

Continuous improvement arrangements in policing

Performance Summary 2022-23

Annual Performance Plan 2023-24

**Report by the Comptroller
and Auditor General**

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This report has been prepared under Section 29 of the Police (Northern Ireland) Act 2000.

The Comptroller and Auditor General is the head of the Northern Ireland Audit Office. She and the Northern Ireland Audit Office are totally independent of Government.

She certifies the accounts of all Government Departments and a wide range of other public sector bodies; and she has statutory authority to report to the Northern Ireland Assembly on the economy, efficiency and effectiveness with which departments and other bodies have used their resources.

Dorinnia Carville

Comptroller and Auditor General

Northern Ireland Audit Office

05 July 2024

Contents

Executive Summary		5
Part One:	Introduction and background	10
Part Two:	Review of Performance	13
Part Three:	Review of the Performance Plan 2023-24	19
Part Four:	Operation of the Continuous Improvement programme	24
Appendices:		32
	Appendix 1	33
	The Comptroller and Auditor General's certificate and opinion to the Northern Ireland Assembly on the Northern Ireland Policing Board's Performance Summary and Performance Plan	
	Appendix 2	35
	Progress on recommendations in the Comptroller and Auditor General's report	

Executive Summary

Executive Summary

Background

1. The Northern Ireland Policing Board (the Board) was established on 4 November 2001 by the Police (Northern Ireland) Act 2000, which put the recommendations of the Patten Report on policing into practice. At the same time, the Police Service of Northern Ireland (the PSNI) came into being, replacing the Royal Ulster Constabulary.
2. Section 28 of the Police (Northern Ireland) Act 2000 requires the Board to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions, and those of the Chief Constable, are exercised, having regard to economy, efficiency and effectiveness. The Board is required to prepare and publish a performance plan (Annual Performance Plan) for each financial year. The Board also has to prepare and publish a performance summary in respect of the previous year.

Basis and scope of the audit by the Comptroller and Auditor General

3. As the Comptroller and Auditor General (C&AG) for Northern Ireland, I am required under section 29 of the Police (Northern Ireland) Act 2000 to audit the Performance Plan and Performance Summary, and to send a report to the Board, the Chief Constable and the Department of Justice (the Department).

The C&AG's certificate and audit opinion to the Northern Ireland Assembly on the Northern Ireland Policing Board's Performance Summary and Performance Plan

4. In accordance with Section 29 of the Police (Northern Ireland) Act 2000 as amended, I certify that I have audited the Board's:
 - Performance Summary for the year ended 31 March 2023; and
 - Annual Performance Plan for the year ended 31 March 2024.

Basis of my opinion

5. I planned and performed my work to obtain all the information and explanations that I considered necessary in order to provide an opinion on whether:
 - (i) **for the Performance Summary 2022-23:** the Board has prepared and published a Performance Summary of the Board's assessment of:
 - a. its and the Chief Constable's performance in 2022-23 measured by reference to performance actions and performance indicators in the Board's Business Plan and the Annual Performance Plan 2022-23 respectively; and
 - b. the extent to which performance measures in 2022-23 were met.

My work included examination, on a test basis, of the evidence supporting performance actions, indicators and measures as set out in the above documents; and

(ii) for the Annual Performance Plan 2023-24:

- a. the Board has prepared and published an Annual Performance Plan 2023-24 containing details of how arrangements in place to secure continuous improvement in the way its functions and those of the Chief Constable are to be implemented; and
- b. the performance indicators and performance measures in the Annual Performance Plan 2023-24 are reasonable.

Main findings of my review

6. I have given an unqualified audit opinion on the Performance Summary for the year ended 31 March 2023 and the Annual Performance Plan for the year ended 31 March 2024 (**Appendix 1**). I have raised one recommendation for the attention of the Board and the PSNI, details of which are outlined in the following paragraphs.

On Performance Summary 2022-23

7. Performance actions, indicators and measures are published for both the Board and the PSNI in the Board's Business Plan and the Annual Performance Plan respectively.
8. The Board's Business Plan 2022-23 included 13 performance actions underpinning four corporate objectives. The Board's Annual Performance Plan 2022-23 for the PSNI sets out nine indicators with 13 performance measures. The same three overarching outcomes align both the Board's Business Plan 2022-23 and the Annual Performance Plan 2022-23. These are:
 - We have a safe Community;
 - We have confidence in Policing; and
 - We have engaged and supportive communities.
9. The Board has reported its own performance summary in its Annual Report and Accounts 2022-23. Overall the Board reported that in 2022-23, 11 of its 13 actions (85 percent) (2021-22: 85 percent) had been achieved and the remaining two actions were partially achieved.
10. The Board's Policing Plan and Performance Plan Annual Assessment 2022-23 (Annual Assessment) provides the Board's assessment of the PSNI's performance and delivery of the Annual Performance Plan 2022-23, and concludes on the status of each measure at year-end as having been achieved or otherwise.
11. For each measure within the Annual Performance Plan 2022-23, the Annual Assessment includes an impacts update, initiatives to improve performance, detailed information and an assessment of 'RAG' status as being achieved, partially achieved or not achieved. At the 31 March 2023 the Board has reported in the Annual Assessment that, in its opinion, of the total 13 measures; four measures (30%) were fully achieved, 8 measures (62%) were partially achieved and 1 measure was not achieved (8%).

On the Annual Performance Plan 2023-24

12. The Annual Performance Plan 2023-24 supports the fourth year of the *Northern Ireland Policing Plan 2020-2025* (Policing Plan) and comprises nine indicators and 16 measures (2022-23: nine indicators and 13 measures) across the same three overarching outcomes noted above. A Policing Plan Review Working Group, comprising both Board members and

PSNI representatives, is constituted on an annual basis by the Board to take forward the statutory requirement to review the Annual Assessment and propose any changes to the subsequent Annual Performance Plan. The Board reconstituted the most recent working group in September 2023.

