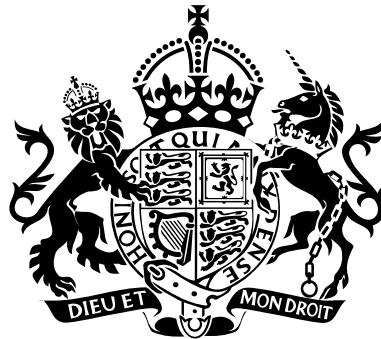


Police Remuneration Review Body

Eleventh Report on Northern Ireland 2025

Chair: Zoë Billingham CBE



Police Remuneration Review Body

Eleventh Report for Northern Ireland 2025

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Presented to the Minister of Justice for Northern Ireland

7 July 2025

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Police Remuneration Review Body

Terms of Reference¹

The Police Remuneration Review Body² (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.

¹ 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.

² 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.

Members³ of the Review Body

Zoë Billingham CBE (Chair)

Andrew Bliss QPM

Professor Monojit Chatterji

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The secretariat is provided by the Office for the Pay Review Bodies.

³ 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 [Accessed on 4 July 2025]

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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
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
LGBT+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transexual and Other
MPS	Metropolitan Police Service
NHS	National Health Service
NIAC	Northern Ireland Affairs Committee
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
ONS	Office for National Statistics
OPRB	Office for the Pay Review Bodies
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
RUC	Royal Ulster Constabulary
SANI	Superintendents' Association of Northern Ireland
TVP	Targeted Variable Pay
UK	United Kingdom

Foreword

This is our 11th Report to the Department of Justice (DOJ) for Northern Ireland. The Justice Minister's remit letter of 10 January 2025 asked us to commence our annual pay review for Police Service of Northern Ireland (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 2025/26 for police officers in the PSNI up to and including the rank of chief superintendent.

In our report, we comment on the bravery shown by officers in dealing with the unrest and social disorder in the summer of 2024 in Belfast in the aftermath of the tragic events in Southport. We also note the recent challenges of outbreaks of public disorder, for example on Easter Monday, and in Ballymena and at various other Northern Ireland locations in June 2025. We understand that many officers were injured during the course of these events. In our consideration of a pay award for 2025/26, we have given weight to officer wellbeing and the impact of the policing role on private lives. We also acknowledge the specific policing challenges found in Northern Ireland, including the demanding operational context.

While the key factors leading to the pay award that we recommended in England and Wales of 4.2% are also relevant in the Northern Ireland policing context, it is the principle of parity that underpins our recommendations for the PSNI officers in our remit group. We define the central principle of 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. 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 observe that while affordability within the Northern Ireland budget-setting process is a particular challenge, the PSNI has allocated 3.8% for the police officer pay award in 2025/26. This provides important context for our recommendations this year.

We note improvements in the timing of the implementation of the latest pay award (a three-month delay, which is the shortest delay in nine years) and that annual increments were paid on time this year. We hope that both the pay award and annual increments are paid on time in 2025 and beyond.

We highlight the fact that the PSNI is not representative of the community it serves, in particular in terms of ethnicity. We stress the importance of the need for improvement on

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this to the overall operational efficiency of policing. We welcome the fact that the proportion of ethnic minority applicants in the PSNI's January 2025 recruitment exercise was above the levels found within the Northern Ireland community. We hope that this positive development is reflected in final appointments at the end of the recruitment process.

We also wish to reinforce the need for action by the PSNI to reduce a reliance in its operating model on temporary promotions. On our visit to Derry and Strabane in 2024, we were struck by the high number of officers on temporary promotion for extended periods and the damage to morale arising from the risk of losing the temporary rank, or from being asked to fill a vacant post at the higher rank after failing the promotion process. We welcome the promotion boards being held by the PSNI and expect to hear that there has been a sharp decrease in temporary promotions next year.

We remain concerned about the need for compensation to address the problems faced by officers working in hard-to-fill locations in Northern Ireland, particularly probationary officers and those with up to five years' service. We recognise that the Chief Constable is aware of the seriousness of the situation in the context of early attrition and, given the potential implications for both recruitment and retention, we stress the need for effective measures to address it.

We also wish to draw attention to levels of sickness absence in the PSNI, which are unusually and unacceptably high. These figures remain stark and require continued focus. As well as the detrimental effect of being off sick on the officers themselves, having a high proportion of police officers absent every day also significantly increases the pressures on those who remain at work and reduces operational effectiveness. It is very important that the underlying reasons for this trend of very high sickness are clearly understood.

Our strong view is that parity means resolving long-outstanding issues such as Competence Related Threshold Payments (CRTP) and ensuring that convergence on non-geographical allowances with England and Wales takes place more generally. We are concerned at varying definitions of parity among the parties, and stress that parity is not a principle that can be upheld for some things and not others. We recommend that parties bring forward proposals on closing the CRTP scheme to any further officers and instead introducing the Unsocial Hours Allowance for officers in the federated ranks not in receipt of CRTP. We have asked the parties to give us their proposals in evidence in 2026.

We also recognise and commend the DOJ for its thinking on more innovative ways to modernise the workforce, such as through direct entry for technical specialists. We would welcome hearing more about the DOJ's ideas next year.

Zoë Billingham (Chair)

Andrew Bliss

Monojit Chatterji

Richard Childs

Mark Hoble

Jacqui Siggers

7 July 2025

POLICE REMUNERATION REVIEW BODY

Northern Ireland 11th Report 2025

Executive Summary

Our 2025/26 recommendations (from 1 September 2025):

1. A consolidated increase of 4.2% to all police officer pay points for all ranks up to and including chief superintendent.
2. The PSNI participates in the National Police Chiefs' Council's (NPCC's) current review of police officer allowances. We also recommend that the DOJ and PSNI commit in principle to adopting the review's resultant proposals, subject to any views expressed by the Police Remuneration Review Body (PRRB).
3. An increase of 4.2% in the current level of the Northern Ireland Transitional Allowance (NITA).
4. The On-call Allowance for both the federated and superintending ranks for evenings, weekends and Northern Ireland public holidays is increased in the PSNI to £35.
5. The current three bands for the Motor Vehicle Allowance essential users' lump sum, linked to engine size of the vehicle, be replaced with a single allowance of £1,239 irrespective of engine size.
6. The Away from Home Overnight Allowance be increased by £10 from £50 to £60.
7. The Hardship Allowance be increased by £10 from £30 to £40.
8. The Northern Ireland parties bring forward proposals on closing the Competence Related Threshold Payment (CRTP) scheme to any further officers and instead introducing the Unsocial Hours Allowance for officers in the federated ranks not in receipt of CRTP. We ask the parties to give us their proposals in their 2026 evidence.
9. The CRTP is frozen at its current level until further notice.

1. We received our remit letter from the Minister of Justice on 10 January 2025 asking us to commence our annual review in respect of police officers in the PSNI for 2025/26 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 police officers up to and including the chief superintendent rank, as well as for the NITA and the Dog Handlers' Allowance.

2. The unrest and violent disorder in Belfast in the summer of 2024 after the tragic events in Southport, and events this year particularly on Easter Monday and in June in various parts of Northern Ireland, exemplify the unforeseen public order challenge that the police service can face. PSNI officers, particularly those on the frontline, have dealt with very difficult and dangerous issues this year that have put their own personal safety at risk. We wish to commend them for their bravery. In the PSNI, the lowest ever headcount and increasing complexity of demand, coupled with its unique additional responsibilities, are also placing great pressures on our remit group. We would again like to acknowledge our remit group for their contribution this year, especially in the very challenging current context.
3. In Chapter 2 we consider Government pay policy and the performance of the wider economy and labour market as well as PSNI officer recruitment, retention and motivation and morale. We also consider the Northern Ireland policing environment and PSNI budgetary context and the impact of these on the workforce. We focus particularly in this chapter on the issue of the wellbeing of officers in our Northern Ireland remit group because of the unusually intense pressures they are working under and the unacceptably high levels of sickness absence recorded.
4. In Chapter 3 of our report we examine the issue of parity. We continue to see the principle of parity as essential, especially given the complex political and budgetary environment of Northern Ireland. However, we note that this year our recommendation for convergence on all non-geographical allowances has again not been progressed, which raises broader questions about the longer-term commitment of all parties to the concept of parity as defined above, and therefore its sustainability.
5. We also summarise the issues that we took into account in making our recommendation for a basic pay award in 2025/26. As requested by the Northern Ireland parties, we have focused primarily on upholding the principle of parity with England and Wales. It was also important to our considerations that despite the singular constraints placed on the PSNI budget, it had factored 3.8% for the police pay award into its budget from September 2025. Looking across Government as a whole, we observe that there is flexibility to set priorities within all funding arrangements.
6. Other key factors that we took into account include the performance of the economy. We note that inflation was lower over the last year than in preceding years. However, we emphasise that this represents a slowing in the rate of overall price increases and not a fall in prices, and officers continue to experience the effect of past high inflation in their cost of living. We also give weight to the fact that police officers, unlike the vast majority of employees in the public and private sectors, are prohibited from taking industrial action. We highlight that over the past year some employers have agreed significantly enhanced pay deals as a result of industrial

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action or the threat of such action. We were also mindful in setting a pay award of the practicalities and pressures of policing on officers' personal lives.

7. After taking the above factors into account including the principle of parity, we conclude that an annual pay award in 2025 of 4.2% across all ranks up to and including chief superintendent is the most suitable approach.
8. In Chapter 3 we also consider police officer allowances. We recommend that the PSNI participates in the NPCC's current review of police officer allowances and that the DOJ and PSNI commit in principle to adopting the review's resultant proposals, subject to any views expressed by the PRRB.
9. We also set out our recommendations on police officers' allowances. These include:
 - uprating the NITA by 4.2% in line with the basic pay award;
 - increasing the On-call Allowance to £35 for evenings, weekends and Northern Ireland public holidays for both the federated and superintending ranks;
 - replacing the three bands for the Motor Vehicle Allowance essential users' lump sum with a single allowance of £1,239 irrespective of engine size; and
 - increasing both the Away from Home Overnight Allowance and the Hardship Allowance by £10.
10. On CRTP, we recommend that parties bring forward proposals on closing the scheme to any further officers and instead introducing the Unsocial Hours Allowance for officers in the federated ranks not in receipt of CRTP. We have asked the parties to give us their proposals on this in their evidence in 2026, and we will consider these alongside the findings of the NPCC review of the Unsocial Hours Allowance. We ask parties to consider the issue of equalities and wider implementation questions in their evidence. We also recommend that the CRTP is frozen at its current level until further notice.
11. Finally, in our Forward Look (Chapter 4) we set out the issues of particular interest to us in future pay rounds.

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Chapter 1 – Introduction

Introduction

1.1 This is our 11th 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 10th Report 2024

1.2 Our 10th Report was submitted to the Minister of Justice for Northern Ireland on 26 June 2024 (Appendix A). It contained the following recommendations on Northern Ireland police officer pay and allowances:

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 Department of Justice (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

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that from September 2024 the annual leave for probationary officers in the PSNI is increased from 22 to 25 days.

- 1.3 On 17 December 2024, the Minister of Justice accepted our pay recommendation of a consolidated 4.75% pay increase for 2024/25 for all ranks up to and including chief superintendent. Alongside this, she also accepted recommendations 2, 4–6 and 8. Subsequently, recommendation 9 was also accepted.
- 1.4 On submitting our 2025 Report, formal responses to recommendations 3 and 7 from our 2024 Report are still outstanding.
- 1.5 We observe that PSNI officers' annual increments were paid on time this year (for the first time since 2021) but also that implementation of our pay award recommendation in 2024/25 was again delayed, this time by three months. We note that police officers in England and Wales were paid on time.

2025/26 remit

- 1.6 In her letter of 10 January 2025 (Appendix B), the Minister of Justice asked us, in conjunction with that for England and Wales, to commence our annual review of the pay award for the federated and superintending ranks in the PSNI. The Minister separately remitted consideration of the pay of chief police officers in Northern Ireland to the Senior Salaries Review Body.

Our approach to the 2025 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 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 We take an independent view of all the evidence we receive and this is the starting point for our deliberations. Our analysis and assessments help us ensure that our recommendations are evidence-based and take into account the matters referred to us and our standing terms of reference.

The principle of parity on pay and allowances

- 1.9 We continue to uphold the principle of parity on pay and allowances with England and Wales. From its inception, the Police Remuneration Review Body (PRRB) has upheld the parity principle, initially because the Northern Ireland parties requested this but also because the parity principle provides important clarity in the complex political, economic and budgetary context of Northern Ireland.

1.10 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 Belfast on 22 and 23 January 2025. We are very grateful to all those who took the time to speak to us. The main themes arising were:

- The PSNI currently had its lowest ever number of police officers and staff. Officers reported feeling 'exhausted' and shifts were increasingly highly paced.
- Officers welcomed the recruitment campaign begun on the first day of our visit.
- To try to reduce early attrition, new recruits' training now involved exposure to response work at an earlier stage.
- There was low morale among response officers working shifts and long hours, while those working in other functions were clear that they did not want to return to response work. New officers on probation and those in specialist roles that we met generally had higher morale.
- The fall in officer numbers meant the overtime budget had increased, and in Belfast it now equalled the overtime budget for the whole organisation five to six years earlier. Officers who did not want to work overtime were being required to do so.
- Neighbourhood officers played a vital role in increasing public confidence in the police service. There was concern that levels of abstraction from neighbourhood teams were leading to a loss of visibility in communities where policing was still contested. Officers reported feeling less supported by the public.
- High levels of support for other public services, such as health and social care, continued to be provided by the PSNI.
- While many officers were still on temporary promotion, ongoing promotion boards would address this problem. However, temporary roles would still exist and the loss of overtime pay at inspector rank deterred officers from seeking promotion.
- In the context of the Northern Ireland security situation, PSNI officers expressed a range of views about the future but observed that risk levels for officers remained high.

Written evidence

1.12 We received written evidence in March 2025 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. A summary of the key points from each party's written evidence can be found in Appendix C. Links to the parties' websites are provided in Appendix 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 May 2025. We are grateful to the PFNI for submitting written evidence but regret that once again they did not participate in oral evidence because of their concerns about the pay review process. We remain hopeful that the PFNI will take part in full in 2026.

Process issues

1.14 Table 1.1 shows that the annual pay award for PSNI officers has been subject to delay for each of the last nine years and that it was last received on time in 2015/16. We are very concerned at the impact of this repeated occurrence on morale levels in our remit group.

Table 1.1: Delays in implementation of the annual pay award⁴

Pay year	Payment delay
2015/16	On time
2016/17	8 months
2017/18	6 months
2018/19	6 months
2019/20	6 months
2020/21	4 months
2021/22	7 months
2022/23	6 months
2023/24	8 months
2024/25	3 months

1.15 The timings in 2024/25 were an improvement on previous years. We hope both the pay award and annual increments are paid on time in 2025/26. We are pleased that, following our recommendation last year, new recruits' first increments are now to be paid each year exactly twelve months from their date of joining.

⁴ Officers' annual increments were paid 7 months late in 2021, 6 months late in 2022 and 2 months late in 2023.

Environment for our considerations

- 1.16 As context for submission of our 2025 report, we note that while Northern Ireland remains one of the safest places in the UK, the PSNI continues to face a range of unique policing challenges shaped by the past. We also observe that the Northern Ireland Executive was restored in February 2024 and that the reduction in the security level from 'SEVERE' to 'SUBSTANTIAL' in March 2024 remains in place.
- 1.17 In addition, the UK Government committed in November 2024 to publish a Police Reform White Paper in England and Wales and in February 2025 announced plans for a new National Security Strategy. Both these developments are expected to have significant implications for the future strategy for policing across the UK and are being developed in the context of wider geopolitical changes and global uncertainties.
- 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 and in particular commend the bravery of officers in the summer of 2024 when dealing in Belfast with the aftermath of the tragic events in Southport. We also note the recent challenges of outbreaks of public disorder on Easter Monday, and in Ballymena and at various other Northern Ireland locations in June 2025, and would like to pay tribute to the ongoing commitment, determination and bravery of PSNI officers. In addition, we wish to express our gratitude to all the parties for engaging with us 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 includes an 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.

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Chapter 2 – Analysis of the 2025/26 Evidence

Introduction

2.1 In this chapter we analyse the key points in the evidence from our Northern Ireland parties relating to our standing terms for reference and our remit letter from the Minister of Justice for Northern Ireland. More detailed evidence summaries can be found at 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 PSNI explained that overall recorded crime rates in Northern Ireland were decreasing but that this masked an increase in specific crime types which had a considerable impact upon victims, and which were more complex in nature. It said that complexity had shifted from relatively low resource-intensive demand in the public space (for example, assaults, robberies and thefts) to more resource-intensive demand in the private sphere (for example, cybercrime, serious sexual assaults and harassment). The PSNI added that demand was also driven by other factors such as non-crime incidents, legacy investigations and security threat level considerations.

2.3 The PSNI reported a gap of 363 constables within its 24/7 local policing teams that responded to emergency and priority calls. It stated that to ensure a sufficient, minimum, level of resource for frontline policing across every shift it had to use overtime, change rest days or abstract officers from elsewhere, including neighbourhood teams. The PSNI added that it was short by nearly 400 neighbourhood police officers and that community groups had reported a rise in antisocial behaviour. The PSNI stressed that an ever-decreasing number of officers holding an increasing level of demand from frontline policing was not sustainable.

2.4 The NIPB emphasised the ongoing requirement for the PSNI to undertake work on behalf of other public services, especially health and social services. The NIPB added that while policing across the UK was an increasingly demanding role, the PSNI faced a unique set of circumstances, including a continuing terrorist threat, an extremely challenging budgetary situation and a very stretched operating model with fewer officers doing more.

2.5 On 6 March 2024, the security threat level in Northern Ireland was reduced from ‘SEVERE’ to ‘SUBSTANTIAL’⁵, meaning a terrorist attack was now likely (instead of

⁵ The Northern Ireland security threat level was previously ‘SUBSTANTIAL’ from 22 March 2022 to 28 March 2023. Until 6 March 2024, it was otherwise ‘SEVERE’ (from 2010).

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. It added that police and prison officers were considered targets for terrorist attacks.

- 2.6 The PSNI informed us that additional security funding directly supported its fight against terrorism. It added that, although much progress had been made in driving down the terrorist threat, there was still an important job to be done if hard-earned gains were to be maintained.
- 2.7 The SANI stressed that, despite the significant progress made towards peace and reconciliation, police officers were still not able to live a normal life due to the fear of being targeted by terrorists.
- 2.8 The PFNI commented that recent events had demonstrated that violent terrorists still posed a deadly threat to PSNI officers. It said that the continuance of terrorist activity added an additional layer of worry and challenge to PSNI officers both on and off duty, and more so following the data breach which continued to have an impact on officers and their families.
- 2.9 The PSNI pointed to statistics published by the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) on crime levels in Northern Ireland. These included data published on the PSNI website for the period April 2024 to September 2024 (the most recent available period for statistical purposes). The PSNI said these showed that Northern Ireland had a significantly lower crime rate in comparison with all other police forces in England and Wales. It said there were 51.1 crimes for every thousand people in Northern Ireland, compared with 88.1 crimes for every thousand people in England and Wales. It pointed out that this meant that people and businesses in Northern Ireland were less likely to be victims of crime.
- 2.10 At the same time, the aspects of policing unique to Northern Ireland in comparison with England and Wales were set out for us. The PSNI explained that it held responsibility for a wider range of the elements of policing than in England and Wales. For example, in Northern Ireland, there was no equivalent to the British Transport Police, or Highways Teams or Regional Organised Crime Units. Furthermore, the issue of public safety tended to default to the PSNI. Moreover, the PSNI did not have Special Constables or Police Community Support Officers.
- 2.11 The PSNI also differed from England and Wales police services in that it was responsible for the UK's only land border with the European Union. This was 500km long and very challenging to police. In addition, because of its geographical position, the PSNI lacked neighbouring UK police services to collaborate with easily on shared services and mutual aid.

2.12 The PSNI also had additional responsibilities arising from the need to maintain public order in a post-conflict society. The PSNI observed that it was responsible for legacy investigations arising from the Troubles, and counterterrorism (which it said in other parts of the UK was dealt with by separate national capabilities). In addition, it had an obligation to police mass events, especially during the marching and parade season that was unique to Northern Ireland. These events had the potential to turn to serious violence, and other events too had a generally higher risk of escalating in a much more complicated way than in England and Wales. Moreover, additional costs arose for the PSNI from the need to train all its officers in the use of arms for self-protection.

Our comment on the Northern Ireland policing environment

2.13 We note the additional responsibilities and demand that the PSNI contends with compared with the police service in England and Wales. While the reduction maintained in the security threat level since March 2024 is encouraging, it still means that a terrorist attack is likely. Furthermore, all PSNI officers remain at risk from a terrorist attack, regardless of where they serve.

2.14 We are very concerned about continuing high levels of abstraction from neighbourhood policing in the PSNI, especially given its particular importance to managing demand and improving public confidence in a post-conflict society. In addition, while Northern Ireland has lower overall crime rates in comparison with England and Wales, crime is only one aspect of demand. We note that the level of complexity of police demand is rising, along with the resource requirement to deal with it. Recent events in Ballymena and beyond have also highlighted the changes in demand arising from Northern Ireland becoming an increasingly diverse society, and the importance of the PSNI responding and adapting to these developments.

Public sector pay policies and affordability

HM Treasury public sector pay policy

2.15 The UK Government's Spring Statement of 26 March 2025 emphasised that, over the medium term, above-inflation public sector pay increases should be accompanied by productivity gains. It said workforce reform would be a key theme across the 2025 Spending Review as it worked to enhance productivity.

Northern Ireland Budget

2.16 The Final Budget for Northern Ireland for the financial year ending (FYE) 2026 was agreed by the Northern Ireland Executive on 3 April 2025. The Northern Ireland Executive said it had made decisions on a budget of £19.3 billion, 95% of which came from HM Treasury in the form of a Block Grant.

Northern Ireland public sector pay policy

2.17 The 2025/26 public sector pay policy for Northern Ireland was published by the Department of Finance on 30 May 2025. It said that the overarching approach to public sector pay in 2025/26, in keeping with recent years, had three principles: pay must be affordable within each department's budget settlement; awards should be targeted to address low pay, and where possible, the payment of the real Living Wage⁶; and fairness in setting awards for Senior Executives.

The Department of Justice budget for FYE 2026

2.18 The DOJ told us that its final opening budget for FYE 2026 was £1,415 million, compared with its opening budget in FYE 2025 of £1,262 million.

The PSNI budget for FYE 2026

2.19 The DOJ advised us that the PSNI's final opening budget for FYE 2026 was £910.59 million. It said that the PSNI would also receive £8.01 million of in-year funding for the increase in employer national insurance contributions from April 2025 and to take forward work under the Safer Communities element of the Northern Ireland Programme for Government 2024–27. The DOJ added that, by comparison, in FYE 2025, the PSNI's opening balance had been £807.73 million, and its closing budget, £880.4 million.

2.20 The PSNI informed us in written evidence that, as a consequence of its funding position, it remained smaller, less visible, accessible or responsive, with fewer officers in all areas and specialisms than before. It explained that its opening budgetary shortfall in FYE 2026 was £21 million and that this consisted of three equal parts: £7 million to increase officer and staff numbers, £7 million for the unfunded part of the increase in employer National Insurance contributions and £7 million for the costs of ill-health retirements. The PSNI added in oral evidence that it had factored a 3.8% annual pay award into its budget from September 2025.

2.21 The PSNI observed that it had been underfunded for a protracted period, leaving the community with a smaller and less resilient police service and that this was acutely true in respect of frontline policing. It said this was having real consequences for service delivery, resilience and modernisation within the service, with difficult decisions required on how to prioritise demand and manage risk in the coming years. In oral evidence, the PSNI contrasted its funding with England and Wales Uplift Programme funding and Neighbourhood Policing Guarantee anticipated funding. The PSNI also emphasised its particular concern about unfunded pressures arising for an indefinite period from the UK Government's revised approach to legacy.

⁶ Living Wage Foundation pay rates: £12.60 an hour or £24,336 a year.

2.22 The NIPB emphasised that without proper funding, all areas of service delivery would continue to be impacted. It said resourcing pressures continued to be critical, with the number of officers available to deliver the service to the community falling to an historic low. The NIPB observed that the situation was having a detrimental impact on the operational resilience of the PSNI and the ability of officers and staff to meet the demands faced.

2.23 The SANI commented that continued inadequate funding for the PSNI, and the inability to carry over annual efficiency savings or raise additional funding through the precept (as in England and Wales), put the Chief Constable at a continued disadvantage when assessing the affordability of pay increases and the need for recruitment.

2.24 The PFNI said that the PSNI needed multi-year budgets to enable long-term planning for the delivery of a high-quality service with a focus on supporting the workforce. It stated that the PSNI had experienced the largest expenditure reduction of any UK police service at a time when the threat environment had remained broadly consistent. The PFNI specified that, between 2010 and 2023, the PSNI's budget had been cut by 3%, or by 29% in real terms, given inflation. The PFNI added that additional funding allocated to the PSNI in December 2024 had enabled it to close the remaining funding gap for FYE 2025.

Commentary from others on the PSNI budget

2.25 In its April 2025 inspection report on the PSNI⁷, His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) noted that the service operated in a particularly complex social and political environment. HMICFRS explained among other things that its inspection report identified many of the consequences of the service's budget shortfall and the continued challenges facing the Chief Constable and his team. It said it had concerns about the performance of the service in keeping people safe, preventing crime and providing victims with an effective service.

