



Police Service
of Northern Ireland

Chief Constable's Accountability Report

to Northern Ireland
Policing Board

Report Date:

Covering Period of 28 January 2025 to
27 February 2025

Presented at Policing Board Meeting:

6 March 2025



**we care
we listen
we act**

Contents

Foreword	3
Finance and Resource Update	5
Our Performance	6
Outcome 1: Victim Focused	11
Outcome 2: Community Focused	16
Outcome 3: Workforce Focused	17

Unless otherwise stated the statistics in this report are unvalidated management information sourced from administrative systems and are subject to change.

Foreword

February saw the PSNI's Student Officer and Call Handling Recruitment Campaigns come to a close. I am delighted that in a very competitive job market we were able to attract 4,822 Student Officer applications and 587 for the Call Handling positions. It is really positive to see such a large number of people expressing an interest in serving our communities and keeping people safe. Engagement work in support of both campaigns has enabled officers and staff to meet with exceptional people from all backgrounds and walks of life, all of whom are unquestionably capable of enhancing the service we provide to communities across Northern Ireland.

The related issue of vetting was raised during February's Board Meeting and has been the subject of some commentary since. PSNI is bound by Police (Recruitment) (Northern Ireland) Regulations 2001 and aligns itself with the College of Policing Vetting Code of Practice. Quite simply, vetting exists to protect the public and the organisation from individuals who are not fit to wear the uniform and might cause harm. The vetting process includes the examination of an applicant's outward facing social media. Consideration is given as to whether it contains anything, for example, of a misogynistic, racist, sexist, sectarian or homophobic nature. Each case is treated on its individual merits and has in-built safeguards, such as the interview of an applicant to clarify identified issues. To ensure fairness, transparency and consistency in the process, any concerns around suitability are referred to a Vetting Panel. Should an applicant be assessed as unsuitable by the Panel, they may have the decision reviewed by an Independent Assessor. Sir John Gillen currently performs this role.

The public expect and demand high standards from their police officers. Accordingly, our vetting standards are high with public protection the primary consideration. There will be applicants whose previous offending, behaviour and associations, among other things, will mean they simply are not suitable to work for the Police Service.

I wish all applicants well as they enter what is a rigorous selection process.

Once again, this month I find myself having to condemn the abhorrent levels of violence faced by officers and staff. Northern Ireland was shamed again during the course of one weekend in February when nine officers were injured while on duty in Derry City and Strabane. I am incredibly proud of the dedication and resilience each officer showed as they remained on duty, continuing to serve their community. While grateful for the support of the Board and Justice Minister in their condemnation of these attacks, I remain alarmed at the apparent tolerance and indifference that exists here in Northern Ireland. Such permissiveness does not exist elsewhere in the United Kingdom. Policing requires our officers and staff to handle difficult and hostile situations, but attacks upon them should never be accepted. They are not simply 'part of the job'. An attack on them must be seen as an attack on society as a whole. I will continue to work with the Department of Justice around sentencing guidelines for those who have carried out an assault on a police officer.

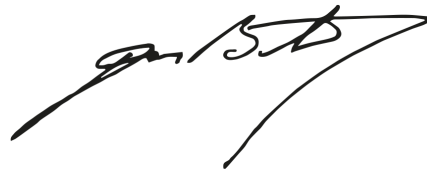
February saw the conclusion of the Omagh Bombing Inquiry Commemorative and Personal Statements hearings. With victims and survivors rightly placed at the centre of



proceedings, we have heard the most heart breaking testimonies from so many, and about so many, remarkable people. The Inquiry's focus must remain on delivering for the victims and their families, and these testimonies, including those of Police Officers and emergency service partners, have brought home the magnitude of the unimaginable horror inflicted on everyday people going about their everyday lives. We must all work together to ensure that atrocities such as this never happen again.

The PSNI's Problem Solving Awards took place during February in the magnificent surroundings of the Belfast Harbour Commissioners Office. These awards are an excellent way of demonstrating how we as a Service step up for our communities each and every day despite the adversity and the many challenges we face. There were so many fantastic examples of the effective collaborative problem solving taking place across the organisation, and the team PSNI ethos clearly shone through. I would very much like to thank all those who entered and congratulate the finalists and the winners themselves. I would also like to give a special mention to Belfast Harbour Commissioners Office for hosting, to the Board for partnering and all event sponsors. Their support is invaluable and greatly appreciated.

