



Police  
Remuneration Review Body

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Tenth Report on Northern Ireland 2024

*Chair:* Zoë Billingham CBE





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Presented to the Minister of Justice for Northern Ireland

26 June 2024

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# Police Remuneration Review Body

## Terms of Reference<sup>1</sup>

The Police Remuneration Review Body<sup>2</sup> (PRRB) provides independent recommendations to the Home Secretary and to the Northern Ireland Minister of Justice on the hours of duty, leave, pay, allowances and the issue, use and return of police clothing, personal equipment and accoutrements for police officers of or below the rank of chief superintendent and police cadets in England and Wales, and Northern Ireland respectively.

In reaching its recommendations the Review Body must have regard to the following considerations:

- the particular frontline role and nature of the office of constable in British policing;
- the prohibition on police officers being members of a trade union or withdrawing their labour;
- the need to recruit, retain and motivate suitably able and qualified officers;
- the funds available to the Home Office, as set out in the Government's departmental expenditure limits, and the representations of police and crime commissioners and the Northern Ireland Policing Board in respect of local funding issues;
- the Government's wider public sector pay policy;
- the Government's policies for improving public services;
- the work of the College of Policing;
- the work of police and crime commissioners;
- relevant legal obligations on the police service in England and Wales and Northern Ireland, including anti-discrimination legislation regarding age, gender, race, sexual orientation, religion and belief, and disability;
- the operating environments of different forces, including consideration of the specific challenges of policing in rural or large metropolitan areas and in Northern Ireland, as well as any specific national roles which forces may have;
- any relevant legislative changes to employment law which do not automatically apply to police officers;
- that the remuneration of the remit group relates coherently to that of chief officer ranks.

The Review Body should also be required to consider other specific issues as directed by the Home Secretary and/or the Northern Ireland Minister of Justice, and should be required to take account of the economic and other evidence submitted by the Government, professional representatives and others.

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<sup>1</sup> The terms of reference were set by the Home Office following a public consultation – Implementing a Police Pay Review Body – The Government's Response, April 2013.

<sup>2</sup> The Police Remuneration Review Body was established by the Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014, and became operational in September 2014.

It is also important for the Review Body to be mindful of developments in police officer pensions to ensure that there is a consistent, strategic and holistic approach to police pay and conditions.

Reports and recommendations of the Review Body should be submitted to the Home Secretary, the Prime Minister and the Minister of Justice (Northern Ireland), and they should be published.

## **Members<sup>3</sup> of the Review Body**

Zoë Billingham (Chair) CBE

Andrew Bliss QPM

Professor Monojit Chatterji

Richard Childs QPM

Mark Hoble JP

Patrick McCartan CBE

Trevor Reaney CBE

The secretariat is provided by the OPRB.

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<sup>3</sup> Members of the Review Body are appointed through an open competition adhering to the Commissioner for Public Appointments' Code of Practice. Available at:  
[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/578090/Public\\_Appointments\\_Governance\\_Code\\_.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/578090/Public_Appointments_Governance_Code_.pdf) [Accessed on 31 May 2024]

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## List of Abbreviations

ASHE	Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings
CPI	Consumer Prices Index
CPIH	Consumer Prices Index including owner occupiers' housing costs
CRTP	Competence Related Threshold Payment
CSR	Comprehensive Spending Review
DCI	Detective Chief Inspector
DOF	Department of Finance
DOJ	Department of Justice
FTE	Full-time Equivalent
FYE	Financial Year Ending
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HMICFRS	His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services
HMRC	HM Revenue & Customs
LFS	Labour Force Survey
MPS	Metropolitan Police Service
NIAC	Northern Ireland Affairs Committee
NIFC	Northern Ireland Fiscal Council
NIPB	Northern Ireland Policing Board
NISRA	Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency
NITA	Northern Ireland Transitional Allowance
NPCC	National Police Chiefs' Council
OBR	Office for Budget Responsibility
OPRB	Office for the Pay Review Bodies
ONS	Office for National Statistics
PAYE	Pay As You Earn
PFNI	Police Federation for Northern Ireland
PRRB	Police Remuneration Review Body
PSA	Police Superintendents' Association
PSNI	Police Service of Northern Ireland
RTI	Real Time Information
SANI	Superintendents' Association of Northern Ireland
TVP	Targeted Variable Pay
UK	United Kingdom



## Foreword

This is our Tenth Report to the Department of Justice for Northern Ireland. The Justice Minister's remit letter of 26 February 2024 asked us to commence our annual review of PSNI officers in conjunction with that for police officers in England and Wales and make a recommendation on how to apply the pay award for 2024/25 for police officers in the PSNI up to and including the chief superintendent rank.

On our visits to the PSNI each year we are struck by the dedication and determination of the officers we meet. These officers are committed to giving the best possible service to the public and many do so at considerable personal risk.

The fundamental principle of parity with England and Wales has been particularly important in the complex political and budgetary environment of Northern Ireland this year. As we have made clear in previous years, we define parity as meaning the same pay scale and allowances across the police service in England, Wales and Northern Ireland to reflect the fact that the role of police officer is fundamentally the same across all three areas, while also recognising the need for variation in geographical allowances to reflect exceptional local conditions. This means that from a Northern Ireland perspective, the Northern Ireland Transitional Allowance (NITA), which is unique to Northern Ireland, is the one allowance excluded from the parity principle. As we have stated previously, on all non-geographical allowances the PSNI should plan for convergence with England and Wales. Therefore, in the context of the parity principle, we again urge the Northern Ireland parties to further the convergence process on pay and allowances with England and Wales.

We note the concerns raised not just by all our parties but also by independent commentators such as the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee about the severity of the PSNI's funding situation. While the reduction in the security threat level to 'SUBSTANTIAL' is encouraging, we note that the PSNI faces increasing complexity of demand with the lowest ever number of police officers. Of particular concern to us is the impact of this situation on the PSNI's neighbourhood policing function.

In our 2022 and 2023 Reports, we highlighted the unusual volatility of the economic climate. We expressed our concern about the impact of the rising cost of living on police officers, especially the lower paid. The annual rate of increase in the Consumer Prices Index (CPI) was 8.7% in April 2023 – the latest available data when we considered our recommendations for the 2023 pay award – and 6.7% in September 2023 at the start of the police pay year. The CPIH rate (including owner occupiers' housing costs) was 7.8% and 6.3% in these months respectively. In April 2024, the annual CPI rate was 2.3% and the CPIH rate was 3.0%, although we note that the Bank of England expects inflation to increase in the second half of the year. However, the financial hardship experienced by many officers will continue, as most prices have not fallen and the impact of the last few years' economic instability on mortgages and other loans is still being felt. This will inevitably affect officers' morale and motivation.

In the year to April 2024, median earnings in Northern Ireland had increased by 6.8% compared with a year earlier, and, in the context of pay parity, annual growth in Average Weekly Earnings excluding bonuses was 5.9% in the private sector in Great Britain for the three months to March 2024. In the three months to April 2024, the latest estimates for median pay settlements across the UK were around 5%.

In reaching our pay award recommendation, we gave weight to the fact that police officers are prohibited from taking industrial action. We recognise that other public sector workforces in Northern Ireland have experienced prolonged delays with their pay awards because of the particular political and budgetary context. However, we also observe that police officers provide invaluable support to their many public sector partners and that we have a moral obligation to deliver a fair and just pay award for our remit group because they do not have the right to take industrial action.

In the context of the fundamental principle of pay parity and considering all the factors set out above, as well as our terms of reference, we conclude that a 4.75% annual uplift to all ranks up to and including chief superintendent is the most suitable approach. In addition, in order to attract high-calibre candidates and help address the financial pressures on the most junior ranks, we also recommend that the Chief Constable of Northern Ireland is given the discretion to set the starting pay for new constables in the PSNI at either pay point 1 or pay point 2 on the constable pay scale, in line with our recommendation for England and Wales.

In our view, the practical ramifications and impact on morale for PSNI officers experiencing repeated lengthy delays in the payment of their annual pay award and increments are too great to go unaddressed. Because of the delay in responding to our 2023 Report, the PSNI officers in our remit group did not receive their 2023/24 pay award until the end of April 2024. We regard this delay of eight months as completely unacceptable, especially as they had received their previous pay award six months late.

PSNI officers have also been experiencing lengthy delays in the payment of their increments since 2021 but, because of a decision taken this year to separate increments from the annual pay award, the delay was reduced to two months. However, we were concerned to learn that this more timely payment of increments had been approved just this once. We consequently recommend again the introduction of a police regulation in Northern Ireland on police officer increments to ensure that they are paid on time.

Zoë Billingham (Chair)  
Andrew Bliss  
Monojit Chatterji  
Richard Childs

Mark Hoble  
Patrick McCartan  
Trevor Reaney

*26 June 2024*

# **POLICE REMUNERATION REVIEW BODY**

## **Northern Ireland Tenth Report 2024**

### **Executive Summary**

**Our 2024/25 recommendations (from 1 September 2024):**

- 1. A consolidated increase of 4.75% to all police officer pay points for all ranks up to and including chief superintendent.**
- 2. The Chief Constable of Northern Ireland be given the discretion to set the starting salary for new constables in the PSNI at either pay point 1 or pay point 2 on the constable pay scale.**
- 3. The introduction of a police regulation in Northern Ireland on police officer increments to ensure that they are paid on time.**
- 4. That all constables receive their first pay increment exactly twelve months from when they first join the service.**
- 5. An increase of 4.75% in the current level of the Northern Ireland Transitional Allowance (NITA).**
- 6. Dog Handlers' Allowance be uprated by 4.75% and the additional rate for officers with more than one dog be raised from 25% to 50% of the rate for the first dog.**
- 7. The DOJ plans for convergence on allowances with England and Wales alongside the phased removal of the Competence Related Threshold Payment (CRTP) in a way that mitigates the impact on overall pay for officers currently receiving CRTP. We ask that the DOJ submits by 30 November 2024 a full proposal, with a firm timeline, for delivering this. We recommend that the current level of the CRTP does not increase.**
- 8. The On-call Allowance for evenings and weekends in the PSNI be increased from £20 to £25 as an interim measure pending the outcome of the National Police Chiefs' Council's review of allowances in 2024/25.**
- 9. The time it takes the federated ranks in the PSNI to reach the maximum annual leave entitlement of 30 days be reduced from 20 to 10 years. Implementation of this change to be in line with the proposals put forward for England and Wales by the National Police Chiefs' Council. In advance of that, we also recommend that from September 2024 the annual leave for probationary officers in the PSNI is increased from 22 to 25 days.**

1. We received our remit letter from the Minister of Justice on 26 February 2024 asking us to commence our annual review of PSNI officers in conjunction with that for

police officers in England and Wales. The letter asked us to make a recommendation on how to apply the pay award for 2024/25 for police officers in the PSNI up to and including the chief superintendent rank, as well as for the NITA and the Dog Handlers' Allowance.

2. The nature of the challenges facing the police service and its officers is changing. Officers, particularly those on the frontline, have always been required to deal with difficult and dangerous issues often at a risk to their own personal safety. In the PSNI, the lowest ever headcount and increasing complexity of demand are placing great pressures on our remit group. During this review, we have been struck by officers' sense of vocation and public service and we would again like to acknowledge our remit group for their contribution this year, particularly in the very difficult current context.
3. Central to our report is concern about the acute financial challenge facing the PSNI that has arisen from the overall budgetary position of the Department of Justice and the Northern Ireland Executive in 2024/25. The situation is already affecting many aspects of the PSNI's work, including its ability to recruit officers or provide a neighbourhood policing function and it is putting at risk the overall operational effectiveness of the organisation.
4. We continue to uphold the principle of parity on pay and allowances with England and Wales. This is at the request of the Northern Ireland parties. We define parity as meaning the same pay scales and allowances across the police service in England, Wales and Northern Ireland to reflect the fact that the role of police officer is fundamentally the same across all three areas, while also recognising the need for variation in geographical allowances to reflect exceptional local conditions. From a Northern Ireland perspective, this means that the NITA, which is unique to Northern Ireland, is the one allowance excluded from the parity principle. On all non-geographical allowances, the PSNI should plan for convergence with England and Wales.
5. In the context of this parity principle, we therefore ask the Northern Ireland parties to become involved in and influence the Comprehensive Review of police remuneration that we have recommended in our England and Wales report, and to continue to engage with the National Police Chiefs' Council's review of allowances. This will also support the convergence process on PSNI pay and allowances with England and Wales in the context of parity.
6. The main areas of difference on pay and allowances between Northern Ireland and England and Wales are set out in Table 1. A fuller list can be found at Appendix G.

**Table 1: Main areas of difference on pay and allowances between Northern Ireland and England and Wales**

	England and Wales	Northern Ireland
C RTP	Phased abolition by April 2016.	£1,224. Pensionable. Phased abolition awaited, as proposed in DOJ-commissioned review of allowances in 2022.
Unsocial Hours Allowance	Introduced from 2012. 10% of hourly rate of pay for every full hour worked between 8pm and 6am.	Not introduced.
Timing of receipt of first constable increment	Constables receive their first increment exactly 12 months after joining the police.	From 2023/24: Constables receive their first increment 12 months and 21 weeks after joining the PSNI. (Previously from 2019: Constables received their first increment 2 years and 21 weeks after joining the PSNI.)
Bonus payments	All ranks (£50-£2,000). Payments where the chief officer is satisfied an officer has performed work of an outstandingly demanding, unpleasant or important nature.	All ranks (£50-£500).

7. Our previous report was completed during a period of significant economic uncertainty and the officers in our remit group have continued to experience the consequences. In Chapter 2, we consider government pay policy and the performance of the wider economy and labour market before examining indicators on changes in the policing workforce and environment in Northern Ireland, as well as PSNI officer recruitment, retention, motivation and morale. The chapter sets out long-term changes to police earnings and the workforce. The Consumer Prices Index (CPI) rate of inflation was 6.7% in the year to September 2023, and was 2.3% in the year to April 2024.
8. The extensive budgetary uncertainties and pressures on the PSNI and the continuing reductions in police officer numbers make an assessment of the affordability of pay rise recommendations very challenging this year. While we are cognisant of the extremely difficult situation that the PSNI faces, we would not properly discharge our remit if we were to base our recommendations on pre-determined budgetary considerations alone, rather than the needs of the police service, especially given continuing economic uncertainty and cost-of-living pressures.
9. In Chapter 3 of our report we summarise the issues that we took into account in making our recommendation for a basic pay award for police officers in 2024/25 and for changes to police allowances. As requested by all the Northern Ireland parties, we have focused first and foremost on upholding the principle of parity with England and Wales on pay and allowances, while also noting that the affordability implications of the parity principle pose greater challenges for the PSNI than for

police forces in England and Wales. Looking across Government as a whole, we observe that there is inevitably flexibility in all funding arrangements.

10. We also consider the performance of the economy and the impacts on our remit group of high inflation which we mention above. Although the rate of inflation is falling, most prices, with the exception of energy prices, are not. We also took the prohibition on police officers taking industrial action into account. In addition, we observe that the particular combination in Northern Ireland of growing complexity of demand and a shrinking workforce make it vital that the PSNI is able to use appropriate pay and reward structures to attract recruits and retain officers from diverse backgrounds with the right motivations and attitudes. We also note that we sensed a decline in officer morale after a particularly tumultuous year for the PSNI.
11. After taking the above factors into account including the principle of parity, we conclude that an annual pay award in 2024 of 4.75% across all ranks up to and including chief superintendent is the most suitable approach. We uphold the principle of parity by making the same pay recommendation for Northern Ireland as England and Wales.
12. To assist with recruitment, we also recommend that the Chief Constable of Northern Ireland is given the discretion to set starting pay for constables at either pay point 1 or pay point 2 on the constable pay scale, again in line with our recommendation for England and Wales.
13. We stress our concerns this year about the cumulative damage caused to officers' morale by repeated delays to the annual pay award and continuing uncertainty over the timing of salary increments. We therefore recommend again the introduction of a police regulation to ensure that police officer increments in Northern Ireland are paid on time and received after one year. This includes the first constable increment. This accords with the principle of parity with England and Wales.
14. We also set out our recommendations on police officer allowances. These include uprating the NITA and the Dog Handlers' Allowance by 4.75% in line with the basic pay award and raising the additional rate for officers with more than one dog to 50% of the rate for the first dog.
15. On CRTP, we recommend that the current level of the CRTP does not increase. Restating our clear definition of parity on all non-geographical allowances (so excepting the NITA), we recommend that the DOJ plans for convergence on allowances with England and Wales alongside the phased removal of the CRTP in a way that mitigates the impact on overall pay for officers currently receiving CRTP. We ask that the DOJ submits by 30 November 2024 a full proposal, with a firm timeline, for delivering this. We also recommend that the current level of the CRTP does not increase.

16. We also recommend increasing the On-call Allowance for evenings and weekends from £20 to £25 for all the officers in our remit group in Northern Ireland.
17. Finally, in our Forward Look (Chapter 4) we set out the issues of particular interest to us in future pay rounds. In particular, we ask for the Northern Ireland parties to update us next year on our request to them to become involved in and influence the Comprehensive Review of police remuneration that we have recommended in our 2024 England and Wales report.



# Chapter 1 – Introduction

## Introduction

- 1.1 This is our Tenth Report on remuneration in the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI). It covers recommendations for the federated and superintending ranks, as requested in our remit letter this year.

## Our Ninth Report 2023

- 1.2 Our Ninth Report was submitted to the Department of Justice for Northern Ireland on 20 June 2023 (Appendix A). It contained the following recommendations on Northern Ireland police officer pay and allowances:
- A consolidated increase of 7% to all police officer pay points for all ranks up to and including assistant chief constable.
  - The introduction of a police regulation in Northern Ireland on police officer increments to ensure that they are paid on time.
  - The removal of pay point 0 of the constable pay scale.
  - All constables to move to pay point 2 after twelve months at pay point 1, as in England and Wales.
  - Point 3 of the chief superintendent pay scale to be uplifted by £2,838 from 1 September 2023 and £2,837 from 1 September 2024. These uplifts are to be made before the application of the respective pay awards for these years.

In line with recommendations on chief constable and deputy chief constable pay in the PRRB England and Wales Ninth Report we recommended:

- A consolidated increase of 5% to the PSNI chief constable pay point from 1 September 2023.
- A consolidated increase of 6.4% to the PSNI deputy chief constable pay point from 1 September 2023 to set it at 82.5% of the chief constable pay point.

On allowances we recommended:

- An increase of 7% in the current level of the Northern Ireland Transitional Allowance (NITA) from 1 September 2023.
- Dog Handlers' Allowance to be uprated by 7%.
- That the current level of the Competence Related Threshold Payment (CRTP) does not increase and that, by 30 November 2023, the DOJ submits a full proposal with a firm timeline for the removal of CRTP and convergence with allowances in England and Wales, in the context of parity.

- 1.3 On 27 March 2024, the Minister of Justice accepted our pay recommendation of a consolidated 7% pay increase for 2023/24 for all ranks up to and including assistant chief constable. She also accepted the following recommendations:
- The removal of pay point 0 of the constable pay scale.
  - Point 3 of the chief superintendent pay scale to be uplifted by £2,838 from 1 September 2023 and £2,837 from 1 September 2024.
  - A consolidated increase of 5% to the PSNI Chief Constable pay point from 1 September 2023.
  - A consolidated increase of 6.4% to the PSNI Deputy Chief Constable pay point from 1 September 2023 to set it at 82.5% of the Chief Constable pay point.
  - Dog Handlers' Allowance to be uprated by 7%.
  - All constables to move to pay point 2 after twelve months on pay point 1, as is already the case in England and Wales.
  - An increase of 7% in the current level of the Northern Ireland Transitional Allowance (NITA) from 1 September 2023.
- 1.4 We discuss in paragraph 1.16 below our recommendations where responses are still outstanding.
- 1.5 We were very disappointed that, for a further year, implementation of our pay award recommendation in 2023/24 was delayed, and we discuss our concerns in more detail at paragraph 1.14 onwards and again in Chapter 3. However, we note that this time a decision was taken to separate police officers' annual increments from the annual pay uplift. Consequently, our remit group received their incremental payments at the end of November 2023 (so two months late).

## **2024/25 remit**

- 1.6 In her letter of 26 February 2024, the Minister of Justice asked us, in line with "the principle of broad alignment", to formally commence the 2024/25 pay round for police officers in the PSNI in conjunction with that for police officers in England and Wales. She asked us how to consider how to apply the pay award for 2024/25 for police officers up to and including the chief superintendent rank, as well as the regular elements of the NITA and the Dog Handlers' Allowance. The Minister of Justice separately remitted consideration of pay for chief police officers in Northern Ireland to the Senior Salaries Review Body.

## **Our approach to the 2024 round**

- 1.7 We have reached recommendations and made observations this year following our close examination of the evidence from a range of sources. These include: the written evidence submissions from our parties and the subsequent oral evidence discussions; the remit letter from the Minister of Justice; our analyses of police

workforce and pay statistics; the economic and labour market context; and external independent reports on various matters in Northern Ireland. The principle of parity on pay and allowances with England and Wales also strongly guided our work.

- 1.8 During the 2024 round, we considered the Northern Ireland evidence alongside that from England and Wales. This highlighted to us the depth of the PSNI's budgetary issues compared to police forces in England and Wales and the particular challenges to the parity principle arising from the PSNI's affordability position. We note that the DOJ's budget for 2024/25 was 22% below its requirement and that this very large shortfall is impacting greatly on the PSNI.
- 1.9 In addition, we have taken into account the prohibition on police officers taking industrial action and the strong moral obligation therefore placed on us to deliver a fair, just and equitable pay award. We note that in the last two years in particular, industrial action has led to instances of significant additional pay awards in the public sector.

## **The principle of parity on pay and allowances**

- 1.10 We continue to uphold the principle of parity on pay and allowances with England and Wales. We define parity as meaning the same pay scales and allowances across the police service in England, Wales and Northern Ireland to reflect the fact that the role of police officer is fundamentally the same across all three areas, while also recognising the need for variation in geographical allowances to reflect exceptional local conditions. From a Northern Ireland perspective, this means that the NITA, which is unique to Northern Ireland, is the one allowance excluded from the parity principle. On all non-geographical allowances, the PSNI should plan for convergence with England and Wales. We provide this explanation here because the issue of parity arises several times in our report.

### *Our visit*

- 1.11 We visited PSNI officers in Derry and Strabane on 6 and 7 February 2024. We are very grateful to all those who took the time to speak to us. The main themes that arose were:
- All officers were awaiting the 2023/24 pay award outcome and many expressed deep frustration at the delay in receiving their pay award.
  - Morale levels seemed lower than on previous visits. Damage to morale had been compounded by a range of factors including the PSNI data breach, the increase in the cost of living, the delay to the 2023 pay award and the difficulties of policing with the lowest ever headcount while addressing increasingly complex demand.
  - Many officers posted to Derry and Strabane stayed for as short a time as possible, including those promoted substantively.

- Many officers reported lengthy journeys to work, of typically 120-130 miles a day and high fuel costs. Only a minority of officers were considered to have a reasonable journey to work.
- The preponderance of lengthy temporary promotions over substantive promotions arose for a range of reasons but fundamentally because of difficulties in recruiting locally.
- Sickness levels were particularly high, which placed additional pressure on remaining officers. The repeated combination of shift, overtime and commute seemed unsustainable.
- There was tension between the need to live far enough from Derry and Strabane to ensure personal safety but close enough to ensure effective, preventative policing through sustained community connections.

### *Written evidence*

1.12 We received written evidence in March 2024 from the parties listed below. We are very grateful to all the parties for helping us complete this report in accordance with the desired timetable. Summaries of the key points from each party's written evidence can be found in Appendix C. Links to the parties' websites are provided in Annex D.

- the Department of Justice (DOJ) and Department of Finance (DOF);
- the Northern Ireland Policing Board (NIPB);
- the PSNI;
- the Police Federation for Northern Ireland (PFNI); and
- the Superintendents' Association of Northern Ireland (SANI).

1.13 We held four oral evidence sessions in Belfast with the parties in April 2024. We are grateful to the PFNI for submitting written evidence this year but regret that once again they did not participate in oral evidence due to their ongoing concerns about the pay review process. We very much hope that the PFNI will participate fully next time.

### **Process issues**

1.14 Because of the delay in the response to our 2023 Report, the PSNI officers in our remit group did not receive their 2023/24 pay award until the end of April 2024. We regard this delay of eight months as completely unacceptable, especially as they had received their previous pay award six months late. Furthermore, it meant that our Northern Ireland parties had to submit their proposals to us for the 2024/25 pay award without confirmation of the pay award for the previous year.

1.15 The annual pay award for PSNI officers has been subjected to delay for each of the last five years (Table 1.1). We are extremely concerned at the impact of this on

morale levels in our remit group, particularly in the current economic context. We note that these delays have not occurred in England and Wales policing.

