, the Police Service advised that despite the current resource pressures, 101 calls continued to be answered on average within two minutes and 58 seconds. Community representatives often facilitated contact with the Police Service themselves, often through the local NPT Officer.

3.34   Neighbourhood Officers reported that they received calls from members of the public on their mobile phone and that this was usually seeking advice or guidance on a single issue or action on a recurring problem. This was reported as popular as it provided a *'more personal service',* and while frustrations were raised about the availability by Officers to answer and respond to requests for assistance made by mobile phone, in particular during leave and rest days, a response was generally forthcoming when the Officer returned to duty.

3.35   High levels of Officer turnover and a lack of continuity in neighbourhood Officers was reported as a significant issue by many of the community groups and representatives Inspectors met with. Turnover in senior Officers was noted as particularly problematic as it often resulted in a change in priority and approach which impacted delivery of key initiatives, as well as the subsequent time required to develop new relationships and re-build trust and confidence. One community group reported that upon meeting the newest District Commander their first question was how long he was *'intending on staying'*, in reference to the brief

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CHIEF INSPECTOR'S FOREWORD

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

RECOMMENDATIONS

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER 2: STRATEGY AND GOVERNANCE

CHAPTER 3: DELIVERY

CHAPTER 4: FOLLOW-UP REVIEW

CHAPTER 5: OUTCOMES

APPENDICES

tenure of the previous Commander. A lack of sufficient handover to new Officers was also noted as an area of frustration. However, Inspectors were told that when new neighbourhood Officers joined a NPT there was a period of introductions, often undertaken by the local Sergeant, to ensure the Officer was aware of, and known by, key community groups and representatives.

3.36   The commitment made in 2019 to provide 16-hour daily coverage of neighbourhood policing remained in place at the time of the inspection, however some Districts were no longer able to provide this due to resourcing constraints. In some areas this coverage was no longer suitable, for example in areas where the night time economy was not a major feature, the availability of NPT Officers at one am on a Thursday, Friday or Saturday night was not deemed an appropriate use of resources. Similarly, the lack of engagement opportunities on a Sunday morning when partner organisations and community groups were not available was also noted, as well as the lack of flexibility in shift patterns which prevented Officers from attending key meetings outside of their detailed hours. A senior Officer reported that in the context of recent budget discussions, it remained possible to *'safeguard the function'* of neighbourhood policing, but that it was not possible to continue to *'deliver it across 16 hours, seven days a week.'* Given the current budget and resourcing situation, a re-evaluation of the 16-hour coverage is timely and should form part of the demand analysis to inform future decision making about NPT in the coming years. This re-evaluation should consider the most appropriate core hours which are required to enable neighbourhood policing to operate at an optimum level. It should prioritise engagement, problem solving and proactive policing and should provide for flexibility, when appropriate, to ensure policing intervention on local priorities.

OPERATIONAL RECOMMENDATION 5

Within six months of the publication of this report, the Police Service of Northern Ireland should review the 16-hour neighbourhood coverage commitment.

Responsive

3.37   Out of 209,987 calls made to 999 in 2022 95% were answered within 10 seconds. 499,070 101 calls were also made, with 39% answered within 30 seconds.[85] Police Officers were dispatched to approximately 60% of calls, with the remaining 40% resolved within the Contact Management Centre. Approximately 10% of these were directed to the Telephone Resolution Unit to conduct basic enquiries.

3.38   Determinations about call grading and prioritisation were based on the Threat, Harm, Risk, Investigation, Vulnerability and Engagement (THRIVE) model.

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85   *Police Service of Northern Ireland, Emergency and non-emergency telephone call statistics,* available at https://www.psni.police.uk/sites/default/files/2023-01/SCE044-23%20PSNI%20Emergency%20and%20Non%20 Emergency%20Telephone%20Call%20Statistics.pdf.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CHIEF INSPECTOR'S FOREWORD

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

RECOMMENDATIONS

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER 2: STRATEGY AND GOVERNANCE

CHAPTER 3: DELIVERY

CHAPTER 4: FOLLOW-UP REVIEW

CHAPTER 5: OUTCOMES

APPENDICES

Decisions regarding who attended a call were based on this model followed by resource availability and proximity. There was no set criteria or priority list which identified the types of calls which were best placed with NPT. This was appropriate in some circumstances, including where an Article 2[86] issue was evident and the NPT were the closest available resource, however NPT Officers reported on the increasing use of NPT resources to respond to calls outside of their neighbourhood area due to LPT unavailability. This was having a significant impact on the ability of NPT to protect priority engagement time.

3.39   Senior Officers told Inspectors they wanted NPTs to respond to more calls, however this included an acknowledgement that this should consider the type of calls directed to NPT and the best use of their skillset. **As an area for improvement, more consideration was needed of the calls NPT respond to and how their skillset could be optimised.** This should form part of the current demand analysis of neighbourhood policing.

3.40   Community organisations and representative groups stated that neighbourhood Officers were generally responsive when local issues were raised. An example was provided which outlined the responsiveness of neighbourhood Officers in dealing with a vendor who was selling vapes to underage children and the longer-term solution put in place with local businesses to deal with the issue. The responsiveness of NPTs in dealing with intelligence gathered by community groups, for example related to drug dealing, was also highlighted however, some community representatives reported that this responsiveness had reduced.

Community focussed

3.41   Neighbourhood Officers were clearly dedicated to their designated areas, deeply involved in the local community and worked in partnership to provide local solutions to local issues. Inspectors were greatly impressed by the significant level of knowledge NPT Officers had about their local areas, much of which had been built up over many years and which anecdotally surpassed information contained on police systems and therefore available to other police functions.   While the sharing of intelligence was routinely undertaken through a formal process of submitting a 'Form A', neighbourhood Officers explained that the sharing of more generic, local information typically occurred informally, on an ad-hoc basis, with no formal process in place. This reduced the opportunity to share and record important information. **As an area for improvement the Police Service of Northern Ireland should assure that effective methods of sharing local information within and between Neighbourhood Policing Teams, including the use of Neighbourhood Profiles, are operating as intended.**

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86   Article 2 of the European Convention on Human Rights states that *'everyone's right to life shall be protected by law'*

LIST OF
ABBREVIATIONS

CHIEF
INSPECTOR'S
FOREWORD

EXECUTIVE
SUMMARY

RECOMMENDATIONS

CHAPTER 1:
INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER 2:
STRATEGY AND
GOVERNANCE

CHAPTER 3:
FOLLOW-UP
DELIVERY

CHAPTER 4:
FOLLOW-UP
REVIEW

CHAPTER 5:
OUTCOMES

APPENDICES

3.42   District neighbourhood profiles had been developed to provide a summary of each ward in Northern Ireland, detailing information on key partners, elected representatives, regular engagement activities, annual events and an overview of policing issues in the area. The profiles were discussed at the Neighbourhood Delivery Board and Chief Inspectors were tasked with ensuring they were up-to-date and used as a tool to identify gaps in local areas where assistance from the Strategic Community Engagement Team could be sought. The information contained within the profiles was useful and was particularly important given the potential change to teams and structures, however there was little knowledge of them within NPTs. Furthermore, some community groups expressed frustration about a lack of corporate knowledge on previous projects and groups which had existed in local areas to address specific issues. **As an area for improvement neighbourhood profiles would be an important information resource for Neighbourhood Policing Teams in developing and assessing initiatives in the future.**

Strategic engagement

3.43   The Strategic Community Engagement Team (the Team) was established in 2021 in response to criticisms made by the Office of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland[87] and HMICFRS[88] regarding a lack of strategic community engagement. The Team was overseen by a Superintendent and were responsible for the production of monthly tension monitoring reports, community impact assessments and the roll out of strategic events. The establishment of the Team was referenced as an 'emerging practice' as part of the NPCC and CoP Neighbourhood Policing Peer Review 2022-23.[89]

3.44   The Team developed a new approach to community engagement entitled Reference, Engagement and Listening (REaL) events, which were to be utilised at the strategic, District and neighbourhood level to *'establish community sentiment and feedback on thematic issues for the Service, including policy matters, significant incidents and police procedures.'*[90] Events were attended by an ACC and were structured around the five pillars of the 'Here for You' Engagement Vision. They were also used as an opportunity for the Police Service to explain actions from a policing perspective.

3.45   REaL Events had been held in the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transexual and Queer plus (LGBTQ+) community and with the Protestant, Unionist and Loyalist community.

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87   *OPONI, An Investigation into Police Policy and Practice of Protests in Northern Ireland, December 2020,* available at **https://www.policeombudsman.org/PONI/files/85/858a4b0b-9b99-4921-b947-5fae248ba683.pdf**.

88   *HMICFRS, The Police Service of Northern Ireland: An inspection into the Police Service of Northern Ireland's handling of the Bobby Storey funeral on 30 June 2020, May 2021,* available at **https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmicfrs/wp-content/uploads/inspection-into-psni-handling-of-the-bobby-storey-funeral-30-june-2020.pdf**.

89   *NPCC & CoP, Neighbourhood Policing Peer Review 2022-23, Concluding report on Neighbourhood Policing 2023, The impact of COVID-19 and the future for Neighbourhood Policing, unpublished.*

90   *Police Service of Northern Ireland, Chief Constable's Accountability Report to the Northern Ireland Policing Board, report date covering period of 24 February to 30 March 2023, 6 April 2023,* available at **https://www.nipolicingboard.org.uk/files/nipolicingboard/2023-04/chief-constables-report-northern-ireland-policing-board_0.pdf**.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CHIEF INSPECTOR'S FOREWORD

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

RECOMMENDATIONS

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER 2: STRATEGY AND GOVERNANCE

CHAPTER 3: DELIVERY

CHAPTER 4: FOLLOW-UP REVIEW

CHAPTER 5: OUTCOMES

APPENDICES

Events with the Catholic, Nationalist and Republican and Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities had taken place in August and September 2023. Key points and actions from these events were distilled by the Police Service and were to be shared with those who attended. Some of the groups who had attended sessions reported that this information had not been received. This risked undermining the purpose of the events. **As an area for improvement the Police Service should ensure that timely feedback from REaL events is provided to all community groups.** This should prevent the onset of distrust or disillusionment in the concept of strategic community engagement.

3.46 The primary link between strategic engagement and local engagement undertaken by NPTs was provided through the Neighbourhood Delivery Board. A member of the Strategic Community Engagement Team sat on the Board and received some information on local engagement through the creation of monthly tension monitoring reports. REaL style events were to be planned at a local level with the Team developing resources for Districts to use as templates for delivery. This was to assist with setting a benchmark for the style and tone of events rather than determining what should be delivered.

3.47 There was an expectation that the Strategic Community Engagement Team would work with NPTs to provide reassurance and support in signposting and adding to local contacts including in hard-to-reach groups and areas where gaps remained. However, there was little evidence of this occurring. Indeed, Inspectors felt the link between the two functions could be strengthened. Centrally there was a lack of information on local engagement activities, minimal strategic direction or input into local engagement plans and locally NPTs received little information on outcomes or actions of strategic engagement events or key areas of focus for engagement. Inspectors were cognisant of the significant amount of engagement which occurs locally and do not expect centralised oversight of all engagement activities. However, a two-way flow of information regarding engagement events with key groups and partners would ensure a more consistent corporate response to key issues and prevent a fragmented approach to community engagement. **As an area for improvement the Police Service should work to raise awareness of the Strategic Community Engagement Team within Neighbourhood Policing Teams and improve communications between them.**

Police Officers Part Time

3.48 In 2019 POPT were re-aligned from LPT to NPT following a recommendation within a Neighbourhood Proposal Paper. Draft guidance was developed outlining their function:

- In support of NPTs to tackle local policing priorities;
- In support of surge activity and the management of major incidents;
- Duty at parades and public events which require a policing input; and
- In support of policing the night time economy.[91]

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91   *NIPB, Part-Time Reserve, 4 February 2021,* available at **https://www.nipolicingboard.org.uk/questions/part-time-reserve**.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CHIEF INSPECTOR'S FOREWORD

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

RECOMMENDATIONS

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER 2: STRATEGY AND GOVERNANCE

CHAPTER 3: DELIVERY

CHAPTER 4: FOLLOW-UP REVIEW

CHAPTER 5: OUTCOMES

APPENDICES

3.49   There was broad consensus that the POPT were a significantly under-used resource and significant confusion in their role, their powers and their hours of work. Morale and motivation within the POPT were exceptionally low. Much of this confusion related to guidance issued by the Police Service following a 2015 legal dispute about equal treatment.

3.50   The then Chief Constable had recommitted to the POPT at the 50th Anniversary of the Part-Time Reserve. The ACC for local policing noted a desire to revisit the legal advice and reported on the development of a new Service Procedure, led by a Chief Superintendent and intended to provide clarity on the role of POPT, their policing powers and their hours of work. Given the significant resourcing constraints facing the Police Service, the availability of 181[92] additional POPT to assist in delivering a key function of policing in Northern Ireland was viewed as critical by Inspectors.

OPERATIONAL RECOMMENDATION 6

The Police Service of Northern Ireland should complete and publish the new Police Officer Part Time Service Procedure within three months of the publication of this report. The Neighbourhood Delivery Board should provide oversight of the implementation of this Service Procedure across all Districts.

HALLMARK 3: BUILDING ANALYTICAL CAPABILITY

3.51   The inclusion of 'Building analytical capability' as the third Hallmark of Neighbourhood Policing provided a focus on the use of data and technology in the provision of an evidence-based approach to policing. This was one of the key areas in which the development of the Hallmarks had led to a notable shift in direction and focus within neighbourhood policing.

3.52   Through the review of tactical reports, meeting minutes and in discussions with neighbourhood Officers, there was evidence of the use of data to identify repeat victims, locations and offenders that was subsequently used to make decisions on resource allocation and response. New mobile technologies, including mobile phones and the roll out of laptops, had increased access to data and policing information. The use of NICHE[93] for this purpose was widespread and the understanding of how to use it was good. This was a well-known system and was now available on mobile phones. New programmes including Pulse[94] and Geoportal[95] were less well known, and particularly among frontline Officers

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92   *Police Service of Northern Ireland, Strength of Police Service Statistics, 1 October 2023,* available at **https://www.psni.police.uk/our-publication-scheme/who-we-are-and-what-we-do/strength-police-service-statistics**.

93   NICHE is the Police Service's Records Management System which provided information on people, locations, vehicles and incidents.

94   Pulse is the Police Service's Performance Management Framework which provided real time accessible performance information and analysis to Officers and staff.

95   Geoportal is a mapping and analytics software package which provided Officers with visual information and real-time access to spatial data services.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CHIEF INSPECTOR'S FOREWORD

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

RECOMMENDATIONS

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER 2: STRATEGY AND GOVERNANCE

CHAPTER 3: DELIVERY

CHAPTER 4: FOLLOW-UP REVIEW

CHAPTER 5: OUTCOMES

APPENDICES

there was little understanding of what data was held, how to access it and how it could be of use. Supervisors and senior Officers were more informed about data availability, with use of data a core component of Area and District management meetings. However, there remained work to do in creating buy-in and understanding of these important programmes.

3.53   The use of analytics within Districts varied depending on individual skills and abilities and at the time of the inspection fieldwork access to training had been sporadic (see Hallmark 7). Forty nine percent of NPTs in 2021 and 47% in 2022 reported that the analytical capacity and capability to support their teams in problem solving activity was developed or somewhat developed.

3.54   There was a concerted effort within neighbourhood policing to increase awareness of the role of data analysts and access to them. This provided neighbourhood Officers with access to experienced and knowledgeable analysts who offered professional insights into crime patterns and trends. Analysts presented at the problem solving conference, outlining their role and offering assistance. Emails were also sent from analysts to Officers explaining how their help could be sought. There remained inconsistencies in awareness levels about the role of analysts within NPTs as well as differences in approach. Some Officers had contacted and received assistance from an analyst while others had no knowledge of them. Some NPT Officers reported that a request for assistance would '*hold more weight*' if it came from a Police Inspector, and therefore had not made a request personally.

3.55   Analysts reported that there had been a significant increase in their workload. Some of this was attributed to greater awareness within NPTs and more NPT Officers seeking assistance. It was also reported that demand was outweighing what analysts could produce and that demand was so high that they were having to prioritise and re-prioritise requests for assistance. A District Commander reported that often the delay in receiving assistance from an analyst was such that by the time the product was received, the information was out of date. Approximately 50% of an analysts' time was spent preparing products such as Tactical Assessments for Tactical Tasking Co-ordination Group meetings, this was reducing the amount of time analysts could give to work on bespoke incidents or requests. Inspectors were concerned for the future sustainability of this important function if resources are unable to continue to meet demand.

HALLMARK 4: SOLVING PROBLEMS

3.56   Including problem solving as a Hallmark of Neighbourhood Policing had resulted in a distinct focus on development and improvement. Progress in this area was evident through programmes such as problem solving champions, a dedicated conference and through the problem solving awards. However further progress was required.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CHIEF INSPECTOR'S FOREWORD

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

RECOMMENDATIONS

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER 2: STRATEGY AND GOVERNANCE

CHAPTER 3: DELIVERY

CHAPTER 4: FOLLOW-UP REVIEW

CHAPTER 5: OUTCOMES

APPENDICES

3.57 In 2021 62% of NPTs reported their team's approach to problem solving as effective or highly effective. In 2022 this was 61% and this was highest in Derry City and Strabane (67%) and lowest in North Area (59%). In year one 56% of NPTs reported their team as effective or highly effective at understanding and monitoring the effectiveness and impact of problem solving. This increased to 61% in year two and was again highest in Derry City and Strabane (83%) and lowest in North Area (47%).

3.58 Neighbourhood Officers were asked about their approach to problem solving and the model used within the Police Service. The Police Service utilise the SARA problem solving model[96] to *'ensure that our actions are linked to a detailed understanding of problems,'* however knowledge of the model was inconsistent and not everyone had received training. Problem solving training was to be included as part of the neighbourhood training courses under development within the newly established Neighbourhood Faculty (see Hallmark 7).

3.59 Problem solving folders were used by Police Officers to record actions taken against local issues which required a bespoke, collaborative intervention. They provided a framework for identifying the causes of the problem, understanding and addressing the needs of victims and offenders and for monitoring progress. Understanding the purpose of problem solving folders was inconsistent with reports of folders to keep a *'log of activities'.* Inconsistencies were also evident in understanding who could open a folder; some Constables were actively encouraged to open folders, while for others the role of a problem solving folder required such a significant level of Police Inspector oversight that this acted as a barrier to opening a folder. In Derry City and Strabane a review was underway to establish a Memorandum of Understanding regarding the threshold needed to determine when a folder could be opened and closed and to ensure consistency in the use and quality of folders across the District.