Finally, I would like to offer my congratulations to ACC Chris Todd who has been announced as the preferred candidate as the Chief Constable for Humberside Police. During his time in the PSNI, Chris's support has been invaluable to me and the entire Service Executive Team. He has made a significant contribution to policing in Northern Ireland and his leadership through a number of key challenges, especially the data breach, has been exceptional. I wish him every success for the future.



Jon Boutcher QPM
Chief Constable
Police Service of Northern Ireland



Finance and Resource Update

As highlighted in my report last month, the additional £120m of in-year funding allocated to policing over our baseline now enables me to project a break even position for the full year. This additional funding is tangible evidence of a growing recognition about the pressures faced by the Service. A further £1m has since been provided by the Executive to off-set additional costs incurred in our response to Storm EOWYN.

Looking to next year, the Executive agreed and issued the Draft Budget for 2025/26 in December 2024 for consultation. On 29 January 2025, the Department of Justice (DOJ) advised PSNI of the draft budget for policing, which usefully provides an additional £86m. While this additional funding is welcome, it still leaves PSNI with an opening funding shortfall. Work is currently underway to revise our resource requirements for 2025/26, to calculate the residual funding gap and to identify the potential impacts.

Following consideration, a draft Resource Plan 25/26 will be prepared and presented to PSNI's Strategic Management Board (likely in March) and then forwarded for discussion with the Policing Board's Resources Committee.

Holiday Pay

We remain committed to finding a satisfactory resolution to the Holiday Pay case, which is subject to legal proceedings.

A business case has been prepared in which we outline potential methods of remedy and seek authority to engage and negotiate with the claimants representatives. This was submitted to the DOJ in late 2024 and following engagement resubmitted on 22

January 2025 with a number of queries addressed.

A Case Management Preliminary Hearing (CMPH) was listed on 21 February 2025 and the parties provided an update on the status of the case. The tribunal have listed the case for a further review on 4 April 2025 for the parties to provide an update on departmental approval of the business case. It is proposed that a joint consultation will take place in the Spring, the purpose of which will be to agree and discuss any outstanding issues.

PSNI are proactively seeking a resolution and we continue to work with DOJ and legal representatives to achieve this end.



Our Performance

The information in this section is extracted from our Official Statistics published reports. The full reports can all be accessed from the following link. <https://www.psni.police.uk/about-us/our-publications-and-reports/official-statistics>.

These are in-year provisional figures and may be subject to change.

Recorded Crime

In the 12 months from 1 February 2024 to 31 January 2025:

- There were 96,529 crimes recorded, a decrease of 9,748 (-9.2%) on the previous 12 months.
- There were 50 police recorded crimes per 1,000 population¹ in the 12 months February 2024 to January 2025 compared with 55 in the previous 12 months.
- All policing districts experienced a lower level of crime.
- Lower crime levels were seen in violence against the person, with the largest volume decrease in Violence without Injury (1,507 crimes). Stalking and Harassment fell by 12% (1,323 crimes).
- Lower crime levels were also seen across sexual offences, robbery, burglary, theft, criminal damage, drug offences, public order offences, possession of weapons offences and miscellaneous crimes against society.

Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB)

In the 12 months from 1 February 2024 to 31 January 2025:

- There were 44,000 ASB incidents in Northern Ireland, a decrease of 1,625 (-3.6%) on the previous 12 months.
- When comparing the current and previous 12 months, eight policing districts showed lower levels of ASB. Seven policing districts showed lower levels in January 2025 compared with December 2024.
- Each month February 2024 through to January 2025 recorded the lowest levels of ASB for those months since the start of the data series in April 2006, with the exception of March, May, September and November 2024, and January 2025, all of which recorded their second lowest levels in the data series. December 2024 recorded its third lowest level in the data series.
- The latest month, January 2025, was 76 incidents lower than December 2024. This is the first time January levels have been lower than those in December since January 2019.

Domestic Abuse

In the 12 months from 1 January 2024 to 31 December 2024:

- There were 30,509 domestic abuse **incidents** recorded, a decrease of 2,551 (-7.7%) on the previous 12 months.
- The number of domestic abuse **crimes** recorded fell to 18,656, a decrease of 2,049 (-9.9%) on the previous 12 months.
- There were 16 domestic abuse incidents and 10 domestic abuse crimes per 1,000

¹ Crime per 1,000 population based on mid-year population estimate of 1,920,382 for 2023, the latest mid-year estimate available at time of compilation.