2.26 HMICFRS observed that, despite best efforts, neighbourhood policing had borne the consequences of the budgetary position and, with police officer numbers at their lowest level since the PSNI's formation, the service was less able to prioritise prevention activity. Furthermore, as a consequence of the necessary reduction in officers, it had withdrawn its commitment to 16-hours-a-day neighbourhood policing. HMICFRS stated that the current resourcing picture was stark, with neighbourhood officers diverted away from their main duties so often that they were sometimes working only a couple of shifts per month in their communities. In addition, even though the PSNI's child internet protection team was short of staff and struggling to

⁷ HMICFRS (April 2025), *The Police Service of Northern Ireland – An inspection of police effectiveness and efficiency*. Available at: <https://hmicfrs.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/publications/psni-inspection-of-police-effectiveness-and-efficiency-2025/> [Accessed 4 July 2025]

meet demand, there was no certainty that its numbers would be restored. HMICFRS added that if the continuing financial pressures facing the service were left unresolved, they were likely to further affect the service the PSNI could provide.

- 2.27 The Northern Ireland Affairs Committee (NIAC) published a report in April 2025 on the funding and delivery of public services in Northern Ireland⁸, in particular policing, justice, health and education. It observed that the funding and delivery of public services in Northern Ireland were under enormous pressure. It commented that substandard public services had wider implications for Northern Ireland, including for the delivery of Northern Ireland Executive priorities such as economic growth, and created significant costs to society.
- 2.28 The NIAC pointed out that because of the PSNI's budgetary position, it had lower officer numbers, slower crime investigations and slower responses to non-emergency calls. It confirmed that the PSNI had no access to reserves, or the ability to carry forward annual funding, or borrowing powers. In addition, the NIAC had been advised by the PSNI that its budget had remained static since 2010 against a backdrop of 36% inflation. The NIAC said, among other things, that the Government must provide stable, sustainable, multi-year funding as part of future budget settlements, to enable the Northern Ireland Executive and service providers to plan for long-term public services transformation.

Our comment on public sector pay policies and affordability

- 2.29 We note the strength of concern expressed by the parties and by independent commentators about the overall affordability situation for the PSNI. We observe the singular constraints placed on the PSNI's budget in comparison with England and Wales in terms of the absence of reserves, the ability to carry forward annual funding, or borrowing powers. Furthermore, the PSNI is affected by Barnett Consequentials being linked to the Northern Ireland Block Grant rather than directly to police funding in England and Wales. We also note the PSNI's confirmation that it has factored 3.8% into its budget for the 2025/26 pay award for police officers.

The economy and labour market

- 2.30 HM Treasury reported that across different indicators, 2024 data had shown a decline in UK earnings growth. It also pointed out that wage growth was forecast to moderate over the coming months, and be materially lower over FYE 2026 than FYE 2025, at 3.0% according to the Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR).
- 2.31 The DOJ advised us that after two successive years of pay increases failing to keep pace with sharp rises in inflation, median weekly earnings for full-time employees in the Northern Ireland economy grew by 1.2% in real terms (adjusted for inflation)

⁸ Northern Ireland Affairs Committee (April 2025), *Funding and delivery of public services: follow up*, HC477. Available at: <https://committees.parliament.uk/publications/47420/documents/245818/default/> [Accessed 4 July 2025]

over the year to April 2024. The PSNI explained that the recent pause in police officer recruitment compounded by high rates of employment in Northern Ireland had created an extremely competitive recruitment market. The PFNI provided us with comprehensive economic data. This included the detail that a house price survey from the Halifax showed that property prices in Northern Ireland were rising faster than anywhere else in the UK and that homes in Northern Ireland cost 6.8% more in November 2024 than a year earlier. The PFNI added that the growth rate of average rent in Northern Ireland had been generally slowing since the record-high annual rise of 10.4% in February 2024. The SANI stated that inflation rates in Northern Ireland were slightly higher than in the rest of the UK, at 3.3% as opposed to 2.2% in England and Wales, in late 2024.

Our comment on the economy and labour market

2.32 We set out below the latest UK-wide and Northern Ireland economic and labour market indicators as at 4 June 2025, available to us when finalising our recommendations:

- *Inflation.* Inflation was falling as we wrote our last Report and continued to do so until September 2024, before starting to pick up again. The Consumer Prices Index (CPI) increased by 1.7% in the year to September 2024 (when the 2024 police pay award took effect), and the CPI including owner occupiers' housing costs (CPIH) increased by 2.6% over the same period. In the year to April 2025 the CPI increased by 3.5% and the CPIH increased by 4.1%. Separate inflation figures are not available for Northern Ireland⁹.
- Core CPI (which excludes the effects of price changes in energy, food and alcohol) was higher at 3.8% in the year to April 2025, while core CPIH was 4.5%.
- The Bank of England base interest rate decreased from 5.25% in July 2024 to 4.25% from May 2025 as inflationary pressures eased. However, it will take time for falling interest rates to affect mortgage payments.
- In its March Economic and Fiscal Outlook¹⁰, the Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR) expected CPI to peak at 3.7% in the third quarter of 2025 driven by higher energy prices, higher food prices, and the increase in regulated water bills from April 2025. However, it expected CPI to fall back to 3.1% in the fourth quarter of 2025 and to be around the 2% target from 2026 onwards.

⁹ The ONS has been conducting work to develop a Northern Ireland CPI, but this is still in the pilot phase and so it does not recommend the use of the metrics for policy or decision-making purposes.

¹⁰ OBR (March 2025), *Economic and Fiscal Outlook*. Available at: <https://obr.uk/efo/economic-and-fiscal-outlook-march-2025/> [Accessed on 4 July 2025]

OFFICIAL-SENSITIVE (UNTIL PUBLICATION)

- In its May 2025 Monetary Policy Report¹¹, the Bank of England's median projection expected CPI to peak at 3.5% in the third quarter of 2025, before gradually falling back to the 2% target at the start of 2027.
- *Economic growth.* UK real gross domestic product (GDP) figures showed that the UK economy grew by 1.1% over 2024 as a whole, but was flat over the second half of the year. The first estimate of GDP for January to March 2025 showed growth of 0.7% on the previous quarter and 1.3% on a year earlier. Real GDP per head of population was unchanged over 2024 as a whole, while the first estimate for January to March 2025 showed increases of 0.5% on the previous quarter and 0.3% on a year earlier. The Northern Ireland Composite Economic Index (broadly equivalent to the output measure of GDP) increased by 2.2% in 2024.
- In March 2025, the OBR estimated that annual real GDP growth would be 1% in 2025 and would increase to 1.9% in 2026 reflecting monetary policy loosening, falls in energy prices, and a gradual easing of uncertainty resulting in spare capacity in the economy being used up. It estimated that real GDP per head would increase by 0.3% in 2025 and 1.5% in 2026.
- *Labour market.* Pay As You Earn (PAYE) Real Time Information (RTI) indicates that the number of employees on payrolls in April 2025 was 30.3 million, 0.3% lower than a year earlier. In Northern Ireland, the number of employees on payrolls in April 2025 was 1.1% higher than a year earlier.
- At 71.6%, the Labour Force Survey¹² (LFS) employment rate for people aged 16 to 64 in Northern Ireland for the three months to March 2025 was the third lowest for any region in the UK (the rates for Wales and North East England were 71.3% and 68.0% respectively, while for the UK as a whole it was 75.0%). The LFS unemployment rate for people aged 16 and over was lower in Northern Ireland for the three months to March 2025 (1.6%) than any other region in the UK (4.5% for the UK as a whole) and also lower than in the Republic of Ireland (4.1% for the single month of April 2025¹³). The economic inactivity rate for people aged 16 to 64 in Northern Ireland was 27.2% in the three months to March 2025, the second highest for any region of the UK (the rate for North East England was 28.4%, while for the UK as a whole it was 21.4%)¹⁴.

¹¹ Bank of England (May 2025), *Monetary Policy Report*. Available at:

<https://www.bankofengland.co.uk/monetary-policy-report/2025/may-2025> [Accessed on 4 July 2025]

¹² 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.

¹³ Central Statistics Office (May 2025), *Monthly Unemployment April 2025*. Available at

<https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/p-mue/monthlyunemploymentapril2025/> [Accessed 4 July 2025]

¹⁴ 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

- *Earnings.* PAYE RTI data show that median earnings across the UK grew 6.4% in the year to April 2025. Northern Ireland saw growth in median earnings of 10.9% over the same period. Median earnings in Northern Ireland were 3.7% below the UK median in April 2025 and an average of 5.8% below the UK as a whole during FYE 2025. The difference is primarily due to significantly lower earnings in the private sector in Northern Ireland relative to the UK.
- *Pay settlements.* The latest estimate for median pay settlements in the three months to April 2025 ranged from 3.0% to 3.8%. Pay awards made during this time period will have been predominantly in the private sector. Our analysis of Brightmine data indicated that around one-third (33%) of the pay awards it recorded so far in 2025 had been worth less than 4%.

2.33 We note that inflation has been lower over the last year than in preceding years. However, we continue to emphasise that this represents a slowing in the rate of overall price increases and not a fall in prices, and that officers continue to experience the effect of past high inflation in their cost of living. We observe that energy price inflation is higher than the overall rate. We also observe that measures of average earnings growth and median pay settlements have not fallen as quickly as inflation.

2.34 In the context of the cost of living, we observe that average house prices and private rent levels in Northern Ireland are both around one-third lower than for the UK as a whole. Northern Ireland has the second lowest average house prices out of the UK regions and the fourth lowest average private sector rents. However, average house prices and private sector rents have both grown more in Northern Ireland over the last five years than in any of the other regions of the UK.

2.35 Our recent reports were produced in periods of significant economic uncertainty. This year, we observe that there have been significant geopolitical changes since we received evidence from HM Treasury. The international diplomatic and trading environment remains uncertain and there is a risk that this may lead to a further period of economic instability.

Police officer earnings

Our analysis of police officer earnings

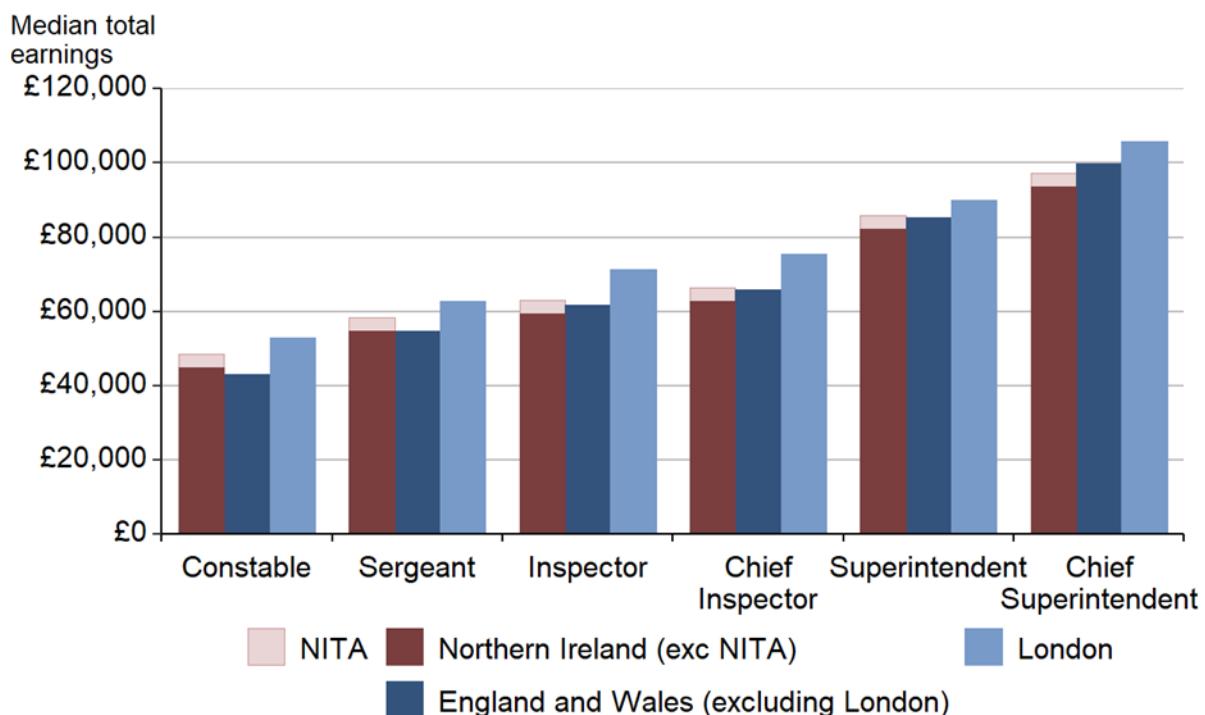
2.36 Our full analysis of police officer earnings data is set out in Appendix E. This includes consideration of the differences between police officer earnings in Northern Ireland and England and Wales and the wider economy. It focuses on earnings comparisons that exclude the NITA, in recognition of the fact that the NITA is an allowance paid to police officers in Northern Ireland in acknowledgement of the

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%.

challenges particular to the Northern Ireland policing environment and the restrictions faced there by officers and their families.

2.37 Comparisons between police officer pay in Northern Ireland and England and Wales for FYE 2024 are distorted by the delayed payment of the 2023 pay award to police officers in Northern Ireland¹⁵. Median full-time total earnings (excluding the NITA) for constables in FYE 2024 were higher than for their counterparts in England and Wales, excluding London, by around £1,700, while for sergeants the figures were similar (Chart 2.1). For these ranks, higher levels of overtime worked in Northern Ireland (median overtime earnings in Northern Ireland were around 115% and 74% higher than those in England and Wales for constables and sergeants respectively) and the retention of CRTP offset the delayed pay award in the comparisons. For all other ranks, earnings were lower in Northern Ireland, whereas in previous years they were similar unless there were differences in the distributions of officers on the pay scales.

Chart 2.1: Median total earnings, by rank, full-time officers, Northern Ireland and England and Wales, FYE 2024



Source: Office for the Pay Review Bodies (OPRB) analysis of Police Earnings Census data, Home Office.

Evidence from the parties on police officer earnings

2.38 The DOJ said in oral evidence that the PSNI needed a properly resourced officer pay and remuneration package because of competition not just from England and Wales policing but also from An Garda Síochána and Police Scotland.

¹⁵ This award was not paid until FYE 2025 in Northern Ireland and so is not picked up in the data, despite being backdated.

2.39 The PSNI advised us that its officers were experiencing the same cost of living effects as officers in England and Wales as a result of inflation, and that this was further compounded by delays in authorised pay awards.

2.40 The PSNI told us that the number of officers with registered outside business interests or second occupations in January 2025 had reduced slightly in January 2024, from 950 officers to 923 officers (down 2.8% overall), compared with 519 officers in 2017. The PSNI explained that the job types seeing the greatest increase in recent years (sales and retail, and driving and delivery) had fallen in that period from 117 to 113 officers and from 42 to 35 respectively. However, the number engaging in care and community work had risen from 91 to 104. Property remained the largest single category of second occupation overall (down to 332 in January 2025 from 354 a year earlier). The PSNI explained that data to show how many officers were leaving the service to take up their secondary role fulltime were not available.

2.41 The NIPB highlighted the impact of the cost of living on PSNI officers and staff and noted the varied reasons for officers having registered outside business interests or second jobs. It noted that in a recent 'Your Service Your Voice' survey, pay and conditions were raised by officers as a key factor in their sense of feeling valued in their role. However, it also noted that the starting remuneration package for successful applicants in the January 2025 recruitment campaign was £34,000, which would help make the PSNI an attractive career option while cost of living issues continued.

2.42 The PFNI stated in written evidence that police officers felt strongly that their incomes were not reflective of their work and that constable pay did not cover the cost of running an average household. It said that comparing an Office for National Statistics (ONS) estimate of household expenditure and the constable pay scale showed that, despite working in a dangerous and critical profession, police officers in Northern Ireland were not able to support themselves and their families.

2.43 The PFNI added in written evidence that the gradual erosion of police pay had occurred over many years, starting with austerity. It told us that the ground lost to austerity had never been regained and that by the close of 2024, the pay of constables compared with the start of austerity had fallen behind by 21.2%. It observed that the substantial degradation in police pay for more than a decade insulted and devalued the unique and difficult work of police officers. The PFNI emphasised its plan to fully restore police pay and reverse long-term pay degradation.

2.44 The SANI said in oral evidence that its members felt like the 'easy target' of poor pay increases and poor overall investment, despite their increasingly violent and difficult working conditions under the continued Northern Ireland-related terrorism

threat. The SANI added that it had seen how other public sector roles, with the right to strike, had gained better pay increases.

Our comment on police officer earnings

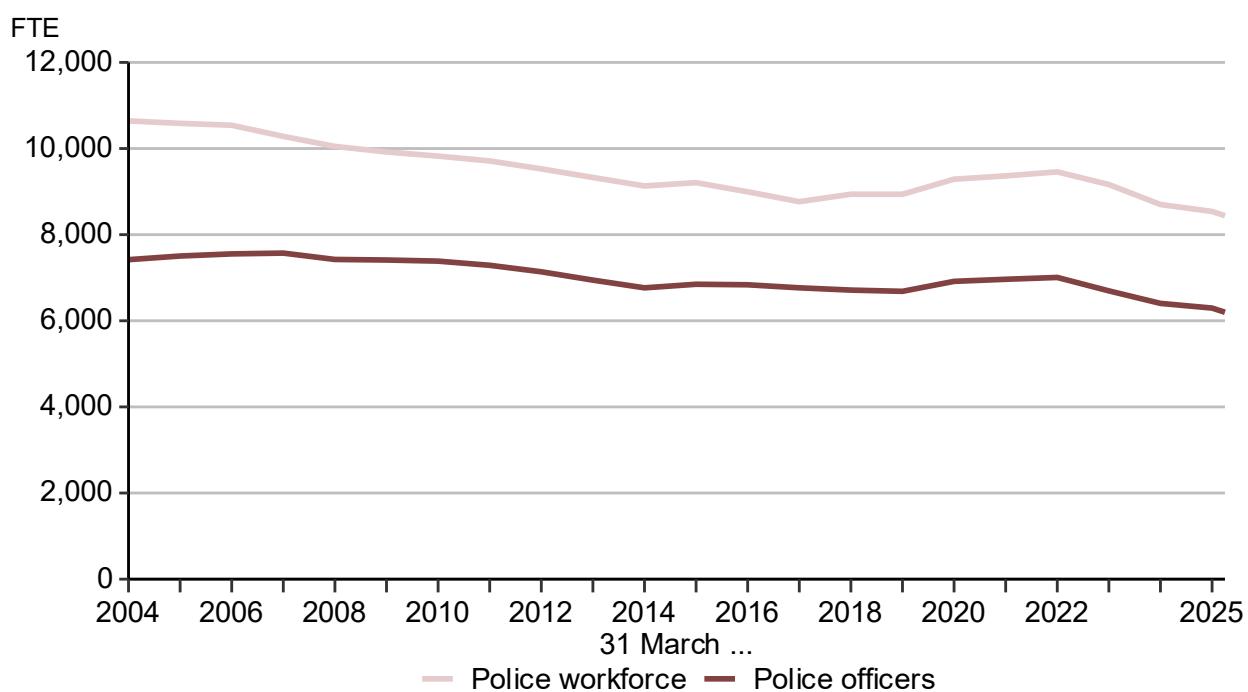
- 2.45 We have continued to hear from parties about the decline in pay in real terms since 2010. These comparisons have focused on comparing police pay awards with inflation. We acknowledge the importance of this but question the relevance of 2010 as a starting year, given the proportion of PSNI officers recruited after that date. We note that 44% of PSNI officers joined after 2010 and that 42% have less than 10 years' service. We also highlight that many officers will have receive progression and/or promotion during the period since 2010, which means that their earnings have not declined in real terms to the same extent as the pay scales have, and in many cases their real-terms earnings will have increased.
- 2.46 We note that officers may have had an expectation that the pay scales would increase in line with inflation and they may, therefore, be earning less than expected in real terms. However, we observe that comparisons against inflation vary depending on which starting year is chosen.
- 2.47 We also recognise that the 2024/25 pay award for police officers was lower than for many other areas of the public sector. However, we highlight that the 2023/24 police pay award was higher than in many other areas of the public sector. Our analysis indicates that the cumulative value of pay awards received by police officers since our formation is similar to those received by the remit groups of other Pay Review Bodies.
- 2.48 In making our pay recommendation each year, we consider what the appropriate annual award should be based on the factors in our terms of reference, as informed by the evidence provided to us, and our own analysis. Our recommendations are driven by this evidence at the point of our consideration, rather than designed to meet any particular position relative to changes over time against inflation or comparator organisations, or to set a long-term pay strategy. However, we observe that long-term decreases in real terms, or in comparison with other sectors, have potentially negative implications for the morale and motivation of officers and for recruitment and retention, especially given the prohibition on officers withdrawing their labour. This has been highlighted to us by the results of staff association surveys.
- 2.49 We thank the PSNI for the provision of data on officers' outside business interests and secondary occupations, which we requested last year on an annual basis. We observe that despite a slight fall in such registered activities this year, the number is still almost double that in 2017. We would be interested in finding out more about the varied reasons for these additional activities and ask again if any officers are leaving the PSNI to take up their secondary role full-time.

PSNI workforce

2.50 We have set out our full analysis of PSNI workforce data in Appendix E. We also provide below some of the key points.

2.51 On 1 June 2025, PSNI data showed that its officer total was 6,198 full-time equivalents (FTE), the lowest number since the formation of the PSNI (Chart 2.2). The PSNI explained that budget modelling for the FYE 2026 was based on police officer numbers starting at 6,358 FTE in April 2025 and increasing to around 6,500 FTE by March 2026. The PSNI observed that its current resourcing challenges were well-publicised and unfortunately might not reflect the flexible and agile environment it sought to establish.

Chart 2.2: Strength of police workforce and number of police officers (FTE), Northern Ireland, March 2004 – June 2025



Source: PSNI data.

2.52 The NIPB pointed out that the new five-year PSNI policing plan stated that securing a representative, valued and enabled workforce was central to delivery of the policing service.

2.53 The PSNI written evidence explained that it was developing a service operating model, undertaking an exercise to rationalise the distribution of police officer and staff posts based on available funding, and producing a human resources distribution plan. In oral evidence, the PSNI added that it wanted transformation and to maximise the use of officers through workforce modernisation and better deployment of civilians in police staff roles. The PSNI explained that it was taking measures to release police officers back to the frontline in order to maximise the organisation's effectiveness and that it was 190 detectives short on the crime side.

2.54 The PSNI written evidence said that it had 324 officers per 100,000 people in December 2024. In comparison, the average in England and Wales on 31 March 2024 was 245 officers per 100,000 people.

Our comment on PSNI workforce

2.55 At the time of writing, the PSNI had recorded its lowest ever number of officers, albeit with an ambition to grow. In other sections of this chapter we explore the causes of this situation and the consequences. We request information next year on the PSNI's desired officer to staff ratio, its approach to reverse civilianisation and more detail on its human resources distribution plan.

Diversity

2.56 We note figures from the PSNI website showing that on 1 April 2025:

- 32% of PSNI officers were female;
- The community background of 32.1% of PSNI officers was Perceived Roman Catholic and for 66.4% was Perceived Protestant (compared with 45.7% and 43.5% respectively for the Northern Ireland population in the 2021 census).
- 0.7% of PSNI officers said they were from an ethnic minority (compared with 3.4% of the Northern Ireland population in the 2021 census).

2.57 PSNI data showed that in its latest recruitment campaign in January and February 2025, 1,389 (28.8%) of the 4,822 applicants were Catholic, compared with 30% in the previous 2021 campaign and 31% in 2020. In the 2025 campaign, 1,808 (37.5%) of applicants were female, 188 (3.9%) said they were from an ethnic minority and 386 (8%) said they were LGBT+.

2.58 On request, the PSNI also provided data from 2019 to 2024 on the diversity of officers leaving with less than five years' service. The aspects covered were gender, religion and ethnicity and showed that the diversity of leavers with less than five years' service was broadly in line with the diversity of the cohort recruited.

2.59 The PSNI observed that policing in a challenging area limited the number of applicants received from the local population. It said the fear of being targeted as an officer or family member created a barrier to recruitment. The PSNI said it was unfortunate that an officer from an ethnic minority background who had featured in its latest recruitment campaign had then endured racism on social media. In oral evidence, the Chief Constable explained that increasing diversity was a multifaceted issue with which a regime of constantly open recruitment would assist. It was possible, for example, that applicants from the Catholic community were lost during PSNI recruitment pauses. The Chief Constable stated that, if it could increase its diversity, the PSNI could make a greater difference in society than any other organisation in Northern Ireland.

2.60 The SANI explained in oral evidence that while the PSNI no longer had a target for Catholic representation its goal was to mirror the composition of the community it served. The SANI added that the ethnic minority population in Northern Ireland had grown in recent years to around 5% of the population and that the composition of the PSNI needed to reflect this change but that its ability to recruit from minority communities remained challenging.

Our comment on PSNI workforce diversity

2.61 We observe that the proportion of female officers, Catholic officers and those from ethnic minorities remains below the levels representative of the communities served by the PSNI.

2.62 On the diversity data of applicants in the PSNI's latest recruitment exercise (January and February 2025), we note that the proportion of Catholic applicants was below not just the overall Northern Ireland population but also existing police officers. On gender, the proportion of female applicants was below the overall Northern Ireland population but above that within the existing police officer workforce. In terms of ethnicity, the proportion of applicants from an ethnic minority was higher than the levels found in the community and within the existing police officer workforce. Data from successful appointees is currently unknown as the recruitment process has not finished. We are grateful for receiving diversity data on applications, and request the diversity data on successful appointees from this PSNI recruitment campaign once it is available.

2.63 We are also grateful to the PSNI for providing information for the first time this year on the diversity of officers leaving with less than five years' service. We ask that this information is included from now on in the PSNI's annual written evidence submission. We again encourage the PSNI to work to improve the completeness of its data on officer disability, sexual orientation and protected characteristics not yet published.

