

National Preventive Mechanism – Northern Ireland Sub Group Meeting

Minutes

Date: 06/03/25

Time: 11:00 – 13:00



In attendance:

RL – Chair of the NPM Northern Ireland Subgroup, **Chair**
JP – Northern Ireland Policing Board
SG – Head of NPM
BS – Independent Monitoring Boards
ME – Criminal Justice Inspection
JD – Independent Monitoring Boards
MM – Northern Ireland Policing Board Independent Custody Visiting Scheme
JK – NPM Secretariat Officer, **Minutes**
HR – Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission (NIHRC)
JPe – Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority
NM – Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority
WM – Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority

1 Welcome, Apologies and Introductions

Apologies received from **JD**, CJI, and **AR** IMB.

Introductions made and welcome to **HR**, representing the NIHRC, **JP**, representing the children's team at RQIA, and **NM**, Mental Health, Learning Disabilities and Prison Healthcare Senior Inspector at RQIA.

2 Approval of December Minutes

All agree minutes are a true and accurate record.

3 See overleaf for Matters Arising

4 Introduction to the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission, and the Commission's role in OPCAT

HR gave an oral introduction to the work of the NIHRC and its mandate to advise on all human rights across Northern Ireland under international treaties. The NIHRC was established before the Prisoner Ombudsman and also has an investigative function. Over the years the NIHRC has visited every prison in NI and continues to organise visits, as appropriate, where a pressing human rights issue is raised. The NIHRC has used and interacted with NPM work.

SG notes that the Scottish Human Rights Commission has added great value to the NPM and NPM Scotland Subgroup.

5 Subgroup member updates

The Subgroup held oral Q&A on the pre-circulated written updates, for information purposes.

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Matters arising

Task	Lead	Status
RL to write to the Chief Commissioner to invite them to the next NISG meeting	RL	Completed and in attendance. RL will invite NICCY in advance of the September meeting, all to give advance consideration of issues relating to children.
RL to write to both Departments in January, to summarise what was discussed, identify the Subgroup's two key issues for 2025, set up annual face-to-face meeting and request funding for a Secretariat Officer. JK to draft letters ready to send in January 2025.	RL, JK	Completed, met with Mark Goodfellow and Beverley Wall this morning. Met with Peter May in February. Constructive meetings sharing information about the workplan, especially data collection and personality disorder, and objective for a Secretariat Officer. Annual face to face meetings pending.
WM will set up link-in mechanism with DoH representative in the new year.	WM	Ongoing.
All agreed that the format of written updates shared in advance of the meeting is helpful.		
JK to continue to prompt written updates with reminders.	JK	Completed and all going well.
All agree that the workplan covers purposes of the Subgroup.		
JK and WM to set up a call in January to discuss this in relation to transfer times from prisons and UK NPM work.	JK WM	Completed.
SG to circulate his update to the Steering Group and the NPM definition of detention and definition procedure to the Subgroup	SG	Ongoing, to circulate. Adopted by MoJ now.
All agree to invite NIHR and NICCY reflective of their level of NPM involvement and update Terms of Reference as of 2025. All agree to update the Terms on reporting.		
All agree that the long term objective of personality disorder work is a review of the legislation with a review to revise provisions for people with personality disorder. Shorter term objectives are the provision of appropriate services and support for people deprived of their liberty who have personality disorder.		
WM, ME , and RL to review the South Eastern Trust's paper on personality disorder to pull out key data on personality disorder symptoms and issues in detention.	WM ME RL	Completed.
All agree to publish modified minutes following member approval from the next meeting, with right to request redaction of any matter.		
WM to send contact details of new RQIA senior inspector to JK .	WM	Completed
RL will share a copy of the final Marie-Curie report once received for discussion at a future Subgroup meeting, and forward to the Prisoner Ombudsman.	RL	No update received as of 06.03.25, RL to follow up.
All to send any regular diary clashes to JK to coordinate meetings for 2025 (half in person, half online).	All JK	Meetings in the diary.
Additional actions included in the NISG Workplan for JD, ME, RL, MM, JK, WM, BS, SG	JD ME RL MM JK WM BS SG	To cover in the meeting.

No.	Items
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6 Guidance for IMB members

BS shares hard-copy booklets of the completed IMB aide-memoires, has received feedback that they are very useful, particularly for new monitors. The IMB handbook will be updated next. Noted that the NPM induction video and resources webpage are a very useful starting point and that a “train-the-trainer” package will be available this calendar year.

RL notes that IMB training was raised in the Department of Justice meeting of 6 March, and that the Department expressed capacity to review and discuss specific requests for concrete training gaps. **BS** proposes to review use of the NPM training package alongside IMB documentation and updates to the internal IMB Handbook, and potential work with ICVs, to identify needs in summer 2025.