[Mid-year population estimates are available from the NISRA website \(opens in a new window\).](#)



population², compared with 17 domestic abuse incidents and 11 domestic abuse crimes recorded during the previous 12 months.

- When comparing the current and previous 12 months, all eleven policing districts showed a decrease in both the number of domestic abuse incidents and the number of domestic abuse crimes.
- Levels fell across all major offence classifications, with the exception of sexual offences.
- The largest volume decrease in domestic abuse crimes was seen within Violence against the person which showed a fall of 1,589 (-9.8%). Violence with injury fell by 421 (-8.4%) and Violence without injury fell by 598 (-8.4%). While Violence without injury showed the largest volume decrease, Stalking and harassment showed the largest percentage decrease of -13.7% (-570 crimes).
- Changes in recording practice have had an impact on levels, particularly in respect of malicious communications offences, with fewer such offences required to be recorded. In the 12 months ending 31 December 2024 there were 365 Malicious Communications offences, compared with 701 in the previous 12 months.
- Between January and December 2024, the number of domestic abuse incidents were lower in all twelve months when compared with the equivalent months in the previous 12 month period.

Domestic abuse homicide: In the 12 months from 1 February 2024 to 31 January 2025, there were seven homicides with a domestic abuse motivation recorded, compared with three homicides in the previous

12 months³. Six of the victims were female and one was male, compared with two female and one male victim during the previous 12 months.

Hate Motivation

In the 12 months from 1 January 2024 to 31 December 2024:

- There were more race, faith/religion and transgender identity hate incidents when compared with the previous twelve months.
- Incidents and crimes with a race motivation showed the largest volume increases (454 more race incidents and 292 more race crimes). Incidents and crimes with a faith/religion motivation showed the largest percentage increases (37% more faith/religion incidents and 35% more faith/religion crimes).
- The number of incidents with a race motivation reached the fourth highest 12 month level since the recording of these motivations began in 2004/05.
- The number of crimes recorded decreased across four of the six motivations (sexual orientation, sectarian, disability and transgender identity) when compared with the previous 12 months.
- The number of crimes with a race motivation reached the fourth highest 12 month level since the recording of these motivations began in 2004/05.
- Incidents and crimes with a sectarian motivation showed the largest decrease, with 167 fewer incidents and 163 fewer crimes.

² Crime per 1,000 population based on mid-year population estimate of 1,920,382 for 2023, the latest mid-year estimate available at time of compilation.

[Mid-year population estimates are available from the NISRA website \(opens in a new window\).](#)

³ Homicide consists of the offences of murder, manslaughter, infanticide and corporate manslaughter.



Overall summary of hate motivated incidents and crime

	Incidents Jan'23-Dec'23	Incidents Jan'24-Dec'24	Incidents Change	Crimes Jan'23-Dec'23	Crimes Jan'24-Dec'24	Crimes Change
Race	1,323	1,777	454	858	1,150	292
Sexual Orientation	398	362	-36	249	217	-32
Sectarian	1,089	922	-167	745	582	-163
Disability	103	69	-34	65	40	-25
Faith/Religion	67	92	25	46	62	16
Transgender Identity	66	74	8	41	39	-2

Security Situation

In the 12 months from 1 February 2024 to 31 January 2025:

- There were no security related deaths, compared to one during the previous 12 months.
- There were fewer shootings, bombings and paramilitary style attacks than during the previous 12 months.
- There were 6 bombing incidents, compared to 8 during the previous 12 months and 16 shooting incidents, compared to 32.
- There were 21 casualties of paramilitary style assaults, compared to 30 during the previous 12 months. The greatest number of assaults occurred in Belfast (5). Of the 21 casualties, one was under 18 years old.
- There were 6 casualties of paramilitary style shootings, approximately a third of the number that occurred during the previous 12 months (17). All 6 casualties were aged 18 years or older.
- There were 66 security related arrests under Section 41 of the Terrorism Act 2000, compared to 105 during the previous 12 months.
- 7 persons were subsequently charged, compared to 22 during the previous 12 months.

Finds of Firearms, Explosives and Ammunition; *these refer to the seizure or recovery of all illegal firearms, ammunition, explosives, rocket/mortar launchers, detonators and bomb making material/equipment. Replica/blank firing firearms, petrol bombs and petrol bomb making materials, grenades and munitions from World War 1 or World War 2 found on the beach or in attics etc. are not recorded as finds.*

Firearms Finds

There were 10 firearms found during the past 12 months, compared to 20 during the previous 12 months.

