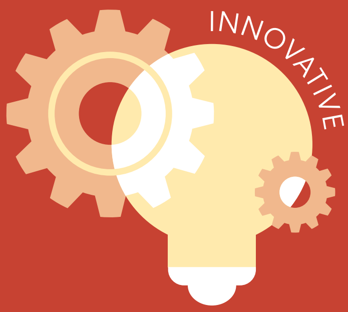
police Ombudsman
FOR NORTHERN IRELAND



ANNUAL REPORT
& ACCOUNTS

2025-26

ANNUAL REPORT AND ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2026

Together with the Certificate and Report of the Comptroller and Auditor General for Northern Ireland

The Annual Report is laid before the Northern Ireland Assembly by the Department of Justice in accordance with section 61(5)(a) of the Police (Northern Ireland) Act 1998. The Statement of Accounts together with the report of the Comptroller and Auditor General for Northern Ireland are laid before the Assembly in accordance with paragraph 12(2) of Schedule 3 to that Act (as amended by the Northern Ireland Act 1998 (Devolution of Policing and Justice Functions) Order 2010).

on

02 July 2026.

Glossary of Abbreviations

AME	Annual Managed Expenditure
APSP	Abuse of Powers for Sexual Purpose
ARC	Audit and Risk Committee
C&AG	Comptroller and Auditor General
CARE	Career Average Related Earnings
CETV	Cash Equivalent Transfer Value
CJINI	Criminal Justice Inspectorate NI
CPI	Consumer Prices Index
CSP	Civil Service Pensions
DAERA	Department of Agricultural, Environment and Rural Affairs
DEL	Departmental Expenditure Limit
DoF	Department of Finance
DoJ	Department of Justice
ELT	Executive Leadership Team
FOI	Freedom of Information
FReM	Financial Reporting Manual
HMT	His Majesty's Treasury
ICRIR	Independent Commission for Reconciliation and Information Recovery
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
MSFM	Management Statement and Financial Memorandum
MPMNI	Managing Public Money NI
NDPB	Non Departmental Public Body
NIAO	Northern Ireland Audit Office
NIPB	Northern Ireland Policing Board
NPM	National Preventative Mechanism
OBI	Omagh Bombing Inquiry
PCSPS	Principal Civil Service Pension Scheme
PPS	Public Prosecution Service
PSNI	Police Service of Northern Ireland
RTTCWG	Report to those Charged with Governance
SAR	Subject Access Request
SCS	Senior Civil Service
SIRO	Senior Information Responsible Officer
TME	Total Managed Expenditure.

Index to the Annual Report and Accounts

Foreword by Chief Executive Officer

This report is unusual in that for the first time since the inception of the Office of the Police Ombudsman there is no sitting Ombudsman. In June 2025, Marie Anderson, the then Ombudsman, announced her intention to retire in advance of the official end of her tenure in July 2026. Prior to her retirement on 31 December 2025 and in accordance with the applicable statutory scheme the Police Ombudsman delegated her authority to me as Chief Executive along with some senior staff as she deemed appropriate.

I am immensely grateful to the members of the Executive Leadership Team and staff across the Office who in Marie's absence have taken on additional responsibilities to ensure we continue delivering the vital functions required for an effective and efficient independent police complaints system.

And despite the challenges this year, we have made considerable progress transforming the operating model for the Office to meet the challenges of contemporary policing oversight.

Our work today is significantly different from what it was 25 years ago. As our operating environment evolves, driven by changes in technology, society, and the police themselves, so too must we change if we are to remain relevant and effective.

This year we refreshed and embedded our Values to ensure our culture is representative of today's demands. We have successfully completed a procurement process for a new digital case management system that will provide opportunities for innovation and efficiency and have also completed a five-year review of legislation which we believe provides a framework for policing oversight that would modernise our service to the benefit of the public and police officers alike.

Operational demands remain very high, and the nature of our investigations is changing too. Whilst the number of complaints we have received showed a small reduction, the number of allegations within those complaints continues to rise. In addition, the number of referrals received from the Chief Constable and Police Ombudsman self-initiated investigations have risen significantly. A combination of these factors has led to a tangible increase in the complexity of our investigations and increased harm experienced by the victims who engage with us.

Supporting the Northern Ireland Executive's Ending Violence against Woman and Girls Strategy remains a key priority for the Office. This year we completed several investigations into relevant allegations against police officers. These ranged from the sending of misogynistic messages, through to the active abuse of their position by police officers to take sexual advantage of women. The growing volume of these investigations and our experience of investigating alleged police predatory behaviour allowed us to produce and publish an in-depth analysis of such cases across a seven-year period (2018 – 2024). It highlighted the often-significant vulnerabilities of the 36 victims identified in the cases and builds a picture of the characteristics of the police officers involved.

Whilst developing and publishing this analysis is an important innovation for the Office, we can achieve little change within policing unless we work collaboratively with other statutory bodies such as the Policing Board, the Department of Justice and the PSNI themselves. These bodies can use our insights to change policing culture, strengthen internal controls and inform police leaders of indicative predatory behaviours. Similarly, by working with groups such as Victim Support NI and Women's Aid, we can better identify and support victims of violence and ensure our service matches their needs. We have made good progress this year sharing and collaborating with others and in 2026-2027 we aim to develop our ability to share insights and work more collaboratively.

In the meantime, our active investigations continue at pace and volume. We currently have 34 ongoing investigations relating to Abuse of Position for Sexual Purposes. In December 2025, we confirmed that following a complaint and the commencement of a criminal investigation, staff from the Police Ombudsman's Office had arrested a former PSNI officer for 10 non-recent offences alleged to have been committed while he was on-duty and a serving police officer. These included rape, other sexual offences, and misconduct in public office. Investigators have subsequently identified multiple potential victims, together with a substantial number of witnesses.

As the victim impact, scale and complexity of the investigation have become clear, we are now working to ensure that this investigation is carried out in the timeliest manner possible. We, therefore, allocated all available resources to ensure it will be victim-centred, effective and efficient.

However, our resources are finite, and this means that the timeliness of our other casework may be affected. However, this is the reality of balancing the demands of our complaints across the Office with the need to progress this complex and expanding investigation. If we do not prioritise now, in the long term we risk compromising the service we provide to complainants and victims, and public confidence in this office and the PSNI.

