

Geraldine Hanna
Commissioner Designate for
Victims of Crime
Block 1, Knockview Buildings
Stormont Estate
Belfast
BT4 3SJ

Criminal Justice Inspectorate NI

C/o Roisin Devlin

Via email

RE: Adult Safeguarding Inspection

Dear Roisin,

I welcome the opportunity to provide input into the above inspection of the criminal justice system in Northern Ireland.

While the scope of the inspection, as outlined in the Terms of Reference, is broad and covers a multitude of significant areas, there are a number of key areas of concern that I would like to highlight and that should be covered as part of the inspection. These are outlined below:

- Older people's experience of crime: where PSNI identify an adult at risk are they making a referral into the relevant Health Trust in the same way they would for a child at risk. Our understanding is that the responsibility and understanding is greater for child safeguarding. It may be helpful to speak with expert professionals in this field to gain a deeper understanding of the issues / gaps and areas requiring improvements. I would recommend speaking with Marcella Leonard and the Safeguarding Board NI in the first instance.
- The Adult Protection Bill, introduced to the Assembly in June 2025, seeks to improve how public bodies and establishments identify, respond to and prevent harm where they believe there is reasonable cause to suspect an individual meets the criteria of an "adult at risk". It places duties on parties such as health and social care trusts, the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI), the Public Health Agency (PHA), the Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority (RQIA), independent providers, and social workers, among others, to act to protect an adult at risk of harm. It would strengthen the powers of these agencies and staff within these bodies to intervene and investigate incidences where they suspect an adult is at risk of harm. COPNI's [Beyond Good Intentions](#) review of this Bill has also identified a number of areas of concern when it comes to the rights and protection of adults at risk of harm.

- Criminality in Care Homes – Ref Mr. John O'Reilly who died as a result of another patient's actions in a dementia care home despite the Health Trust being aware of previous incidents with the same patient with a history of aggressive behaviour and no action taken to address the matter or inform family members. This feeds into the perceptions that such incidents of failures in adult safeguarding are not taken as seriously as child safeguarding. It also causes me to wonder what training is provided to staff to help them to recognise adults with care and support needs as potential victims or witnesses needing safeguarding.
- This leads on to a question about the practical effectiveness of the Joint Protocol for investigation of cases between PSNI and HSCB. Where does the responsibility lie in cases like this where there is an adult in need of protection and at risk of harm. Also what efforts are taken to ensure that, where appropriate, victims are consulted about how safeguarding decisions may affect their participation in the justice process, particularly where the alleged offender is a family member or carer.
- Finally, it would be worthwhile for this inspection, if it fits within the remit, to examine how Justice organisations who employ third parties to provide services ensure appropriate safeguarding policies and accountability frameworks are in place. We can see from the current PSNI investigation into the Presbyterian Church of Ireland that this body runs certain facilities which work with offenders. It is therefore important that as funders they seek assurances as to how Adult Safeguarding is managed when third party bodies are commissioned.

Should you have any queries or require any clarification on the points raised above, please get in touch via policy@cvocni.org

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in purple ink, appearing to read "Geraldine Hanna", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Geraldine Hanna
Commissioner Designate for Victims of Crime