3.60 In a drive to embed problem solving as a core function of neighbourhood policing, the Police Service had aimed to establish at least one problem solving champion within each NPT. At the time of the inspection this had not been realised, however it was reported that there was at least one champion in every District. Becoming a problem solving champion involved attendance at an internal two day course with an accredited trainer. The role of a champion was to take the knowledge, skills and abilities learned back to their District and to assist others and champion the approach. Awareness among NPT Officers of who the problem solving champions were and their role was inconsistent. Few of the champions Inspectors spoke with were aware of their role or had been asked for advice in their capacity as a champion. There was no formal team briefings once a problem solving champion was identified and trained.

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96   SARA was a model of problem solving with four stages; Scanning, Analysis, Response and Assessment.

OPERATIONAL RECOMMENDATION 7

Within three months of publication of this report, the Police Service of Northern Ireland should develop and communicate effective guidance for all Neighbourhood Policing Teams which outlines:
- the function of and process for opening and closing a problem solving folder; and
- the identity and role of problem solving champions.

3.61   Many positive examples of problem solving were highlighted, including from the inaugural Problem Solving Awards in October 2022, where the Lisburn City Neighbourhood Team 'City Centre Crime and Harm Reduction Project' were the overall winners. A synopsis is provided in Figure 4 below.

Figure 4: Lisburn City Neighbourhood Team, Problem Solving Award winners, October 2022

S   *Scanning: In 2020 the Police Service and other partner organisations reported an increase in calls regarding ASB, criminal damage, drug taking and assault following the opening of a new housing development in the Lisburn area. Local businesses and residents voiced significant concern about this issue.*

A   *Analysis: Using a variety of sources of information it was identified that the tenants involved had problems with addiction and high levels of unemployment. Peak times of offending and ASB were also identified. It became apparent that many of those living in fear of crime were living in vulnerable circumstances.*

R   *Response: A collaborative response with local partners was progressed to address the ASB, criminality and to reduce the fear of crime. Clear roles were identified for partners with Police leading on reducing opportunities for crime and bringing offenders to justice. A stakeholder group was established and progress routinely reviewed.*

A   *Assessment: Information collated identified a decrease in offending and ASB, which has been maintained over time. This subsequently reduced the fear of crime as evidenced through feedback from residents. Police resourcing in the area reduced, enabling resources to focus on other demands. No displacement of issues was noted. Learning was taken and implemented in another housing development in a preventative capacity.*

Cost benefit analysis conducted by Strategic Partnerships and Prevention: the number of calls received in the area declined from 155 in 2020 to 30 in 2022. The total cost in dealing with these was £32,087 in 2020, reducing to £10,194 in 2022.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CHIEF INSPECTOR'S FOREWORD

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

RECOMMENDATIONS

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER 2: STRATEGY AND GOVERNANCE

CHAPTER 3: DELIVERY

CHAPTER 4: FOLLOW-UP REVIEW

CHAPTER 5: OUTCOMES

APPENDICES

3.62   The Problem Solving Awards were a joint Police Service and NIPB initiative, which have since been renamed as the 'Problem Solving and Partnership Awards' and expanded to include a specific category for PCSP work.

Partnership working

3.63   A key element of problem solving was partnership working. NPT Officers, community groups and representative organisations spoke about their approach to partnership working and the importance of good working relationships, two-way communication and information sharing. Examples of collaboration in the delivery of local projects and initiatives were provided, including in Derry City and Strabane where the strong linkages between NPTs and Donegal An Garda Síochána Guards were highlighted, while Officers in Causeway Coast and Glen referenced partnership approaches with the Driver and Vehicle Agency and the Department for Infrastructure in dealing with vehicle related ASB. Feedback from community groups and representative organisations was positive but also reflected the importance of key personalities and continuity of neighbourhood Officers, with high levels of Officer turnover impacting the relationships needed to develop and maintain effective partnership working.

3.64   As part of the NPT Self-Assessment Survey, NPTs were asked to rate their effectiveness at engaging with a range of partners to deliver better outcomes for communities. The results from the survey identified areas where partnership working was strong, as well as partners where improved collaboration was required.

Table 2: Percentage of NPTs who reported their team as effective or highly effective at engaging with the following partners to deliver better outcomes for communities, NPT Self-Assessment Survey, 2021 and 2022

Partners	2021 — Year 1	2022 — Year 2
Community groups	69%	73%
Public Health Agency/Drug and Alcohol Co-ordination Teams	19%	17%
PCSPs	60%	71%
Restorative justice organisations	40%	40%
Local Councils	74%	75%
Multi-Agency Support Hubs	46%	55%
Other parts of the Police Service	67%	77%

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CHIEF INSPECTOR'S FOREWORD

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

RECOMMENDATIONS

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER 2: STRATEGY AND GOVERNANCE

CHAPTER 3: DELIVERY

CHAPTER 4: FOLLOW-UP REVIEW

CHAPTER 5: OUTCOMES

APPENDICES

3.65   In 2021 74% of NPTs and 75% in 2022 reported their team as effective or highly effective in engaging with local councils. Internal partnership working with other Police Service departments was also rated highly, including by 67% of NPTs in 2021 and 77% in 2022. In 2021 69% of NPTs also reported their team as effective or highly effective in engaging with community groups. This increased to 73% in 2022. Examples of partnership working included collaboration between NPTs and local community groups on bonfires, the drive to reduce ASB surrounding bonfires and to divert young people to alternative activities. This involved partners such as the NIHE, the Department of Education, the EA and other youth services participating in regular local meetings to discuss and plan around key events, as well as initiatives such as joint patrolling to prevent problems arising. However, concerns were raised about the future of these joint initiatives as funding constraints also impacted partner agencies.

3.66   NPTs rated their engagement with PCSPs highly, with 60% of teams in 2021 reporting this as effective or highly effective, increasing to 71% in 2022. The effectiveness of these relationships was echoed by PCSP Managers, Chairs and Vice Chairs and Inspectors were informed about good working relationships and the strong approach to collaboration between PCSPs, NPTs and senior leaders. This included joint approaches such as community surgeries, bike marking and farm equipment marking events. However, PCSP budget issues and allocation delays in 2023-24 had stalled applications for funding and the subsequent progression of projects and initiatives.

3.67   Partnership working between NPTs and Multi-Agency Support Hubs was less favourably rated, with 46% in 2021 noting this as effective or highly effective. However this increased to 55% in 2022. At 40% in both 2021 and 2022 more work was needed to improve the effectiveness of the partnership working with restorative justice organisations. CJI had previously reported on the working relationship between the Police Service and Community Restorative Justice Ireland. This review noted that a *'lack of formal guidance required Police Officers to develop their own working relationships with Community Restorative Justice Ireland, which took time, and this impacted the effectiveness of their working relationship.'*[97]

3.68   With less than one in five NPTs reporting an effective or highly effective relationship with the Public Health Agency/Drug and Alcohol Co-ordination Teams, this partnership emerged as the lowest rated in terms of effectiveness by NPTs. In 2022 this was highest in Belfast at 33%, and lowest in Derry City and Strabane at just 8%.

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97   *CJI, Review of Community Restorative Justice Ireland and its Accredited Schemes, 24 May 2023,* available at http://www.cjini.org/TheInspections/Inspection-Reports/2023/Apr-June/Review-of-Community-Restorative-Justice-Ireland-an.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CHIEF INSPECTOR'S FOREWORD

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

RECOMMENDATIONS

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER 2: STRATEGY AND GOVERNANCE

CHAPTER 3: DELIVERY

CHAPTER 4: FOLLOW-UP REVIEW

CHAPTER 5: OUTCOMES

APPENDICES

HALLMARK 5: TARGETING ACTIVITY

3.69   The Hallmarks of Neighbourhood Policing reported that policing activity would be *'targeted towards the people and places with the greatest needs'* as informed by community engagement and feedback. This was to ensure that available resources could be deployed in the right place and at the right time. The need to effectively target resources had become increasingly critical to neighbourhood policing as overall resources depleted.

3.70   As part of the NPT Self-Assessment Survey, NPTs were asked about their effectiveness at ensuring policing activity is targeted according to the needs of differing communities, taking account of threat, risk, harm and vulnerability. At 82% in both 2021 and 2022, a majority of NPTs rated their team as effective or highly effective at targeting according to need.

3.71   As discussed under Hallmark 2, a significant level of community engagement was undertaken by neighbourhood Officers and this included the identification of local priorities and the development of preventative measures and proactive initiatives. Local priority setting was also evident through the development of local Policing Plans and through partnership work with PCSPs and others. These priorities ensured that NPTs were aware of and were able to respond to local needs, as determined by the local community, in a targeted manner. A key benefit of developing and maintaining trusted relationships within communities was the provision of intelligence from members of the community, which also enabled a targeted response to local concerns.

3.72   As noted in Chapter 2, there was evidence of a focus within neighbourhood policing, including tasking from Area and District management meetings, towards repeat victims, repeat locations and repeat offenders. This was bolstered by the use of data from systems including Pulse to analyse and understand current and predicted crime patterns and trends in local areas. This enabled the targeted deployment of resources, for example by targeted ASB hotspot patrols. This was further enhanced by the local knowledge of NPT Officers to know how and where they were best placed to add value to local communities.

3.73   NPTs were most confident in their effectiveness at identifying and managing interventions for repeat locations, with 75% of NPTs in 2021 and 77% in 2022 rating their team as effective or highly effective. In 2021 46% of NPTs rated their team as effective or highly effective at identifying and managing interventions for repeat victims. This increased to 57% in 2022. Just over half (51%) of NPTs in 2021 and 2022 rated their team as effective or highly effective at identifying and managing interventions for repeat offenders.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CHIEF INSPECTOR'S FOREWORD

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

RECOMMENDATIONS

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER 2: STRATEGY AND GOVERNANCE

CHAPTER 3: DELIVERY

CHAPTER 4: FOLLOW-UP REVIEW

CHAPTER 5: OUTCOMES

APPENDICES

HALLMARK 6: ACCOUNTABILITY

External accountability

3.74   The Hallmarks of Neighbourhood Policing aimed to *'ensure that there is accountability for delivery at all levels of the organisation.'* Much of the external accountability of neighbourhood policing took place within the governance arrangements outlined in Chapter 2, including reporting to the NIPB and to PCSPs through each Policing Committee. In 2014 CJI reported on the variability in the nature and effectiveness of Policing Committees, with those that relied on the formal presentation of crime statistics with limited discussion being less effective.[98] A 2019 report entitled *'The Effectiveness of Policing Committees'*[99] found that there was a lack of understanding about what is meant by 'accountability', leading to a more passive role for Policing Committees in receiving information from the Police Service. The roll out of the reporting template had improved the information provided at Policing Committees and aided better understanding and, as a result, better discussion of issues (see Chapter 4). However, there remained a lack of consensus among PCSP Managers, Chairs and Vice Chairs about the role of Policing Committees with different views on the meaning of 'accountability' versus 'monitoring'. This variation reflected differences in the function of PCSPs as stated in the Justice Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 and the aims of PCSPs as determined by the strategic priorities. District Commanders reported that they valued the opportunity to be held accountable by Policing Committees and the opportunity to report to local members on local issues, however some continued to present a lack of challenge to Officers, with one referring to the committee as a *'toothless tiger'*.

3.75   In addition to Policing Committees, the Police Service reported directly to, and answered questions from, members of the public at public PCSP meetings. The PCSP Code of Practice[100] recommended *'two public meetings each year on specific policing issues.'* The pandemic had stopped face-to-face public meetings and in some Districts they had yet to resume. This had removed a key aspect of local visibility and accountability for neighbourhood policing. **As an area for improvement all Policing and Community Safety Partnerships and District Policing and Community Safety Partnerships should resume face-to-face public meetings.**

3.76   The benefits of ongoing, two-way dialogue between neighbourhood Officers and local communities were reported as a key feature of local accountability. Officers and community groups noted the sometimes frank exchange of views and the willingness of groups to provide feedback to neighbourhood Officers, as well

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98 *CJI, Policing and Community Safety Partnerships, A review of governance, delivery and outcomes, December 2014,* available at **http://www.cjini.org/getattachment/aacda6ac-11fa-4d0a-944a-4ba2cd4eed28/report.aspx**.

99 *Morrow, D., Byrne, J., & Good, R., Ulster University, Research on The Effectiveness of Policing Committees, April 2019,* available at **https://www.nipolicingboard.org.uk/files/nipolicingboard/publications/research-report-on-the-effectiveness-of-policing-committees.PDF**.

100 *DoJ & NIPB, Code of Practice for the Exercise of Functions by Policing and Community Safety Partnerships (PCSPs) and District Policing and Community Safety Partnerships (DPSCPs), March 2016,* available at **https://www.pcsps.org/files/pcsps/publications/Code-of-Practice-for-the-Exercise-of-Functions-by-PCSPs-and-DPCSPs.pdf**.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CHIEF INSPECTOR'S FOREWORD

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

RECOMMENDATIONS

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER 2: STRATEGY AND GOVERNANCE

CHAPTER 3: DELIVERY

CHAPTER 4: FOLLOW-UP REVIEW

CHAPTER 5: OUTCOMES

APPENDICES

as the openness of the Police Service to listen and to take feedback on board. This included feedback on issues such as resourcing, visibility or accessibility of neighbourhood Officers, as well as feedback following specific policing operations. This feedback was often given directly to senior Officers, including the District Commander, through structured pre-arranged meetings, but also materialised in more informal ways including by telephone calls as and when issues emerged.

Internal accountability

3.77   The Hallmarks of Neighbourhood Policing stated that supervisors and leaders would be accountable for ensuring that *'an outcomes-based performance framework is in place, aligned to the delivery of visible, accessible, responsive and community focused policing in the local context and in accordance with these Hallmarks.'* Each District had a Performance Chief Inspector who was responsible for performance management. NPTs were held accountable through Area and District management meetings and Tactical Tasking Co-ordination Group meetings whereby proactivity reports, engagement activities and performance data of NPTs was discussed. Monthly one-to-one meetings between Officers and their Performance Chief Inspector, as well as the annual Individual Performance Review system (which had been renamed as 'Headlights') were also cited as elements of the internal accountability processes. Senior Officers reported that these helped to embed a culture of service delivery and of improving performance.

3.78   However, there remained a significant challenge in adequately assessing the performance of neighbourhood policing, an issue which was not unique to the Police Service, but which had challenged police forces across the UK.[101] The Police Service had not yet worked out what 'success' looked like in terms of 'good' neighbourhood policing and this had been complicated by the fragmentation of the function.

3.79   A range of performance related data was readily accessible through the Pulse performance management system and the Causeway Management Information System. The indicators used to measure NPT performance varied by District, however all the NPTs Inspectors met with lacked specific NPT indicators with a reliance on indicators deemed easier to track, for example the number of stop and searches completed, number of Community Resolution Notices and Fixed Penalty Notices issued and intelligence forms submitted. There were also varying approaches to monitoring the length of time NPT Officers spent out of stations. Senior Officers outlined their expectation that neighbourhood policing should operate with more *'bite'* in terms of enforcement, however while it is entirely appropriate, and indeed necessary, for neighbourhood Officers to issue notices and to undertake stop and search duties, Inspectors questioned the appropriateness of these indicators to measure performance and the absence of assessment based on quality, outcomes and alignment with Police Service strategic priorities including the Children and Young People Strategy.

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101 *NPCC & CoP, Neighbourhood Policing Peer Review 2022-23, Concluding report on Neighbourhood Policing 2023, The impact of COVID-19 and the future for Neighbourhood Policing, unpublished.*

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CHIEF INSPECTOR'S FOREWORD

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

RECOMMENDATIONS

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER 2: STRATEGY AND GOVERNANCE

CHAPTER 3: DELIVERY

CHAPTER 4: FOLLOW-UP REVIEW

CHAPTER 5: OUTCOMES

APPENDICES

3.80 While Officers in some Districts reported no direct accountability regarding numbers and indicators such as these, in other Districts teams and individuals were more strictly held to account, with orders given to increase numbers if the Performance Chief Inspector assessed that they were falling below expectation. Examples identified the impact of this on reducing Officer discretion in circumstances when discretion may have been best applied, rather than for example issuing a Community Resolution Notice. The negative implications of this practice on community engagement, trust and confidence as well as on disillusionment within NPTs was noted.

3.81 Monthly one-to-one meetings with Performance Chief Inspectors were not always taking place. Officers reported that a high level of turnover in supervisors had prevented meetings from happening, while for others the formal meetings were replaced by an informal catch up. The 'Headlights' performance review process was to be used to encourage reflective practices, provide an opportunity for feedback and facilitate continuous professional development. However, Officers reported that the process was a *'tick box exercise'* which provided an opportunity to update on work done and which, positively, did involve a focus on wellbeing. However, they did not include any attempt to qualify activities undertaken, successes or outcomes of work done. Furthermore, Officers expressed frustration that the review process seldom involved an opportunity to discuss development or training needs.

3.82 A National Performance Framework[102] for neighbourhood policing was completed in Spring 2023. The framework was based on the CoP Neighbourhood Policing Guidelines and set outcomes against Engaging Communities, Problem Solving and Targeting Activity. A range of quantitative measures accompanied each area including percentage of NPTs with tailored annual engagement plans, dip sample scores of problem solving plans, number of abstractions from neighbourhood policing activity and number of incidents attended at the request of other departments.

3.83 An internal assessment of the national framework was ongoing at the time of the inspection, however initial views were that the framework involved a continued reliance on quantitative data, including targets and that an issue remained '*of whether targets are always good*'. There was a clear desire for a dedicated NPT performance framework, with one District moving to create a framework for use in the interim while waiting on the outcome of the review of the national framework. Internal developments such as the creation of a dedicated neighbourhood dashboard on Pulse will provide a single point of reference for access to data and this will prove beneficial.