Despite changes to the legislation surrounding the investigation of legacy matters the Police Ombudsman retains a statutory remit for reporting on some residual cases involving police officers. This year former Ombudsman Marie Anderson completed and published her findings in relation into three major investigations. Ongoing criminal proceedings in one legacy case precludes the publication of any associated findings currently. However, two further legacy cases remain outstanding but cannot be completed until a new Ombudsman is appointed. This will be disappointing for those affected and their families, but the allegations are so serious that I believe they require the independent assessment of a sitting Ombudsman.

Separate to our statutory role investigating legacy cases we have an ongoing demand to service requests for information from the ICRIR, Coroners Court, Public Inquiries and others. This demand for the provision of information is already placing a pressure on our resources and demands are likely to increase further in 2026-2027. However, no funding is provided to support these additional expectations that are beyond our statutory function as a Police Ombudsman. We, like other bodies in the Justice Sector, cannot continue to absorb those costs without proper and adequate funding from the Northern Ireland Office. Failure to do so will inevitably lead to diminution of our ability to deal with current complaints about poor policing.

Hugh Hume
Chief Executive

Performance Overview

The purpose of this overview section is to provide an understanding of the Office of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland. It also outlines the Office's key objectives and performance against those objectives during the 2025-26 financial year and highlights the key issues and risks identified by senior management.

Purpose and Activities of the Office

Statutory Duties and Background

The Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland was established under the Police (Northern Ireland) Act 1998. It was created on 6 November 2000 by virtue of the Police (Northern Ireland) Act 1998 (Commencement) Order (Northern Ireland) 2000. It is an Executive Non-Departmental Public Body (NDPB) of the Department of Justice (DoJ). In law, the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland is a corporation sole and has a personal jurisdiction. The Office is not accountable to a board and has an Audit and Risk Committee who advise on the strategic processes for risk control and governance and provide a strategic level of governance in the oversight and stewardship of funds and in the general functioning of the Office.

The Office of the Police Ombudsman is constituted and operates independently of the DoJ, the Northern Ireland Policing Board (NIPB) and the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI). The Office is accountable to the Northern Ireland Assembly and is required to take into account all relevant guidance given by the Department of Finance (DoF) and the DoJ.

Principal Functions

The Office of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland (the Office) provides an independent, police complaints system for the public and police of Northern Ireland. The Office investigates complaints about the Police Service of Northern Ireland, the Belfast Harbour Police, the Belfast International Airport police, National Crime Agency (NCA) officers in Northern Ireland and Ministry of Defence Police in Northern Ireland. The Office also undertakes investigations into serious complaints of criminality by Immigration Officers and Designated Customs officials when exercising police powers in Northern Ireland as well as officers from the Independent Commission for Reconciliation and Information Recovery (ICRIR). These complaints are dealt with through a legal agreement developed jointly with the Home Office and Department of Justice.

The Police Ombudsman investigates complaints about the conduct of police officers and, where appropriate, makes recommendations in respect of criminal and misconduct matters. The Police Ombudsman also investigates matters referred to her by certain bodies, where appropriate, and reports on these matters to the DoJ, the NIPB and the Chief Constable. In addition, the Police Ombudsman may commence an investigation on her own motion in relation to certain matters where it appears that a member of the police force may have committed a criminal offence or misconduct, and she believes it is in the public interest to do so. The Office publishes statements and makes policy recommendations aimed at improving policing within Northern Ireland. She also provides statistical reports for management purposes to the PSNI and to the Northern Ireland Policing Board (NIPB) and provides management information to the DoJ.