**Table 1.1: Delays in implementation of the pay award and annual increments for PSNI officers**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Pay award</b>	<b>Annual increments</b>
2019/20	6 months	Paid on time
2020/21	4 months	Paid on time
2021/22	7 months	7 months
2022/23	6 months	6 months
2023/24	8 months	2 months

Source: PFNI written evidence submission, March 2024.

1.16 Furthermore, on submitting our 2024 Report, responses to the following 2023 recommendations are still outstanding:

- The introduction of a police regulation in Northern Ireland on police officer increments to ensure that they are paid on time.
- That the current level of the Competence Related Threshold Payment (CRTP) does not increase and that, by 30 November 2023, the DOJ submits a full proposal with a firm timeline for the removal of CRTP and convergence with allowances in England and Wales, in the context of parity.

## **Environment for our considerations**

1.17 Our report was completed during a further period of significant economic uncertainty. Other important developments were the restoration of the Northern Ireland Executive in February 2024 and the reduction in the security level in Northern Ireland from 'SEVERE' to 'SUBSTANTIAL' in March 2024. We discuss the Northern Ireland policing environment further in Chapter 2.

1.18 The work of police officers is important, difficult, complex and often dangerous. We would again like to acknowledge our remit group for their contribution this year.

1.19 Chapter 2 provides a summary of the main evidence from the parties, sets out this year's overall policing context and provides our analysis of the issues. Chapter 3 contains our recommendations on the pay and allowances of police officers in Northern Ireland, as required by the remit letter. Chapter 4 looks ahead to the issues that we expect to inform our work next year.



## Chapter 2 – Analysis of the 2024/25 Evidence

### Introduction

- 2.1 In this chapter we analyse the key points in the evidence from the Northern Ireland parties as they relate to our standing terms of reference and to our remit letter from the DOJ in Northern Ireland. More detailed summaries of each party's evidence can be found in Appendix C. Our conclusions from the evidence and analysis in this chapter are carried forward to our consideration of pay proposals in Chapter 3 and our Forward Look in Chapter 4.

### Northern Ireland policing environment

#### *Demand on policing*

- 2.2 The Minister of Justice for Northern Ireland advised us in oral evidence that the financial situation in Northern Ireland and the pressures it placed on policing were extremely concerning, as was pressure placed on the justice system as a whole. In her view, the situation for the PSNI was complex and serious. She explained that people were falling through the public sector service delivery 'net' and that the PSNI had become the service of last resort. She added that officers were dealing with increasingly complex situations on the frontline and that a high proportion of emergency calls to the police came from people in distress and were not crime-related.
- 2.3 The PSNI told us that the majority of its demand arose from wellbeing issues, safeguarding and mental health. It told us it was engaging with England and Wales police forces where changes in the approach to certain requests for service were being made as part of the national Right Care, Right Person programme. It said it was doing this to understand best practices and learning and to ensure that the most appropriate response was available to those in need.
- 2.4 On 6 March 2024, the security threat level in Northern Ireland was reduced from 'SEVERE' to 'SUBSTANTIAL'<sup>4</sup>, meaning a terrorist attack was now likely (instead of highly likely). This brought the security threat level in Northern Ireland in line with the rest of the UK for all forms of terrorism. The DOJ explained in written evidence that the Government, police and security partners continued to work to address the threat posed by terrorism in all its forms and that police and prison officers were still considered targets for terrorist attacks. The PSNI advised us that 2023 was the first calendar year since records began (in 1969) in which no security-related deaths occurred.

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<sup>4</sup> The Northern Ireland security threat level was previously 'SUBSTANTIAL' from 22 March 2022 to 28 March 2023. It has otherwise been 'SEVERE' (since 2010).

- 2.5 The NIPB welcomed the reduction in the threat level but added that, while it would affect the PSNI's service operating model, it would make little difference to police officers' sense of personal safety. They would, for example, still need to check under their vehicle for explosive devices and carry a side-arm for personal protection.
- 2.6 The SANI told us that with technological advances, changing crime trends and increasing demand, expectations on officers had increased, including in the superintending ranks.
- 2.7 The DOJ pointed out that Northern Ireland in relative terms was a very safe place in which to live, socialise and work. It said that Northern Ireland had 55 recorded crimes per 1,000 people, compared with 98 per 1,000 in England and Wales. In oral evidence to us in May 2024, the Chief Constable emphasised the good performance rating received by the PSNI in inspections from both His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) and Criminal Justice Inspection Northern Ireland, and the positive feedback received from the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee. He said that while there was a clear and evident risk of police performance collapsing in current circumstances, it had not done so.
- 2.8 The PSNI confirmed in oral evidence that its biggest challenge was its reducing workforce while trying to meet changing and increasing complexity of demand. In local policing provision, the volume of calls from the public meant neighbourhood officers were being routinely diverted to response work.
- 2.9 On our visit to the PSNI in Derry and Strabane in February 2024, we learned that police legitimacy had been transformed through community relationship-building sustained over many years and the normalisation of neighbourhood policing (and even the introduction of officer patrols by bicycle). Engagement with external partners had proved to be a 'goldmine of opportunity' for addressing the causes and drivers of crime and anti-social behaviour and reducing harm in communities and demand on policing. However, for budgetary reasons there were now fewer community police officers and levels of abstraction from neighbourhood to response policing were high.

### *Report on Community Safety and Local Policing Arrangements in Northern Ireland*

- 2.10 The report on Community Safety and Local Policing Arrangements in Northern Ireland<sup>5</sup>, which was published by Criminal Justice Inspection Northern Ireland in March 2024, found that abstraction, or the withdrawal of police officers from their core function, was now the key defining contextual feature of neighbourhood

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<sup>5</sup> Criminal Justice Inspection Northern Ireland (March 2024), *An Inspection of Community Safety and Local Policing Arrangements in Northern Ireland*. Available at: <https://www.cjini.org/TheInspections/Inspection-Reports/2024/Jan-Mar/Community-Safety-and-Local-Policing-Inspection#:~:text=This%20inspection%20report%20makes%20one,for%20delivery%20in%20Northern%20Ireland>. [Accessed on 26 June 2024]

policing in the PSNI. Furthermore, knowledge of the scale of abstraction was lacking and there were inconsistencies in its application. While there was clear understanding of the importance of openness and transparency in interactions with the public (and community groups and representatives spoke highly of neighbourhood officers' visibility, accessibility, responsiveness and community focus), there were indications that this had started to reduce as officer numbers fell. Neighbourhood policing officers reported significant levels of job satisfaction, enjoyment and dedication to their communities, and, despite frustration at the lack of a career path in neighbourhood policing, few officers sought to leave. Nevertheless, abstraction levels meant almost all community groups voiced frustration regarding high officer turnover and a lack of continuity of police officers in local neighbourhoods.

### *Our comment on the Northern Ireland policing environment*

- 2.11 We were pleased to learn about the PSNI achieving good inspection ratings in the face of highly challenging circumstances. However, we note with concern the risks to the PSNI's ability to manage overall demand that arise from the pressures placed on its neighbourhood policing function.
- 2.12 We also note the changing nature of demand on the police in Northern Ireland and that the PSNI's role in supporting wider public services in Northern Ireland is impacting on delivery across the service. This is concerning and we are encouraged that the PSNI is working with police forces in England and Wales on how wellbeing, safeguarding and mental health can be addressed with sensitivity.
- 2.13 The reduction in the security threat level to 'SUBSTANTIAL' (terrorist attack likely) from 'SEVERE' (highly likely) is an encouraging step in the right direction. However, we observe that the Northern Ireland policing environment is still very different from that generally found in England and Wales. Furthermore, while the level of danger varies widely across Northern Ireland, all PSNI officers are at risk, no matter where they live or serve.
- 2.14 We observe the emphasis of independent experts on the importance of neighbourhood policing to managing overall police demand and transforming levels of confidence in a post-conflict society. In this context we are concerned about reports of high and increasing levels of abstraction from neighbourhood to response policing in the PSNI.

## **Public sector pay policies and affordability**

### *HM Treasury public sector pay policy*

- 2.15 Evidence received from HM Treasury stressed that, although public sector borrowing and debt were forecast to fall, they were historically high, and discipline with the public finances was central to continuing to get borrowing down to levels

where debt could sustainably fall. It added that further significant borrowing would add to existing inflationary pressure.

#### *Northern Ireland budget*

- 2.16 In the 2024 UK Spring Budget, it was announced that the Northern Ireland Executive would receive around £100 million additional funding through the Barnett formula, in addition to a £3.3 billion spending settlement confirmed in February 2024.
- 2.17 The Northern Ireland budget for 2024/25 announced on 25 April 2024 reflected significant financial pressure across the Northern Ireland Executive. On publication, the Finance Minister said: “The stark reality is the demands on our finances far outstrip the funding available many times over.... The Executive recognises the need for transformation and the reform of our public services.... I will continue to make the case that we need to be provided with a multi-year budget which enables long-term planning for service delivery and have the appropriate powers to be able to deliver high quality public services and support workers and families.”<sup>6</sup>
- 2.18 The Northern Ireland Fiscal Council’s (NIFC) assessment of the Northern Ireland Executive’s 2024/25 Budget<sup>7</sup> said that public sector pay restraint, however unpopular and difficult, would improve the manageability of Northern Ireland public finances.

#### *Northern Ireland public sector pay policy*

- 2.19 The Northern Ireland public sector pay policy for 2024/25 was still awaited at the time of report submission. The Minister of Justice confirmed that she would not be able to consider the pay award for police officers until this was in place.

#### *The Department of Justice budget for 2024/25*

- 2.20 The Department of Justice budget of £1.26 billion for 2024/25 was announced on 25 April 2024 and confirmed on 28 May. The NIFC reported that, as the DOJ had received only 78.2% of its resource requirement for 2024/25, it would inevitably create a challenging budgetary environment for the department. This compared to Health and the Economy which, along with the minor departments, had received over 90% of the amount they had requested.
- 2.21 The Justice Minister advised the Justice Committee at Stormont that her department was historically underfunded. She explained that if the DOJ had simply received an inflationary uplift since 2011, it would not have unmet budget needs now. The

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<sup>6</sup> Department of Finance (25 April 2024), *Executive agrees 2024-25 Budget*. Available at: <https://www.finance-ni.gov.uk/news/executive-agrees-2024-25-budget> [Accessed on 26 June 2024]

<sup>7</sup> Northern Ireland Fiscal Council (May 2024), *The NI Executive’s 2024-25 Budget: an assessment*. Available at: <https://www.nifiscalcouncil.org/publications/ni-executives-2024-25-budget-assessment> [Accessed on 26 June 2024]

Minister told us that around two-thirds of the DOJ budget was typically accounted for by the PSNI.

### *The PSNI budget for 2024/25*

- 2.22 The Northern Ireland Chief Constable told us that the PSNI had not been funded properly for 14 years and that, taking inflation into account, the PSNI budget had decreased by 29% since 2010. He observed that, in the same period, the Northern Ireland health budget had increased by more than 89% and the education budget by more than 23%. He added that police officer pay in the Republic of Ireland had grown by 23% since 2020. He stressed that he was exploring various ways of protecting the PSNI's budget.
- 2.23 In April 2024 in oral evidence, the PSNI told us that for 2024/25 a 5% pay award had been estimated and factored into its financial planning. It added that the organisation had a £130 million deficit<sup>8</sup>.
- 2.24 We were advised that the PSNI draft budget allocation for 2024/25 received by the PSNI on 21 May 2024 provided the organisation with an additional £60.6 million above the 2023/24 baseline position of £759 million. The PSNI said that while the additional budget was welcome, it was still insufficient against the PSNI's resource requirement. It stated that the shortfall in funding for 2024/25, even after the additional funds of £60.6 million were received, was around £80 million. The Chief Constable explained to the NIPB in June 2024 that this presented an acute challenge over a short timeframe and that some difficult decisions lay ahead. However, the PSNI confirmed that the budget allocation covered the 7% pay award for the 2023/24 police officer pay year in its entirety. In addition, the DOJ had advised the PSNI that additional funding for a requirement to increase employer pension contributions might be available later in the year.

### *Commentary from others on the PSNI budget*

- 2.25 On 1 February 2024, the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee (NIAC) published a report on the effect of paramilitary activity and organised crime on society in Northern Ireland<sup>9</sup>. This expressed concern at the budgetary shortfall that the PSNI was facing. It said "fewer resources for the PSNI will inevitably lead to a reduction in its ability to tackle paramilitary activity. A slowing of investigations, reduction of intelligence gathering capabilities and smaller neighbour policing presence means a less secure Northern Ireland....Yet police numbers are falling and funding is inadequate". The NIAC recommended that the Government ensure that Northern

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<sup>8</sup> The PSNI explained subsequently that this included: £20 million for the 2023/24 pay award; £21.6 million for the 2024/25 pay award; £35.6 million for employer pension contributions for police officers; £3.4 million for overtime pressures; £6 million for ill-health retirements; £32.3 million for increases in non-pay business areas; and £11.1 million (other).

<sup>9</sup> Northern Ireland Affairs Committee (March 2024), *The effect of paramilitary activity and organised crime on society in Northern Ireland – Report Summary*. Available at: <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm5804/cmselect/cmniaf/43/summary.html> [Accessed on 26 June 2024]

Ireland received funding in 2024, and on a recurrent basis thereafter, to enable the PSNI to provide fair pay awards to officers and staff (and recommence officer recruitment and increase headcount to at least 7,500 officers).

- 2.26 The NIAC also observed that the Justice budget in Northern Ireland had risen by just 3% compared to respective increases of 70% and 45% for health and education over the last 12 years. It said: “We consider this level of funding to be unsustainable and propose that improved funding arrangements are put in place as soon as possible.”
- 2.27 In addition, the NIAC report published on 26 March 2024<sup>10</sup> stated that the PSNI operated under a different financial framework from policing in England and Wales: as a Non-Departmental Public Body directly funded by the Northern Ireland Executive, the PSNI had no access to a policing precept or the ability to carry forward or borrow. The NIAC said that the inability of the PSNI to carry forward any strategic reserves restricted the actions the PSNI could take to manage its finances.
- 2.28 Consequently, the NIAC made the following recommendation: “Given the severe funding situation which the PSNI faces, we urge a rethink by the Treasury, Northern Ireland Office and new Northern Ireland Executive of the PSNI’s financial framework. This would ensure that the PSNI has a greater variety of options in dealing with any financial difficulty in future, which is critical given the importance of the Police Service’s role in Northern Ireland’s post-conflict society”.
- 2.29 In its inspection report on PSNI effectiveness, efficiency, vetting and standards published in October 2023<sup>11</sup>, HMICFRS said that, unlike its counterparts in England and Wales, the PSNI received annual funding settlements with no ability to hold reserves. It said this made longer-term strategic planning difficult and stressed that the PSNI’s budget provision was expected to get worse.
- 2.30 HMICFRS summarised the likely consequences of a decrease in PSNI officer numbers as:
- a significant reduction in neighbourhood policing patrolling hours, meaning less visibility, problem-solving activity, engagement and reassurance for communities.
  - a reduced number of detectives and less experienced detectives. This will limit capacity for the development of intelligence and proactive investigation of

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<sup>10</sup> Northern Ireland Affairs Committee (March 2024), *The funding and delivery of public services in Northern Ireland*. Available at: <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm5804/cmselect/cmniaf/46/report.html> [Accessed on 26 June 2024]

<sup>11</sup> HMICFRS (October 2023), *The Police Service of Northern Ireland – An inspection of police effectiveness, efficiency, vetting and standards*. Available at: <https://hmicfrs.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/publications/psni-inspection-of-police-effectiveness-efficiency-vetting-and-standards/> [Accessed on 26 June 2024]

terrorism, organised crime and high harm offences such as rape, sexual assault and domestic abuse; and

- fewer specialist uniformed support officers will mean reduced capacity for proactive search operations, specialist resource deployment and less resilience to deal with significant public disorder.

#### *Our comment on public sector pay policies and affordability*

- 2.31 We note the strength of concern expressed by independent commentators about the overall affordability situation for the PSNI. We also note the NIAC's recommendation on the PSNI receiving fair funding in 2024 and each year thereafter. We observe that the PSNI is commencing 2024/25 with an £80 million shortfall, which includes an estimate for a 5% pay award.
- 2.32 It is clear that the overall fiscal position in Northern Ireland is extremely challenging, with the latest budget reflecting significant financial pressure across the Northern Ireland Executive. However, as we have pointed out in previous years, we would not properly discharge our remit if we were to base our recommendations on pre-determined budgetary considerations alone rather than the needs of the police service, including the other, sometimes competing, factors set out in our terms of reference, particularly in light of the economic volatility seen in recent years.

### **The economy and labour market**

- 2.33 HM Treasury highlighted that the economy had faced an unprecedented series of shocks in recent years, which had driven up inflation. It said the Bank of England had taken necessary action to bring inflation back to target, which was working, but had led to slower growth over the past 18 months. HM Treasury reported that, in light of these shocks, the economy had performed better than first expected and while inflation was now on a downward trend, it remained elevated and returning inflation to target remained a top priority for the Government.
- 2.34 All the parties in Northern Ireland emphasised the continuing cost-of-living challenges faced by police officers and the wider population, with the PSNI highlighting the particular impact on its student and probationary officers. The PSNI also pointed out that the Northern Ireland labour market was extremely competitive, with the number of vacancies continuing to increase. The PFNI noted increases in the CPI and CPIH inflation rates to January 2024. The SANI told us that the majority of PSNI officers successful in the police senior leaders' course were applying for chief officer posts in other forces in England and Wales and further afield to gain lateral development as well as higher pay.

## *Our comment on the economy and labour market*

2.35 We set out below the latest UK-wide and Northern Ireland economic and labour market indicators as at 31 May 2024, available to us when finalising our recommendations:

- *Inflation.* Inflation has been falling over the past year. The Consumer Prices Index (CPI) increased by 6.7% in the year to September 2023 (when the 2023 police pay award took effect), and the CPI including owner occupiers' housing costs (CPIH) increased by 6.3% over the same period. In the year to April 2024 the CPI increased by 2.3%, and the CPIH increased by 3.0%. Separate inflation figures are not available for Northern Ireland.
- Core CPI (which excludes the effects of price changes in energy, food and alcohol) was higher at 3.9% in the year to April 2024 and core CPIH was 4.4%.
- The Bank of England base interest rate has increased from 0.1% at the start of December 2021 to 5.25% since August 2023 to try to slow rising prices. Rising interest rates have a knock-on effect on mortgage payments over a long period.
- In its March 2024 Economic and Fiscal Outlook<sup>12</sup>, the OBR expected CPI inflation to reach the 2% target in the second quarter of 2024 and to fall to 1.4% in the fourth quarter of 2024.
- In its May 2024 Monetary Policy Report<sup>13</sup>, the Bank of England's median projection expected CPI inflation to fall temporarily to 2.1% in the second quarter of 2024, as energy prices fell, before increasing again to 2.4% in the third quarter and 2.8% in the fourth quarter, due to the persistence of domestic inflationary pressures.
- *Economic growth.* UK gross domestic product (GDP) figures showed that the UK economy increased by 0.1% over 2023 as a whole, but shrank in the last two quarters of 2023 (by 0.1% in the third quarter and 0.3% in the fourth quarter), thereby meeting the technical definition of a recession. The first quarterly estimate of GDP for 2024 showed that this recession had ended, with GDP in the first quarter of 2024 estimated to be 0.6% higher than the previous quarter and 0.2% higher than a year earlier. The Northern Ireland Composite Economic Index (broadly equivalent to the output measure of GDP) increased by 1.4% in 2023.
- In March 2024, the OBR estimated that annual GDP growth would pick up slightly to 0.8% in 2024. It considered that lower than expected inflation strengthened near-term growth prospects but that the medium-term economic

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<sup>12</sup> OBR (March 2024), *Economic and Fiscal Outlook*. Available at: <https://obr.uk/efo/economic-and-fiscal-outlook-march-2024/> [Accessed on 26 June 2024]

<sup>13</sup> Bank of England (May 2024), *Monetary Policy Report*. Available at: <https://www.bankofengland.co.uk/monetary-policy-report/2024/may-2024> [Accessed on 26 June 2024]

outlook remained challenging, in particular higher and rising levels of economic inactivity.

- **Labour market.** Pay As You Earn (PAYE) Real Time Information (RTI) data indicate that the number of UK employees on payrolls in April 2024 was 30.2 million, 0.4% higher than a year earlier but 0.3% lower than January 2024. In Northern Ireland the number of employees on payrolls in April 2024 was 1.3% higher than a year earlier but 0.2% lower than February 2024.
- At 71.8%, the Labour Force Survey<sup>14</sup> (LFS) employment rate for people aged 16 to 64 in Northern Ireland for the three months to March 2024 was the third lowest for any region in the UK (the rates for Wales and North East England were 69.6% and 69.1% respectively, while for the UK as a whole it was 74.5%). The LFS unemployment rate for people aged 16 and over was lower in Northern Ireland for the three months to March 2024 (2.1%) than any other region in the UK (4.3% for the UK as a whole) and also lower than in the Republic of Ireland (4.4% for the single month of April 2024<sup>15</sup>). The economic inactivity rate for people aged 16 to 64 in Northern Ireland was 26.6% in the three months to March 2024, the third highest for any region of the UK (the rates for Wales and North East England were 28.0% and 27.6% respectively, while for the UK as a whole it was 22.1%)<sup>16</sup>.
- **Earnings.** PAYE RTI data show that median earnings across the UK grew by 6.9% in the year to April 2024. Northern Ireland saw growth in median earnings of 6.8% over the same period. Median earnings in Northern Ireland were 7.9% below the UK median in April 2024. The difference is primarily due to significantly lower earnings in the private sector in Northern Ireland relative to the UK. In the context of pay parity, annual growth in Average Weekly Earnings in Great Britain was, excluding bonuses, 6.0% in the whole economy and 5.9% in the private sector in the three months to March 2024.
- **Pay settlements.** The latest estimates for median pay settlements across the UK in the three months to April 2024 were around 5.0%. Our analysis of Brightmine (formerly XpertHR) data indicates that just under half (49%) of pay awards so far in 2024 have been worth less than 5%, compared with less than one-quarter (23%) in 2023 and three-fifths (60%) in 2022.

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<sup>14</sup> The ONS advises that increased volatility of LFS estimates, resulting from smaller achieved sample sizes, means they should be treated with additional caution, and it recommends using them as part of a suite of labour market indicators.

<sup>15</sup> Central Statistics Office (May 2024), *Monthly Unemployment April 2024*. Available at <https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/p-mue/monthlyunemploymentapril2024/> [Accessed 26 June 2024]

<sup>16</sup> The employment rate measures the proportion of the population (aged 16 to 64) in employment; the unemployment rate gives the number of unemployed people (both looking for and available for work) as a proportion of the total number of people (aged 16 and over) either in work or unemployed; and the inactivity rate is the proportion of the population (aged 16 to 64) neither in employment nor unemployed. The different bases for the rates mean they do not add to 100%.