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102 *NPCC & CoP, Neighbourhood Policing, Outcome and Performance Guidelines, Spring 2023, unpublished.*

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CHIEF INSPECTOR'S FOREWORD

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

RECOMMENDATIONS

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER 2: STRATEGY AND GOVERNANCE

CHAPTER 3: DELIVERY

CHAPTER 4: FOLLOW-UP REVIEW

CHAPTER 5: OUTCOMES

APPENDICES

3.84   However, in the absence of a dedicated performance framework based on bespoke performance data for neighbourhood policing, Inspectors assessed that the performance management of neighbourhood policing would continue to be ineffective and will yield continued disparities across Districts. This is particularly problematic during a time of severe budgetary constraint when the ability to appropriately and adequately assess performance is critical to ensuring the continued resourcing of a key policing function.

OPERATIONAL RECOMMENDATION **8**

Within nine months of the publication of this report, the Police Service of Northern Ireland should develop and implement a dedicated performance framework for neighbourhood policing, based on bespoke performance data with a focus on quality of activity and outcomes.

HALLMARK 7: DEVELOPING OFFICERS AND STAFF

3.85   The continued use of effective on-the-job training combined with the development of bespoke classroom-based learning was central to Hallmark 7 with a recognition that *'Effective neighbourhood policing requires a developed skillset which is strongly influenced by emotional awareness, communication, analytical and community development skills.'*

3.86   In 2021 66% of NPTs reported that the training available to deliver neighbourhood policing was under-developed to some degree. This increased to 73% in 2022. There was a lack of knowledge of what training had been completed by who and when, and what accreditations were held and skills developed. At the time of the inspection the training environment for neighbourhood policing was confusing and inconsistent. The foundation and probationer training courses did not include specific neighbourhood training modules, rather they sought to embed key skills including communication, procedural justice and the treatment of victims, witnesses and suspects. Specific neighbourhood policing training modules were available through the Open University and the initial premise was that this would be a mandatory requirement for all NPT Officers to complete when in post. However this had not materialised. Training opportunities also existed in the form of topic specific Open University modules, routine training alongside LPTs as part of the local policing training schedule and training from partner agencies. Inspectors were told that such was the demand on NPT Officers that dedicated training time was limited. Much of the development of NPT Officers was based on experiential on-the-job training, however as noted under Hallmark 6, there was little assessment of skills and competencies as part of the performance management framework and limited discussion about training or development.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CHIEF INSPECTOR'S FOREWORD

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

RECOMMENDATIONS

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER 2: STRATEGY AND GOVERNANCE

CHAPTER 3: DELIVERY

CHAPTER 4: FOLLOW-UP REVIEW

CHAPTER 5: OUTCOMES

APPENDICES

3.87   As with Hallmark 3 'Building analytical capability' and Hallmark 4 'Solving problems', Inspectors assessed that the Hallmarks of Neighbourhood Policing had provided a much needed focus on the training and development needs of neighbourhood policing. Investment in this area was most notable through the development of a dedicated Neighbourhood Faculty within the Police College. A training needs analysis had been conducted to assess the type of training required and the knowledge/skills gaps evident within neighbourhood policing. This identified communication, negotiation, engagement and mediation skills as core skills required in neighbourhood policing. It also identified Sergeants and Inspectors as key to how neighbourhood policing is delivered and the subsequent need for dedicated supervisor training.

3.88   Two NPT training courses were under development at the time of the inspection; a Leaders course which was to be trialled between July and August and rolled out in October 2023 and a Constables course which was to begin in November 2023. Once in place these would be the first dedicated in-house NPT training programmes within the Police Service. The Leaders course would be a mandatory three-day course for all NPT Sergeants and Inspectors, structured around the Hallmarks, incorporating the following areas:

- Culture - analysing issues such as procedural justice and how to manage and encourage change in internal cultures;
- Engagement - a focus on managing effective engagement, a structured approach to engagement, resourcing and implications of not engaging;
- Problem solving - overview of the SARA model and skills for directing and overseeing problem solving;
- Analytical capability – how to use NICHE, Geoportal, Pulse and how to best use analysts; and
- Hydra critical incident training – skills for de-escalating tensions and building relationships post incident.

3.89   The Constables NPT course was to include three dedicated modules, each requiring three days of training throughout the year. The three modules were engagement, problem solving and proactive policing. The neighbourhood faculty training team explained that training on the use of NICHE, Pulse and Geoportal would also be included, although at the time it appeared that this would not be a dedicated module. Discussions were ongoing about the potential for completion of the course being a pre-requisite to joining an NPT. Inspectors were disappointed to hear that the course would not be accredited. Formal accreditation would place more value on the course, as well as on the investment in neighbourhood policing, and would further professionalise the function. There was potential for a future link with the CoP and a centrally developed NPT course, which may provide accreditation. POPT were to be included in the roll out of the training, although the logistics of this due to the complexities of POPT hours remained a work in progress.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CHIEF INSPECTOR'S FOREWORD

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

RECOMMENDATIONS

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER 2: STRATEGY AND GOVERNANCE

CHAPTER 3: DELIVERY

CHAPTER 4: FOLLOW-UP REVIEW

CHAPTER 5: OUTCOMES

APPENDICES

3.90   The establishment of the Neighbourhood Faculty and the roll out of the first ever dedicated NPT training courses were positive developments in the commitment towards the neighbourhood policing function within the Police Service. While current knowledge about the faculty was inconsistent this would improve as the courses were rolled out. Furthermore, the roll out of dedicated NPT training courses would help to address the issues of confusion and inconsistency in the neighbourhood training environment.

HALLMARK 8: DEVELOPING AND SHARING LEARNING

3.91   As detailed under Hallmark 8 of the Hallmarks of Neighbourhood Policing, the neighbourhood policing function was led by the ACC for Local Policing. The Neighbourhood Faculty was under development, as outlined in Hallmark 7, and this would provide a key mechanism for the development and sharing of learning. However, evidence of shared learning went beyond that delivered by the establishment of the faculty and beyond the internal departments of the Police Service. A range of external networks had been utilised to develop and share best practice in neighbourhood policing including participation in a neighbourhood policing peer review with colleagues from Merseyside Police which focussed on the strategic approach to neighbourhood policing, problem solving, targeted activity, performance and community engagement. In addition, the operational lead for neighbourhood policing UK wide was a Chief Inspector based in Belfast. This role was utilised to share information and learning within and across other UK police forces.

3.92   Cross border initiatives were also used to share learning between the Police Service and An Garda Síochána, of which neighbourhood policing was a key component. This included the establishment of three operational groups which meet on a bi-monthly basis in the Newry Mourne and Down, Fermanagh and Omagh and Derry City and Strabane Districts, as well as plans for an annual conference to learn and share best practice.

3.93   The development and sharing of learning internally took place in a number of ways including through the use of the NPT Self-Assessment Survey that supported understanding being created and maintained. The Problem Solving Awards were a public means of driving innovation, recognising good work and sharing learning. The Neighbourhood Hub on POiNT acted as a single point of reference which included case studies to highlight best practice.

3.94   Secondments of Officers from LPT to NPT were facilitated to allow for the development of experience and to encourage the cross-departmental sharing of information and knowledge. Secondments from NPT to LPT were also available, however these rarely took place. While secondments to NPT occurred to enable shared learning, others took place in response to a particular issue in a particular location, for example in the Causeway Coast and Glens and Ards and North Down

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CHIEF INSPECTOR'S FOREWORD

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

RECOMMENDATIONS

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER 2: STRATEGY AND GOVERNANCE

CHAPTER 3: DELIVERY

CHAPTER 4: FOLLOW-UP REVIEW

CHAPTER 5: OUTCOMES

APPENDICES

Districts during the summer months, as previously discussed. A pilot of attaching all probationary Officers to NPT for a period was also trialled and although successful, was unable to be rolled out due to resourcing issues. There were varying reports of the benefits of secondments to NPT as well as inconsistencies in how they operate across Districts. The length of secondment to NPT ranged from two weeks to 12 weeks depending on the District. Many NPT Officers were concerned by the short length of secondments, identifying the reduced likelihood of developing meaningful, trusted relationships during such a short time frame while also reporting the frustrations of local communities and the likelihood that this exacerbated perceptions of a high turnover of Officers.

Value

3.95   The value of neighbourhood policing was a significant theme which emerged throughout the fieldwork for this inspection. Inspectors heard this repeatedly from local community groups and community representatives. However, many NPT Officers reported that this was often not replicated within the Police Service. Inspectors assessed that the publication of the Hallmarks had given a renewed sense of importance to the role and had increased its visibility within the Service. There was evidence of significant efforts made by the Police Service to publicise the work of neighbourhood policing, including using National Neighbourhood Policing Week to publicise the work of NPTs, as well as through the Problem Solving Awards and repeated public statements about the commitment to the function. Furthermore, despite the significant resourcing issues facing policing and the desire to ensure neighbourhood policing operated with more '*bite*', there was significant praise for neighbourhood policing from senior Officers within the Police Service.

3.96   The repeated assertions from NPT Officers about how they were valued stemmed from the views of other policing functions, specifically LPT, which reportedly viewed neighbourhood policing as '*soft*' with fewer pressures. Secondments to NPT had helped to improve this as seconded Officers had the opportunity to see the work done and the benefit of engagement and proactive policing. NPT Officers also explained that their value would be increased if they were '*left alone to do their role*', reporting that the high level of abstraction of neighbourhood Officers and the apparent ease with which they were 'pulled from' their core role had resulted in a lack of respect for neighbourhood policing. NPT Officers reported that the preventative work of neighbourhood Officers reduced the demand on other departments and this would be valued more highly if they were able to operate as intended and if the Police Service was better at sharing what NPT do with other departments.

Recruitment, retention and succession planning

3.97   There were no reported issues with either recruitment or retention within neighbourhood policing. There was no need to actively recruit or promote the role as Officers actively chose a career in neighbourhood policing with many applying multiple times. Any issues with recruitment which did arise were associated with

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CHIEF INSPECTOR'S FOREWORD

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

RECOMMENDATIONS

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER 2: STRATEGY AND GOVERNANCE

CHAPTER 3: DELIVERY

CHAPTER 4: FOLLOW-UP REVIEW

CHAPTER 5: OUTCOMES

APPENDICES

location rather than role. Officers reported significant levels of job satisfaction, enjoyment and dedication to their communities however many voiced frustration over the lack of a career path within neighbourhood policing. Once in post, few Officers sought to leave, and this was particularly true at the Sergeants rank. This subsequently reduced the promotion prospects within neighbourhood policing with Officers having to choose between remaining at their current rank within their role or move from neighbourhood policing to advance their career. This was a difficult choice for many Officers, invoking feelings of guilt at the prospect of leaving the communities and relationships they had developed behind.

3.98 The eighth Hallmark of Neighbourhood Policing stated that the Police Service would *'Ensure succession planning is in place in neighbourhood roles to protect continuity of service delivery and relationships.'* As previously discussed, almost all community groups voiced frustration regarding high Officer turnover and a lack of continuity of Police Officers in local neighbourhoods. This appeared at odds with evidence of no reported issues in recruitment or retention but reflected many of the issues previously outlined including high rates of abstraction, the short-term nature of NPT secondments and the creation of temporary NPTs.

3.99 The impact of high Officer turnover was voiced most strongly and was most problematic when related to senior Officers. Key personalities were central in building and maintaining relationships in local areas, as well as driving delivery towards local solutions in several critical locations including North and West Belfast and Derry City and Strabane. Inspectors are therefore concerned about the effectiveness of succession planning within neighbourhood policing. In 2013 CJI recommended that *'Longer term workforce planning should be strengthened in the PSNI with a stronger focus on utilising good practice. This should include the implementation of effective succession planning to address ongoing skills and knowledge gaps.'*[103] This recommendation and its outworkings are of particular importance to neighbourhood policing where the level and impact of turnover in senior roles was a significant issue. **As an area for improvement the Police Service of Northern Ireland should revisit this recommendation with a focus on neighbourhood policing.**

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103 *CJI, Finding the Balance: matching human resources with priorities in the Police Service of Northern Ireland, May 2013,* available at **http://www.cjini.org/getattachment/70bb4c1f-ced0-4922-89a0-1e975ee84951/report.aspx**.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CHIEF INSPECTOR'S FOREWORD

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

RECOMMENDATIONS

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER 2: STRATEGY AND GOVERNANCE

CHAPTER 3: DELIVERY

CHAPTER 4: FOLLOW-UP REVIEW

CHAPTER 5: OUTCOMES

APPENDICES

CHAPTER 4:
PCSP FOLLOW-UP REVIEW

BACKGROUND

4.1 In August 2019 CJI published a report on *'Working Together for Safer Communities – a review of Policing and Community Safety Partnerships in Northern Ireland'* (*the 2019 inspection report*).[104] This was a full inspection and followed a previous inspection in 2014.[105] The 2019 inspection report made five strategic and two operational recommendations, of which two were addressed to the Police Service and the remaining five were taken forward by the DoJ and the NIPB. This included two recommendations which directly related to the designated organisations of PCSPs.

4.2 This Follow-Up Review assessed the progress made against the recommendations arising from the 2019 inspection report. It was conducted as part of the Community Safety and Local Policing Arrangements inspection. A progress update on the recommendations was co-ordinated by the DoJ with input from the NIPB and the Police Service. In this update an assessment of the progress made and a description of activity undertaken was provided. Interviews and focus groups were conducted with relevant stakeholders and the recommendations and actions taken to address them were discussed.

DEVELOPMENTS SINCE THE 2019 INSPECTION

4.3 An overview of the establishment of PCSPs, their membership, functions, strategic priorities and oversight was provided in Chapter 1. Since the completion of the 2019 inspection report there had been a number of publications which included a renewed focus on partnership working and the role of PCSPs. The results from the Local Policing Review were published in November 2019 with commitments from the Police Service to review the reporting mechanisms to the NIPB and to PCSPs to *'maximise how they highlight the non-public crimes and how these demands are increasing'* and to *'Work in partnership with PCSPs and local communities to improve the development of local policing plans which recognise the changing crime trends and variations in policing.'*[106]

104 *CJI, Working together for safer communities, A review of Policing and Community Safety Partnerships in Northern Ireland, August 2019,* available at **http://www.cjini.org/getattachment/010eb06d-a1b7-46b9-85cd-50af58cb6f98/report.aspx**.
105 *CJI, Policing and Community Safety Partnerships, A review of governance, delivery and outcomes, December 2014,* available at **http://www.cjini.org/getattachment/aacda6ac-11fa-4d0a-944a-4ba2cd4eed28/report.aspx**.
106 *NIPB, Local Policing Review 2018, Consultation Response, November 2019*, available at **https://www.nipolicingboard.org.uk/files/nipolicingboard/media-files/local-policing-review-response-document.pdf**.

4.4   PCSPs were also referenced in Outcome 3 of the 2020-2025 Policing Plan
'We have engaged and supportive communities.'[107]   Indicator 3.1 focussed on
partnership working and reiterated the importance of PCSPs as a key mechanism in
the identification and delivery of local solutions to local problems.

4.5   Outside of the actions to implement the 2019 report recommendations, the most
significant change to the operation of PCSPs occurred due to the restrictions
imposed in response to the pandemic. This included the introduction of virtual
meetings and the (temporary) cessation of public meetings. As reported in Chapter
3 many of these public meetings had yet to resume.

4.6   Community safety priorities have become increasingly focussed on issues including
domestic and sexual abuse with the laws created under the Domestic Abuse and
Civil Proceedings Act (Northern Ireland) 2021,[108] the publication of the joint DoJ
and Department of Health draft Domestic Abuse and Sexual Abuse Strategy[109], and
consultation on the Ending Violence Against Women and Girls Framework.[110] These
issues have therefore also become increasingly important priorities for PCSPs.
Vulnerabilities from organised crime, including paramilitarism, continued to be areas
of focus for PCSPs, with the commencement of phase two of the Executive Action
Plan for the programme for tackling paramilitary activity and organised crime.[111]

PROGRESS AGAINST RECOMMENDATIONS

STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATION 1

The Belfast Policing and Community Safety Partnership should be subsumed into the
Belfast District Policing and Community Safety Partnerships.

Status: Partially achieved.

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107 *NIPB, The Northern Ireland Policing Plan 2020-2025 and Annual Performance Plan 2023/24, March 2023*, available at
**https://www.nipolicingboard.org.uk/files/nipolicingboard/2023-03/annual-assessment-policing-plan-2020-25-and-
annual-performance-plan-202324.pdf**.
108 *Legislation.gov.uk, Domestic Abuse and Civil Proceedings Act (Northern Ireland) 2021, March 2021, available* at
https://www.legislation.gov.uk/nia/2021/2.
109 *Department of Health and the Department of Justice, Draft Domestic Abuse and Sexual Abuse Strategy, February 2023,*
available at **https://www.justice-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/consultations/justice/dsa-strategy.PDF**.
110 *The Executive Office, Ending Violence Against Women and Girls Strategic Framework, Summer 2023,* available at **h
ttps://www.executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/consultations/execoffice/evawg-strategic-framework.pdf**.
111 *Northern Ireland Executive, Executive programme for tackling paramilitary activity and organised crime, Phase 2 2021-2024,*
available at **https://www.northernireland.gov.uk/articles/executive-programme-tackling-paramilitary-activity-and-
organised-crime-0**.

LIST OF
ABBREVIATIONS

CHIEF
INSPECTOR'S
FOREWORD

EXECUTIVE
SUMMARY

RECOMMENDATIONS

CHAPTER 1:
INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER 2:
STRATEGY AND
GOVERNANCE

CHAPTER 3:
DELIVERY

CHAPTER 4:
FOLLOW-UP
REVIEW

CHAPTER 5:
OUTCOMES

APPENDICES

Organisational response

4.7 *Department of Justice and Northern Ireland Policing Board update – November 2022 (Partially Achieved).*

4.8 *A 'Task and Finish Group' chaired by DoJ comprising the PSNI District Commander for Belfast, together with senior staff from Belfast City Council and the Northern Ireland Policing Board was established to progress implementation of this recommendation, which would require legislative change. Progress of this action was impacted by the covid pandemic and additional resource and capacity issues. The recommendation has recently been discussed by Joint Committee. An upcoming meeting with Belfast City Council Chief Executive will provide an opportunity to reflect on current appetite to implement this recommendation. It is intended that this recommendation will be completed during Q4 22-23.*

Inspectors' assessment

4.9 At the time of the inspection the PCSP structures within the Belfast area had not changed since 2019 with one principal PCSP and four District PCSPs (DPCSPs). As noted in the organisational response, initial discussions about implementation of this recommendation were impacted by the pandemic restrictions including stopping the Task and Finish Group set up to progress implementation. The Task and Finish Group was not reconvened however discussions had reopened at the Joint Committee. Inspectors were told that a meeting with the Chief Executive of Belfast City Council took place in January 2023, with a planned follow-up meeting in June 2023 when a paper on the recommendation was to be presented; almost four years after the recommendation was made. This meeting had been rescheduled to the end of 2023.