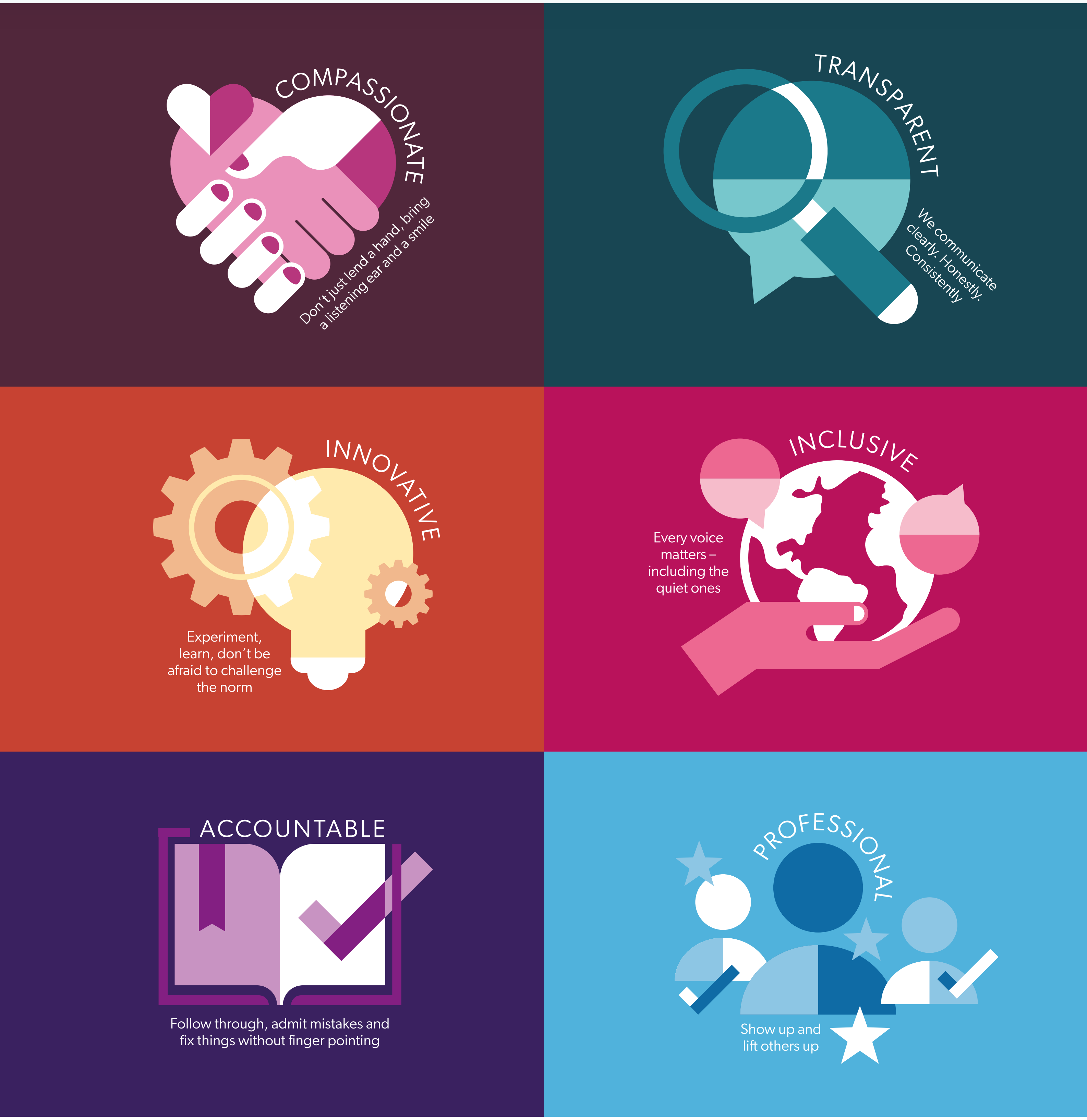
Our Vision, Mission and Values

Our vision is that the public and police have trust and confidence in the independent investigation of police complaints by the Police Ombudsman.

Our mission is that through the recommendations and outcomes of our investigations, police are held to account and policing standards and conduct are improved.

Values

As outlined in the previous annual report a piece of work had been commenced to refresh our Values and ensure they reflect the Office as it progressed through transformational change. This piece of work was completed during this reporting period with staff consulted widely via a number of engagement sessions. The refresh in the Values was about creating a culture where everyone can thrive, feel proud of the work we do and deliver our best for the people we serve.



Throughout the year there has been ongoing communication and highlighting of these Values via a number of methods including; a launch video with both the CEO and staff taking part, a 'Value of the month' update on our intranet with examples given of how this Value is being lived, incorporation at staff 'Connection' days and posters displayed across the Office.

Our 2024-2027 Strategy

In 2024, we launched our 2024-27 strategic plan and this reporting period represents the second year of that plan. The 2024-27 strategy explains what our priorities will be and what we hope to achieve. It sets out the actions we aim to take over that period and how we will measure success. These actions are influenced by the changing nature of Northern Ireland society, the 2023 Act relating to the investigation of Legacy Cases and the Northern Ireland Executive's priorities contained in the draft Programme for Government. It remains an ambitious plan and outlines five strategic objectives:

- Objective 1: Deliver the Transformational Change Programme, ensuring effective communication internally and externally on its progress.
- Objective 2: Continue to provide a high quality human rights compliant complaints and investigation service that achieves fair and appropriate outcomes for the public and police.
- Objective 3: Support, value and invest in our staff and maximise growth in the areas of leadership, learning and development and standards.
- Objective 4: Establish and maintain effective external relationships with stakeholders in a consistent, fair and lawful manner.
- Objective 5: Be ethical and accountable for our service delivery and use of resources including human, financial and other resources and to ensure sustainability for the Office in order to protect those resources and the environment.

2025-2026 Business Plan

For the 2025-26 business year, four core objectives were developed to contribute to the strategic objectives and with a focus on the 2025-26 reporting period, building on progress made during year one of the three year strategic plan. The business objectives contained in the 2025-26 business plan are:

Business Objective 1: To deliver contemporary efficient and effective policing oversight that ensures the public and members of the Police Service of Northern Ireland have confidence in our service;

Business Objective 2: To improve victims and survivors' confidence in the justice system and support the Executive Office Ending Violence against Woman and Girls strategy;

Business Objective 3: To support the Programme for Government priority for Safer Communities and through the analysis of our complaints identify opportunities to improve sharing of insights to inform ourselves, partners etc.; and

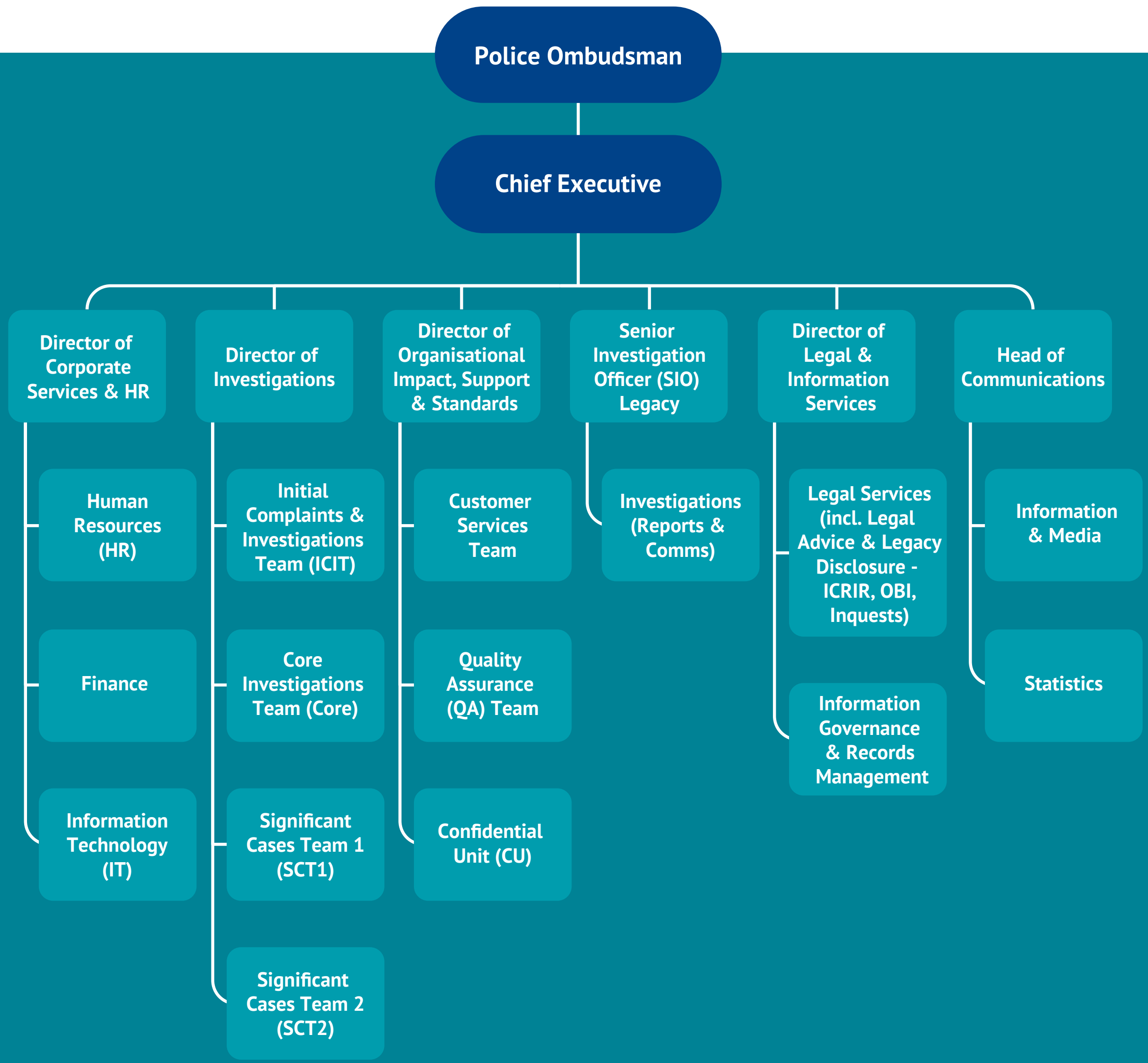
Business Objective 4: To transform our operating model to reflect current fiscal realities, digital opportunities and best international practice, improving our effectiveness, and enhancing the confidence in our service/Office.