13. There are three additional measures included in the Annual Performance Plan 2023-24. These are the introduction of:
 - 1.4.2 - Demonstrate progress against the Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy and Action Plan;
 - 2.1.2 - Report on the levels (numbers and outcomes) of conduct cases within the police service; and
 - 2.1.3 - Report on the levels of 999 (emergency) and 101 (priority) call response.
14. The other 13 measures are carried forward from the Annual Performance Plan 2022-23 and remain unchanged apart from a revision to the wording of measure 3.1.1, which previously focused on the Local Policing Review. However, following the successful delivery of commitments in the Local Policing review, the wording of measure 3.1.1 has been revised to measure progress against a "Here For You" Public Engagement Strategy and eight hallmarks of neighbourhood policing which the PSNI has developed.
15. Baseline and impact data continues to be developed and improved for measures in the Annual Performance Plan. I am pleased to see detailed baseline descriptions are available for all measures at Annex A of the Annual Performance Plan 2023-24, apart from Outcome 3, and in particular measure 3.1.1 *Demonstrate progress against the "Here for You" Public Engagement Strategy and the associated Hallmarks of Neighbourhood Policing*. However, I do note that quantitative baseline figures have not been included.
16. If this data is not available and being continuously developed, the value of the Annual Performance Plan may be compromised as performance against individual measures in relation to performance indicators cannot be measured, assessed and reported as required by Section 28 (5)/(5A)/(5B) of the Police (Northern Ireland) Act 2000.
17. Continuous improvement is an ongoing process and baseline data should become more robust over time and as more information is actively sourced. I recommended in my previous years' reports that the Annual Performance Plan would benefit from the inclusion of baseline information and data as it becomes available. With further information and data now available from the Policing Plan Survey 2023 to update baselines, I have retained this recommendation.

On the continuous improvement arrangements

18. Section 28 (4) of the Police (NI) Act 2000 requires the Board's Annual Performance Plan to contain details of its arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which it functions, and those of the Chief Constable, are exercised, having regard to economy, efficiency and effectiveness.
19. To satisfy this requirement, the Board has stated that both the Policing Plan and the subsequent Annual Performance Plans have been developed using the Outcomes Based Accountability (OBA) framework.

- 20.** The key feature of an OBA approach is working in reverse from a set of desired outcomes and asking: 'How much did we do?', 'How well did we do it?' and 'Is anyone better off?'. The validity of the approach requires good quality and relevant datasets and baseline information. Whilst there have been improvements in the provision of baseline information, it is important that this continues to be developed and I have made a recommendation to this effect.
- 21.** At the time of writing this report the Policing Plan and the current OBA approach is coming to the end of a 5-year process, and the Board is working towards developing a new policing plan during 2024. It is important that lessons learned and recommendations made pertaining to the existing Policing Plan are taken into consideration when developing a new policing plan.

Update on the legislation supporting the continuous improvement arrangements

- 22.** As I have reported in a number of previous reports, in my opinion, it is important that the Department considers changes to the legislation underpinning the audit of continuous improvement, which has been in place since 2000. The role of the C&AG defined in the Police (Northern Ireland) Act 2000 in respect of continuous improvement in Northern Ireland now appears to be unique in the UK with the Department finding that many of the corresponding provisions to the Police (Northern Ireland) Act 2000 in the UK have been repealed and, for the most part, 'best value' arrangements in England and Wales no longer apply to the police. Any such proposal would be subject to Ministerial approval.



Summary of Recommendation

The Annual Performance Plan requires the inclusion of up to date and relevant data and baseline information for all indicators and measures. Whilst baselines and measures have been set and reported on in previous years, these datasets must be continuously developed using all available information. This would include updating the indicators and measures to absorb any information gleaned from the Policing Plan Survey 2023. This is essential in order to monitor performance and for the evaluation of success against the measures, indicators and outcomes stated in the Annual Performance Plan.

Part One:

Introduction and background

Introduction and background

Responsibilities of the Northern Ireland Policing Board

- 1.1** Under section 28 of the Police (Northern Ireland) Act 2000, the Northern Ireland Policing Board (the Board) is required to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions, and those of the Chief Constable of the Police Service of Northern Ireland (the PSNI), are exercised, with regard to economy, efficiency and effectiveness.
- 1.2** The Board must prepare and publish a performance plan (Annual Performance Plan) for each financial year, containing details of how these continuous improvement arrangements are to be implemented. In particular, the Annual Performance Plan must:
- identify performance indicators by reference to which performance in exercising functions can be measured; and
 - set performance standards (measures) to be met in the exercise of particular functions in relation to performance indicators.
- 1.3** The Board must also prepare and publish a performance summary for each financial year of the Board's assessment of:
- its, and the Chief Constable's, performance in the year measured by reference to performance indicators; and
 - the extent to which any performance standard (measure) which applied at any time during that year was met.
- 1.4** In practice, the Board works in partnership with the PSNI to develop the Annual Performance Plan, and monitor and review progress in its implementation, within an overall context of continuous improvement.

Responsibilities of the Comptroller and Auditor General

- 1.5** Under section 29 of the Police (Northern Ireland) Act 2000, I am required to audit the Performance Summary and the Annual Performance Plan to establish whether they are prepared and published in accordance with the requirements of section 28 of Police (Northern Ireland) Act 2000. Accordingly, I must issue a report (**Appendix 1**):
- certifying that I have audited the Performance Summary and the Annual Performance Plan;
 - stating whether I believe the Performance Summary and the Annual Performance Plan were prepared and published in accordance with the requirements of section 28 of the Police (Northern Ireland) Act 2000;
 - stating whether I believe the performance indicators and standards (measures) in the Annual Performance Plan are reasonable and, if appropriate, recommending changes to them;
 - if appropriate, recommending how the Performance Summary and Annual Performance Plan should be amended so as to accord with the requirements of section 28 of the Police (Northern Ireland) Act 2000; and

- recommending whether the Department of Justice should give a 'direction' to the Board, under section 31 (2) of the Police (Northern Ireland) Act 2000. Such a direction would require the Board to take appropriate corrective action to ensure compliance with the Act.

1.6 Under section 30 of the Police (Northern Ireland) Act 2000, I may carry out an examination of the Board's compliance with the requirements of section 28 of the Police (Northern Ireland) Act 2000.