Explosive Finds

There were 0.30kg of explosives found during the past 12 months compared to 3.44kg during the previous 12 months. There were 2.29kg of explosives found in September 2023, the most found in a month since June 2020.

Ammunition Finds

There were 184 rounds of ammunition found during the past 12 months compared to 1,023 rounds found in the previous 12 months



Stop and Search

During the 12 months between 1 January 2024 and 31 December 2024:

- 19,288 persons were stopped and searched/questioned, 24% fewer than the previous 12 months.
- 71% of stops were conducted under the Misuse of Drugs Act* and 13% of stops were conducted under the Police and Criminal Evidence Order*.
- 12% of stops were conducted under the Justice and Security Act Section 24* and 2% under the Justice and Security Act Section 21*.
- There was a decrease in the use of all powers compared to the previous 12 months. In particular, the use of the Justice and Security Act* decreased by 49% (from 5,320 to 2,713) and the use of Misuse of Drugs Act* by 21% (from 17,389 to 13,683). Use of the Police and Criminal Evidence Order, the Firearms Order, the Terrorism Act and other less frequently used powers also decreased, albeit by smaller amounts.
- 24% of stops resulted in some form of outcome. The arrest rate was 8%, compared to 6% in the previous 12 months.
- All 11 police districts carried out fewer stops than the previous 12 months.
- 8% (1,606) of those stopped were aged 17 and under. Of these, approximately 2 out of every 3 (62%) were stopped and searched under the Misuse of Drugs Act*.
- 84% of those stopped were male, while 37% were aged 18 to 25.
- There were 10 persons stopped for every 1,000 people in Northern Ireland.

Police Recorded Injury Road Traffic Collisions and Casualties

Between 1 January 2024 and 30 November 2024:

- There were 4,277 Road Traffic Collisions compared with 4,642 between January and November 2023 – a decrease of 365 collisions (-7.9%).
- There were 59 fatalities, 824 people seriously injured and a further 5,860 people slightly injured. While the total casualties were down by 605 year on year, there were 17 additional killed or seriously injured casualties.
- Three road user groups showed an increase in KSIs (killed and seriously injured) between January to November 2023 and January to November 2024, most notably passengers which increased by 24.
- Single vehicle collisions resulted in 22 fatalities or 37.3% of all fatalities during January to November 2024. In the equivalent period of 2023 there were 13 single vehicle collision fatalities or 21.3% of all fatalities.
- Fermanagh and Omagh district recorded 13 road deaths between January and November 2024. Belfast City district had the most people seriously injured with 126 recorded during this period. One district, Lisburn and Castlereagh City, recorded no fatal road casualties over the period.
- Six out of the eleven districts showed an increase in their KSI casualties between January and November 2023 and this year to November. The largest increase in KSI casualties was in Causeway Coast and Glens district which recorded 29 additional KSIs compared to the same period in the previous year. In contrast, Newry, Mourne

* alone or in combination with other powers.



and Down district showed a decrease of 26 recorded KSI casualties over the same period.

- The most common principal causation factors for KSI casualties during the reporting period were 'inattention or attention diverted' (131 KSI casualties), 'wrong course/position' (73) and 'impairment by drugs or alcohol - driver/ rider' (69).

Outcome 1: Victim Focused

Crime Department

Organised Crime Branch



The PSNI's Serious and Organised Crime Strategy focuses on how we will protect individuals, communities and businesses in Northern Ireland from the threat of serious and organised crime. The focus of our operational objectives have been identified under four key themes: **Pursue, Prevent, Partnership, Prepare and Protect.**

Tackling Organised Crime requires a nuanced response and, as such, our approach has strengthened multi-agency collaboration and efforts to prevent crime before it takes place. This "4P" response enables us to move away from a traditional Pursue focused approach.

The following are examples of "4P" work conducted during this reporting period.

Pursue

Organised Crime Unit

- On 14 February 2025, detectives from Organised Crime Unit supported by colleagues from the Auto Crime Team, carried out a search of a vehicle in the Moneynick area of Antrim. Cannabis and the Class A drugs drug methamphetamine, with a combined estimated street value of £120,000, were recovered.

Two men were arrested and subsequently charged to Court with a number of offences, including possession of Class A and B controlled drugs with intent to supply.