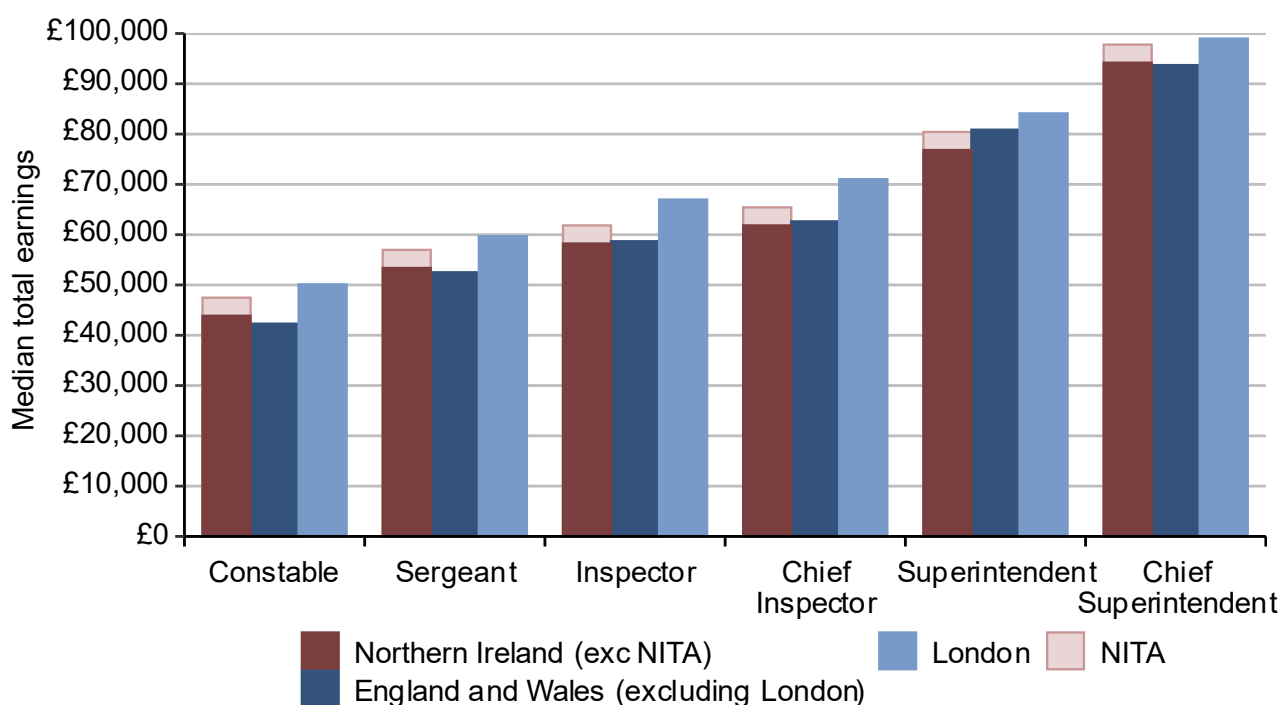
- 2.36 We observe that inflation levels have been particularly high over the last three years but have been falling over the past year. However, we emphasise that this only represents a slowing in the rate of overall price increases and not a fall in prices. Therefore, the effect of the recent high inflation will continue to be felt by officers in our remit group. The Bank of England also expects inflation to increase again in the second half of the year.
- 2.37 We also observe that measures of average earnings growth and median pay settlements have not fallen as quickly as inflation. Last year we gave particular weight to developments in private sector pay in considering our recommendations, and they continue to play an important role this year.

## **Police officer earnings**

### *Our analysis of police officer earnings*

- 2.38 Our full analysis of police earnings data is set out in Appendix E. This includes consideration of the differences between police officer earnings in Northern Ireland and England and Wales and the wider economy. It focuses on earnings comparisons that exclude the NITA, in recognition of the fact that the NITA is an allowance paid to police officers in Northern Ireland in acknowledgment of the challenges particular to the Northern Ireland policing environment and the restrictions faced there by officers and their families.
- 2.39 For the FYE 2023, these comparisons showed that median full-time total earnings, excluding the NITA, of Northern Ireland constables and sergeants and chief superintendents were higher than for their counterparts in England and Wales excluding London, but slightly lower for the ranks of inspector, chief inspector and superintendent (Chart 2.1).

**Chart 2.1: Median total earnings, by rank, full-time officers, Northern Ireland and England and Wales, FYE 2022**



Source: OPRB analysis of Police Earnings Census data, Home Office.

2.40 We note that, with a few exceptions<sup>17</sup>, the basic pay scales for police officers in Northern Ireland are the same as those for officers in England and Wales. Therefore, for constables and sergeants the higher median earnings are mainly as a result of higher levels of overtime worked and the retention of the CRTP in Northern Ireland. Median overtime earnings in Northern Ireland were around 51% higher than those in England and Wales for constables and 36% higher for sergeants. The lower median earnings for superintendents in Northern Ireland (by around £4,000) result from differences in the distribution of superintendents on their pay scale.

#### *Evidence from the parties on police officer earnings*

2.41 HM Treasury considered that the public sector remuneration package remained competitive when taking account of pay, pensions, and wider benefits including job security. It said that, while pinch-points remained, notable improvements had been achieved in the recruitment and retention status of key public sector workforces over the last year.

2.42 The PSNI told us that the number of officers in the federated ranks with registered outside business interests or second occupations had risen in the last year, from 871 in 2023 to 951 in February 2024. It added that the total in 2017 had been 519. The biggest increases between 2017 and 2024 were seen in sales and retail work (up from 32 officers to 117), care and community work (up from 24 officers to 91)

<sup>17</sup> The main examples are the timings of the payment of the first constable increment and a different pay scale for the inspecting ranks in London.

and driving and delivery (up from 9 officers to 42). While property was the largest single category of second occupation overall (354 officers in 2024 compared with 295 in 2017 and 347 in 2020), the number of officers had remained relatively steady over time. The NIPB advised us that the PSNI had noted a large increase in officers giving the cost of living as the reason for having to seek an additional income.

- 2.43 The PFNI stated that, despite the 7% pay award of 2023/24, police officers had still received a real-terms pay cut since 2010. The PFNI said that when taking CPI inflation into account the mean pay of constables had decreased by 22% between September 2010 and December 2023. It added that, as a weighted average, the federated ranks' real pay had declined by 20.2% between September 2010 and December 2023.

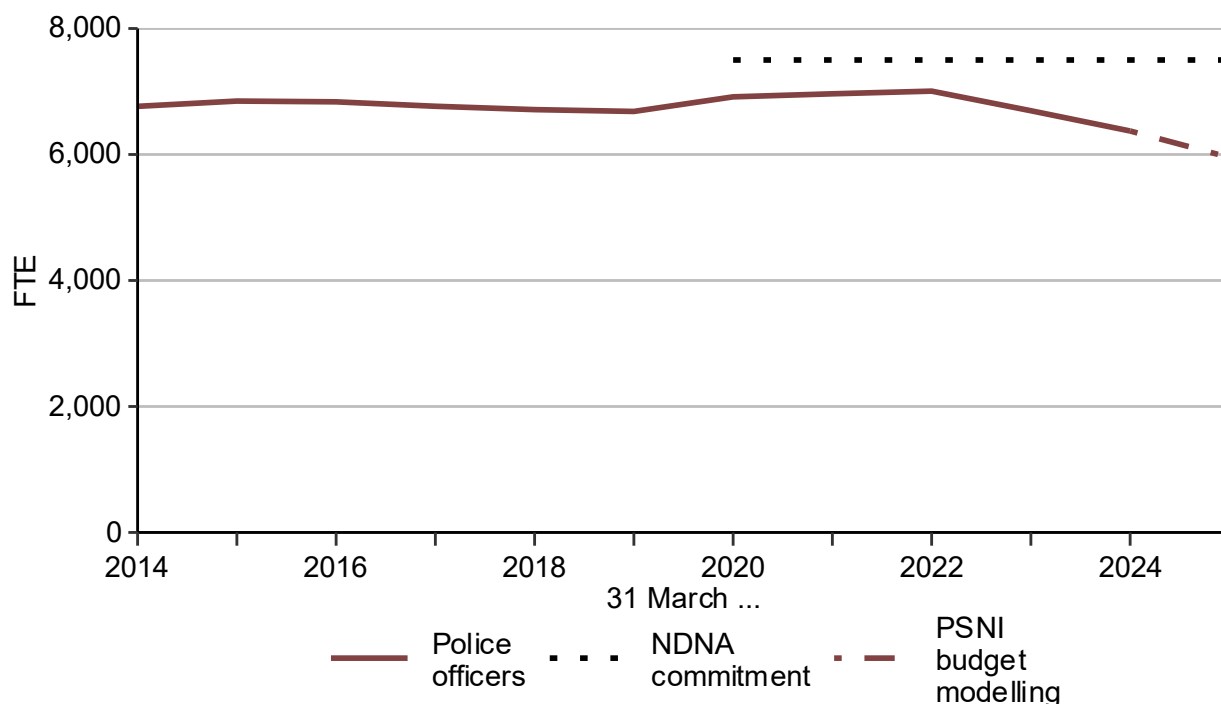
#### *Our comment on police officer earnings*

- 2.44 We note that median full-time total earnings, excluding the NITA, of Northern Ireland constables and sergeants were higher than for their counterparts in England and Wales excluding London, mainly as a result of higher levels of overtime worked and the retention of the CRTP in Northern Ireland. As in our previous reports, we do not make any judgement on what the correct level of police earnings relative to comparators should be. However, we observe that decreasing differentials over the long term have potentially negative implications for the morale and motivation of officers and for recruitment and retention. The same is true of long-term decreases in real-terms earnings of police officers, as highlighted to us by the results of staff surveys.
- 2.45 We are concerned about the increase in officers taking second jobs and the potential risks arising for officer safety and wellbeing. We therefore request data on second jobs on an annual basis and also ask whether any officers are leaving the PSNI to take up their secondary role full-time.

### **PSNI workforce and diversity**

- 2.46 We have set out our full analysis of PSNI workforce data in Appendix E. We also provide some of the key points from this below.
- 2.47 The PSNI reported that on 31 May 2024 its officer total was 6,357 FTE, the lowest number since the formation of the PSNI and more than a thousand below the 2020 New Decade, New Approach (NDNA) commitment of 7,500 officers. In addition, the PSNI told us that budget modelling for the FYE 2025 was based on a reduction in police officer numbers to 5,954 FTE by March 2025 (Chart 2.2).

**Chart 2.2: Number of police officers and budget modelling (FTE), Northern Ireland, March 2014 – March 2025**



Source: PSNI data.

2.48 We note figures from the PSNI website showing that on 1 June 2024:

- 32% of PSNI officers were female;
- the community background of 32.9% of PSNI officers was Perceived Roman Catholic and for 65.8% was Perceived Protestant (compared with 45.7% and 43.5% respectively for the Northern Ireland population in the 2021 census);
- 0.6% of PSNI officers said they were from an ethnic minority (compared with 3.4% of the Northern Ireland population in the 2021 census).

2.49 PSNI data showed that in the latest recruitment campaign in 2021, 30% of applicants were Catholic. In 2020, 31% of applicants and 24% of those appointed were Catholic.

#### *Our comment on PSNI workforce and diversity*

2.50 We note with particular concern the further fall in officer numbers, following the reduction last year, given the scale of the challenges facing the force. Evidence we received has indicated that the pressures on the police service are increasing rather than decreasing, and in that context falling officer numbers are likely to put increased pressure and strain on those remaining, and could contribute to reductions in morale as well as affect the service that officers are able to provide to the public.

2.51 We are also concerned about the implications for diversity of falling officer numbers. Diversity is an important factor in operational efficiency. We observe that the

proportion of female officers, Catholic officers and those from ethnic minorities remain below levels representative of the communities served by the PSNI. In the particular context of the PSNI's future recruitment projections, we would like evidence next year on actions to address the risks to diversity from falling officer numbers.

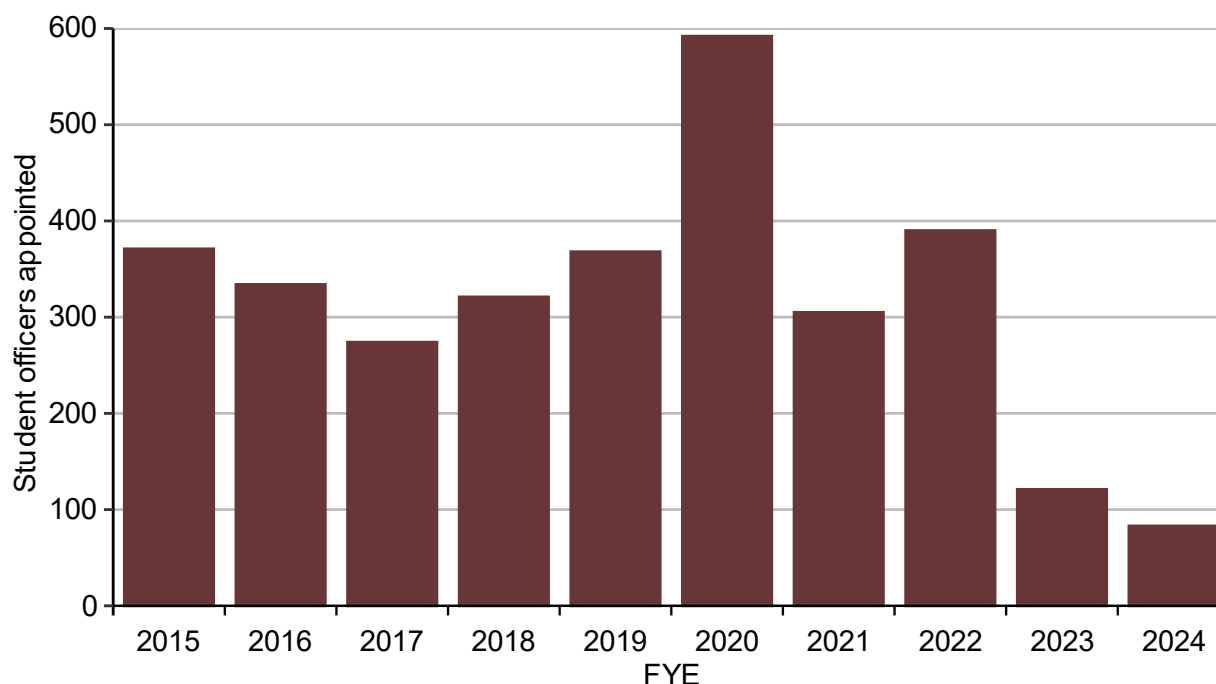
- 2.52 We learned this year that the PSNI provides the NIPB's Resources Committee with twice-yearly updates on representativeness in the PSNI, including a breakdown of probationary and student officer resignations by gender, religion and ethnicity. We ask that the PSNI includes this data in its written evidence submission to us each year. We also note that not all protected characteristics are covered by the PSNI data. We therefore again encourage the Northern Ireland parties to engage with initiatives in England and Wales policing to improve the quality of data collected on protected characteristics and to supply more such data in future.

## **Recruitment and retention**

### *Evidence from the parties on recruitment*

- 2.53 The PSNI said the sharp fall in officer numbers resulting from its funding issues could impact on its legitimacy and its efforts to be a demographically representative workforce. It added that its ongoing budgetary challenges were adversely affecting its ability to recruit and had required it to pause student officer recruitment from November 2022 to March 2023 and from July 2023 to March 2024. Furthermore, in 2023/24, it had only been able to appoint 83 student officers from around 1,000 suitable candidates from its 2020 and 2021 recruitment campaigns. The PSNI said that while it continued to engage regularly with the candidates from those recruitment campaigns, it was concerned that the recruitment delays due to the funding gap would increasingly affect its ability to retain its talent pipeline. After oral evidence the PSNI provided data on the number of student officers appointed since FYE 2015 (Chart 2.3).

**Chart 2.3: Number of student officers appointed in each financial year, FYES 2015 – 2024**



Source: Unpublished data provided by the PSNI.

- 2.54 The PSNI explained that the numbers of student officers trained in 2023/24 represented a reduction in overall headcount because around 350 officers left the PSNI each year. It stated that it would therefore need to appoint 350 officers in FYE 2024/25 just to maintain officer numbers at 6,358. The Chief Constable told us that after resuming recruitment in April 2024, the PSNI would need to conduct further recruitment in the autumn of 2024 if it was to overcome the problems that came with having too few officers.
- 2.55 The DOJ told us that the PSNI had advised it that police officer numbers should not, and could not, be allowed to fall below 6,358. However, in oral evidence, the Minister of Justice confirmed that officer numbers were likely to fall further towards the end of the year. The Minister agreed that at least 350 individuals needed to be sent to the Police College in Northern Ireland annually just to maintain officer numbers, and observed that when officer numbers reached a low point at the end of the year it would impact on the service to the public, for example, through the speed of response. The Minister explained that the reduction in numbers would also affect evidence gathering and preparing for prosecutions, with implications for the effectiveness of the criminal justice system.
- 2.56 The NIPB said that pauses in recruitment had removed the pipeline of new officers into local policing teams, which in turn led to neighbourhood policing teams being ‘plundered’ to meet response demands. The NIPB said it wanted to work with the PSNI to ensure that the integrity of the neighbourhood function was not eroded as the service went through challenging times. In written evidence, the NIPB told us

that the slowing of recruitment had impacted on the steps being taken to improve the representativeness of the service. In oral evidence, the NIPB warned that a time was approaching when neighbourhood policing might no longer be viable.

2.57 The PFNI's written evidence called on the Government to ensure sufficient funding to enable the PSNI to increase its roll to at least 7,500 officers. It said that fewer resources for the PSNI would inevitably lead to a reduction in its ability to tackle paramilitary activity. It stated that a slowing of investigations, a reduction in intelligence gathering capabilities, and a smaller neighbourhood policing presence meant a less secure Northern Ireland.

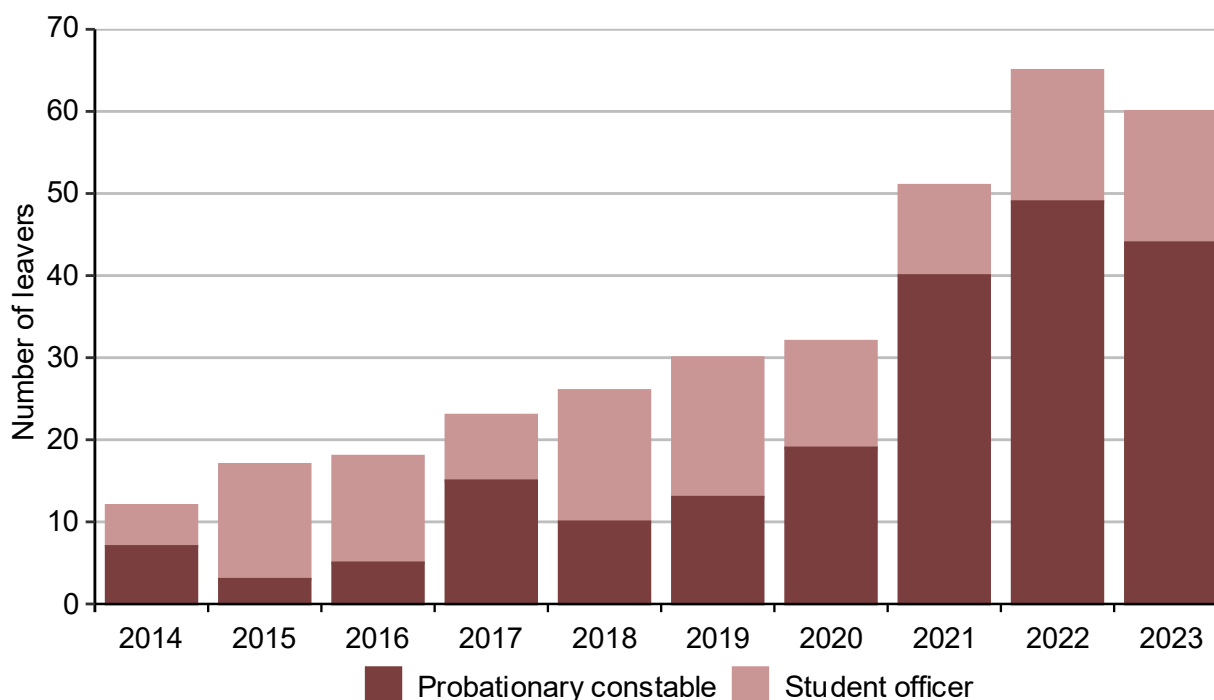
2.58 The SANI said that the budgetary situation meant a projection of falling below 6,000 officers by 2025 and that this was hitting frontline policing and directly impacting on confidence in policing in Northern Ireland. It added that it was also affecting the PSNI's ability to meet its workforce diversity requirements.

#### *Evidence from the parties on retention*

2.59 In written evidence the PSNI told us that, following media reports on a significant increase in resignations by probationary police officers in England and Wales in the last 10 years, it had undertaken its own internal research. The PSNI reported that between 2014 and 2023 it had recruited almost 3,200 officers in total and that during the same period around 430 officers had left, of whom 84% were resignations. The PSNI therefore calculated that between 2014 and 2023, the overall attrition rate was around 14% (of whom 12% were resignations) and that for student officers and probationary officers it was 11%. The PSNI said that the Police College in Northern Ireland continued to monitor attrition rates for student and probationary officers and that it had noted nothing of significance. After oral evidence the PSNI told us that 100 officers had resigned in the FYE 2024 and that, of these, 41 had been probationary officers and 12 were student officers.

2.60 The PFNI provided data on probationary officers leaving the PSNI between 2014 and 2023 (Chart 2.4). It noted that the highest ever total in recent years (49) had left in 2022 and 44 in 2023 and observed that this was part of a worrying trend. The PFNI stated that there was little doubt that making ends meet was a significant factor and that, anecdotally, officers left for other employment where the financial rewards were greater and the daily pressures considerably less. The PFNI added that the increase in departures had impacted on the morale, motivation and work pressures on those officers who remained in service. The PFNI also observed that 16 student officers had left the PSNI in 2022 and again in 2023 in the context of reduced numbers of new recruits in both those years.

**Chart 2.4: PSNI leavers by year – probationary constables and student officers<sup>18</sup>**



Source: PFNI provision of unpublished PSNI data.

2.61 In the context of concerns about early attrition, the Chief Constable told us in March 2024 that the long commutes of officers in areas such as Derry and Strabane were unreasonable and unfair and that the introduction of Targeted Variable Pay (TVP) might be one way to address this. He said he would talk to his senior team about the option of allowances for officers with long commutes. In May 2024, the Chief Constable added that he was keen to explore any measure that would incentivise officers and enable them to travel to work, such as a mileage allowance. He explained that new officers were placed in such hard-to-fill policing locations when officers with longer service felt they had ‘done their time’ there. The PSNI asked us for support to fully review the situation and consider what options might be available to support probationary officers’ travel.

#### *Commentary from others on recruitment and retention in the PSNI*

2.62 A rapid independent review of PSNI demand and capacity<sup>19</sup> commissioned by the Chief Constable in February 2024 had found that:

- between 2010 and 2023, there was a 22% reduction in the number of police officers per 100,000 residents in Northern Ireland;

<sup>18</sup> Student officers are those undertaking the 21-week student officer development programme which is the first stage of foundation training for PSNI officers. Probationary constables are those in their first two years of service following completion of the student officer development programme and attestation.

<sup>19</sup> Leapwise (February 2024), *Assessing the officer and staff requirement for the Police Service of Northern Ireland*. Available at: <https://www.psni.police.uk/sites/default/files/2024-03/Leapwise%20Report%20-%20Assessing%20the%20officer%20and%20staff%20requirement%20for%20the%20Police%20Service%20of%20Northern%20Ireland.pdf> [Accessed on 26 June 2024]

- if PSNI resourcing kept pace with England, Scotland and Wales during this period, it would presently have over 8,000 officers; and
- 1,594–2,487 additional officers and 404–495 additional staff were needed (around 8,540 officers and 3,000 staff in total).

2.63 The March 2024 NIAC report on the funding and delivery of public services in Northern Ireland stated: "...the cuts in police officer numbers due to recent budgetary pressures will impact on the PSNI's visibility and ability to respond to increased demand. Officer numbers have dropped some way below the 7,500 committed to under the New Decade, New Approach agreement in 2020. More complex crimes [and] threats to staff...need to be addressed, too."

2.64 The Chief Inspector of Criminal Justice in Northern Ireland reported in March 2024 that cuts in police officer numbers had resulted in abstraction rates from neighbourhood policing of between 20% to 30% in the North Area, 50% in the South Area and between 50% and 75% in the Causeway Coast and Glens District. It also found that high levels of abstraction had led to uncertainty about the purpose of the role.

#### *Our comment on recruitment and retention*

2.65 We are very concerned at the impact of the budget-related reductions in officer numbers on officer wellbeing and workload, as well as the implications for the PSNI's demographic representativeness, diversity profile, legitimacy, public confidence and overall long-term service effectiveness. We note the range of independent organisations who also express their disquiet. We also observe that if potential recruits are aware that the decline in officer numbers is leading to fewer opportunities in neighbourhood policing, it could dissuade those inclined to develop the skills and capabilities most associated with the neighbourhood policing function. While we observe that the PSNI is fortunate in having access to a large pool of people to draw on from previous recruitment campaigns, an available budget is required to be able to appoint them, and it is of little use if those appointed then resign.

2.66 We note the difference in the PSNI and Police College view of the probationary officer (and student officer) attrition rates in recent years compared with the concerns expressed by the PFNI and the NIPB. In our view, the numbers recruited and the numbers of officers leaving in the first five years of service in particular deserve ongoing monitoring and analysis by our Northern Ireland parties. Furthermore, we observe that PSNI budgetary pressures as well as cost-of-living increases are likely to be primary causes of the recent increase in probationary officer departures indicated in the data provided by the PFNI. We hope that the restoration of the Northern Ireland Assembly and Executive will bring solutions.