Progress against these objectives are outlined in pages 22-42.

It is relevant to also note the ongoing projects managed by the Transformational Change Programme Board contributing to these objectives. These projects are outlined below and form part of the progress against objectives outlined in the Performance Analysis section:

- Digital Transformation
- Maximising impact of our work
- Our People Strategy
- Engagement and Partnership
- Legacy Operations
- New Offices
- New Legislation.

Organisational Structure



Our Departments

Investigations Department

The Investigations Department is responsible for undertaking all investigations, which are within the remit of the Office. The majority of our investigations begin following receipt of complaints from members of the public. However, the Office can also receive referrals from the Chief Constable, Director of Public Prosecutions, NIPB, Secretary of State or the DoJ. The Police Ombudsman also has a statutory 'own motion' power to commence investigations where there is no public complaint or referral from another body.

The Investigations Department investigates matters that have occurred within 12 months of the subject of complaint or referral. An additional statutory gateway allows the Police Ombudsman to investigate 'grave or exceptional' matters that occurred more than 12 months previously.

Investigations are categorised into A, B or C, dependent on the nature and complexity of the matters involved. Category A cases are the most serious and include loss of life or serious injury, serious sexual assault, serious corruption (including policy predatory behaviour), and discharge of firearms. Category B cases will consider allegations such as use of force that has caused physical injury, that an officer has committed theft or fraud or neglect of duty. However, complaints in Category C make up the vast majority of the complaints received by the Office and can range from allegations that an officer was rude or behaved unfairly, to complaints about failure to investigate in a timely manner or neglect of duty linked to less serious crimes.

In 2025-26, 3,037 complaints were received by the Office, a 2% decrease compared with the previous year. This ends an upwards trajectory of complaints which was evident from 2021-22 through to 2023-24. These complaints contained 5,463 allegations which is a 3% increase in allegations compared to the previous year and the second highest number of allegations received in each of the last five years.

During 2025-26 the Police Ombudsman instigated an 'own motion' investigation 17 times (an investigation where there is no public complaint or referral from another body), 11 more than the previous year, and received 23 Chief Constable referrals which is 12 more than the previous year.

Further details on statistics relating to our investigations are outlined in the Performance Analysis Section.

During 2025-26 the Office' awarded a contract to supply a new Case Management System (CMS), that is, a digital platform through which all complaints received by the Office are tracked, managed and organised. It is anticipated this system will be implemented by November 2026.

The Investigations Department has been impacted by staff turnover outlined later in the report with a number of experienced staff leaving the Office and time taken to recruit new staff. Further detailed outline of performance against objectives is provided in the Performance Analysis section of the report.

Legacy Department

The Legacy Act, which ended the Office's remit for undertaking investigations into Troubles- related matters on 1 May 2024 was reported in the previous annual report and accounts.

However, the introduction of new transitional arrangements under the Act allowed for the completion of reports and related administrative tasks in cases where investigations had concluded by 30 April 2025. An extension to the transitional provisions made under the Northern Ireland Troubles (Legacy and Reconciliation) Act 2023 provides that the Office can carry out post investigative tasks. This was previously extended until 30 April 2026 and has recently been extended further until 31 October 2026.

During 2025-26 eight legacy reports were issued along with one historical report. Ongoing criminal proceedings in one legacy case precludes the publication of any associated findings currently and two further legacy cases remain outstanding but cannot be completed until a new Ombudsman is appointed.

Legal and Information Department

Legal Services provides advice and guidance to the Police Ombudsman, Chief Executive and ELT on all legal matters as well as providing legal advice to investigation teams and ensuring investigative and corporate decisions are based on sound legal foundation. The Department also ensures effective delivery of the obligations on the Office for effective disclosure to the Coroner's and other third party requests for access to information. Lawyers in legal services also provide legal representation and have conduct of legal proceedings on behalf of the Office.

As a core participant in the Omagh Bombing Inquiry ('OBI'), the Office is required to comply with directions from the Inquiry. This includes having conduct of the legal proceedings, representation at hearings, filing comprehensive submissions, drafting statements and providing disclosure in relation to the terms of reference of the OBI. This is a key area of work for the Legal Department which demands significant resource both in terms of time and financial expenditure. There is no funding provided to the Office and in turn the Department to resource the work required for the OBI. This is in addition to ongoing and expected increasing disclosure requirements to ICRIR and non-troubles related requests. The Director of Legal has introduced a financial governance framework for the briefing of external counsel by utilising the Government Legal Services Civil Panel to provide greater transparency and accountability around external legal fees.