4.10 In 2019 it was reported that there was *'no opposition in principle'* to the recommendation implementation, however at the time of Follow-Up Review fieldwork there was only limited support for it and no evidence of any plan or actions taken towards achieving the recommendation.

4.11 There was broad consensus about the strategic role held by the principal PCSP in bringing together and providing strategic direction to the DPCSPs. This included the consideration of city-wide community safety initiatives, which DPCSPs could choose to fund locally, as well as oversight of community safety activities within the city centre. These are important functions to avoid segregation across four Districts and to ensure the city centre was considered appropriately.

4.12 There was evidence of duplication and inefficiency within the Belfast PCSP structures, including attendance at two or sometimes multiple PCSP/DPCSP meetings and the repeated presentation of similar reports at those meetings. Duplication was also evident in some administrative tasks. However, in working towards the intention of the recommendation, some actions had been taken to increase centralisation and co-ordination of procurement and administrative tasks.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CHIEF INSPECTOR'S FOREWORD

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

RECOMMENDATIONS

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER 2: STRATEGY AND GOVERNANCE

CHAPTER 3: DELIVERY

CHAPTER 4: FOLLOW-UP REVIEW

CHAPTER 5: OUTCOMES

APPENDICES

To further streamline and simplify the structures and processes, Inspectors would like to see this enhanced. To achieve this, and **as an area for improvement, the role of the principal PCSP needs further defined and an annual mapping exercise should be conducted to analyse and understand further areas of commonality which exist between the principal PCSP and the DPCSPs, which could yield further time and resource savings and the streamlining of initiatives which are common between one or more DPCSP.**

4.13   Overall, this strategic recommendation **had been partially achieved.**

STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATION 2

Inspectors recommend a review (within 2019-20 planning cycle) of the current strategic approach to communications by an independent agent with subject expertise. Such a review should include a feasibility study in regard to a technical solution that offers a more unified singular entity and identity for the corporate Policing and Community Safety Partnership brand.

Status: Partially achieved.

Organisational response

4.14   *Department of Justice and Northern Ireland Policing Board update – November 2022 (Achieved).*

4.15   *PCSPs have a singular identity through unified branding which can be modified to insert each Council District, whilst maintaining the overall brand. A PCSP website which publishes joint information, contact details, best practice examples and a monthly e-zine is maintained by the NI Policing Board. In advance of the development of the PCSP 3-year Strategic Reviews (2022-25), the Joint Committee, in consultation with PCSPs and other interested stakeholders, completed a review of the PCSP Strategic Priorities. As part of this review and recognising some of the challenges in raising awareness of the PCSPs, the Joint Committee agreed to amend Strategic Priority 1 to focus on Engagement, Communications and Awareness Raising and all PCSPs are now required to fully report on the activities that each are implementing in these areas. In considering the recommendation and in discussions with PCSPs, it was agreed that the cost of this work is likely to outweigh the benefits and that increased effort at a local level through the delivery of Strategic Priority 1 would likely give a greater return. [NIPB] have led on this recommendation, it is considered achieved utilising a different approach.*

Inspectors' assessment

4.16   A singular unified brand under which all PCSPs operated was in place and was widely used by all PCSPs. This included the corporate name 'Policing and Community Partnership', and a corporate logo. Most PCSP communications were branded with this logo, albeit localised with the name of the local Council.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CHIEF INSPECTOR'S FOREWORD

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

RECOMMENDATIONS

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER 2: STRATEGY AND GOVERNANCE

CHAPTER 3: DELIVERY

CHAPTER 4: FOLLOW-UP REVIEW

CHAPTER 5: OUTCOMES

APPENDICES

Consideration had been given to employing a consultant to review the strategic approach to communications, however this was not deemed an appropriate use of funds. A project had been initiated to develop a joint communication strategy, however similar to Strategic Recommendation 1, this had stalled due to the pandemic and had not reconvened. As such, no technical solution was sought nor put in place.

4.17 PCSP identity was less about branding and more about recognition, awareness and communication. This was complicated by the high level of partnership working undertaken by PCSPs, in particular in areas where community safety initiatives were funded by PCSPs but delivered by other statutory or third-party organisations. Project funding was based on an expectation that the PCSP would be included in promotional materials. However, this did not always occur and often when the media reported on events they removed references to PCSPs. Some PCSP Managers felt that the push to ensure a focus on the PCSP brand was to the detriment of a focus on the community safety events and initiatives. Some questioned the need for an enhanced awareness of PCSPs, however this missed the point and overlooked a key function of PCSPs which was to work with local communities to identify and address local problems. This ultimately requires the public to be aware of PCSPs and what they do.

4.18 There was some frustration that there was no joint communication strategy in place between PCSPs and other criminal justice partners. It was reported often that when collaborating with other criminal justice agencies each would publicise their own input with little recognition given to others. This was particularly detrimental to PCSPs as only a few had their own communication strategy meaning their promotion of events lacked strategic direction. The issues arising from this were further exacerbated by the failure to revisit the communications project following the pandemic.

4.19 Issues with communication and awareness were perhaps most evident through problems encountered when attempting to access PCSP documents or seek information about PCSP events and initiatives. Information on events and initiatives were largely provided through social media on Facebook, however, this varied by area, and due to the nature of social media was difficult to search. There was some confusion over the use of X/Twitter and Instagram platforms, as well as over access to social media analytics and social media training. The number of websites was also confusing, led to different standards in information provision and stood out as an opportunity for creating efficiencies in a challenging financial environment. Each PCSP had a local Council run PCSP webpage within the local Council website, although some of these were difficult to locate. PCSP Managers had no direct access to this website with information uploaded by the local Council communications team. While relationships between PCSP Managers and the local Council communications team were positive with regular engagement, this was

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CHIEF INSPECTOR'S FOREWORD

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

RECOMMENDATIONS

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER 2: STRATEGY AND GOVERNANCE

CHAPTER 3: DELIVERY

CHAPTER 4: FOLLOW-UP REVIEW

CHAPTER 5: OUTCOMES

APPENDICES

a duplication of efforts. Action plans, annual reports and meeting minutes were generally not available on these websites and where they were available, they were often out of date. In some instances an email had to be sent requesting access. This was not congruent with promoting the work of PCSPs and encouraging public awareness. The main PCSP website, managed by the NIPB, contained minimal information and had broken links to the local Council run PCSP websites. Some PCSP members were unaware that there was a central PCSP website.

4.20 In response to this recommendation, the Joint Committee changed the first PCSP strategic priority from *'To form and successfully deliver the functions of the PCSP for the area',* which was deemed as out of date and part of the 'business as usual' functions of PCSPs, to *'To ensure effective delivery in response to local need, and improve the visibility and recognition of the work of the PCSP through effective consultation, communication and engagement.'* This placed an onus on all PCSPs to promote and raise the awareness of PCSPs and report their actions to the Joint Committee. This was a positive development which would ensure a focus on communication and engagement activities while also providing an insight into areas which need improvement. Reporting on strategic priority one was still at an early stage and tended to rely on survey results from the Northern Ireland Policing Plan Survey, as well as the number of meetings held and attendees, and social media statistics (when they were available). Inspectors anticipate that this will evolve and improve over time to consider more meaningful measures of engagement and awareness raising including engagement with different groups of people and through new and innovative methods.

4.21 Overall, this strategic recommendation had been **partially achieved.**

STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATION 3

The Police Service of Northern Ireland should present a narrative update on achievement against the local Policing Plan that gives a cumulative measure of achievement to the Policing and Community Safety Partnership members with specific reference to delivery of Policing Plan outcomes.

Status: Achieved.

Organisational response

4.22 *Police Service update - January 2021 (Achieved).*

4.23 *ACC District Policing Command provided a narrative to District Commanders on reporting against local Policing Plans to PCSPs.*

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CHIEF INSPECTOR'S FOREWORD

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

RECOMMENDATIONS

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER 2: STRATEGY AND GOVERNANCE

CHAPTER 3: DELIVERY

CHAPTER 4: FOLLOW-UP REVIEW

CHAPTER 5: OUTCOMES

APPENDICES

Inspectors' assessment

4.24   A new reporting template was developed and rolled out across all PCSPs by the end of 2022. The template had been well received by all stakeholders as providing a notable improvement in the type of information relayed to PCSPs by the Police Service, providing greater contextual analysis of issues rather than a sole focus on crime statistics. PCSP Managers and members reported that they received more information that was presented in a simpler format and promoted greater discussion.

4.25   The template followed the SARA problem solving model and the Outcome Based Accountability methodology and provided an overview of a key issue, the analysis undertaken to understand the origin of the issue, the response which had been deployed to address it and the outcome using outcomes-based analysis. Workshops were held during 2022 to assist template utilisation and enable a smooth roll out. These had been important in alleviating the initial reluctance of police District Commanders.

4.26   Police District Commanders routinely answered questions from PCSP members on the information presented. These were provided to District Commanders a week in advance to enable the preparation of an appropriate response and ensure that data was available. The areas reported on reflected local priorities, although this could be more clearly linked to the local Policing Plan. Template usage varied by local Council and was more effective in some areas than in others. Derry City and Strabane PCSP had adopted a focussed approach of reporting on three themes per quarter, each of which was allocated to a dedicated lead to report on. This was received positively by the PCSP, enabling them to consider outcomes over time. At the time of the inspection the District Commander identified the themes for discussion, but plans were in place to enable PCSP members to make recommendations on areas of focus each quarter.

4.27   This strategic recommendation had been **achieved.**

STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATION 4

In response the Policing and Community Safety Partnerships should have an agenda item to highlight the linkage between the delivery of the local Policing Plan, the Policing and Community Safety Partnership Action Plan and the work of the Policing and Community Safety Partnerships. They should then identify what needs to be done to improve delivery.

Status: Not achieved.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CHIEF INSPECTOR'S FOREWORD

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

RECOMMENDATIONS

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER 2: STRATEGY AND GOVERNANCE

CHAPTER 3: DELIVERY

CHAPTER 4: FOLLOW-UP REVIEW

CHAPTER 5: OUTCOMES

APPENDICES

Organisational response

4.28   *Department of Justice and Northern Ireland Policing Board update – November 2022 (Achieved).*

4.29   *Board officials have been working closely with PSNI District Commanders and PCSPs to ensure effective alignment between the PCSP Action Plans and the Local Policing Plans. A new Policing Committee reporting template has been implemented and 4 regional workshops were held during 2022 to ensure a more effective information flow and accountability role for the Policing Committees. The template is fully in use for the 2022-23 implementation year. The template has been designed to fully evidence any potential role that the PCSP may have in assisting with PSNI problem-solving. It is anticipated that this will also aid in the development of both the PCSP Action Plans and the Local Policing Plans going forward. NIPB led this recommendation.*

Inspectors' assessment

4.30   A review of agenda and minutes from PCSP and Policing Committee meetings identified that no specific agenda item existed which explicitly identified the linkage between the delivery of the local Policing Plan, the PCSP Action Plan and the work of PCSPs. This was confirmed by the PCSP Managers and members.

4.31   PCSPs reported different approaches in attempts to address the issue, with each varying in nature and effectiveness. For example in Derry City and Strabane PCSP the Manager's Report demonstrated Action Plan progress and how this linked to the local Policing Plan. However, a more common approach was based on the premise that the inclusion of the local Policing Plan, the Action Plan and PCSP activities in the agenda and through discussion was, in itself, a reflection of the linkages.

4.32   PCSP and Policing Committee meeting agenda content differed by PCSP. However, each included the local Policing Plan, with an overview given and discussion on key issues. A report on the PCSP Action Plan was also discussed however this tended to be an administrative/procedural update with no direct link to activities undertaken or planned. Separately, PCSP activities were discussed, however this was inconsistent and there was no evidence that this linked back to local Policing Plan priorities or to the Action Plan. Therefore the linkages between the three areas were not sufficiently clear to ensure that members of the PCSP and the public could clearly understand how they work together to provide local solutions to local issues in a collaborative manner. This was particularly problematic for newer PCSP members who reported that they struggled to understand how PCSP activities reflected and addressed agreed local priorities.

4.33   As noted under Strategic Recommendation 3, the roll out of the new reporting template had improved reporting from the Police Service to PCSPs and an opportunity to report on a partnership response to local problems, as well as an

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CHIEF INSPECTOR'S FOREWORD

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

RECOMMENDATIONS

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER 2: STRATEGY AND GOVERNANCE

CHAPTER 3: DELIVERY

CHAPTER 4: FOLLOW-UP REVIEW

CHAPTER 5: OUTCOMES

APPENDICES

assessment of the outcome and if further delivery improvements were needed. Inspectors believe there is scope for District Commanders and PCSP members to more effectively draw out the connections between local Policing Plan priorities, the PCSP Action Plan and key activities underway or planned.

4.34   Overall, this strategic recommendation **had not been achieved.**

STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATION 5

The Designated Organisations of the Policing and Community Safety Partnerships should increase recognition of the role of Policing and Community Safety Partnerships and delivery of shared positive outcomes in their corporate planning.

Status: Partially achieved.

Organisational response

4.35   *Department of Justice and Northern Ireland Policing Board update – November 2022 (Partially achieved).*

4.36   *Having shared CJINI's recommendations with each organisation, a commitment was given by Joint Committee to schedule a series of follow-up one-to-one meetings with designated organisation chief executives to discuss opportunities for enhancing engagement with PCSPs in line with CJINI's recommendations. DoJ has met with all designated representatives during 2019-2020. A summary of the meetings will be presented to Joint Committee for consideration as to any remaining steps required. It is intended that this recommendation will be completed during Q4 22-23.*

Inspectors' assessment

4.37   A review of designated organisations' corporate planning documents identified that three of the seven organisations made direct, albeit limited, reference to PCSPs. A general theme of 'partnership working' was adopted by most organisations. This reflected the often multiple partnerships organisations were associated with, including those which for some organisations, more closely aligned with organisational core function. In some cases organisations reported that they were actively trying to reduce the size of their corporate planning documents and that this impacted the likelihood of reference to individual partnerships.

4.38   Mindful that a number of PCSP designated organisations were not criminal justice organisations and therefore not within CJI's statutory remit, Inspectors were impressed by the significant volume of work undertaken by the Joint Committee to bring designated organisations on board with this recommendation. Meetings with representatives of all designated organisations were initiated in late 2019, however these were delayed due to the pandemic. A paper was presented to the Joint Committee in November 2021 outlining the results of the consultation.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CHIEF INSPECTOR'S FOREWORD

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

RECOMMENDATIONS

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER 2: STRATEGY AND GOVERNANCE

CHAPTER 3: DELIVERY

CHAPTER 4: FOLLOW-UP REVIEW

CHAPTER 5: OUTCOMES

APPENDICES

While designated organisations reported the value of PCSP membership, they expressed frustration over resourcing issues and the potential overlap with Community Planning; problems of appropriate representation and the ability to provide relevant contributions; and the subsequent turnover of representatives which created problems in understanding their organisation's role in PCSPs. Difficulties with local Council boundaries and organisational structures not aligning were also raised. The designated organisations also acknowledged they could improve how they highlight PCSPs role and provide better feedback to their organisation. They reported that a more strategic approach to PCSPs would bring a renewed focus on the importance of designated organisations.

4.39 Consultation results were also provided to PCSP Chairs, who were asked to discuss them with their PCSP and identify methods to address the issues raised, where possible. The Joint Committee also further engaged with the designated organisations to feedback on the information collated and reflect on outcomes. A Joint Committee facilitated workshop had been planned for October 2023 to improve the understanding and appreciation of the role of designated organisations within PCSPs; to explore how mutual benefits could be maximised with PCSP membership; and to identify opportunities for improvement.

4.40 Inspectors are cognisant of the fact that the onus for the implementation of this recommendation rests with the designated organisations. However, the work undertaken by the Joint Committee in the development of a formulated improvement plan through the consultation exercise and associated workshop, has sought to understand the issues and barriers which were central to the recommendation and to address these through engagement and awareness raising. This work is ongoing and so an assessment of the associated improvements is not possible at this time.

4.41 Overall, this strategic recommendation had been **partially achieved.**

OPERATIONAL RECOMMENDATION 1

The Police Service of Northern Ireland should report on specific initiatives in the delivery of policing aimed at improving performance in dealing with Sexual and Domestic Violence and other local policing priorities such as human trafficking, rural crime and cyber-crime.

Status: Achieved.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CHIEF INSPECTOR'S FOREWORD

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

RECOMMENDATIONS

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER 2: STRATEGY AND GOVERNANCE

CHAPTER 3: DELIVERY

CHAPTER 4: FOLLOW-UP REVIEW

CHAPTER 5: OUTCOMES

APPENDICES

Organisational response

4.42 *Police Service update - January 2021 (Achieved).*

4.43 *Local policing plans for 2020-2021 were developed by local Commanders in consultation with their respective PCSPs. Commanders are responsive to the requirements of local PCSPs and will provide updates on specific initiatives when requested to do so, inviting representatives from specialist departments to assist in these updates as necessary. Achieved April 2020.*

Inspectors' assessment

4.44 Evidence collated from PCSP Managers, PCSP members and minutes from PCSP and Policing Committee meetings identified that the Police Service did report to PCSPs on specific initiatives related to dealing with significant thematic crime types. The initiatives reported on reflected local circumstance, including their inclusion within the local Policing Plan and PCSP Action Plan, as well as issues which arose as topical at a given time due to, for example, a high-profile case in a local area. In addition PCSP members could, and did, request a report on a specific initiative at any time. Guest speakers and presentations by lead Officers on key initiatives were noted by PCSP members as useful additions to meetings, which encouraged greater and more open discussion of issues.

4.45 The extent to which reporting on these thematic crime types occurred varied. Some crime types were more frequently reported on than others, for example domestic and sexual abuse was routinely reported on within almost all PCSPs. This reflected the widespread nature of domestic and sexual abuse as a community safety issue, as well as the inclusion of domestic and sexual abuse as a DoJ priority as directed by the Joint Committee to all PCSPs for inclusion in all 2023-24 Action Plans. Cyber crime was also included as a key DoJ priority, however reporting on this area was minimal. There was evidence of the Police Service reporting on rural crime, however, as expected, this tended to be focussed in areas with a larger rural population. Inspectors saw no evidence of reporting on human trafficking.

