

Continuous Improvement Arrangements in Policing

Performance Summary 2024-25
Annual Performance Plan 2025-26

**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 *Northern Ireland Audit Office*
Comptroller and Auditor General 30 April 2026

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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 (the Act).
2. Section 28 of the Act 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 a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness. The Board is required to prepare and publish an Annual Performance Plan for each financial year including performance indicators, as well as an assessment of performance ('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 for Northern Ireland, I am required under Section 29 of the Act to audit the Performance Summary and Annual Performance Plan, and to send a report to the Board, the Chief Constable of the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI), and the Department of Justice (the Department).

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

4. In accordance with Section 29 of the Act as amended, I certify that I have audited the Board's:
 - **Performance Summary** for the year ended 31 March 2025; and
 - **Annual Performance Plan** for the year ended 31 March 2026.

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 opinions on whether the Board has prepared and published in accordance with the requirements of section 28 of the Act:
 - **Performance Summary** of the Board's assessment of its and the Chief Constable's performance in 2024-25; and
 - an **Annual Performance Plan** for 2025-26 outlining arrangements in place to secure continuous improvement in the functions of the Board and the Chief Constable.
6. My work included examination, on a test basis, of the evidence supporting performance actions, indicators and standards (measures) set out in the above documents. Refer to **Part Two** of this report for further detail.

Main findings of my review

7. I have given an unqualified audit opinion on the Performance Summary for the year ended 31 March 2025 and the Annual Performance Plan for the year ended 31 March 2026 (**Appendix 2**). I have raised two recommendations for the attention of the Board and the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI).

On Performance Summary 2024-25

8. Performance actions, indicators and measures are published for both the Board and the PSNI in the Board's Corporate and Business Plan and the Annual Performance Plan respectively.
9. The Board had the same three overarching outcomes aligning both its Corporate Plan 2023-2025 - Business Plan 2024-2025 (Business Plan 2024-25), and its Policing Plan 2020-2025 and Annual Performance Plan 2024-25 (Annual Performance Plan 2024-25). These were:
- (i) We have a safe community;
 - (ii) We have confidence in policing; and
 - (iii) We have engaged and supportive communities.
10. The Board's Business Plan 2024-25 included 23 actions underpinning four corporate objectives based on the three overarching outcomes noted above.
11. The Annual Performance Plan 2024-25 for the PSNI sets out nine indicators with 16 performance measures (referred to as 'standards' in the Act) to quantify the progress towards achieving the three overarching outcomes.
12. The Board reported in the Annual Report and Accounts 2024-25 its performance summary against both its Business Plan and Annual Performance Plan. Of the 23 actions outlined in the Business Plan 2024-25, 21 were assessed as being 'achieved'. The two actions that were reported as being partially achieved at 31 March 2025 were:
- Objective A, Action (v): 'To advocate to secure sufficient funding for policing in Northern Ireland'; and
 - Objective D, Action (i): 'Work with DoJ colleagues to ensure Joint Guidance for Medical Practitioners is placed on statutory footing and scope out the most efficient means of revising the guidance'.
- The Board explained that additional resources or time would be required for these actions to be achieved.
13. The Board's Policing Plan 2020-25 Annual Assessment 2024-25 (Annual Assessment 2024-25) provides the Board's assessment of the PSNI's performance and delivery of the Annual Performance Plan 2024-25, and concludes on the status of each measure at year-end as having been achieved or otherwise. This assessment is also included in the Board's Annual Report and Accounts 2024-25.

14. For each measure within the Annual Performance Plan 2024-25, the Annual Assessment 2024-25 includes performance information and an assessment of 'RAC' status as being 'Achieved', 'Partially Achieved', or 'Not Achieved'.
15. The Board has reported that, in its opinion, of the total 16 measures in the year to 31 March 2025 - 5 measures (31 per cent) were assessed as 'Achieved' and 11 measures (69 per cent) as 'Partially Achieved'.

On the Annual Performance Plan 2025-26

16. The Board's Northern Ireland Policing Plan 2025-2030 and Annual Performance Plan 2025-26 supports the first year of the Northern Ireland Policing Plan 2025-2030 which was agreed following consultation. This aligns with departmental priorities and the wider Programme for Government and a new Corporate Plan 2025-30. It outlines three overarching Outcomes that the Board want policing to deliver for the people of Northern Ireland:
 - (i) PSNI is victim focused;
 - (ii) We have safe and engaged communities with confidence in policing; and
 - (iii) PSNI has a representative valued and enabled workforce.
17. It sets out a new suite of 16 indicators and descriptors to help quantify the progress towards the three outcomes. Each indicator includes: baselines; quantitative and qualitative measures; and impacts.
18. The Policing Plan Development Group (PPDG) met nine times between August 2024 and March 2025 with the primary aim of developing a new Policing Plan for the period 2025 to 2030. The PPDG comprises Board members and PSNI representatives. Going forward, the Policing Plan Working Group (PPWG) will review the Annual Assessment and propose any updates to the Annual Performance Plan.