1.7 In August 2023 I published a similar report summarising my audit of the Performance Summary 2021-22 and the Annual Performance Plan 2022-23. My report at that time contained a recommendation which is presented at **Appendix 2**, along with an update from the Board on progress.

Scope of the review

1.8 During the course of the review, my staff liaised closely with the Board and the PSNI. My findings are set out as follows:

- **Part Two: Review of Performance:** summarising the Board's and the Chief Constable's performance in 2022-23 and the extent to which performance standards (measures) were met;
- **Part Three: Review of the Annual Performance Plan:** considering whether the Annual Performance Plan meets the Board's statutory obligations and whether proposed performance indicators and performance standards (measures) are reasonable; and
- **Part Four: Continuous Improvement:** reviewing the arrangements made by the Board to secure continuous improvement and, examining how such arrangements are being implemented.

Part Two:

Review of Performance

Review of Performance

Introduction

- 2.1** The Board is required to prepare and publish a performance summary for each financial year of the Board's assessment of:
- its, and the Chief Constable's, performance in the year measured by reference to performance indicators; and
 - the extent to which any performance standard (measure) which applied at any time during that year was met.
- 2.2** In this part of the report, I consider whether the performance summaries published in the Board's Annual Report and Accounts 2022-23 and the Board's Policing Plan and Performance Plan Annual Assessment 2022-23 (Annual Assessment) meet the statutory obligations of the Board.

Policing Board performance

- 2.3** The Board's Corporate Plan for the period 2020-2023 sets out the Board's Purpose, Vision and Values and outlines the key challenges envisaged during the period. The Board has set four key objectives based on the three overarching outcomes in line with the outcomes in the *Northern Ireland Policing Plan 2020-2025* (Policing Plan).
- 2.4** The detail of how the Board will deliver these four key objectives is set out in the Board's Business Plan 2022-23. For each of the four objectives, a number of associated actions have been identified (13 in total) which will be used by the Board to gauge its progress in achieving the overall objective.
- 2.5** The Board's performance is summarised in its Annual Report and Accounts 2022-23. **Figure 1** below presents a summary of the Board's performance against the key objectives and associated actions as set out in the Business Plan 2022-23. Of the 13 actions identified, 11 are reported as fully achieved (85 per cent) and the remaining two reported as partially achieved (15 per cent).
- 2.6** The two actions that were reported as partially achieved at 31 March 2023 relate to:
- scoping and procuring a third-party supplier to assist with the development of bespoke revised guidance to Selected Medical Practitioners and Independent Medical Referees; and
 - progressing recommendations made in the Injury on Duty awards report by my Office in March 2020.

Figure 1: Summary of progress against Objectives and Actions

Objectives	Actions	Achieved / Partially Achieved / Not Achieved
<p>A. To monitor resourcing plans for the PSNI; advocating on issues which support policing, including transformational change, and delivery of a representative service.</p>	<p>i. Monitor PSNI senior leadership staffing requirements, progress appointments to fill vacancies as required and monitor the effectiveness of the revised Senior Executive Team structure in light of the non-policing expertise now embedded within the PSNI Senior Executive Team</p> <p>ii. Monitor the effectiveness of PSNI Financial Management and specifically the impact of the prevailing budgetary position, including in relation to officer numbers, recruitment and any impact on service delivery</p> <p>iii. Monitor the effectiveness of measures taken to ensure that membership of the PSNI is representative of the community</p>	<p>Achieved</p> <p>Achieved</p> <p>Achieved</p>
<p>B. To monitor, oversee and assess the performance of the PSNI through the Board and its Committees and ensure the delivery of Human Rights based, community focussed policing.</p>	<p>i. Deliver the 2022-23 Performance Plan in line with the 2020-2025 Northern Ireland Policing Plan</p> <p>ii. Implement a framework to assess PSNI's compliance with the Human Rights Act (1998)</p> <p>iii. Monitor PSNI progress towards completion of the remaining 8 Local Policing Review actions for which PSNI have sought and been given an extension in order to deliver</p> <p>iv. Deliver and report on the work of the Board and its Committees</p>	<p>Achieved</p> <p>Achieved</p> <p>Achieved</p> <p>Achieved</p>
<p>C. To work collaboratively with the community, Police and Community Safety Partnerships (PCSPs) and partners, to deliver the outcomes for policing and allow them to be informed and engaged with the Board's work.</p>	<p>i. Support the delivery of PCSP Action Plans which contribute to increased community safety and confidence in policing</p> <p>ii. Deliver a Communications Action Plan</p> <p>iii. Deliver the Engagement Strategy 2020-23 to support the Board's outcomes</p> <p>iv. Deliver a funding programme to support and increase community engagement with policing</p>	<p>Achieved</p> <p>Achieved</p> <p>Achieved</p> <p>Achieved</p>
<p>D. To deliver independent, fair and transparent processes for former and serving officers in line with Police Pension, Injury Benefit and Appeal legislation.</p>	<p>i. Scope and procure a third party supplier to assist with the development of bespoke revised guidance to Selected Medical Practitioners and Independent Medical Referees</p> <p>ii. Progress any recommendations made by the Northern Ireland Audit Office from their reporting on the Northern Ireland Injury Benefit Scheme</p>	<p>Partially Achieved</p> <p>Partially Achieved</p>

Source: : NIAO summary based on the NIPB Annual Report and Accounts 2022-23

- 2.7** The performance information in the Board's Annual Report and Accounts 2022-23 reproduces the detailed information from the Board's Business Plan and is consistent with it, supporting the higher-level Corporate Plan outcomes. The Annual Report and Accounts 2022-23 also contains a progress summary and status of each of the Business Plan actions as at 31 March 2023.

The PSNI's performance against the Annual Performance Plan 2022-23

- 2.8** The Policing Plan sets out three overarching outcomes that the Board have set for policing to deliver over the five-year period. The Annual Performance Plan 2022-23 includes nine indicators and 13 measures which are used to measure progress in the delivery of the third year of the Policing Plan. A summary of the PSNI's progress against the Annual Performance Plan 2022-23 is set out at **Figure 2**.