As the work in the Department has continued to increase and evolve, a review of the structure of the Department began in 2024-25 and continued into this year. Due to the increasing work demands within the Department a number of Disclosure Officers have been recruited as well as a Records and Information Governance Officer and the Office is currently recruiting for permanent lawyers.

Impact, Standards & Support Department

The Impact Standards & Support Directorate is made up of three discrete departments – Customer Services, Quality Assurance and the Confidential Unit. Each of these plays an important role in the business.

The Customer Services team receives every complaint into the Office, staff here evaluate each complaint to ensure it is within our remit and allocates them to the appropriate team for investigation or closes them as appropriate. The informal resolution process – whereby complaints that are suitable to be dealt with without a formal investigation are referred to PSNI to address – is also managed by this team.

Customer Services also oversees complaints made about the service provided by the Office. In 2025-26 we undertook a review of this process with a view to refining and improving it in 2026-27.

The Quality Assurance team is responsible for overseeing the quality of the work done in the Office. In 2025-26 this included a review of the quality of correspondence with feedback and lessons learned shared with teams.

The Confidential Unit manages sensitive material for the Office. In 2025-26 we began implementing our strategy to improve digital capability and capacity and this work will continue in the coming year. We also expanded the headcount of the team in order to meet growing demand.

Our Analysts undertook work on key reviews, most notably the report on the emerging findings from a review of APSP (Abuse of Position for Sexual Purposes) cases. This work was externally reviewed and published in March 2026. The report provided a unique insight into the trends and emerging themes from this review and received much media and political attention. We will continue to build on this work in 2026-27.

Corporate Services Department

Corporate Services Department comprises the Human Resources, Finance and IT teams as well as the Accommodation project.

Following a period of significant staff turnover, particularly affecting the Finance team in previous reporting periods, this year has seen a decrease in turnover in the Department along with a number of permanent posts confirmed, including a Head of Finance.

This has resulted in resilience increasing and with further restructuring planned in the coming months this is set to continue. Significant work has been undertaken in the team to update policies and processes. An updated and more modern Finance system has also been procured in-year and this will be in place early in the new reporting period which will bring ongoing efficiencies to the team. There have been a number of significant procurement processes also supported by the Finance team, not least that for the development of a new Case Management system along with a number of other areas which add value to the Office.

The 2025-26 financial year remained a busy year for recruitment, managed by the Human Resources team. Successful recruitment campaigns for posts including Investigation Officers, Administrative Officers, Disclosure Officers and IT staff were among those carried out. This has resulted in the number of Agency staff and staff in temporary promotion posts reducing significantly. The HR team also co-ordinated a large induction programme to incorporate all the new staff and assist in successful onboarding for new staff. Absence figures have continued to reduce during this period and the HR staff work with line managers in the management of staff absence. In terms of Learning and Development, a number of training interventions occurred during the year with a focus on wellbeing for all staff, involving courses covering resilience and group reflective practice. Operational training along with dedicated training for various departments was sourced and delivered as required. Significant work has been completed, working with the Investigations and Finance teams on the development of a business case for a Professionalising Investigation Programme and this is now being progressed with Central Procurement Division (CPD) with a view to commencing in the 2026-27 reporting period.

The IT team delivers, implements and monitors networks, IT hardware and Line of Business Applications. During the period of review permanent appointments were made to the roles in the IT team further creating resilience in the small team. ICT system capabilities in support of business development and service improvement are provided by the team and during the period of review health checks have been completed enabling ongoing accreditation and a number of IT solutions have been researched and provided to assist business needs. There is also significant input from the IT team into new and updated systems, and this includes the new Case Management and finance systems.

Accommodation

The Office has been located in New Cathedral Buildings since it's inception in 2000. The option of relocating has been a consideration for some time to ensure efficient utilisation of space in line with standards aspired to in the Asset Management Strategy. This has been further impacted by hybrid working which reduces the number of staff on premises.

We are working to identify suitable options to enable a shift to a modern, open-plan working environment supported by digital technology expected to foster a culture of enhanced collaboration, engagement and efficiency.

This project has proven to be complex and has faced a number of barriers which has caused unavoidable delays. While significant progress has been made in year, unfortunately a business case seeking approval for a 12 month lease extension in the current building was not approved. This has resulted in notification of irregular expenditure, details of which are provided on page 70.

Key Issues and Risks facing the Office

The Office seeks to identify significant strategic risks that could prevent us achieving our key strategic objective and assess and manage these through mitigation and risk reduction activities. The risk register is reviewed by the Executive Leadership Team on a regular basis and is presented to our Audit and Risk Assurance Committee (ARC) at each quarterly meeting.

The key strategic risks facing the Office during 2025-26 were:

Risk Area	Impact
Budget	Insufficient funding for the Office leading to non-alignment with key strategic objectives
Capability and Capacity	High turnover of staff in investigations teams and a significant number of staff with the Office for less than 12 months impacting outcomes
IT capability	Effective IT systems not in place impacting on the Office ability to function effectively
Historical Investigation Reporting	Ability to deliver on commitments made in respect of the outcomes of history investigations completed before 31 March 2025 via public statements, Regulation 20 reports and other closure correspondence
Legal obligation	Insufficient capacity and capability to deal with Legal requirements including ICRIR and Omagh bombing inquiry disclosure along with Legacy inquests and ongoing legal advice
Uncertainty around accommodation	Current lease ends with no alternative premises secured
Corporate Governance oversight	Governance structures / policies and procedures are not fit for purpose and do not support the sufficient quality assurance processes
Information governance / Cyber Security	A lack of Information Security could lead to an incident impacting on the Office
Confidence in the Office of the Police Ombudsman	A range of issues including the absence of a Police Ombudsman could impact on the Office
Critical Incident	The declared critical incident is not manageable with the resources of the Office or investigation is not as robust as it requires

Further details in relation to the risks faced by the Office and how these are mitigated are provided in the Performance Analysis section. The Governance Statement also provides an overview of the Office's risk management and internal control system.