On the Continuous Improvement arrangements

19. To satisfy the requirements of Section 28 (Part V) of the Act, the Board has stated that both the Policing Plan and the subsequent Annual Performance Plans have been developed using an Outcome Based Accountability (OBA) framework. For further information see, Outcomes Based Accountability and the Programme for Government.
20. The OBA approach focuses on starting with desired outcomes and working backward by asking three key questions: 'How much did we do?'; 'How well did we do it?'; and 'Is anyone better off?'. For this approach to be effective it relies on high-quality, relevant datasets and accurate baseline information.
21. My assessment of continuous improvement arrangements is set out in **Part Three** and **Appendix 1** of this report.

22. I made three recommendation in last years' Continuous Improvement arrangements in policing report (May 2025) and these are outlined in **Appendix 3** together with an update on how they are progressing. Due to timing differences and the introduction of the new Policing Plan, previous recommendations have not yet been implemented in full. It is important that these are in place for the Annual Performance Plan 2026-27 and also the Annual Assessment 2025-26.
23. I have made two further recommendations in **Part Two** and **Part Three** of this report, which are included below:



Recommendation 1

In assessing the status of an indicator, the Board agreed to adopt a four tier RAG framework in response to a previous recommendation. To further support this development, a structured framework should be established to set out the specific criteria, thresholds or milestones that determines each RAG level. This would ensure consistent and transparent judgments about progress through the four-tier model.

The framework should also enable measurable comparison with previous reporting periods and across the full duration of the Policing Plan.



Recommendation 2

Baselines, indicators, and measures (standards) should be reviewed and realigned to ensure internal consistency and accurate representation[A1.1][A1.2]. The Performance Plan requires the inclusion of up to date and relevant evidence-based baseline information for all outcomes, indicators, and measures. This is necessary to establish targets, enable effective monitoring of performance, assess progress and evaluate success, and report on these in the Annual Performance Plan. Baselines should be set out clearly at the start of the Policing Plan period to ensure monitoring and reporting performance against the baseline over the lifetime of the plan as well as yearly performance.

Update on the legislation underpinning continuous improvement arrangements

24. In September 2024 an Executive Justice Bill ('the Bill') was brought forward to the Assembly by the Justice Minister. Section 23 of the Bill pertains to the removal of section 29 of the Act, which covers the requirement of the Comptroller and Auditor General to audit performance plans.
25. At the time of reporting in April 2026 the Bill has progressed to the Committee Stage. It is currently expected that the Bill may attain Royal Assent post-Summer 2026, although this is subject to a number of factors.

Part One:

Background

Background

Responsibilities of the Northern Ireland Policing Board

- 1.1** Under section 28 of the Act, 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 PSNI, are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness.
- 1.2** The Board must prepare and publish an Annual Performance Plan for each financial year, containing details of how the 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 Act, I must issue a report (**Appendix 2**):
- 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 Act;
 - stating whether I believe the performance indicators and standards (i.e. 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 Act; and
 - recommending whether the Department should give a direction to the Board, under section 31 (2) of the Act. Such a direction would require the Board to take appropriate corrective action to ensure compliance with the Act.

Recommendations from prior year

- 1.6 I published my previous report in May 2025 summarising my audit of the Performance Summary 2023-24 and the Annual Performance Plan 2024-25. My report at that time contained three recommendations which are presented at **Appendix 3**, along with an update from the Board on the progress made. Although some progress has been made since the previous report, timing differences and the introduction of the new policing plan have hindered their full implementation. It is important that these are in place for the Annual Performance Plan 2026-27 and the Annual Assessment 2025-26.

Scope of the review

- 1.7 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: Performance Summary 2024-25 and the Annual Performance Plan 2025-26**

Assessing whether:

- the performance summaries in the Board's Annual Report and Accounts 2024-25 and the Board's Policing Plan and Performance Plan Annual Assessment 2024-25 meet the Board's statutory obligations; and
- the Annual Performance Plan 2025-26 is reasonable.

- **Part Three: Operation of the Continuous Improvement Programme**

Reviewing the arrangements made by the Board to secure continuous improvement and examining how such arrangements are being implemented.

Part Two:

**Performance
Summary
2024-25 and
the Annual
Performance Plan
2025-26**

Performance Summary 2023-24 and the Annual Performance Plan 2024-25

- 2.1** This part of the report evaluates whether the Board has fulfilled its statutory obligations under section 28 of the Act regarding the Performance Summary and Annual Performance Plan. It also considers whether the performance indicators and standards (measures) in the Annual Performance Plan appear reasonable.
- 2.2** The Board was required to prepare and publish:
- a Performance Summary of the Board's assessment of its and the Chief Constable's performance in 2024-25 measured by reference to performance indicators, and the extent to which performance standards (measures) applied during 2024-25 were met; and
 - a Performance Plan for 2025-26 which details how: continuous improvement arrangements are to be implemented; identifies performance indicators by reference to which performance in exercising functions can be measured; and sets performance standards (measures) to be met in the exercise of particular functions in relation to performance indicators.