- 2.67 We recognise that the PSNI Chief Constable is aware of the seriousness of the situation concerning retention in hard-to-fill locations in Northern Ireland and is seeking a robust mechanism to resolve it. Nevertheless, we also ask the Northern Ireland parties to engage with their counterparts in England and Wales to explore the full range of potential tools such as Targeted Variable Pay (TVP) that could be introduced to address these problems. We envisage this activity forming part of the Comprehensive Review of police remuneration that we have recommended this year in our England and Wales report.
- 2.68 As mentioned, we are pleased that the PSNI's representativeness updates to the NIPB incorporate data on some protected characteristics (gender, ethnicity and religion) for those resigning from the service, including student officers and probationers. We would like the PSNI to provide this information to us on an annual basis and to work on ways to expand its range of data to cover all protected characteristics. Furthermore, we request exit interview data from the PSNI that separates out police officer returns.
- 2.69 We observe that the reducing numbers of PSNI officers mean that the population per officer is increasing in Northern Ireland. Figures for the end of May 2024 show there was one officer for every 301 residents<sup>20</sup>. This was up from one officer for every 273 residents in mid-2022<sup>21</sup>. This remains a lower number of people per officer than in England and Wales where there was one officer for every 430 residents in mid-2022 (mid-2024 figures are not yet available for England and Wales). We recognise that this is primarily an indicator of the different nature of policing in Northern Ireland.

## **Morale and motivation**

### *Surveys*

- 2.70 The PSNI told us that it had conducted a workforce survey ('Your Service Your Voice') as part of a wider cultural audit in the spring of 2023. The survey received 4,163 responses (or from 46% of the total workforce) and the results were shared with officers and staff in November 2023. The PSNI advised us that pay was the theme raised most frequently in response to the open-ended survey questions and in focus groups and workshops. Feedback from officers indicated that they believed the job could no longer be perceived as well paid. They referenced similar pay in private sector roles with less stress as well as the reduced availability of overtime in the PSNI, coupled with the increased cost of living.
- 2.71 The NIPB said that the PSNI workplace cultural audit conducted in 2023 had provided insightful detail on officer morale and motivation. Most respondents had disagreed when asked if the wellbeing of employees was an organisational priority

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<sup>20</sup> Using 2021-based population projections for mid-2024 published by the ONS.

<sup>21</sup> Using mid-2022 population estimates published by the ONS.

and had said that the PSNI simply did not care about its employees. Furthermore, wellbeing was being damaged by resourcing constraints which had resulted in high and intense workloads, as well as by financial pressures on officers arising from the cost of living.

- 2.72 The PSNI told us before submission of our report that there were plans for a further workforce survey in 2024 but that at present no further information or firm dates were available.

### *Factors affecting morale*

- 2.73 The PFNI stressed the importance of the impact of the reduction in officer numbers on the morale, motivation and pressure on remaining officers. The PSNI Chief Constable told us that insufficient resources and the amount of responsibilities and workload had in some cases negatively affected officer mental health. The Chief Constable told us that he had therefore advised the Stormont Justice Committee that the PSNI needed more funding for its core function and to meet broader demand.
- 2.74 We learned on our visit about the impact of the cost of living on officers' morale. The PSNI Benevolent Fund informed us that while the overall number of times it assisted beneficiaries each year had stayed steady, the proportion of serving – rather than retired – officers that it had helped had increased to 48% in 2023, compared with 29% in 2022 and 20% in 2021. It stressed that it was a very significant step for a serving officer to ask the charity for assistance, and that anecdotally, many officers in need 'muddled through' with the help of family or friends or the use of credit cards. It said that officers in the early years in particular were on extremely tight budgets, with the consequence that a small change in circumstances or financial profile had a magnified effect.
- 2.75 The NIPB said it had heard at all levels of significant commitment and dedication but also of a service stretched to dangerous levels. It said in the context of increased demand that more was expected from fewer officers, resulting in very stretched individuals, low morale and a constant juggling exercise at both a local and senior level to ensure resource was placed where there was the most demand. From the Criminal Justice Inspection Northern Ireland report published in March 2024, we learned that the continued pull on neighbourhood resources, and the subsequent impact on the provision of the neighbourhood policing function, was also having a significant impact on officers' morale and motivation.
- 2.76 The PFNI outlined to us the impact on officers and their families of the very significant data breach on 8 August 2023 in which personal information on PSNI officers and staff was uploaded onto a public website. The PFNI explained that this had left its members and their families feeling particularly vulnerable. The PFNI also referred to the disciplinary action taken against two constables involved in the Ormeau Road incident of February 2021 during the pandemic.

- 2.77 The SANI also said that demand on the PSNI had increased as other workforces went on strike to secure better pay deals, such as on 18 January 2024. The SANI stressed that this was ‘galling’ for Northern Ireland police officers frustrated by the lack of a pay award, yet often asked to pick up the demand resulting from other organisations fighting unfair pay.
- 2.78 On our visit to Derry and Strabane in February 2024, we sensed that morale levels were lower than on previous visits. Officers told us that damage to morale had been compounded by a range of factors including the PSNI data breach, the increase in the cost of living, the delay to the 2023 pay award and the difficulties of policing with the lowest ever headcount to address increasingly complex demand. Several officers reported on difficulties arising from the high cost of childcare. Others reported being expected to do more with less, suffering burnout and going on sick leave. A number of officers discussed the option of looking for different jobs, while others were said to be leaving to work as police officers in Scotland, Australia and Canada.
- 2.79 We were struck on our visit by the high number of officers on temporary promotion for extended periods. One sergeant reported being on temporary promotion for seven years and a superintendent had been on temporary promotion for four years. The risks to officers from temporary promotion included being returned to their substantive rank and losing the pay and pension of the temporary rank with no notice. It was also demoralising and demotivating to fail the promotion process (sometimes repeatedly) but then be asked again to fill the vacant post at the higher rank on a temporary basis. The PSNI explained to us that it was trying to reduce its current reliance on temporary promotions.

#### *Sickness absence levels*

- 2.80 The PSNI Chief Constable told us that police officer sickness absence levels in Northern Ireland were worse than in England and Wales. The PSNI explained that 22 working days per officer were lost on average in 2023/24. The NIPB said this meant that an average of 643 officers per day were off sick as of February 2024. The PSNI told us the main causes of sickness absence were respiratory, psychological and musculoskeletal. It added that it was possible that an increase in psychological absences among its officers had been observed in the wake of the August 2023 data breach, as well as the organisational upheaval that followed the Scofield Judgment of 30 August 2023. The PSNI also identified the continued cost of living and internal work pressures as other significant causes of psychological absences.
- 2.81 The PFNI informed us that assaults on officers continued to rise, year on year, with officers being spat on, kicked, head-butted, punched and bitten. It advised us that the number of assaults on officers had reached a five-year high in February 2023.

2.82 The SANI said that the superintending ranks were dealing with increased officer welfare issues, sickness absence and ill-health retirement in the federated ranks. It explained that as a consequence they had been required to respond to a greater range of urgent problems relating to the operational environment. The SANI added that, in a recent survey, the superintending ranks were found to be holding 834 untaken rest days between them, with some individual officers carrying over 40. The average number of untaken rest days per officer in those ranks was 11.

*Our comment on morale and motivation.*

2.83 We were very concerned to discern lower morale levels overall on our visit to the PSNI in 2024 compared to previous visits. We note the wide range of factors that seem to have caused this downturn. We hope that restoration of the Northern Ireland Assembly and Executive will provide the opportunity to start addressing the underlying budgetary and resource issues that are causing many of the problems impacting on officer morale and motivation. In addition, we request updates on the PSNI's strategy to reduce reliance in its operating model on temporary promotions. We also request more consistent and comprehensive access to PSNI officer pay and morale survey results.

## **Legal obligations on the police service in Northern Ireland and relevant changes to employment law**

2.84 In a change from its position in 2023, we were told that the PSNI had proposed increasing maternity and adoption leave from 18 to 26 weeks to accord with England and Wales policing and that a draft determination was currently under consideration. In addition, the DOJ told us that it had extended the right to parental bereavement leave for PSNI officers in line with employment legislation and other UK police services.

2.85 We note the possibility of very significant financial pressures being placed on the PSNI as a result of the legal case concerning holiday pay. We have also seen the reports that the PSNI has been issued with a £750,000 fine by the Information Commissioner over the August 2023 data breach.

*Our comment on legal obligations on the police service in Northern Ireland and relevant changes to employment law*

2.86 We welcome the harmonisation of certain leave arrangements for PSNI officers who are parents with those in England and Wales.

2.87 We are interested in parties' views on further extending the principle of parity with England and Wales to terms and conditions of employment. The table in Appendix G setting out the current position in Northern Ireland compared with England and Wales sets out some areas of difference. We invite the Northern Ireland parties to explore these areas in a mutual exercise with their counterparts in England and Wales.

## Chapter 3 – Pay Proposals and Recommendations for 2024/25

### Introduction

- 3.1 In this chapter we make recommendations and observations on the pay and allowances of police officers in Northern Ireland for the 2024/25 pay year.
- 3.2 In our remit letter, the Minister of Justice asked us for a recommendation on how to apply the pay award for 2024/25 for police officers in the PSNI up to and including the chief superintendent rank.

### Parity on pay and allowances

- 3.3 The recommendations contained in this chapter are based on the principle of parity on pay and allowances. We define parity as meaning the same basic pay scales and allowances across the police service in England, Wales and Northern Ireland to reflect the fact that the role of police officer is fundamentally the same across all three areas, while also recognising the need for variation in geographical allowances to reflect exceptional local conditions.
- 3.4 The PSNI, NIPB, PFNI and SANI all upheld the principle of parity on pay and allowances. However, in written evidence, the DOJ said that it did not use the term 'parity' for pay and allowances. It said this was because there were some unique differences within the three police jurisdictions, such as the NITA and London allowances. In oral evidence, DOJ officials said that they used the term 'broad alignment' rather than parity because parity implied equality on every aspect of pay, terms and conditions. The Justice Minister stated that, given existing rewards structures, it was not possible to align with England and Wales on all aspects of pay and allowances and that while the DOJ wanted to maintain pay parity, this had to be set in the context of the 3% fall in the DOJ budget of the last eight years. Therefore, a policy of broad alignment also seemed more sustainable.

#### *Our comment on parity*

- 3.5 We understand that the political and budgetary environment in Northern Ireland is very complex but in our view this makes it more important to uphold clear principles. The NITA, like the London and South East Allowances in England, is a geographical allowance and although the rationale for it is very different, we do not regard its existence as grounds for use of the phrase 'broad alignment' rather than parity. We therefore urge all parties from now on to use the term 'parity' instead and this definition which we have set out in previous reports:

We define parity as meaning the same pay scale and allowances across the police service in England, Wales and Northern Ireland to reflect the fact that the role of police officer is fundamentally the same across all three areas, while also recognising the need for variation in geographical allowances to reflect exceptional local conditions. This means that the NITA, which is unique to Northern Ireland, is from a Northern Ireland perspective the one allowance excluded from the parity principle. On all non-geographical allowances, the PSNI should plan for convergence with England and Wales.

## **Basic pay award**

- 3.6 In written evidence, the NIPB, PSNI, PFNI and SANI all sought pay parity in 2024/25 with police officers in England and Wales. In addition, the PFNI said that the 7% pay award in 2023/24 had been necessary to cover the inflationary pressures of the previous year but not sufficient to cover the pay reductions in real terms of previous years. The PFNI therefore sought immediate action to compensate for the current pay degradation, as well as a clearly defined timeline to restore police officer pay. It said this should include above-inflation pay increases for a number of years and that it should be in the form of an equal percentage rise across all ranks, reflecting pay parity.
- 3.7 The remit letter from the Minister of Justice asked us to give careful consideration to the affordability position in Northern Ireland which, in reality, was gradually unfolding during the round. The Minister told us in oral evidence that pay parity did not trump the PSNI budget and that the Northern Ireland Executive needed to decide what to prioritise on behalf of the Northern Ireland public and reach a balanced decision on police officer pay. Equally, however, the PSNI budget did not trump pay parity. The Minister added that PSNI officers were already being lost to other forces and that if the PSNI did not retain a degree of alignment on pay, it would be unable to maintain them.
- 3.8 The Minister stated that she was pressing for additional resource for both the PSNI pay award and officer headcount and that in reality a two-phase approach was required. Firstly, officer numbers needed to be stabilised and then some level of pay parity applied. This was because it would be difficult for the PSNI to recruit if it did not offer pay rates equivalent to England and Wales. However, the final decision on the appropriate balance between pay and headcount lay with the Chief Constable and the Minister stressed that it was for the Chief Constable to assure himself of the affordability of any pay award as the PSNI accounting officer. The Minister added that, for the Chief Constable to find that pay parity was affordable, not just efficiency savings but also reductions in services would be required.
- 3.9 In oral evidence, the NIPB acknowledged the proposal for a 6% pay award put forward by the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) for police officers in England

and Wales in 2024/25. The NIPB said it accepted that an award of that size would create further budgetary difficulties for the PSNI but reiterated its commitment to pay parity.

- 3.10 In written evidence, the PSNI told us that it supported the NPCC's recommendation of an above-inflationary increase, subject to affordability, and had considered inflation, societal contribution and the need to attract and retain the best. In oral evidence, the PSNI added that if the 6% pay award proposed by the NPCC meant pay parity, it would be very welcome in 2024/25. The PSNI also told us that it had factored an estimated 5% pay award for 2024/25 into its financial planning process and that each 1% of pay award would cost £3 million to £4 million.
- 3.11 The SANI was the only Northern Ireland party to specify a figure (6.7%) for the 2024/25 pay award. It explained that this was the rolling annual inflation rate in September 2023 and was in line with the pay proposal for 2024/25 from the Police Superintendents' Association for England and Wales. The SANI added that this figure reflected less-than-sufficient pay increases in past years, the resultant real-terms pay cut and the need for a pay rise now. The SANI told us that it viewed the 6% pay award proposed by the NPCC as 'slightly light'. The SANI stated that it was for the DOJ to provide the PSNI with a budget in 2024/25 that included provision for a reasonable pay award. It highlighted that it had been possible to fund a 7% pay award the previous year.

#### *Our comment and recommendation on the basic pay award*

- 3.12 In making our pay award recommendation we considered a number of factors which we discuss below.

#### *Parity*

- 3.13 As in previous years, we have upheld the principle of parity with England and Wales on pay. As stated above, we define parity as meaning the same basic pay scales and allowances across the police service in England, Wales and Northern Ireland to reflect the fact that the role of police officer is fundamentally the same across all three geographical areas, while also recognising the need for variation in geographical allowances to reflect exceptional local conditions. This main principle set the context for our consideration of a range of other factors as set out below.

#### *Economic factors*

- 3.14 Officers within our remit group continue to feel the effect of the high inflation seen over the last two years. The wider economy including the level of pay settlements and the increased cost of living are factors in our deliberations. Annual CPI inflation was 8.7% in April 2023, the latest available data when we considered our recommendations for a 2023 pay award and 6.7% in September 2023 at the start of the police pay year. The CPIH rate was 7.8% and 6.3% in those months respectively. As set out in Chapter 2, there continues to be some uncertainty about

the economic climate. The CPI rate of inflation was 2.3% in the year to April 2024 and the CPIH rate was 3.0%, but the Bank of England expects inflation to increase in the second half of the year.

#### Right to take industrial action

- 3.15 The prohibition on police officers taking industrial action means that we have an obligation to deliver a fair, just and equitable pay award. We have again monitored the impact of recent industrial disputes and pay negotiations across the public sector. In a number of cases, industrial action has led to employers making significantly enhanced pay offers, especially in the last two years.

#### Recruitment and retention

- 3.16 We share the concerns of the Northern Ireland parties at the likely impact of the Northern Ireland budgetary position in 2024/25 on the PSNI's ability to recruit and retain officers. We note the great difference between recent cuts in PSNI officer numbers and the growth in police officer numbers in England and Wales.
- 3.17 The police service needs to recruit officers to meet the challenges posed by the current policing environment and to build and sustain public trust and confidence. Today's police officers are required to respond to vulnerability, de-escalate social tension and manage complexity. This requires the police service to recruit officers with the right attitudes and maturity to develop these skills through the training and supervision provided by forces. Remuneration should attract and retain such officers in policing. Notwithstanding current budgetary issues, the recruitment and retention of officers of the right calibre to work with all communities in Northern Ireland is critical.
- 3.18 A police service representative of the population it serves is vital to police legitimacy and effectiveness. We have said before that efforts to keep officers in the police service would not be assisted by a remuneration package that is insufficiently attractive to compensate them for the personal risks they face. We note that parties such as the NIPB and the PFNI have expressed concern at a recent rise in resignation rates among student and probationary officers.

#### Policing environment

- 3.19 The policing environment of Northern Ireland is characterised by increasing complexity of demand and reduced police officer numbers.
- 3.20 In these circumstances, we regard it as particularly important that the PSNI is able to use appropriate pay and reward structures to attract recruits and retain officers from diverse backgrounds with the right motivations and attitudes to help maintain community representativeness, police legitimacy and an effective police service.

## Morale and motivation

- 3.21 We were very concerned at the decline in morale that we sensed on our visit to PSNI officers in February 2024. It has been a difficult year for the PSNI and morale and motivation continue to be a significant factor that we take into consideration.

## Affordability

- 3.22 We recognise the likely impact of the overall Northern Ireland budgetary situation on the PSNI and its expected funding shortfall of £80 million in 2024/25. The PSNI told us that it had provisionally budgeted for a 5% average pay increase in 2024/25. However, as we have pointed out in previous years, we would not properly discharge our remit if we were to base our recommendations on pre-determined budgetary considerations alone rather than the needs of the police service, including the other, sometimes competing, factors set out in our terms of reference, particularly in light of the economic volatility seen in recent years. Looking across Government as a whole, we observe that there is inevitably flexibility in all funding arrangements.
- 3.23 We note the contrast between Northern Ireland and England and Wales on affordability in the public sector and more specifically on policing. We also observe that the affordability implications of the parity principle for pay and allowances pose greater challenges for the PSNI than for police forces in England and Wales. In spite of the problems arising from the 2024 Northern Ireland Budget, all parties sought pay parity with England and Wales police officers in 2024/25.

## Pay recommendation

- 3.24 In reaching our pay recommendation for 2024/25, the fundamental principle of parity has been particularly important. We have also taken into account all the other factors listed above. We note the economic situation, pay developments in Northern Ireland and the prohibition on the police taking industrial action, as well as our analysis of recruitment, retention, motivation and morale which we balance with affordability considerations. We consequently conclude that an annual pay award in 2024 of 4.75% across all ranks up to and including chief superintendent is the most suitable approach. We uphold the principle of parity by making the same pay recommendation for Northern Ireland as England and Wales.

**Recommendation 1. We recommend a consolidated increase of 4.75% to all police officer pay points for all ranks up to and including chief superintendent from 1 September 2024.**

## The Comprehensive Review of police remuneration

- 3.25 To uphold the principle of parity with England and Wales and to further the convergence process on pay and allowances, we urge the Northern Ireland parties

to engage fully with the Comprehensive Review of police remuneration that we have recommended as a matter of urgency in our 2024 Police England and Wales report. This review is to examine pay and the coherence of pay scales and allowances in order to produce a costed plan in preparation for the next Comprehensive Spending Review. We have invited policing parties in England and Wales to provide an initial plan for our consideration by January 2025. We encourage the Northern Ireland parties to participate fully in this review in order to influence and inform the outcomes of what we envisage as being a mutual exercise.

### **Timing the annual pay award**

- 3.26 When we visited the PSNI in February this year, officers were still awaiting the outcome of the 2023/24 pay award. This was not paid to the federated and superintending ranks until the end of April 2024, eight months after their counterparts in England and Wales had received it. This was the seventh consecutive year in which the pay award for our remit group in Northern Ireland was significantly delayed.
- 3.27 In written evidence in March 2024, the PFNI told us that the DOJ had received additional funding to cover the 2023/24 pay award in February 2024. The PFNI added that the delay experienced by police officers had contrasted with other public sector workforces who had already received a pay award from their sponsoring department. The PFNI said it did not understand the continuing delay for PSNI officers, as sufficient funds had been allocated to ensure that the award could be approved.
- 3.28 In oral evidence, the SANI told us that receiving the 2023/24 pay award in financial year 2024/25, rather than in September 2023 when it was due, had increased the likelihood of its members breaching annual allowance thresholds. Moreover, chief superintendents receiving the 2023/24 pay award in 2024/25 would mean them exceeding the £100,000 threshold for earnings and reduce their tax threshold limit. The SANI added that while it did not represent the federated ranks, the delay was also likely to affect them and eligibility for child benefit and possibly other types of financial support.
- 3.29 The DOJ stressed in oral evidence that it had turned around the 2023/24 pay award in just 12 days once it had been approved by the Department Of Finance. The PSNI told us that it was challenging to recruit and retain officers when the progression of pay awards occurred well behind those of colleagues in England and Wales. It asked for the pay award in 2024/25 to be progressed in a timely manner. The NIPB observed that the delay in the 2023/24 pay award meant a reduction in living standards.

### *Our comment on the timing of the annual pay award*

- 3.30 We recognise that other public sector workforces in Northern Ireland have experienced prolonged delays with their pay awards because of the particular political and budgetary context. However, we also observe that police officers provide invaluable support to their many public sector partners and that it is our moral responsibility to focus on police officers as our remit group. In addition, the SANI has drawn our attention to the practical, financial ramifications of delayed pay awards for the federated and superintending ranks and the cumulative damage of this reoccurrence to officer morale. With the restoration of the Northern Ireland Executive, we expect police officers to receive their 2024/25 pay award on time (1 September 2024).

### **Starting salaries**

- 3.31 The PSNI told us that, subject to affordability, it supported the NPCC proposal to remove pay point 1 of the constable pay scale. It said that doing this might assist with the retention of probationary officers who would otherwise leave the organisation for employment with higher pay and lower risks. The NIPB told us that of the 87 resignations from the PSNI between 1 April 2023 and 31 January 2024, 42 were either by student officers (12) or probationary constables in their first two years of service (30)<sup>22</sup>. The PFNI also provided data on student officers and probationer constables leaving the PSNI. It said there was little doubt that making ends meet was a significant factor.
- 3.32 On recent visits to the PSNI, officers have told us that constable pay starts too low and climbs too slowly at first, particularly in the context of higher heating, fuel and food costs and that it was a major reason for some young-in-service officers leaving. We learned of typically high commuting costs for officers, with many living far from their workplace. In addition, we were told that the stress and threat levels of the job – particularly with headcount at its lowest ever point – were not worth the early-years' salary.

### *Our comment and recommendation on starting salaries*

- 3.33 We therefore recommend that the Chief Constable of Northern Ireland is given the discretion to set the starting salary for new constables in the PSNI at either pay point 1 or pay point 2 on the constable pay scale from 1 September 2024. This is consistent with what we have recommended for England and Wales and so upholds the principle of parity. We are conscious that it would be best to take further decisions regarding the bottom of the constable pay scale in the context of decisions around the reform of the constable pay scale and an overall review of the coherence of police pay scales. The Comprehensive Review of police remuneration, which we

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<sup>22</sup> The PSNI has subsequently provided data showing that there were 100 resignations in the FYE 2024, of which 41 were from probationary constables and 12 from student constables.

have recommended in our England and Wales report, and in which we encourage full participation from our Northern Ireland parties, will have the opportunity to assess the coherence of the constable pay scale as a whole, and the implications of a shortened constable pay scale for those career constables who make such a vital contribution in areas such as neighbourhood policing. We note that in Northern Ireland there is a particular contrast between the bottom and the top points of the constable pay scale as the latter is still enhanced by the CRTP, unlike in England and Wales.

**Recommendation 2. We recommend that the Chief Constable of Northern Ireland be given the discretion to set the starting salary for new constables in the PSNI at either pay point 1 or pay point 2 on the constable pay scale from 1 September 2024.**

### **Timing of the payment of increments**

- 3.34 In 2023, we recommended the introduction of a police regulation in Northern Ireland for police officer increments to be paid on time. In a letter dated 27 March 2024, the Minister of Justice for Northern Ireland wrote to us to explain, among other things, that she had deferred a response to this recommendation to allow further consideration of how it might be progressed.
- 3.35 We learned that in 2023/24, police officer annual pay increments were authorised in November 2023, just two months after the start of the pay year (earlier than in previous years, but long before the 2023/24 annual pay award was received at the end of April 2024). However, the PSNI told us that the more timely authorisation of increments had only been approved for that one instance and that no precedent had been set for the future. The PSNI asked us to support the separation of incremental pay from its annual pay remits.
- 3.36 The PFNI said that delays to contractual incremental payments had started in September 2021 and that it had initiated judicial review proceedings on the matter. It also confirmed that it had not received any assurance from the DOJ or DOF that the delays would not reoccur in 2024. The PFNI therefore proposed the addition of a determination to PSNI regulations stating that pay awards were payable annually. It said this would align with Annex F of the England and Wales Police Regulations 2003.
- 3.37 The NIPB said it welcomed the recommendation to secure the continuation of incremental pay progression and supported the principle for those payments to be progressed independently from the annual pay award.
- 3.38 In oral evidence, the DOJ told us that, under DOF guidance, the DOJ was required to deal with pay remits once a year – both the annual pay award and pay

increments. However, in an extraordinary set of circumstances in 2023/24, police officer pay was dealt with in two stages and the final budget was not settled until the end of the financial year. The DOJ added that DOF guidance on public sector pay was clear: there needed to be one combined pay remit. Separating out increments was not possible as the pay award process would become 'clunky and cumbersome'. The DOJ confirmed that a separate temporary approvals process had existed for the payment of police officer increments in 2023/24. However, the ideal remained one combined process.