Going Concern basis

The Office draws cash resource from the DoJ on the basis of need to pay and not as costs are accrued. Consequently, at the end of the financial year the Office had net current liabilities of £1,022,373 for year ended March 2026. It is considered appropriate to adopt a going concern basis for the preparation of the financial statements as the Office is financed through Grant in Aid from the DoJ which draws its fund from the Consolidated Fund. Therefore, there is no anticipated liquidity risk in respect of the liabilities due in future years.

Performance Summary 2025 – 2026 and Forward Look.

2025-26 was the second year of the 2024-27 Corporate Plan which set out five strategic objectives for the three year period.

Each year we produce an annual business plan to support the achievement of the overarching Corporate Plan and we use a Balanced Scorecard approach to assess the evaluation and delivery of the annual business plan. The objectives of the 2025-26 business plan are outlined in page 13. The Performance Analysis section below shows the Balanced Scorecard for 2025-26, the actions contained in it and how the Office performed against each one.

Going into 2026-27 a business plan to support the third and final year of the 2024-27 Corporate Plan will be developed.

PERFORMANCE ANALYSIS

Operational Performance

The 2025-26 objectives for the Office outlined on page 13 are driven by our vision and values and are also influenced by the changing nature of Northern Ireland society, the new legislation relating to the investigation of Legacy Cases and the Northern Ireland Executive's priorities contained in the Programme for Government. These objectives are:

- Deliver contemporary efficient and effective policing oversight that ensures the public and members of the Police Service of Northern Ireland have confident in our service.
- Improve victim's and survivor's confidence in the justice system and support the Executive Office ending violence against Woman and Girls strategy
- Support the Programme for Government priority for Safer Communities and through the analysis of our complaints identify opportunities to improve sharing of insights to inform ourselves, partners etc
- Transform our operating model to reflect current fiscal realities, digital opportunities and best international practice, improving our effectiveness, and enhancing the confidence of in our Office.

The Office measures performance against objectives outlined in the Business Plan using a balanced scorecard to aid reporting. Progress is updated each month by members of ELT and included as a standing item on monthly ELT meetings. Updates are also provided to the DOJ on a quarterly basis.

The performance against the 2025-26 Business Plan Outcomes is summarised in the table that follows:

Objective 1: To deliver contemporary efficient and effective policing oversight that ensures the public and members of the Police Service of Northern Ireland have confidence in our service.		
Action / Target	**Key Performance Indicator Progress**	**Year End Status**
To be transparent, accountable and ethical in our service delivery and use of public funds.	2024-25 Annual Report and Accounts laid in Assembly 04 July 2025. Audit Report on Governance took place with recommendations implemented. Monthly management accounts produced on a timely basis. Finance team undergoing restructuring with a new finance system due to go live in early 2026-27. Partnership Agreement not progressed – outside of PONI control.	Achieved (with exception of areas outside of OPONI control)
To ensure that information assurance and security practices are embedded within the Office.	A Data Breach Working Group has been established to ensure the completion of all the recommendations made by the independent reviewer's investigation of the PONI Data Breach in August 2024. The Group reports to the Information Assurance and Security Group and going forward will be rebranded as a Data Incident Forum. The Retention and Disposal Schedule was formally approved by the NI Assembly in January 2026. Schedule is now fully operational. All necessary IT health checks are in place.	Achieved.

Objective 2: To improve victims and survivors' confidence in the justice system and support The Executive Office Ending Violence against Women and Girls		
Action / Target	**Key Performance Indicator Progress**	**Year End Status**
To develop a strategy for enhancing our capacity and capability to deal effectively with Police Predatory Behaviour	Section 61 Report into the Abuse of Position for Sexual Purposes (APSP) by PSNI Officers: Analysis and Emerging Findings was published on 3 March 2026 CJNI Inspection Recommendations monitored and reported on.	Achieved (with exception of areas outside of OPONI control)
To enhance the quality and accountability of the service we provide to the public and police officers, by improving our processes and benchmarking our performance..	Review of correspondence was taken forward by Quality Assurance Team and managed through Transformation Change Programme Board. Interim report tabled with ongoing meetings with internal stakeholders and focus groups taking place. Draft report produced and development of an implementation plan to introduce appropriate recommendations commenced. Review of Policy and report to be produced.	Achieved

Objective 3: Supporting the Programme for Government priority for Safer Communities and through the analysis of our complaints, identify opportunities to improve sharing of insights to information ourselves partners etc.		
Action / Target	**Key Performance Indicator Progress**	**Year End Status**
Through analysis of our data, we will identify thematic areas for improvement within policing and share our insights with stakeholders and partners.	Meetings held with a number of relevant stakeholders. Internal group constituted to take forward work on quality including policy recommendations. Terms of Reference agreed.	Achieved
Develop a strategic communication, stakeholder and engagement plan.	Managed via the Transformation Change Programme Board. Terms of reference for plan agreed. Communications and engagement plans developed for relevant workstreams and agreed by project boards. Strategic outline for stakeholder engagement strategy completed and Communications plan to support strategic objectives and demonstrate alignment to Programme for Government developed in June 2025. Strategic engagement continuing and Communications work continues to support messaging around strategic priorities ongoing.	Achieved

Objective 4: Transforming our operating model to reflect current fiscal realities, digital opportunities and best international practice, improving our effectiveness, and enhancing the confidence in our service/Office.		
Action / Target	**Key Performance Indicator Progress**	**Year End Status**
To deliver a new Case Management solution that supports the complaints and investigations process.	A contract for a new Case Management System was awarded in February 2026 and this project has moved to delivery phase	Achieved
To establish an operating model for the investigation of Non-Troubles related legacy matters	A workplan was established and reviewed regularly. 2 non-troubles related cases have been completed with substantial work completed on a number of others.	Achieved
To develop a Legacy Operating model to ensure that all residual legacy demands are met including:- Provision of information to the ICRIR Core Participant status at the Omagh Bomb Public Inquiry Compliance with PPS directions in relation to cases were a prosecution has been directed Disclosure of relevant information to inquests The effective management, of all retained information	A Legacy Operations Board was established with a clear Terms of Reference. Recruitment processes and restructuring across the Legal and Information Department to support this work has taken place. Legal Services continues to comply with all legislative requirements and directions of the Omagh Bombing Inquiry in relation to information sharing agreements. An internal Omagh Bombing Inquiry working group has been established. Processes are in place with ICRIR in relation to disclosure protocol. An ongoing audit in Legacy has progressed	Achieved