Board's assessment of Board performance in 2024-25











- 2.3** The Board's Corporate Plan 2023-25 set out the Board's purpose, vision and values and outlines the key challenges envisaged during the period. The Board 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** For each of the four objectives, a number of associated actions were identified (23 in total) which were used by the Board to gauge its progress in achieving the overall objectives.
- 2.5** The Board's performance for 2024-25 is summarised in its Annual Report and Accounts 2024-25. Section 2, Performance Analysis, provides an assessment of how the Board delivered against the key objectives and associated actions outlined in the 2024-25 Business Plan.
- 2.6** Of the 23 actions identified, 21 are reported as 'Achieved' (over 90 per cent) and the remaining two reported as 'Partially Achieved'.
- 2.7** The two actions that were reported as partially achieved at 31 March 2025 were:
- Objective A, Action (v) - To advocate to secure sufficient funding for policing in Northern Ireland;
 - Objective D, Action (i) - Work with DoJ colleagues to ensure Joint Guidance for Medical Practitioners is placed on statutory footing and scope out the most efficient means of revising the guidance.
- The Board explained that in order for these actions to be achieved, additional resources or time would be required.
- 2.8** The performance section of the Board's 2024-25 Annual Report and Accounts reflects the detailed information in the Business Plan and aligns with it, supporting the broader outcomes set out in the Corporate Plan.








The Board's assessment of the PSNI's performance against the Annual Performance Plan 2024-25

- 2.9** The Policing Plan 2020-25 set out three overarching outcomes that the Board set for policing to deliver over the five-year period. The Annual Performance Plan 2024-25 included nine indicators and 16 measures which were used to assess progress in the delivery of the final year of the Policing Plan.
- 2.10** The Performance Summary section of the PSNI Annual Report and Accounts 2024-25 includes PSNI's reporting on their performance against the Annual Performance Plan 2024-25. The Board's assessment of performance should be read in conjunction with that of the PSNI's assessment for a full understanding.
- 2.11** In the course of my review, I identified some reporting differences between the Board and PSNI. The PSNI had assessed four indicators as 'achieved' which the Policing Board had assessed as 'partially achieved'. Such disparities may arise due to timing differences in reporting timeframes and the underlying data used by the Board and PSNI, as well as variances in the interpretation of the data by the two organisations. Recommendation 3 from our prior year report in May 2025, outlined in **Appendix 3**, addressed the use of consistent data for reporting and would go some way towards aligning the assessments made. It is important that this recommendation is fully implemented and applied when assessing performance in 2025-26 and reflected in the Annual Performance Plan for 2026-27.
- 2.12** The Board published its assessment of the PSNI's performance against the Performance Plan 2024-25 in its Annual Assessment 2024-25. 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:
- the Board's assessment; and
 - an assessment of the 'RAG' status as being '**Achieved**', '**Partially Achieved**' or '**Not Achieved**', identifying the position in respect of data development, baselines and surveys.
- 2.13** At 31 March 2025 the Board has reported in the Annual Assessment 2024-25 that of the total 16 measures, in its opinion, five measures (almost a third) were achieved and 11 measures were partially achieved. **Figure 1** below summarises PSNI's performance against each of the 16 measures and highlights any changes compared with the previous year.

Figure 1: RAG status summary table

Performance Plan Measure		RAG Status		
		2023-24	2024-25	Change
KEY: No movement  Deteriorated  Improved  Not applicable 				
Outcome 1: We have a safe community				
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 2024/25.	Partially Achieved	Achieved	
1.2.1	Repeat offending rate and report on initiatives to reduce repeat offenders with a focus on Domestic Abuse.	Not Achieved	Achieved	
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.	Partially Achieved	Partially Achieved	
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.	Partially Achieved	Achieved	
1.3.2	Rate of places repeatedly victimised.	Partially Achieved	Partially Achieved	
1.4.1	Benchmark PSNI crime rates against previous rates and other similar police services.	Achieved	Achieved	
1.4.2	Demonstrate progress against the Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy and Action Plan.	Partially Achieved	Achieved	

Performance Plan Measure		RAG Status		
KEY: No movement  Deteriorated  Improved  Not applicable 		2023-24	2024-25	Change
Outcome 2: We have confidence in policing				
2.1.1	Number of people in Northern Ireland who are confident that PSNI is accessible, visible, responsive and victim focused.	Not Achieved	Partially Achieved	
2.1.2	Report on the levels (numbers and outcomes) of conduct cases within the police service.	Partially Achieved	Partially Achieved	
2.1.3	Report on the levels of 999 (emergency) and 101 (priority) call response.	Partially Achieved	Partially Achieved	
2.2.1	Number of victims and service users who are satisfied with the service they have received.	Not Achieved	Partially Achieved	
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.	Partially Achieved	Partially Achieved	
2.4.1	Levels of crime outcomes, with a particular focus on Domestic Abuse, to identify areas of concern.	Partially Achieved	Partially Achieved	

Performance Plan Measure		RAG Status		
KEY: No movement  Deteriorated  Improved  Not applicable 		2023-24	2024-25	Change
Outcome 3: We have engaged and supportive communities				
3.1.1	Demonstrate progress against the "Here for You" Public Engagement Strategy and the associated Hallmarks of Neighbourhood Policing.	Partially Achieved	Partially 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.	Not Achieved	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	Partially Achieved	