- On 21 February 2025, officers from Organised Crime Unit, assisted by colleagues from the Metropolitan Police Service, arrested a man on suspicion of offences associated with the discovery of an industrial scale cannabis factory and recovery of cannabis plants with an estimated street value in excess of £1.5m, in Belfast last year.

He has been charged to Court with a number of offences, including, cultivating cannabis, conspiracy to cultivate cannabis, conspiracy to supply a Class B controlled drug and intimidation of a witness.

Two other men, one from County Down and the other from London, are currently on remand as part of this investigation.

This is one of the largest cannabis grows uncovered in recent years, with 23 grow rooms located, all equipped to grow and cultivate cannabis. Enquiries are continuing, but this activity has all the

hallmarks of a sophisticated crime gang operation.

Paramilitary Crime Task Force (PCTF)

- On 18 February 2025, detectives from the PCTF supported by colleagues from one of our Tactical Support Groups, made two arrests and recovered suspected controlled drugs with an estimated street value of £1,500 and the same amount in cash, following a number of premises searches in the Carrickfergus area. A man and woman have been arrested for a number of offences, including drug related offences. Enquiries are continuing.

Protect

PCTF - Illegal Money Lending

- The Problem Solving in Partnership Awards 2025 took place on the evening of Wednesday 19 February 2025. The judges selected **Predatory Money Lending**, as the Serious Crime category winner, and also their overall winner and recipient of The Chenery Award for excellence in Problem Solving.

This fantastic project, led by Organised Crime Branch is aimed at improving the policing response to predatory money lending, including addressing the perceived apathy or lack of awareness within the community regarding this issue. This project has worked to tackle illegal money lending in many ways, including dedicated partnership working, awareness raising, calling out the criminality through an impactful Crimestoppers campaign, and investigative strategies that are already seeing promising results.

- During February 2025, our Illegal Money Lending Officer worked with several national debt charities and identified that the information they were providing to those in



Susan Brew of Crimestoppers, and Zoe Parker, Advice NI

Northern Ireland was incorrect or non-existent. She was able to assist three charities in developing a Northern Ireland specific statement (see below) for use by their training advisers and for their websites. This will ensure victims in Northern Ireland get the appropriate support and signposting.

“In Northern Ireland illegal money lending is dealt with by the PSNI. The PSNI have a dedicated illegal money lending officer who can offer support, safeguarding and local signposting, even if victims do not wish to make a statement of complaint. “

Cyber Crime Centre

- In support of Cyber First NI, the local delivery partner of the National Cyber Security Centres (NCSC) ‘Cyber First Program’, the PSNI Cyber Protect Officer has been involved in delivering the ‘Police Cyber Escape Room’ to Year 10 pupils at local Cyber First Schools. Created by the Metropolitan Police and used by Police Cyber Protect Network across the UK, the Cyber Escape Room is designed to promote good online security behaviours through a series of problem solving tasks.

During this period, support has been provided to two Cyber First Schools events aimed at highlighting the importance of cyber security and potential



routes to employment available to young people in Northern Ireland:

- On 28 January, 95 pupils (21 teams) at Ballyclare High School competed the Escape Room.
- On 18 February, 48 pupils (14 teams) at Erne Integrated College completed the Escape Room
- In partnership with a local government department, the PSNI Cyber Protect Officer is currently involved in a program aimed at improving awareness amongst Departmental Staff of common cyber threats in a bid to protect online users. This program includes delivery of the Police Cyber Escape Room supported by an awareness session highlighting current attacks affecting local organisations and individuals across Northern Ireland. Our Cyber Protect Officer has delivered two sessions with local government employees during February 2025, reaching 48 Information Asset Owners.
- On 20 February 2025, the Cyber Protect Officer supported the NI Cyber Security Centre (NICSC) and Law Society of Northern Ireland (LSNI) with the delivery of a cyber-security awareness exercise to Partners, Principals and Office Managers.

Part of an ongoing program of support to the local legal sector, the training exercise explores how prepared firms are for a phishing attack and aims to provide practical takeaways that can be used to build resilience against this common cyber -attack method.

Economic Crime Unit (ECU)

- On 12 February 2025, a Fraud Protect session was delivered to a group of approximately 30 young women aged 16+. Participants were from the Randalstown area and the event part of a cross

community venture involving the local GAA and Rugby clubs.

Romance fraud, financial abuse, online purchases and bogus callers were covered as part of the session, and the key message, *“By being more questioning of situations when our money is involved, whether online or in the physical world, fraud can be prevented, but if it does happen, report it.”*, reinforced.