2.64 We note the importance of increased diversity to operational efficiency in policing and the potential significance of uninterrupted recruitment processes to improved levels of representativeness within the PSNI's workforce. We would like to hear more in 2026 from the Northern Ireland parties about ways to achieve the goal of greater diversity within the PSNI workforce in relation to all the protected characteristics, but particularly on Catholic representation and ethnicity and race. We wish to stress the importance of diversity in creating a police service reflective of the population it serves and equipped with the skills and capabilities to respond effectively to the growing complexity of policing and the changing nature of crime.

Recruitment and retention

Evidence from the parties on recruitment

2.65 The DOJ told us that the PSNI had launched its latest officer recruitment campaign in January 2025 – the first since 2021 – and that 4,822 applications had been received. PSNI data showed that the number of applicants to its January 2025 campaign was the lowest in recent years¹⁶. The PSNI informed us that it expected to complete the resultant selection process by July 2025. The DOJ advised us in written evidence that the Chief Constable had highlighted that the reduced workforce was placing immense strain on existing officers, and potentially compromising their ability to serve the community effectively.

2.66 In oral evidence, the DOJ said that the model for PSNI recruitment might be modernised. The DOJ added that direct entry was one option to be considered: an alternative recruitment process that did not involve starting as a constable could usefully attract specialists in say cyber-crime or other emerging crime types. The DOJ was keen to examine this concept with the PSNI as it could assist in dealing with the growing complexity of policing work.

2.67 The PSNI explained that its budgetary position had continued to have a significant impact on officer recruitment and had resulted in lengthy delays in progressing appointments from its 2021 recruitment campaign. It informed us that the pause in appointments from June 2023 to March 2024 had contributed to a significant number of withdrawals from this campaign: from a total of 1062 applicants, while 223 had so far been appointed, 313 had withdrawn. It stressed that a withdrawal rate from the 2021 campaign of around 30% was clearly having a detrimental impact on the PSNI's talent pipeline. Furthermore, it told us that a further 240 applicants had so far been removed from the process as a result of pre-employment checks.

2.68 The PSNI added that in FYE 2025 it had resumed making appointments from the 2021 pool and that it had anticipated appointing a total of 336 student officers by 31 March 2025. However, it also pointed out that its appointment rate was not sufficient to keep pace with increased numbers of leavers. Furthermore, student officers were not operationally deployable for 22 weeks from their start date, so further impacting on the service's capability.

2.69 In oral evidence, the PSNI said there would be a short hiatus in recruitment in June and July 2025 while the organisation focused on processing and vetting the volume of applicants. The PSNI explained subsequently that from August 2025 onwards it anticipated appointing candidates from its January 2025 campaign, as well as completing appointments from its 2021 campaign. It also told us that it planned a further recruitment campaign in early 2026 to maintain the future recruitment

¹⁶ Numbers of applicants in previous years' campaigns: 2013 (7,493) 2014 (5,856) 2015 (5,498) 2017 (7,695) 2018 (6,243) 2020 (6,879) 2021 (5,311).

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pipeline necessary to facilitate the uplift in police officer numbers outlined within its recovery business plan. The PSNI added that uncertainty over funding had caused stop/start recruitment but also confirmed a plan for continual recruitment and a secure recruitment pipeline.

- 2.70 The PSNI confirmed that the Chief Constable had not exercised his discretion to enhance the starting salary to constable pay point 2 in response to our 2024 recommendations. However, it explained that it would review findings from its January and February 2025 recruitment campaign to establish whether this would be beneficial in future.
- 2.71 The DOJ told us that it had approved a robust business case from the PSNI to recover workforce levels to 7,000 officers and 2,572 staff over the next three years and that this had been agreed to in principle by the DOF. The DOJ emphasised that the PSNI's recovery business plan proposal would contribute to the delivery of justice and policing priorities in the Northern Ireland Programme for Government, particularly through enhanced capacity.
- 2.72 The PSNI said that the Chief Constable's target was in fact a minimum service operating model of 7,000 police officers over the next three years, with a strong emphasis on then growing this figure to between 7,500 and 8,000 on the basis of commissioned analysis. The PSNI explained that it had told the NIAC in January 2025 that the estimated cost to recover the PSNI's workforce levels would be £200 million and that additional funding from the Northern Ireland Executive would be required.
- 2.73 The DOJ informed us in oral evidence that in-year funding of £4 million had been allocated to the PSNI in FYE 2026 to enable it to proceed with recruitment as part of its three-year recovery business plan. The PSNI said it hoped to reach a consensus with the NIPB, DOJ and Secretary of State for Northern Ireland on funding the recovery business plan in full.
- 2.74 The DOJ told us that it considered between 6,900 and 7,200 to be a reasonable number of officers. It said that this had been proposed by a PSNI-commissioned study. The DOJ added that while more officers would be an affordability issue, it would also help alleviate current high workforce overtime and sickness levels and was therefore expected to result in overall savings for the PSNI.
- 2.75 The PSNI advised us in oral evidence that it had purchased the site for a new Police College. It said it planned to provide a world-class police training academy and in this way restore the service to 7,000 officers in the first instance.
- 2.76 The NIPB explained that it had a statutory duty to secure sufficient resources to deliver policing services. It said that having officer numbers at their lowest ever level was having a detrimental impact on the operational resilience of the PSNI and the ability of officers and staff to meet the demands faced. The NIPB welcomed the

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decision by the Chief Constable to recommence recruitment but observed that this would need to be funded and would take time to implement. It said the issue of continuing future recruitment would need to be part of the decision-making around balancing the budget, along with other competing priorities.

- 2.77 The SANI said the PSNI had been put in a position where its decision to commence recruitment was at risk because it was made without confirmed funding. The SANI feared that this would ultimately have a detrimental effect on operational capability.
- 2.78 The PFNI said it welcomed the PSNI's latest recruitment drive in 2025. It observed that it was an essential first step towards rebuilding officer numbers, but that more was needed to halt the decline.

Evidence from the parties on retention

- 2.79 The PSNI advised us that at 31 December 2024, the twelve-month attrition rate was 7% compared with the 6.2% attrition rate in England and Wales in the year to 31 March 2024. The PSNI added that in FYE 2024, 62 officers resigned voluntarily from the PSNI (14.6% of the 426 total leavers), compared with 56% of total leavers in England and Wales in FYE 2024. The PSNI informed us that 9.6% (41) of those leaving in 2024 had less than five years' service.
- 2.80 The DOJ observed in oral evidence that between 300 and 350 officers left the PSNI each year.
- 2.81 On the particular issue of retention of officers in hard-to-fill locations, the NIPB observed that it was multifaceted and related to factors such as the distance from main population hubs, the impact of commuting and shift work on normal family life, and the level of threat.
- 2.82 The PFNI said that PSNI data showed that between 2014 and 2024, 232 officers had left the service during their probationary period. It said that 49 probationers had left in 2022 (the highest total in recent years), 44 in 2023 and 27 in 2024. It informed us that, while reducing, this figure remained unacceptably high, given the cost of recruitment and training and the impact on workforce recovery. The PFNI stated that there was little doubt that making ends meet was a significant factor in decisions to leave and that, anecdotally, officers had left for work with greater financial rewards and considerably lower pressures.
- 2.83 The SANI advised us in written evidence that the data breach in August 2023 had not just compounded the PSNI's inability to recruit from diverse demographics but had also furthered the extreme anxiety of those serving. The SANI stated that this incident had affected PSNI retention.

Our comment on recruitment and retention

2.84 We wish to express concern at the risks arising from the further reductions in PSNI officer numbers this year to officer wellbeing and resilience, demographic representativeness, diversity, legitimacy, public confidence and overall long-term service effectiveness. We stress the importance of resolving the funding uncertainties over the PSNI's recovery business plan. We also welcome the PSNI's resumption of recruitment in 2025 and look forward to receiving a progress update.

2.85 We note that the Chief Constable did not use his discretionary power to raise the starting salary to pay point 2 this year. We would like an update next year on the PSNI's review of findings from its January and February 2025 recruitment campaign on whether this would be beneficial in future.

2.86 We also request an update next year on the issue of the retention and morale of police officers in hard-to-fill locations, as raised on our visit to Derry and Strabane in 2024. We ask about this particularly in relation to officers on probation (in view of the PFNI's evidence on the numbers of probationary officers choosing to leave) and those with up to five years of service.

2.87 As set out in our 2024 Report, the PSNI Chief Constable had told us that, in the context of concerns about early attrition, 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 the PSNI would consider the option of allowances for officers with long commutes. He had 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 had 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.

2.88 In our 2024 Report, we responded by urging the Northern Ireland parties to take an active role in the National Police Chiefs' Council's (NPCC's) review of allowances in England and Wales. This was because we saw it as providing an opportunity to explore all possible options for incentives for probationary officers travelling far to their first posting, especially those in hard-to-fill locations. In our 2024 Report, we then requested that in evidence this year we receive a progress update on the options chosen to address the problems faced by officers working in hard-to-fill locations in Northern Ireland, particularly probationary officers. We also focused on new and recent recruits in hard-to-fill locations in our request for information for this current round on the continuing impact of the cost of living on police officers.

2.89 We were disappointed to receive little evidence on these issues this year, and in particular in response to our focus in our last report on hard-to-fill locations, and we are concerned that the problems we witnessed on our 2024 visit have not yet been addressed. We now reiterate the importance of action in this area, given the

potential implications for recruitment and retention, and request that the PSNI further progresses options. We ask the PSNI to set out in evidence in 2026 the measures they have put in place to support probationary officers and those with up to five years' service based in hard-to-fill locations.

Morale and motivation

2.90 The Chief Constable observed in oral evidence that when he joined the PSNI in October 2023 he had found the organisation doing impressive police work but in a bad place motivationally, organisationally and structurally. Consequently, his priority in the first year had been to stabilise the organisation. In oral evidence, the Justice Minister observed that if police officers did not feel adequately remunerated when they were paid each month, they did not feel valued. The NIPB said that a recent cultural audit in the PSNI had revealed it as a service of low morale. However, the NIPB was hopeful that, with the replenishment of the chief officer team on a permanent basis, morale and stability within the PSNI would improve.

2.91 The PFNI told us that the reduction in officer numbers had impacted on the morale, motivation and pressure on those officers who remained in service. It added that it was crucial to remember that police officers in Northern Ireland were currently facing the consequences of the eighth consecutive delay in implementing recommendations from the pay review process. It said it had previously presented evidence on the impact of these delays on morale within the PSNI and the real-life implications of such disregard for the personal finances of serving police officers, especially during a time of widespread concern about the cost of living. It stressed that consideration had to be given to the cumulative impact of year-on-year delays on officers in relation to their welfare and wellbeing. The PFNI advised us that this remained a major concern for the PFNI and a significant source of anger and disillusionment among its members.

2.92 The SANI informed us that just over half of the 37 PSNI respondents to the joint Police Superintendents' Association (PSA) and SANI 2024 Pay Survey reported lower or substantially lower personal levels of morale compared with twelve months earlier. The SANI added that due regard was not given to its surveys even though these repeatedly highlighted the low morale and wellbeing of its members. It echoed the PFNI in advising us that repeated delays with the annual pay award continued to have a significant impact on officer morale and caused a feeling of disadvantage compared with colleagues in England and Wales. It said that police officers did not have the same rights as other public sector workers, yet the expectations and demands on them were often greater.

Visit observations on morale and motivation

2.93 On our visit to the PSNI in Belfast in January 2025, officers told us that in contrast to England and Wales, the pay award in Northern Ireland was often delayed and that this led to significant frustration. One comment was that it felt like policing was the

least important priority in spite of the assistance it gave to other public services and that this seemed unfair given the restrictions on police officers' lives. It was also emphasised to us that the nature of police work in Northern Ireland constrained officers on where they could live. We were advised that Northern Ireland was still not a normal policing environment in spite of recent changes in the threat level.

2.94 In addition, officers told us that they did not feel adequately rewarded. They drew attention to the recent data protection breach and unresolved issues around holiday pay as evidence that they were underappreciated and not adequately rewarded. All these factors were having a negative impact on officers' morale and motivation.

Our comment on morale and motivation

2.95 High morale and strong motivation drive productivity. We remain concerned by the low levels of morale reported in the PSNI. We also note the evidence from parties on the link between the reward package and morale. However, we consider that drivers of morale and motivation go much wider than reward. A significant driver of motivation and morale is officer wellbeing. We have received an increasing amount of evidence on wellbeing in recent years and consider this separately in the next section.

Wellbeing

2.96 The PSNI said that current high sickness levels and ill-health retirements in the organisation were likely to be driven, in part, by high levels of fatigue and burnout among officers and staff. It explained that this had resulted in an increase in the number of overall referrals to occupational health and wellbeing in recent years, in particular in relation to mental health and ill-health retirement. The PSNI observed that this was compounding the availability to the service of deployable officers and put further strain on them. The PSNI hoped that sickness absence levels had now plateaued.

2.97 The PSNI also cited research showing that low levels of annual leave led to high incidence of fatigue, increased stress and low morale culminating in increased sickness absence. It noted that police officers had less flexibility than other types of employment to vary their start and end times and a reduced ability to work from home.

2.98 The NIPB told us that it had discussed with all the PSNI staffing associations the impact of pressures on the organisation and the health and welfare of officers. It said it had heard across the board, at all levels of officers and staff, reports of significant commitment and dedication and of a service stretched to dangerous levels. The NIPB stated that the PSNI was expecting more from fewer officers, resulting in very stretched individuals and teams with a finite capacity for overtime. The NIPB advised us of pressures placed on individuals and the constant juggling

exercise at both a local and senior level to ensure resource was placed where there was most demand, against a backdrop of increased demand.

2.99 The PFNI told us that police officers felt strongly that their incomes were not reflective of their work. It said they were far more likely to experience trauma and stress and impacts on their mental health. It stated that countless studies evidenced the unique psychological impact of policing on its officers. It observed that while it was unsurprising to find inherent trauma within policing, the depth of the impact on officers was alarming. The PFNI stated that pay should reflect risk, and that a more informed discussion on the impacts of trauma (and not just physical injury) should feature in considerations of pay settlements and future pay reform. Furthermore, the PFNI cited a study completed by personal injury claim experts indicating that police officers had the highest rate of mental health issues linked to their job. The report found that 6.5% of current or former police officers reported mental health problems – a rate almost two and a half times the national average.

2.100 The SANI advised us in oral evidence that unprecedently low resourcing levels in the PSNI were putting a significant strain on senior officers as they shouldered a continued increase in responsibility. The SANI added that most sickness absence in the PSNI was the result of stress and mental ill-health issues caused by a lack of resources in the organisation. The SANI observed that this was creating a cycle of officers under pressure going off sick and placing additional pressure and stress on those remaining.

Sickness absence levels

2.101 The PSNI told us that its current high sickness absence levels put a significant strain on resources, and led to increased overtime requirements to ensure safe staffing levels and continued service delivery. It stated that in FYE 2025, the number of Average Working Days Lost to sickness was 22.85 (against a target of 14.11), compared with 22.24 days in FYE 2024. The PSNI added that in FYE 2025, 645 officers were off sick on average per day and that in April 2025 it had introduced a new absence management policy.

2.102 The PSNI also advised us that long-term sickness absence (of 183 days or more) had risen by 44% between 2023 and 2024. It said that one probable cause was delays in the ill-health retirement process. The PSNI added that its high rates of sickness absence and ill-health retirements were likely to be driven by high levels of fatigue and burnout, and that the number of referrals to occupational health and wellbeing had increased in recent years. The PSNI said that further strain was then placed on deployable officers and reduced the neighbourhood policing teams through abstraction to response functions. It explained that this abstraction led to reduced community engagement and confidence in the service. In oral evidence, the PSNI said that ill-health retirement accounted for 4% of leavers from the PSNI,

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but just 0.6% of leavers on average in England and Wales. The PSNI added that it had recently seen a slight downturn in its very high number of ill-health retirements.

2.103 In oral evidence, the PSNI told us that the causes of its high sickness and ill-health retirement levels were very complex and multifaceted. The NIPB observed that measures to address high levels of sickness absence and ill-health retirement were included in the PSNI's recovery business plan.

Assaults

2.104 The PSNI informed us of a reduction in the number of recorded assaults on its officers (either with or without injury) in FYE 2025, compared with the four preceding years (Table 2.1). The PSNI said that assaults on police officers posed a serious threat to the vital service that they provided in keeping people safe, were not acceptable and should not be seen as part of the job. It suggested that increasing public awareness and media coverage of assaults might have acted as a deterrent this year.

Table 2.1: Number of assaults on PSNI officers, FYE 2020–2025

FYE	Number of assaults
2020	2,829
2021	3,109
2022	3,401
2023	3,272
2024	3,339
2025	2,807

Source: PSNI.

2.105 The NIPB stressed its concern at attacks and assaults on police officers. It said it condemned them strongly and called on the Northern Ireland Assembly and Justice Minister to review the penalty for attacks and assaults on police officers and their emergency service colleagues.

2.106 The PFNI said that on average there were nine assaults on PSNI police officers every day. It informed us that it would be conducting a public campaign in the summer of 2025 in order to raise awareness and influence public opinion on such assaults and their impact on both officers and the community. The PFNI explained that its campaign was jointly supported by the PSNI, the DOJ and NIPB.

2.107 The PFNI told us that during the social unrest in Belfast of 2024, in which at least 20 officers were injured, society was reliant on policing to keep people safe and that there was a serious risk of disorder spreading across Northern Ireland. It observed that police officers stepped up and accepted that this would mean rest day cancellations, mandatory overtime, and long hours away from their families. The PFNI said it was undoubtedly the actions and personal sacrifices of officers that meant social unrest did not ignite into widespread public disorder.

Overtime

2.108 The PSNI told us that it was a workforce reliant on overtime to maintain effective service delivery. It said its low levels of taken annual leave and high levels of sickness were combining to affect the wellbeing of its officers. It added that in effect it was not equipping its workforce to effectively serve the people of Northern Ireland.

2.109 The PSNI said it was committed to making the best use of all available resources. However, due to a reducing headcount, overtime had become a necessity in order to maintain safe staffing levels and provide an effective service to the people of Northern Ireland. It acknowledged that there had been suggestions that the amount of overtime being performed by officers was too high, unsustainable and taking a toll on their health and work-life balance, which could subsequently lead to increased sickness levels.

2.110 The PSNI explained that, even if officers did not want to perform overtime, it was not possible to opt out of it entirely. However, officers could opt into regulations that restricted weekly working hours (to an average of 48 hours over 17 weeks). It added that officers with flexible working arrangements still had to work overtime for operational reasons.

2.111 The PSNI provided data on overtime levels and expenditure. It pointed out that its highest cost arose from overtime where officers were provided with less than 15 days' notice. It said this demonstrated the reactive and constant requirement for overtime to maintain service delivery.

2.112 The PFNI told us that, from 1994 onwards, casual overtime rates had not been paid to inspectors and chief inspectors. It stressed that the basis for this agreement was that the inspecting ranks should not be expected to work regular additional hours. However, it confirmed that many in practice worked excessive hours, to the detriment of their work-life balance and general wellbeing. The PFNI therefore proposed the reintroduction of either overtime payments or a non-pensionable supplement for the inspecting ranks to take into consideration the additional hours that many of them were required to work in performing their duties.

Untaken rest days

2.113 The PFNI told us that the PSNI relied on officers working their rest days due to a lack of resources. It informed us that untaken rest days for constables and sergeants were supposed to be re-rostered within four days but that this was not happening in practice. The PFNI provided the number of rest days owing to the federated ranks in February 2025: chief inspectors (647); inspectors (2,002); sergeants (1,639); and constables (6,704).

2.114 The PFNI therefore proposed for constables and sergeants that after three months any untaken rest days should be converted into pay. It said this would operate in a similar way to time off in lieu.

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2.115 The PFNI told us that current PSNI regulations only allowed the inspecting ranks to use untaken rest days for twelve months from the date they were earned. It said this put the PSNI's inspecting ranks at a detriment to their England and Wales counterparts (who, from April 2020 were able, for a further twelve-month period, to carry over any rest days not taken due to exceptional circumstances, exigencies of duty or work demands). Again, the PFNI proposed updating the PSNI regulations to provide parity for the inspecting ranks with their counterparts in England and Wales.

2.116 The SANI told us that it was becoming increasingly difficult for its members to access untaken rest days. It advised us on 1 May 2025 that so far in the calendar year, chief superintendents (19 officers) were owed 182 days, while superintendents (55 officers) were owed 696. Furthermore, a number had in excess of 40 untaken rest days banked over a twelve-month period. The SANI informed us that some officers were no longer bothering to bank their untaken rest days because the opportunity to take them did not exist.

2.117 In oral evidence, the PSNI told us that arrangements around rest days for the federated ranks had been an important element of managing budget pressures in recent years. It said that changing rest days gave the PSNI a 'false sense' of being a properly resourced organisation. The PSNI explained that it was running a three-month pilot to pay overtime rather than modify a rest day. It informed us that changes to rest days had a big impact on officer morale and, for officers with caring responsibilities, led to additional costs. The PSNI stated that a balance needed to be struck between the organisation's needs and the wellbeing of its workforce.

Temporary promotions

2.118 The PSNI attributed a growth in temporary promotions across all areas to an increased rate of officer departure and the absence of generic promotion processes since 2021. It advised us that in January 2025 there were:

- 282 temporary sergeants (an increase of 31% on January 2024); and
- 87 temporary inspectors (an increase of 24% on January 2024).
- 111 temporary promotions lasting 1–2 years (a 70% increase on January 2024), representing 26% of all current temporary promotions.
- 10 officers on temporary promotion for more than 3 years, including 7 sergeants.

2.119 The PSNI added that a sharp decrease in temporary promotions was expected during FYE 2026 with the confirmation of merit lists following the completion of generic promotion processes for: chief inspectors (late 2024); inspectors (April 2025); and sergeants (July 2025) and the superintending ranks also in 2025.

Visit observations on wellbeing

2.120 On our visit to the PSNI in January 2025 we were advised that the lack of funding and reduction in officer numbers had been all-pervasive, with worsened sickness absence and stress levels and increased overtime requirements. Officers reported being required to work overtime, even if they did not want to. We were told that the large amounts of overtime left officers feeling constantly exhausted and lacking in energy for activities with family and friends and that this constrained family life. Officers said that it was also very difficult to get time off and that rest days were being cancelled at short notice. Furthermore, the PSNI data breach in August 2023 had impacted significantly on officers and their families. Officers reported feeling disillusioned and we were warned that younger officers in particular were becoming disenchanted with the organisation. There was constant pressure on the PSNI to support other emergency services and the unremitting pressure was leading to increased sickness levels and burnout. Officers hoped for a better work-life balance and that resourcing would improve in future.

Our comment on wellbeing

2.121 Sickness absence levels in the PSNI are unusually and unacceptably high. The parties' evidence on the matter has indicated to us the complexity of the causes. It is very important that the underlying reasons for this trend of very high sickness are clearly understood, so we request a clear articulation of the causes of the high sickness absence and ill-health retirement rates in evidence next year. We would also welcome an analysis of PSNI sickness absence data by Northern Ireland policing district. We note the determination of the service to address its current problems with a new absence management policy, and we request an update on its impact. As we have also requested of forces in our England and Wales report, we ask the PSNI to consider and address any poor planning or resource management practices that could be exacerbating the intensity of pressure on police officers.

2.122 As well as the detrimental effect of sickness on the officers themselves, there are very concerning wider impacts across the organisation, especially if a high proportion of police officers are absent every day. This significantly increases the pressures on those who remain at work and reduces operational effectiveness. Unprecedented resourcing constraints may bring a related cycle of greater workloads, longer working hours, more cancelled and untaken rest days, altered shifts and compulsory overtime, all of which risk leading to further sickness absences. In addition, the high sickness levels could make it harder to understand the appropriate workforce size for the PSNI in the medium to long term.

2.123 In the challenging context of affordability, policies for improving public services and the PSNI's complex workforce issues, there may be scope for the PSNI to modernise its approach to pay and allowances in ways that enhance officer wellbeing. Options for achieving this could include: reducing reliance on overtime and temporary promotions; addressing pressures on officers so as to reduce

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sickness absence levels; and future changes to CRTP. We would support the PSNI in seeking to deliver efficiencies through greater workforce flexibilities which also have the potential to improve workforce availability and the wellbeing of officers.

2.124 We recognise that the nature of policing, particularly in Northern Ireland, means there will always be occasions when unexpected incidents require the PSNI to cancel rest days and alter shifts. This was demonstrated by the events in Belfast last summer following the Southport attack, the violence in Derry on Easter Monday 2025 (in which more than 50 petrol bombs, fireworks and masonry were thrown at officers) and in June 2025 when 64 officers were injured during violent disorder in Ballymena and at various other Northern Ireland locations. We have previously stated that the work of police officers is important, difficult and often dangerous, as highlighted by these incidents of unrest and violent disorder in Northern Ireland. We have again seen the dedication of officers committed to serving the public on our visit to the PSNI this year.

2.125 We are particularly concerned about the workload of officers in the inspecting ranks, and the effect this has on their wellbeing. We also observe that some inspectors are likely to earn less than sergeants working similar hours, since sergeants are entitled to overtime and inspectors are not. We think it is more important that a police force takes steps to improve the wellbeing and work-life balance of officers, rather than compensate them for any poor management practices. However, we are concerned that progress on restructuring and rebalancing of the pay and workload of the inspecting ranks is some distance away and it is essential that this is expedited. As a last resort, stop-gap measure until this is implemented, we invite the Northern Ireland parties to work with their England and Wales counterparts to explore the introduction of temporary, time-limited payments for the inspecting ranks to compensate them for a high workload where this is unavoidable.

