

**PRISON REVIEW OVERSIGHT GROUP
JUSTICE COMMITTEE SUMMARY REPORT
DECEMBER 2015**

The purpose of this summary report is to provide the Committee with an update following the fifteenth meeting of the Prison Review Oversight Group (the Group), which took place on 25 November 2015.

2. The meeting was chaired by the Minister of Justice and was attended by Group members:

- Nick Perry (Permanent Secretary, DOJ);
- Patricia Gordon (Independent Member);
- Brendan McGuigan (Independent Member, CJINI); and
- Monica McWilliams (Independent Member)

3. Department of Justice officials Anthony Harbinson (Director, DOJ Safer Communities), Sue McAllister (Director, Reducing Offending Directorate) and Mark Adam (Strategic Change Manager) attended to give supporting evidence to the group. Deborah McNeilly (Deputy Secretary, DHSSPS), Hugh Hamill (Assistant Director, PBNI) and Eileen McEaney (Deputy Director of Adult Services, SET) were also in attendance. David Stewart and Liz Colgan attended to provide evidence from the Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority (RQIA), as did Criminal Justice Inspection Northern Ireland (CJINI) inspector Dr Ian Cameron. Apologies were received from Richard Pengelly (Permanent Secretary, DHSSPS).

Maghaberry Report

4. Although not directly linked to the work of the Reform Programme, the Minister invited Brendan McGuigan to provide a brief overview of the recent report on Maghaberry. Brendan reported that, while there was clear and obvious strategic intent within NIPS to reform the Service, the Maghaberry Report highlighted serious front line issues, particularly around safety and

dynamic security. While the Maghaberry Report was not indicative of the wider Prison Service, there had been cultural resistance at Maghaberry. Cultural change would be a progressive process that would improve over time, but Brendan had no doubt that prisoners and staff in Maghaberry would be safer following the CJINI Report. Brendan recorded his confidence in Phil Wragg's approach.

5. The Oversight Group echoed the reassurance from Phil Wragg's appointment, but cautioned that it was important that he was supported and that there was a long-term plan in place. The Group also noted that the urgency in getting Maghaberry into a better position should not be detrimental to other aspects of the Service.

Outstanding recommendations

6. The Oversight Group considered progress on the four key outstanding recommendations:

- Recommendation 03 (Effective Community Sentences) – the Oversight Group noted that an Enhanced Combination Order pilot began in October 2015, with evaluation of the pilots due by spring 2017.
- Recommendation 13 (Joint Health and Justice Strategy) – the Oversight Group considered an update on work to progress the Joint Strategy, noting that DHSSPS and NIPS were currently working toward having the Strategy considered by the relevant Committees by February 2016.
- Recommendation 17 (Joint Working Arrangements) – the Oversight Group noted that there was evidence that joint working between NIPS and Healthcare had improved, but that there were remaining issues outstanding. The Group noted that the two organisations were due to hold a facilitated workshop in December 2015
- Recommendation 26 (Leadership and Development) – the Oversight Group noted the measures being progressed within NIPS, including the T50 development programme which aims to identify, develop and progress talent within NIPS to improve performance, resilience,

innovation and diversity within the leadership team. Additionally, the Group considered work NIPS was undertaking with QUB on leadership and work that it was exploring with Ulster University on cultural change.

7. The Oversight Group accepted that delivery of the above recommendations would fall outside the lifespan of the Reform Programme, but noted that progress was still being made on these recommendations and that this would continue as the Programme entered its second phase.

CJINI report on recommendations

8. CJINI reported in detail on recommendations one (Supervised Activity Orders) and two (Statutory Time Limits). On recommendation one, CJINI noted that pilots had taken place and welcomed the fact that comprehensive legislation had been drafted. While CJINI could not endorse this recommendation for sign-off until the legislation had been passed, the Oversight Group agreed, on back of the June 2014 agreement on the categorisation of recommendations, that this recommendation could be signed-off, caveated under 'external consideration', i.e. the direction of travel has been set, but the supporting legislation will not be in place by the time the Programme comes to an end.

9. On recommendation two, CJINI acknowledged the Departmental focus on reducing delay in the justice system and plans to introduce administrative time limits; however, in the absence of the introduction of statutory time limits (STLs), CJINI could not endorse the recommendation for sign-off. Following an in-depth conversation, the Oversight Group recognised that, whilst the recommendation had not been implemented as written, considerable progress had been made, including the drafting of legislation to introduce STLs and the introduction of a range of measures to speed up the process. Although CJINI was unable to endorse the recommendation, the Oversight Group agreed that, with the progress that had been made and with the commitment to legislation, and in recognition of the fact that the landscape had changed since it was written, the recommendation could be signed-off, categorised like recommendation one under 'external consideration'. The Group was clear,

however, that focus on this recommendation should not be lost as the Reform Programme moved on to its next stage; recommendation two was a key element of the PRT Report and the good intentions of the Department needed to be fulfilled.

Next stage of Reform: Owers and beyond

10. With the Oversight structures soon due to come to an end, as the official Reform Programme finishes, the Oversight Group agreed that the PRT Report had been a catalyst for reform, but that completing the process of transformational change could take ten years and beyond. The Group agreed that focus for the coming years should be on delivering against the key strategic themes emerging from the Programme, as detailed below:

- Leadership;
- Purposeful activity;
- Partnership with Healthcare; and
- The prison estate.

11. This work will be driven by the Prison Service Management Board, in conjunction with Health colleagues, with the Oversight Group agreeing to meet again in February 2016 to discuss in detail the mechanics of the handover of responsibility, along with the initial findings from the follow-up inspection of Maghaberry.

12. The Oversight Group noted that, in light of the Maghaberry report and subsequent follow-up inspection, Dame Anne Owers did not feel it would be appropriate to go ahead with her proposed visit in December. The invitation to Dame Anne and her team remains open.

Independent members' update

13. The independent members of the Oversight Group continued to engage with stakeholders across the programme, attending a number of meetings with the Change Manager during the last period. In the coming

period, the independent members plan to visit Maghaberry and Hydebank Wood College.

Next meeting

14. The Oversight Group agreed to hold a strategic meeting in February 2016, to focus on the key emerging themes from the Reform Programme and the handover of oversight of ongoing reform to the Prison Service Management Board. At this meeting, the Group will also consider the initial findings from the follow-up inspection of Maghaberry.

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