Figure 2: Summary of the PSNI's progress against Annual Performance Plan 2022-23

Outcome	Indicator	Measure	
1. We have a safe community	1.1 Fewer repeat victims of crime	1.1.1 Repeat victimisation rate and report on initiatives to support repeat victims with a focus on victims of (i) Domestic Abuse, (ii) Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation (CSAE) and (iii) Hate Crime in 2022-23	Partially Achieved
	1.2 Fewer repeat offenders of crime	1.2.1 Repeat offending rate and report on initiatives to reduce repeat offenders with a focus on Domestic Abuse in 2022-23	Partially Achieved
		1.2.2 Through Frustrated, Disrupted and Dismantled activity, reduce the capacity and capability of Organised Crime Groups (OCGs) and paramilitary organisations to engage in criminal activity	
	1.3 People in all communities feel safe	1.3.1 Number of people in Northern Ireland who feel safe in their local area, local high street or town centre and own home, including in the online space 1.3.2 Rate of places repeatedly victimised	Partially Achieved
1.4 Crime rates and trends showcase an effective police response	1.4.1 Benchmark PSNI crime rates against previous PSNI levels and other similar police services	Partially Achieved	

Outcome	Indicator	Measure	
2. We have confidence in policing	2.1 The level of public confidence in policing	2.1.1 Number of people in Northern Ireland who are confident that PSNI is accessible, visible, responsive and victim focused	Achieved
	2.2 The level of satisfaction with the service received	2.2.1 Number of victims who are satisfied with the service that they have received	Partially Achieved
	2.3 The representativeness of the police service	2.3.1 Improve representativeness of the service across ranks, grades and departments by gender and community and socio-economic background	Not Achieved
	2.4 Delivery of effective crime outcome	2.4.1 Levels of crime outcomes, with a particular focus on Domestic Abuse, to identify areas of concern	Partially Achieved
3. We have engaged and supportive communities	3.1 Police, in partnership with local communities, including PCSPs, identify and deliver local solutions to local problems	3.1.1 In collaboration with the community deliver the commitments outlined in the Local Policing Review	Achieved
		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	Partially Achieved
		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	Partially Achieved

Source: NIAO summary based on the Board's Policing Plan and Performance Plan Annual Assessment 2022-23.

2.9 Both the Board and the PSNI have reported on the PSNI's performance against the Annual Performance Plan 2022-23. The Board's assessment of performance should be read in conjunction with that of the PSNI's assessment for a full understanding.

2.10 The Board published its assessment of the PSNI's performance against the Performance Plan 2022-23 in its Policing Plan and Performance Plan Annual Assessment 2022-23 (Annual Assessment). The narrative summarises how the PSNI reported how it met each performance measure through its Outcomes Based Accountability (OBA) report cards presented to either the Board's Performance, Partnership or Resources Committees. Additionally, for each performance measure, the Annual Assessment includes:

- an impacts update, including initiatives to continuously improve performance,
- the Board's assessment, and
- an assessment of 'RAG' status as being achieved, partially achieved or not achieved, identifying the position in respect of data development, baselines and surveys.

- 2.11** At the 31 March 2023 the Board has reported in the Annual Assessment that, in its opinion, of the total 13 measures; four measures (30%) were fully achieved, 8 measures (62%) were partially achieved and 1 measure was not achieved (8%).
- 2.12** The 2022-23 baselines and measures used for reporting within the PSNI's OBA Report Cards have been reviewed. The Policing Plan Review Working Group reviewed the measures and baselines as part of their work and reported back to the Board in February 2023.
- 2.13** As the Board is progressing the OBA Framework to develop both the Policing Plan and the subsequent Annual Performance Plan, it has become more important to ensure they continue to develop baselines against which to judge progress. This will make it easier to understand how the three performance measures synonymous with OBA - "How much did we do? How well did we do it? Is anyone better off?" can be measured.

Conclusion

- 2.14** The Board has disclosed its own performance against the Corporate Plan and the Business Plan in its Annual Report and Accounts 2022-23. The Board published its assessment of the PSNI's performance against the Performance Plan 2022-23 in its Policing Plan and Performance Plan Annual Assessment 2022-23 (Annual Assessment).

Part Three:

Review of the Performance Plan 2023-24

Review of the Performance Plan 2023-24

Introduction

- 3.1** The Board is required to prepare and publish a performance plan (Annual Performance Plan) for each financial year, containing details of how these continuous improvement arrangements are to be implemented. In particular, the Annual Performance Plan must:
- identify performance indicators by reference to which performance in exercising functions can be measured; and
 - set performance standards (measures) to be met in the exercise of particular functions in relation to performance indicators.
- 3.2** In this part of the report, I consider:
- whether the Annual Performance Plan 2023-24 meets the Board's statutory obligations; and
 - whether the performance indicators and standards (measures) in the Annual Performance Plan 2023-24 are reasonable.

Development of the Annual Performance Plan 2023-24

- 3.3** Section 25(1) of the Police (Northern Ireland) Act 2000 provides for the Board to determine the objectives for the policing of Northern Ireland. In 2020 I reported that the Board had developed, in partnership with the PSNI, an updated five year plan covering the period 2020 to 2025 known as the *Northern Ireland Policing Plan 2020-2025* (Policing Plan).
- 3.4** The Policing Plan sets out three overarching outcomes for policing to deliver over a five-year period. It is accompanied by Annual Performance Plans which contain indicators and measures used to evaluate the PSNI's progress on a twelve-month basis against the outcomes.
- 3.5** In November 2020, the Policing Plan Review Working Group was established to take forward the statutory requirements to review the Policing Plan and Annual Assessment, and propose any changes to the subsequent Annual Performance Plan. This working group comprises both Board members and PSNI representatives.

Review of Performance measures and indicators

- 3.6** The Annual Performance Plan for 2023 -24 includes nine indicators and 16 measures (**Figure 3**) covering the three outcomes and as such meets the Board's statutory obligations for this.