2.126 Assault levels on PSNI officers have reportedly fallen slightly but remain high and we note the launch of the PFNI's campaign in June 2025 to address the problem, with support from the Minister of Justice, NIPB Chair and PSNI Chief Constable. We request an update on legislation to deter attacks on emergency workers in Northern Ireland.

2.127 We also ask for the results of the three-month pilot exercise in the PSNI using overtime instead of modified rest days. We would like to know in particular whether any unintended consequences arose from adding to overtime levels that were already high.

2.128 The extensive use of temporary promotions in the PSNI was raised as an acute issue with us last year on our visit to Derry and Strabane. We recognise that measures are being taken to reduce the level of temporary promotions and welcome the promotion boards being held from sergeant to chief superintendent rank. We expect to hear that significant progress has been made on this next year, in the form

of a sharp decrease in the number of temporary promotions in the PSNI, and we will be requesting detailed evidence on this.

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

2.129 The NPCC informed us about a range of special familial leave provisions¹⁷ in England and Wales intended to manage work-life balance, promote wellbeing and aid the retention of a diverse workforce. The PSNI confirmed that a range of special familial leave provisions had been implemented in 2021.

2.130 The DOJ told us about significant resource pressures on the PSNI, valued at £227 million. These concerned the PSNI holiday pay judgment, the PSNI data breach in August 2023 and the McCloud pensions judgment.

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

2.131 We ask the Northern Ireland parties for the latest position on special familial leave provisions in the PSNI in comparison with England and Wales. In addition, we remain 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 sets out some areas of difference on the parity principle. We invite the Northern Ireland parties to explore these areas in a mutual exercise with their counterparts in England and Wales. One area for consideration is the requirement for an officer transferring to the PSNI to take the full 21 weeks' initial training course, whereas a PSNI officer transferring to the Metropolitan Police Service takes a three-week training course.

2.132 We also request updates next year from the Northern Ireland parties on the holiday pay case, the data breach and the McCloud pensions judgment. In addition, on the wider policing context this year, we would find it useful to be advised of the latest position in Northern Ireland on legislation on hate crime.

¹⁷ Carer's leave and pay; neonatal care leave and pay; police maternity and adoption support leave and pay; the provisions of the Paternity Leave (bereavement) Act 2024; death of premature baby maternity pay; and still birth and officer entitlement to leave and pay.

Chapter 3 – Pay Proposals and Recommendations for 2025/26

Introduction

- 3.1 In this chapter, we make recommendations and observations on the pay and allowances of police officers in Northern Ireland for the 2025/26 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 2025/26 for police officers in the PSNI up to and including the rank of chief superintendent.

Parity on pay and allowances

- 3.3 The recommendations set out 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, while also recognising the need for variation in geographical allowances to reflect exceptional local conditions.
- 3.4 At present, PSNI officers have the same basic pay scales as their counterparts in England and Wales. These are set out in Appendix F of this report. On PSNI officer allowances and terms and conditions, many are the same as in England and Wales, but some differences remain. These are set out in Appendix G of this report.
- 3.5 The PSNI, NIPB, PFNI and SANI again this year all upheld the principle of parity on officer pay and allowances. However, in written evidence, the DOJ explained that it did not use the term parity for pay and allowances because of some unique differences in the jurisdictions, such as the NITA in Northern Ireland and London Weighting.
- 3.6 In oral evidence, the DOJ explained that it used the phrase 'broad alignment' instead of parity because some different allowances were available in England and Wales. For this reason, the DOJ saw 'parity' as referring to having the same core pay scales.
- 3.7 In oral evidence, the PSNI said that achieving parity meant receiving the pay award at the same time as England and Wales officers, not just the same amount.

Our comment on parity

- 3.8 In our view, parity is a critical principle, and it has been a cornerstone of our approach to police pay in Northern Ireland over recent years. In our report last year, as in previous years, we set out clearly the PRRB's definition of parity.

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. 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.

- 3.9 We continue to see the principle of parity as defined above as essential given the complex political and budgetary environment of Northern Ireland. However, we note that this year our recommendation for convergence on all non-geographical allowances has again not been progressed. It is difficult for us to reach our recommendations when different parties see parity in different ways. In our view it does not work for parity to be a 'pick and choose' concept.
- 3.10 We observe that in comparison with their counterparts in England and Wales (apart from in London), PSNI constables have higher median total earnings, even when setting aside the NITA. This relates to both higher overtime levels and the retention of CRTP in Northern Ireland, and, while variations can also reflect different length-of-service profiles of workers, it is in the context of a generally lower cost of living in Northern Ireland compared with England and Wales. However, despite its budgetary situation, the PSNI has committed to ensuring its officers receive the same pay award as their England and Wales counterparts, in accordance with the parity principle.
- 3.11 A definition of parity, shared by all parties, is very important as a starting point from which broader conversations, including about the future of allowances, can begin. Given the continued variance in views on the essential principle of parity, we request that parties in the coming year set out clearly in evidence their views on the principle of parity, and its justification, to inform the position that the PRRB takes on parity in its deliberations and report next year.

Basic pay award

- 3.12 In written evidence, the PSNI, NIPB, PFNI and SANI all sought pay parity with police officers in England and Wales.
- 3.13 The remit letter from the Minister of Justice asked us to consider the affordability and budgetary position of the PSNI, along with the different funding structures available in Northern Ireland. It said that further detail would be set out in both written and oral evidence. In oral evidence, the Justice Minister clarified that the police officer pay award had to be agreed with the DOF and that the DOJ was committed to working with it and Northern Ireland Executive colleagues to ensure that the justice sector was appropriately funded. The DOJ added that it was aware

that constraints also existed on the justice system in England and Wales but added that the Home Secretary was not routinely placed under the same funding restrictions as the Justice Minister for Northern Ireland. However, the DOJ added that in-year funding was expected to reduce the PSNI's projected overspend in FYE 2026.

- 3.14 In oral evidence, the Justice Minister told us that she wanted officers to feel valued and rewarded by their remuneration package. She added that she wanted the PSNI to be a career of choice by providing competitive, fair and appropriate pay for all officers and staff. She cautioned us that the police officer pay award in the Republic of Ireland should be one element in our considerations.
- 3.15 The PSNI said it supported the NPCC proposal for a 3.8% pay award. The PSNI explained that it had factored an estimated 3.8% pay award into its financial planning process for FYE 2026. It added that its base pay bill, excluding overtime elements, was anticipated to be £543.4 million for the 2025/26 pay year. The PSNI advised us that the gross costs of pay uplifts for its police officers were £2.98 million for every 1% increase in basic pay.
- 3.16 In oral evidence, the Chief Constable said that while ideally he would have liked a pay award for police officers above the 3.8% proposed by the NPCC, it was a sensible figure. He added that a fair pay award was of strategic importance to achievement of the third key (workforce-focused) outcome in the PSNI's Five Year Plan for 2025 to 2030. This committed the PSNI to having a representative, valued and enabled workforce.
- 3.17 In oral evidence in May 2025, the NIPB explained that the PSNI faced a deficit of around £21 million in FYE 2026. It said that, despite this, the PSNI was prioritising the pay award for its officers and the retention of pay parity with England and Wales policing. The NIPB did not provide us with a figure for the 2025/26 pay award but stressed that it remained committed to the principle of parity in pay and allowances between PSNI officers and their counterparts in England and Wales.
- 3.18 The NIPB added that it had not yet formally considered the PSNI's resourcing plan. However, based on previous experience, it expected to approve the service's prioritisation of the pay award and the maintenance of pay parity with England and Wales. It explained that it would be for the Chief Constable to set out the resultant trade-offs required.
- 3.19 The SANI confirmed that together with the PSA it proposed an above-inflation pay award of 4.8% in 2025/26. It explained that this was intended to exceed inflation in view of pay degradation in recent years. The SANI added that the DOJ needed to address the under-resourcing of the PSNI and that, if it did so, a 4.8% pay award would be affordable. The SANI stated that providing adequate resources for the PSNI was a matter of political choice.

3.20 In written evidence, the PFNI did not specify a figure for the pay award. However, it sought immediate action to compensate for pay degradation and a clearly defined timeline to restore police pay. It said that substantially above-inflation pay increases should be included for the next number of years. The PFNI added that police officers deserved a pay award that recognised ongoing cost-of-living pressures, the unique responsibilities placed on them by society, and the restrictions imposed on their private lives and profession, such as the lack of industrial rights. It stressed that this principle was fundamental to the pay review process and had to be upheld constantly.

Our comment and recommendation on the basic pay award

3.21 In reaching our pay award recommendation we considered a number of factors which we discuss below.

Parity

3.22 We have again this year upheld the principle of parity with England and Wales on police officer 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 has set the context for our consideration of a range of other factors.

Economic factors

3.23 The wider economy including the increased cost of living and the level of pay settlements are factors in our deliberations. We note that inflation has been lower over the last year than in preceding years. However, we continue to emphasise that this represents a slowing in the rate of overall price increases and not a fall in prices, and officers continue to experience the effect of past high inflation in their cost of living. The CPI rate of inflation was 3.5% in the year to April 2025 and the CPIH rate was 4.1%. The OBR and Bank of England expect CPI inflation to peak in quarter three of 2025 (the OBR at 3.7% and the Bank of England at 3.5%) before declining again. We observe that energy price inflation is higher than the overall rate. In addition, there continues to be uncertainty about the economic climate particularly given recent geopolitical events.

The labour market

3.24 Recent data suggest that the UK labour market continues to weaken, with vacancies falling and the unemployment rate rising. The OBR considered that the increase in employer National Insurance contributions was likely to be contributing to falling recruitment and rising redundancies. However, average earnings growth remains strong and is forecast to average 4.3% in 2025 by the OBR. Median pay settlements ranged between 3.0% and 3.8% in the three months to April 2025.

3.25 In May 2025, the UK Government announced 2025/26 pay awards for many other parts of the public sector. These mainly covered England and included: around 3.25% for civil servants in England and Wales (with additional flexibility for departments to have up to an extra 0.5%); 3.6% for NHS Agenda for Change staff; 4% for teachers, prison staff and most doctors (with resident doctors receiving an average award of 5.4%); and 4.5% for the UK armed forces. The awards announced for NHS Agenda for Change staff and doctors were also recommended for Northern Ireland, but have yet to be responded to by the Northern Ireland Government. The pay award for the Northern Ireland Civil Service and PSNI police staff will be 9% over a 20-month period (a 3% increase from August 2024 to July 2025 and a 6% increase from August 2025 to March 2026).

The policing environment

3.26 Maintaining public order is one of the challenges for UK policing most visible to the public. There are also less visible challenges, including demand driven by technology and the growth in violence against women and girls and hate crime. The police service needs experienced high-calibre officers if it is to tackle this myriad of challenges effectively and deliver required reforms.

3.27 In the PSNI, officers are facing increasing complexity of demand while their numbers are at a record low. The unrest and violent disorder that broke out in towns and cities across the UK including Belfast in the summer of 2024, after the tragic events in Southport, exemplifies the unforeseen public order challenge that the police service can face. Many police officers were injured and some were hospitalised. While the number of recorded assaults on PSNI officers has reduced slightly this year, the levels are still high. We note that on Easter Monday in 2025, more than 50 petrol bombs and fireworks were thrown at police officers in Derry and that in the public disorder in Ballymena and at other Northern Ireland locations in June, 64 officers were injured.

Recruitment and retention

3.28 We share the concerns of the Northern Ireland policing parties and commentators at the ongoing impact of the PSNI's budgetary position on its ability to recruit and retain officers. We note the cuts in PSNI officer numbers this year and the UK Government's plan to increase the policing presence in England and Wales under the Neighbourhood Policing Guarantee.

3.29 A police service that is representative of the population it serves is vital to police legitimacy and effectiveness. It also needs to recruit officers to develop the skills to tackle the challenges we have outlined above. Today's police officers are required to respond to vulnerability, de-escalate social tension and manage great complexity. The training and supervision provided by forces can enable high-calibre recruits with the right attitudes, aptitudes, resilience, motivations and maturity to develop these

skills, but pay and reward need to be sufficiently competitive to attract and retain such officers in policing.

- 3.30 We recognise that the wider world of work is changing both in terms of the opportunities being offered by employers that enable their staff to work more flexibly and the premium that employees are placing on work-life balance and wellbeing. While we are encouraging the police service to be ambitious as it modernises its workforce through police reform, we recognise that the nature of policing will inevitably constrain the degree of flexibility it can offer its officers. Police remuneration needs to recognise this constraint.
- 3.31 We also observe that the attrition rate for the PSNI remains comparatively low (6.6% in FYE 2025 excluding transfers, or 7.0% including transfers). However, any turnover is a substantial cost to the police service. Minimising that attrition allows scarce resources to be used to ensure the police service delivers the best possible service to the public.

Morale and motivation

- 3.32 It has been another difficult year for the PSNI with its number of police officers at an historic low and we have therefore taken morale and motivation into consideration as significant factors once again. Morale is important because it affects productivity as well as retention and the police service remains heavily reliant on goodwill.
- 3.33 Surveys continue to show low levels of morale in Northern Ireland policing. They indicate that pay levels and delayed pay awards remain key drivers of low morale, alongside other factors, such as reduced officer numbers. This suggests that both pay and non-pay issues need to be addressed in the PSNI. However, we observe that morale and motivation can be damaged by a failure to take adequate action on pay, for example, by not ensuring the timeliness of the annual pay award. Furthermore, a pay award that is judged unfair by officers, particularly in comparison with other parts of the public sector, will do nothing to ameliorate an existing low state of morale and motivation. We observe that an above-inflation pay award, as requested by parties and by PSNI officers during our visit, will be viewed by many as the minimum award needed to deliver a fair outcome for a police service which does so much to keep the public safe, often at a cost to individual officers' safety.

Impact on personal lives

- 3.34 Parties have told us about the unique aspects of policing which should be taken into account in police remuneration. However, we are also concerned about the impact of the practicalities and pressures of policing on officers' personal lives. Some of these are referred to in police regulations as the 'exigencies of duty' and are compensated for through the allowance system but others are not.
- 3.35 Police officers, like the military, can be redeployed at short notice. In some instances, this is in response to unforeseen events such as public order

requirements. We have also been told that resourcing pressures create planning challenges which lead to last minute changes. In those circumstances, a number of allowances come into play to compensate officers for the immediate upheaval. But alongside events of this kind are more minor disturbances, the totality of which can have a very disruptive effect on officers' lives and those of their families. These include officers being redeployed to a different police station, requiring changes to travel arrangements, or being posted to different roles which place new demands on an officer's time and abilities, for example when deployed to hard-to-fill locations such as Derry and Strabane. To this are added the unique pressures facing Northern Ireland officers and their families. We heard from officers during our visit to the PSNI about officers feeling 'exhausted'. We frequently heard too about the abstraction of officers from neighbourhood policing to response teams. While this impacts on frontline delivery, it also affects the officers concerned. We recognise that effective police officers are both adaptable and resilient; nevertheless, these pressures, when combined with the more traditional exigencies of duty such as court attendance, intelligence-led crime operations and essential training amount to a significant disruption to personal lives which in turn affects wellbeing. We also note that the scope for hybrid working in the police service is limited. We were mindful of these issues in setting a pay award for 2025/26.

The absence of the right to take industrial action

3.36 As part of our work, we considered the impact of pay negotiations and recent industrial disputes across the public sector. This is an important factor in our deliberations, given the prohibition on police officers taking industrial action in contrast to the vast majority of workers in both the public and private sectors. This year policing parties, both employer representatives and staff associations, have emphasised that this restriction must be recognised in setting a pay award for police officers.

3.37 As we have said previously, the prohibition on police officers taking industrial action means that we have a moral obligation to deliver a just, fair and equitable pay award. We are conscious that over the past year some employers have agreed significantly enhanced pay deals as a result of industrial action or the threat of such action. In a number of cases, pay has been boosted as a result of strike action. Given these outcomes, we have therefore given weight to the inability of police officers to take equivalent action in formulating our recommendation for a pay award for 2025/26.

Affordability

3.38 We balanced all these factors with affordability. We note from the PSNI's evidence that it has allocated funding for a 3.8% pay award from 1 September 2025 into its budgetary planning. We also observe that the PSNI has started the FYE 2026 with a funding shortfall of £21 million and that while the parties have mentioned the

possibility of further in-year funding in addition to its opening final budget of £910.6 million, this is not guaranteed.

3.39 We have considered all the evidence presented to us by the parties and included in published reports, the impact of the PSNI's budgetary constraints on the service it provides to the public and the lives of its officers. However, we observe, as in previous years, that affordability is about choices and that there are always options for prioritising spending, particularly at government level. Looking across Government as a whole, we observe that there is flexibility in all funding arrangements. We also note that the outcome of the Government-commissioned independent review of needs-based funding in Northern Ireland had not concluded by the time of submission.

Pay recommendation

3.40 The fundamental principle of parity has again been particularly important in our deliberations on this year's pay award. We have also taken into account all the other factors listed above. We note the PSNI and wider Northern Ireland budgetary position and pay developments, the prohibition on the police taking industrial action, the need to recruit and retain high calibre officers, motivation and morale and affordability considerations. We consequently conclude that an annual pay award in 2025 of 4.2% across all ranks up to and including chief superintendent is the most suitable approach. We uphold the principle of parity by making the same recommendation for officers for Northern Ireland as in England and Wales.

Recommendation 1. We recommend a consolidated increase of 4.2% to all police officer pay points for all ranks up to and including chief superintendent from 1 September 2025.

Timing of the annual pay award

3.41 The DOJ explained that having a Northern Ireland Executive in place again had assisted with timings on the pay award. It said that following approval of additional funding for the PSNI pay award in November 2024, the PSNI was able to confirm that our 2024 pay recommendation was affordable. Following Ministerial approval of the PSNI's pay award requests, payment was made to all officers in the PRRB remit group in December 2024 salaries. The DOJ reminded us in oral evidence that while it worked closely with the PSNI on the annual pay award each year, it was still bound by the Northern Ireland public sector pay policy.

3.42 The PSNI observed that delays in approving pay awards could affect police officer morale and that they created a sense of disparity on pay and associated terms and conditions. It added that PSNI officers were experiencing the same cost-of-living effects as officers in England and Wales because of inflation and that this was further compounded by any delay in an authorised pay award. In oral evidence, the

PSNI said that achieving parity meant receiving the pay award at the same time as England and Wales officers, not just the same amount.

- 3.43 The PFNI stated that year after year, the PRRB had urged the government to implement pay awards for police officers more promptly, consistently expressing that the delays were unacceptable. The PFNI said that despite these annual admonishments, the delays persisted, causing significant dismay, anger, and frustration among its members. It added that there seemed to be no resolution in sight, and no apparent repercussions for the DOJ or the DOF. The PFNI stressed that the situation caused irreparable damage to its members' confidence and eroded trust in what should be a fair and transparent pay review process. It pointed out that officers had once again experienced a delayed pay award in 2024/25, with its members receiving their pay award three months after their colleagues in England and Wales.
- 3.44 The SANI told us that previous lateness and delayed confirmation of pay awards for its members, and for the PSNI in general, had significantly affected perceptions of fairness and morale. It explained that this had conflated tax issues for its members and resulted in unnecessary or increased tax bills because of taxation and personal allowances breaches. In the SANI's view, it was wrong for a late pay award to disadvantage those who received it, especially in the context of some of the most significant policing risks arising in Northern Ireland. It called for the UK Government and Northern Ireland Executive to discuss how to make the situation fairer.

Our comment on the timing of the annual pay award

- 3.45 We observe that the latest pay award for the federated and superintending ranks was received in December 2024 instead of September 2024. This was earlier than in recent years but still the ninth consecutive time that the annual pay award for our remit group in Northern Ireland was received late.
- 3.46 We wish to emphasise the cumulative damage to officer morale from repeated late receipt of the annual pay award. We recognise that other public sector workforces in Northern Ireland have also experienced prolonged delays with their pay awards because of the particular political and budgetary context. However, police officers provide invaluable support to their many public sector partners, and are our remit group and therefore our priority. We hope that the improved timing with the pay award last year can be built on and that this year it is paid on time.

Timing the payment of increments

- 3.47 We were pleased that the DOJ accepted our 2024 recommendation for all constables to receive their first increment exactly twelve months from when they first joined the service rather than on a later date. The PSNI confirmed that it had implemented the pay circular for the federated and superintending ranks issued by the DOJ on 9 December 2024. This stated that: "With effect from 1 September 2024

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all constables receive their first incremental progression to pay point 2 after twelve months from joining the service”.

- 3.48 Separately, the Justice Minister’s letter of 17 December 2024 deferred a decision in response to our recommendation to introduce a police regulation on all PSNI officer increments to ensure timely payment.
- 3.49 The PSNI confirmed to us that its officers’ pay increments were paid on time at the start of the 2024/25 pay year for all ranks in our remit. However, as stressed to us by the PFNI, this followed three years of late payment. The PFNI explained that it had been left with no option but to initiate judicial review proceedings on the matter and observed that the subsequent resolution of the issue in November 2023, while welcome, was entirely avoidable. The PFNI said it was repeating its proposal again this year for the introduction of a police regulation on the timely payment of increments because it still had significant concerns about the risk of further delays in future.
- 3.50 The NIPB agreed with the PFNI on moving to a determination contained in regulations as this would take away the small element of uncertainty arising from it being a matter for ministerial decision-making. In oral evidence, the NIPB observed that it was unclear why the DOJ appeared to be resisting the PRRB’s repeated recommendation to formalise the timely payment of annual increments for all officers in its remit group. The NIPB said it would continue to put pressure on the DOJ to ensure that all increments were paid on time.
- 3.51 The DOJ advised us in January 2025 that it had received categorical legal advice confirming that police officers were entitled to their incremental progression on a specific date but that a separate regulation was not required. It said that this was because approval had been given for a pay remit for incremental progression payments to be progressed through a DOF temporary approvals process to allow for their timely payment separately from the pay award.
- 3.52 In oral evidence, the DOJ told us that it recognised the contractual entitlement of PSNI officers to their increments. It explained that, rather than not accepting our recommendation, it was instead implementing it by different means. The DOJ said that, from its perspective, creating a police regulation was a duplication not required.

Our comment on the timing of the payment of increments

- 3.53 We welcome acceptance of our 2024 recommendation to bring forward payment of the first constable increment to exactly twelve months from first joining the service and the payment on time of all officer increments in 2024/25. However, we understand the PFNI’s concerns and the NIPB’s preference for the payment of increments to be set out in regulation rather than subject to ministerial determination in view of recent delays and their impact on officers. We question why, if the DOJ recognises all officers’ legal entitlement to pay progression, it does not take this

small step that would bring reassurance to many. The current position is in contrast with the situation in England and Wales where officer increments are set out in regulation and paid on time each year.

Reviews of police officer allowances

3.54 There have been reviews of police officer allowances in both Northern Ireland and England and Wales in recent years which provide an important backdrop to our consideration this year of allowances other than the NITA.

Northern Ireland

3.55 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.

3.56 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. Since this review, the PRRB has repeatedly recommended that, in the context of parity, the DOJ should plan for convergence on allowances with England and Wales alongside the removal of the CRTP but these recommendations have not been formally accepted.

3.57 This year, the DOJ told us that the Minister had issued to consultation and agreed final proposals on the future for the five allowances incorporated within the review. However, it added that at this time, the Minister had concluded that no revision would apply to any of the allowances reviewed as part of the exercise.

England and Wales

3.58 In 2024, the NPCC started a three-year review of allowances in England and Wales. In 2025, the NPCC presented to us the results on allowances from year one of its review. It told us that allowances reviewed in the first year included:

- Motor Vehicle Allowance – mileage rate and essential users' lump sum (applicable to all ranks).
- Away from Home and Hardship Allowances (applicable to the federated ranks).
- On-call Allowance (applicable to the federated and superintending ranks).

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- South East Allowance, London Allowance and London Weighting (applicable to all ranks).

3.59 The NPCC's allowance reviews completed in 2024/25 culminated in specific proposals as set out in the relevant sections below, alongside the Northern Ireland parties' views on those allowances.

3.60 The NPCC told us that allowances it would next review included the: Unsocial Hours Allowance; Acting up Allowance; Protection Allowance; and Dog Handlers' Allowance. It would also review Bonus Payments, Service Critical Skills Payments and Recognition of Workload Payments.

Our comment and recommendation on the reviews of police officer allowances

3.61 We continue to be disappointed that the review of allowances in Northern Ireland has not come to clear conclusions, and that our recommendation last year on the convergence of allowances in the context of parity, including the phased removal of CRTP, has not been formally accepted. We discuss this further in paragraphs 3.118 to 3.125 below.

3.62 In the context of parity, we continue to encourage the Northern Ireland parties to engage fully with the NPCC's ongoing comprehensive review of police officer remuneration including allowances in England and Wales.

3.63 We have emphasised to the NPCC that the promotion of officer wellbeing, welfare and work-life balance should drive the review of allowances as well as ensure fair compensation for officers. While we recognise the unpredictable nature of policing, we note that in some cases allowances may be providing compensation to officers for poor management practices that are impacting on wellbeing and work-life balance and we have asked for these underlying problems to be addressed as part of the review process. Furthermore, while recognising the very significant capacity and budgetary issues facing the PSNI, our strong view is that police officer allowances should be set at a level that deters their overuse while maximising effectiveness in the management of police resources.

3.64 It is important that any changes to allowances in Northern Ireland also promote officer wellbeing, welfare and work-life balance, in addition to ensuring fair compensation for officers. We recommend that the PSNI participates in the NPCC's current review of allowances and that the DOJ and PSNI commit in principle to adopting the proposals resulting from that review, subject to any views expressed by the PRRB. In making this recommendation we uphold the principle of parity on pay and allowances.