Source: NIAO summary of reporting from the Board's Annual Assessment 2024-25

Audit testing

- 2.14** Of the four new measures in the prior year, I have selected the one which was not tested in our report in the prior year (3.1.1) for testing. Additionally, I have selected two other measures which improved during the year namely 1.2.1 and 2.1.1, in order to track their progress. This involved obtaining and reviewing the Outcomes Based Accountability (OBA) report cards that were developed for each measure, along with the committee meeting minutes in which the report cards were discussed during the year. Individual measures are discussed at least once, if not multiple times at committee meetings during the year so I obtained all relevant minutes and report cards for the year. A summary of testing, along with my conclusion on the reasonableness of the measures and their recorded outcomes during the year, is presented in **Appendix 1**.
- 2.15** I am encouraged that all of the measures are at least partially achieved within the Annual Assessment 2024-25. However, comparing the RAG status of measures from 2023-24 to 2024-25, in Figure 1 above, shows that eight measures have seen no change in RAG status. In addition, at present there is an element of ambiguity, for example, the status for 1.1.1 has moved from partially achieved to achieved however the average repeat offending rate and the average percentage of crime reports attributed to repeat offenders has increased slightly from the previous year.
- 2.16** Whilst it is noted that the 2025-30 Policing Plan does include baselines, qualitative measures and quantitative measures and outcomes, it is important to clearly define the key contributing factors which will be utilised to monitor progress. Under Outcome Three – “Police, in partnership with local communities, including Policing and Community Safety Partnerships (PCSPs), identify and deliver local solutions to local problems” – the indicators lack sufficient quantitative data to support an informed assessment of RAG status. While qualitative insights and case studies provide valuable context and depth regarding experiences and outcomes, they do not offer measurable comparisons with previous periods, making it difficult to determine the extent of progress achieved.
- 2.17** These findings highlight the need for further Board scrutiny on actions both already taken and planned for the future to ensure they see continuous improvement across all measures. Last year’s Recommendations 1 and 2 highlighted how this could be improved, and it is important they are fully implemented in terms of the Annual Assessment in 2025-26 and reflected in Performance Plan for 2026-27.
- 2.18** To further enhance monitoring and reporting on performance I have one further recommendation.



Recommendation 1

In assessing the status of an indicator, the Board agreed to adopt a four tier RAG framework in response to a previous recommendation. To further support this development, a structured framework should be established to set out the specific criteria, thresholds or milestones that determines each RAG level. This would ensure consistent and transparent judgments about progress through the four-tier model.

The framework should also enable measurable comparison with previous reporting periods and across the full duration of the Policing Plan.

Board's Annual Performance Plan 2025-26 and reasonableness review of measures

2.19 The Board's Northern Ireland Policing Plan 2025-2030 and Annual Performance Plan 2025-26 supports the first year of the Northern Ireland Policing Plan 2025-2030 which was agreed following consultation. This aligns with departmental priorities and the wider Programme for Government and a new Corporate Plan 2025-30. It outlines three overarching Outcomes that the Board want policing to deliver for the people of Northern Ireland:

- PSNI is victim focused;
- We have safe and engaged communities with confidence in policing; and
- PSNI has a representative valued and enabled workforce.

2.20 The Annual Performance Plan 2025-26 sets out a new suite of 16 indicators and descriptors to help quantify the progress towards the three outcomes. Each indicator includes descriptions for baselines; quantitative and qualitative measures; and impacts.

2.21 The Board created the Policing Plan Development Group (PPDG) in August 2024 as the current Policing Plan neared the end of its cycle. Comprised of Board members and PSNI representatives, the PPDG is convened whenever a new long-term Policing Plan is required. Over several months, the group met to design the Policing Plan for 2025–2030. Going forward, the Policing Plan Working Group (PPWG) will review the Annual Assessment and propose any updates to the Annual Performance Plan.

2.22 **Figure 2** sets out the three overarching outcomes and the 16 indicators in the Annual Performance Plan.

Figure 2: Annual Performance Plan 2025-26

Outcome 1: PSNI is victim focused	1.1	The Effectiveness in Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls.
	1.2	The Effectiveness in Tackling Domestic Abuse.
	1.3	The Effectiveness in Tackling Child Criminal Exploitation.
	1.4	The Effectiveness in Tackling Hate Crime.
	1.5	Providing a High Quality Service to Victims.
	1.6	Delivery of Effective Outcomes for Recorded Crimes.

Outcome 2: We have safe and engaged communities with confidence in policing	2.1 Level of Public Confidence in Policing.
	2.2 The Effectiveness of Working in Partnership with local communities and community organisations, PCSPs and Statutory Agencies to Provide Solutions to Local Problems.
	2.3 People Feel Safe in their Community.
	2.4 The Effectiveness in Tackling the Threat posed by Terrorism, Paramilitaries and Serious and Organised Crime Groups.
	2.5 The Effectiveness in Tackling Repeat Offending.
	2.6 The Effectiveness of Working in Partnership to Reduce Road Deaths and Serious Injury on our Roads.
	2.7 Working in Partnership to effectively Tackle Cyber Crime.
Outcome 3: PSNI has a representative, valued and enabled workforce	3.1 Representativeness of the Police Service.
	3.2 Standards of Professionalism and Conduct.
	3.3 Making Best Use of Resources.