Figure 3: Annual Performance Plan 2023-24

Outcome	Indicator	Measures 2023-24
1. We have a safe community	<p>1.1 Fewer repeat victims of crime</p> <p>1.2 Fewer repeat offenders of crime</p> <p>1.3 People in all communities feel safe</p> <p>1.4 Crime rates and trends showcase an effective police response</p>	<p>1.1.1 Repeat victimisation rate and report on initiatives to support repeat victims with a focus on victims of (i) Domestic Abuse, (ii) Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation (CSAE) and (iii) Hate Crime in 2023-24</p> <p>1.2.1 Repeat offending rate and report on initiatives to reduce repeat offenders with a focus on Domestic Abuse</p> <p>1.2.2 Through activity which has a minor, moderate and major impact, reduce the capacity and capability of Organised Crime Groups (OCGs) and paramilitary organisations to engage in criminal activity</p> <p>1.3.1 Number of people in Northern Ireland who feel safe in their local area, local high street or town centre and own home, including in the online space</p> <p>1.3.2 Rate of places repeatedly victimised</p> <p>1.4.1 Benchmark PSNI crime rates against previous rates and other similar police services</p> <p>1.4.2 Demonstrate progress against the Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy and Action Plan.</p>
2. We have confidence in policing	<p>2.1 The level of public confidence in policing</p> <p>2.2 The level of satisfaction with the service received</p> <p>2.3 The representativeness of the police service</p> <p>2.4 Delivery of effective crime outcomes</p>	<p>2.1.1 Number of people in Northern Ireland who are confident that PSNI is accessible, visible, responsive and victim focused</p> <p>2.1.2 Report on the levels (numbers and outcomes) of conduct cases within the police service</p> <p>2.1.3 Report on the levels of 999 (emergency) and 101 (priority) call response.</p> <p>2.2.1 Number of victims and service users who are satisfied with the service they have received</p> <p>2.3.1 Improve representativeness of the service across ranks, grades and departments by gender, community background, ethnic origin, disability, sexual orientation and in respect of recruitment, socio-economic background.</p> <p>2.4.1 Levels of crime outcomes, with a particular focus on domestic abuse, to identify areas of concern</p>

Outcome	Indicator	Measures 2023-24
3. We have engaged and supportive communities	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

Source: NIAO Summary based on Annual Performance Plan 2023-24

- 3.7** There are three additional measures included in the Annual Performance Plan 2023-24. These are the introduction of:
- 1.4.2 - Demonstrate progress against the Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy and Action Plan;
 - 2.1.2 - Report on the levels (numbers and outcomes) of conduct cases within the police service; and
 - 2.1.3 - Report on the levels of 999 (emergency) and 101 (priority) call response.
- 3.8** Following successful delivery of commitments in the Local Policing review, the wording of measure 3.1.1 has been revised to measure progress against a “Here For You” Public Engagement Strategy and eight hallmarks of neighbourhood policing which the PSNI has developed.
- 3.9** In previous reports, I have recommended the need for clear and appropriate outcomes, linked indicators and measures, and the fundamental inclusion of baseline information. Together these can demonstrate positive impacts for citizens and communities, and secure the continuous improvement of the PSNI as a whole. I am satisfied that the link between outcome, indicators and measures is clear within the Annual Performance Plan 2023-24.
- 3.10** Baseline and impact data continues to be developed and improved for measures in the Annual Performance Plan. I am pleased to see detailed baseline descriptions are available for all measures at Annex A of the Annual Performance Plan 2023-24, apart from Outcome 3, and in particular measure 3.1.1 *Demonstrate progress against the “Here for You” Public Engagement Strategy and the associated Hallmarks of Neighbourhood Policing*. However, I do note that quantitative baseline figures have not been included.

- 3.11** While the development of baselines is an ongoing process for the Board and the PSNI, if this data is not available and being continuously developed, the value of the Annual Performance Plan may be compromised as performance against individual measures in relation to performance indicators cannot be measured, assessed and reported as required by Section 28 (5)/(5A)/(5B) of the Police (Northern Ireland) Act 2000.
- 3.12** Continuous improvement is an ongoing process and baseline data should become more robust over time and as more information is actively sourced. I recommended in my previous years' reports that the Annual Performance Plan would benefit from the inclusion of baseline information and data as it becomes available. With further information and data now available from the Policing Plan Survey 2023 to update baselines, I have retained this recommendation.

Conclusion

- 3.13** The Board has prepared and published an Annual Performance Plan 2023-24 which contains details of arrangements in place to secure continuous improvement. The performance indicators and performance measures in the Annual Performance Plan, including the additional measures and revisions developed by the Policing Plan Review Working Group, are reasonable.
- 3.14** However, the Board and the PSNI should continue to develop up to date and relevant data and baselines for all indicators and measures which can be used to robustly demonstrate performance and progress against outcomes, and inform the ongoing development of arrangements to secure continuous improvement.



Recommendation

The Annual Performance Plan requires the inclusion of up to date and relevant data and baseline information for all indicators and measures. Whilst baselines and measures have been set and reported on in previous years', these datasets must be continuously developed using all available information. This would include updating the indicators and measures to absorb any information gleaned from the Policing Plan Survey 2023. This is essential in order to monitor performance and for the evaluation of success against the measures, indicators and outcomes stated in the Annual Performance Plan.

Part Four:

Operation of the Continuous Improvement programme

Operation of the Continuous Improvement programme

Introduction

- 4.1** Section 28 (4) of the Police (NI) Act 2000 requires the Board's Annual Performance Plan to contain details of its arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which it functions, and those of the Chief Constable, are exercised, having regard to economy, efficiency and effectiveness.
- 4.2** The Board is also required to carry out reviews of the way in which its functions are exercised by section 28 (2) of the Police (NI) Act 2000.

Continuous improvement within the Board

- 4.3** The Board has no planned continuous improvement projects at present.
- 4.4** On 8 August 2023, the names of police officers and staff in Northern Ireland, where they were based, and their job roles were published on the internet. The data was made public, in error, by the PSNI as they responded to a routine freedom of information (Fol) request.
- 4.5** In response the Board commissioned a review of the data breach which reported on 11 December 2023. To oversee the implementation of recommendations made by this review, the PSNI established a new Data Board to set the strategic direction for the management of information and data.
- 4.6** Alongside this review, the Board has commissioned reviews of the PSNI Senior Executive Team and the Board, the latter of which has also been independently commissioned by the Department.
- 4.7** I will continue to monitor out-workings from these reviews and will report further on continuous improvement developments and implications as part of my audits of the Performance Summary 2023-24 and Annual Performance Plan 2024-25 next year.