4.46 This operational recommendation had been **achieved.**

OPERATIONAL RECOMMENDATION **2**

The representatives of the Designated Organisations attending the Policing and Community Safety Partnerships should have direction from their organisation and internal lines of reporting within their organisation to report on achievement through the Policing and Community Safety Partnership.

Status: Partially achieved.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CHIEF INSPECTOR'S FOREWORD

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

RECOMMENDATIONS

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER 2: STRATEGY AND GOVERNANCE

CHAPTER 3: DELIVERY

CHAPTER 4: FOLLOW-UP REVIEW

CHAPTER 5: OUTCOMES

APPENDICES

Organisational response

4.47 *Department of Justice and Northern Ireland Policing Board update – November 2022 (Partially achieved).*

4.48 *Having shared CJINI's recommendations with each organisation, a commitment was given by Joint Committee to schedule a series of follow-up one-to-one meetings with designated organisation chief executives to agree changes, as necessary. DoJ has met with all designated representatives during 2019-2020. A summary of the meetings will be presented to Joint Committee for consideration as to any remaining steps required. It is intended that this recommendation will be completed during Q4 22-23.*

Inspectors' assessment

4.49 For details of the assessment of Operational Recommendation 2, please see Strategic Recommendation 5.

4.50 This operational recommendation had been **partially achieved.**

CONCLUSION

4.51 Overall, some good progress had been made in the implementation of the 2019 inspection report recommendations, however more work was needed. Two recommendations had been achieved, four partially achieved and one was assessed as not achieved. Implementation of these recommendations was impeded by the pandemic, however this did not hamper some recommendations and the work undertaken since the end of the pandemic had been impressive.

4.52 Improvements had been made in the reporting mechanism between the Police Service and PCSPs. This was working well, had been well received and had helped to improve the understanding of local community safety issues by PCSP members. This was also evident in reporting on key initiatives by the Police Service which was underpinned by local priorities and the ability for PCSP members to request a report on a particular initiative at any time.

4.53 More work was needed in response to Strategic Recommendation 2 which sought a review of the strategic approach to communications. Such a review never materialised, despite the initial establishment of a project to consider a joint communication strategy. The pandemic ended this and it was never reconvened. Efforts had been made to bring focus to the issue of awareness raising and communications of individual PCSPs through changes made to strategic priority 1; this was a positive development. However, further improvements were needed and the reinstatement of the joint communications project would assist in developing these in a challenging budget environment.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CHIEF INSPECTOR'S FOREWORD

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

RECOMMENDATIONS

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER 2: STRATEGY AND GOVERNANCE

CHAPTER 3: DELIVERY

CHAPTER 4: FOLLOW-UP REVIEW

CHAPTER 5: OUTCOMES

APPENDICES

4.54   Much work had been undertaken in response to Strategic Recommendation 5 and Operational Recommendation 2 which related to designated organisations. Recognising that the onus for the implementation of these recommendations lay with the designated organisations, the Joint Committee had sought to understand their position more fully, to work with them and others to improve recognition of the role of designated organisations within PCSPs as well as to explore the mutual benefits of membership. This work was ongoing at the time of the inspection.

4.55   There remained work to do to more fully explore the linkages between the local Policing Plan, the PCSP Action Plan and the activities of the PCSP. These were not sufficiently clear and this was particularly problematic for newer PCSP members. The new reporting template provided an opportunity to report on a partnership response, however this was not adequate in identifying the connections between the three.

4.56   The PCSP structures in the Belfast area had not changed since 2019 and there was little appetite to make the recommended change. Despite this, improvements were noted in attempts to streamline the duplication which existed between the principal PCSP and the four District PCSPs. This was a positive development however, further progress in this area was needed.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CHIEF INSPECTOR'S FOREWORD

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

RECOMMENDATIONS

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER 2: STRATEGY AND GOVERNANCE

CHAPTER 3: DELIVERY

CHAPTER 4: FOLLOW-UP REVIEW

CHAPTER 5: OUTCOMES

APPENDICES

CHAPTER 5:
OUTCOMES

5.1 Structured around the three outcomes from the 2020-2025 Policing Plan, this Chapter brings together a range of measures and indicators and feedback from community groups and representatives. Together they provide an assessment of the response to and delivery of community safety, including neighbourhood policing, in support of Outcome 7 of the draft PfG *'We have a safe community where we respect the law, and each other.'*[112]

5.2 As reported in Chapter 3, NPT specific measurements of performance were not readily available and survey data typically related to the Police Service as a whole, or local policing, but not the specific work of neighbourhood policing. Feedback from community groups and representatives therefore provided an important qualitative insight into the role of neighbourhood policing in creating safe communities, establishing and maintaining confidence in policing and enabling and encouraging engaged and supportive communities.

5.3 The data used in this Chapter is shown in full in Appendix 1.

WE HAVE A SAFE COMMUNITY

5.4 Outcome 1 *'We have a safe community'* is about *'tackling crime to make communities safer and ensure people feel safe.'*[113] It requires an understanding of actual and perceived crime and ASB, the effectiveness of the police in dealing with criminal and non-criminal incidents and bringing offenders to justice, as well as the perception of crime and changing crime trends. It also involves an understanding of perceptions of safety and fear of crime, that, when taken together, contribute to the reality of Northern Ireland as a safe place to live.

Crime and anti-social behaviour
5.5 Police recorded crime statistics identify an upward trend in crime in Northern Ireland, with the total number of recorded crimes (excluding fraud)[114] increasing by 13%, to 111,571 crimes, between 2012-13 and 2022-23.[115]

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112 *Northern Ireland Executive, Draft Programme for Government Framework 2016-2021, May 2016,* available at **https://www.northernireland.gov.uk/sites/default/files/consultations/newnigov/draft-pfg-framework-2016-21.pdf**.

113 *NIPB, The Northern Ireland Policing Plan 2020-2025 and Annual Performance Plan 2023-24, March 2023*, available at **https://www.nipolicingboard.org.uk/files/nipolicingboard/2023-03/annual-assessment-policing-plan-2020-25-and-annual-performance-plan-202324.pdf**.

114 Police recorded crimes of fraud in Northern Ireland are collated by Action Fraud.

115 *Police Service of Northern Ireland, Police Recorded Crime in Northern Ireland, Update to 31st March 2023, May 2023,* available at **https://www.psni.police.uk/system/files/2023-05/1401700191/Police%20Recorded%20Crime%20Bulletin%20Period%20Ending%2031st%20March%202023.pdf**.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CHIEF INSPECTOR'S FOREWORD

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

RECOMMENDATIONS

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER 2: STRATEGY AND GOVERNANCE

CHAPTER 3: DELIVERY

CHAPTER 4: FOLLOW-UP REVIEW

CHAPTER 5: OUTCOMES

APPENDICES

This was the highest number of recorded crimes since 2006-07.[116] This increase was also evident in the crime rate per 1,000 of the population, which in 2022-23 was 58, up from 54 in 2012-13.

Figure 5: Trends in reported crime, crime rate, crime outcome rate and anti-social behaviour, Northern Ireland 2012-13 to 2022-23

RECORDED CRIME

2022-23 had the highest number of recorded crimes since 2006-07

CRIME RATE

The crime rate increased from 54 per 1,000 people in 2012-13 to 58 per 1,000 in 2022-23

CRIME OUTCOME RATE

Crime outcome rate increased from 29.4% in 2012-13 to 31.1% in 2022-23

ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

Between 2012-13 and 2022-23 anti-social behaviour incidents declined by 28%

5.6   When compared to England and Wales, which had a crime rate of 94 per 1,000 in 2022-23[117], Northern Ireland had one of the lowest crime rates across the UK giving rise to the argument that statistically Northern Ireland is *'one of the safest places to live in the UK.'*[118] This was based solely on crime which is recorded by the Police Service and therefore does not reveal the incidence of all crime committed, as not all crimes are reported.

5.7   According to the 2021-22 Northern Ireland Safe Community Telephone Survey (NISCTS),[119] 57% of crime in Northern Ireland is *not* reported to the police, suggesting that crime is significantly under-reported in our community. This was similar in England and Wales; the 2019-20 Crime Survey for England and Wales approximated that 58% of comparable crimes were not reported to the police.[120] Non-reporting may occur for a variety of reasons, however the most common response to the NISCTS was that the matter was *'too trivial/no loss/police would not/could not do anything'*, as reported by 54% of respondents. The overlap between the personal reflection on the impact of the crime and the perceived role of the Police Service in dealing with it, make it difficult to analyse the primary cause of non-reporting in Northern Ireland and the interaction with public confidence in policing and community safety.

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116 *Police Service of Northern Ireland, Trends in Police Recorded Crime in Northern Ireland 1998-99 to 2021-22, December 2022,* available at **https://www.psni.police.uk/sites/default/files/2022-12/Police%20Recorded%20Crime%20in%20 Northern%20Ireland%201998-99%20to%202021-22.pdf**.

117 *ONS, Crime in England and Wales: Police Force Area data tables – year ending March 2023, July 2023,* available at **https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/datasets/policeforceareadatatables**.

118 *The Police Service of Northern Ireland, Chief Constables End of Year Report 2022-23, July 2023,* available at **https://www.psni.police.uk/about-us/our-publications-and-reports/chief-constables-monthly-report**.

119 *Department of Justice, Findings from the 2021-22 Northern Ireland Safe Community Telephone Survey, Findings from the 2021-22 survey: Excel Tables, 31 March 2023,* available at **https://www.justice-ni.gov.uk/publications/findings-202122-northern-ireland-safe-community-telephone-survey**.

120 *ONS, Crime in England and Wales Quality and Methodology Information, July 2023,* available at **https://www.ons.gov.uk/ peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/methodologies/crimeinenglandandwalesqmi#:~:text=It%20was%20 estimated%20in%20the,in%20reporting%20and%20recording%20practices.**.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CHIEF INSPECTOR'S FOREWORD

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

RECOMMENDATIONS

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER 2: STRATEGY AND GOVERNANCE

CHAPTER 3: DELIVERY

CHAPTER 4: FOLLOW-UP REVIEW

CHAPTER 5: OUTCOMES

APPENDICES

5.8   The Northern Ireland crime profile has altered considerably over time. In 2012-13[121]
        violence against the person offences accounted for 31% of all recorded crimes. By
        2022-23[122] this had increased to 45%. Conversely, theft offences reduced from
        36% to 22% and criminal damage offences declined from 21% to 15% in the decade
        to 2022-23. With violent crime representing almost half of all recorded crime in
        Northern Ireland this has implications for fear of crime. Results from the 2021-22
        NISCTS identified that respondents are twice as likely to report being *'very worried'*
        about violent crime, at 10%, compared to those who reported being *'very worried'*
        about overall crime, at 5%.

5.9   While the number of recorded crimes in Northern Ireland had increased over the
        last decade, the crime outcome rate[123] also increased, from 29.4% in 2012-13[124], to
        a high of 31.1% in 2022-23.[125] In 2022-23 more than one in five crimes in Northern
        Ireland were resolved by means of charge or summons (22.2%). The proportion
        of crimes not progressing because of evidential difficulties had increased from
        25.9% in 2012-13 to 37.4% in 2022-23, including 11.6% of cases which did not
        progress despite an identified suspect and a victim who supported prosecution.
        The proportion of cases which closed in 2022-23 post-investigation and where no
        suspect was identified was 22.4%, compared to 39.9% in 2012-13. In England and
        Wales in 2022-23, evidential difficulties resulted in 39.5% of cases not progressing,
        while no suspect was identified in a further 39.3% of cases. [126]

5.10   On average there were 60,008 ASB incidents in Northern Ireland in each year
        between 2012-13 and 2022-23,[127] however overall the number of ASB incidents
        had declined by 28% during this time. This downwards trend was mirrored by a
        reduction in the percentage of Northern Ireland Safe Community Survey (NISCS)
        and NISCTS respondents who perceived the level of ASB as high, declining from
        10% in 2012-13 to 7% in 2021-22.

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121 *Police Service of Northern Ireland, Trends in Police Recorded Crime in Northern Ireland 1998-99 to 2021-22, December
     2022,* available at **https://www.psni.police.uk/sites/default/files/2022-12/Police%20Recorded%20Crime%20in%20
     Northern%20Ireland%201998-99%20to%202021-22.pdf**.
122 *Police Service of Northern Ireland, Police Recorded Crime in Northern Ireland, Update to 31st March 2023, May 2023,*
     available at **https://www.psni.police.uk/system/files/2023-05/1401700191/Police%20Recorded%20Crime%20
     Bulletin%20Period%20Ending%2031st%20March%202023.pdf**.
123 Crime outcomes identify the action taken regarding each crime recorded and included crimes which resulted in a charge/
     summons, offences asked to be taken into consideration at court and formal and informal out of court disposals.
124 *Police Service of Northern Ireland, Trends in Police Recorded Crime in Northern Ireland 1998-99 to 2021-22, December
     2022,* available at **https://www.psni.police.uk/sites/default/files/2022-12/Police%20Recorded%20Crime%20in%20
     Northern%20Ireland%201998-99%20to%202021-22.pdf**.
125 *Police Service of Northern Ireland, Police Recorded Crime in Northern Ireland, Police Recorded Crime Tables Period Ending
     31st May 2023, 29 June 2023,* available at **https://www.psni.police.uk/about-us/our-publications-and-reports/official-
     statistics/police-recorded-crime-statistics**.
126 *Home Office, Crime outcomes in England and Wales 2022 to 2023, 20 July 2023,* available at
     **https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/crime-outcomes-in-england-and-wales-2022-to-2023/crime-outcomes-
     in-england-and-wales-2022-to-2023**.
127 *Police Service of Northern Ireland, Anti-Social Behaviour Statistics, ASB Tables Period Ending 31st March 2023, 16 May 2023,*
     available at **https://www.psni.police.uk/about-us/our-publications-and-reports/official-statistics/anti-social-behaviour-
     statistics**.

LIST OF
ABBREVIATIONS

CHIEF
INSPECTOR'S
FOREWORD

EXECUTIVE
SUMMARY

RECOMMENDATIONS

CHAPTER 1:
INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER 2:
STRATEGY AND
GOVERNANCE

CHAPTER 3:
DELIVERY

CHAPTER 4:
FOLLOW-UP
REVIEW

CHAPTER 5:
OUTCOMES

APPENDICES

Survey data - perception of safety

5.11 Results from the 2021-22 NISCTS indicated that 6% of respondents felt *'very unsafe walking alone in their area after dark,'* a one percentage point reduction since 2019-20. This was highest for older female respondents, at 10% of females aged 55-64, 14% of females aged 65-74 years and 19% aged over 75 years. Having a disability or long-standing illness also increased the feeling of being very unsafe (11%) alongside being a repeat victim of crime within the previous two years (14%).

5.12 The percentage of respondents who reported feeling *'very unsafe in their home alone at night'* was 1% in 2021-22, with an average response of 2% each year between 2012-13 and 2021-22. In 2021-22 this was highest for those who were perceived as having a nationality other than British, Irish or Northern Irish and for those who had been a victim within the last two years, both at 3%.

5.13 The percentage of respondents to the NIPB Policing Plan Survey[128] who reported feeling *'very unsafe in the community they live in'* was low at just 1.1% in 2022, falling to 0.5% in 2023. At 1.7%, respondents with a disability were more likely to report feeling very unsafe in the community they live in, alongside 1% of those who reported their religion as 'other'. At 2.6%, respondents who had been a victim of crime in the previous two years were the most likely to report feeling very unsafe in their community.

5.14 There had been a rise in the proportion of respondents who reported feeling *'very unsafe in their local town centre'* increasing from 1% in 2022 to 2.5% in 2023. This question was not included in earlier Policing Plan Surveys. Females were more likely than males to report feeling very unsafe in their local town centre, at 3.5%. Respondents aged 25-44 years were the most likely age group to report feeling very unsafe (3.5%), alongside 3.6% of those with a disability. At 6%, respondents who had been a victim of crime in the previous two years were the most likely to report feeling very unsafe in their local town centre.

Feedback from community groups and representatives

5.15 Community groups and representatives were asked for their views on Outcome 1 of the Policing Plan *'We have a safe community'*. In common across all groups was concern about the police budget and the potential impact on neighbourhood policing as negatively impacting on the maintenance of safe communities.

5.16 The responses from groups which represented a local community area generally reported the area as safe, however they did highlight local concerns including ASB, drug dealing and paramilitary activities. These types of incidents did not necessarily reduce feelings of safety as reported by community groups, but rather Inspectors heard about communities which were strong and resilient and which developed and maintained a strong community ethos.

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128 *NIPB, Northern Ireland Policing Plan Survey, Statistical Report 2023,* available at
https://www.nipolicingboard.org.uk/policing-plan-survey.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CHIEF INSPECTOR'S FOREWORD

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

RECOMMENDATIONS

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER 2: STRATEGY AND GOVERNANCE

CHAPTER 3: DELIVERY

CHAPTER 4: FOLLOW-UP REVIEW

CHAPTER 5: OUTCOMES

APPENDICES

81

This was often associated with active and effective local community groups, a visible police presence and a belief that reports to the police were dealt with. Good relationships based on effective partnership working with neighbourhood Officers and other key partners were cited as critical to community safety.

5.17   Responses from stakeholder organisations which represented specific groups of people such as those from an ethnic minority background or political representatives were less likely to provide such a positive assessment of safety. Representatives from some communities explained about the impact of the *'perceived slow progress on tackling paramilitarism'* and the *'use of flags to demarcate territories'* in undermining progress in the establishment and maintenance of safe communities. Recent high-profile events and incidents directed at people from a Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic background had also instilled a feeling of fear and of being unsafe within the community. These included attacks on Mosques, the placing of a pigs head outside the Muslim Association office and the arson attack on the multi-cultural association. The impact of such events was reported as significant and long-lasting.