2.23 In my previous reports I have recommended the Policing Plan should assess measures, where possible, on the extent to which a particular measure has met pre-determined, incremental movements against the baseline. Having reviewed the Annual Performance Plan 2025-26 it is encouraging that baselines, quantitative measures, qualitative measures and impacts have been introduced for all but one of the measures, and this will be developed in due course. This should assist in establishing whether individual measures have been achieved and to evaluate the PSNI's overall annual performance for the year.

2.24 Whilst it is important to highlight this improvement, I found that at times there was a lack of alignment between the defined baseline and the impacts identified within the assessment. This misalignment is also reflected in the relationship between the indicators and the associated measures, for example several indicators monitor repeat offending rates despite the baselines not being designed to capture repeat occurrences.

2.25 Indicator 2.7 currently lacks an established baseline, due in part to the absence of clear and consistent definitions of what constitutes cybercrime and sextortion within the scope of this measure. To ensure accuracy and comparability of data, precise operational definitions for these terms should be developed and formally agreed.

2.26 In the absence of an agreed baseline, it is not possible to assess progress or evaluate performance against Indicator 2.7. It is therefore recommended that a clear, measurable, and evidence-based baseline be developed and endorsed. Establishing this baseline will enable effective monitoring, evaluation, and reporting going forward.

2.27 I have one recommendation surrounding the Annual Performance Plan 2025-26 namely:



Recommendation 2

Baselines, indicators, and measures (standards) should be reviewed and realigned to ensure internal consistency and accurate representation. The Performance Plan requires the inclusion of up to date and relevant evidence-based baseline information for all outcomes, indicators, and measures. This is necessary to establish targets, enable effective monitoring of performance, assess progress and evaluate success, and report on these in the Annual Performance Plan.

Conclusion

2.28 Based on my review, I can conclude that:

- the Board has disclosed its own performance against Corporate and Business Plan actions in its Annual Report and Accounts 2024-25;
- the Board published its assessment of the PSNI's performance against the Performance Plan 2024-25 in the Annual Assessment 2024-25;
- the Annual Performance Plan 2025-26 meets the Board's statutory obligations; and
- the performance indicators and measures in the Annual Performance Plan 2025-26 are reasonable.

Part Three:

Operation of the Continuous Improvement Programme

Operation of the Continuous Improvement Programme

Continuous Improvement

3.1 Section 28 (Part V) of the Police (Northern Ireland) Act 2000 requires the Board each year to “make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the in the way in which its functions and those of the Chief Constable are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, effectiveness and efficiency”. The Board is also required to carry out reviews of the way in which its functions are exercised.

Continuous improvement within the Board

3.2 Continuous improvement within the Board itself is supported through the regular review of policies and procedures and a structured framework of arrangements including:

- **Corporate and Business Planning:** The Board develops a Corporate Plan and Annual Business Plan which sets out its purpose, vision and values and also identifies key objectives, overarching outcomes, and actions in line with the Policing Plan;
- **Northern Ireland Policing Plan 2025-2030 and Annual Performance Plans:** To embed continuous improvement into the design and monitoring of outcomes both the Policing Plan and the subsequent Annual Performance Plans are developed using the Outcomes Based Accountability (OBA) framework;
- **Performance monitoring and reporting:** The Board uses OBA to strategically monitor, review, assess, evaluate and report on its own performance, and that of the PSNI, to improve service delivery;
- **Annual Assessments and reporting:** Annual reviews of performance against the Policing Plan and audited Annual Accounts and Reports are published publicly;
- **Corporate Governance framework:** Key internal control, risk management and corporate governance support arrangements are in place including specific committees and structures to review and improve how the Board supports and monitors performance;
- **Accountability meetings:** The Board holds public meetings to question the Chief Constable on performance, delivery of the Policing Plan, and, if necessary, addressing specific issues that emerge during the year; and
- **Additional reports** can be commissioned either by the Board or by external bodies such as the Ministry of Justice, Criminal Justice Inspection Northern Ireland or His Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS).

3.3 The Board is responsible for overseeing all aspects of policing. In addition to monthly meetings, the Policing Board has five Committees to take forward detailed scrutiny: Performance; Resources; Discipline; Partnership; and Audit and Risk Assurance committees. Self assessments are carried out by each committee. The Board publishes a report annually outlining the work done throughout the 2024-25 year, in line with agreed Terms of Reference.

3.4 The Board has also retained their Investors in People accreditation through June 2028, demonstrating their commitment to continuous improvement of the workplace for their staff members.