Continuous improvement within the PSNI

- 4.8** This is the third year I will be reporting on Continuous Improvement within the PSNI under the Board's newly adopted OBA framework methodology.
- 4.9** The development of the Policing Plan follows the OBA framework and aims to embed continuous improvement throughout the design and monitoring of the outcomes of the Annual Performance Plans. To facilitate this new methodology, the Policing Plan Review Working Group supports the Board in its review of the PSNI's past performance and challenge to future Annual Performance Plans, ensuring the measures within remain appropriate and relevant. The monitoring of individual measures and indicators is delegated to either the Board's Performance Committee, Partnership Committee or Resources Committee. The PSNI provide monthly information to the Board using the OBA methodology in 'report card' format, setting out the three OBA performance measures "How much did we do? How well did we do it? Is anyone better off?"

- 4.10** The Board's approach to securing continuous improvement using the OBA framework methodology relies on four key documents:
- Performance Plan Timetable;
 - OBA Report Card (produced by PSNI);
 - Board Analysis (scrutiny of OBA report card - identifying issues or opportunities); and
 - PSNI Update (presentation to the Board).
- 4.11** To obtain assurance that the Board's new approach is fully compliant with Section 28 (4) of the Police (NI) Act 2000 and, in particular, the Board's requirement to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement within the PSNI, I selected and tested the following three performance indicators:
- 1.1 Fewer repeat victims of crime;
 - 2.3 The representativeness of the police service; and
 - 3.1 Police, in partnership with local communities, including PCSPs, identify and deliver local solutions to local problems'.
- 4.12** Two of these indicators (1.1 and 3.1) were both designated as 'partially achieved', whilst one indicator (2.3) was designated as 'not achieved' within the Board's Policing Plan and Performance Plan Annual Assessment 2022-23. Audit work focused on reviewing the underlying supporting documentation, and in particular the four key documents listed above (**Figure 4**).

Figure 4: Summary of NIAO findings from key documentation review

Indicator 1.1 - Fewer repeat victims of crime	
Document	Findings
Performance Plan Timetable 2022-23	Considered by Performance Committee on 13 October 2022 and 9 February 2023.
OBA Report Card	<p>Measure 1.1.1 - Repeat victimisation rate and report on initiatives to support repeat victims with a focus on victims of (i) Domestic Abuse, (ii) Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation (CSAE) and (iii) Hate Crime in 2022-23.</p> <p>Report cards presented to each committee meeting were reviewed.</p> <p>I note repeat victims of crime incidents were available for the 365 days to 30 November 2022 and were compared to the baseline of the financial year 2021-22. There was also a graphical chart to show the 'Repeat Victimisation Rate and Percentage of Crime Incidents Against Repeat Victims' experienced for the 12 months to November 2022.</p> <p>There was further detail in the report split into domestic abuse, hate incidents and CSAE, with a written update given on each. I was pleased to note the use of figures, visual diagrams and case studies as appropriate.</p>
Board Analysis	<p>The February 2023 Performance Committee noted the following:</p> <p><i>'The Performance Monitoring Manager referred Members to the analysis that PSNI have reported that the number and rate of repeat victims has decreased slightly against the baseline. The number of repeat victims remains largely consistent over the past 12 months. The Performance Monitoring Manager also referred to the number and rate of repeat victims of domestic abuse has also fallen marginally against the baseline. However there also been noted minor increases in the number of repeat victims of hate crime and CSAE.'</i></p> <p>This demonstrates the Board is analysing performance against data and baseline.</p>
PSNI Update	The PSNI presented information through their report card and provided a statistical commentary of their performance against measure 1.1.1 and discussed with members the work carried out on a number of key areas.
<p>NIAO View: Overall, based on what has been presented and considered by the Board's Performance Committee, I conclude there is reasonable data and baseline information for indicator 1.1.</p> <p>I am content the RAG Status of 'partially achieved' for measure 1.1.1 is appropriate based on comparison to 31 March 2022. However, going forward, I encourage the Board to use the previous year to the Annual Performance Plan (which would have been 31 March 2021 for the Performance Plan 2022-23) as the baseline.</p>	

Indicator 2.3 - The representativeness of the police service	
<p>Document</p> <p>Performance Plan Timetable 2022-23</p> <p>OBA Report Card</p> <p>Board Analysis</p> <p>PSNI Update</p>	<p>Findings</p> <p>Considered by Resources Committee on 22 September 2022 and 15 December 2022.</p> <p>Measure 2.3.1: Improve representativeness of the service across ranks, grades and departments by gender and community and socio-economic background.</p> <p>The December 2022 report card showed visual representations of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • rank and grade breakdown by community background and gender at 30 September 2022 compared to 30 September 2021; • representativeness from the last three recruitment campaigns; • police officer and police staff community background and gender at September 2022 and from 2013 to 2021; • in service sexual orientation, ethnic origin and disability; • stability indices (percentage of personnel who were employed at both the start and end of the reporting period) for police officers, police staff, community background and gender; and • exit interview results between 1 October 2021 and 30 September 2022. <p>The September 2022 Resources Committee noted the following:</p> <p><i>'Members noted the positive actions being taken to address representativeness in the PSNI and discussed changes they would like to see in the format of the report card to improve structure and presentation. This included a focus on service areas, providing absolute percentages with a year-on-year trend analysis, moving activities to a separate page on the card, and a member requested more information in respect of baseline figures (percentage officers by rank/grade).</i></p> <p><i>A Member also expressed concern in respect of the lack of progress in implementing changes to the report card format despite this issue being raised by members on a number of previous occasions.'</i></p> <p>The December 2022 Resources Committee noted the following:</p> <p><i>'The draft version of the updated report card incorporates member feedback and includes changes in respect of overall structure with 3 new sections (External Recruitment, Internal Representation, Retention), statistical and trend information, current and anticipated impacts, analysis of wider strands of Equality and Diversity, reflecting long term impacts of actions taken, and inclusion of sexual orientation, race and disability data. Members welcomed the positive actions being taken and the visual improvements to the Report Card</i></p> <p><i>Members welcomed the positive actions being taken and the visual improvements to the report card.'</i></p> <p>This demonstrates the Board is influencing the development of improved continuous improvement analysis of performance against data and baseline.</p> <p>The PSNI provided briefing on their report card and an overview of current representativeness reporting, including statutory returns, equality scheme, people principles and management information.</p>
<p>NIAO View: Overall, based on what has been presented and considered by the Board's Resources Committee, I conclude there is reasonable data and baseline information for indicator 2.3.</p> <p>I am content the RAG Status of 'not achieved' for measure 2.3.1 is appropriate based on no representativeness improvement in the 2021 student officer recruitment campaign, and no further opportunity to improve police officer gender, community background and ethnicity representativeness due to no subsequent student officer recruitment campaigns.</p>	