5.18   This evidence indicates that despite the comparatively low reported crime rate in Northern Ireland, reports that Northern Ireland is one of the safest places to live in the UK, the falling level of ASB and relatively low levels of feelings of being very unsafe across a range of locations, community safety is experienced and perceived differently by different groups of people in different communities. The causes of crime and ASB are complex and varied and require a collaborative response based on engagement, understanding and locally based interventions. Neighbourhood police was a key component of this, with reports that the visibility of neighbourhood Officers and their commitment to work on problem-solving solutions made a positive impact on crime and ASB, and to the fear of crime in local areas. The case study provided under Hallmark 4 provided one example of how real and tangible outcomes from neighbourhood police work can be detailed and how a cost-benefit analysis can be produced to explore not only the impact of the work done, but the wider implications for police demand and resourcing.

WE HAVE CONFIDENCE IN POLICING

5.19   Building and maintaining community confidence in policing was a key function of the NIPB, PCSPs and the Police Service, and, as has been outlined throughout this report, is particularly important for effective neighbourhood policing. Building and maintaining confidence requires the ability to successfully tackle crime, however effective community engagement, collaboration with key partners and communities, visibility and responsiveness are also important.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CHIEF INSPECTOR'S FOREWORD

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

RECOMMENDATIONS

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER 2: STRATEGY AND GOVERNANCE

CHAPTER 3: DELIVERY

CHAPTER 4: FOLLOW-UP REVIEW

CHAPTER 5: OUTCOMES

APPENDICES

Feedback from community groups and representatives

5.20 Feedback from community groups and representatives included the shared importance of relationships with individual Police Officers, the importance of consistency in local Officers and the opportunity for local people to know their local Officers. This was often tempered by concerns about resourcing and abstraction from neighbourhood roles. However, significant levels of frustration were expressed by a number of community groups regarding confidence in the Police Service as a corporate organisation often related to the impact of high-profile events, including policing operations and non-policing operations. Events which attracted significant media attention often had negative implications for confidence in policing, with immediate proximity to the event not a pre-requisite. This was a view which was contrasted by the typically positive experience of policing in local areas. This reinforced the importance of neighbourhood policing in the establishment and maintenance of confidence in policing.

5.21 Some community groups commented on the conduct of police departments when undertaking policing operations in local areas, with reports that some *'come in and behave like it's the old days.'* As reported under Hallmark 3, this had significant implications for trust and confidence in policing, as well as for relationships with local neighbourhood Officers. In a post-conflict society which remained in transition, continued to deal with simmering tensions and where the 'severe' threat level against the Police Service remained, greater cognisance was required of the broad implications of such events. However, outside of these events, trust and confidence in the Police Service was *'a lot better than it was'* including in areas which traditionally were viewed as hostile to policing. Relationships with local neighbourhood Officers were critical to this and had played a significant role in reducing barriers and in growing acceptance and legitimacy of policing more generally.

5.22 Some community groups and representatives were vocal in their condemnation of the politicisation of policing, as they saw it. Recent events, including the policing of the Bobby Storey funeral, had fuelled accusations of two-tier policing within Unionist communities and this had caused a reduction in confidence and trust in the Police Service. The REaL event had been a useful opportunity for community groups to express frustrations, however such was the strength of feeling a call had been made for a 'South Armagh' style review[129] into the policing of Unionist communities as well as calls for a 'Patten style' review into the operation of policing more generally. This was before the events surrounding the resignation of the Chief Constable in September 2023.

5.23 In addition to the impact of hate crime incidents on feelings of safety and security within the Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic community, reports of low levels of confidence and trust in policing also emerged. This was related to the ongoing feelings of anger and disillusionment associated with the police handling of the 'Black Lives Matter' protests in 2020. There remained much work to do to restore trust and confidence in policing with members of these communities.

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129 Referencing a 2020 review of the policing arrangements in South Armagh which sought to assess the style, tone and accessibility of local policing and whether it was appropriately aligned to community expectations and need.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CHIEF INSPECTOR'S FOREWORD

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

RECOMMENDATIONS

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER 2: STRATEGY AND GOVERNANCE

CHAPTER 3: DELIVERY

CHAPTER 4: FOLLOW-UP REVIEW

CHAPTER 5: OUTCOMES

APPENDICES

5.24   The residual impact of historical grievances between members of the LGBTQ+ community and the police reportedly continued to have a negative impact in trust and confidence, as evident through the under-reporting of hate crime. Confidence within the LGBTQ+ community was also negatively affected by the police reaction to preachers operating in Belfast city centre, which despite the lack of legislation to prosecute for hate speech, continued to cause significant concern among the LGBTQ+ community. Issues of police interaction with members of the Trans community were also raised as an area of concern, with reports of misgendering by Police Officers and significant distrust within the Trans community. However, through engagement and the creation of awareness raising materials within the Police Service this issue was moving forward. Engagement between the LGBTQ+ community and the Police Service was noted as hugely important and a major element of that was the visibility of Officers at Pride events which showed that the police *'are there and are listening.'* The decision by the Police Service to withdraw from participation in the 2023 Belfast Pride parade in the lead up to Belfast Pride week was met with condemnation within the LGBTQ+ community. It is unclear how this decision tied in with commitments made in the 'Here for You' Public Engagement Vision. If communicated more clearly and at an earlier juncture, this may have reduced the impact within the LGBTQ+ community and provided room for much needed engagement.

Survey data: confidence and satisfaction with policing

5.25   Confidence in the service provided by the Police Service as a whole as well as within local communities was high across all relevant measures.   Almost three quarters of respondents to the NISCS/NISCTS each year between 2012-13 and 2021-22 reported that the Police Service did a fairly or very good job in Northern Ireland as a whole, including 73% in 2021-22. Confidence in the job done by local policing was higher each year, averaging 88% between 2012-13 and 2021-22. In 2021-22 90% of respondents reported that local police were doing a fairly good or very good job. This was reflective of the feedback given by community groups and representatives during the inspection fieldwork.

5.26   However, the results from the 2023 NIPB Policing Plan Survey counter this trend with satisfaction with the *'job the PSNI do in Northern Ireland'* higher than satisfaction with the *'job the PSNI do in the local area'*. 71.9% of respondents to the 2023 Policing Plan Survey reported feeling satisfied or very satisfied with the job the Police Service do in Northern Ireland, compared to 67.3% who were satisfied with the job the Police Service do in the local area. The wording of the question, which asked about the actions of the Police Service within the local area, rather than the actions of local policing, centred the question on the Police Service as a whole, and as such may have influenced the results.

5.27   While overall satisfaction and confidence levels in local policing was high, a number of key individual measures related to the actions of local police were lower, however improvements had been noted since 2020-21.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CHIEF INSPECTOR'S FOREWORD

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

RECOMMENDATIONS

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER 2: STRATEGY AND GOVERNANCE

CHAPTER 3: DELIVERY

CHAPTER 4: FOLLOW-UP REVIEW

CHAPTER 5: OUTCOMES

APPENDICES

The results from the NISCS/NISCTS reveal that 63% of respondents in 2021-22 agreed or strongly agreed that local police could be relied on to be there when you needed them and that local police were dealing with things that matter to the community.

5.28   In 2018-19 just 28% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that local police had a visible presence in their area, declining to 27% in 2019-20. Following the increase in the number of neighbourhood Police Officers in 2020, this increased to 39% in both 2020-21 and 2021-22. In the 2023 NIPB Policing Plan Survey 44.1% of respondents reported that the police were visible or very visible in the local area.

WE HAVE ENGAGED AND SUPPORTIVE COMMUNITIES

5.29   Outcome 3 focussed on *'building the relationship between the police and the community.'*[130] Engagement with local communities enables and empowers local people to participate in the policing of their local area through the identification of key priorities and participation in decision making. As previously outlined, engagement is a key component in maintaining trust and confidence in policing through enhanced transparency, while also providing police with a better understanding of communities, a critical element of policing a post-conflict society. This is crucial in the development of legitimacy of the police which in turn is central to the willingness of communities to support the work of the police in their local area as well as more broadly.

5.30   As evidenced in Hallmark 2, significant efforts have been made by the Police Service to engage with communities both on a strategic and local level. The establishment of the Strategic Community Engagement Team and the initiation of the REaL events were key identifiers in the commitment of the Police Service to enhance the strategic direction of engagement. The two REaL events which had taken place at the time of the inspection had been well received, with positive feedback from participants about the opportunity to engage with the Police Service in a strategic way, the two-way open dialogue which developed and the seniority of Police Service attendees which reflected the importance placed on the event. Positively, these events were to be part of an ongoing strategic communication plan rather than a one-off.

5.31   The publication of the Hallmarks of Neighbourhood Policing placed a renewed focus on the importance of neighbourhood policing as well as the central role of engagement at a local level. Community groups and representatives made reference to the significant level of engagement with the Police Service, in particular local neighbourhood Police Officers, which they participate in on a frequent basis, both as part of planned and unplanned activities.

130 *NIPB, The Northern Ireland Policing Plan 2020-2025 and Annual Performance Plan 2023-24, March 2023*, available at **https://www.nipolicingboard.org.uk/files/nipolicingboard/2023-03/annual-assessment-policing-plan-2020-25-and-annual-performance-plan-202324.pdf**.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CHIEF INSPECTOR'S FOREWORD

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

RECOMMENDATIONS

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER 2: STRATEGY AND GOVERNANCE

CHAPTER 3: DELIVERY

CHAPTER 4: FOLLOW-UP REVIEW

CHAPTER 5: OUTCOMES

APPENDICES

In the 2022 NIPB Policing Plan Survey 64% of respondents reported that the Police Service were engaged or very engaged with their local communities in Northern Ireland. In 2023 this had increased to 68%.

5.32 All the community groups and representatives spoke highly of the engagement undertaken at a local level, including in the crucial role of establishing and maintaining trust and confidence in the police. However, as noted under Hallmark 2, there were some early indicators that the level of local engagement undertaken in communities across Northern Ireland had been reducing, including examples of non-attendance at events or brief appearances which were cut short due to a call for service. This was linked to resourcing constraints.

5.33 There was unanimous support for the Police Service expressed throughout the fieldwork for this inspection. Despite concerns about budget cuts, a declining neighbourhood function, politicisation, two-tier policing or perceived inaction on hate crime and hate speech; everyone Inspectors spoke with voiced support for the Police Service and wanted them to succeed. Often however, views on what 'success' looked like, differed. There were examples from communities which would have traditionally been considered as hostile to the police where support was growing and despite attempts to prevent engagement from taking place, engagement was underway albeit in a more muted way than is the case elsewhere. At the centre of this was neighbourhood policing.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CHIEF INSPECTOR'S FOREWORD

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

RECOMMENDATIONS

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER 2: STRATEGY AND GOVERNANCE

CHAPTER 3: DELIVERY

CHAPTER 4: FOLLOW-UP REVIEW

CHAPTER 5: OUTCOMES

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1:
OUTCOMES DATA

Total police recorded crime (excluding fraud) and crime rate per 1,000 population, Northern Ireland 2012-13 to 2022-23

Northern Ireland Crime Profile 2012-13 to 2022-23: offence categories as a proportion of total recorded crime

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CHIEF INSPECTOR'S FOREWORD

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

RECOMMENDATIONS

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER 2: STRATEGY AND GOVERNANCE

CHAPTER 3: DELIVERY

CHAPTER 4: FOLLOW-UP REVIEW

CHAPTER 5: OUTCOMES

APPENDICES
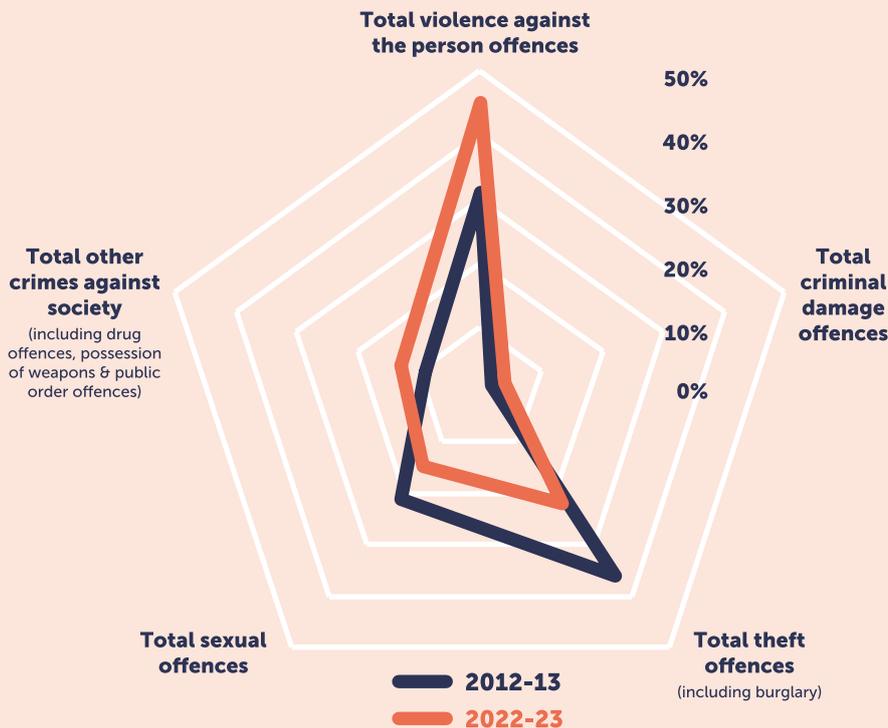
Police recorded anti-social behaviour incidents and the percentage of respondents to the NISCS/NISCTS perceiving levels of anti-social behaviour as high, Northern Ireland 2012-13 to 2022-23

Legend: ASB Incidents Recorded — Perception of high level of ASB
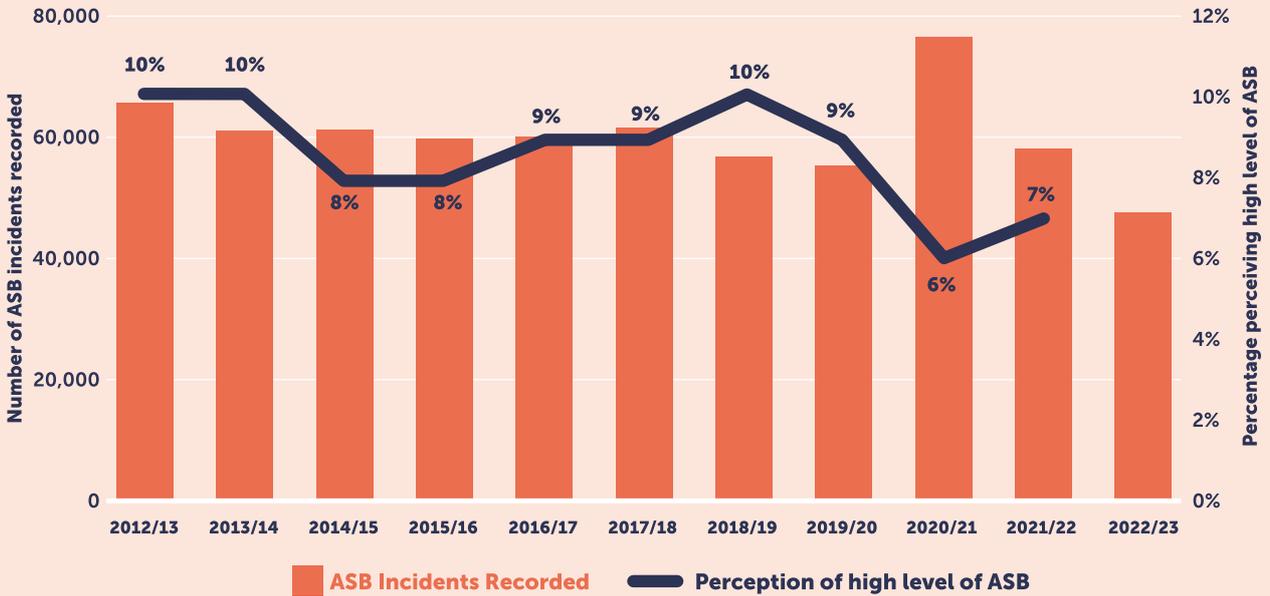
Percentage of respondents who reported feeling very unsafe walking alone in their area at night and alone in their home at night, NISCS 2012-13 to 2019-20 and NISCTS 2020-21 to 2021-22.
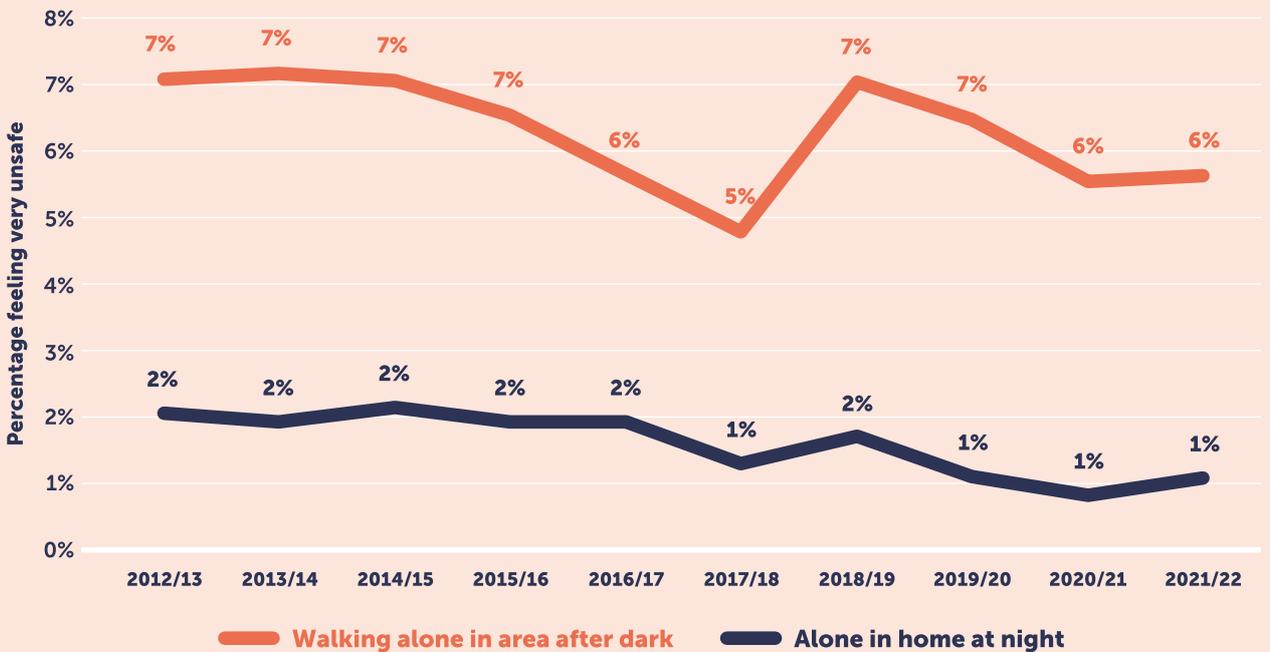
Legend: Walking alone in area after dark — Alone in home at night