This was the beginning of a fresh wave of community outreach in relation to Fraud Protect advice and was very well received.

- During February, upskilling was provided to PSNI’s District Training Team with a Fraud Investigation package. The ECU Fraud Protect Officer, who is a Specialist Fraud Investigator and works in the area of countering fraud, delivered this learning.

March 2025, will see this training rolled out to officers across the Service.

Prevent

Cyber Crime Centre

- The Cyber Choices program is part of a co-ordinated approach by the NCA Cyber Prevent Network that seeks to raise awareness amongst young people about the dangers of engaging in Cybercrime and highlights opportunities available for pursuing academic or vocational routes into a career in IT.
- During this reporting period the Cyber Prevent Officer attended numerous schools throughout Northern Ireland delivering presentations on the Cyber Choices program:

- 31 January 2025 - Rathmore Grammar School Belfast
- 5 February 2025 - St Kevin's College in Lisnaskea



- 3, 6 and 7 February 2025 - Breda Academy

A number of these sessions also involved pupils completing exercises extracted from the Police Cyber Escape Room. These related to phishing emails and digital footprints and promoted secure online security behaviours.

- On the 6 February 2025, the Cyber Prevent Officer attended a public meeting relating to 'Smartphone Free Childhood' chaired by Alex Easton MP.

A number of North Down school Principals, Chairs of Board of Governors and local MLA Peter Martin, were in attendance. The 'Smartphone Free Childhood' is a grassroots movement on a mission to keep childhood smartphone free and a number of speakers presented including professionals from Social Services, Paediatric Emergency Medicine as well as the PSNI Public Protection Branch.

Serious Crime Branch

Investigations

Major Investigation Team

- Detectives have arrested and charged a man with murder. This is in connection with a fatal assault in South Anne Street / Duke Lane Upper area of Dublin in the early hours of Saturday 15 February 2025.
- Detectives have charged a man with grievous bodily harm following a serious assault on Stephen Holmes in the Beechmount Village area of Strabane on Monday 3 February 2025. Mr Holmes died on Saturday 8 February 2025, as a result of his injuries. The charge has been reviewed and formally changed to murder.

Terrorism Investigation Unit

- Detectives have charged two men with collecting information likely to be of use to terrorists following an investigation into the activities of the New IRA.

Criminal Investigation Department

Detectives from our Criminal Investigation Department have:

- Charged a man with a number of offences including hijacking, threats to kill, kidnapping and assault on police, following the hijacking of a vehicle at Craigavon Area Hospital on Saturday 25 January 2025.
- Charged a man with grievous bodily harm with intent, theft and driving-related offences, including driving whilst disqualified, following a report of a serious assault in Limavady on Saturday 1 February 2025.
- Charged a man with impersonating a police officer and possession of a firearm with intent to cause fear of violence, following reports of a man armed with a gun approaching young female passengers travelling on the train from Hollywood on Monday 6 February 2025.
- Charged a man with arson with intent to endanger life, following a serious fire at a house in Cunningham's Lane area of Dungannon on Monday 3 February 2025. Four people had to be rescued from the house and were later hospitalised. A number of police officers were also taken to hospital for treatment.
- Charged a man with three counts of robbery, taking conveyance without authority and common assault. The robberies took place at three different



commercial premises in the Ballyronan, Coagh and Clonoe areas on Thursday 30 January 2025. The stolen vehicle was later found on fire at Drumcree Community Centre.

- Charged a man with a number of offences following a security alert in South Belfast on Wednesday 29 January 2025. A suspicious object believed to be an improvised grenade was found in Empire Street area.
- Charged a man with attempted murder following a report of an assault in Menin Road area of Antrim on Friday 24 January 25.



Outcome 2: Community Focused

Romance Fraud

Throughout the year, PSNI provides a focus on different types of fraud to help educate the public and help people keep themselves and their money safe from criminals.

In February, ahead of Valentine's Day, we had a particular focus on romance fraud. We shared the ordeal of a man from Northern Ireland who was deceived by a fraudster into giving more than £200,000 in a romance related fraud. In this particular case, the fraud was committed over a two-year period between 2020 and 2022. Having met online on a dating site, the man came to believe he was in a genuine relationship with a woman he trusted. Cruelly, however, this was a romance fraud; an ordeal which he says almost 'destroyed him'. Fortunately, he was able to get the money back but is still dealing with the horrendous emotional impact.