Indicator 3.1: Police, in partnership with local communities, including PCSP's, identify and deliver local solutions to local problems	
Document	Findings
Performance Plan Timetable 2022-23	Considered by Partnership Committee on 15 September 2022 and 16 February 2023.
OBA Report Card	<p>Measure 3.1.1 - In collaboration with the community deliver the commitments outlined in the Local Policing Review.</p> <p>There are no report cards for the Local Policing Review. Instead the PSNI provided a progress update against outstanding actions at each Committee. This has been confirmed through review of papers presented by the Director of Partnership to each Committee meeting.</p> <p>Measure 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.</p> <p>Baseline comparisons were illustrated by use of a chart which shows how crime and Anti-Social Behaviour rates per 1,000 households in the rolling 365 days compared to the baseline in the eight neighbourhoods included in the pilot for this measure.</p> <p>Case study narrative used to highlight successful initiatives.</p> <p>Measure 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.</p> <p>The September 2022 report card provided case study narrative to provide examples of the impact of partnership working with local communities from pilot projects.</p> <p>The February 2023 report card provided visual representations of high-level findings of the second year of the Neighbourhood Policing Team Self-Assessment survey against the Year 1 baseline. However, no further data or baseline information was included to illustrate performance and the extent to which this measure has been achieved.</p>
Board Analysis	<p>The September 2022 Partnership Committee noted the following:</p> <p><i>'The Performance Director.....provided members with an analysis of the PSNI measure report cards against.....the measures of 3.1.2 and 3.1.3 specific to neighbourhood policing and the impact of the partnership.</i></p> <p><i>The Director of Performance provided an overview of the information contained in the report card, indicating that officials are seeking direction in respect of future actions.'</i></p> <p>The February 2023 Partnership Committee noted the following:</p> <p><i>'A Board Official provided an analysis of the PSNI measure report cards against.....the measures of 3.1.2 and 3.1.3 specific to neighbourhood policing and the impact of the partnership working.</i></p> <p><i>Members were advised of the details of.....key issues identified by Board officials [including] reporting against future report cards and any plans to assess and evaluate the impact of their partnership working with local communities.'</i></p> <p>This demonstrates the Board is influencing the development of improved continuous improvement analysis of performance against data and baseline.</p>

Indicator 3.1: Police, in partnership with local communities, including PCSP's, identify and deliver local solutions to local problems	
Document	Findings
PSNI Update	<p>The PSNI provided members with contextual information to support the information contained in the report cards and outlined reasons for movements.</p> <p>The PSNI also advised members of issues, concerns and challenges which will influence decision making and performance.</p>
<p>NIAO View: Overall, based on what has been presented and considered by the Board's Partnership Committee, I conclude data and baseline information for indicator 3.1 requires further development to facilitate robust performance analysis. As outlined at Part 3 of this report, I have recommended that up to date and relevant data and baseline information is required for all indicators and measures.</p> <p>While the robustness of performance analysis can be improved, I am content the RAG Status of 'partially achieved' is appropriate for measures 3.1.2 and 3.1.3 for the following reasons:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3.1.2 – there has been mixed performance against crime and anti-social behaviour rates against baseline for the eight neighbourhoods included in the pilot for this measure. However, further development of data and baseline information will allow more robust performance analysis to be performed. • 3.1.3 – high-level findings from the second year of the Neighbourhood Policing Team survey were assessed against the year 1 baseline. However, further development of data and baseline information using the results of the 2023 Policing Plan Survey and the Community Survey will allow more robust performance analysis to be performed. <p>I am content the RAG Status of 'achieved' for measure 3.1.1 is appropriate as the remaining Local Policing Review actions were closed during 2022-23 and no further data or baseline information is required for this performance analysis. For subsequent years, I will consider the robustness of performance analysis completed on the hallmarks of neighbourhood policing introduced to the Annual Performance Plan 2023-24.</p>	

Source: NIAO Summary of review of four key documents – Performance Timetable, OBA Report Card, Board Analysis and PSNI update to the Board.

- 4.13** My review of the key documents identified the same theme across both indicators and measures selected - the introduction of clear baselines makes judging performance easier. Further improvements can be made going forward as the dataset for comparison becomes more developed.
- 4.14** I am pleased to note the Policing Plan Survey 2022 was published in May 2022. The survey is referenced throughout the Board's Policing Plan and Performance Plan Annual Assessment 2022-23, providing narrative information and statistics for the impacts update and RAG status assessment for a number of measures.
- 4.15** Further information and data available from the Policing Plan Survey 2023 published in June 2023 should make baselines more reliable, and show patterns and trends in information.
- 4.16** The development and introduction of current data and baselines are starting to compliment the rationale stated in the Board's Annual Report and Accounts 2020-21 in adopting the OBA methodology. The Board values *'evidence-based monitoring, analysis and evaluation'* and that the OBA approach *'enables the Plans to focus on outcomes which clearly demonstrate continuous improvement in police performance and a positive impact within the community.'*
- 4.17** The three performance measures synonymous with OBA "How much did we do? How well did we do it? Is anyone better off?" can only be facilitated with up-to-date data and relevant baselines with success defined as *'doing better than the baseline'* and *'turning the curve'*. I acknowledge that the Board has made some progress through its implementation of the new OBA approach with the Policing Plan Review Working Group having developed clear baselines and impacts.