All agree to keep on the agenda and review.

7 Update on Subgroup meetings with DoJ and DoH

RL gave oral update of the meetings that followed publication of the 15th NPM Annual Report in December 2024. Meetings with Peter May (Permanent Secretary, Department of Health) and Mark Goodfellow and Beverley Wall (Director Safer Communities and Director Reducing Offending & Northern Ireland Prison Service) were useful to launch key issues and pave the way for future correspondence as they are familiarised with the Subgroup’s work. Conversation about joint working between Health and Justice indicated that both Departments understand that joint work on early intervention is essential. **SG** remarks on positive visibility for the NISG which is only 2 years old and in a good place to build from.

Following the meeting with SPOCs in September, **RL** has shared information on the recruitment of Scottish monitors with John Chittick, to support IMB recruitment.

8 Stakeholder event 2025

JK raised that planning needs to commence for the public awareness-raising event in September, requesting expressions of interest in forming the agenda and supporting coordination.

JK to coordinate a meeting with **RL**, **WM** and **JD** in March/April 2025 to determine:

- Speakers
- the personality disorder report (see item 11)
- venue and hosting

Potential speaker to invite is the author of RQIA’s paper on personality disorder, Dr Mandy Irvine.

All agree to set a date at the next meeting.

All agree to advise JK of clashes in September.

9 Update on RQIA’s state of the nation report

WM gave oral update about the report, which will cover how many people are under guardianship and how many under the Mental Health Order, and delays in transfer from prison. It will include ECR transfers to high secure facilities (as there is not one in NI) – women to Rampton, men to Carstairs.

NM has delivered a piece on admittance to hospital and length of stay, delays in discharge.

JPe has covered the number of young people and under-18s on adult wards due to lack of capacity.

ME asks if the report will cover police custody and notifications of SAIs, delays in attendance. **WM** clarifies that it will if RQIA are notified, but the issue is where they are not notified. This will be raised in a meeting launching the report this afternoon.

10 Revised Terms of Reference

All agreed to proposed updates, JK to finalise and upload to website.

11 Personality disorder – case study review

Discussion of the best approach to the thematic case-study review on personality disorder, to publish and launch September 2025.

JD suggests incorporating perspectives of prison officers, how they are impacted day-to-day in terms of behaviour and treatment of prisoners – hypothesis that earlier intervention would have a positive ripple effect by reducing complex demands on officers. **JK** and **JD** to liaise re: qualitative interview with a prison officer.

ME notes that pushback around staff welfare and support was a feature of CJI's inspection of CSUs – this is another opportunity to flag impacts to senior leaders. **JK** to contact **ME** re: individual in CSU.

RL queries the scope of the report – e.g. in police custody there is a delay in assessment for diagnosis, so which case studies could we include from police custody?

WM clarifies scope should apply only to those with confirmed diagnosis, perhaps following an individual with multiple inpatient admissions who was detained in Maghaberry rather than a hospital, due to the lack of provisions for personality disorder in Mental Health Order, whose subsequent transfer to hospital aided their recovery.

ME and **WM** have examples re: support offered by inpatient units. Another potential qualitative interviewee: Dr Irvine, author of previous RQIA report.

All agree that following this person's story, an experience in CSU, and the experiences of a prison officer, will be a powerful basis for research.

JK to coordinate meeting with **RL**, **WM**, **ME** and **JD** to outline scope, process and sources and research ethics for the report.

12 Workplan updates

Information sharing on deaths and serious adverse incidents

CJI now have a system in place to receive information from the Prison Service. Still working with JJC to reach a similar position and form an intelligence picture. **ME** has met with JJC about single separation – ongoing issues with IT and data.

CJI also receiving information from Prisoner Ombudsman on prison incidents. Receive routine information from prison service, but Ombudsman information covers notifications received, including post-release. However, still receiving different information from different sources (i.e. the prison, the ombudsman and RQIA) exposing some gaps in routine information sharing.

Still finalising Police Custody follow up review reports. **RL** met with Director of Impact from the Office of the Police Ombudsman NI last week. Ongoing work to determine scope of information shared and a similar system of sharing as established with the Prisoner Ombudsman. **RL** continuing work to finalise Police Custody follow up review reports.

All agreed that RQIA should routinely share any notifications they receive with CJI in case of a gap in provision from the Prisoner Ombudsman or Prison Service. **Action WM and NM**

RL and **ME** continuing work to solve issue of provision of information from Court Custody, **RL** working on details.

WM to share RQIA's data tracking system with CJI. Probably a sit-down session. To organise with **RL** and **ME**.