Figures show that between 1 January and 31 December 2024, there were 127 romance frauds with a total reported loss of £1,083,007. By sharing this real life example, we hope to raise awareness of this type of fraud, which we believe it is under reported.

We understand people feel ashamed and may not want to report it, but our message is that you are not alone – help and support is available.

Anyone who has been affected by romance fraud is strongly encouraged to report it to ourselves, Action Fraud and, most importantly, to their bank, especially if they have lost money.

Sexual Abuse and Sexual Violence Awareness Week

The third to ninth February marked the national Sexual Abuse and Sexual Violence Awareness Week campaign. This year we concentrated our awareness raising messaging towards a younger audience.

Between January and December 2024, there were 329 recorded online sexual offences where the victim was under the age of 18.

The online world is ever evolving and has rapidly grown. We are seeing more young people in digital spaces than ever before and, similar to physical spaces, there is risk online of someone with bad intentions targeting their vulnerability.

During the week we took to social media to raise awareness of the dangers online, with particular focus on 'groomers' who hide their identity and may pretend to be the same age as a child. They may use fake profiles, pretending to have similar interests to gain the trust of the child before steering the conversation to a sexual nature. Once trust is established, a groomer may use power and control to force, blackmail, guilt or trick a child into doing what they want.

We want to continue to make it clear that it is a crime for anyone to possess, make, distribute or show anyone an indecent image of a child under 18 years of age. We also raised awareness of our specialist detectives within the Child Internet Protection Team who are dedicated to robustly investigating those who contribute to the cycle of child abuse and bringing those responsible before the courts.

Outcome 3: Workforce Focused

Career Development

Not only have we recommenced our external recruitment process for student officers but our live internal Inspector and Sergeant promotion processes are the first since 2021. These enable career development opportunities for our officers and ensure our management teams are adequately resourced to support our workforce and deliver for the public.

As an organisation, we want to be an employer of choice and establish regular promotion processes. To ensure we have fair and consistent selection processes, identify the best candidates for the job and improve candidate experience, we have incorporated feedback, presented in the Cultural Audit, in how we run these selection events.

We have also recently completed an internal promotion process for police staff grade 'E02'. The methodology was designed and agreed in conjunction with NIPSA. An external provider assisted in administering a range of online selection tests to ensure we are assessing the range of key skills and competencies needed for these important first line supervisor roles. Candidates had a window of opportunity to take the tests at a day and time of their choosing. This aligns with our workforce focus. As a result, 146 people have been successful in the process, providing us with a solid merit list for appointments for the next 12 months

Problem Solving Awards

The PSNI Problem Solving Awards 2025 took place on Wednesday 19 February at the Harbour Commissioner's Office, Belfast, supported by colleagues from Belfast Harbour Police.

The ethos of the awards is to pause and reflect on the fantastic problem solving work ongoing across Northern Ireland, and within our own organisation. There were seven award categories: Probationary Officer, Delivering for Communities, Partnerships, Serious Crime, Enhancing Service Delivery, Policing and Community Safety Partnerships and Innovation; with all finalists going above and beyond to come up with new and innovative ways to solve a variety of issues.

The judges selected the Serious Crime category winners, **Predatory Money Lending**, as their overall winner and recipient of The Chenery Award for excellence in Problem Solving. This award is named after Sylvia Chenery who has been key in embedding problem solving within the PSNI. Members of the team will now have the opportunity to attend the National Problem Solving Conference and Tilley Awards in Sheffield in October this year.

Now in their third year, the awards were partnered with Northern Ireland Policing Board and event sponsors Fujitsu, Selectamark DNA, Police Crime Prevention Initiatives and Sodexo. Tim McGarry compered the event and provided great entertainment throughout the evening. We would like to take this opportunity to pay thanks to them all for their support.



International Women's Day

PSNI marked International Women's Day with a Conference on the theme of **#Accelerate Action**. The event, delivered in partnership with the Belfast Harbour Police, Belfast Harbour Commissioner, the Police Service of Northern Ireland and the PSNI Women's Police Association (WPA), took place in the Belfast Harbour Commissioners Office on 3 March 2025. The packed agenda included both external and internal speakers and was supported by The Harp and Crown Credit Union and the Police Federation of NI.

As part of the event, the WPA formally launched their Inspire Awards, which recognises the contributions of Inspirational women within the PSNI.

psni.police.uk