- 3.39 The DOJ expressed concerns about the option of a regulation on the timely payment of police officer increments. It said this was for a range of policy reasons and that it was far better for there to be one pay settlement each year. It added that separating the payment of increments from the annual pay award would have repercussions across the public sector.

*Our comment and recommendation on timing the payment of increments*

- 3.40 We await a response from the Justice Minister to our 2023 recommendation on the introduction of a police regulation in Northern Ireland on police officer increments to ensure that they are paid on time. The practical, financial, ramifications for officers not receiving their annual increments on time, and the associated impact on their morale, are too great for this matter to go unaddressed. We therefore repeat this recommendation and in doing so uphold the parity principle. We observe that the payment of police officer increments in England and Wales is not subject to delay.

**Recommendation 3. We recommend the introduction of a police regulation in Northern Ireland on police officer increments to ensure that they are paid on time.**

## **Payment of the first increment on the constable pay scale**

- 3.41 In 2023, we recommended that all constables in Northern Ireland move to pay point 2 after twelve months at pay point 1. We had learned that, in 2018, a change had been made so that new officers moved to pay point 2 not twelve months after joining the service but on completion of their two-year probationary period. Furthermore, this two-year period began on their date of attestation on completion of their initial 21-week police training course. This meant that officers in Northern Ireland were waiting two years and 21 weeks to move to pay point 2. This differed from the timetable in England and Wales, where new officers moved to pay point 2 exactly twelve months from their date of joining the police service. The PSNI told us that this meant that by the time PSNI constables had moved to pay point 2 they were more than £3,000 behind their counterparts in England and Wales.

- 3.42 The letter from the Minister of Justice of 27 March 2024 confirmed that our 2023 recommendation on moving all constables to pay point 2 after 12 months at pay point 1 had been approved. However, we were then advised by the PSNI that the date at which constables would move to pay point 2 in 2024/25 would be one year and 21 weeks from the day of joining (rather than two years and 21 weeks). This was therefore still 21 weeks later than in England and Wales.
- 3.43 The PSNI told us that it had subsequently received legal advice confirming that, for the purposes of calculating reckonable service for the payment of annual increments, the 21 weeks spent in training should be taken into account. We have separately received confirmation that this would conform with the practice in England and Wales.

*Our comment and recommendation on the payment of the first increment on the constable pay scale*

- 3.44 We are pleased that payment of the first constable increment has been brought forward from two years and 21 weeks to one year and 21 weeks. However, we recommend that it is brought forward to exactly twelve months from when an individual officer joins the service at the start of their training. This is to bring the arrangements for new PSNI officers in line with those in England and Wales and uphold the parity principle.

**Recommendation 4. We recommend that all constables receive their first pay increment exactly twelve months from when they first join the service.**

## **The pay of the inspecting ranks**

- 3.45 In our 2023 report we highlighted the concerns expressed on our visits to the PSNI and forces in England and Wales about the small pay differential between the inspector and chief inspector ranks and the big pay gap between the top of the chief inspector rank and the bottom of the superintendent rank. We asked our Northern Ireland parties to provide detailed evidence in 2024 on the differentials between those ranks.
- 3.46 In response, the NIPB asked us to consider how to recognise additional hours worked, particularly for those ranks which did not attract an overtime payment. It said PSNI officers should be paid appropriately and that their terms and conditions should recognise the role performed and give due weight and attention to ensuring an appropriate level of work-life balance.
- 3.47 The PFNI again drew attention to the impact of excessive and unpredictable hours of work on the health of individual inspectors who regularly worked in excess of their salaried hours and well over the 48-hours weekly limit specified in Working Time Regulations. The PFNI also informed us that the 95 chief inspectors in the PSNI

were currently owed 603 untaken rest days, and the 381 inspectors 2,041 untaken rest days. The PFNI again sought the re-introduction of overtime payments or a non-pensionable supplement for the inspecting ranks. It also sought an additional pay point at the top of the chief inspector pay scale.

- 3.48 On our visit to the PSNI in February this year, we learned from inspectors and chief inspectors that they worked additional hours every working day, on their days off, and during annual leave to manage risks and workloads. They added that when on call they typically worked 40-60 hours a week. Inspectors regarded the extra £100 a month earned by chief inspectors as inadequate compensation for that rank's additional workload and working hours. They also observed that, on promotion to chief inspector, they would initially experience a pay cut through the loss of CRTP.

*Our comment on the pay of the inspecting ranks*

- 3.49 We are grateful to the NIPB and the PFNI for addressing the issue of remuneration for the inspecting ranks again this year. In our view, it would be best to consider reforms to the pay of inspectors and chief inspectors in the context of the Comprehensive Review of police remuneration that we recommend in our England and Wales report and the planned examination of the coherence of police pay scales. This should address inconsistencies in the size of the pay gap between the top of the inspector pay scale and the bottom of the chief inspector pay scale and between the top of the chief inspector pay scale and the bottom of the superintendent pay scale. We also note that the pay scales for chief inspectors (along with sergeants) are the shortest of any rank. In the meantime, we highlight to chief officers that they have the flexibility to pay new chief inspectors at a point above the current pay point 1 on the chief inspector pay scale.
- 3.50 We urge the Northern Ireland parties to engage with and influence the Comprehensive Review of police remuneration on the matter of the workload of inspectors and chief inspectors, among other things. We observe that the removal of overtime in the 1990s means that inspectors are likely to experience supervising teams, and particularly sergeants, who are earning more on certain operations because of overtime payments, despite working similar hours.

**The DOJ-commissioned review of allowances**

- 3.51 Following our 2020 recommendation to the parties to conduct a comprehensive review of PSNI police officer allowances, a DOJ-commissioned review covered the NITA, Dog Handlers' Allowance, CRTP, On-call Allowance and Motor Vehicle Allowance. In January 2022, it proposed the following changes to CRTP and the On-call Allowance:
- a phased approach to the removal of the CRTP over two years.

- limiting the enhanced £30 On-call Allowance rate currently paid on eight public holidays to just two (17 March and 12 July) and paying £20 on the remaining six.

- 3.52 However, the review proposed no changes to the NITA, the Motor Vehicle Allowance, the Dog Handlers' Allowance, or the £20 rate for the On-call Allowance for evenings and weekends. The final conclusions of the DOJ's review have not yet been published.
- 3.53 In oral evidence, the Justice Minister told us that while allowances payable to PSNI officers did not fully mirror those paid to officers in England and Wales, her officials continued to monitor workforce reforms and the review of allowances being progressed for police officers in England and Wales.
- 3.54 In addition, the PSNI sought our support to fully review the additional expense of travel for probationary officers travelling to their first work location post-attestation. The PSNI explained that the absence of a mileage allowance was quite daunting for these officers and might be contributing to them leaving the service. In oral evidence, the PSNI Chief Constable added that he was keen to explore anything to incentivise such officers and enable them to travel to work and that a mileage allowance was just one option.

#### *Our comment on the review of allowances*

- 3.55 We note that the outcomes of the DOJ-commissioned review of allowances, once finally published, may culminate in proposals that diverge somewhat from the principle of parity as set out in this Report. In such circumstances, we would uphold parity as the over-riding principle. This is in recognition of the fact that the role of police officer is fundamentally the same across all three geographical areas. At the same time, we recognise the need for variation in geographical allowances to reflect exceptional local conditions. This means that from a Northern Ireland perspective the NITA, which is unique to Northern Ireland, is the one allowance excluded from the parity principle. On all non-geographical allowances, the PSNI should plan for convergence with England and Wales.
- 3.56 We are pleased that DOJ officials continue to monitor workforce reforms and the review of allowances being conducted for police officers in England and Wales by the NPCC. However, the convergence for Northern Ireland on allowances with England and Wales that we have been recommending for some time has still not been realised. Therefore, we now urge the Northern Ireland parties to uphold the principle of parity and accelerate the convergence process on allowances between Northern Ireland and England and Wales by engaging fully with the Comprehensive Review of police remuneration.
- 3.57 We have recommended in our 2024 England and Wales Report that the allowances set out in the NPCC's three-year schedule for review are actually reviewed in their

entirety in one year (2024/25) as part of the Comprehensive Review of police remuneration. We have stipulated in our England and Wales Report that a coherent and equitable package of proposals for changes to police allowances should be presented to us in the next pay round for implementation in 2025/26. After that initial review we agree with the NPCC that each allowance should be reviewed at least once every five years.

- 3.58 We urge the Northern Ireland parties to take an active role in this review of allowances. Among other things, it would provide an opportunity for the Northern Ireland parties to explore all possible options for incentives for probationary officers travelling far to their first posting especially those in hard-to-fill locations in Northern Ireland.

### **Northern Ireland Transitional Allowance**

- 3.59 Our 2024/25 remit letter from the Minister of Justice asked us to consider the NITA.
- 3.60 The NITA is a taxable non-pensionable allowance received by all police officers. Its current value is £3,924 per annum. It is a payment unique to PSNI police officers, in recognition of the fact that in Northern Ireland, police officers and their families must live with the constant threat of a terrorist attack and the other adverse effects of the political context.
- 3.61 The 2022 review of allowances commissioned by the DOJ recommended no change to the level of the payment of the NITA, subject to annual cost-of-living increases.
- 3.62 It also stated that the payment of the NITA and its value should be reviewed in light of any significant change to the terrorist threat level or significant advance or setback to the process of normalisation of the policing environment. The review of allowances recalled that the Baker Review<sup>23</sup> had said: “The Northern Ireland Transitional Allowance should not be fully withdrawn until responsibility for policing and the judicial system have been delegated to the democratic institutions of Northern Ireland, paramilitary attacks against police officers and establishments have ceased and the threats of violence have reduced substantially, access to difficult areas has been substantially eased, the post-Patten process of change has been completed, and PSNI officers are no longer required to carry sidearms for self-protection or advised to disguise the nature of their occupation”<sup>24</sup>.

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<sup>23</sup> Police Service of Northern Ireland (March 2006): *Special duty allowance – report of an independent review*, by Mark Baker CBE.

<sup>24</sup> The Baker Review also said that “the NITA did not depend directly on the actual level of risk and danger. Instead, the justification was indirect and related to the difficulty and stress arising from having to live with, and mitigate, the terrorism threat... There was not a linear relationship between the danger of attack, the precautions needed to guard against attack, and the difficulties for officers and their families caused by such precautions.” The Baker Review emphasised that the NITA “was paid in recognition of the extraordinary circumstances in which police officers operated in Northern Ireland and the restrictions placed on their daily lives, both on- and off-duty, and those of their family members”.

- 3.63 This year, we asked the parties for their views on the value of the NITA in 2024/25. We did so in the context of the reduction in the Northern Ireland terrorism threat level from 'SEVERE' to 'SUBSTANTIAL' on 6 March 2024.
- 3.64 The DOJ told us in oral evidence that the reduction in the security threat level in Northern Ireland in March 2024 would not affect its consideration of the value of the NITA in 2024/25. In the department's view, the distinction was small and merely meant an attack was now likely rather than highly likely. The DOJ added that it would need to see a substantial reduction in the threat level for a very long period – or even reduced further to moderate – before it would consider reducing the value of the NITA. The DOJ said that the threat level had been rising and dipping as it reflected recent events but that, overall, the reality of the security situation had not changed. The Justice Minister added that, while the threat level had been lowered, PSNI officers still had to remain vigilant against potential threats to them and their families.
- 3.65 In written evidence, the NIPB said that the measures required to police in a 'SEVERE' threat environment were the same as those required for a 'SUBSTANTIAL' threat level. These included security patrols, a ban on single-officer patrolling and additional awareness for police officers and staff in their daily lives.
- 3.66 The PSNI emphasised in its written submission that it was an armed service facing a substantial terrorist threat to harm or attack its officers. It said it policed the UK's only land border with the European Union and, unlike the police in England and Wales, could not easily rely on surges of operational support from neighbouring police services when there were serious incidents, including those involving terrorism. In oral evidence, it said that, while the recent decision by the security services to lower the threat level in Northern Ireland was welcome, the risk of future attacks remained likely. Furthermore, the previous twelve months had seen an increase in security-related incidents with bombings, paramilitary style assaults and shootings across Northern Ireland. In addition, it said that the attempted murder of DCI Caldwell in February 2023 and the ongoing active threat to PSNI officers remained at the forefront of the minds of officers at all ranks across the service. The PSNI observed that these incidents showed that stability had not yet been achieved. It said the service would continue to work towards a safer working environment and community.
- 3.67 The PFNI said that recent events had demonstrated that terrorists still posed a deadly threat to PSNI officers as they provided a policing service to the community. It added that a recent resurgence in such activity added an additional layer of worry and challenge for PSNI officers, both on and off duty. The PFNI told us that it regarded the NITA as a fundamental element of the reward package paid to police officers in Northern Ireland in recognition of the extraordinary circumstances in which they served. The PFNI stated that the NITA should continue to be uplifted in line with the pay award.

3.68 The SANI called for the NITA to be increased in line with the cost of living. It said that the 'SUBSTANTIAL' threat level meant that officers were not able to live a normal life due to the fear of being targeted by terrorists, as evidenced by the attack on DCI Caldwell.

#### *Our comment and recommendation on the Northern Ireland Transitional Allowance*

3.69 While the reduction in the terrorist threat level in March 2024 to 'SUBSTANTIAL' is an encouraging sign, we observe that the security environment in Northern Ireland remains challenging. We also note that the DOJ says that it would need to see a substantial reduction in the threat level for a very long period – or even reduced further to 'MODERATE' – before it would consider reducing the value of the NITA.

3.70 In line with all the parties' evidence, we therefore recommend an uplift to the NITA of 4.75% in line with the 2024/25 pay award.

**Recommendation 5. We recommend an increase of 4.75% in the current level of the Northern Ireland Transitional Allowance (NITA) from 1 September 2024.**

### **Dog Handlers' Allowance**

3.71 Our remit letter from the Minister of Justice sought our consideration of the Dog Handlers' Allowance.

3.72 The review of allowances found that the Dog Handlers' Allowance was paid in line with England and Wales at a flat rate of £2,400<sup>25</sup> for the care of one dog and that compensation for each additional dog was £600 per annum. It explained that all reasonable out-of-pocket expenses associated with the care of dogs (for example, grooming and food) were paid for directly by the PSNI. It added that dog handlers in the PSNI were provided with a vehicle to transport the police dogs to and from work.

3.73 The review of allowances concluded that the allowance was paid for a valid purpose and stated that it appeared to be a reasonable and cost-effective means of providing essential care to police dogs.

3.74 The review of allowances report proposed retention of the Dog Handlers' Allowance at its current rate, subject to annual cost-of-living increases assessed by the PRRB. It observed that all stakeholders supported the continued payment of the allowance and increasing it in line with the pay award each year. The subsequent consultation letter to the parties from the Justice Minister in March 2022 said there was a clear

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<sup>25</sup> This was the rate at the time of the review. (It was £2,400 from September 2020 and frozen in September 2021 but since updated in September 2022 and 2023.)

case to support the retention of the Dog Handlers' Allowance and that it should remain subject to annual review by the PRRB.

- 3.75 This year, all the Northern Ireland parties proposed increasing the Dog Handlers' Allowance in line with the annual pay award.
- 3.76 The NPCC in England and Wales provided an update on the second part of its review of the Dog Handlers' Allowance which focused on payments made to dog handlers with a second dog. The NPCC proposed that the allowance to officers for a second dog should be raised from 25% of the first dog allowance to 60%. The MPS supported this proposal. As part of this review, the NPCC considered how a methodology for determining the allowance might be agreed. This would be considered again as part of the next review in 2025/26.

*Our comment and recommendation on the Dog Handlers' Allowance*

- 3.77 We note the work that has been undertaken by the NPCC to review the payments made to dog handlers with more than one dog. However, we were concerned by the lack of data on the number of dogs per officer and on the number of dog handlers who have dogs that have to be exercised separately. We also note the lack of suitable comparators. We observe that it is difficult to make robust recommendations in the absence of basic statistical data.
- 3.78 In spite of these challenges, we recognise the additional burdens, particularly in terms of the time required to exercise the dogs, placed on officers as the result of having responsibility for more than one dog. However, we also note that the NPCC says that its proposal to uplift the allowance for subsequent dogs to 60% of the allowance for the first dog was "based on a subjective and professional decision, considering the current circumstances attaching to the requirements of being responsible for an additional dog". We observe that in contrast, the majority of respondents to the NPCC's survey of dog handlers felt that an allowance for subsequent dogs that was 50% of the allowance for the first dog was most appropriate. Given we were not entirely convinced by the NPCC's methodology for determining the percentage uplift to the allowance for subsequent dogs, we have given weight to the views of the dog handlers themselves and we recommend that the allowance to officers for a subsequent dog should be raised from 25% to 50% of the rate for the first dog. As in previous years, we also recommend that the Dog Handlers' Allowance be uprated in line with the main pay award. This is in line with the parity principle.

**Recommendation 6. We recommend that the Dog Handlers' Allowance be uprated by 4.75% and the additional rate for officers with more than one dog be raised from 25% to 50% of the rate for the first dog from 1 September 2024.**

## Competence Related Threshold Payments

- 3.79 In 2023 we recommended that the current level of the CRTP did not increase and that, by 30 November 2023, the DOJ submit a full proposal with a firm timeline for the removal of CRTP and convergence with allowances in England and Wales, in the context of parity.

### *Background on the CRTP*

- 3.80 The CRTP was introduced in 2003 to recognise and reward officers able to demonstrate high professional competence under four national standards. It was phased out in England and Wales between 2013 and 2016. It is worth £1,224, was last increased in September 2013 and is pensionable. The PSNI told us that, on 31 December 2023, it was received by around 3,400 officers (up 4.5% on the previous year), at a cost of £6.16 million. It is paid to officers in the federated ranks who have served for a year at the maximum of their pay scale and who satisfy the requirements of the scheme.
- 3.81 Consideration of the CRTP in the 2022 DOJ-commissioned review of allowances was limited to options for its removal and replacement. The review ultimately recommended ceasing the CRTP and replacing it with a performance-related bonus payments scheme to meet the objective of rewarding exceptional performance (instead of time served) which it said would align with the direction of travel of the UK police service as a whole. Furthermore, the review stated that this proposal would involve the same level of funding as the existing CRTP scheme.
- 3.82 The Justice Minister's subsequent consultation letter to the parties in March 2022 said that it was important to remain mindful of the broad consensus that the CRTP should be removed. It acknowledged the potential hardship that its removal could have on individual officers and, with that in mind, proposed a phased approach to the removal of the CRTP over the next two years. The letter proposed closing the scheme to new applicants with immediate effect and a 50% reduction in the payment by 31 August 2023, with the remaining 50% removed by 31 August 2024.

### *Evidence from the parties on the Competence Related Threshold Payment in 2024*

- 3.83 The Justice Minister's letter of 27 March 2024 responding to our 2023 Report informed us that she was giving further consideration to our recommendation on the CRTP. The DOJ told us in written evidence that the Minister would consider the Review's recommendations.
- 3.84 The NIPB told us in oral evidence that it would not be acceptable just to abolish the CRTP as a replacement payment was required. The Unsocial Hours Allowance, introduced in England and Wales following the removal there of the CRTP, was one possibility but this was expected to cost around £15 million, which was significantly more than the CRTP. The NIPB added that given the financial implications and the likely resistance of the staff associations to changes to the CRTP, DOJ officials had

wanted a Minister in place before the issue was progressed. They observed that, given the pressures on officers as a result of the decline in PSNI officer numbers, it would be a difficult issue to raise with staff. The NIPB said there was a tension in its position on the CRTP: it should not be replaced with any measure requiring additional funding but it was also firmly committed to parity with England and Wales.

- 3.85 The PSNI told us that removal of CRTP without some form of replacement would impact on officers' take-home pay during a cost-of-living crisis. It stressed that this would have a negative impact on morale when demands on policing had increased and the reduction in police officer numbers was placing additional responsibilities on fewer officers. The PSNI asked us to reconsider our previous recommendation to remove the CRTP but also stressed that if it remained in place, a practical migration plan was needed. The PSNI added in oral evidence that the problem for the workforce concerned the absence of any discussion on alternative allowances. The PSNI Chief Constable emphasised in oral evidence that it was never good to take money away from people if they were accustomed to receiving it, especially in a service that was under unique pressures. He added that he understood that when the CRTP had ceased in England and Wales, an allowance had been put in place to encourage the development of a more modern and agile workforce. He said he realised why the CRTP needed to be reviewed and phased out but in a transitional way and, as in England and Wales, with an 'olive branch' and a clear message on modernising pay and conditions.
- 3.86 The PFNI told us in written evidence that it continued to oppose the removal of the CRTP but also that it reluctantly accepted our position regarding the impact of its retention on parity. The PFNI said that it would not countenance the removal of the CRTP without the immediate implementation of the appropriate replacement allowance available in England and Wales, i.e. the Unsocial Hours Allowance. It said this allowance would need to be paid immediately to those to whom the scheme was closed and phased in for those currently in receipt of the CRTP to ensure parity in pay but at minimal detriment to officers. The PFNI explained that the Unsocial Hours Allowance was paid to officers to compensate them for every full hour worked between the hours of 8pm and 6am. It said the same rate of the allowance should be applied as in England and Wales, so 10% of an officer's hourly rate of pay working full-time on a standard shift pattern.

#### *Our comment and recommendation on the Competence Related Threshold Payment*

- 3.87 We observe that it is eight years since the CRTP was phased out in England and Wales and that its continuation in Northern Ireland remains at odds with the definition of parity with England and Wales. We also understand that the phased withdrawal in England and Wales alongside the introduction of new allowances was done in such a way that the combined value of basic pay and the CRTP did not decrease for officers as the pay awards in each year were higher in monetary terms than the amount by which the CRTP was reduced. We urge the DOJ to work with

the parties and take immediate steps to plan for convergence on allowances with England and Wales alongside the phased removal of the CRTP in a way that mitigates the impact on overall pay for officers currently receiving it. We ask that the DOJ submits by 30 November 2024 a full proposal, with a firm timeline, for delivering this. We also recommend that the current level of the CRTP does not increase. The proposal should include a decision on when the CRTP will be closed to new applicants. By engaging fully with the review of allowances forming part of our recommended Comprehensive Review of police remuneration in England and Wales, and through convergence on allowances with England and Wales, the principle of parity will be upheld.

**Recommendation 7. We recommend that the DOJ plans for convergence on allowances with England and Wales alongside the phased removal of the Competence Related Threshold Payment (CRTP) in a way that mitigates the impact on overall pay for officers currently receiving CRTP. We ask that the DOJ submits by 30 November 2024 a full proposal, with a firm timeline, for delivering this. We recommend that the current level of the CRTP does not increase.**

## **On-call Allowance**

- 3.88 The 2022 DOJ-commissioned review of allowances proposed maintaining the On-call Allowance for evenings and weekends at a rate of £20. It also proposed limiting the enhanced £30 On-call Allowance rate currently paid to the federated ranks on eight public holidays to just two (17 March and 12 July) and paying £20 to the federated ranks on the remaining six.

### *Evidence from the parties on the On-call Allowance in 2024*

- 3.89 The PSNI told us that it supported the NPCC's recommendation this year to increase the On-call Allowance by £5 in England and Wales and asked us to consider this for Northern Ireland. It explained that all officers up to chief superintendent rank received the £20 rate for evenings and weekends. However, on public holidays, the federated ranks received £30 while the superintending ranks received £20.
- 3.90 The PFNI also proposed increasing the On-call Allowance from £20 to £25 to reflect the NPCC's position. However, the SANI (along with the Police Superintendents' Association in England and Wales) proposed increasing the on-call rate to £60, which after income tax at the higher rate of 40% would amount to £36 net per 24-hour period of on-call. Both the PFNI and SANI called for their respective proposed payments to become reckonable for pension purposes. The joint written evidence from the PSA and SANI included benchmarking research showing that the market median for on-call rates was higher than £20. In oral evidence, the SANI said an

increase to £60 was reasonable because the superintending ranks were not remunerated in the same way as the federated ranks for on-call duties. The flat £20 rate of On-call Allowance had been extended to the superintending ranks in 2020.

- 3.91 On our visit to the PSNI in February 2024, officers told us that the £20 rate of On-call Allowance at evenings and weekends was ‘derisory’ and that the £30 rate on public holidays for the federated ranks was too low. A temporary chief inspector added that the £20 On-call Allowance really amounted to £12 after tax.