Recommendation 2. We recommend that the PSNI participates in the National Police Chiefs' Council's (NPCC's) current review of police officer allowances. We also recommend that the DOJ and PSNI commit in principle to adopting the review's resultant proposals, subject to any views expressed by the Police Remuneration Review Body (PRRB).

Northern Ireland Transitional Allowance

3.65 Our 2025/26 remit letter from the Minister of Justice asked us to consider the NITA in relation to the Northern Ireland security threat level for police officers. The DOJ confirmed that the Northern Ireland terrorism threat level had been reduced from 'SEVERE' to 'SUBSTANTIAL' on 6 March 2024 and had remained there since.

3.66 The NITA is a taxable non-pensionable allowance received by all police officers. Its current value is £4,110 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.

3.67 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.

3.68 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 2022 review of allowances recalled that the Baker Review 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" ¹⁸.

3.69 The DOJ said in oral evidence that it wanted the PRRB to consider all the issues when deciding on the NITA uplift this year, including the current threat level. It told us that a substantial and sustained reduction in the security threat level and an assessment by the security forces of the threat to the PSNI would need to precede

¹⁸ 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".

any possible consideration of reducing or removing the NITA. The DOJ added that Northern Ireland was safer than other places but that the reduction in the security threat level from 'SEVERE' to 'SUBSTANTIAL' did not mean the terrorist threat had disappeared. Instead, it had just changed from imminent to likely. It stressed that there was no reduction in the capacity or desire of terrorist organisations to carry out their threats. Instead, they just waited for the opportunity to do so and the PSNI was doing good work to disrupt their intentions.

- 3.70 The DOJ added that while the cost of living was generally lower in Northern Ireland than in parts of England and Wales, the cost of living for PSNI officers was not lower. This was because their lives had hidden extra costs. They had to choose safe communities in which to live, which generally meant paying premium house prices. In addition, their occupation affected their ability to access mortgages and other services.
- 3.71 In written evidence, the NIPB stressed that despite the reduction in the threat level, security remained a significant concern for police officers. It explained that officers needed to remain vigilant because of the continued strong possibility of a terrorist attack.
- 3.72 The PSNI told us that it sought continued payment of the NITA to take account of the special challenges faced by the service, the 'SUBSTANTIAL' threat level and the extraordinary security situation in which its officers continued to serve. It emphasised that the policing environment in Northern Ireland had still not normalised and that the terrorist threat persisted even when an officer was off duty or had left the service and was felt in officers' private and family life.
- 3.73 The SANI sought an increase in the NITA in 2025/26 in line with the cost of living. It said that officers were still unable to live a normal life due to the fear of being targeted by terrorists, as evidenced by the attempted murder of Detective Chief Inspector John Caldwell in February 2023.
- 3.74 The PFNI described the NITA as a fundamental element of the reward package provided to police officers in Northern Ireland in recognition of the extraordinary circumstances in which they continued to serve. The PFNI called for the NITA to continue to be uplifted in line with the pay award. The PFNI added that recent events had demonstrated that terrorists still posed a deadly threat to PSNI officers and that this continued activity added an additional layer of worry and challenge to PSNI officers both on and off duty. It stressed that the threat to officers from the 2023 PSNI data breach (in which the personal information of nearly 9,500 PSNI police officers and staff were published on a public website following a Freedom of Information request) was ongoing.

Our comment and recommendation on the Northern Ireland Transitional Allowance

3.75 It is encouraging that the reduction in the terrorist threat level in March 2024 from 'SEVERE' to 'SUBSTANTIAL' has been sustained and not reversed. However, the security environment remains challenging and the 'SUBSTANTIAL' threat assessment means that an attack is likely. The DOJ advised us that a significant and sustained reduction in the threat level would be needed before it could give any consideration to reducing or removing the NITA and that it was too early to do this. In our view, the NITA remains an essential element of police remuneration in Northern Ireland. In line with the parties' evidence, we therefore recommend an uplift to the NITA of 4.2% in line with the 2025/26 pay award.

Recommendation 3. We recommend an increase of 4.2% in the current level of the Northern Ireland Transitional Allowance (NITA) from 1 September 2025.

Dog Handlers' Allowance

3.76 Our remit letter from the Minister of Justice sought our consideration of the Dog Handlers' Allowance. The 2023 NPCC review of the Dog Handlers' Allowance for England and Wales recommended that the allowance should increase automatically in line with annual pay awards. On the basis of parity, and in the absence of any evidence to the contrary, we expect this to also apply in Northern Ireland. The new rate, in line with our pay recommendation, is contained in Appendix F.

On-call Allowance

The NPCC review of the On-call Allowance

3.77 In England and Wales, the On-call Allowance is currently £25 for evenings, weekends and public holidays. The NPCC set out the findings of its 2024 review of the On-call Allowance, including its research into arrangements outside policing, which found among other things that the average weekday rate was £33 and that typical arrangements for weekends and holidays were noticeably higher than the current value of the police On-call Allowance of £25, even in organisations that were not 24/7 services. The NPCC suggested an allowance value for the police just above the weekday average to recognise that officers carried out on-call duties at weekends as a 24/7 service. Consequently, it proposed that the On-call Allowance be increased by £10, from £25 to £35. It also proposed reviewing the On-call Allowance every three years, unless evidence necessitated bringing this review date forward.

Northern Ireland evidence on the On-call Allowance

3.78 The PSNI told us that the superintending ranks received an On-call Allowance of £25 on evenings, weekend days and public holidays¹⁹. However, it also explained that the federated ranks, while receiving £25 for evenings and weekends, also received an enhanced rate of £30 on public holidays.

3.79 The PSNI asked us to consider maintaining the public holiday on-call rate for the federated ranks to reflect factors unique to Northern Ireland. It stated that this higher rate was justified by the time of year and political landscape bringing associated increases in public disorder and heightened unrest during public holidays in comparison with England and Wales. Therefore, in addition to supporting the NPCC recommendation to increase the On-call Allowance from £25 to £35 for the superintending ranks and for the federated ranks for evenings and weekend days, the PSNI also requested a £10 increase from £30 to £40 for the On-call Allowance for the federated ranks on public holidays.

3.80 The DOJ advised us that the Justice Minister had concluded this year that there would be no revision to any of the five allowances covered by the DOJ-commissioned 2022 review of allowances, including the On-call Allowance. In addition, it specified that consideration of any proposal for revision of the On-call Allowance on some public holidays would be deferred until such time as it could be revisited²⁰.

3.81 The PFNI proposed increasing the On-call Allowance from £25 to a minimum of £35, which it said reflected the NPCC's position. In addition, it requested an allowance of £40 on public holidays or rest days. It said that on-call payments should be pensionable and uplifted in line with the annual pay award to reflect the impact of the duty on individuals and its adverse impact on work-life balance. The PFNI observed that the high level of on-call duties within certain roles needed to be recognised and balanced against officer wellbeing. It added that the current allowance did not fully reflect the restrictions placed on those who were on call and might have to, for example, make alternative care arrangements in order to respond to potentially high-risk issues.

3.82 The SANI together with the PSA requested an increase in the On-call Allowance from £25 for the superintending ranks to £60. It said that after income tax at the higher rate of 40% the on-call payment would amount to £36 net per 24-hour period of being on call. In addition, the SANI and PSA called for the £60 payment to

¹⁹ The relevant Northern Ireland public holidays are: New Year's Day; St Patrick's Day; May Day; End of May Bank Holiday; 12 July; August Bank Holiday; Christmas Day; and Boxing Day.

²⁰ The 2022 DOJ-commissioned review of allowances proposed limiting the enhanced On-call Allowance rate paid to the federated ranks on eight public holidays to just two (17 March and 12 July). The review said this was on the grounds that on the other six days there appeared to be no justification for an enhanced rate. The review suggested that the DOJ conduct a separate exercise to assess the overall level of annual expenditure on On-Call Allowance, which was high relative to comparable police forces.

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become reckonable for pension purposes. The SANI drew attention to its survey results which showed that no respondent in the PSNI regarded the current On-call Allowance as adequate reward for on-call duties. Furthermore in the SANI survey, its members cited occasions on which they had been required to undertake on-call duties while on rest days and annual leave.

3.83 On our visit to the PSNI in January 2025, we were told that the On-call Allowance was too low, especially on Christmas Day, in view of the restrictions that being on call imposed on the daily lives of officers. In addition, it was commented that greater use was being made of on-call duties on public holidays and this was thought to be budget-driven (to avoid paying officers double time) but the PSNI had not clarified the reason. Officers complained of constrained lives for little reward.

Our comment and recommendation on On-call Allowance

3.84 We are aware of the pressure that being on call places on officers, including in the senior ranks. We were concerned to hear on our visit about an apparent intensification of the use of on-call duties on public holidays. In the context of the PSNI's current resourcing problems, we ask for the impact of this on officers' wellbeing and work-life balance to be considered. While recognising the very significant capacity and budgetary issues faced by the PSNI, our strong view is that the On-call Allowance should be set at a level that deters its overuse and maximises effectiveness in the management of police resources. In particular, we would like an update on the use of the On-call Allowance on public holidays in evidence next year.

3.85 The NPCC informed us that officers should not be rostered during rest days and annual leave but that it happened in practice in some forces. We note the incidence of this in the PSNI as reported in the SANI survey and would like an update on this from the Northern Ireland parties in evidence next year for all ranks in our remit group.

3.86 In accordance with our accepted recommendation in 2024, the On-call Allowance for evenings and weekends was raised in the PSNI from £20 to £25. This was in line with the principle of parity on pay and allowances with England and Wales and as an interim measure pending the outcome of the NPCC's substantive review.

3.87 However, the on-call rate on public holidays for the federated ranks in the PSNI was instead set at £30. This places the public holiday on-call rate for the federated ranks in the PSNI out of step with England and Wales forces and therefore at odds with the principle of parity and planned convergence on allowances.

3.88 In our 2024 report we encouraged the PSNI to participate in the review of allowances in England and Wales. We specified that this would enable the PSNI to address the remaining difference in on-call payments on public holidays between Northern Ireland and England and Wales and uphold the parity principle. However, we note in evidence this year that the public holiday on-call rate in the PSNI remains

at odds with that in England and Wales, and that some Northern Ireland parties have made different proposals regarding the future On-call Allowance for public holidays.

3.89 We accept the NPCC review's argument that the On-call Allowance is a compensatory payment as opposed to a payment for work undertaken. We are aware of the pressure that being on call places on officers, including senior ranks. We are very concerned, for instance, by the information we have seen from the staff associations regarding the practice of officers being on call while they are on annual leave. This should not happen but we understand from staff surveys that it does appear to happen. We note that the NPCC review decided against establishing a mechanism for uprating the allowance on, for instance, on an annual basis, on the grounds that the On-call Allowance is a compensatory payment.

3.90 We observe that the Northern Ireland parties did not bring about convergence of the On-call Allowance on public holidays in the PSNI with England and Wales in 2024 as requested. We therefore again propose addressing the matter this year in direct support of the parity principle and the NPCC on-call review findings. Consequently, we recommend that the current On-call Allowance is universally uprated for the federated and superintending ranks to £35, not just for evenings and weekends but also on Northern Ireland public holidays.

Recommendation 4. We recommend that the On-call Allowance for both the federated and superintending ranks for evenings, weekends and Northern Ireland public holidays is increased in the PSNI to £35 from 1 September 2025.

Motor Vehicle Allowance

The NPCC review of the Motor Vehicle Allowance

3.91 After commissioning an independent review of both elements of the Motor Vehicle Allowance (essential users' lump sum and mileage rate), the NPCC proposed replacing the current three bands of the motor vehicle essential users' lump sum, linked to vehicle engine size, with a single lump sum of £1,239, irrespective of engine size, with effect from September 2025. The NPCC also proposed retention of the current (45p) business mileage rate in line with HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC) approved rates. The NPCC review also concluded that the Motor Vehicle Allowance remained an essential benefit for officers needing to use a vehicle for police business.

Northern Ireland evidence on the Motor Vehicle Allowance

3.92 The PSNI told us that it supported the NPCC's proposed changes and asked us to endorse them so as to maintain parity on mileage rates. It also advised us that only

one of its officers exceeded its annual 5,200 mileage threshold to qualify for the essential users' allowance.

- 3.93 The PFNI pointed out that annual essential users' lump sums in the PSNI were below those in England and Wales forces. It also observed that if the level of expenditure on the Motor Vehicle Allowance in the PSNI was a cause for concern, the option existed to provide police vehicles instead.
- 3.94 The DOJ reminded us that the Justice Minister had concluded that there would be no revision to any of the allowances reviewed in 2022. It added that its commissioned review had recommended no change to the Motor Vehicle Allowance²¹ and that this remained the current position.

Our comment and recommendation on Motor Vehicle Allowance

- 3.95 We agree with the finding of the NPCC review that the Motor Vehicle Allowance remains an essential benefit for officers needing to use a vehicle for police business. We note that the annual essential users' lump sums in the PSNI are at present not in parity with those in England and Wales forces. At the same time, the PSNI has advised us that only one of its officers qualifies for these. However, in keeping with our 2025 England and Wales report and the parity principle, and also in support of simplification, we regard it as important that the NPCC proposal to replace the current three bands for the motor vehicle essential users' lump sum, linked to vehicle engine size, with a single allowance of £1,239 also apply in Northern Ireland.
- 3.96 We recall that last year the PSNI asked about the appropriate mileage rate, or lump sum, for electric vehicles for essential users and casual users but note that the subsequent NPCC review has not recommended a separate rate. We assume that electric vehicles will be covered by the single lump sum rate. Our view is that the issue should be considered again if HMRC were to add a separate mileage rate for electric vehicles. We note that the NPCC has proposed consideration of further incentives for following the green agenda in 2026/27 and plans to issue guidance. This may be of interest to the PSNI.

Recommendation 5. We recommend that the current three bands for the Motor Vehicle Allowance essential users' lump sum, linked to engine size of the vehicle, be replaced with a single allowance of £1,239 irrespective of engine size, with effect from 1 September 2025.

²¹ The 2022 DOJ-commissioned review of allowances found that the Motor Vehicle Allowance appeared to represent a valid use of public funds and that the amount payable was closely aligned to the rates used by other public bodies. It proposed retention of the Motor Vehicle Allowance and of the mileage threshold of 5,200 miles for essential users.

Away from Home Overnight Allowance and Hardship Allowance

3.97 The PSNI confirmed to us that its current rate for the Away from Home Overnight Allowance rate was £50, and £30 for the Hardship Allowance, in keeping with England and Wales. The PFNI pointed out that these rates had been set in 2012 and were outdated and reflected neither cost-of-living increases nor the impact of officers volunteering for such duties and unable to return home. The PFNI added that the rates were significantly lower than the equivalent payments in Police Scotland. It therefore sought increases to mirror the provisions in Police Scotland (an Away from Home Allowance of £72.51, a Hardship Allowance of £108.77, and an additional Held in Reserve Allowance (for officers required to stay away from home overnight and with restrictions placed on their off-duty activities) of £48.34). The PFNI stated that these rates would ensure members were adequately compensated for inconvenience, disruption to family life and caring responsibilities and would acknowledge that officers could often be deployed on mutual aid at short notice.

The NPCC review of the Away from Home Overnight Allowance and Hardship Allowance

3.98 The 2024 NPCC review of the Away from Home Overnight and Hardship Allowances rejected a proposal to mirror Police Scotland's arrangements because of various factors, including differences in remuneration packages. The NPCC added that trying to evaluate market practice comparisons to assess an appropriate value for the Hardship Allowance had proved challenging. It proposed increasing both allowances by £10.

Our comment and recommendations on Away from Home Overnight Allowance and Hardship Allowance

3.99 We recall that in 2022, the Justice Minister's remit letter asked us to recommend on mutual aid payments and allowances. Subsequently, we recommended in our 2022 report bringing the payment of officers providing mutual aid in line with arrangements in England and Wales, including the Away from Home Overnight Allowance. Following acceptance of our recommendation, the Away from Home Overnight and Hardship Allowances were implemented in Northern Ireland in May 2023.

3.100 We recognise that the Away from Home Overnight and Hardship Allowances have not been adjusted since 2012 and that their value has since deteriorated. We accept that both allowances are operationally essential and the conclusion of the NPCC review that increasing the values of the allowances by a fixed amount would be a fair and reasonable approach to ensure officers receive adequate compensation for being held in reserve or not provided with proper accommodation. We therefore agree that the Away from Home Overnight Allowance should be increased by £10, from £50 to £60 and the Hardship Allowance by £10, from £30 to £40, from September 2025.

3.101 We also observe that the Away from Home Overnight and Hardship Allowances are part of a wider package of measures that officers can claim while on mutual aid. In England and Wales, this includes the Unsocial Hours Allowance, which we note remains unavailable to Northern Ireland officers, and which the NPCC is due to review this year. We have asked the NPCC to review the coherence of the mutual aid package in England and Wales this year and urge the Northern Ireland parties to become involved in this review as part of the convergence process on allowances.

Recommendation 6. We recommend that the Away from Home Overnight Allowance be increased by £10 from £50 to £60 from 1 September 2025.

Recommendation 7. We recommend that the Hardship Allowance be increased by £10 from £30 to £40 from 1 September 2025.

Competence Related Threshold Payments

3.102 The CRTP was introduced to the federated ranks in 2003 to recognise and reward officers able to demonstrate high professional competence under four national standards: professional competence and results; commitment to the job; relations with the public and colleagues; and willingness to learn and adjust to new circumstances. 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. The CRTP is worth £1,224, was last increased in September 2013 and is pensionable. The decision was taken to phase out CRTP in England and Wales between 2013 and 2016 because it was not being implemented against the set criteria in the way intended. However, CRTP remains in place in Northern Ireland and the PSNI told us that, on 31 December 2024, it was received by around 3,382 officers, at a cost of £6.6 million.

3.103 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. 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.

3.104 In 2024, following similar recommendations in previous years and in line with the principle of parity, we recommended that the DOJ planned for convergence on allowances with England and Wales alongside the phased removal of the CRTP. We said this should be done in a way that mitigated the impact on overall pay for officers currently receiving CRTP. We asked the DOJ to submit a full proposal to us by 30 November 2024, with a firm timeline for delivering this. We also recommended that the current level of the CRTP did not increase.

3.105 In November 2024, the DOJ told us that it would not be providing a proposal as requested by the end of the month but would address the matter in subsequent written and oral evidence. The Justice Minister's letter of 17 December 2024 responding to our 2024 Report informed us that she had deferred a response to our recommendation on CRTP in order to consider further how it could be progressed.

3.106 In written evidence submitted in March 2025, the DOJ advised us that, following a period of instability within the PSNI and a number of complex challenges facing the leadership, direction and capacity of the service, the Minister had reserved her position in respect of any proposals to revise the CRTP. It explained that this position would remain until such time as the package of measures aimed at securing stability within the PSNI had reached a satisfactory level and had been sustained for an appropriate period of time. It said that further discussion and update could be provided during the DOJ oral evidence session.

3.107 In oral evidence, the Justice Minister told us that her concerns about stability in the PSNI had not yet been allayed even though it was currently experiencing stability after a prolonged period of churn. However, the senior leadership team which had recently been replenished on a permanent basis, needed time to bed in. The Minister said her priority was to maintain stability for the future at a time when demands on the police were increasing and reduced officer numbers had placed additional pressures on individuals.

3.108 The Minister added that it would be wise to see the outcome of the NPCC's review of allowances and the stakeholder response before making changes to CRTP in the PSNI with a potentially negative impact on officer morale or at odds with broader alignment. The Minister preferred to signal a potential transition to a new allowances structure in future rather than change allowances now and potentially again.

3.109 The Minister explained that closing the CRTP scheme to new officers had been rejected as a plan as it would potentially give rise to claims of unfair or unequal treatment. Also, the cost of alternatives was higher than for the existing CRTP scheme, so it could not be argued that removing it would lead to a more efficient use

of resources. The DOJ said it would look carefully at any alternative options proposed before transitioning to anything new.

3.110 The PSNI advised us in written evidence that it sought the continuation of CRTP while awaiting DOJ instructions for its removal. It emphasised that the removal of any existing payment or allowance without some form of replacement was likely to impact on take-home pay in a cost-of-living crisis. The PSNI also stressed that any change to CRTP should take account of the full impact on police officers (because CRTP was pensionable and, for example, the Unsocial Hours Allowance was not). In oral evidence, the PSNI confirmed that changes to CRTP could only be considered when the PSNI had settled and was stable. However, the PSNI said it knew that CRTP was outdated and as soon as it could it planned to introduce mechanisms to allow it to fade out and transition to a shift (unsocial hours) allowance instead. It conceded that there was risk that changes to CRTP could result in a divided workforce. Nevertheless, it was at least conceivable that in future officers already in receipt of CRTP would get to keep it and new arrivals would not. It observed that ideally CRTP would be stopped for new officers and a shift allowance brought in instead.

3.111 The PSNI also informed us that in FYE 2025, CRTP had been withheld from 18 eligible officers. It told us that this was for disciplinary reasons, unsatisfactory attendance or unsatisfactory performance.

3.112 The NIPB said in written evidence that it was happy to consider any proposals brought forward as an alternative to CRTP. In oral evidence it observed that the continued existence of CRTP was inconsistent with pay parity but that it was the DOJ's responsibility to come up with proposals. The NIPB stressed that it would not countenance the removal of CRTP without an acceptable alternative being put in place. It agreed that the approach adopted in England and Wales might be one possible solution and that it might be possible to gradually phase out the payment by closing the CRTP scheme to new applicants. The NIPB said it would be prepared to consider such an approach, subject to the views of the DOJ, the detail of any proposal and an assessment of the likely impact on officers. The Board added that it would also need to be satisfied that any new proposals would not be more expensive than the current arrangements.

3.113 The SANI acknowledged the benefits of removing CRTP (a blanket payment), in favour of a more targeted approach to attract officers of all ranks to hard-to-fill roles and areas. The SANI agreed that the issue of CRTP needed to be addressed but emphasised the need for alternative arrangements to also be put in place, as in England and Wales. On that basis, the SANI proposed waiting first for the outcome of the NPCC's review of allowances. The SANI added that phasing out CRTP by closing the scheme to new applicants was an approach used successfully to introduce other changes to allowances.

3.114 In contrast, the PFNI written evidence proposed increasing CRTP in line with the 2025/26 pay award. However, should CRTP be phased out, it also called for the introduction of an Unsocial Hours Allowance and other associated allowances as awarded to colleagues in England and Wales. The PFNI repeated that while it opposed the removal of the CRTP, it reluctantly accepted the PRRB's view that its retention was incompatible with parity on pay and allowances.

3.115 The PFNI emphasised that the removal of CRTP had to coincide with the immediate implementation of the Unsocial Hours Allowance. It stated that this would ensure the continuation of parity in pay, with minimal detriment to the fewest officers within the PSNI. The PFNI specified that the allowance should compensate officers for every full hour worked between the hours of 8pm and 6am and be paid at 10% of an officer's hourly rate of pay. It added that the rate for a full-time officer working a standard shift system should be the same as in England and Wales.

3.116 In the PFNI's view, the options for removing CRTP were:

- Phased removal over two years, while remaining open to new applicants, with a reduction in the value of the allowance over a two-year period by approximately 33% each year. The scheme would remain open to new applicants and would be removed in its entirety by 1 September 2027.
- Phased removal of CRTP over two years but closed to new applicants during this period and reduced as above. The scheme would be closed to new applicants from 1 September 2025 and removed in its entirety by 1 September 2027.
- Full removal of CRTP on 1 September 2026 with the appropriate replacement allowances implemented immediately from that date. In the interests of fairness and ensuring the most equitable transition, immediate payment of Unsocial Hours Allowance to those officers no longer eligible for CRTP and phased in for those officers currently in receipt of CRTP would be provided. It added that consideration should be given to additional allowances payable in England and Wales.

3.117 The PFNI again stressed strongly that it would not countenance any situation in which CRTP was removed from its members and the appropriate replacement allowance not implemented.

Our comment and recommendations on Competence Related Threshold Payments

3.118 We set out below a specific proposal for change on CRTP, and a clear recommendation that the Northern Ireland parties carefully consider this proposal. We ask the parties to give us the findings in their evidence in 2026 so we can fully assess the proposal and make recommendations if appropriate.

3.119 We observe that nine years have passed since the CRTP was completely phased out in England and Wales and that its continuation in Northern Ireland remains fundamentally at odds with the definition of parity. The decision was taken to phase out CRTP in England and Wales because it was not being implemented against the set criteria in the way intended. We believe that this may also be the case in Northern Ireland: we were surprised by the low number of officers from whom the CRTP was withheld (amounting to less than 1% of the 3,382 who qualified for it) in Northern Ireland in 2024/25, when the demanding nature of the criteria is considered. Moreover, we note that the blanket nature of the payment for those with at least twelve months' service at the top pay point for each of the federated ranks could be said to distort the police officer pay structure in Northern Ireland. We heard reports on our visit in 2024 that the reduced differential and the loss of CRTP on moving from the top pay point from one rank to the lowest point in the next was a factor deterring some officers from seeking promotion. Furthermore, CRTP led to a sense of unfairness among some constables on lower pay points: the boost to the top pay point increased the unevenness of the constable pay scale.

3.120 After the phasing out of CRTP in England and Wales between 2013 and 2016, the expectation was that its withdrawal in Northern Ireland would take place over the three years from 2018 to 2021. However, despite repeated submission by Northern Ireland parties of proposed timetables for its withdrawal, particularly from 2021 onwards, and clear recommendations from this Review Body on the importance of its removal and replacement in the context of parity, it remains in place.