Agreed to keep on the agenda: plan for the data once all received.

Personality disorder

Covered above.

Adult safeguarding in places of detention

An ongoing issue in social care is the question of which Trust takes responsibility. This causes roadblocks in getting appropriate support in place in prisons, e.g. for older prisoners needing increased care and support. Needs action from the Department of Health. Department of Justice have been clear in their view that social care bureaucracy complicates responsibility from Trust's re: safeguarding support. **ME** has met with the Governor of Hydebank Wood re: a more comprehensive action plan following a concern over quality of safeguarding investigations.

Additions to the workplan

JD raises issue of prisoners held over tariff: with courses unavailable to provide and prove rehabilitation this is an increasing issue with some held significantly over tariff due to lack of accessibility. Increasing frustrations about this process then leads to more adjudications, which also affects release.

A CJI inspection of Parole commissioners found that 28% of the released population is then recalled and described significant issues with delivery of the Prisoner Development Unit process, meaning Commissioners consider far lower proportion for release than in other jurisdictions.

Agree to keep under review, JK to present ongoing research on indeterminate detention at the next Northern Ireland Subgroup meeting.

13	NPM central team update	SG
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SG gave oral update on impact review of 2023-25 Business Plan and the work in the last quarter.

Demonstration of recommendations database and information re: Phase 2 which will look at whether recommendations are implemented and fulfilled, provisionally slated for 2026-27. This will also capture good practice to show how to improve. Clarification that recommendations include international reports and repeat recommendations. A version will be available for NPM bodies and another for the public as a resource for civil society organisations.

The 2025–26 Business Plan will go to NPM bodies for comment in advance of the Conference, with a view to agree and adopt at the conference.

14 AOB All

Discussed the NPM Northern Ireland Subgroup update at the NPM conference in April, to be delivered by **RL**.

JK disseminated NPM/Edinburgh Law School hard-copy guidance on monitoring environmental conditions of detention.

WM delighted that Joanne and Nicola are joining the Subgroup from RQIA to represent children's and other settings, and to increase joint work with **JK** in central team. **JPe** will provide input re: children for September's Subgroup meeting. **SG** notes that Scotland is looking at alternatives to police custody for children. **SG** to put relevant contacts in touch with **JPe**.

Record of agreements and decisions

Task	Lead	Status
Minutes of NISG meeting of 12 December agreed as a true and accurate record		
RL will invite NICCY in advance of the September meeting, all to give advance consideration of issues relating to children.	RL, all	
WM will set up link-in mechanism with DoH representative in the new year.	WM	
RL to follow up on a copy of the final Marie-Curie report.	RL	2 April 2025: Delay to publishing due to illness of the lead researcher. However, a summary of key findings is available here under "Session 5: Addressing inequalities in palliative and end of life care (approx.. 1:39:00). A summary by RL shared by email on 28 April 2025.
SG to circulate his update to the Steering Group and the NPM definition of detention and definition procedure to the Subgroup	SG	
JD and HR to liaise re: a potential NIHRC walk-around with IMBs	JD, HR	
All agree to keep IMB guidance/training on the agenda and review.		
JK to coordinate a meeting with RL, WM and JD in March/April 2025	JK	
All agree to set the date of the Awareness Raising Event (September) in June's Subgroup meeting. All to advise JK of clashes in September.	All	
All agreed to proposed updates to ToR, JK to finalise and upload to website.	JK	
JK and JD to liaise re: qualitative interview with a prison officer. JK to contact ME re: individual in CSU	JK, JD, ME	
All agree that following a person's story in Maghaberry and inpatient unit, an experience in CSU, and the experiences of a prison officer, will be a powerful basis for research.		
JK to coordinate meeting with RL, WM, ME and JD to outline scope, process and sources and research ethics for the report.	JK	
All agreed that RQIA should routinely share any notifications they receive with CJI in case of a gap in provision from Ombudsman or Prison Service.	WM and NM	
RL and ME continuing work to solve issue of provision of information from Court Custody.		
RL continuing work to finalise Police Custody follow up review reports, and the scope of information to share from police custody. Engagement from Policing Ombudsman to share information, RL working on details.	RL	
WM to share RQIA's data tracking system with CJI. Probably a sit-down session. To organise with RL and ME .	WM	
Agreed to keep on the agenda: plan for the data once all received.		
Agreed to keep issue of prisoners held over tariff under review for the workplan		
JK to present ongoing research on indeterminate detention at the next Northern Ireland Subgroup meeting.	JK	
JPe will provide input re: children for September's Subgroup meeting.	JPe	
SG to put relevant contacts in touch with JPe .	SG	