#### *Our comment and recommendation on the On-call Allowance*

- 3.92 We examined the detailed evidence presented by the SANI and PSA in support of a differentiated On-call Allowance and their proposal for a significantly higher rate for the superintending ranks to reflect the on-call responsibilities they carried and the impact on their lives. We observe that we do not have similar evidence on other ranks so it is difficult to assess the case for a differentiated allowance. In line with England and Wales, we ask the Northern Ireland parties to carry out a complete review of the On-call Allowance and we await the outcome of this. In doing this we again call on the Northern Ireland parties to participate fully in the review of allowances in England and Wales as part of the Comprehensive Review of police remuneration and in support of the principle of parity on pay and allowances.
- 3.93 In keeping with our 2024 England and Wales report, we recommend that the On-call Allowance at evenings and weekends is raised from £20 to £25 for all the officers in our remit group. This is an interim measure pending the review of allowances that should form part of the Comprehensive Review of police remuneration that we have recommended in our England and Wales report. By participating fully in the Comprehensive Review, the Northern Ireland parties can influence and inform its outcomes. As part of this convergence process they will be able to address the remaining difference in overtime payments on public holidays between Northern Ireland and England and Wales and uphold the principle of parity.

**Recommendation 8. We recommend that the On-call Allowance for evenings and weekends in the PSNI be increased from £20 to £25 from 1 September 2024 as an interim measure pending the outcome of the NPCC’s review of allowances in 2024/25.**

## **Annual Leave**

- 3.94 The PSNI told us that it was keen to ensure parity with England and Wales and that it was aware that the NPCC had proposed modernisation of annual leave provision to make it more comparable with the market and improve the wellbeing of police officers. It noted that the NPCC had proposed a reduction in the time taken by the

federated ranks to reach the 30-day-maximum annual leave entitlement, from 20 to 10 years.

- 3.95 Under the NPCC's proposal, this would be achieved by incrementally increasing the leave entitlement between 6 and 10 years of service. Officers with between two and six years of service would, as under the existing arrangements, be entitled to 25 days' annual leave. Officers would receive one additional day's annual leave each year from their sixth year of service until they reached their full annual leave entitlement of 30 days in their tenth year of service. The NPCC's intention was to transition to the new policy over a three-year period, commencing on 1 April 2025, and review the impact of the new annual leave policy after two years.
- 3.96 The PSNI told us that around 18% of officers were in the range of 6 to 10 years of reckonable service, equivalent to collective potential leave of 3,000 days in the first year. It said it anticipated that the shorter time period for accruing annual leave would have a positive effect on absence rates and workforce resilience. The PSNI said it recognised that a change in legislation and additional costs in the short term (e.g. overtime) would be involved and that it would undertake some analysis of the financial and operational impact of the NPCC's proposal. The PSNI said it would welcome our input on implementing a strategy for the modernisation of annual leave for police officers.
- 3.97 The PFNI advised us that it had identified significant equality considerations and potential indirect discrimination in current police officer leave arrangements. It said it was concerned in particular that the length of time taken to reach the maximum entitlement was likely to impact disproportionately on protected characteristics such as age and sex. It added that recent pension changes had highlighted that there was currently no increase in annual leave entitlement after 20 years' service and that many police officers would in future have to work significantly longer than 30 years.
- 3.98 On annual leave entitlements, the PFNI requested an increase in the minimum annual leave entitlement for the federated ranks from 22 to 25 days and a reduction in the time taken to reach the maximum 30-day entitlement from 20 to 5 years. The PFNI added that it also wanted a period of Long Service Leave of six weeks to be introduced for officers who had served for 10 or more years.

#### *Our comment and recommendation on annual leave*

- 3.99 We observe that annual leave makes an important contribution to wellbeing and morale and that there are signs of work pressures in the PSNI leading to a downward trend in mental health and wellbeing. We note that existing annual leave entitlements in policing do not necessarily reflect current market practice and that annual leave is an important part of the overall remuneration package and will affect the attractiveness of policing as a career.

- 3.100 We agree with the PFNI that the time taken to reach the maximum entitlement is likely to impact disproportionately on those with protected characteristics. We recognise that changing the annual leave policy may assist the efforts of the police service to improve diversity. We therefore recommend that the time it takes the federated ranks in the PSNI to reach the maximum annual leave entitlement of 30 days be reduced from 20 to 10 years. This is in line with our England and Wales 2024 Report and therefore upholds the parity principle.
- 3.101 We also agree with the PFNI that the amount of annual leave for probationary officers (so those in their first two years after completing their initial training<sup>26</sup>) should be increased from 22 to 25 years. The amount of annual leave offered by an organisation is an important part of the recruitment package. We therefore recommend that annual leave for probationary officers should be increased from 22 to 25 days. We note that this will have implications for transition costs and will increase the estimated reduction in police officer capacity. However, we observe that this will be offset to some degree by the productivity gains resulting from improved officer performance because of the potential enhancement to wellbeing from an increase in annual leave provision. This is also in line with our report on England and Wales and so upholds the parity principle.
- 3.102 We note with concern anecdotal evidence suggesting that PSNI officers have difficulty in taking their existing leave entitlements and rest days. We observe that ensuring that officers can take their leave is as important as increasing the amount of leave to which they are entitled. We ask the Northern Ireland parties to consider how to address this underlying problem. In our view, police forces should strongly encourage officers to take their full annual leave allocation in Northern Ireland as well as in England and Wales.
- 3.103 We ask that an Equality Impact Assessment is prepared on all the proposed changes to annual leave. The new annual leave policy should not be implemented until that work is completed.

**Recommendation 9. We recommend that the time it takes the federated ranks in the PSNI to reach the maximum annual leave entitlement of 30 days be reduced from 20 to 10 years. Implementation of this change to be in line with the proposals put forward for England and Wales by the NPCC. In advance of that, we also recommend that from September 2024 the annual leave for probationary officers in the PSNI is increased from 22 to 25 days.**

- 3.104 We note that the NPCC plans to carry out a review in 2024/25 in England and Wales of Carers' Leave, Neonatal Leave and Paternity Leave and other requests

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<sup>26</sup> Our understanding is that PSNI student officers separately receive 8 days' leave during their 21-week initial training course.

from the staff associations in England and Wales. Once again, we encourage the Northern Ireland parties to take an active part in this review of certain types of leave in the interests of convergence with England and Wales and so uphold the parity principle in the area of police officer terms and conditions. We also note that Parental Bereavement Leave was extended to PSNI officers earlier this year in line with England and Wales forces.



## **Chapter 4 – Forward Look**

- 4.1 It will be for Government to set our remit for the next pay round. However, the core of our report will be driven by our standing terms of reference.
- 4.2 In this chapter we aim to give the parties who provide evidence, and the remit group more generally, some indications of areas which are likely to be of continuing interest to us in future pay rounds.

### **Engagement with parties**

- 4.3 We were grateful that all our parties provided us with written evidence this year and further information whenever we requested it. However, we regret that the PFNI did not attend an oral evidence session for the second successive year. This made our consideration of key issues less straightforward. We would have valued hearing directly from the PFNI on a wide range of matters but particularly on officer morale. We hope that full participation by all parties in oral evidence sessions as well as written evidence provision will resume in 2025.

### **Changes to the policing environment**

- 4.4 In the context of competing policing priorities, we would like to learn more about the impact on the PSNI and its officers of the ongoing budgetary situation especially in the areas of neighbourhood policing, partnership working and community engagement. We also request an update on the effect on the PSNI of the restoration of the Northern Ireland Executive and any developments concerning the way in which the PSNI is funded.
- 4.5 We note that the security rating in Northern Ireland was reduced from 'SEVERE' to 'SUBSTANTIAL' in March 2023, a year on from being increased from 'SUBSTANTIAL' to 'SEVERE'. We seek evidence next year on the impact of this latest change on the PSNI operating environment and the lives of officers.
- 4.6 In addition, we are also keen to hear from the parties about the continuing impact of the cost of living on police officers, especially new and recent recruits placed in hard-to-fill locations.

### **Parity with England and Wales**

- 4.7 As requested by all the parties, we have upheld the principle of parity with England and Wales on pay and allowances. We define parity as meaning the same pay scale and allowances across the police service in England, Wales and Northern Ireland to reflect the fact that the role of police officer is fundamentally the same across all three areas, while also recognising the need for variation in geographical allowances to reflect exceptional local conditions. This means that the NITA, which is unique to Northern Ireland, is the one allowance excluded from the parity

principle. On all non-geographical allowances, the PSNI should plan for convergence with England and Wales.

## **Comprehensive Review of police remuneration**

- 4.8 Further to earlier references in this report to the recommendation contained in our England and Wales report for a Comprehensive Review of police remuneration, we ask our Northern Ireland parties to provide us with an update next year on their involvement in a mutual exercise with the England and Wales parties to work towards convergence on pay and allowances.
- 4.9 We have requested by 30 November 2024 a full proposal with a firm timeline from the DOJ for the delivery of plans for convergence on allowances with England and Wales alongside the phased removal of CRTP in a way that mitigates the impact on overall pay for officers currently receiving CRTP. Further to this collaborative work with England and Wales, we also seek progress reports from the Northern Ireland parties next year on:
- the introduction of a regulation to ensure increments are paid on time;
  - constables receiving their first pay increment exactly twelve months from when they first join the service;
  - options chosen to address the problems faced by officers working in hard-to-fill locations in Northern Ireland, particularly probationary officers; and
  - options for enhancing the data on representativeness in the PSNI to cover all protected characteristics.
- 4.10 We note that there are many other exceptions to the parity principle on pay, allowances and terms and conditions to be addressed in Northern Ireland and the recommended Comprehensive Review of police remuneration provides a way to address them. Some of the key remaining differences are set out in Appendix G.

## **Evidence provision**

- 4.11 We thank the parties for the evidence they have provided this year. We would encourage the continued, and where possible enhanced, provision of:
- historical data to allow time-series analysis on the demographics of the workforce, including the age profile of recruits;
  - information on sickness absence and analysis of the reasons for high sickness absence levels;
  - information on the recruitment and retention of officers such as on numbers of applicants and recruits, leavers and attrition and protected characteristics of those resigning, including during training and probation;
  - information on levels of overtime taken, both pre-detailed and casual;

- data on on-call duties and untaken rest days;
- information on progress in response to the Deloitte report, the workforce profile for all protected characteristics and representativeness;
- data on hard-to-fill posts and the number and length of temporary promotions in the PSNI;
- data on the morale and motivation of officers, such as from PSNI, PFNI and SANI surveys of officers;
- data on movements between the PSNI and other police forces, in particular with those in England and Wales, An Garda Síochána and Police Scotland;
- data on second jobs and on any officers leaving the PSNI to take up their secondary role full-time;
- data on neighbourhood policing abstractions;
- views on gender pay gap reporting; and
- information on any matters with regard to the relevant legal obligations on the PSNI and any relevant legislative changes to employment law which do not automatically apply to police officers.

4.12 The PSNI is the primary source of much of the information requested above. We wish to support the PSNI in its provision of this data and are happy to join it in a review of our requests ahead of the next round.

## **Process issues**

4.13 In the context of the restoration of the Northern Ireland Executive, we hope that the Department of Justice can respond to our pay award recommendation in time for the start of the pay year (1 September 2024) and that police officers' annual increments will not be subject to delay. We also hope that this report will be published in a timely fashion.



## Appendix A – Our Previous Recommendations

### 2023 Report

We submitted our 2023 Report on 20 June 2023. The recommendations were as follows:

**Our 2023/24 recommendation (from 1 September 2023):**

**Pay:**

- 1. A consolidated increase of 7% to all police officer pay points for all ranks up to and including assistant chief constable.**
- 2. The introduction of a police regulation in Northern Ireland on police officer increments to ensure that they are paid on time.**
- 3. The removal of pay point 0 of the constable pay scale.**
- 4. All constables to move to pay point 2 after twelve months at pay point 1, as in England and Wales.**
- 5. Point 3 of the chief superintendent pay scale to be uplifted by £2,838 from 1 September 2023 and £2,837 from 1 September 2024. These uplifts are to be made before the application of the respective pay awards for these years.**

**In line with recommendations on chief constable and deputy chief constable pay in the PRRB England and Wales Ninth Report:**

- 6. A consolidated increase of 5% to the PSNI chief constable pay point from 1 September 2023.**
- 7. A consolidated increase of 6.4% to the PSNI deputy chief constable pay point from 1 September 2023 to set it at 82.5% of the chief constable pay point.**

**Allowances:**

- 8. An increase of 7% in the current level of the Northern Ireland Transitional Allowance (NITA) from 1 September 2023.**
- 9. Dog Handlers' Allowance to be uprated by 7%.**
- 10. That the current level of the Competence Related Threshold Payment (CRTP) does not increase and that, by 30 November 2023, the DOJ submits a full proposal with a firm timeline for the removal of CRTP and convergence with allowances in England and Wales, in the context of parity.**

## Previous recommendations

All of our previous recommendations, along with the responses<sup>27</sup> are set out below

Report	Recommendation	Response
1 <sup>st</sup> (2015)	A consolidated increase of 1% to all pay points for federated and superintending ranks	Accepted
	No increase to the current level of Competence Related Threshold Payment	Accepted
	Northern Ireland Transitional Allowance to be uprated by 1%	Accepted
	Dog Handlers' Allowance to be uprated by 1%	Accepted
2 <sup>nd</sup> (2016)	A consolidated increase of 1% to all pay points for federated and superintending ranks	Accepted
	No increase to the current level of Competence Related Threshold Payment	Accepted
	Northern Ireland Transitional Allowance and Dog Handlers' Allowance to be uprated by 1%	Accepted
	No increase to the current level of the On-call Allowance	Accepted
3 <sup>rd</sup> (2017)	A consolidated increase of 2% to all pay points for federated and superintending ranks	Increased consolidated pay by 1% and, for 2017/18 only, provided a 1% non-consolidated pay award
	No increase to the current level of Competence Related Threshold Payment	Accepted
	Northern Ireland Transitional Allowance and Dog Handlers' Allowance to be uprated by 2%	Increased Northern Ireland Transitional Allowance and Dog Handlers' Allowance by 1%
	No increase to the current level of the On-call Allowance	Accepted
4 <sup>th</sup> (2018)	The time-limited 1% non-consolidated pay award received by the federated and superintending ranks in 2017/18 should be consolidated onto all pay points officers at these ranks.	Rejected
	In addition to and following our first recommendation, a consolidated increase of 2% to all police officer pay points at all ranks.	Accepted
	An increase of 2% in the current level of the Northern Ireland Transitional Allowance and Dog Handlers' Allowance	Accepted
	The CRTP scheme remains open to new applicants pending the outcome of the comprehensive review and that the current level of CRTP does not increase	Accepted
5 <sup>th</sup> (2019)	A consolidated increase of 2.5% to all police officer pay points for all ranks.	Accepted for federated and superintending ranks. No response yet made regarding chief police officers
	An increase of 2.5% in the current level of the Northern Ireland Transitional Allowance.	Accepted

<sup>27</sup> Responses to the 2015, 2016, 2019, 2020, 2021 and 2023 Reports were made by the Northern Ireland Minister of Justice. The 2017, 2018 and 2022 Reports were responded to by the Permanent Secretary at the Department of Justice in Northern Ireland in the absence of a Minister of Justice.

Report	Recommendation	Response
	The current level of Competence Related Threshold Payment (CRTP) does not increase and that the parties submit proposals next year on how CRTP can be incorporated into pay arrangements as part of the pay reform process in Northern Ireland, or a clear programme and timetable for phasing out CRTP.	Accepted
	Dog Handlers' Allowance should increase by 2.5%.	Accepted
6 <sup>th</sup> (2020)	A consolidated increase of 2.5% to all police officer pay points for all ranks.	Accepted
	The Chief Constable of Northern Ireland should be granted the same discretion as chief constables in England and Wales regarding the starting salaries of constables.	Accepted
	Removal of the lowest point on the sergeants' pay scale.	Accepted
	An increase of 2.5% in the current level of the Northern Ireland Transitional Allowance.	Accepted
	The current level of the Competence Related Threshold Payment should not increase and the parties submit proposals to us next year on suitable alternative arrangements.	Accepted
	Dog Handlers' Allowance should increase by 2.5%.	Accepted
	On-call Allowance should be extended to the superintending ranks in Northern Ireland.	Accepted
	The parties conduct a comprehensive review of police officer allowances in Northern Ireland within the next twelve months.	Accepted
7 <sup>th</sup> (2021)	Pay point 0 of the constable pay scale is uplifted by £250.	Accepted
	A 1% increase to the Northern Ireland Transitional Allowance for all police officers.	Accepted
8 <sup>th</sup> (2022)	A consolidated increase of £1,900 to all police officer pay points for all ranks.	Accepted
	An increase of 5% in the current level of the Northern Ireland Transitional Allowance (NITA).	Accepted
	An increase of 5% in the Dog Handlers' Allowance.	Accepted
	That the current level of the Competence Related Threshold Payment (CRTP) does not increase and that in evidence next year the parties present a clear process and timetable for its abolition.	Accepted
	That the payment of officers providing mutual aid is brought in line with England and Wales, including the Away from Home Overnight Allowance	Accepted
9 <sup>th</sup> (2023)	A consolidated increase of 7% to all police officer pay points for all ranks up to and including assistant chief constable.	Accepted
	The introduction of a police regulation in Northern Ireland on police officer increments to ensure that they are paid on time.	No response
	The removal of pay point 0 of the constable pay scale.	Accepted
	All constables to move to pay point 2 after twelve months at pay point 1, as in England and Wales.	Accepted
	Point 3 of the chief superintendent pay scale to be uplifted by £2,838 from 1 September 2023 and £2,837 from 1 September 2024. These uplifts are to be made before the application of the respective pay awards for these years.	Accepted

<b>Report</b>	<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Response</b>
	A consolidated increase of 5% to the PSNI chief constable pay point from 1 September 2023.	Accepted
	A consolidated increase of 6.4% to the PSNI deputy chief constable pay point from 1 September 2023 to set it at 82.5% of the chief constable pay point.	Accepted
	An increase of 7% in the current level of the Northern Ireland Transitional Allowance (NITA) from 1 September 2023.	Accepted
	Dog Handlers' Allowance to be uprated by 7%.	Accepted
	That the current level of the Competence Related Threshold Payment (CRTP) does not increase and that, by 30 November 2023, the DOJ submits a full proposal with a firm timeline for the removal of CRTP and convergence with allowances in England and Wales, in the context of parity.	No response

## Appendix B – Remit Letter from the Minister of Justice

FROM THE OFFICE OF THE JUSTICE MINISTER



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Our Ref: SUB-1010-2024

Zoë Billingham  
Chair  
Police Remuneration Review Body  
Office of Manpower Economics  
3<sup>rd</sup> Floor, Windsor House  
50 Victoria Street  
LONDON  
SW1H 0TL  
Via email: [gabrielle.kann@businessandtrade.gov.uk](mailto:gabrielle.kann@businessandtrade.gov.uk)

25 February 2024

Dear Zoë,

### **POLICE REMUNERATION REVIEW BODY REMIT FOR 2024/25**

I would like to thank the Police Remuneration Review Body (PRRB) for the work undertaken to support the 2023/24 pay process and for receipt of its ninth report for Northern Ireland.

It is regrettable that in the absence of a Northern Ireland Executive the Department has to date been unable to conclude the pay round for 2023/24. I wish to assure you that this is now a priority decision which I will give my full consideration to.

FROM THE OFFICE OF THE JUSTICE MINISTER



However, this cannot delay considerations of the next pay round, and therefore I am writing to ask the PRRB to commence its annual review in respect of officers of the PSNI for 2024/25, in conjunction with that for police officers in England and Wales.

In line with the principle of broad alignment of PSNI officer pay with those in England and Wales, I ask you to formally commence the 2024/25 pay round and I refer to the PRRB the following matters:

- How to apply the pay award for 2024/25 for police officers in the PSNI up to and including chief superintending ranks;
- Consideration of the regular elements of the Northern Ireland Transitional Allowance and the Dog Handlers' Allowance.

While the Northern Ireland Public Sector Pay Policy has not been set for 2024/25, I would ask that the PRRB give careful consideration to the affordability position in Northern Ireland which will be set out in both written and oral evidence.

As in previous years, I would invite you to have regard to PRRB's standing terms of reference. We would welcome receipt of your tenth report and recommendations by the end of June 2024. I look forward to working with you and your members in support of the process for the year ahead.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read 'Naomi Long'.

**NAOMI LONG MLA**  
**Minister of Justice**

*Please ensure that you quote our reference number in any future related correspondence.*

## **Appendix C – Summaries of the Parties’ Written Evidence**

C.1 We have set out below our summaries of the written evidence provided to us this year.

### **DOJ and DOF**

- C.2 The DOJ told us that the pay and other terms and conditions of PSNI officers were broadly consistent with their counterparts in England and Wales and that the Department wanted to continue with that approach. It said therefore that retention of broad alignment continued to be important, as was the principle that officers should be rewarded on a consistent basis for fulfilling their role as an officer, no matter which of the UK police forces they served within. The DOJ added that it did not use the term ‘parity’ for pay and allowances because there were some unique differences in the jurisdictions such as the NITA in Northern Ireland and the application of London Weighting in London.
- C.3 The DOJ explained that the impact of the 2023/24 budget meant that the PSNI had, among other things, implemented a freeze on recruitment and a reduction in police officer numbers. The DOJ said that the PSNI had 6,477 officers (as at 29 February 2024), 6,392 by March 2024 and that police officer numbers had fallen to their lowest level since the formation of the PSNI due to lack of funding.
- C.4 The DOJ advised us that it was too early to say what the approach to public sector pay setting in Northern Ireland would be in 2024/25. Furthermore, the Northern Ireland Budget for 2024-25 had not yet been set. However, it explained that for 2024/25 the PSNI’s non-ringfenced Resource DEL planning baseline was £715.9 million and that the PSNI had reported potential budgetary pressures of £330.8 million, based on police officer numbers of around 6,392 by March 2024. The DOJ outlined the PSNI’s range of responsibilities and sources of funding.
- C.5 The DOJ said that in September 2023, the public sector in Northern Ireland accounted for 27.5% of all employee jobs in Northern Ireland and that Northern Ireland consistently had a higher proportion of public sector jobs per head of population than the whole of the UK (11.8% compared to 8.8% for the whole of the UK). It added that data showed that earnings for public sector workers had not increased in real terms over the last decade.
- C.6 The DOJ told us that the cost-of-living crisis continued to have a profound impact on local households and families, who were facing significantly higher day-to-day costs on essential items such as food and energy compared to prices two years earlier. It said that elevated interest rates had exacerbated financial pressures for households from higher costs of new borrowing and that repayments for existing loans and household incomes had been severely depressed because average earnings growth for employees in Northern Ireland had failed to keep pace with the sharp

risers in inflation. Nevertheless, the latest monthly HMRC PAYE data suggested in February 2024 that average earnings growth in Northern Ireland (which increased by 4.6% nominally over the year to January 2024) had outstripped inflation (4%). The DOJ added that while CPI inflation had fallen from a peak of 11.1% in October 2022 to 4.0% in the 12 months to January 2024, it remained two times higher than the Bank of England's target rate of 2%. The DOJ explained that the Bank of England also expected lower oil and gas prices to contribute to a further drop in inflation to 2% in the coming months before increasing to around 2.75% by the end of the year. In addition, the Bank of England was forecast to consider an interest rate cut (from 5.25% in February 2024 after 14 successive increases) later in the year.

## **NIPB**

- C.7 The NIPB told us that it remained committed to the principle of parity in pay and allowances between PSNI officers and their counterparts in England and Wales as it considered that a failure to do so would have a detrimental effect on the recruitment and long-term retention of officers in Northern Ireland. It added that PSNI officers faced a unique set of circumstances, including: a continuing terrorist threat; an extremely challenging budgetary situation (which had resulted in significantly reduced recruitment and a very stretched operating model with fewer officers doing more); the impact of a large-scale data breach; and instability within the senior team following the resignation of the Chief Constable in 2023.
- C.8 The NIPB agreed with our comment that the principle of parity should extend to allowances other than where the local context dictated a difference, such as in relation to the NITA. It said it was happy to review any proposals in this regard, including alternatives to the CRTP. The NIPB added that it recognised that the challenges of the last two years had adversely affected the ability of the PSNI to seriously engage in the reform and transformation activity that it wanted to, including in relation to pay.
- C.9 The NIPB welcomed our 2023 recommendations on the pay award and allowances, on constables progressing to pay point 2 after 12 months in post (which in the current cost-of-living context it said would help to make the PSNI an attractive career option and would be particularly well-received by those just starting), and on processing annual increments independently from the pay award. The NIPB asked that we continue to take into account the absence of industrial rights for police officers when recommending on pay and allowances.
- C.10 On the PSNI budget, the NIPB said that the resourcing pressures facing the service were beyond a critical point, with the number of officers falling to the lowest ever level by 31 March 2024 (officers: 6,358; staff: 2,341). It said this was continuing to have a detrimental impact on the operational resilience of the PSNI and the ability of officers and staff to meet the demands faced. The NIPB stressed that in particular it

was concerned about the impact of the resourcing situation on neighbourhood policing teams. It told us it would want to work with the PSNI to ensure that the integrity of the neighbourhood policing function was not eroded.