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CHIEF INSPECTOR'S FOREWORD

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

RECOMMENDATIONS

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER 2: STRATEGY AND GOVERNANCE

CHAPTER 3: DELIVERY

CHAPTER 4: FOLLOW-UP REVIEW

CHAPTER 5: OUTCOMES

APPENDICES

Percentage of respondents who reported feeling very unsafe in the community they live in and very unsafe in the local town centre, NIPB Policing Plan Survey 2014 to 2023

Percentage (y-axis)

2014: 1% (Very unsafe in community they live in)
2015: 1%
2016: 1%
2017: 1%
2022: 1.1% (community), 1% (local town centre)
2023: 0.5% (community), 2.5% (local town centre)

■ Very unsafe in community they live in
■ Very unsafe in local town centre
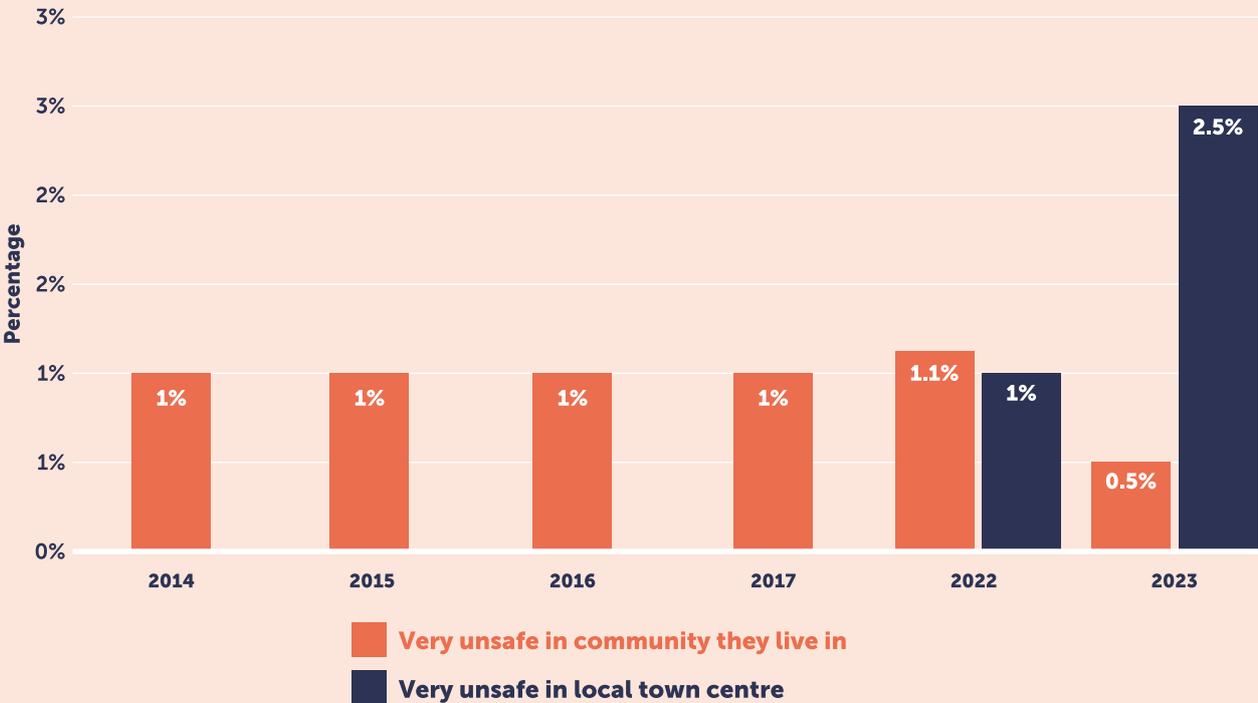
Percentage of respondents who reported that the Police Service as a whole and local police were doing a fairly, good or very good job, NISCS/NISCTS, 2012-13 to 2021-22

Percentage of respondents (y-axis)

2012/13, 2013/14, 2014/15, 2015/16, 2016/17, 2017/18, 2018/19, 2019/20, 2020/21, 2021/22

■ The police do a very or fairly good job in NI as a whole
■ Local police are doing a fair, good or very good job

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CHIEF INSPECTOR'S FOREWORD

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

RECOMMENDATIONS

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER 2: STRATEGY AND GOVERNANCE

CHAPTER 3: DELIVERY

CHAPTER 4: FOLLOW-UP REVIEW

CHAPTER 5: OUTCOMES

APPENDICES

Levels of satisfaction with the job the PSNI do in Northern Ireland and in the local area, NIPB Policing Plan Survey, 2023

Legend:
- Satisfaction with the job PSNI do in Northern Ireland
- Satisfaction with the job the PSNI do in the local area

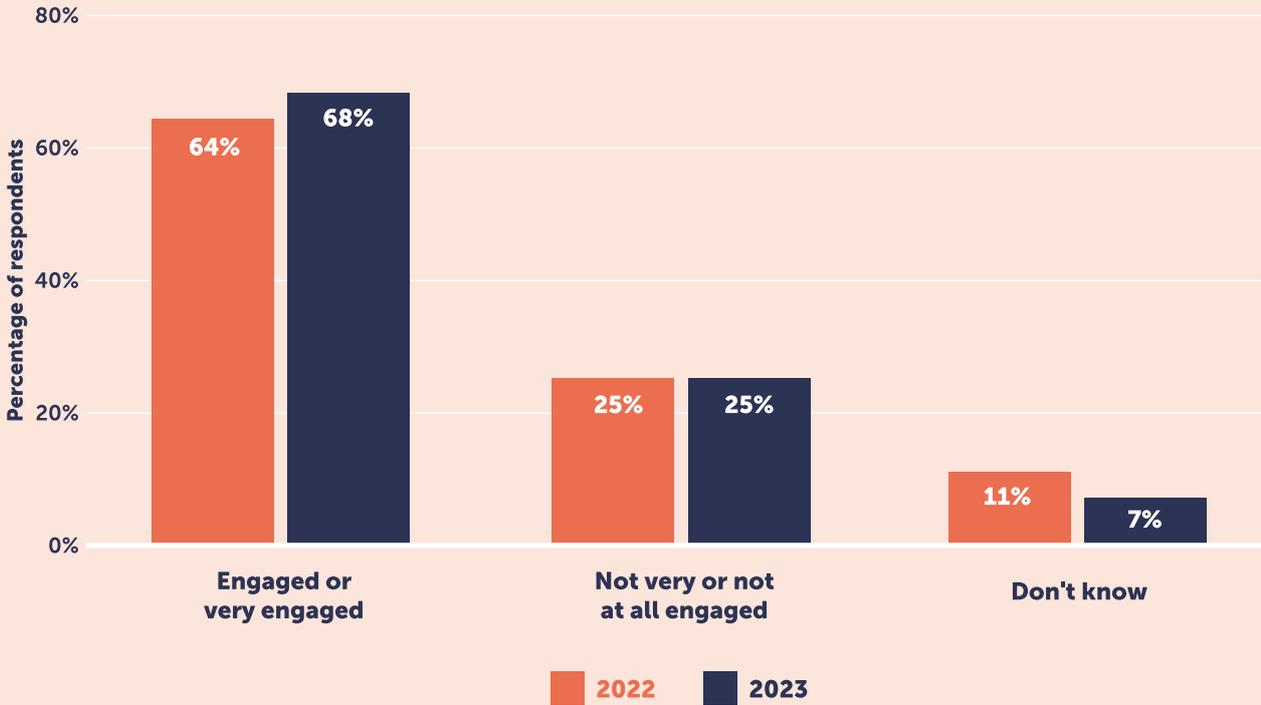|	Very dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very satisfied	Don't know
NI	1.7%	4.6%	18.9%	47.8%	24.1%	2.8%
Local area	2.6%	7.2%	18.8%	43%	24.3%	4.1%

Percentage of respondents who agreed or strongly agreed with each of the following statements. NISCS/NISCTS, 2012-13 to 2021-22

Legend:
- Can be relied on to be there when you need them
- Are dealing with the things that matter to this community
- Have a visible presence in this area

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CHIEF INSPECTOR'S FOREWORD

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

RECOMMENDATIONS

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER 2: STRATEGY AND GOVERNANCE

CHAPTER 3: DELIVERY

CHAPTER 4: FOLLOW-UP REVIEW

CHAPTER 5: OUTCOMES
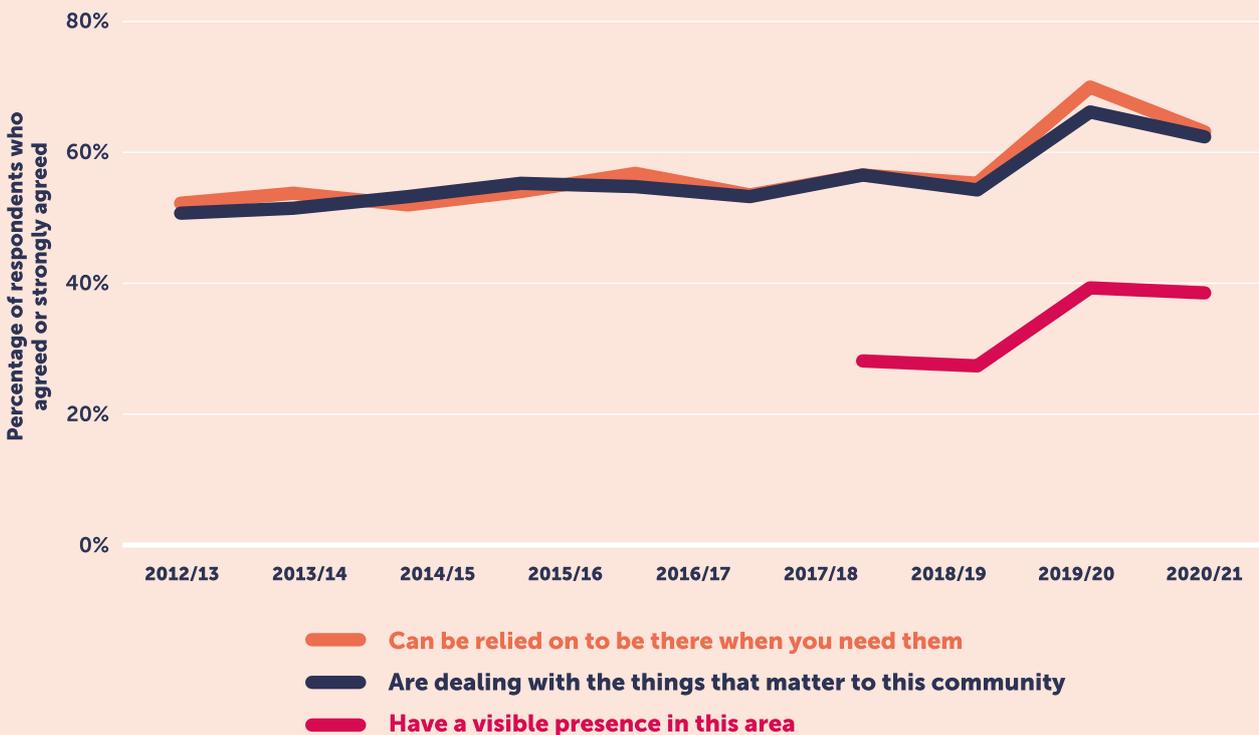
APPENDICES

Police Service engagement with their local communities in Northern Ireland, NIPB Policing Plan Survey, 2022 and 2023

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CHIEF INSPECTOR'S FOREWORD

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

RECOMMENDATIONS

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER 2: STRATEGY AND GOVERNANCE

CHAPTER 3: DELIVERY

CHAPTER 4: FOLLOW-UP REVIEW

CHAPTER 5: OUTCOMES

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 2:
METHODOLOGY

Scoping meetings

Inspectors met with the Chief Constable, Assistant Chief Constable and Assistant Chief Officer of the Police Service, as well as with a member of the Strategic Community Engagement Team to determine the scope of the inspection. Scoping meetings were also held with senior representatives of the NIPB and the DoJ Community Safety Division.

Desktop research and development of terms of reference

Research literature and guidance documentation was reviewed in relation to community safety and local policing. This was used to inform the development of terms of reference for the inspection as well as fieldwork planning.

Self-assessment

The CJI 'Operational Guidelines for Inspection'[131] made provision for Inspectors to request a self-assessment from the inspected agencies. Following CJI's Inspection Framework, the self-assessment provided the agencies involved with an opportunity to reflect and identify current areas of activity and areas for improvement in relation to strategy and governance, delivery and outcomes. Inspectors sought and received a completed self-assessment from the Police Service and the DoJ Community Safety Division. These were received prior to Inspectors conducting the inspection fieldwork and were subsequently used to inform fieldwork planning and the development of interview questions.

Document review and development of question areas

Inspectors requested and obtained access to a range of strategy and operational documentation from the Police Service, the DoJ Community Safety Division, the NIPB and PCSPs. A review was undertaken of all the documentation collated and this was cross-referenced against information obtained through desktop research and the completed self-assessments. This information was also used to inform the development of questions to be used during the fieldwork phase.

Fieldwork

Fieldwork with the Police Service was conducted during June and July 2023. In addition to conducting a number of one-to-one interviews and focus groups with individuals and departments which operate across Northern Ireland, Inspectors conducted fieldwork across four police Districts: Belfast, Derry City and Strabane, Causeway Coast and Glens and Ards and North Down. These Districts were chosen by Inspectors in order to give a geographical spread across Northern Ireland as well as enabling a focus on the urban/rural dimension to policing.

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131 *CJI Operational Guidelines for Inspection (2018), p6.* available at **http://www.cjini.org/getdoc/15070948-fab1-4b38-b7e9-81ce636f7327/OPERATIONAL-GUIDELINES-FOR-INSPECTION-v1-7.aspx**.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CHIEF INSPECTOR'S FOREWORD

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

RECOMMENDATIONS

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER 2: STRATEGY AND GOVERNANCE

CHAPTER 3: DELIVERY

CHAPTER 4: FOLLOW-UP REVIEW

CHAPTER 5: OUTCOMES

APPENDICES

One-to-one interviews and focus groups were also conducted with officials from the DoJ Community Safety Division, the NIPB Partnership Committee and PCSPs. Interviews were also conducted with representatives from the various representative bodies on the Community Safety Board. Representatives from the following areas were interviewed during the fieldwork:

Community Safety Board Member Organisations
- Probation Board for Northern Ireland;
- Education Authority; and
- Northern Ireland Housing Executive.

Department of Justice
- Community Safety Division.

Northern Ireland Policing Board
- Partnership Committee Chair and Vice Chair;
- Partnership Manager; and
- Director of Partnership.

Policing and Community Safety Partnerships
- PCSP Managers;
- Belfast PCSP Chair and Vice Chair;
- Derry City and Strabane PCSP Chair and Vice Chair;
- Ards and North Down PCSP Chair and Vice Chair; and
- A written response was provided by the Causeway Coast and Glens PCSP Manager and Chair.

Inspectors also attended PCSP meetings in Belfast, including the Principal Belfast PCSP, the North Belfast District PCSP and the South Belfast District PCSP.

Police Service of Northern Ireland
- Assistant Chief Constable for Local Policing;
- Area Commander, Chief Superintendent and Engagement Chief Inspectors for Belfast, Derry City and Strabane, Ards and North Down and Causeway Coast and Glens;
- Local Policing Team and Neighbourhood Policing Team Supervisors focus groups, Sergeants and Inspectors - Belfast, Derry City and Strabane, Ards and North Down and Causeway Coast and Glens;
- Local Policing Team and Neighbourhood Policing Team Constables focus groups - Belfast, Derry City and Strabane, Ards and North Down and Causeway Coast and Glens;
- Police Officer Part Time focus group;
- Police District Analyst focus group;
- Police Trainers focus group;
- Contact Management Centre, Chief Inspector and Inspector; and
- Strategic Community Engagement Team, Deputy Principal.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CHIEF INSPECTOR'S FOREWORD

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

RECOMMENDATIONS

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER 2: STRATEGY AND GOVERNANCE

CHAPTER 3: DELIVERY

CHAPTER 4: FOLLOW-UP REVIEW

CHAPTER 5: OUTCOMES

APPENDICES

Stakeholders

Inspectors also offered the opportunity for stakeholder organisations from across a range of Section 75 groups, to participate in an engagement exercise as part of the consultation process for this inspection. The following groups participated in this exercise:

- The Alliance Party;
- The Democratic Unionist Party;
- The Social Democratic and Labour Party;
- Sinn Féin;
- Northern Ireland Council for Racial Equality; and
- The Rainbow Project.

The views and opinions of the Commissioner for Older People Northern Ireland, AgeNI, Dementia NI and Alzheimer's Society NI were collated as part of the CJI Inspection on the Criminal Justice Systems' Approach to Vulnerable Older People[132]. Consultation with the Youth Justice Agency was undertaken as part of CJI's ongoing inspection of the Youth Justice Agency, Youth Interventions.[133]

In addition to these regional organisations, Inspectors also engaged directly with a number of local community groups based in each of the four police Districts which formed the focus of this fieldwork: Belfast, Derry City and Strabane, Causeway Coast and Glens and Ards and North Down. These community groups were identified due to their role in delivering local community safety initiatives or as recommended to Inspectors by the Police Service.

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132 *CJI, Vulnerable Older People – An inspection of the criminal justice system's approach to vulnerable older people, September 2023,* available at **http://www.cjini.org/getattachment/c170643e-1eba-410d-8a32-e883014370ec/report.aspx**.
133 Ongoing at the time of publication.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CHIEF INSPECTOR'S FOREWORD

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

RECOMMENDATIONS

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER 2: STRATEGY AND GOVERNANCE

CHAPTER 3: DELIVERY

CHAPTER 4: FOLLOW-UP REVIEW

CHAPTER 5: OUTCOMES

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 3:
TERMS OF REFERENCE

AN INSPECTION OF COMMUNITY SAFETY AND LOCAL POLICING ARRANGEMENTS IN NORTHERN IRELAND

TERMS OF REFERENCE

Introduction

Criminal Justice Inspection Northern Ireland (CJI) proposes to undertake an inspection of Community Safety and Local Policing Arrangements in Northern Ireland.

