



Ms Christine Darrah,  
Clerk to the Committee for Justice,  
Room 242,  
Parliament Buildings,  
Ballymiscaw,  
Stormont, BELFAST.  
BT4 3XX

27 January 2022

Dear Christine,

### **Draft Budget 2022-25**

Thank you for your letter of 17 January 2022 and for the opportunity to provide an update on the implications of the draft budget 2022-25 for Criminal Justice Inspection Northern (CJI).

The CJI annual budget is £1.127m for 2021-22, which will be reduced by £23,000 (2%) for 2022-23. When this reduction is combined with inflationary costs, which are likely to be at least 3% per annum, and inescapable salary related increases, the cumulative budget pressures are likely to exceed 5% in 2022-23 and more than 10% by 2025. Inescapable financial support, audit and IT costs represent 8% of the overall budget and will increase as a proportion in the coming years.

As a result of the draft budget, CJI has very reluctantly taken the decision to cut a full time Inspector position – this follows the recent retirement of an Inspector. This will impact on the Inspection Programme and reduce inspection capacity by about 15% which means a loss of at least two inspections and follow-up reviews each year and delays to other inspection activity such as research, fieldwork and writing of reports.

By 2023-24, additional savings will be necessary from the already small ‘consultancy’ budget, which is primarily used to bring in expertise from partner Inspectorates on policing, prosecution, probation and prisons. It will be necessary to reduce the use of this expertise from 2023-24 with resulting implications for how prison inspections in particular will be conducted and our contribution to inspecting places of detention as a member of the National Preventive Mechanism. There will also be implications for benchmarking the performance of criminal justice bodies and services.



There will also be less scope and capacity to undertake Ministerial reviews, which have in recent years included Care and Supervision Units in the prisons and legacy disclosure arrangements between the Police Service of Northern Ireland and the Office of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland. CJI has conducted these reviews from within current budget. This is not sustainable and any new financial arrangements for future reviews could be perceived as undermining the independence of CJI.

As one of the smallest Non-Departmental Public Bodies with little discretionary spending, CJI will be disproportionately impacted by this budget settlement with immediate cuts to front line service delivery. This will also impact on CJI's ability to contribute to COVID-19 recovery, including achieving better health outcomes and reducing vulnerability. Working in partnership with inspectorates and regulators such as the Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority has been critical to seeking improvements for those held in detention as well as addressing wider problems around mental health. Proposed cross-departmental inspections in areas such as child protection and vulnerable older persons will be placed at risk due to this proposed budget settlement.

In conclusion, I believe these budget reductions will have a significant impact on CJI's ability to provide sufficient inspection coverage across the organisations in our statutory remit and independent assurance to the public and all stakeholders, including the Committee and the Minister of Justice. Some risks will be not identified at an early stage and there will be missed opportunities to take action to deliver a better criminal justice system for all.

I hope this further information is helpful to the Committee and please do not hesitate to contact me if anything further is required.

Yours sincerely,

**Jacqui Durkin Chief Inspector of Criminal Justice in Northern Ireland**