- C.11 The NIPB reported that morale levels were low among PSNI officers as reflected in the 2023 cultural audit results and high sickness absence levels. It said the data breach and the Scofield Judgment and its aftermath had impacted on service confidence. The NIPB also observed that it had experienced a significant increase in serving officers applying for ill-health retirement and injury on duty awards.
- C.12 The NIPB welcomed the restoration of the Northern Ireland Assembly as an opportunity to progress a number of outstanding recommendations and legislative reforms that would benefit policing. The NIPB added that the increase in assaults on officers had led it to call on the Assembly to consider whether current legislation adequately reflected the risks facing officers and other emergency service workers.

## **PSNI**

- C.13 The PSNI told us that despite the significant challenges facing the organisation and its officers, it had continued to provide excellent services to the communities of Northern Ireland. It said it was only right therefore for its police officers to be rewarded and remunerated to reflect the commitment, performance and valuable contribution they continued to make, despite the challenging context and untenable delays on pay.
- C.14 The PSNI's written evidence set out the following issues for our consideration:
- "Pay parity: we are keen to uphold pay parity with England and Wales and ask the PRRB to recognise the need for variation in allowances to reflect exceptional local conditions.
  - Targeted Variable Payments (TVP): In recognition of unique challenges in recruitment and retention in a number of locations we are cognisant that we may need new ways to address these challenges. PSNI seek PRRB's support to explore whether a TVP for hard-to-fill roles and locations would be an appropriate solution.
  - Pay progression: We ask the PRRB to support total separation of incremental pay from our annual pay remits.
  - On-call Allowance: We ask the PRRB to consider maintaining On-call Allowance to reflect the factors unique to Northern Ireland and increase the rate of the allowance.
  - Competence Related Threshold Payment (CRTP): In recognition of no further instruction from the DOJ in respect of the removal of CRTP, we ask the PRRB to reconsider their previous recommendation to remove CRTP. If this recommendation remains current, we would request that any proposal to

remove it includes a practical migration plan which does not disadvantage the current workforce.

- Mileage Allowance: We welcome views from the PRRB on what an appropriate mileage rate, or lump sum, for electric vehicles should be set at for essential users and casual users.
- Annual Leave: We would welcome the PRRB's input in respect of an implementation strategy for the modernisation of annual leave for police officers.
- Excess fares for probationary officers: The PSNI seeks support from the PRRB to fully review and consider what options may be available to support probationary officers' travel to their first station.
- Maternity leave: We ask the PRRB to support alignment of maternity leave with England and Wales."

C.15 The PSNI explained that its anticipated base pay bill for 2024/25, excluding overtime, was £501 million and that the gross costs of pay uplifts were £2.8 million for every 1% increase in basic pay. It told us that it and the wider public sector in Northern Ireland faced an even more challenging budgetary outlook this year and that budget allocations in recent years were having real consequences for service delivery, resilience and modernisation, with difficult decisions required on how to prioritise demand and manage risk in the coming years. It explained further that it had embarked on another year of cost-cutting measures and headcount reductions. By March 2024, it therefore expected to have 6,358 officers, so 1,142 fewer than the commitment to 7,500 police officers in the New Decade New Approach (NDNA) agreement of 2020. It said this reduction in numbers came at a time when the population in Northern Ireland was growing and police officer workloads were increasing and becoming more complex.

C.16 The PSNI added that a confident and prosperous society was dependent on a safe Northern Ireland. However, it stressed that the more it examined its strategic and financial position, and in meeting with officers and staff, the clearer it became that it was moving to a position where service delivery was increasingly untenable. It said that if this situation continued, it would not be able to meet the requirement of keeping people safe. It also warned that the reduction in police officer numbers would result in reduced frontline services affecting the most vulnerable in society and drive services towards emergency response only. It said it would also impact detrimentally on its legitimacy and objective to optimise the number of under-represented groups in the organisation.

C.17 The PSNI advised us that Northern Ireland had seen more strikes in the last year than ever before and that the organisation had to monitor the situation to respond appropriately. At the same time, police officers – unlike police staff colleagues or the ambulance or fire service – were themselves unable to strike but expected to respond to additional demand when public sector partner provision ceased at the

end of the working day or week. The PSNI told us that the biggest strike in Northern Ireland in 50 years had taken place on 18 January 2024.

- C.18 The PSNI told us that its budgetary position had resulted in a pause in student officer appointments between June 2023 and March 2024 but that it intended to progress around 100 appointments between April and June 2024. It explained that while it continued to engage regularly with its existing candidates from its previous recruitment campaigns, e.g. in 2021, it was concerned that the recruitment delays due to the funding gap would increasingly affect its ability to retain its talent pipeline.
- C.19 The PSNI added that the change within Home Office forces to provide four distinct entry routes had not been implemented in the PSNI. However, it added that, subject to funding, it would explore alternative entry routes as part of any future potential growth plan. The PSNI explained that current barriers included the non-availability of apprenticeship funding, safety concerns for university students taking a specific police course, and associated risks to the PSNI's ability to attract a representative workforce. Consequently, the PSNI said that it continued to have a single route of entry open to anyone aged 18 to 57 and a minimum entry requirement of 5 GCSEs (or equivalent) at A\* to C grade, including English Language. During the Student Officer Development Programme, they worked towards a level 5 qualification accredited by Ulster University.

## **PFNI**

- C.20 The PFNI emphasised that it had prepared its written evidence for 2024/25 without sight of our 2023 Report. It added that a confidential briefing on the Report from the DOJ in October 2023 had been of limited value because the Report's recommendations had not been specified.
- C.21 The PFNI said policing in Northern Ireland was now beyond crisis point and that appropriate and tangible steps were urgently needed to address officers' concerns. The PFNI set out the impact on officers' morale and motivation arising from various factors, including: the PSNI's budget deficit; the August 2023 data breach; the Ormeau Road incident, the Scofield Judgment and subsequent events; and the halting of officer recruitment. The PFNI also reported that assaults on police officers had continued to rise each year.
- C.22 The PFNI detailed the impact of the data breach of 8 August 2023 on the workforce. It said that personal information on 9,483 PSNI officers and staff had been published on a public website following an FOI request. The PSNI told us that the nature and extent of the data breach and the threat it posed to PSNI officers and staff in the Northern Ireland context made it the most significant data breach ever in UK policing. The PFNI added that the ongoing detrimental impact on the workforce and their families could not be underestimated and that it had left them feeling particularly vulnerable. It explained that in December 2023, HMT funding had meant the subsequent provision of a universal offer of £500 to the workforce for

reimbursement for the purchase of equipment to enhance personal security. In addition, the PFNI was seeking compensation for the adverse impact of the data breach on officers and their families.

C.23 The PFNI made seven main proposals in its written evidence this year:

- Immediate action to compensate for current pay degradation and a clearly defined timeline to restore police pay. It said that this should include above-inflation pay increases for a number of years.
- The introduction of an Unsocial Hours Allowance and other allowances received in England and Wales should CRTP be phased out.
- An increase to the On-call Allowance from £20 to £25 and for it to be made pensionable.
- On annual leave, raising the minimum entitlement in the federated ranks from 22 to 25 days, a reduction in the time taken to reach the maximum entitlement (of 30 days) from 20 to 5 years and the introduction of long service leave (six weeks on reaching ten years' service).
- An increase in fully paid maternity and adoption leave from 18 weeks to 26 weeks in line with police officers in England and Wales.
- The reintroduction of overtime payments or a non-pensionable supplement for the inspecting ranks.
- The introduction of a determination in Northern Ireland on paying police officers' pay increments annually, in line with Annex F of the England and Wales Police Regulations 2003.

C.24 On the CRTP, the PFNI stressed that it opposed its removal. However, it added that it also reluctantly accepted our position regarding the impact of its retention on parity with England and Wales. The PFNI explained that it remained 'steadfast' in its view that the removal of CRTP had to coincide with the immediate implementation of the Unsocial Hours Allowance as available in England and Wales.

C.25 The PFNI also set out options for the removal of CRTP. Two included phased removal of CRTP in two years (by 1 September 2026) and a reduction in the value of the allowance over this period by approximately 33% each year. In the first option, the CRTP scheme would also remain open to new applicants but in the second, it would be closed to new applicants from 1 September 2024. In a third option, the CRTP would be removed in full on 1 September 2025 with the appropriate replacement allowances implemented immediately from that date.

## **SANI and PSA**

C.26 The SANI again this year expressed disappointment that none of its points had been included in the Department of Justice remit letter. It said its members continued to

feel this was unfair and that it prevented consideration of key matters affecting the PSNI workforce.

C.27 The SANI set out what it called the uniquely challenging political context of Northern Ireland. It said that the PSNI consequently faced stark challenges on its budget, recruitment freezes and the possibility of falling below 6,000 police officers by 2025, at a time of increasing demand.

C.28 The SANI proposed the following:

- Maintaining parity of pay with police officers in England and Wales in respect of core pay scales.
- An increase in pay scales and the NITA in line with the cost of living.
- Payment for rest days and public holidays that cannot be taken due to exigencies of duty, and an extension of their availability to 24 months.

C.29 With regard to a pay award for 2024, the SANI and PSA set out an analysis of pay and inflation between 2015/16 and 2024/25 concluding that pay for the superintending ranks had been suppressed by between 12.2% and 11.6%. The SANI's evidence also included the joint statement on behalf of the SANI, PSA, NPCC and Chief Police Officers' Staff Association. In line with that statement, the SANI confirmed that it sought a funded, above-inflation party award applied equally across all ranks, together with a recommendation for a longer-term strategy linked to a future multiyear settlement aligned to the next CSR that continued to reduce the real-terms pay cuts. The joint statement noted that inflation was 6.7% in September 2023.

C.30 The SANI requested a commitment to timely implementation of recommended pay awards in future reviews with an oversight body for governance.

C.31 Other SANI proposals included:

- Parity on additional discretionary bonuses. The SANI noted that, unlike the federated ranks, the superintending ranks were not eligible for the CRTP, nor able to apply for TVP.
- The extension of retire and return to the PSNI as found in England and Wales. The PSNI was experiencing 70-80 retirements or resignations per month which created an additional workload for those remaining in post, particularly those with specialist skills and knowledge at a time when training and recruitment was being delayed.
- An increase in allowances to include mileage rates in line with the cost-of-living increase.



## Appendix D – The Parties’ Website Addresses

The parties’ written evidence should be available through these websites.

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Department of Justice Northern Ireland	<a href="https://www.justice-ni.gov.uk/">https://www.justice-ni.gov.uk/</a>
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Northern Ireland Policing Board	<a href="https://www.nipolicingboard.org.uk/">https://www.nipolicingboard.org.uk/</a>
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Police Service of Northern Ireland	<a href="https://www.psni.police.uk/">https://www.psni.police.uk/</a>
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Police Federation for Northern Ireland	<a href="https://www.policefed-ni.org.uk/">https://www.policefed-ni.org.uk/</a>
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Superintendents’ Association of Northern Ireland	<a href="https://police-superintendents.herokuapp.com/rails/active_storage/blobs/eyJfc_mFpbHMiOnsibWVzc2FnZSI6IkJBaHBBZ3NDIiwiaXhwLjpudWxsLCJwdXliOiJibG9iX2lkIn19--4677eef31cbce4153b492392c3061c662c0ecb46/PRRB%20Doc%202024%20Final.pdf">https://police-superintendents.herokuapp.com/rails/active_storage/blobs/eyJfc_mFpbHMiOnsibWVzc2FnZSI6IkJBaHBBZ3NDIiwiaXhwLjpudWxsLCJwdXliOiJibG9iX2lkIn19--4677eef31cbce4153b492392c3061c662c0ecb46/PRRB%20Doc%202024%20Final.pdf</a>
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## Appendix E – Our Analysis of Earnings and Workforce Data

### Earnings

- E.1 We examined the earnings<sup>28</sup> of police officers using the Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE) and the Police Earnings Census run by the Home Office. ASHE is a sample survey, published in autumn each year, which provides headline earnings estimates for occupations across the economy; for police officers the Standard Occupational Classification produces figures jointly for constables and sergeants and, separately, for the grouping of more senior ranks. The Police Earnings Census, conducted in its present form since FYE 2011, covers all police officers and permits detailed earnings analysis. The data provide a useful insight into the range of earnings received within and across ranks, and the take-up and value of individual pay components.
- E.2 We used the ASHE data to compare median<sup>29</sup> full-time<sup>30</sup> gross annual earnings of police officers (constables and sergeants) with those of: the whole economy; associate professional occupations group (the occupational group which includes police officers); and professional occupations (which tend to be graduate professions). From our analysis (Chart E.1) we conclude that police officers in Northern Ireland have higher median full-time gross annual earnings (including the NITA<sup>31</sup>) compared with counterparts in England and Wales, approximately £51,000 compared with £43,000 respectively in FYE 2023; this was primarily driven by NITA, higher amounts of overtime, and the retention of the CRTP scheme. Moreover, police officers in Northern Ireland have higher median full-time gross annual earnings compared with workers in Northern Ireland in the wider economy and the other occupational groups shown.
- E.3 We note that median full-time gross annual earnings of police officers in Northern Ireland in FYE 2023 (including the NITA) increased by 3.8% (around £1,900) compared with FYE 2022. Across England and Wales, ASHE estimates of median full-time gross annual earnings for police officers fell by 2.4% (£1,000). Median full-time gross annual earnings in Northern Ireland rose by 8.8% (£2,700) for the whole economy, 2.4% (£1,000) for professional occupations, and 4.6% (£1,500) for associate professional occupations.

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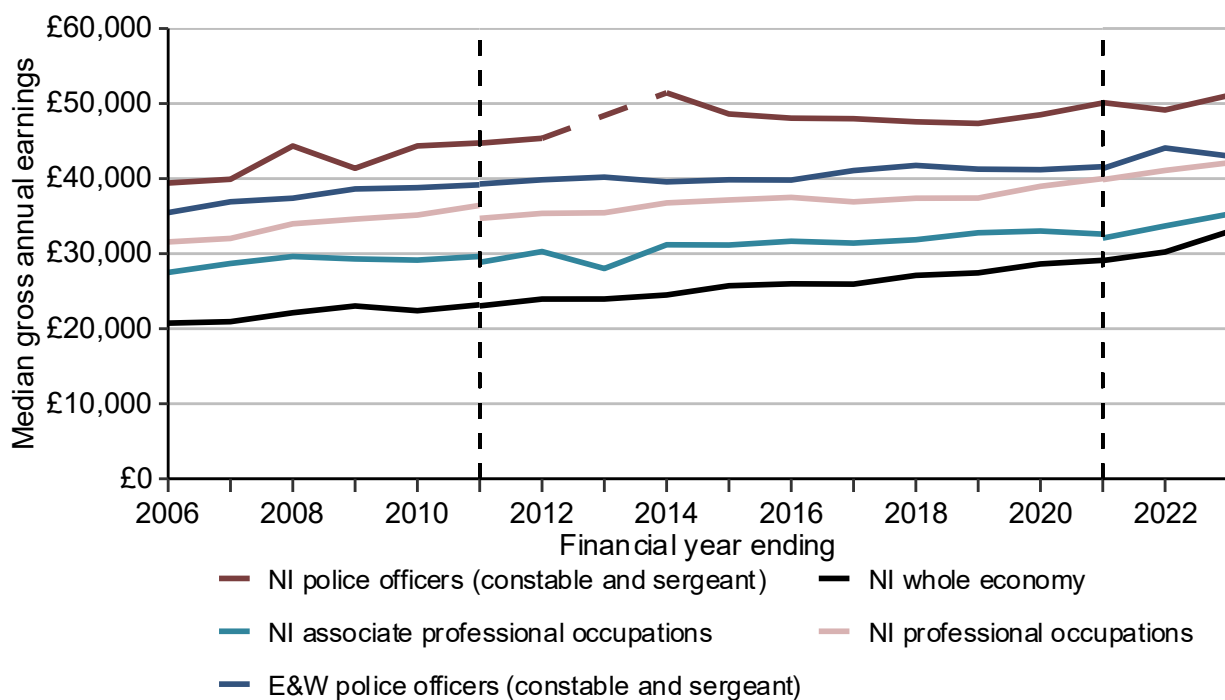
<sup>28</sup> Earnings include basic pay and additional pay from overtime and allowances. Earnings are presented in terms of gross pay (that is before tax, National Insurance and other deductions) in current prices unless otherwise stated.

<sup>29</sup> The median is the value below which 50% of workers fall. It gives a better indication of typical pay than the mean as it is less affected by a relatively small number of very high earners and the skewed distribution of earnings.

<sup>30</sup> Full-time earnings are used to control for any differences caused by different mixes of full- and part-time workers over time and between occupations.

<sup>31</sup> ASHE does not provide figures excluding the NITA.

**Chart E.1: Median full-time gross annual earnings, Northern Ireland and England & Wales, FYE 2006 – 2023**



Source: OPRB analysis of Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings, ONS and NISRA.

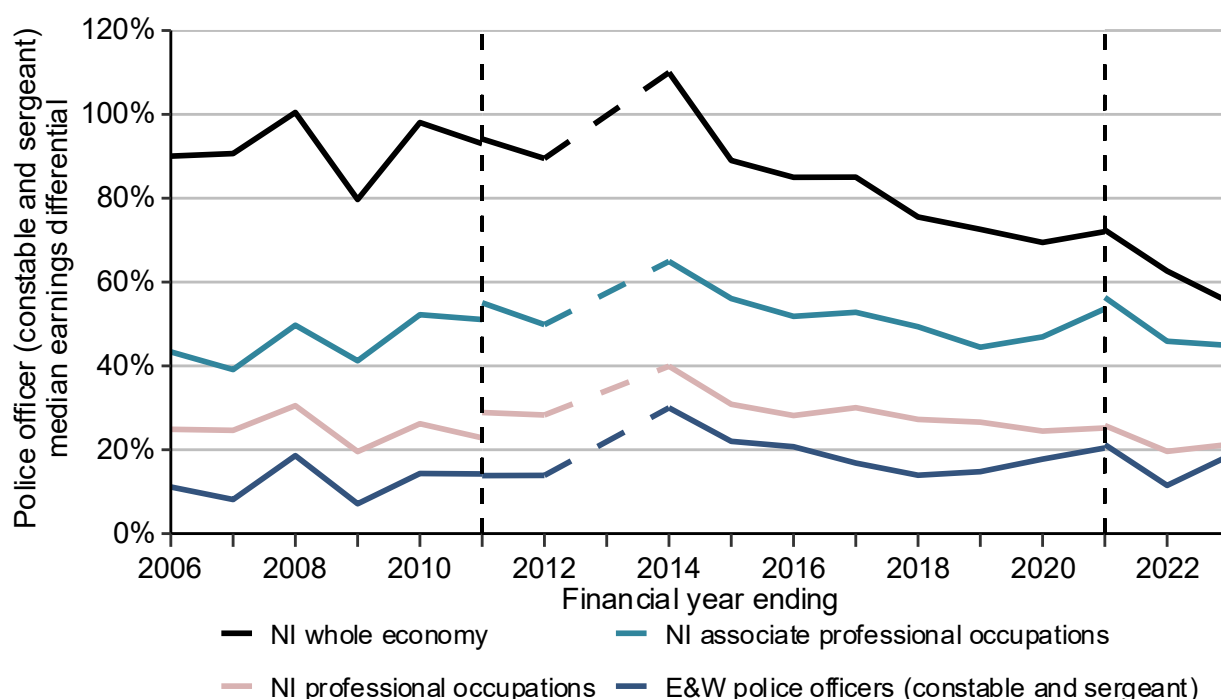
Notes:

- There are discontinuities in the series due to changes to the Standard Occupational Classification (in FYE 2011).
- Data for the latest year are provisional.
- Data for Northern Ireland police officers are not available for FYE 2013 due to a small sample size.

**E.4** Our analysis included looking at the differentials between police officer earnings (including the NITA) in Northern Ireland and the earnings of other groups (Chart E.2). These differentials with the whole Northern Ireland economy and Northern Ireland associate professional occupations fell in FYE 2023, while the differential with England and Wales police and Northern Ireland professional occupations rose. In FYE 2023, median full-time gross annual earnings for police officers in Northern Ireland were:

- 55% (£18,200) higher than those for the whole economy in Northern Ireland;
- 45% (£15,800) higher than associate professional occupations in Northern Ireland;
- 21% (£9,000) higher than professional occupations in Northern Ireland; and
- 19% (£8,000) higher than police officers in England and Wales.

**Chart E.2: Differentials between Northern Ireland police officer full-time median gross annual earnings and those of other groups, FYE 2006 – 2023**



Source: OPRB analysis of Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings, ONS and NISRA.

Notes:

- There are discontinuities in the series due to changes to the Standard Occupational Classification (in FYE 2011).
- Data for the latest year are provisional.
- Data for Northern Ireland police officers are not available for FYE 2013 due to a small sample size.

E.5 For a detailed analysis of police earnings we used the latest available Police Earnings Census data (covering FYE 2023). We found that superintendent was the only rank in Northern Ireland where fewer than half of officers were at the top of their pay scale (Table E.1:). This means that median basic pay is around the top of the pay scale for all other ranks.

**Table E.1: Proportion of officers (full- and part-time) at the top of pay scales, Northern Ireland and England & Wales, March 2023**

	Northern Ireland	England & Wales
Constable	61%	49%
Sergeant	73%	67%
Inspector	58%	46%
Chief Inspector	75%	50%
Superintendent	23%	37%
Chief Superintendent	60%	50%

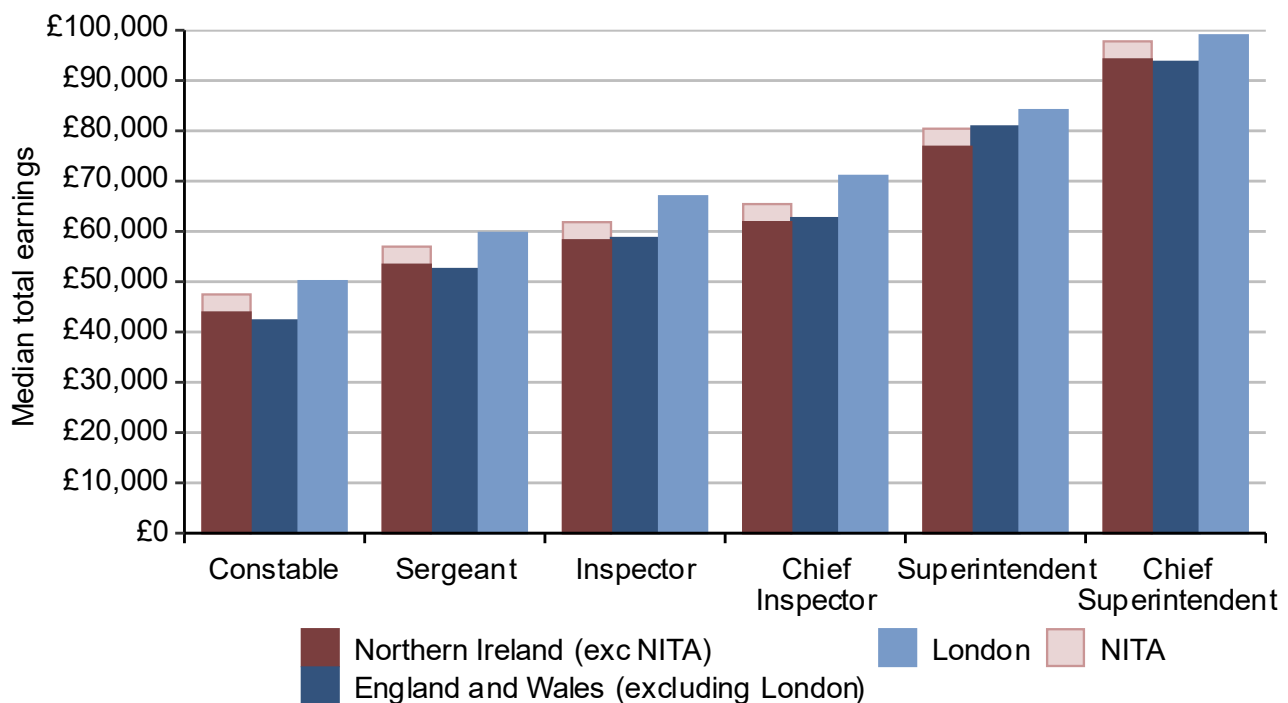
Source: OPRB analysis of Police Earnings Census data, Home Office.