3.121 Last year, we recalled how the phased withdrawal of CRTP in England and Wales alongside the introduction of new allowances was achieved in such a way that the combined value of basic pay and the CRTP did not decrease for officers. This was because the pay awards in each year were higher in monetary terms than the amount by which the CRTP was reduced. We urged 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 mitigated the impact on the overall pay of officers currently receiving it. We recommended that the DOJ submit to us by 30 November 2024 a full proposal, with a firm timeline, for delivering this. We said the proposal should include a decision on when the CRTP would be closed to new applicants. We also encouraged the Northern Ireland parties to engage fully with the review of allowances in England and Wales in order to achieve this change successfully.

3.122 We note that this recommendation has not been formally accepted, and the Justice Minister instead responded to us this year by reserving her position on CRTP and not making consequent changes to other allowances. This time she emphasised the need to maintain stability in the PSNI, the potential complexities associated with closing the scheme to new entrants and the benefits of first receiving the outcome of the NPCC's review of allowances, as well as the stakeholder response.

3.123 We are increasingly concerned about the failure to implement the changes required to CRTP and other allowances in accordance with upholding the position of parity on pay and non-geographical allowances with England and Wales. We note the DOJ's decision not to implement changes to CRTP this year because of the need to maintain stability. While we understand and accept the importance of not destabilising the PSNI workforce unnecessarily through the introduction of changes to remuneration, CRTP has not been addressed for a number of years. We note that independent experts have made more positive recent observations on stability in the Northern Ireland context more widely, such as the NIAC, which in its April 2025 report noted a welcome stability in Northern Ireland's institutions. Also, the reduction in the terrorist threat level from 'SEVERE' to 'SUBSTANTIAL' has been sustained since March 2024, after a decade set almost entirely at 'SEVERE'. Furthermore, a number of parties are starting to propose change on CRTP.

3.124 We reiterate again this year that the importance of the phasing out of CRTP and its replacement with other allowances is a crucial aspect of delivering parity of pay and non-geographical allowances with England and Wales. Our recommendations made earlier in this report on allowances recently reviewed by the NPCC have reflected the importance of the parity principle to ensure changes on allowances introduced in England and Wales are mirrored in Northern Ireland. If steps are not taken towards addressing the continuation of CRTP in Northern Ireland while other allowances are kept in line with England and Wales, it raises broader questions about the longer-term commitment of all parties to the concept of parity as defined earlier in this report, and therefore its sustainability.

3.125 We consider that this issue cannot be left unresolved and that the DOJ is not prioritising its resolution. We therefore plan to explore directly with all parties a specific recommendation to close the CRTP scheme to any further officers and instead introduce the Unsocial Hours Allowance for officers in the federated ranks not in receipt of CRTP. Full consideration of this particular proposal next year would also enable us to take into consideration the outcome of the NPCC review of the Unsocial Hours Allowance in England and Wales which is taking place within the same timeframe. We observe that an Equality Impact Assessment would be required for this proposal. We ask the parties to consider the issue of equalities, and wider implementation questions, in the evidence they provide to us next year.

Recommendation 8. We recommend that the Northern Ireland parties bring forward proposals on closing the Competence Related Threshold Payment (CRTP) scheme to any further officers and instead introducing the Unsocial Hours Allowance for officers in the federated ranks not in receipt of CRTP. We ask the parties to give us their proposals in their 2026 evidence.

Recommendation 9. We recommend that the CRTP is frozen at its current level until further notice.

Annual leave

3.126 The DOJ informed us that the phased implementation of our 2024 recommendation to reduce the time it took the federated ranks to reach the maximum annual leave entitlement would commence from 1 April 2025 and be completed by March 2028. This would mean officers in the federated ranks receiving 30 days' annual leave after 10 years instead of 20. It also advised us that our recommendation to increase the annual leave entitlement for new entrants from 22 to 25 days would be implemented from 1 April 2025 without transition.

3.127 The PSNI told us that it expected the accrual of annual leave over a shorter time period to have a positive effect on absence rates and workforce resilience. It observed that the length of service required to receive full annual leave was substantially different from other public sector roles. It informed us that PSNI civilian staff reached their maximum leave entitlement after five years.

3.128 The NIPB said it sought enhanced annual leave for PSNI officers to recognise the longer service required before a full pension could be taken.

3.129 In its written evidence, the PFNI welcomed our 2024 recommendations on annual leave provision but also argued that police officers were still behind other public sector workers, including officers in Police Scotland. It pressed for a further reduction in the time taken to reach the maximum leave entitlement. It also proposed the introduction of long service leave.

Our comment on annual leave

3.130 We welcome the implementation of our recommended changes to annual leave provision for PSNI officers from April 2025 in line with the parity principle. However, we ask for evidence that PSNI officers have actually been able to use their new annual leave entitlement in full, particularly in the context of the PSNI's report that its officers have low levels of taken annual leave.

3.131 We considered carefully the PFNI's proposal for the introduction of long service leave. We observe that providing experienced officers with a period of long service leave at a suitable point in their career could be a useful retention tool. We point out that such leave could be linked to the criteria for, and awarding of, the PSNI's Long Service and Good Conduct medal at the 20-year stage. We note that the PSNI also has long service awards at 30 and 40 years' service. The PFNI's proposal for long service leave was also made by its counterpart in England and Wales. We invite the PSNI to consider it in conjunction with the NPCC and respond in 2026.

3.132 It should be of interest to the Northern Ireland parties that the NPCC has made a commitment to carry out a further review of annual leave policy after two years, including whether the time taken by officers to reach their maximum annual entitlement should be further reduced. We suggest that the PSNI considers a similar exercise.

Additional proposals from the parties

A shortened constable pay scale

3.133 The PSNI advised us that it supported the NPCC's proposal for a shortening of the constable pay scale to achieve the maximum salary at five years, and pay points aligned to the level of experience attained at four years. It added that, as outlined in NPCC's submission, the PSNI would also require additional funding to support the proposed changes.

3.134 The NIPB observed that the constable pay scale could be flattened to assist with moving through the pay scales, and as a method to further enhance the ability to cope with cost-of-living increases.

3.135 The PFNI also proposed a shortened pay scale for constables. It said it believed that police officers were fully experienced earlier than presumed, and that a shorter pay scale would be in keeping with other professions. It noted that the NPCC's proposals included the abolition of pay point 1 and the restructuring of the remaining pay points. The PFNI observed that the NPCC's view was that the current pay scale mostly rewarded officers after years five and six but that officers were experienced after four. The PFNI provided annual data from 2020 to 2024 on the number of constables leaving at each pay point. These showed that the pay points 1 to 4 were key attrition points and that resignations at pay points 1 and 2 were particularly high.

Our comment on a shortened constable pay scale

3.136 Any review of the constable pay scale should take place within the context of wider reform and an overall review of the coherence of police officer pay scales. Aspects for the Northern Ireland parties to consider would include the NIPB's view on a more evenly spaced pay scale, the early attrition rates cited by the PFNI, and the implications of a shortened constable pay scale for those career constables making a vital contribution in areas such as neighbourhood policing. We note that wider reviews of police officer base pay are expected after the production of a workforce plan for England and Wales policing. Given the parity principle, we would expect any future reforms of the police officer pay structure in Northern Ireland to accord with those in England and Wales.

Unsocial Hours Allowance

3.137 The Unsocial Hours Allowance is paid to officers in the federated ranks in England and Wales and amounts to 10% of base salary and applies between 8pm and 6am.

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The PFNI again requested its introduction to the PSNI this year, should the decision be taken to remove CRTP. The PSNI told us that it estimated the cost of implementing the Unsocial Hours Allowance for a year as £8.6 million. It added that should the DOJ support its introduction, the PSNI would need additional funding. We note that the NPCC is due to review the Unsocial Hours Allowance in 2025/26, and we have included a recommendation for the Northern Ireland parties to consider the proposal for this to be introduced in line with the removal of CRTP and to provide their views in evidence next year.

Shift alteration allowance

3.138 The PFNI set out the case for a shift alteration allowance. It reported that, in conjunction with the Police Federation of England and Wales, it had evidence that police officers' shifts were being changed at an unsustainable rate. The PFNI told us that officers were entitled to know their shift schedules 90 days in advance and that while changes were sometimes necessary due to exigencies, they often resulted from inadequate forward planning. The PFNI stressed that, regardless of the reason, such changes could have a financial impact on officers, for instance, by requiring them to arrange additional childcare. The PFNI requested that consideration be given to a payment when for excessive shift changes within the 90-day window.

Our comment on proposals for additional allowances

3.139 We note that the NPCC is due to review the value of the Unsocial Hours Allowance in 2025/26. We have recommended that the Northern Ireland parties consider the proposal to close the CRTP scheme to any further officers and instead introduce an Unsocial Hours Allowance for officers in the federated ranks not in receipt of CRTP. We have asked the parties to give us their views on this in evidence in 2026. We have discussed this in more detail in paragraphs 3.118 to 3.125 above.

3.140 We recognise that the increasingly diverse nature of the police workforce means that today's police officers are more and more likely to be juggling their policing duties with carer responsibilities. We are concerned about the impact of the practicalities and pressures of policing on officers' personal lives. We accept that short-notice changes to shift patterns are likely to have financial consequences for officers as well as disrupting personal arrangements and increasing stress levels. We agree that a shift alteration allowance, set at an appropriate level, might help to deter poor management practices. We are aware of the 90-day notice needed for a change to shifts under police regulations but observe that modern workforces need to be agile. Therefore, while in our view there is a case for some kind of shift alteration allowance to compensate officers for last-minute shift changes that may have financial consequences, it may be appropriate that the trigger for payment of the allowance is set at less than 90 days. We have asked the NPCC to work with the England and Wales parties to examine the scope for this type of allowance and to receive evidence on this in the next pay round. In the interests of convergence on

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allowances, we invite the Northern Ireland parties to engage with this initiative, as well as one proposed in our England and Wales report this year to consider ways to strengthen the financial package for detectives.

Chapter 4 – Forward Look

- 4.1 It will be for the Department of Justice 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 join us for an oral evidence session for the third year in succession (the last time the PFNI did so was in April 2022). This made our consideration of key issues more challenging. We would have valued hearing from the PFNI on a wide range of matters, and in particular about the impact on officers of the reduction in workforce numbers. We hope that the PFNI will resume full participation in the PRRB process in 2025.

Changes in the policing environment

- 4.4 At the time of writing, the PSNI had its lowest ever number of officers. We would like to learn more next year about the impact of this situation on our remit group and on the PSNI's services to the public, particularly the neighbourhood policing function. This is in the context of the UK Government's Neighbourhood Policing Guarantee in England and Wales. We would also like to be updated on the PSNI's recovery business plan, the restoration of officer headcount and ambition for continuous recruitment.

Parity with England and Wales

- 4.5 As requested by all the parties, we have upheld the principle of parity with England and Wales on pay and allowances. Given the continued variance in views on the essential principle of parity, we request that parties in the coming year set out clearly in evidence their views on the principle of parity, and its justification, to inform the position that the PRRB takes on parity in its deliberations and report next year.

Pay and workforce modernisation

Allowances

- 4.6 We have recommended that the PSNI participates in the NPCC's ongoing review of police officer allowances. We also recommend that the DOJ and PSNI commit in principle to adopting the review's resultant proposals, subject to any views expressed by the PRRB. We request a detailed progress update from the PSNI and DOJ next year.

Police reform and workforce strategy

- 4.7 In order to understand the possible implications for Northern Ireland policing, we also encourage the Northern Ireland parties to engage with their England and Wales counterparts on developments concerning the forthcoming White Paper on Police Reform in England and Wales and the 2025 National Security Strategy.
- 4.8 We would also like to hear from the parties about the continuing impact of the cost of living on police officers, especially new and recent recruits. We have asked for this evidence to include the measures put in place by the PSNI to support probationary officers and those with up to five years' service based in hard-to-fill locations.
- 4.9 We remain interested in the working pressures on inspectors and chief inspectors and the difficulties caused by the small pay differential between inspectors and chief inspectors and the large pay gap between the top of the chief inspector rank and the bottom of the superintendent rank. We note that the pay scales for chief inspectors are the shortest of any rank. We would like to hear more from the Northern Ireland policing parties on the pay and work of the inspecting ranks next year.

The future of work

- 4.10 We were very encouraged by the DOJ mentioning in oral evidence a desire to modernise policing careers in the PSNI and think creatively about how to recruit and retain those with expertise useful to policing, such as through a direct entry scheme for cyber-crime specialists. We look forward to hearing more on this next year.
- 4.11 The police service needs to recognise the increasing attraction to younger workers of portfolio careers and offer multiple entry points into policing through direct entry. In addition, the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development has outlined the profound transformation in the modern workplace driven by changing demographics, technological advancements and shifting societal values²². For instance, the change in demographics will have significant implications for policing. As the working age population continues to decrease, a more inclusive and flexible approach to recruitment and retention will be required. People will work for longer and employers will need to support this through more innovative career opportunities, promotion and continuous learning and development. The police service will need to attract, and then retain, a more diverse group of recruits from a shrinking pool of potential employees. This will have implications for the police service's current employment offer, internal structures and approaches to promotion and careers. Policing will need to develop a much more flexible approach in order to respond to these challenges. We encourage the police service to be ambitious and think broadly about the future employment proposition for the police. We look forward to hearing

²² Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (April 2022), *The future of work: insights for senior leaders on the drivers of change*. Available at: <https://www.cipd.org.uk/views-and-insights/thought-leadership/insight/future-work-insights/> [Accessed on 4 July 2025]

from parties about the ways in which these developments might change the nature of policing over the next decades and how the police service is planning to future-proof its workforce and organisational strategies to ensure it can train the current and future workforce to adapt and embrace them.

Diversity

4.12 Having a more diverse workforce is an important building block of police legitimacy. We remain concerned about the pace of change on increasing diversity both in the PSNI and across the police service in England and Wales. We ask the Northern Ireland parties to update us on plans to improve diversity for all protected characteristics in the PSNI.

4.13 We are focusing more on the matter of ethnicity and race in Northern Ireland as the population becomes increasingly diverse. We ask the parties to tell us next year how they plan to secure a workforce that is more diverse and which reflects more closely the population it serves, including in terms of ethnicity.

Recruitment and retention

4.14 We request an assessment in 2026 of the impact on PSNI recruitment of the Chief Constable's decision to keep the constable starting salary at pay point 1 and not increase it to pay point 2.

4.15 We are hopeful that the resumption of recruitment and the proposal to restore officer numbers will begin to address the complex problems facing the PSNI arising from its budgetary position and lowest ever headcount. We look forward to hearing more in 2026.

Wellbeing

4.16 Wellbeing needs to lie at the heart of the PSNI's workforce agenda both in terms of promoting the welfare of officers and ensuring that a career in policing remains an attractive option for future generations. In this report, we have mentioned our concerns about the impact of the practicalities and pressures of policing on officers' wellbeing (in paragraphs 2.121 to 2.128) and their personal lives (in paragraphs 3.34 and 3.35). We also discuss our particular concerns regarding allowances and annual leave in paragraphs 4.17 to 4.20 below. The promotion of officer wellbeing should be woven through the changes emerging from the police reform agenda.

Allowances

4.17 In accordance with the parity principle, we have recommended that all Northern Ireland parties bring forward the proposal to withdraw CRTP and introduce an Unsocial Hours Allowance for new officers, and that parties present their proposals in evidence to us next year so we can consider this issue more fully then. We have commented from a Northern Ireland perspective on allowances included in the first

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year of the NPCC's review of allowances. We have emphasised the importance of any changes to allowances promoting officer wellbeing, welfare and work-life balance, as well as ensuring fair compensation for officers. While we recognise the unpredictable nature of policing, we have noted that in some cases allowances may be providing compensation to officers for poor management practices that are impacting on wellbeing and work-life balance. We have asked for these underlying problems to be addressed by the NPCC's review of allowances in which we recommend the participation of the PSNI. We have also recommended that the DOJ and PSNI commit in principle to adopting the proposals resulting from that review, subject to any views expressed by the PRRB.

- 4.18 We have agreed changes to the On-call Allowance and Away from Home Overnight and Hardship Allowances but we have also asked for the wellbeing of officers to be protected and whether a more efficient use of on call is possible, thereby reducing both costs and the burden on officers. We have also encouraged the Northern Ireland parties to comprehensively review the provision of allowances for mutual aid, including the Unsocial Hours Allowance, in order to further the convergence process and uphold the parity principle.
- 4.19 In addition, we have invited the Northern Ireland parties to engage with work we have proposed in England and Wales to examine the scope for an allowance to deter the police service from changing officers' shifts at short notice and bring forward proposals. This too is in the interests of convergence on allowances and the parity principle.

Annual leave

- 4.20 We note the NPCC's commitment to carry out a further review of annual leave policy after two years in England and Wales, including whether the time taken by officers to reach their maximum annual entitlement should be further reduced. We suggest that the PSNI considers a similar exercise. We also wish to see evidence that PSNI officers have actually been able to use their new annual leave entitlement. In addition, we invite the PSNI to consider the scope for the introduction of long service leave and provide evidence on that in 2026.

Pensions

- 4.21 We are aware that changes to police pensions can affect morale, motivation, and retention and our terms of reference state that it is important for us 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.
- 4.22 We remain concerned by the number of officers opting out of the police pension scheme. This is because by opting out officers are losing an important part of the remuneration package and forfeiting benefits linked to death in service and medical retirement. We would also like evidence in the next pay round on how the wider

implications for officers when they opt out of the pension can be mitigated, especially ways that ensure that death-in-service and medical retirement benefits are available to any officer killed or injured as a result of incidents faced in the line of duty, regardless of pension membership status.

Evidence provision

4.23 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 report²³, 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.

²³ Deloitte, 2016, Understanding barriers affecting police officer recruitment – final report: <https://www.psni.police.uk/sites/default/files/2022-07/Understanding%20barriers%20affecting%20police%20officer%20recruitment%20-%20Final%20Report%20-%20December%202016.pdf> [Accessed on 4 July 2025]

4.24 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

4.25 We welcomed police officers' annual increments being paid on time in 2024 and expect this again this year. We also request a response to our pay award recommendation in good time for implementation of the annual pay uplift at the start of the police officer pay year (1 September 2025), along with timely publication of our report.

Appendix A – Our Previous Recommendations

2024 Report

We submitted our 2024 Report on 26 June 2024. The recommendations were as follows:

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.**

Previous recommendations

All of our previous recommendations, along with the responses²⁴ are set out below

Report	Recommendation	Response
1 st (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 nd (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 rd (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 th (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 th (2019)	A consolidated increase of 2.5% to all police officer pay points for all ranks.	Accepted
	An increase of 2.5% in the current level of the Northern Ireland Transitional Allowance.	Accepted
	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

²⁴ 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. All other Reports were responded to by the Northern Ireland Minister of Justice.

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Report	Recommendation	Response
6 th (2020)	<p>A consolidated increase of 2.5% to all police officer pay points for all ranks.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>Removal of the lowest point on the sergeants' pay scale.</p> <p>An increase of 2.5% in the current level of the Northern Ireland Transitional Allowance.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>Dog Handlers' Allowance should increase by 2.5%.</p> <p>On-call Allowance should be extended to the superintending ranks in Northern Ireland.</p> <p>The parties conduct a comprehensive review of police officer allowances in Northern Ireland within the next twelve months.</p>	<p>Accepted</p> <p>Accepted</p> <p>Accepted</p> <p>Accepted</p> <p>Accepted</p> <p>Accepted</p> <p>Accepted</p>
7 th (2021)	<p>Pay point 0 of the constable pay scale is uplifted by £250.</p> <p>A 1% increase to the Northern Ireland Transitional Allowance for all police officers.</p>	<p>Accepted</p> <p>Accepted</p>
8 th (2022)	<p>A consolidated increase of £1,900 to all police officer pay points for all ranks.</p> <p>An increase of 5% in the current level of the Northern Ireland Transitional Allowance (NITA).</p> <p>An increase of 5% in the Dog Handlers' Allowance.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>That the payment of officers providing mutual aid is brought in line with England and Wales, including the Away from Home Overnight Allowance</p>	<p>Accepted</p> <p>Accepted</p> <p>Accepted</p> <p>Accepted</p> <p>Accepted</p>
9 th (2023)	<p>A consolidated increase of 7% to all police officer pay points for all ranks up to and including assistant chief constable.</p> <p>The introduction of a police regulation in Northern Ireland on police officer increments to ensure that they are paid on time.</p> <p>The removal of pay point 0 of the constable pay scale.</p> <p>All constables to move to pay point 2 after twelve months at pay point 1, as in England and Wales.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>A consolidated increase of 5% to the PSNI chief constable pay point from 1 September 2023.</p> <p>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.</p>	<p>Accepted</p> <p>Not accepted</p> <p>Accepted</p> <p>Accepted</p> <p>Accepted</p> <p>Accepted</p>

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Report	Recommendation	Response
	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.	Not accepted
10 th (2024)	A consolidated increase of 4.75% to all police officer pay points for all ranks up to and including chief superintendent.	Accepted
	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.	Accepted
	The introduction of a police regulation in Northern Ireland on police officer increments to ensure that they are paid on time.	Not accepted
	That all constables receive their first pay increment exactly twelve months from when they first join the service.	Accepted
	An increase of 4.75% in the current level of the Northern Ireland Transitional Allowance (NITA).	Accepted
	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.	Accepted
	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.	Not accepted ²⁵
	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.	Accepted
	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.	Accepted

²⁵ The Minister of Justice wanted to wait for the outcome of the review of the Unsocial Hours Allowance by the NPCC.

Appendix B – Remit Letter from the Minister of Justice

FROM THE OFFICE OF THE JUSTICE MINISTER



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Our Ref: SUB-0007-2025

Zoë Billingham
Chair
Police Remuneration Review Body
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10 January 2025

Dear Zoë,

I wrote to you last month to advise that approvals for the pay award for 2024/25 for federated and superintending officers had concluded and I am happy to advise that payments have been made to officers, backdated to 1 September 2024.

I am now writing to ask the PRRB to commence its annual review in respect of federated and superintending officers in the PSNI for 2025/26 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 that for the 2025/26 pay round the PRRB considers the following matters:

FROM THE OFFICE OF THE JUSTICE MINISTER



- How to apply the pay award for 2025/26 for police officers in the PSNI up to and including chief superintending rank; and
- Consideration of the regular elements of the Northern Ireland Transitional Allowance in relation to the Northern Ireland security threat level for Police Officers and the Dog Handlers' Allowance.

The Northern Ireland Public Sector Pay Policy has not yet been set for 2025/26, but I would ask that the PRRB considers the affordability and budgetary position, along with the different funding structures available in Northern Ireland. Further detail on this will be set out in both written and oral evidence.

I would invite you to have regard to the PRRB's standing terms of reference and 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 that reads '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 set out the Northern Ireland Programme for Government (2024–27) agreed in February 2025, called ‘Our Plan: Doing What Matters Most’. It explained that the Programme included nine Northern Ireland Executive priorities for making a real difference to people’s lives, with the goal of improving the wellbeing of everyone living and working in Northern Ireland. These were: grow a globally competitive and sustainable economy; deliver more affordable, accessible, high-quality early learning and childcare; cut health waiting times; ending violence against women and girls; better support for children and young people with special educational needs; provide more social, affordable and sustainable housing; safer communities; protecting Lough Neagh and the environment; and reform and transformation of public service.

C.3 The DOJ told us that the Northern Ireland public sector employed 226,000 people or 27% of all employee jobs in Northern Ireland. It explained that Northern Ireland consistently had a higher proportion of public sector jobs per population than the UK as a whole (11.8% compared with 8.7% for the UK as a whole). However, it advised treating such comparisons with caution given the different structure and coverage of public sector workforces across the UK.

C.4 The DOJ added that public sector pay in Northern Ireland accounted for a significant share of the Resource Departmental Expenditure Limit budget. It said that in FYE 2024, pay costs accounted for approximately 56.7% of its non-ring-fenced Resource Departmental Expenditure Limit.

C.5 The DOJ also advised that public sector median weekly earnings for full-time employees in Northern Ireland and the UK had been broadly aligned for 20 years. It said that in April 2024, public sector median weekly earnings in Northern Ireland were £732, compared with the UK median of £765. Also in April 2024, Northern Ireland public sector employee earnings were 15% higher than median gross full-time private sector earnings (£636), which represented the smallest gap on record.

C.6 The DOJ explained that this gap had reduced as private sector weekly earnings increased by 3.5% in real terms (adjusted to take account of inflation) over the year, whereas public sector weekly earnings decreased by 2.8%, contributing to an overall rise in earnings across all full-time employees in Northern Ireland of 1.2% in real terms. The DOJ added that this was a continuation of a downward trajectory for Northern Ireland public sector real earnings, which were 11% below the 2021

median and, looking back further, 8.2% lower compared with the figure two decades earlier.

C.7 The DOJ said that in stark contrast, real earnings in the private sector had grown by 13% over the past ten years. However, it also highlighted that some public sector pay uplifts since awarded were not included in the latest earnings survey conducted in April 2024. In addition, it advised that headline comparisons of median earnings could reflect differing workforce structures and activities between the public and private sectors.

C.8 The DOJ explained that the DOF had approved in principle a business case from the PSNI for an immediate increase in current workforce levels. It said this had followed a collaborative approach between DOJ officials and the PSNI over a relatively short time to support the recovery of workforce levels to 7,000 officers and 2,572 staff over the next three years. The DOJ noted that the Chief Constable had on numerous occasions publicly expressed critical concern over the number of officers in the PSNI and that he had highlighted the immense strain placed on existing officers, so potentially compromising their ability to serve the community effectively. The DOJ added that the PSNI's preferred option included in the business case was to grow police numbers in alignment with a wide array of strategies, including the Patten Report and the New Decade, New Approach Agreement. The DOJ observed that the proposal would contribute to the delivery of Northern Ireland Programme for Government priorities through enhanced capacity.