Conclusion

- 4.18** Using the OBA framework and methodology, the Board has established arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which it functions, and those of the Chief Constable, are exercised.
- 4.19** However, there remain gaps in the data and baseline information for indicator 3.1. It is important for the conclusion of the current Policing Plan, and the development of a new Policing Plan, that data and baseline information is developed and continuously updated for all performance indicators and performance measures.

Appendices

Appendix 1: The Comptroller and Auditor General's certificate and opinion to the Northern Ireland Assembly on the Northern Ireland Policing Board's Performance Summary and Performance Plan

In accordance with section 29 of the Police (Northern Ireland) Act 2000 as amended, I certify that I have audited the Northern Ireland Policing Board's:

- Performance Summary for the year ended 31 March 2023; and
- Annual Performance Plan for the year ended 31 March 2024.

Basis of my opinion

Audit of the Performance Summary

I planned and performed my work to obtain all the information and explanations that I considered necessary in order to provide an opinion on whether the Northern Ireland Policing Board has prepared and published a Performance Summary of the Board's assessment of:

- its and the Chief Constable's performance in 2022-23, measured by reference to performance actions and performance indicators; and
- the extent to which performance measures in 2022-23 were met.

My work comprised a review and assessment and, where appropriate, examination on a test basis of the evidence supporting performance against the actions, indicators and measures as prescribed in the Board's Business Plan 2022-23 and Annual Performance Plan 2022-23. I obtained sufficient evidence to satisfy myself that the Performance Summary provided includes those matters prescribed in legislation, and that the arrangements for publishing the Performance Summary complied with those requirements.

Audit of the Performance Plan

I planned and performed my work to obtain all the information and explanations that I considered necessary in order to provide an opinion on whether:

- the Annual Performance Plan 2023-24 has been prepared and published in accordance with statutory requirements; and
- the performance indicators and performance measures in the Annual Performance Plan 2023-24 are reasonable.

My work comprised a review and assessment of the Annual Performance Plan 2023-24 and, where appropriate, examination on a test basis of relevant evidence sufficient to satisfy me that arrangements to secure continuous improvements are in place, that the plan includes those matters prescribed in legislation, and that the arrangements for publishing the plan complied with those requirements.

Opinion

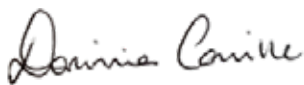
In my opinion:

- the Northern Ireland Policing Board has prepared and published its Performance Summary for the year ended 31 March 2023 in accordance with the requirements of section 28 of the Police (Northern Ireland) Act 2000;
- the Northern Ireland Policing Board has prepared and published its Annual Performance Plan for the year ended 31 March 2024 in accordance with the requirements of section 28 of the Police (Northern Ireland) Act 2000; and
- the performance indicators and performance measures included within the Annual Performance Plan 2023-24 are reasonable.

Recommendation to the Department of Justice

Under section 29 of the Police (Northern Ireland) Act 2000, I am required to make a recommendation as to whether the Department of Justice should issue a direction to the Policing Board under section 31 (2) of the Police (Northern Ireland) Act 2000.

On the basis of my work, I do not recommend that the Department of Justice issues a direction under section 31 (2) of the Police (Northern Ireland) Act 2000.



Dorinnia Carville
Comptroller and Auditor General
Northern Ireland Audit Office
106 University Street
Belfast
BT7 1EU

7 June 2024

Appendix 2: Progress on recommendations in the Comptroller and Auditor General's report

NIAO Continuous improvement arrangements in policing (August 2023)

NIAO Recommendations	Board and PSNI Response September 2023	Progress to Feb 2024
<p>The Performance Plan requires the inclusion of up to date and relevant data and baseline information for all indicators and measures. Whilst baselines and measures have been set and reported on in the 2021-22 year, these datasets should be further developed and become more robust as further information becomes available. This would include updating the indicators and measures to absorb any information gleaned from the Policing Plan Survey. This is essential in order to monitor performance and for the evaluation of success against the measures, indicators and outcomes stated in the Annual Performance Plan.</p>	<p>Accepted - During 2022-23 the Board and the PSNI again focused on providing the relevant data and baseline information for all indicators and measures. The Policing Plan Review Working Group focused their attention on this task and further updated the baselines and impacts for each Measure of the Policing Plan for PSNI to report against to enable more robust performance measurement. In addition, a second major Policing Plan survey was delivered and published in June 2023 which will enable further comparisons to be made with the previous year's survey that acted as a baseline. The Policing Plan Review Working Group has also updated the indicators and baselines to include information gleaned from the first survey on a number of measures within the new 2023-24 Annual Performance Plan. The Policing Plan Review Working Group will be formed again in the autumn of 2023 and will take forward further actions to implement this recommendation in full.</p> <p>PSNI Response to the Recommendation:</p> <p>Accepted</p>	<p>The Policing Plan Review Working Group, consisting of Board members and senior PSNI Representatives, met between September 2023 and February 2024 to review the current Policing Plan and Annual Performance Plan. The Group took into consideration the recommendation made by the NIAO in relation to baseline information and indicators. The Group reviewed the three Outcomes and all 16 Measures. Overall, The Group agreed that as this year was the final year of the current Policing Plan it did not believe there was a need for major changes to the final year. The Group also agreed that due to the ongoing budget situation and as its final year of plan that no further major changes should be introduced and instead there should be a focus on sustaining the current levels of performance. The Working Group did not recommend that any new Measures are added to the Performance Plan for the final year. However, it recommended that some existing Measures are amended to bring them up to date after considering contextual changes. After a detailed review, the Working Group also recommended to the Board a number of changes to the indicators and impacts in order to make them more meaningful and accurate and to improve the reporting on the Plan.</p>



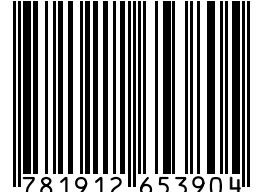
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