Continuous improvement within the PSNI

- 3.5** This is the third Continuous Improvement report on PSNI under the Board's adopted OBA framework methodology.
- 3.6** To satisfy the requirements of Section 28 (Part V) of the Act, the Board, in partnership with PSNI, developed and published both the Policing Plan 2025-30 and the subsequent Annual Performance Plan using the OBA framework. OBA aims to embed continuous improvement into both the design and monitoring of outcomes included by providing a framework for delivery of the policing service over the next five years and the assessment of performance.
- 3.7** The Policing Plan 2025-30 and the subsequent Annual Performance Plan identified 16 Indicators, under the three outcomes of Victims, Community and Workforce, to be scrutinised for PSNI's performance against identified baselines, measures and impacts.
- 3.8** The Policing Plan Development Group supports the Board in its review of the PSNI's past performance and scrutinising future Annual Performance Plans, ensuring the proposed indicators and measures remain appropriate and relevant.
- 3.9** Each Indicator is assigned to an appropriate Board Committee for monitoring and scrutiny – Performance Committee; Partnership Committee; or Resources Committee. Each Indicator will appear at a Board Committee at least once a year for scrutiny and assessment.
- 3.10** The PSNI provides monthly updates to the Board using the OBA 'report card' format outlining the three performance measures "How much did we do? How well did we do it? Is anyone better off?" These allow the Board to strategically monitor, review, assess and report on the impact of plans over the next five years.
- 3.11** The subsequent Annual Performance Plans and Assessments support the evaluation and delivery of the Policing Plan across a 12-month period. These allow for year-on-year comparisons and evaluation of how well the police are performing against set objectives, indicators and measures. A four scale RAG (Red, Amber, Green) status for the assessment of the indicators and whether targets are achieved will be used to reflect whether 'Not Achieving Progress', 'Limited Progress', 'Adequate Progress', or 'Good Progress' has been made.
- 3.12** In addition to reporting to Committees, the Chief Constable developed a Policing Plan Report/Dashboard and reports to the Board on four occasions during the financial year - in October, December, February and June each year. In the October, December and February reports the focus is on one of the three Outcomes or specific indicator in the report. The June report will be the year-end report for the April to March period of the preceding year and, if agreed, this will be the information used for both the PSNI and NIPB annual report and accounts.
- 3.13** To enhance services and ensure continuous improvement in the effectiveness and efficiency of the police service the Board and PSNI itself monitors, evaluates, and reports on performance year-round through a structured framework. Key monitoring and reporting arrangements include:
- **Northern Ireland Policing Plan 2025-2030** including **Annual Performance Plans** (see above);
 - **Annual Assessments and reporting:** Annual Assessment reviews of performance against the Policing Plan and Annual Performance Plans are published. In addition, audited Annual Accounts and Reports are published;

- **Performance monitoring and reporting cycle:** Regular review of performance data and reports submitted by PSNI, both internally and to the Policing Board, to track progress against: key strategic outcomes; set targets; actions; objectives; key performance indicators and measures; and key strategies;
- **Redesigned Accountability Report:** Starting in October 2025, the Chief Constable's monthly accountability report was restructured to directly align with the 2025–2030 Policing Plan, featuring a performance dashboard, impact measures, and case studies to provide "clearer focus on performance, evidence, and outcomes";
- **Strategic oversight:** Specific committees within the Board and PSNI focus on specific areas like performance, human resources, and finance to ensure they meet corporate and policing plan requirements;
- **Public and Independent Review:** the Justice Minister may commission reviews and there is also feedback from Policing and Community Safety Partnerships (PCSPs), independent custody visits, and public surveys; and
- **External Inspections and recommendations:** such as Criminal Justice Inspection Northern Ireland (CJINI) and His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) Inspections.

Assurance

- 3.14** 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).
- 3.15** To obtain assurance that the Board's approach is fully compliant with Section 28 (4) of the Act 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 measures:
- 1.2.1: Repeat offending rate and report on initiatives to reduce repeat offenders with a focus on Domestic Abuse in 2024-25;
 - 2.1.1: Number of people in Northern Ireland who are confident that PSNI is accessible, visible, responsive and victim focused; and
 - 3.1.1: Demonstrate progress against the "Here for You" Public Engagement Strategy and the associated Hallmarks of Neighbourhood Policing.
- 3.16** My audit work focused on reviewing the underlying supporting documentation, including OBA report cards, presented to the respective committees throughout 2024-25, and the ensuing scrutiny, analysis and discussion.

- 3.17** As was the case in the previous year, in performing my review and testing, I identified an opportunity for improvement, where I believe there could be increased disclosure of the data being used in the RAG status assessment process. OBA report cards (and/or other relevant reporting) are presented to the Board and its committees during the assessment year using data that is up-to-date at the time of presentation. However, it is clearly noted on the report cards that this data may be provisional, not representative of official crime statistics, and subject to change.
- 3.18** Should the Board's assessment be made on data that is incomplete, inaccurate, or inappropriate, there is a risk that an incorrect assessment will be made and reported. This may also manifest in differences of reporting between the Board and PSNI, as outlined in paragraph 2.11, above. This issue should be addressed by full implementation of Recommendation 3 from last year (**Appendix 3**).

Conclusion

- 3.19** I conclude that, together with the Board's and PSNI's internal continuous improvement arrangements, the use of the OBA framework and methodology has enabled the Board to establish arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which it functions, and in how the Chief Constable's functions are exercised.
- 3.20** There remain some gaps in the data and baseline information for some indicators and measures. It is important that data and baseline information is developed, continuously updated, and presented clearly. All recommendations from last year, and this year, must be implemented in full and reflected in the Annual Assessment 2025-26 and the Annual Plan 2026-27.