NIPB

C.9 The NIPB said that it acknowledged that all government departments in Northern Ireland were under pressure and that policing was competing for funding with other frontline services, in particular health and education. It stressed that policing played a key role in securing the stability of wider society and in ensuring the safety of all in the community was maintained, but that financial investment in police officers and staff was required to sustain that. The NIPB said it had reiterated the importance of policing in its submission to the draft Northern Ireland Programme for Government (2024–27), and the impact of increasing demands to the security and safety of the community. The NIPB added that it had set out in representations and correspondence to the Department of Justice, the Northern Ireland Office, the Secretary of State and the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee the risks faced if adequate funding for the PSNI was not provided.

C.10 The NIPB told us that over the last year it had worked hard to secure stability within the PSNI senior team so that leadership could be provided to a service facing high pressures. The NIPB explained that it continued to engage with senior PSNI officers and with staff associations at all levels to hear their concerns and do all in its power to assist with the PSNI's current situation. The NIPB said that with stability in the senior team, an opening up of recruitment, the recovery plan at an advanced stage

and strong voices lobbying for adequate longer-term funding, it was hopeful that staff morale would show some signs of improving.

C.11 The NIPB explained that it continued to be acutely aware that industrial rights, including strike action, were not available to police officers should they be unhappy with their pay and allowances, unlike other public sector workers. The NIPB said that consequently it welcomed previous comments by the PRRB on the moral duty this placed on all parties to ensure officers were paid properly, in a way which reflected their expectations and working conditions, and which achieved parity with their counterparts elsewhere.

C.12 The NIPB asked the PRRB to consider in particular:

- enhanced annual leave to recognise the longer service required before a full pension could be taken;
- the ability to extend the period over which leave could be used (albeit this needed to be managed);
- recognising additional hours worked, particularly for those ranks which did not attract an overtime payment; and
- on-call allowances.

C.13 The NIPB added that recently it had been experiencing a significant increase in the number of serving officers applying for ill-health retirement and injured on duty awards. On average, it received 20 new applications per month, but this had increased to 30 at the beginning of 2025 (a few years earlier, it was on average five per month). The NIPB explained that its officials were currently implementing changes designed to make these make processes run more efficiently. In addition, NIPB officials were part of an ill-health retirement review group, led by the PSNI, aiming to improve timelines, identify barriers, reduce backlogs and optimise the future operating model.

PSNI

C.14 The PSNI's written evidence set out the following issues for our consideration:

- 'Pay Parity: It is essential that pay parity exists with England and Wales to ensure that police officer pay mirrors that of our counterparts to avoid police officers being discouraged when performing the same tasks at a different rate of pay.
- PSNI are aware of and support the NPCC's proposal for a restructure of the constable's pay scales to achieve the maximum salary at 5 years, and pay points aligned to the level of experience attained at 4 years. As outlined in NPCC's submission, PSNI would also require additional funding to support these proposed changes.

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- NITA: Retention of NITA with an annual uplift in line with the pay award.
- On-Call Allowance: Consider maintaining On-Call to reflect the factors unique to Northern Ireland. We support the NPCC recommendation of increasing the allowance to £35 with effect from September 2025.
- Dog Handlers' Allowance: Retain and increase annually the Dog Handlers' Allowance.
- Recall to Duty: The PSNI supported the NPCC review of recall to duty recompense for inspecting/superintending ranks due to commence in 2025/26.
- Annual Leave: The PSNI asked the PRRB to continue supporting the proposed changes to annual leave in maintaining parity with England and Wales
- Motor Vehicle Allowance: The PSNI asked the PRRB to support the mileage recommendations of the NPCC.
- CRTP: The PSNI sought the continuation of CRTP while awaiting DOJ instructions for its removal.'

C.15 The PSNI reiterated the main advantages of pay parity as:

- shared resources to address operational requirements;
- interoperability for transferees and mutual aid;
- underpinning resilience in light of the cumulative impact of recent pay constraints and pension changes;
- the interchange of skills and experience; and
- uniformity with England and Wales and adherence to the UK Government's public sector pay policy.

C.16 The PSNI added that it was keen to uphold pay parity with England and Wales, meaning the same pay scales and allowances.

C.17 The PSNI explained that it had told the DOF that its statutory minimum funding requirement for FYE 2026 was around £1,004 million. It said that this was modelled on police officer numbers of 6,358 FTE in April 2025, increasing to around 6,500 FTE by March 2026.

C.18 The PSNI advised us that it was aware of, and supported the NPCC review of recall to duty recompense for the inspecting and superintending ranks due to commence in 2025/26. It explained that a recall to duty was where an officer was required to work between two separate calls of duty. It explained that those ranks did not currently earn overtime.

C.19 The PSNI told us that recent press coverage of the organisation, particularly with respect to the data breach in August 2023 and current levels of sickness, morale and the higher number of leavers, could prove to have a negative impact on its

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future ability to attract and retain applicants from underrepresented groups, particularly those from the Catholic community. It said that the lowering of the security threat level to 'SUBSTANTIAL' might assist in recruitment from these groups, despite the continuing threat.

C.20 The PSNI informed us that officer sickness absence due to psychological conditions had been rising before the data breach but that a daily increase in psychological absences in the wake of the data breach in 2023 has been observed. It said that initial research also indicated links to cost of living and internal work pressures. The PSNI advised us that absences relating to psychological ill health had increased by 2.4% compared with the previous year, so accounting for 52.9% of all absences between April and December 2024. The PSNI added that this change in sickness absences had prompted it to develop in-house mental health services for officers and staff. It explained that because of the unique security risk in Northern Ireland, officers were often reluctant to seek therapeutic help as this would involve disclosing the nature of their employment and create a potential risk to personal security. The PSNI said that the provision of in-house mental health services was a major investment for the organisation and a positive step to improving the mental wellbeing of its officers and staff.

C.21 In support of its new absence management policy launched in spring 2025, the PSNI had developed a mandatory training package to ensure that:

- officers knew the attendance standards expected;
- those who were sick knew their responsibilities;
- line managers and supervisors were equipped to effectively support and manage those who were off sick;
- a healthy workplace culture was created;
- managers were enabled to apply an appropriate balance of support and challenge in how they managed sickness absence; and
- managers were provided with guidance on reviewing duty and role adjustments.

C.22 The PSNI explained that in the year to 31 December 2024, 1,191 police officers required role adjustments. It said that each adjustment had multiple aspects, such as not being able to drive police vehicles, not being able to wear body armour for extended periods, or not being able to exercise reasonable physical force in restraint and dealing with arrests. The PSNI added that role adjustments were essential to ensuring the health and wellbeing of officers, but that this put further strain on the deployable workforce. The PSNI told us this emphasised the need for further significant investment in occupational health and wellbeing services.

C.23 The PSNI estimated that there were 324 officers per 100,000 people in Northern Ireland in December 2024 (with 6,292 officers), that 7,000 officers (Chief

Constable's three-year plan) would equal 361 officers per 100,000 people and that 7,500 officers (Patten Report 1999) would equal 387 officers per 100,000 people. It explained that this was a higher ratio than for police forces in England and Wales of a similar size. However, the PSNI stressed that when comparing officer numbers and population size, terrorism and some serious organised crime elements were handled by other security services in England and Wales, whereas in Northern Ireland this was not the case.

C.24 The PSNI said it was at crisis point in terms of police officer numbers. It stressed that the need to focus on the most significant demand, threat, risk and harm, meant that neighbourhood police officers were being abstracted to other roles and that vacancies within neighbourhood policing teams were not being filled. It stated that the Home Office had allocated an extra £100 million of funding for policing in England and Wales as part of the UK Government's pledge to deliver a further 13,000 policing personnel. The PSNI added that it had 390 fewer neighbourhood police officers than police services of a similar size in England and Wales and that such an increase would take the PSNI back to resourcing levels of 2015, when it had 905 neighbourhood officers. It explained that it currently had 543 neighbourhood officers (more than in 2016, when it had 310 but fewer than in 2022, when it had 699).

C.25 The PSNI described the impact of the decline in visible policing, such as rising crime rates, everyday policing matters going unaddressed and a potentially worsened quality of life for affected communities. It added that visible policing was extremely important to the Northern Ireland population and that any reduction could leave the community feeling unsafe, with weakened community cohesion.

C.26 The PSNI added that fewer police officers investigating crimes meant slower investigations, serious implications for the number of investigative teams and the number of live investigations, and in some cases a less satisfactory service for victims. It explained that it had an average of 20 cases per major investigation team against the 6 cases recommended in national guidance. Furthermore, the PSNI had experienced a significant reduction in its public order capability and would be more reliant on mutual aid from Police Scotland and forces in England and Wales.

PFNI

C.27 The PFNI said that it could see the merit in a pay review process that enabled all key policing stakeholders the opportunity to engage equally and directly with the process through the provision of robust evidence. However, it observed that persistent shortcomings in the system had eroded trust to the point where it had, for the third year, taken the decision to submit a significantly reduced written submission. It stated that it joined its England and Wales colleagues in requesting a new approach to police officer pay that was meaningful and eradicated bureaucracy. The PFNI added that alternatively, it would much rather discuss pay and conditions

directly with the PSNI and Government and have the option to explore mediation and/or binding arbitration.

C.28 The PFNI explained that over the last eleven years it had been explicit in its concerns relating to policing in Northern Ireland and the problems and delays with the pay review process. It said it believed that policing remained beyond the crisis point it had been warning about for some years and that appropriate and tangible steps were urgently needed to address the very real and valid concerns of serving officers and staff associations.

C.29 The PFNI highlighted that the pay review process was the sole mechanism through which police officers' pay, terms and conditions were independently evaluated, making it a fundamental aspect of the policing environment. It added that since its inception in 2014, the process had significantly impacted on morale and motivation within the police service, as well as officers' confidence in the system designed to assess their pay, terms and conditions, fairly and independently. The PFNI stressed that it was important to acknowledge the cumulative effect of a system that, over eleven consecutive years, had appeared to the remit group to lack independence and impartiality.

C.30 The PFNI stated that the PRRB process was proving totally ineffective as the Government set its remit, the parameters around what it could recommend and could choose not to implement its recommendations. The PFNI argued that the PRRB should make its recommendations independently of any financial or political constraints and that there needed to be a disconnect between affordability and PRRB recommendations. It emphasised that recommendations that were unaffordable should be for the Government to address and not the PRRB.

C.31 The PFNI made 12 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 associated allowances received in England and Wales should CRTP be phased out.
- An increase to the On-call Allowance from £25 to £35 minimum for evenings and weekend days and an On-call Allowance of £40 on public holidays or rest days and for these to be made pensionable.
- On annual leave for the federated ranks: an increase in the entitlement to align with Police Scotland; a reduction in the time taken to reach the maximum entitlement (30 days) from 20 years to 5 years; and introduce long service leave for officers who have served 10 or more years (6 weeks on reaching ten years' service).

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- An increase in maternity/adoption pay for police officers from 18 weeks' full pay to 26 weeks' full pay in line with England and Wales.
- The reintroduction of overtime payments or a non-pensionable supplement for the inspecting ranks and on the availability of untaken rest days due to exceptional circumstances, exigencies of duty or work demands, an extension from 12 to 24 months.
- The introduction of a determination in Northern Ireland on police officers' pay increments annually, in line with Annex F of the England and Wales Police Regulations 2003.
- An increase in the Away from Home Overnight Allowance and Hardship Allowance to mirror provision in Police Scotland.
- Motor vehicle allowances – An increase to both the essential user lump sum element and the mileage rates for essential and casual users. In advance of those proposals, the essential user lump sum is uplifted to £846, £963, and £1,239 to bring the PSNI in line with England and Wales.
- Unused rest days and annual leave. Constables and sergeants with any outstanding rest days after three months should have the option of converting them into pay. For the inspecting ranks, this should be the case once an untaken rest day reaches twelve months. Officers should also have the option to buy up to five days' annual leave at the start of the annual leave year.
- There should be a shorter pay scale as in other professions: police officers are fully experienced earlier than presumed.
- Officers are entitled to know their shift pattern 90 days in advance, so a payment is proposed when excessive shifts are changed within the 90-day window.

C.32 The PFNI emphasised that evidence demonstrated that there had been a substantial degradation of police pay for more than a decade, which it said insulted and devalued the unique and difficult work of police officers. It said that PSNI frontline officers were now 21% worse off than at the start of austerity measures. The PFNI stressed that its pay proposal this year was intended to fully restore police pay and reverse long-term pay degradation. It observed that its members had seen how other public sector roles, with the right to strike, had gained better pay increases and stated that since 2010, policing had fallen significantly behind the professions it was once benchmarked alongside – experienced nurses and teachers.

SANI

C.33 On the 2025/26 pay award, the SANI proposed the following:

- A fully funded, above-inflation pay award of 4.8% applied equally across all ranks.
- Maintaining parity of pay with England and Wales on core pay scales.
- Increasing the pay scales in line with the cost of living.

C.34 The SANI explained that it continued to press the DOJ for the timely payment of the annual pay award. It stressed that this was essential to avoid disadvantaging its members in comparison with PSA colleagues.

C.35 Other SANI proposals included:

- Increasing the NITA in line with the cost of living.
- Parity of additional discretionary bonuses for the senior ranks because the PSNI superintending ranks were not eligible for CRTP or able to apply for TVP.
- An increase in the On-call Allowance to £60 for the superintending ranks and making it reckonable for pension purposes.
- Payment for rest days and public holidays that could not be taken due to exigencies of duty, and an extension of their availability to 24 months.

C.36 The SANI told us that its members continued to report the loss of rest days owing. It said that this, along with a smaller number of officers in the superintending ranks, would lead to increased workloads, worsened wellbeing and absences due to stress and mental health issues. The SANI emphasised that, in the unique policing environment of Northern Ireland, its members were being denied the recuperation time they needed.

C.37 The SANI added that the impact of inadequate funding for the PSNI on operational capability was affecting the superintending ranks. It said that its members were routinely commanding large scale operations in addition to their core role, for example in the annual parade season. Furthermore, the new focus on violence against women and girls and hate crime was an important priority but that it was further adding to the workload of members who were service leads on emerging trends.

C.38 The SANI also observed that the August 2023 PSNI data breach compounded the PSNI's inability to recruit from diverse demographics while worsening the extreme anxiety of serving officers. The SANI added that while PSNI application numbers overall were healthy, its ability to recruit from minority communities remained challenging. The SANI said that the data breach had also impacted retention figures and was another factor affecting its members' morale and wellbeing.

C.39 The SANI also explained that some of its members had retired recently and that a high number of them had left as a direct result of low morale, feeling under-valued and having a poor work-life balance. In addition, an attractive remuneration package was offered in the private sector to senior leaders but with significantly less risk and a better work-life balance. The SANI added that in its 2024 survey, a majority of respondents had stated that they would not seek promotion due to the work-life balance implications. It said this compounded the reality of senior officers in the PSNI working longer hours with additional responsibilities not reflected in their pay or remuneration.

Appendix D – The Parties’ Website Addresses

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

Department of Justice <https://www.justice-ni.gov.uk/>

Northern Ireland

Northern Ireland Policing Board <https://www.nipolicingboard.org.uk/>

Police Service of Northern Ireland <https://www.psni.police.uk/>

Police Federation for Northern Ireland <https://www.policefed-ni.org.uk/>

Superintendents’ Association of Northern Ireland https://www.policesupers.com/rails/active_storage/blobs/eyJfcFpbHMiOnsibWVzc2FnZSI6IkJBaHBBakIDliwiZXhwIjpudWxsLCJwdXliOiJibG9iX2IkIn19--fae7715194b012720c972b16cf097da223431764/PRRB%20Submission%202025.pdf

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Appendix E – Our Analysis of Earnings and Workforce Data

Earnings

E.1 We examined the earnings²⁶ 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 median²⁷ full-time²⁸ gross annual earnings of 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). We note that late payment of the 2023 pay awards to police officers and other public sector workers in Northern Ireland has distorted the earnings figures²⁹. From our analysis (Chart E.1) we conclude that constables and sergeants in Northern Ireland have higher median full-time gross annual earnings compared with their counterparts in England and Wales (including the NITA³⁰), approximately £51,900 compared with £46,100 respectively in FYE 2024; this was primarily driven by NITA, higher amounts of overtime, and the retention of the CRTP scheme. Moreover, constables and sergeants 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 constables and sergeants in Northern Ireland in FYE 2024 increased by 1.6% (around £800) compared with FYE 2023. Across England and Wales, ASHE estimates of median full-time gross annual earnings for constables and sergeants rose by 7.0% (£3,000). Median full-time gross annual earnings in Northern Ireland rose by 5.0% (£1,600) for the whole

²⁶ 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.

²⁷ 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.

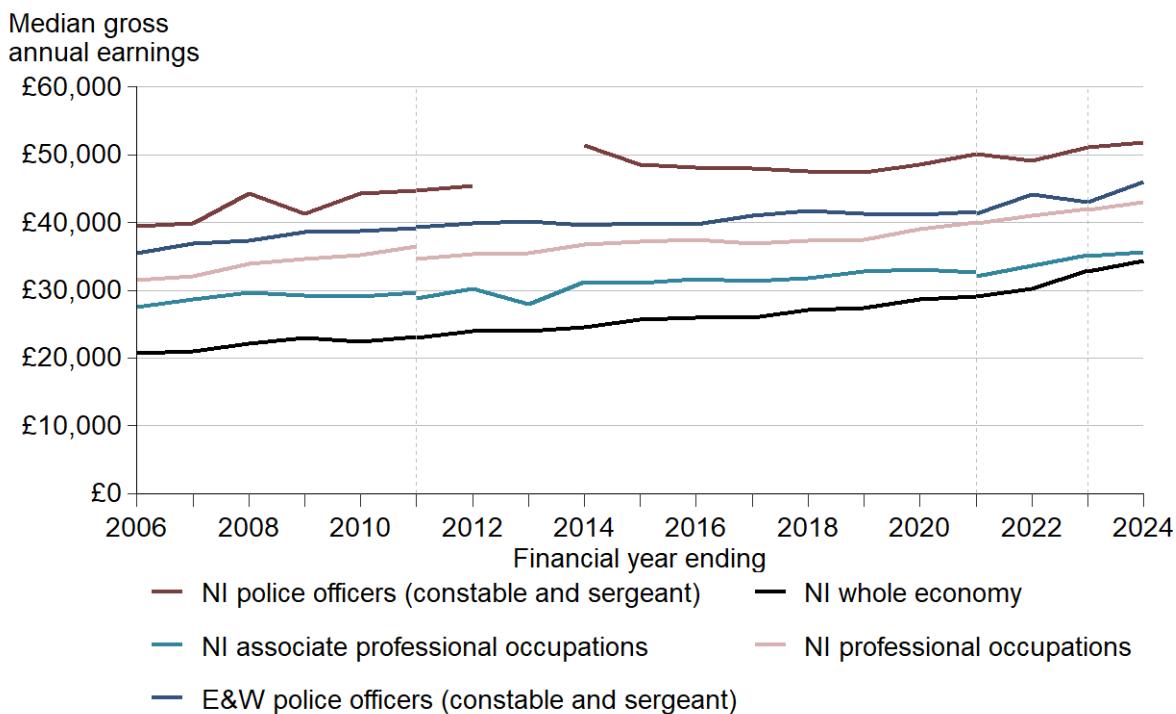
²⁸ Full-time earnings are used to control for any differences caused by different mixes of full- and part-time workers over time and between occupations.

²⁹ These pay awards were made in FYE 2025 and, although backdated, will not have been picked up in the survey data.

³⁰ ASHE does not provide figures excluding the NITA.

economy, 2.6% (£1,100) for professional occupations, and 1.6% (£600) for associate professional occupations.

Chart E.1: Median full-time gross annual earnings, Northern Ireland and England & Wales, FYE 2006–2024



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

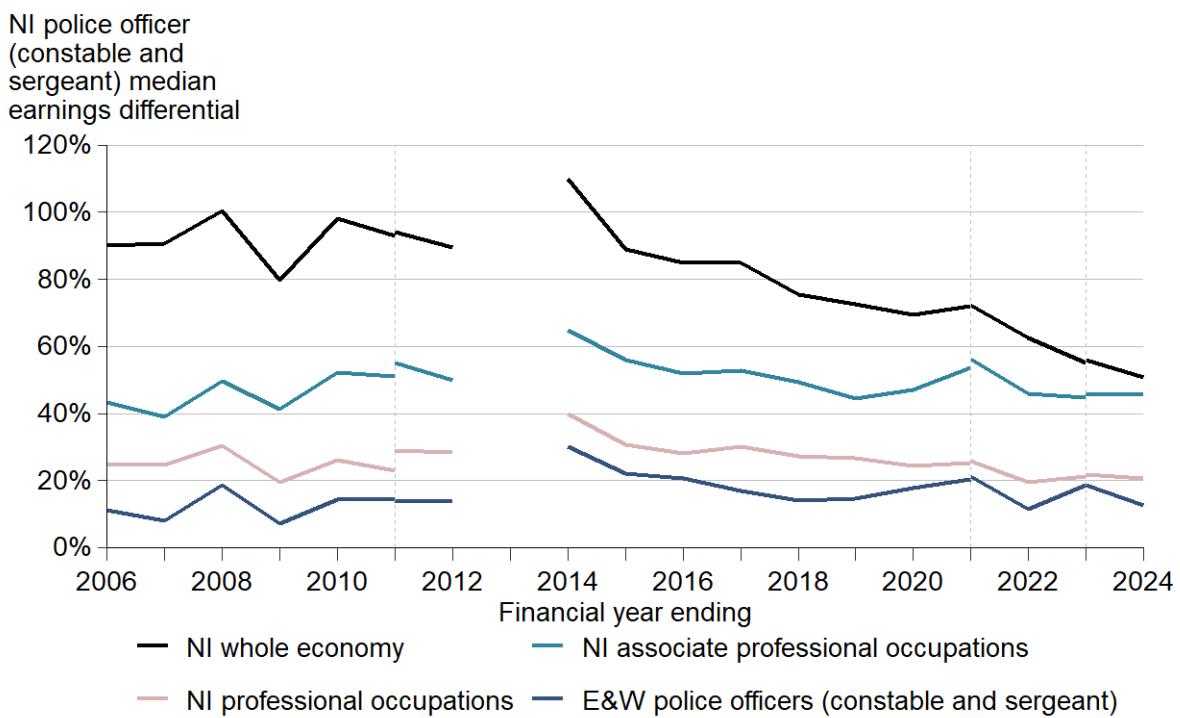
Notes:

- There are discontinuities in the series due to changes to the Standard Occupational Classification in FYEs 2011 and 2021. There is also a discontinuity in FYE 2023 due to methodological changes.
- 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 the earnings of constables and sergeants in Northern Ireland and the earnings of other groups (Chart E.2). The differential with Northern Ireland associate professional occupations remained unchanged in FYE 2024, while the other differentials all fell. In FYE 2024, median full-time gross annual earnings for police officers in Northern Ireland were:

- 51% (£17,500) higher than those for the whole economy in Northern Ireland;
- 46% (£16,200) higher than associate professional occupations in Northern Ireland;
- 21% (£8,900) higher than professional occupations in Northern Ireland; and
- 13% (£5,800) 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 2006–2024



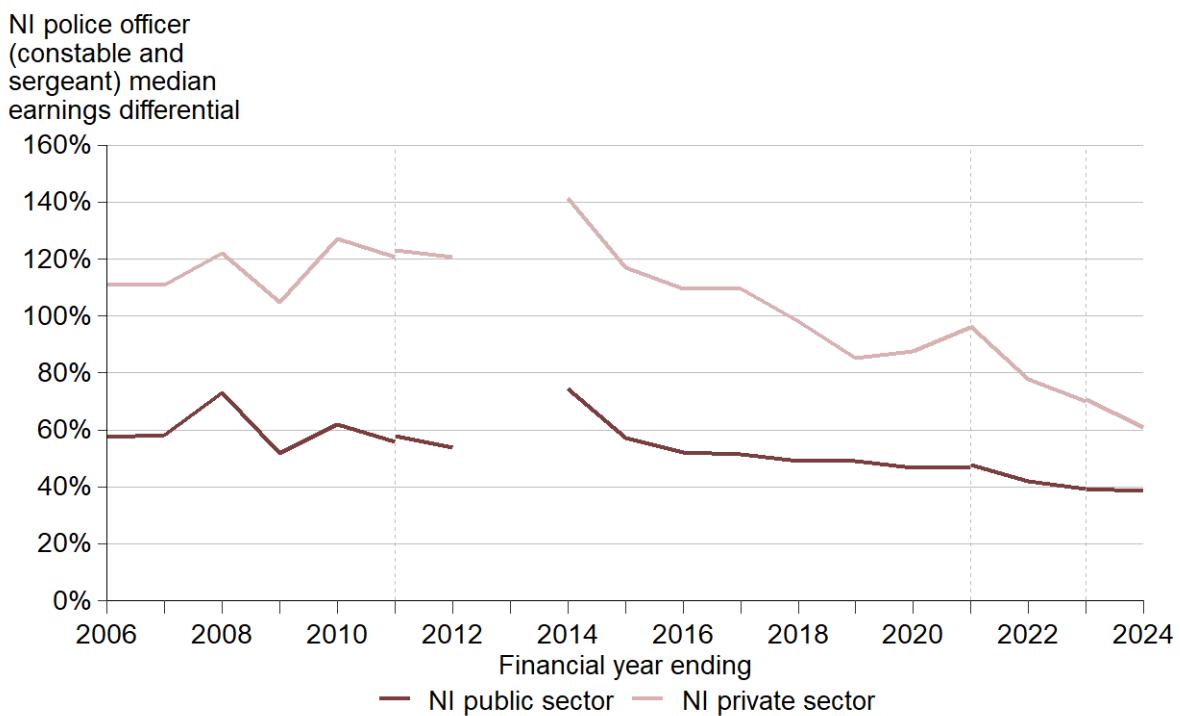
Source: OPRB analysis of Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings, ONS and NISRA.