Objective 4: Transforming our operating model to reflect current fiscal realities, digital opportunities and best international practice, improving our effectiveness, and enhancing the confidence in our service/Office.		
Action / Target	**Key Performance Indicator Progress**	**Year End Status**
To develop a People Strategy to support the Strategic and Corporate Plan.	Terms of Reference for People Strategy project agreed and monitored at Transformation Change Programme Board. Values Framework was rolled out to staff during Summer 2025. Focus groups with staff taking place and People Strategy in development.	Achieved
To relocate the Police Ombudsman's Office to a suitable, modern and sustainable building supporting the vision of a contemporary police oversight organisation.	A preferred premises has been identified and work underway to complete business case with all relevant information and costs. Further lease extension for 12 months to June 2027 agreed for submission by DoJ but not approved by LPS. Ongoing communication with relevant stakeholders.	Still in progress
To undertake a legislative review to develop contemporary legislation for the Police Ombudsman to explore the existing police complaints system and to ensure that the Office keeps apace with local, national and international developments I police oversight and Ombudsman legislation.	Contemporary Legislation Working Group under the Transformational Change Programme. The Contemporary Legislation Group concluded its work on the Five Year Review and the Ombudsman signed off on the Review on 31 December 2025 prior to leaving office. Consultation on the Five Year Review was opened on 4 February 2026 for a period of 8 weeks closing on the 3 April 2026.	Achieved

OBJECTIVE 1

To deliver contemporary efficient and effective policing oversight that ensures the public and members of the Police Service of Northern Ireland have confidence in our service.

During 2025-26 the Office has sought to deliver a contemporary efficient and effective policing oversight. To support the objective we focused on the transparent, accountable and ethical delivery of our service and use of funds. We ensured that our annual report and accounts was laid in Assembly in line with timescales, something that has also been achieved in previous years, with the exception of the 2023-24 financial year. There was also considerable work carried out to review our governance arrangements with the support of an Internal Audit report and ongoing work with our Audit and Risk Non Executive Committee members. Ongoing work in the Finance Department including a restructuring and the procurement of a more efficient finance system took place to further enhance the resilience of this Department. While it was hoped that a Partnership Agreement would be developed, this has not been the case due to resource constraints with our Sponsor body.

As was reported in the 2024-25 annual report and accounts, the Office experienced a data breach in August 2024. A specific target on information assurance and security practices is therefore extremely in important. In the period under review the Data Breach Working Group has continued to function, ensuring that all recommendations made by the independent reviewer's investigation of the breach are complete. The group meets quarterly and reports to the Information Assurance and Security Group which is chaired by the CEO. Going forward this group will be rebranded as a Data Incident forum to continue it's work and also focus on near misses and data incidents to inform ongoing learning.

The Retention and Disposal Schedule was formally approved by the NI Assembly in January 2026 and is now fully operational. Alongside this all necessary IT health checks are in place providing assurance that our processes are secure and effective and ensuring our service delivery is fully supported.

Shooting of cows cleared

By Grainne Ni Aodha
newsdesk@newsletter.co.uk
@News_Letter

Officers acted proportionally in shooting a "highly aggressive" cow as it headed towards a dual carriageway, the police ombudsman has said.

The office of the ombudsman reviewed two incidents that took place in May this year involving cattle being put down.

The ombudsman was notified about both incidents in accordance with established procedures for incidents involving the discharge of police firearms.

It concluded that officers

reviewed body-worn video, footage from police vehicles, and operational logs.

"While initial footage showed that there was only one visible shot, further clarification confirmed that two simultaneous shots were fired to the animal's vital organs due to the distance, safety constraints and the animal's demeanour," the ombudsman said.

"The decision to aim for the body rather than the head, which would have been the preferred option, was made to ensure a swift and humane outcome, in line with operational guidance and veterinary ad-

and the vet identified animals with fractures and unclear conditions.

It was decided that if the vet could not use captive bolt euthanasia, as she was unable to reach or get close to the animal, armed officers would be authorised to use firearms.

Captive bolt euthanasia involves using a gun with a steel bolt, powered by compressed air or a blank cartridge, to cause the rapid loss of consciousness by disrupting brain function.

At 9.42am, a specialist firearms PSNI officer put down one animal in the lower deck of the trailer that was identified as suf-

Riots – police acted with restraint says Ombudsman

The Police Ombudsman has said the PSNI's response to last month's riots was "proportionate" after 32 plastic bullets were fired by officers.

A total of 31 plastic bullets,

A single plastic bullet was fired at nationalist rioters in Derry on June 18.

As part of their response to the riots, the PSNI drafted in mutual aid officers from Scotland as well as deploying dogs and water cannon.

their use.

Hugh Hume, Chief Executive of the Police Ombudsman's Office, said "assessing the police use of force" required "extensive work" that included reviewing more than 100 pieces of body worn video amounting to 20

CASE STUDY

Building confidence through vindication of policing.

Although the most serious cases of misconduct will always make the news headlines, our investigations will often identify good practice on the part of the police and conclude that police officers acted within the law and met the standards of the PSNI Code of Ethics.

Highlighting good work is as important for building confidence in the complaints system and in policing as finding evidence of criminality or misconduct.

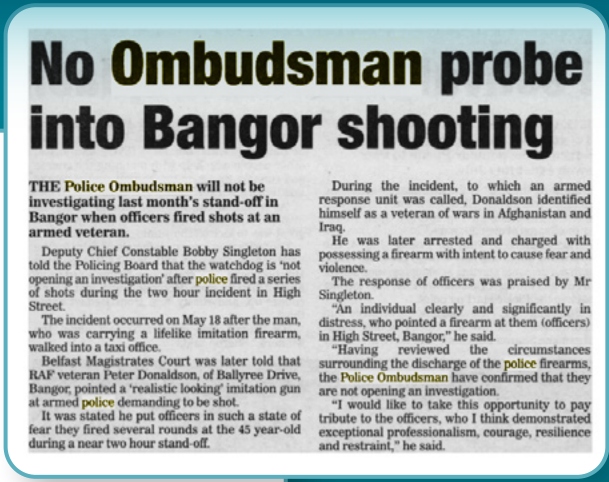
Take a deep dive into our statistics and you'll see that of the 3,037 complaints we received in 2025-2026, we fully investigated 1,286 complaints. That's 43% across the year. And of these fully investigated complaints, we found evidence to substantiate all or part of the complaint - or identified another concern - in 15%. This data is consistent across each of the last five years.

