



Northern Ireland Audit Office

# PRESS RELEASE

## Continuous improvement arrangements in policing

Mr Kieran Donnelly, the Comptroller and Auditor General, today issued his report to the Assembly on Continuous improvement arrangements in policing. The report examines the Policing Plan for 2014-15 and the performance of the Policing Board and PSNI in 2013-14. Mr Donnelly said, *"Significant process has been made in developing appropriate targets for the Policing Plan for 2014-15. This is a welcome development and has resolved, for now, the major issue causing audit qualifications in previous years. However, there is room for further improvement and this will be considered in future audits"*.

### Background

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 for each financial year, detailing how the continuous improvement arrangements are to be implemented. Under the Act, the Board must also prepare and publish a performance summary. This report from the C&AG reviews the systems underpinning the plan and performance summary. It is not an audit of PSNI's performance.

### Main Findings

The C&AG gave an unqualified audit opinion on the Policing Plan for 2014-15 and the performance summary for 2013-14.

- The Policing Plan 2013-14 included 28 measures of performance for PSNI, spread across four main themes. Overall, PSNI achieved 18 (64 per cent) measures, with the remaining 10 measures (36 per cent) not achieved.
- Based upon the information contained within the Board's Annual Report, the C&AG said that it is difficult to form a firm conclusion as to the overall performance achieved in 2013-14. . He added that he has commented in previous years on the lack of additional explanatory information provided and it is now time that this matter was addressed.
- The 2014-15 Plan consists of 11 outcomes, with 29 associated performance measures. There has been a significant increase in the number of performance measures which have been expressed in quantitative terms compared to the previous Policing Plan.
- There remain areas where further development of the measures is desirable. In particular, there are a number of targets which focus on measuring activities rather than outcomes, and a number of targets expressed in terms of a general level of improvement rather than specifying the level of improvement to be achieved.

**THIS STATEMENT IS ISSUED ON THE STRICT UNDERSTANDING THAT IT IS NOT FOR PUBLICATION OR BROADCAST BEFORE 00.01 hrs ON Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup> February 2015**

### **Key Recommendations**

- The Annual Report should provide explanatory information to accompany the reporting of PSNI performance data, to help the public better understand performance or to highlight emerging trends.
- The Board should ensure that, wherever possible, performance measures specify the level of performance to be achieved and the timescale for this. Targets should focus on outcomes rather than activities.

### **Notes for Editors**

1. The Comptroller and Auditor General is Head of the Northern Ireland Audit Office (the Audit Office). He, and the NIAO, are totally independent of Government. He certifies the accounts of Government Departments and a range of other public sector bodies. He has statutory authority to report to the Assembly on the economy, efficiency and effectiveness with which departments and public bodies use their resources. His reports are published as Assembly papers.
2. This report is available on the Audit Office website at [www.niauditoffice.gov.uk](http://www.niauditoffice.gov.uk). The report is embargoed until 00.01 hrs on Tuesday 17 February 2015.
3. Background briefing can be obtained from the Audit Office by contacting Neil Gray (028 9025 4345) or Suzanne Walsh (028 9025 1021).