Notes:

- There are discontinuities in the series due to changes to the Standard Occupational Classification in FYEs 2011 and 2021. There is also a discontinuity in FYE 2023 due to methodological changes.
- 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 We can also use the ASHE data to look at the differentials with the public and private sectors in Northern Ireland (Chart E.3). In FYE 2024, median earnings for constables and sergeants in Northern Ireland were 38% (£14,400) higher than median earnings in the public sector and 61% (£19,700) higher than median earnings in the private sector. The differentials with both sectors have been falling over time, but the differential with the private sector has fallen further than that with the public sector.

Chart E.3: Differentials between Northern Ireland police officer full-time median gross annual earnings and those of the public and private sectors, FYE 2006–2024



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 FYEs 2011 and 2021. There is also a discontinuity in FYE 2023 due to methodological changes.
- 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.6 For a detailed analysis of police earnings we used the latest available Police Earnings Census data (covering FYE 2024). We found that superintendent and chief superintendent were the only ranks 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 2024

	Northern Ireland	England & Wales
Constable	64%	50%
Sergeant	80%	70%
Inspector	57%	48%
Chief Inspector	70%	57%
Superintendent	39%	37%
Chief Superintendent	48%	50%

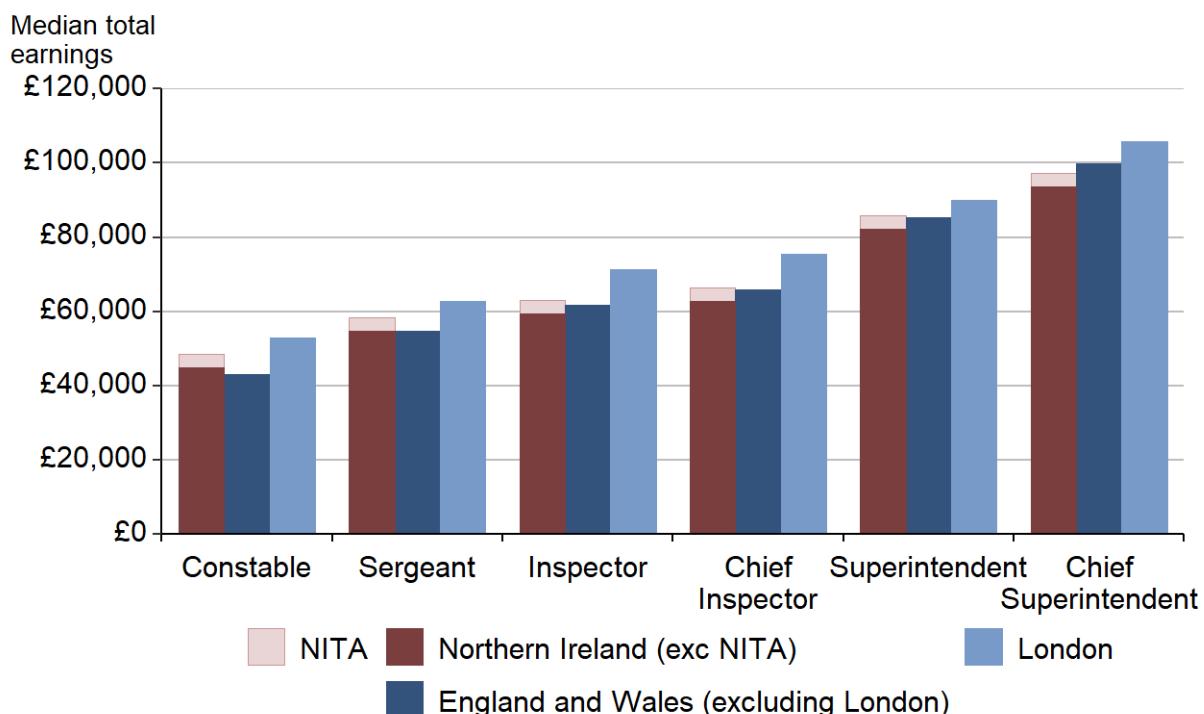
Source: OPRB analysis of Police Earnings Census data, Home Office.

E.7 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.8 Comparisons between Northern Ireland and England and Wales for FYE 2024 are distorted by the delayed pay award for Northern Ireland. Median full-time total earnings (excluding the NITA) for constables were higher than for their counterparts in England and Wales excluding London (Chart E.4) by around £1,700, while for sergeants the figures were similar. For these ranks higher levels of overtime worked in Northern Ireland and the retention of CRTP offset the delayed pay award in the comparisons. For all other ranks earnings were lower in Northern Ireland, whereas in previous years they were similar unless there were differences in the distributions of officers on the pay scales.

Chart E.4: Median total earnings, by rank, full-time officers, Northern Ireland and England & Wales, FYE 2024



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

E.9 Our assessment of police earnings includes the proportion of full-time officers in Northern Ireland in receipt of specific allowances and overtime (Table 2) and the median annual values of those payments for those officers who were in receipt of the particular payments (Table 3). Our key observations include:

- All police officers received the NITA;
- The proportion in receipt of CRTP ranged from 49% of chief inspectors to 66% of sergeants;

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- The vast majority of constables and sergeants (91% and 93% respectively) received overtime. Median overtime earnings in Northern Ireland were around 115% higher than those in England and Wales for constables and 74% higher for sergeants;
- The proportion of officers in receipt of Replacement Allowance (available to officers who joined before September 1994) increased with rank from 3% of constables to 37% of superintendents; and
- The proportion of officers receiving On-call Allowance also increased with rank from 10% of constables to 33% of chief inspectors. However, the median values were low – equivalent to three periods (or two bank holiday periods) for each rank except chief inspector (equivalent to four and a half periods or three bank holiday periods).

Table E.2: Percentage of full-time officers in receipt of additional pay components, by rank, Northern Ireland, FYE 2024

	Constable	Sergeant	Inspector	Chief Inspector	Supt.	Chief Supt.
NITA	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Replacement Allowance	3%	6%	9%	14%	37%	—
CRTP	56%	66%	50%	49%	—	—
On-call Allowance	10%	20%	28%	33%	—	—
Overtime	91%	93%	—	—	—	—
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.3: Median value of additional pay components, full-time officers in receipt of relevant payments, by rank, Northern Ireland, FYE 2024

	Constable	Sergeant	Inspector	Chief Inspector	Supt.	Chief Supt.
NITA	£3,666	£3,666	£3,666	£3,666	£3,666	£3,666
Replacement Allowance	£3,500	£3,500	£3,500	£3,500	£4,060	—
CRTP	£1,224	£1,224	£1,224	£1,224	—	—
On-call Allowance	£60	£60	£60	£90	—	—
Overtime	£4,699	£6,835	—	—	—	—
Other payments (e.g. Dog Handlers', secondment allowances)	£3,002	—	—	—	—	—

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

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

PSNI workforce

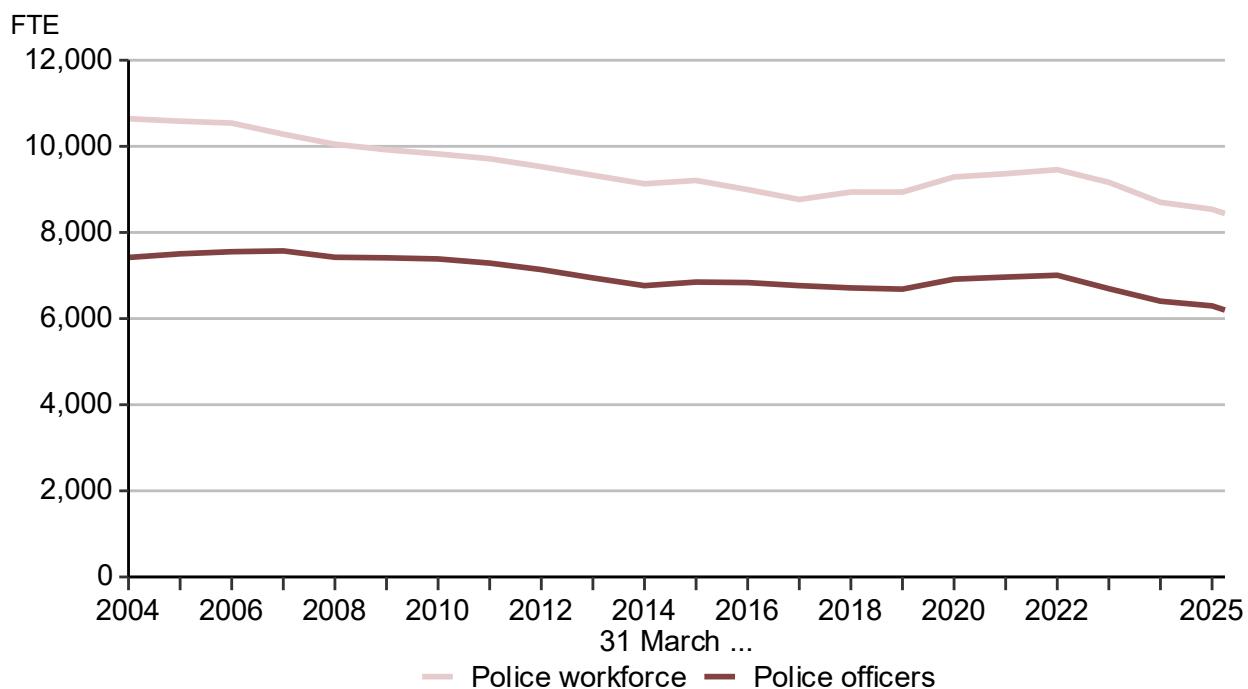
E.10 Data provided by the PSNI (Chart E.5) show that the full-time equivalent (FTE) police workforce (i.e. both officers and permanent support staff) shrank nearly every year between March 2004 (the earliest year for which we have data) and March

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2017, but then grew in most years to March 2022. In March 2024 the overall workforce was around 8,700. This was 450 FTE (5%) lower than a year earlier and 1,950 FTE (18%) lower than in March 2004 but a similar level to March 2017. Data on the PSNI website for January 2025 show that since March 2024 the workforce size has fallen by a further 215 FTE (2%).

E.11 Police officers account for around three-quarters of the PSNI workforce. Officer numbers fell nearly every year between March 2007 and March 2019, but increased between March 2019 and March 2022. In March 2025 there were around 6,300 FTE officers, 109 FTE (2%) lower than a year earlier and 1,277 FTE (17%) fewer than in March 2007. Figures published on the PSNI website show that officers numbers fell further between 31 March 2025 and 1 June 2025 to just under 6,200.

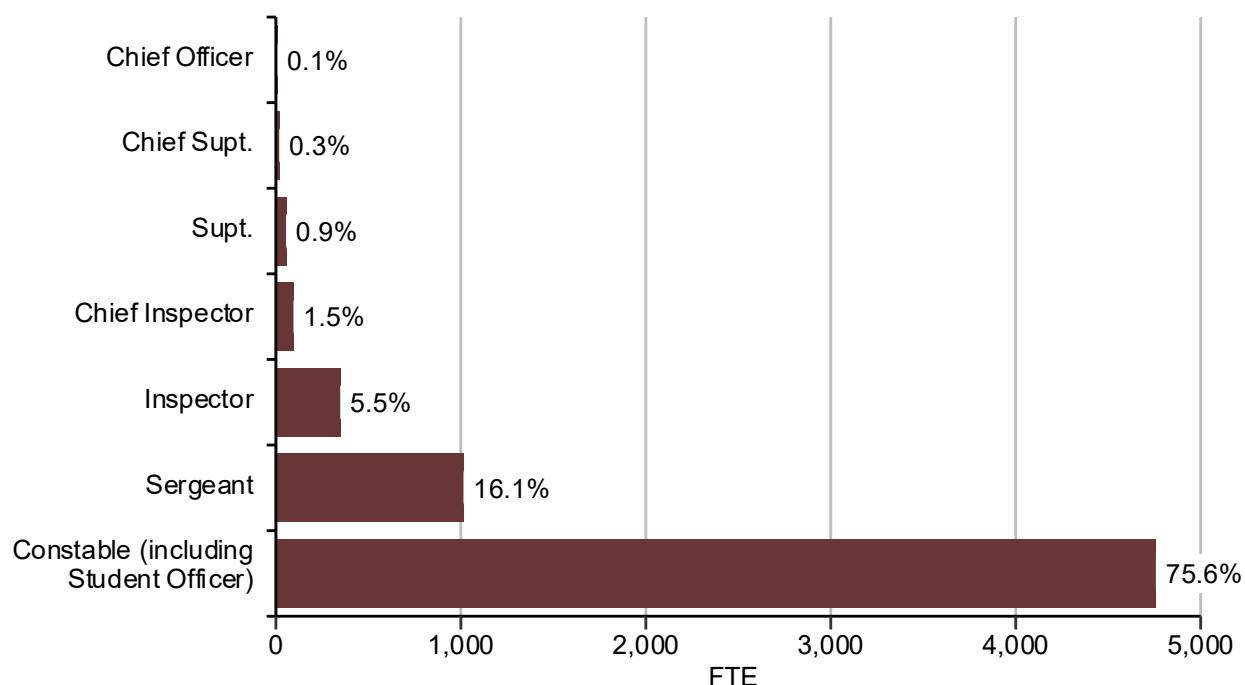
Chart E.5: Strength of police workforce and number of police officers (FTE), Northern Ireland, March 2004 – June 2025



Source: PSNI data.

E.12 Three-quarters (76%) of police officers were constables in March 2025 (Chart E.6), and just 8% of officers were in the ranks above sergeant.

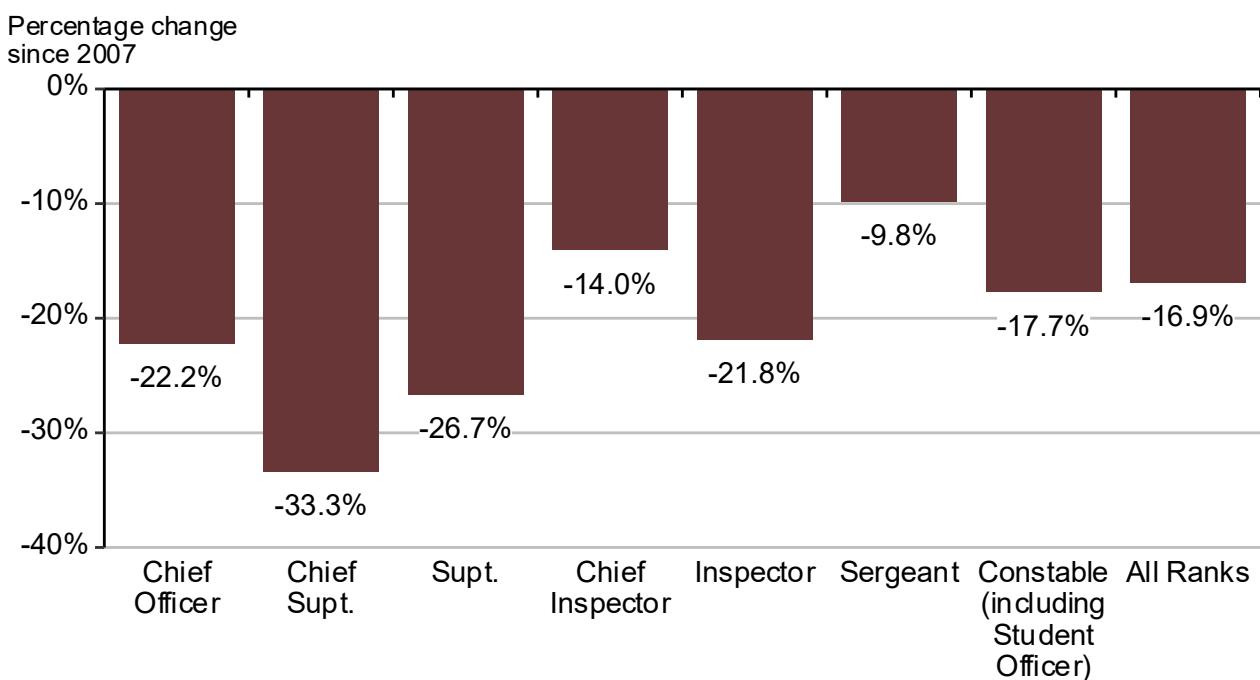
Chart E.6: Breakdown of full-time equivalent police officers by rank, Northern Ireland, March 2025



Source: OPRB analysis of PSNI data.

E.13 Between March 2024 and March 2025 the number of officers decreased for all ranks except chief inspector and superintendent (up 6 and 1 FTE respectively). The largest absolute decrease was in the number of sergeant (down 42 FTE or 4%) but the largest percentage increase was for chief superintendents (down 25% or 6 FTE). Since 2007 the largest proportional decreases in police officers (Chart E.7) have been for chief superintendents (down 33%). However, the greatest decrease in absolute terms has been for constables (just over 1,000 FTE officers, 18%).

Chart E.7: Percentage change in police officer numbers (FTE) between March 2007 and March 2025, by rank, Northern Ireland



Source: OPRB analysis of PSNI data.

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Appendix F – Recommended Changes to PSNI Officer Pay Scales and Allowances from 1 September 2025

Salary scales

The salary scales for the federated and superintending ranks in effect from 1 September 2024 are set out below along with our recommendations for effect from 1 September 2025.

Federated ranks

Rank	Pay point	With effect from 1 September 2024	Recommended for effect from 1 September 2025	Notes
Constable (appointed on or after 1 September 2014)	1	£29,907	£31,164	a,b
	2	£31,164	£32,472	
	3	£32,427	£33,789	
	4	£33,690	£35,106	
	5	£36,216	£37,737	
	6	£41,304	£43,038	
	7	£48,231	£50,256	
Sergeant	2	£51,408	£53,568	
	3	£52,458	£54,660	
	4	£53,943	£56,208	c
Inspector	0	£61,197	£63,768	
	1	£62,865	£65,505	
	2	£64,527	£67,236	
	3	£66,201	£68,982	c
Chief Inspector	1	£67,509	£70,344	d
	2	£68,823	£71,715	
	3	£70,200	£73,149	c

Superintending ranks

Rank	Pay point	With effect from 1 September 2024	Recommended for effect from 1 September 2025	Notes
Superintendent	1	£80,784	£84,177	
	2	£84,885	£88,449	
	3	£89,208	£92,955	
	4	£95,025	£99,015	
Chief Superintendent	1	£99,612	£103,797	
	2	£102,903	£107,226	
	3	£111,117	£115,785	

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 2024	Recommended for effect from 1 September 2025	Notes
Constable (appointed before 1 September 2014)	0	£31,497	£32,820	
	1	£34,908	£36,375	
	2	£36,801	£38,346 e	
	3	£38,922	£40,557	
	4	£40,083	£41,766	
	5	£41,304	£43,038	
	6	£44,748	£46,626	
	7	£48,231	£50,256 c	

Allowances

The recommended values of allowances from September 2025 are set out below.

Northern Ireland Transitional Allowance	£4,284 per annum
Dog Handlers' Allowance	£2,946 per annum
On-call Allowance	£35 for evenings, weekends and Northern Ireland public holidays
Motor Vehicle Allowance	
– Essential Users' Lump Sum	£1,239 for all engine sizes
Away from Home Overnight Allowance	£60 per night
Hardship Allowance	£40 per night

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

Notes:

- a. Pay point 1 applies to new entrants in the PSNI for twelve months from the start of the Student Officer Development Programme.
- b. The Chief Constable of Northern Ireland is given discretion to set starting pay at pay point 2
- c. Officers in the PSNI who have been on this point for a year will have access to the Competence Related Threshold Payment.
- d. Entry point for an officer appointed to the rank, unless the chief officer of police assigns the officer to a higher point.
- e. 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 2025

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)	<p>Metropolitan Police and City of London Police:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – London Allowance (maximum: £6,588) – London Weighting: £3,024 <p>South East Allowance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Maximum rate £3,000: Essex, Hertfordshire, Kent, Surrey, Thames Valley. – Maximum rate £2,000: Hampshire, Sussex, Bedfordshire. 	Northern Ireland Transitional Allowance (NITA): currently £4,110.
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 ³¹ .
Unsocial Hours Allowance	Introduced from 2012. 10% of hourly rate of pay for every full hour worked between 8pm and 6am.	Not introduced.
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.
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.

³¹ 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.

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	England and Wales	Northern Ireland
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.
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 Overnight Allowance (£50 per night) and Hardship Allowance (£30 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 Overnight Allowance (£50 per night) and Hardship Allowance (£30 per night) introduced in May 2023 specifically for mutual aid deployments only. Unsocial Hours Allowance not introduced.
On-call Allowance	£25 for federated and superintending ranks.	For the federated ranks, £25 on weekdays and weekends and £30 on public holidays ³² for each 24-hour period. £25 flat rate for superintending ranks.
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.	Same. Same. 4-hour minimum payment when recalled to duty – retained.

³² Following the 2022 review of allowances, the DOJ has proposed reducing the On-call Allowance to £20 on six of the eight relevant 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 for federated ranks	25 days on joining. Transitional arrangements in place that will lead to officers having a maximum of 30 days' annual leave after 10 years' service.	Same ³³ .
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 1 removed in January 2022.
Shortened 4-point superintendents' pay scale	Applied from 2014	Same.
Chief superintendent pay point 3 uplifted by £5,675	Phased application in September 2023 and September 2024	Phased application in March and December 2024 both backdated to the previous September.
Dog Handlers' Allowance	£2,826 for first dog; and additional rate for officers with more than one dog is 50% 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.
Timing of receipt of first constable increment	Constables receive their first increment twelve months after joining the police.	Same since 2024.
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.
Maternity and adoption leave	26 weeks fully paid	Same since 2025.

³³ However, one difference is that PSNI student officers are allocated 8 days' leave during their 21-week course.

Appendix H – The History of the NITA

H.1 The NITA began in 1972 as a claim from the police staff associations for an allowance for the dangers to which Northern Ireland (Royal Ulster Constabulary or RUC) police officers were exposed. It was agreed to in 1974 and was called a Special Duty Allowance with a value of £183 per annum for all ranks up to and including chief superintendent. It was then maintained in line with the Armed Forces' Special Duty Allowance until 1978, when it was reviewed by the Committee of Enquiry on the Police (which led to the establishment of the Police Negotiating Board). This concluded that the allowance paid to the RUC should not be derived from that paid to servicemen, noting that, unlike soldiers, "the policeman and his family are exposed to attack for 24 hours a day" and did not have short tours of duty in Northern Ireland. On the contrary, "the police officer has no such respite from the unremitting pressure attached to a career in the RUC, members of which have been declared prime targets by the terrorists".

H.2 The Committee concluded that police officers should be paid an allowance in excess of the £1 per day then paid to servicemen. It recommended that an allowance of £500 a year should be paid to all RUC officers up to and including the Chief Constable from 1978. The allowance was non-pensionable and would not count for overtime. It was to be updated in line with the new mechanism proposed for pay, but subject to review by the Police Negotiating Board in light of the prevailing security situation. It was emphasised that the allowance was not 'danger money' but concerned strains and stresses, pressures and constraints, and unprecedented demands. It encapsulated those features of policing in Northern Ireland as 'the special difficulties facing officers and their families'.

H.3 The Sheehy Review of 1993 recommended that the Special Duty Allowance should be increased to £4,000 (from £1,836) and continue to be paid 'until the end of the Troubles'. The Government did not accept the recommendation.

H.4 The Special Duty Allowance was then in place until 2005 and increased each year in line with the police officer pay award agreed by the Police Negotiating Board. By this time, it cost around £25 million a year.

H.5 In 2005, the Northern Ireland Office announced a review of the PSNI Special Duty Allowance (the Baker Review) which reported in March 2006. This recommended renaming it the Northern Ireland Transitional Allowance (NITA) in order to remove any illusion of permanence and to emphasise the expectation that the circumstances giving rise to the Allowance were themselves not permanent. It also recommended reducing the value of the NITA (from £2,736) by 25% over two years starting in September 2006. Therefore, it would be worth £2,394 in 2006/07 and £2,052 in 2007/08. The Baker Review also recommended reviewing the allowance

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in three years' time, with any changes to be implemented from September 2009. In practice, however, only the first part of the reduction was implemented.

- H.6 The Baker Review decided in 2006 to reduce the NITA on the basis of widespread recognition that conditions, if not good, were substantially better for PSNI officers than at the height of the terrorist campaigns in the 1970s and 1980s. It therefore did not think the level of payment introduced during the violence of the 1970s and not subsequently increased during the height of the terrorist campaign could still be fully justified in the much-improved situation in the early 21st century.
- H.7 The Baker Review also recommended that the NITA should not be fully withdrawn until: responsibility for policing and the judicial system had been delegated to the democratic institutions of Northern Ireland; paramilitary attacks against police officers and establishments had ceased and the threats of violence had reduced substantially; access to difficult areas had been substantially eased; the post-Patten process of change had been completed; and PSNI officers were no longer required to carry side arms for self-protection or advised to disguise the nature of their occupation.
- H.8 In 2012, the NITA was increased by 12.5% and this was backdated to September 2010. This followed a recommendation by the 2011 Winsor Review of Police Officer and Staff Remuneration and Conditions in England and Wales Part One. The Review had received evidence that the terrorist threat had increased substantially in the previous three years, with more targeting of police officers and their families, and that this had led to an increasing number of instances whereby PSNI officers were prevented from living in their desired location. The PFNI and SANI had explained to the Winsor Review that the NITA was designed to compensate officers for this but that it had been cut by 12.5% in 2007.