Appendices

Appendix 1: The Comptroller and Auditor General's Review of the Board's Assessment of Performance Measures

1.2.1 Repeat offending rate and report on initiatives to reduce repeat offenders with a focus on Domestic Abuse in 2024-25.

Test Step	Findings
A Performance Plan Timetable	<p>This measure for Repeat Offenders was discussed twice in 2024-25 by the Performance Committee – on 10 October 2024 and 13 February 2025.</p> <p>The figures presented were provisional, do not represent official crime statistics, and were subject to change at the time of reporting.</p>
B OBA Report Card produced by PSNI	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The OBA report card was produced by the PSNI and presented at both of the Performance Committee meetings noted in test step A, above. • As at February 2025 the average repeat offending rate across 2024-25 to date was 22.1 per cent, with an average percentage of crime reports attributed to repeat offenders of 47.1 per cent. The corresponding values for 2023-24 were 21.8 per cent and 46.9 per cent. • Updates were provided against Terrorist Offender Management Unit (TOMU), Reducing Offending Units (ROU) and Youth Diversion and Early Intervention. • Included in the report card template were graphs illustrating Repeat Offending Rate & Percentage of Crime Reports by Repeat Offenders.
C PSNI Update via presentation to the Board	<p>The PSNI's Assistant Chief Constable ("ACC") presented the OBA Report Cards to the Board's Performance Committee on the dates under test step A, above.</p>
D Board Analysis of OBA Report Card	<p>I have obtained and reviewed the minutes of the Performance Committee meetings noted under test step A, above.</p> <p>Minutes from both meetings demonstrate detailed discussion and consideration of the OBA report cards by the Board, with Board members questioning of the PSNI's ACC presenting the report.</p>

C&AG Conclusion on Measure 1.2.1

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 measure 1.2.1. However, it has not clearly set out the basis on which the RAG status of 'achieved' for measure 1.2.1 is appropriate in light of the increase in the average rate of repeat offending from 21.8 per cent in 2023-24 to 22.1 per cent in 2024-25 and the average percentage of crime reports attributed to repeat offenders increase from 46.9 per cent to 47.1 per cent. This has contributed to the recommendation 1 in Part 2 to introduce a more systematic assessment approach.

2.1.1 Number of people in Northern Ireland who are confident that PSNI is accessible, visible, responsive and victim focused.

Test Step	Findings
A Performance Plan Timetable	This measure was discussed once in 2024-25 by the Performance Committee – on 16 May 2024.
B OBA Report Card produced by PSNI	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The OBA report card was produced by the PSNI and presented at the Performance Committee meeting noted in test step A, above. Results from NIPPS 2023 show over 90 per cent of respondents as feeling confident or very confident in contacting PSNI, which is a slight rise from 89.5 per cent in 2022. In 2022 only 40 per cent of respondents felt police were visible or very visible in their local area, but this has risen to 44.1 per cent in 2023.
C PSNI Update via presentation to the Board	The PSNI's Assistant Chief Constable (ACC) presented the OBA Report Cards to the Board's Performance Committee on the dates under test step A, above.
D Board Analysis of OBA Report Card	<p>I have obtained and reviewed the minutes of the Performance Committee meeting noted under test step A, above.</p> <p>Minutes from the meeting demonstrate detailed discussion and consideration of the OBA report cards by the Board, with Board members questioning of the PSNI's ACC presenting the report.</p>

C&AG Conclusion on Measure 2.1.1

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 measure 2.1.1. I am content the RAG Status of 'partially achieved' for measure 2.1.1 is appropriate based on varying performance, with marginal improvements in some measures but ultimately still low overall rates.

3.1.1 Demonstrate progress against the “Here for You” Public Engagement Strategy and the associated Hallmarks of Neighbourhood Policing.

Test Step	Findings
A Performance Plan Timetable	This measure was discussed once in 2024-25 by the Performance Committee – on 20 February 2025.
B OBA Report Card produced by PSNI	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The OBA report card was produced by the PSNI and presented at the Performance Committee meeting noted in test step A, above. Case studies presented outline the works of The Strategic Community Engagement Team in resolving local issues. Additional case studies were presented to illustrate the core features of neighbourhood policing. Supporting statistics were also provided to evidence progress across several hallmarks: including Hallmark 7, Developing Officers and Staff; and Hallmark 8, Developing and Sharing Learning for example it was highlighted that to date, 101 officers have completed the Emerging Leaders programme.
C PSNI Update via presentation to the Board	The PSNI’s Temporary Chief Superintendent (T/Chief) presented the OBA Report Cards to the Board’s Performance Committee on the dates under test step A, above.
D Board Analysis of OBA Report Card	<p>I have obtained and reviewed the minutes of the Performance Committee meeting noted under test step A, above.</p> <p>Minutes from the meeting demonstrate detailed discussion and consideration of the OBA report cards by the Board, with Board members questioning of the PSNI’s T/Chief presenting the report.</p>

C&AG Conclusion on Measure 3.1.1

There is scope for using more quantifiable data in accessing this measure rather than reliance on just qualitative measures. While qualitative insights and case studies add valuable context, they do not necessarily allow meaningful comparison with previous periods. This gap has informed the Recommendation 1 in Part 2 above to incorporate more measurable data to support a more robust and evidence based assessment.