The inspection will focus on the three main elements of the CJI inspection framework as they apply to the approach to community safety and local policing; these are strategy and governance, delivery and outcomes.

The main organisation to be inspected will be the Police Service of Northern Ireland (Police Service). The role of the Department of Justice (DoJ) in community safety policy and strategy will be considered including co-ordinating the Community Safety Board (CSB) and its work; and working in partnership with key stakeholders who have a remit in community safety work across the public sector. The inspection will also assess the progress made against recommendations made in CJI's 2019 review of Policing and Community Safety Partnerships (PCSPs).[1] In doing so, engagement with the Northern Ireland Policing Board (NIPB) and the DoJ as partners in the Joint Committee, who oversee the work of PCSPs, will be critical.

A number of previous CJI inspections have examined the area of community safety, local policing and policing with the community. Previous to the 2019 review, CJI published a report on the work of PCSPs in 2014.[2] In 2009 CJI published its first inspection of Policing with the Community[3] with a Follow-Up Review report published in September 2012.[4] CJI have also inspected the Police Service's approach to customer service[5] and contact management[6] as well as the criminal justice system's approach to addressing anti-social behaviour.[7]

His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary & Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) have undertaken inspections which have considered the Police Service's engagement with the community. In recent years this has included an assessment of the effectiveness of the Police Service at preventing crime, tackling anti-social behaviour and keeping people safe[8] alongside consideration of whether the Police Service inspires public confidence[9].

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CHIEF INSPECTOR'S FOREWORD

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

RECOMMENDATIONS

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER 2: STRATEGY AND GOVERNANCE

CHAPTER 3: DELIVERY

CHAPTER 4: FOLLOW-UP REVIEW

CHAPTER 5: OUTCOMES

APPENDICES

A recent investigation by the Office of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland reported that the police handling of 'Black Lives Matter' protests in 2020 had damaged confidence in policing among some within the Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities in Northern Ireland.[10] The Police Ombudsman further reported that, when contrasted against the prompt identification of suspects involved in the 'Black Lives Matter' protest, the premature closing of a Police Service investigation into a 'Protect Our Monuments' protest further eroded confidence in these communities.[11]

Context

In support of Outcome 7 in the draft *Programme for Government* (PfG) *'We have a safe community where we respect the law and each other',* the DoJ had developed a *Community Safety Framework*. This aimed to *'ensure effective connectivity between the community safety work of the responsible agencies and provide an operational roadmap on how to collectively deliver the safer community objectives set out in the PfG and Community Plans, whilst providing the mechanism to respond proactively and reactively to operational need.'*[12] The DoJ, the Police Service, the Probation Board for Northern Ireland, the Youth Justice Agency and the NIPB were all members of the CSB alongside partners from education, housing, health, communities and Government Departments.

The vision of policing for Northern Ireland, as stated in the report of the Independent Commission on Policing (*The Patten Report*),[13] was one of Policing with the Community at the core of the service, *'...the police working in partnership with the community, the community thereby participating in its own policing and the two together, mobilising resources to solve problems affecting public safety...'*. This approach to policing and the role of neighbourhood policing has been a focus for the Police Service, the NIPB and those with an accountability role over the Police Service since the time of *The Patten Report*. Efforts to embed this ethos at the centre of policing in Northern Ireland were further advocated through a series of strategies including *Policing a Shared Future* (2005) and 2011's *Policing with the Community Strategy (2020)*.

In 2015 the Police Service reviewed policing structures in Northern Ireland in line with the Review of Public Administration and the restructuring of local District Councils. The model of frontline policing which accompanied this included the creation of 26 dedicated Local Policing Teams (LPTs). These teams were established to respond to local calls, conduct investigations and deal with community problems, as well as having in-depth local knowledge of the area and undertaking community engagement. In areas of higher need, LPTs were supported by 34 Neighbourhood Policing Teams (NPTs), aiming to develop long-term relationships and commitments in the areas. PCSPs also underwent similar reorganisation in line with the new council areas.[14]

In 2018 the Police Service and the NIPB launched a public consultation on local policing in Northern Ireland. The *Local Policing Review* sought to explore how the Police Service could best meet demand and deliver effective local policing. The findings from the review indicated strong public support for Neighbourhood Policing with communities alongside indicators that this support had declined in the preceding years.[15] The outcomes of this review shaped the current delivery model of neighbourhood policing in Northern Ireland and have informed the development of the *Northern Ireland Policing Plan 2020-2025*.[16]

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CHIEF INSPECTOR'S FOREWORD

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

RECOMMENDATIONS

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER 2: STRATEGY AND GOVERNANCE

CHAPTER 3: DELIVERY

CHAPTER 4: FOLLOW-UP REVIEW

CHAPTER 5: OUTCOMES

APPENDICES

In June 2022 the Police Service launched its new *Here for You: Public Engagement Vision* and eight *Hallmarks of Neighbourhood Policing*.[17] The approach to engagement envisaged within the Police Service's *Engagement Strategy* sought to *'enable citizens and communities to participate in policing at their chosen level'* and included five key pillars as a means of delivery: Attraction and Recruitment; Engagement; Procedural Fairness; Effective Neighbourhood Policing; and, Local Accountability.[18] The Police Service's *Hallmarks of Neighbourhood Policing* indicate a *'public commitment to modernise local policing delivery so that it is increasingly visible, accessible, responsive and, above all, community focused'*. The Hallmarks, which are *'evidence based, informed by national policing guidelines issued by the College of Policing, yet adapted to best meet our local context'* include:

- Hallmark 1 Embedding The Right Culture;
- Hallmark 2 Engaging Neighbourhoods;
- Hallmark 3 Building Analytical Capability;
- Hallmark 4 Solving Problems;
- Hallmark 5 Targeting Activity;
- Hallmark 6 Accountability;
- Hallmark 7 Developing Officers and Staff; and
- Hallmark 8 Developing & Sharing Learning.[19]

Aims of the Inspection
The aims of the inspection are to:

- Examine the effectiveness of the community safety and local policing strategic and operational governance structures;
- Examine the approach to partnership working between the agencies represented on the CSB in delivering against targets and expectations;
- Examine the effectiveness of DoJ and the Police Service organisational strategies with regard to community safety and local policing and consider how these fit together in support of the draft PfG;
- Examine the effectiveness of the Police Service's governance structures to monitor implementation and delivery of *The Hallmarks of Neighbourhood Policing*;
- Examine the performance of the Police Service against *The Hallmarks of Neighbourhood Policing*, particularly in relation to Hallmark 2: Engaging Neighbourhoods*;*
- Examine the approach to partnership working between the Police Service, PCSPs and other partners involved in the delivery of community safety;
- Review the operation and effectiveness of PCSPs with regard to the recommendations of CJI's 2019 PCSP report (see Appendix 1); and
- Examine how the above aspects of the approach to community safety benchmarked against good practice.

Any other matters relating to Community Safety and Local Policing Arrangements arising during the inspection, if considered appropriate by CJI, may be included.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CHIEF INSPECTOR'S FOREWORD

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

RECOMMENDATIONS

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER 2: STRATEGY AND GOVERNANCE

CHAPTER 3: DELIVERY

CHAPTER 4: FOLLOW-UP REVIEW

CHAPTER 5: OUTCOMES

APPENDICES

Methodology

The inspection will be based on the CJI Inspection Framework for each inspection that it conducts. The three main elements of the inspection framework are:

- Strategy and governance;
- Delivery; and
- Outcomes.

The *Hallmarks of Neighbourhood Policing* will form the framework against which CJI will assess the Police Service's effectiveness in the area of delivery.

Constants in each of the three framework elements and throughout each inspection are equality and fairness, together with standards and best practice. The CJI inspection methodology can be found at **www.cjini.org.**

Design and Planning
Preliminary research

In preparation for the inspection scoping meetings have been conducted with the Police Service, the NIPB and the DoJ Community Safety Branch. A review has been undertaken of previous CJI reports as well as other relevant reports produced by the NIPB and the DoJ. Police Service strategies in relation to public engagement, crime prevention and neighbourhood policing have been reviewed.

Benchmarking, research and data collection

Collection of benchmarking information and data, where available, from other jurisdictions and sectors in Northern Ireland and a review of inspection and research reports will be undertaken.

Contact with agencies

Terms of reference will be prepared and shared with the DoJ, the Police Service and the NIPB prior to the initiation of the inspection. Liaison officers from the organisations should be nominated for the purposes of this inspection.

Policies and procedures, management information, minutes of meetings and related documentation held by the Police Service, the DoJ, the CSB, the NIPB and PCSPs will be requested and reviewed.

Delivery
Stakeholder consultation

A programme of stakeholder consultations will be conducted across a range of stakeholder organisations. Assistance will be sought from the Police Service Community Engagement Team to identify organisations; these will seek to cover all Section 75 groups as well as providing appropriate geographic spread across Northern Ireland.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CHIEF INSPECTOR'S FOREWORD

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

RECOMMENDATIONS

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER 2: STRATEGY AND GOVERNANCE

CHAPTER 3: DELIVERY

CHAPTER 4: FOLLOW-UP REVIEW

CHAPTER 5: OUTCOMES

APPENDICES

Self-assessment

The Police Service will be asked to provide evidence of delivery against the eight *Hallmarks of Neighbourhood Policing*. The DoJ, the CSB, the NIPB and PCSPs will be asked to provide evidence of their strategy and governance arrangements and outcomes.

Development of fieldwork plan

CJI will liaise with the inspection liaison points of contact in each organisation to arrange a series of meetings and focus groups with relevant individuals. This will include meetings within the DoJ, the CSB and the NIPB. Meetings will also be conducted with PCSP Managers and representatives, and Inspectors will attend a number of PCSP meetings.

Fieldwork within the Police Service will focus on Local Policing and Neighbourhood Policing Teams, with meetings arranged in several Districts, involving District Commanders, as well as focus groups with Officers of differing ranks. This will involve a blend of in person and remote fieldwork.

Initial feedback to agency

On conclusion of the fieldwork the evidence will be collated, triangulated and analysed and emerging recommendations will be developed. CJI will then present the findings to appropriate organisations.

Drafting of report

Following completion of the fieldwork and analysis of the evidence collated, a draft report will be shared with the inspected bodies for factual accuracy check. The Chief Inspector will invite the inspected bodies to complete an action plan within six weeks to address the recommendations and if the plan has been agreed and is available it will be published as part of the final inspection report. The inspection report will be shared, under embargo, in advance of the publication date with the inspected bodies.

Publication and Closure

A report will be sent to the Minister of Justice, or in their absence the Permanent Secretary, for permission to publish. When permission is received the report will be finalised for publication. A press release will be drafted and shared with the inspected agencies prior to publication and release. A publication date will be agreed and the report will be issued.

Indicative Timetable

Scoping/Research: January-March 2023.
Stakeholder consultation: April-June 2023.
Fieldwork: May-September 2023.
Draft Report: December 2023.
Factual accuracy feedback received: January 2024.

The above timetable may be impacted by factors outside CJI's control. The inspected organisations will be kept advised of any significant changes to the indicative timetable.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CHIEF INSPECTOR'S FOREWORD

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

RECOMMENDATIONS

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER 2: STRATEGY AND GOVERNANCE

CHAPTER 3: DELIVERY

CHAPTER 4: FOLLOW-UP REVIEW

CHAPTER 5: OUTCOMES

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1:
CJI INSPECTION REPORT: WORKING TOGETHER FOR SAFER COMMUNITIES:
A REVIEW OF POLICING AND COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIPS IN NORTHERN IRELAND - RECOMMENDATIONS

STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The Belfast PCSP should be subsumed into the Belfast District PCSPs **(paragraph 1.5).**

2. Inspectors recommend a review (within 2019-20 planning cycle) of the current strategic approach to communications by an independent agent with subject expertise. Such a review should include a feasibility study in regard to a technical solution that offers a more unified singular entity and identity for the corporate PCSP brand **(paragraph 2.24).**

3. The PSNI should present a narrative update on achievement against the local Policing Plan that gives a cumulative measure of achievement to the PCSPs members with specific reference to delivery of Policing Plan outcomes **(paragraph 2.48).**

4. In response the PCSPs should have an agenda item to highlight the linkage between the delivery of the local Policing Plan, the PCSP Action Plan and the work of the PCSPs. They should then identify what needs to be done to improve delivery **(paragraph 2.48).**

5. The Designated Organisations of the PCSPs should increase recognition of the role of PCSPs and delivery of shared positive outcomes in their corporate planning **(paragraph 2.57).**

OPERATIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The PSNI should report on specific initiatives in the delivery of policing aimed at improving performance in dealing with Sexual and Domestic Violence and other local policing priorities such as human trafficking, rural crime and cyber-crime **(paragraph 2.48).**

2. The representatives of the Designated Organisations attending the PCSPs should have direction from their organisation and internal lines of reporting within their organisation to report on achievement through the PCSP **(paragraph 2.57).**

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CHIEF INSPECTOR'S FOREWORD

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

RECOMMENDATIONS

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER 2: STRATEGY AND GOVERNANCE

CHAPTER 3: DELIVERY

CHAPTER 4: FOLLOW-UP REVIEW

CHAPTER 5: OUTCOMES

APPENDICES

AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

1. Earlier and more extensive consultation on the local Policing Plan would be welcome **(paragraph 1.19).**

2. Inspectors believe that there would be merit in an assessment of the level of compliance demands the NIPB places on the managers and the value of each of the returns they request and receive **(paragraph 1.27).**

3. Developing the narrative around regional issues and what local police, and other Designated Organisations such as the PBNI, are doing to implement the specific initiatives for example, Child Sexual Exploitation, Domestic Violence and tackling paramilitarism, and engaging the PCSP in specific delivery initiatives is needed **(paragraph 1.36).**

4. There is scope to review some successful projects at the PCSP meetings to have immediate impact as well as the issue of good practice examples by the Joint Committee **(paragraph 1.37).**

5. The integration of the Policing Committee into the overall PCSP was more convenient for members, reduced duplication and led to greater involvement of the members from the Designated Organisations **(paragraph 2.35).**

6. Possible improvements are to identify shared areas of need, what outcomes are desired and how the various bodies will contribute to achievement. This could also lead to increased direction given to the officials attending the meetings with subsequent accountability and reporting procedures within their parent designated body **(paragraph 2.55).**

7. Causeway Coast and Glens intend to share this approach [a project to improve feedback from the local community using a stratified sampling approach to better reflect the mixed urban and rural nature of their District] with the other PCSPs and this should be completed as soon as possible **(paragraph 3.9).**

8. There may be scope to define the outcome as what the alternative to ASB or fear of crime would look like **(paragraph 3.11).**

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CHIEF INSPECTOR'S FOREWORD

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

RECOMMENDATIONS

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER 2: STRATEGY AND GOVERNANCE

CHAPTER 3: DELIVERY

CHAPTER 4: FOLLOW-UP REVIEW

CHAPTER 5: OUTCOMES

APPENDICES

ENDNOTES

1   *CJI, Policing and Community Safety Partnerships, August 2019* available at
    **https://www.cjini.org/TheInspections/Inspection-Reports/2019/July-September/Policing-and-Community-Safety-
    Partnerships**.
2   *CJI, Policing and Community Safety Partnerships: A review of governance, delivery and outcomes, December 2014* available
    at **https://www.cjini.org/TheInspections/Inspection-Reports/2014/October---December/Police-and-Community-
    Safety-Partnership**.
3   *CJI, Policing with the Community: An inspection of Policing with the Community in Northern Ireland, March 2009* available
    at **https://www.cjini.org/getattachment/ccae1ea9-133f-4199-8c29-0ff8b48206b6/Policing-with-the-Community-An-
    inspection-of-Policing-with-the-Community-in-Northern-Ireland.aspx**.
4   *CJI, Policing with the Community: A follow-up review of inspection recommendations, September 2011* available at **https://
    www.cjini.org/TheInspections/Action-Plan-Reviews-Inspection-Follow-Up-Revie/2012/Policing-with-the-Community**.
5   *CJI, Police Service of Northern Ireland Customer Service, May 2011* available at
    https://www.cjini.org/getattachment/93329071-5912-41bd-9119-57f8e4ffc7a6/PSNI-Customer-Service.aspx.
6   *CJI, Answering the Call: An inspection of the Police Service of Northern Ireland Contact Management Arrangements, June
    2012* available at **https://www.cjini.org/TheInspections/Inspection-Reports/2012/April---June/Answering-the-Call**.
7   *CJI, Anti-social behaviour: An inspection of the criminal justice system's approach to addressing anti-social behaviour in
    Northern Ireland, October 2012* available at
    https://www.cjini.org/TheInspections/Inspection-Reports/2012/October---December/Anti-Social-Behaviour.
8   *HMICFRS, PEEL: Police effectiveness 2017 - Police Service of Northern Ireland, March 2018* available at
    **https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmicfrs/publications/peel-police-effectiveness-2017-police-service-of-
    northern-ireland/**.
9   *HMICFRS, The Police Service of Northern Ireland: An inspection of how well the service treats its workforce and the people
    of Northern Ireland, September 2020* available at **https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmicfrs/publications/police-
    service-northern-ireland-an-inspection-of-how-well-the-service-treats-its-workforce-and-the-people-of-northern-
    ireland/**.
10 *OPONI, An Investigation into Police Policy and Practice Of Protests in Northern Ireland, December 2020,* available at
    https://www.policeombudsman.org/PONI/files/85/858a4b0b-9b99-4921-b947-5fae248ba683.pdf
11 *OPONI, Police Ombudsman: Investigation Into 'Protect Our Monuments' Protest 'Closed Prematurely', February 2023,*
    available at **https://www.policeombudsman.org/Media-Releases/2023/Police-Ombudsman-Investigation-Into-
    %E2%80%98Protect-Our-M**
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LIST OF
ABBREVIATIONS

CHIEF
INSPECTOR'S
FOREWORD

EXECUTIVE
SUMMARY

RECOMMENDATIONS

CHAPTER 1:
INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER 2:
STRATEGY AND
GOVERNANCE

CHAPTER 3:
DELIVERY

CHAPTER 4:
FOLLOW-UP
REVIEW

CHAPTER 5:
OUTCOMES

APPENDICES

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