E.6 When comparing the total earnings of Northern Ireland police officers with those of their counterparts in England and Wales we show earnings figures including and excluding the NITA. We focus our analysis on the comparison excluding the NITA,

as this allowance is paid to police officers in Northern Ireland in acknowledgement of the challenging policing environment and the restrictions faced by officers and their families.

- E.7 Our analysis shows that median full-time total earnings (excluding the NITA) for constables and sergeants were higher than for their counterparts in England and Wales excluding London (Chart E.3) by around £1,600 and £900 respectively. This is mainly as a result of higher levels of overtime worked in Northern Ireland and the retention of CRTP. The lower median earnings for superintendents in Northern Ireland (by around £4,000) are as a result of differences in the distribution of superintendents on their pay scale.

**Chart E.3: Median total earnings, by rank, full-time officers, Northern Ireland and England & Wales, FYE 2023**



Source: OPRB analysis of Police Earnings Census data, Home Office.

- E.8 Our assessment of police earnings includes the proportion of full-time officers in Northern Ireland in receipt of specific allowances and overtime (Table E.1:) and the median annual values of those payments for those officers who were in receipt of the particular payments (Table E.2:). Our key observations include:
- All police officers received the NITA;
  - The proportion in receipt of CRTP ranged from 37% of chief inspectors to 53% of constables;
  - The vast majority of constables and sergeants (93% and 95% respectively) received overtime. Median overtime earnings in Northern Ireland were around 51% higher than those in England and Wales for constables and 36% higher for sergeants;

- The proportion of officers in receipt of Replacement Allowance (available to officers who joined before September 1994) increased with rank from 4% of constables to 39% of superintendents; and
- The proportion of officers receiving On-call Allowance also increased with rank from 11% of constables to 48% of chief inspectors. However, the median values were low – equivalent to three periods (or two bank holiday periods) for each rank.

**Table E.1: Percentage of full-time officers in receipt of additional pay components, by rank, Northern Ireland, FYE 2023**

	Constable	Sergeant	Inspector	Chief Inspector	Supt.	Chief Supt.
NITA	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Replacement Allowance	4%	9%	13%	22%	39%	–
CRTTP	53%	52%	39%	37%	–	–
On-call Allowance	11%	19%	28%	48%	–	–
Overtime	93%	95%	–	–	–	–
Other payments (e.g. Dog Handlers', secondment allowances)	1%	–	–	–	–	–

Source: OPRB analysis of Police Earnings Census data, Home Office.

Note: Percentages relating to fewer than 10 officers are suppressed.

**Table E.2: Median value of additional pay components, full-time officers in receipt of relevant payments, by rank, Northern Ireland, FYE 2023**

	Constable	Sergeant	Inspector	Chief Inspector	Supt.	Chief Supt.
NITA	£3,594	£3,594	£3,594	£3,594	£3,594	£3,594
Replacement Allowance	£3,500	£3,500	£3,500	£3,500	£4,060	–
CRTTP	£1,224	£1,224	£1,224	£1,224	–	–
On-call Allowance	£60	£60	£60	£60	–	–
Overtime	£4,087	£6,167	–	–	–	–
Other payments (e.g. Dog Handlers', secondment allowances)	£3,025	–	–	–	–	–

Source: OPRB analysis of Police Earnings Census data, Home Office.

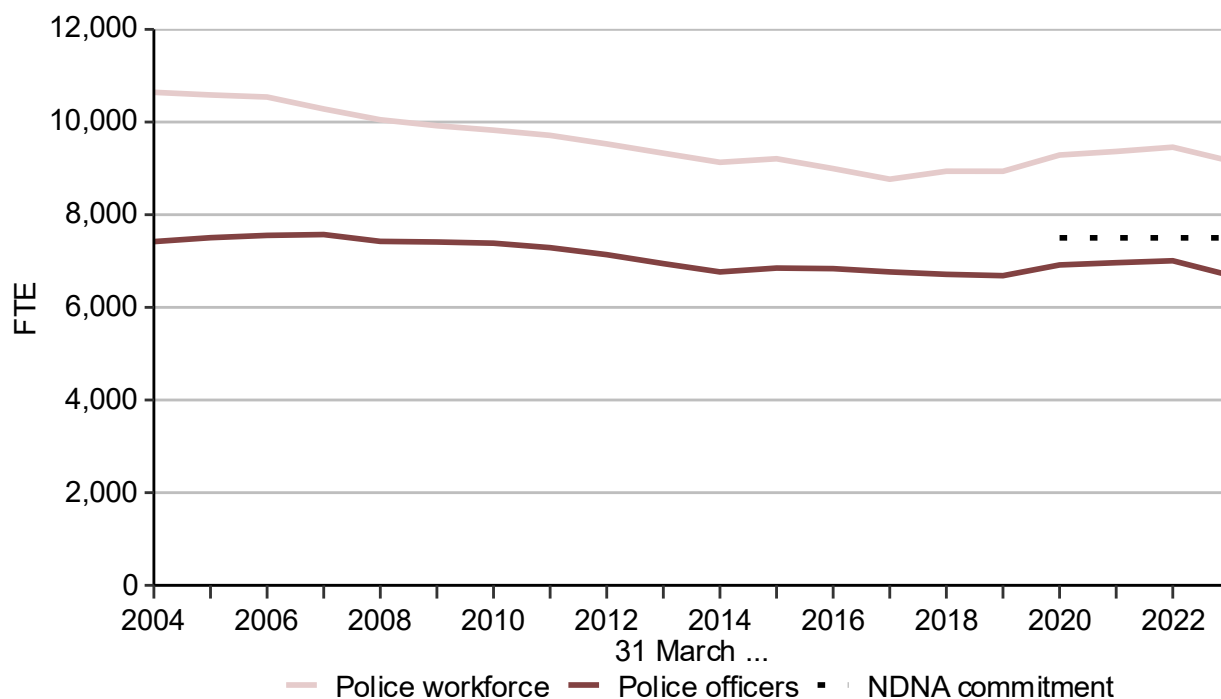
Note: Estimates relating to fewer than 10 officers are suppressed.

## PSNI workforce

E.9 Data provided by the PSNI (Chart E.4) show that the full-time equivalent (FTE) police workforce (i.e. both officers and permanent support staff) shrank nearly every year between March 2004 (the earliest year for which we have data) and March 2017, but has been growing most years since. In March 2023 the overall workforce was around 9,150. This was 300 FTE (3%) lower than a year earlier and 1,500 FTE (14%) lower than in March 2004 but 400 FTE (5%) higher than March 2017.

E.10 Police officers account for around three-quarters of the PSNI workforce. Officer numbers fell every year between March 2007 and March 2019, apart from a slight increase between March 2014 and March 2015. Following three years of growth, in March 2023 there were around 6,700 FTE officers, 310 FTE (4%) lower than in March 2022 and 880 FTE (12%) fewer than in March 2007.

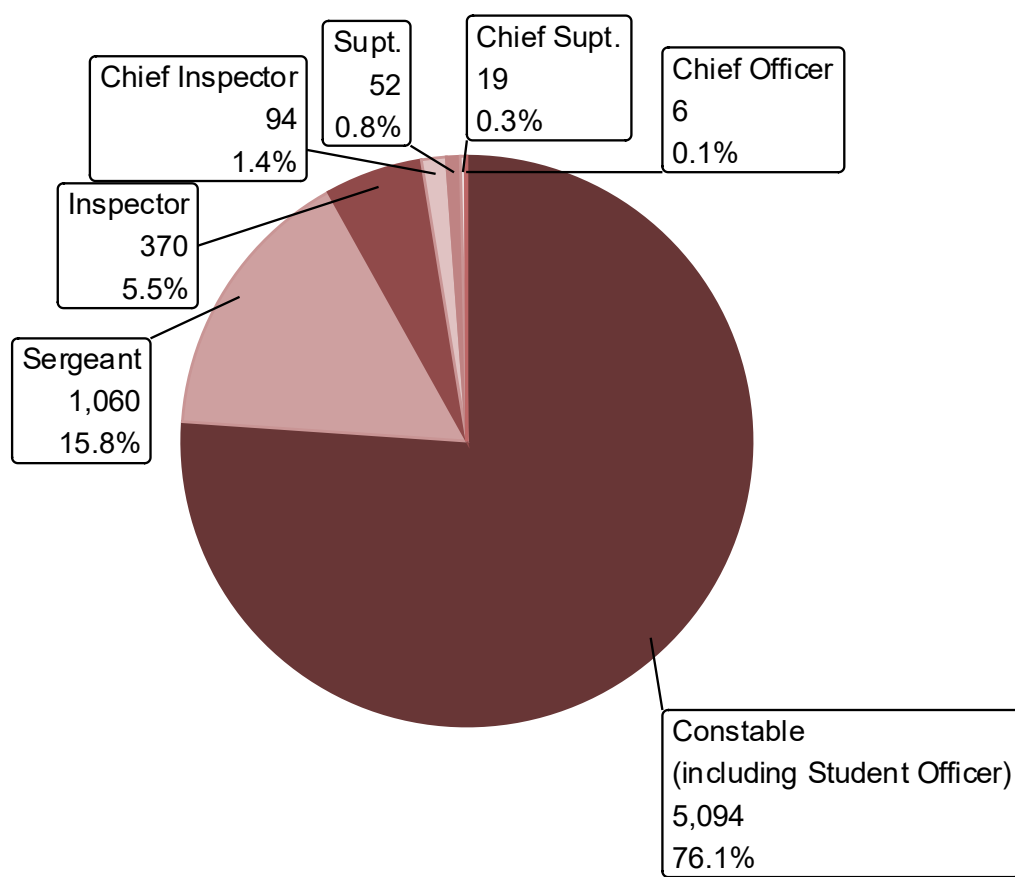
**Chart E.4: Strength of police workforce and police officers (FTE), Northern Ireland, March 2004 – March 2023**



Source: PSNI data.

E.11 Just over three-quarters (76%) of police officers were constables in March 2023 (Chart E.5), and just 8% of officers were in the ranks above sergeant.

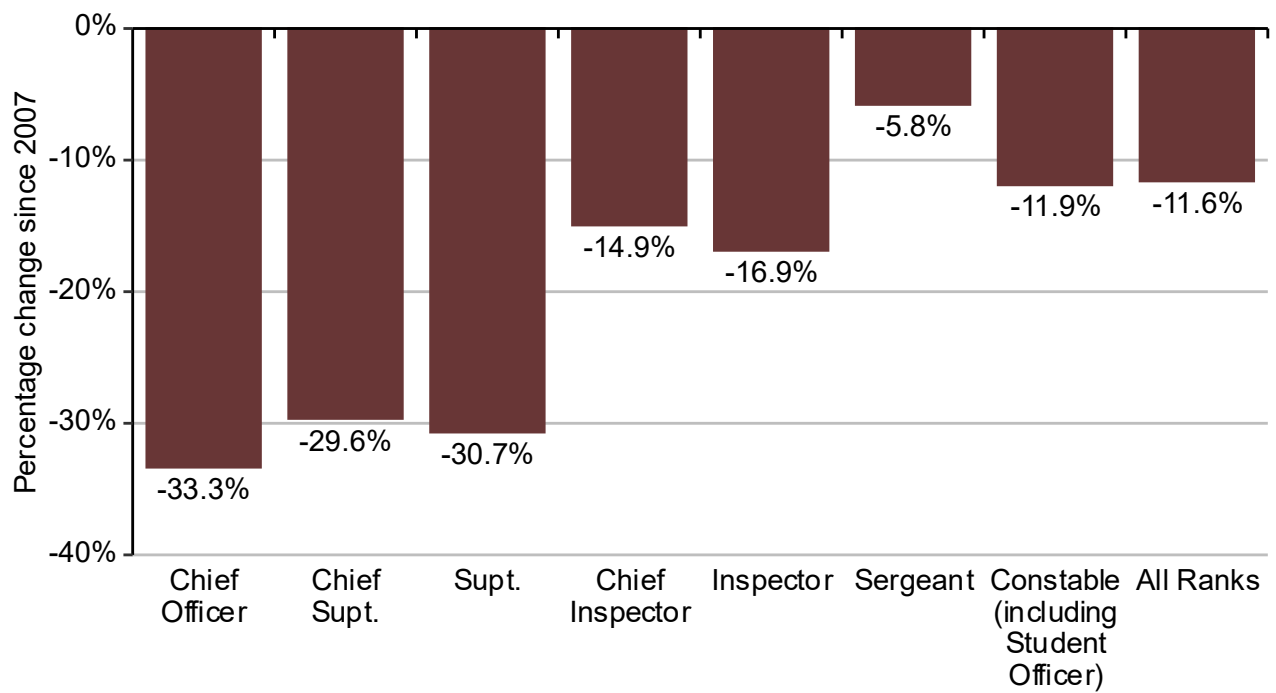
**Chart E.5: Breakdown of full-time equivalent police officers by rank, Northern Ireland, March 2023**



Source: OPRB analysis of PSNI data.

E.12 Between March 2022 and March 2023 the number of officers decreased for all ranks apart from chief superintendent (up 2 FTE). The largest absolute decrease was in the number of constables (down 285 FTE or 5%) but the largest percentage decrease was for chief officers (down 14% or 1 FTE). Since 2007 the largest proportional decreases in police officers (Chart E.6) have been for chief officers (down 33%). However, the greatest decrease in absolute terms has been for constables (around 680 FTE officers, 12%).

**Chart E.6: Percentage change in police officer numbers (FTE) between March 2007 and March 2023, by rank, Northern Ireland**



Source: OPRB analysis of PSNI data.

## Appendix F – Recommended Changes to PSNI Officer Pay Scales and Allowances from 1 September 2024

### Salary scales

The salary scales for the federated and superintending ranks in effect from 1 September 2023 are set out below along with our recommendations for effect from 1 September 2024.

#### *Federated ranks*

Rank	Pay point	With effect from 1 September 2023	Recommended for effect from 1 September 2024	Notes
<b>Constable</b> (appointed on or after 1 September 2014)	1	£28,551	£29,907	a,b
	2	£29,751	£31,164	
	3	£30,957	£32,427	
	4	£32,163	£33,690	
	5	£34,575	£36,216	
	6	£39,432	£41,304	
	7	£46,044	£48,231	
<b>Sergeant</b>	2	£49,077	£51,408	
	3	£50,079	£52,458	
	4	£51,498	£53,943	c
<b>Inspector</b>	0	£58,422	£61,197	
	1	£60,015	£62,865	
	2	£61,602	£64,527	
	3	£63,198	£66,201	c
<b>Chief Inspector</b>	1	£64,449	£67,509	d
	2	£65,703	£68,823	
	3	£67,017	£70,200	c

#### *Superintending ranks*

Rank	Pay point	With effect from 1 September 2023	Recommended for effect from 1 September 2024	Notes
<b>Superintendent</b>	1	£77,121	£80,784	
	2	£81,036	£84,885	
	3	£85,164	£89,208	
	4	£90,717	£95,025	
<b>Chief Superintendent</b>	1	£95,094	£99,612	
	2	£98,238	£102,903	
	3	£100,206	£111,117	e

### Legacy pay scales

Constables appointed before 1 April 2013 remain on the old pay scale. The value of these pay points in effect from 1 September 2023 are set out below along with our recommendations for effect from 1 September 2024.

Rank	Pay point	With effect from 1 September 2023	Recommended for effect from 1 September 2024	Notes
Constable (appointed before 1 September 2014)	0	£30,069	£31,497	
	1	£33,324	£34,908	
	2	£35,133	£36,801	f
	3	£37,158	£38,922	
	4	£38,265	£40,083	
	5	£39,432	£41,304	
	6	£42,720	£44,748	
	7	£46,044	£48,231	c

### Allowances

The recommended values of allowances from September 2024 are set out below.

<b>Northern Ireland Transitional Allowance</b>	£4,110 per annum
<b>Dog Handlers' Allowance</b>	£2,826 per annum for the first dog, 50% additional for other dogs
<b>On-call Allowance</b>	£25 for evenings and weekends

The values of all other allowances and payments, including Competence Related Threshold Payments, remain unchanged.

#### Notes:

- Pay point 1 currently applies to new entrants in the PSNI from the start of the Student Officer Development Programme until one year from attestation (so for 1 year and 21 weeks in total). We have recommended that officers should move to the next pay point exactly twelve months after they join the service.
- We have recommended that the Chief Constable of Northern Ireland is given discretion to set starting pay at pay point 2.
- Officers in the PSNI who have been on this point for a year will have access to the Competence Related Threshold Payment.
- Entry point for an officer appointed to the rank, unless the chief officer of police assigns the officer to a higher point.
- Includes second part (£2,837) of uplift of £5,675 recommended by PRRB and accepted by Government in 2023.
- All officers move to this salary point on completion of two years' service as a constable.

## Appendix G – A Comparison of Elements of Pay, Allowances and Terms and Conditions for the Federated and Superintending ranks – June 2024

### *Differences*

	England and Wales	Northern Ireland
Geographical allowances (the variations in these reflect differences in local conditions, so geographical allowances are the one exception to the parity principle on pay and allowances)	Metropolitan Police and City of London Police: – London Allowance (maximum: £5,338) – London Weighting: £2,886  South East Allowance: – Maximum rate £3,000: Essex, Hertfordshire, Kent, Surrey, Thames Valley. – Maximum rate £2,000: Hampshire, Sussex, Bedfordshire.	Northern Ireland Transitional Allowance (NITA): currently £3,924.
Competence Related Threshold Payment (CRTP)	Phased abolition by April 2016	£1,224. Pensionable. Phased abolition awaited, as proposed in DOJ-commissioned review of allowances in 2022. Whether an alternative payment is under consideration is unknown <sup>32</sup> .
Unsocial Hours Allowance	Introduced from 2012. 10% of hourly rate of pay for every full hour worked between 8pm and 6am.	Not introduced.
Timing of receipt of first constable increment	Constables receive their first increment 12 months after joining the police.	From 2023/24: Constables receive their first increment 12 months and 21 weeks after joining the PSNI. (Previously from 2018: constables received their first increment 2 years and 21 weeks after joining the PSNI.)
On-call Allowance	£15 rate introduced in 2013 and increased to £20 in 2019. Extended to the superintending ranks at a flat rate £20 in 2020.	For the federated ranks, £20 on weekdays and weekends and £30 on public holidays <sup>33</sup> for each 24-hour period. Extended to the superintending ranks in 2020 at a flat rate of £20.
Essential Users' Allowance (motor vehicles)	Vehicle ccs 451-999: £846 1000-1199: £963 1200-1450: £1,239	Vehicle ccs 451-999: £795 1000-1199: £906 1200-1450: £1,170
Voluntary exit scheme and compulsory severance scheme	Voluntary exit provisions introduced in 2013	Not introduced.

<sup>32</sup> Five alternatives were proposed in the DOJ-commissioned review of allowances: ceasing the CRTP with no replacement, or replacing it with one of the following: an Unsocial Hours Allowance; an extra pay point; a TVP scheme; or a performance-related bonus payments scheme.

<sup>33</sup> Following the 2022 review of allowances, the DOJ has proposed reducing the On-call Allowance to £20 on six of the eight public holidays (while two of them, 17 March (St Patrick's Day) and 12 July, would retain the £30 rate). Outcome awaited.

	<b>England and Wales</b>	<b>Northern Ireland</b>
Replacement allowance	Retained, but increases for change in personal circumstances abolished from 2011.	Not changed.
Bonus payments	All ranks (£50-£2,000). Payments where the chief officer is satisfied an officer has performed work of an outstandingly demanding, unpleasant or important nature.	All ranks (£50-£500).
Team recognition awards	Discretion to make bonus payments of £50-100 for unpleasant or demanding tasks extended to whole teams from 2012	Not introduced.
Regional allowances	Chief Constable discretion to vary levels of regional allowance payment up to the maximum based on local retention needs (not performance) from 2013	Not introduced. Ways to address the issue of hard-to-fill locations under consideration by the PSNI. Details not yet known.
TVP: Service Critical Skills Payment	Superintending ranks: discretionary payments for skills that are in demonstrably short supply and financial incentivisation is considered necessary to attract or retain those skills; or where the role in question is hard-to-fill. Up to £5,000 a year	Ways to address hard-to-fill roles under consideration by the PSNI. Details not yet known.
TVP: Recognition of Workload Payment	Federated and superintending ranks: discretionary payments in circumstances where the chief officer determines that the demands placed on the officer exceed those usually placed on other officers of the same rank. Up to £5,000 a year.	Ways to address this issue under consideration by the PSNI. Details not yet known.
Maternity and adoption leave	26 weeks fully paid	18 weeks fully paid. However, PSNI business case submitted to the DOJ seeking an increase to 26 weeks.
The basic training requirement on transfer between the PSNI and Metropolitan Police Service (MPS)	PSNI officer transferring to the MPS: three weeks' training (the MPS treats the PSNI the same as Home Office police forces).	MPS officer transferring to the PSNI: 21 weeks' training.

## Partial move to parity

	England and Wales	Northern Ireland
Mutual Aid arrangements	Away from home allowance (£50 per night) and unsocial hours allowance (10% of hourly rate of pay for every full hour worked between 8pm and 6am) introduced from 2012. In England and Wales, these payments are not restricted to the mutual aid context.	Away from home allowance (£50 per night) introduced in May 2023 specifically for mutual aid deployments only. Unsocial hours allowance not introduced.
On-call Allowance	£15 rate introduced in 2013 and increased to £20 in 2019.  Extended to the superintending ranks at a flat rate £20 in 2020.	For the federated ranks, £20 on weekdays and weekends and £30 on public holidays <sup>34</sup> for each 24-hour period.  Same.
Overtime rates	Overtime rate is time and one third for 'casual overtime', with payment of travelling time for recalls between tours of duty.  Cancellation of rostered rest day with fewer than 15 days' notice: pay at time and a half.  4-hour minimum payment when recalled to duty – abolished.  Cancellation of rest day with fewer than 5 days' notice: rate changed to time and a half from double time.	Same.  Same.  4-hour minimum payment when recalled to duty – retained.  Payment of double time for cancellation of rest day changed from 5 days' notice to 3 days' notice.

<sup>34</sup> Following the 2022 review of allowances, the DOJ has proposed reducing the On-call Allowance to £20 on six of the eight public holidays (while two of them, 17 March (St Patrick's Day) and 12 July, would retain the £30 rate). Outcome awaited.

## Parity

	England and Wales	Northern Ireland
Annual leave	< 2 years' service: 22 days > 2 years' service: 25 days > 5 years' service: 25 days > 10 years' service: 27 days > 15 years' service: 28 days > 20 years' service: 30 days	Same <sup>35</sup> .
Shortened 7-point constable scale for existing constables and new scale for new starters	Pay points removed on a phased basis from 2014 to 2016 for existing officers and a new scale with lower starting salary introduced for new joiners in 2013	Introduced in 2014 for existing officers and a new scale with lower starting salary introduced for new joiners in 2014.
Abolition of pay points on sergeants' pay scale	Pay point 0 removed in 2014. Pay point 1 removed in 2020.	Pay point 0 removed in 2015. Pay point one removed in January 2022.
Shortened 4-point superintendents' pay scale	Applied from 2014	Same.
Chief superintendent pay point 3 uplifted by £2,838 from 1 September 2023 <sup>36</sup>	Applied in 2023	Applied in 2024 and backdated.
Dog Handlers' Allowance	£2,697 for first dog; and additional rate for officers with more than one dog is 25% of the rate for the first dog.	Same.
Special Priority Payments (£500 – £3,000)	Abolished in 2012	Abolished in 2014.
Abolition of special bonus schemes and post-related allowances	Suspended from 2012 and abolished in 2014.	Abolished from 2014: special bonus scheme (£50-£500). There are no plans to re-introduce or replace general bonus schemes.
Motor vehicle rates	Linked to Local Government rates from 2012. Current (HMRC) mileage rates are 45p per mile for the first 10,000 miles and 25p per mile for mileage over 10,000 miles in any tax year.	Aligned with Northern Ireland Civil Service rates in 2014. DOJ-commissioned review of allowances in 2022 proposed no change. Mileage rates same as England and Wales. Method for remunerating probationary officers for travel to first allocated station under consideration. Details not yet known.

<sup>35</sup> However, one difference is that PSNI student officers are allocated 8 days' leave during their 21-week course.

<sup>36</sup> Chief superintendent pay point 3 also to be increased by £2,837 from 1 September 2024. Uplifts to be made before the application of respective annual pay awards.