Appendix 2: The Comptroller and Auditor General's certificate and opinion to the Assembly on the Northern Ireland Policing Board's Performance Summary and Performance Plan

1. 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 2025; and
 - Annual Performance Plan for the year ended 31 March 2026.

Basis of my opinion

Audit of the Performance Summary

2. 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 2024-25, measured by reference to performance actions and performance indicators; and
 - the extent to which performance measures in 2024-25 were met.
3. 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 2024-25 and Annual Performance Plan 2024-25. 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

4. 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 2025-26 has been prepared and published in accordance with statutory requirements; and
 - the performance indicators and performance measures in the Annual Performance Plan 2025-26 are reasonable.
5. My work comprised a review and assessment of the Annual Performance Plan 2025-26 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

6. In my opinion:
- the Northern Ireland Policing Board has prepared and published its Performance Summary for the year ended 31 March 2025 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 2026 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 2025-26 are reasonable.

Recommendation to the Department of Justice

7. 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.
8. 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

20 April 2026

Appendix 3: Progress on recommendations in the Comptroller and Auditor General's May 2025 report

NIAO Recommendations	Northern Ireland Policing Board (NIPB) and PSNI Response July 2025	Progress on Recommendation
<p>The Board's assessment of the RAG status of measures in the Policing Plan 2025-30 be based, where possible, on the extent to which a particular measure has met pre-determined, incremental movements against the baseline.</p>	<p>Accepted – The Policing Plan Development Group (PPDG) considered and agreed a series of new baseline measures for each of the 16 Indicators for the new Policing Plan 2025-2030. PSNI have agreed to provide data against these baselines that will enable the Board to assess movement against the baselines.</p> <p>PSNI Response Baselines have been established for 15 of the 16 Indicators within the new Policing Plan with only Indicator 2.7 (Cyber Crime) requiring a baseline to be developed. We consider it important that both quantitative and qualitative information is used for both the baselines and the measures so as to provide a balanced view of performance. The PSNI looks forward to reviewing the robustness and relevance of these as part of the work of the Policing Plan Review Working Group (PPRWG) for the development of the Annual Performance Plan for 2026-27.</p>	<p>The PPDG, consisting of Board members and senior PSNI representatives, met throughout the year 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.</p> <p>Overall, 15 of the 16 Indicators included baselines with the final indicator 2.7 (Cyber Crime) to be developed in year 1 for inclusion in the second year of the 2025-30 Policing Plan.</p>
<p>The Board should consider the implementation of a four-tier RAG status of 'Not Achieved', 'Off Track', 'On Track' and 'Achieved'.</p>	<p>Accepted – The Board and the PSNI have agreed to implement a four tier RAG status for the 2025- 2030 Policing Plan.</p> <p>PSNI Response In support of the agreement to implement a four-tier RAG status, the Board and the PSNI have also agreed the PSNI will take the lead in the application of RAG/traffic light reporting to Report Cards as part of the introduction of a "self-assessment" approach. These self-assessments will then be subject to scrutiny by the Board at both Committee and full Board Meetings. A four-tier RAG status of 'Good Progress', 'Adequate Progress', 'Limited Progress' and 'Not Achieving Progress' will be used.</p>	<p>The PPDG, consisting of Board members and senior PSNI representatives, met throughout the year to review the current Policing Plan (2025-2030) and Annual Performance Plan 2025-26. The Group took into consideration the recommendation made by the NIAO in relation to a four tier RAG status to monitor progress. This will be implemented in the first year of the annual assessment using the new 2025-2030 Policing Plan.</p>

NIAO Recommendations	Northern Ireland Policing Board (NIPB) and PSNI Response July 2025	Progress on Recommendation
<p>The Board should ensure the annual assessment is based on data to 31 March of the assessment year where possible, and at a minimum should be based on official crime statistics to ensure that the assessment is robust and stands to scrutiny.</p>	<p>Accepted – The Board and the PSNI have agreed that each Annual Assessment for the 2025 to 2030 Policing Plan will be based on data up until the 31st March each year. The Chief Constable will present this to the Board in a new reporting format to the Board at its June meeting annually, with the first report being presented in June 2026.</p> <p>PSNI Response</p> <p>This is current practice within the PSNI. We also consider this development, and the implementation of improvements to the application of RAG/traffic-light reporting, to represent a more robust and meaningful performance management arrangement for the general public.</p> <p>The PSNI welcome the implementation of the new RAG status approach to reporting and progress can be monitored both through the PPRWG and NIPB Performance and Accountability meetings.</p>	<p>Whilst this was not undertaken for the 2024-25 Board’s assessment of the PSNI’s performance against the Annual Performance Plan 2024-25 due to it being the last year of the Plan and greater focus on developing the 2025-2030 Policing Plan, it is noted that this will be in place for the assessment of first year of the new plan 2025-26.</p>



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