So, when we do not find evidence of wrongdoing, particularly when there has been widespread, negative public commentary on police actions, it's important that we highlight those cases which vindicate police officers.

In the distressing case of a young autistic woman who was physically removed from a shop by four police officers and her father, for example, our investigation found no misconduct by the police officers involved.

When the young woman entered the shop through half-closed shutters, the shop's tills were no longer operational and she was unable to buy a DVD. Shop staff asked the woman, and her mother, to leave.

When the young woman, who is non-verbal, would not leave the shop, the situation escalated and the police were called.



No Ombudsman probe into Bangor shooting

THE Police Ombudsman will not be investigating last month's stand-off in Bangor when officers fired shots at an armed veteran.

Deputy Chief Constable Bobby Singleton has told the Policing Board that the watchdog is 'not opening an investigation' after police fired a series of shots during the two hour incident in High Street.

The incident occurred on May 18 after the man, who was carrying a lifelike imitation firearm, walked into a taxi office.

Belfast Magistrates Court was later told that RAF veteran Peter Donaldson, of Ballyree Drive, Bangor, pointed a 'realistic looking' imitation gun at armed police demanding to be shot.

It was stated he put officers in such a state of fear they fired several rounds at the 45 year-old during a near two hour stand-off.

During the incident, to which an armed response unit was called, Donaldson identified himself as a veteran of wars in Afghanistan and Iraq.

He was later arrested and charged with possessing a firearm with intent to cause fear and violence.

The response of officers was praised by Mr Singleton.

"An individual clearly and significantly in distress, who pointed a firearm at them (officers) in High Street, Bangor," he said.

"Having reviewed the circumstances surrounding the discharge of the police firearms, the Police Ombudsman have confirmed that they are not opening an investigation.

"I would like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to the officers, who I think demonstrated exceptional professionalism, courage, resilience and restraint," he said.

Response by police to toy gun in car not excessive, says report

JONATHAN McCAMBRIDGE

Police in Northern Ireland did not use excessive force when responding to a report of a firearm in a car which turned out to be a water pistol, a report has concluded.

The Police Ombudsman said the incident happened in September 2025 when armed response officers attended reports that a gun had been seen in a car being driven in Belfast.

Investigators concluded that officers had been right to treat the incident as a potentially serious threat.

The office of the ombudsman said body-worn video and CCTV coverage was reviewed, showing he had made a "split-second decision" to pull the complainant to the ground after his left hand moved downwards and he believed it was a high-risk situation.

The investigation found that while this movement was not clearly visible on video footage, the officer's account was consistent with his notebook entry and the recorded motion of his own hands at the time.

Investigators also assessed whether the force used was both necessary and proportionate and concluded that it fell within the bounds of reasonable force.

The ombudsman also examined a complaint about the same officer having used the water pistol at the scene.

Body worn video showed that the first two police officers to arrive discussed the situation with the young woman's parents, made it clear that she needed to leave as the shop was closed, and that their preference was for her parents to remove her.

Her father first encouraged his daughter to leave, and then tried to move her physically.

When this was unsuccessful, officers discussed the most appropriate course of action.

They became physically involved only after the young woman's father continued to experience difficulties managing on his own and, during one attempt to escort the young woman outside, one officer was injured.

Repeated efforts were made and ultimately, when a further two police officers arrived at the shop, the four officers and the young woman's father, carried her out of the shop.

Footage of the young woman being carried out of the shop by police and her father was the subject of significant public commentary. However, when reviewed in its entirety, the body worn video, which included audio, together with CCTV footage, showed that the police officers who recognised from the outset that there was no simple solution and their action was a last resort in an incident which lasted for around 18 minutes from police entering the shop to leaving.

In another incident which received significant publicity, armed response officers responded to reports that a gun had been seen in a car being driven in Belfast and we investigated a complaint about excessive force being used on one of the young men in the car.

However, our investigators found that officers had been right to treat the incident as a potentially serious threat and that police did not use excessive force while responding to what was a credible report of a firearm in a car – subsequently found to have been a toy water pistol.

Body Worn Video and available CCTV coverage was reviewed and our investigators found that police actions fell within the bounds of reasonable force.

Ensuring that the use of force by police was necessary, justified and proportionate was also central to other cases during the year.

For example, a Police Ombudsman review of the PSNI's use of 'Attenuating Energy Projectiles' (AEPs), commonly known as baton rounds, during public disorder in June 2025 concluded that police commanders showed "considerable restraint" in their use of force.

Police used AEPs 32 times on five dates to help control disorder, with each incident subsequently assessed. The review included more than 100 pieces of body worn video, amounting to more than 20 hours of footage. It was clear from the evidence that police commanders did not authorise any use of force until all other options had been exhausted.

CLIP Teen taken from shop

PSNI in clear after autistic teen incident

BY **CONNOR LYNCH**

THE PSNI has issued a statement after the Police Ombudsman ruled there was "no misconduct" regarding an incident where officers removed an autistic teen from a shop.

A video of the incident in Lisburn, Co Antrim, was shared widely on social media in December of 2024 and the incident had been referred to the PONI.

On Tuesday, the Ombudsman ruled that there was no misconduct

We concluded that "in the face of sustained and significant violence, which resulted in multiple police officers being injured, police showed considerable restraint and a consistent, proportionate response."

We also confirmed in June 2025 that there were no grounds to open an investigation into the discharge of firearms by police officers during an incident in Bangor the previous month.

And in two unusual incidents involving cattle loose on major roadways in May 2025 which led to animals being euthanised, we found that police officers adhered to their training, acted proportionally and prioritised public health. Decisions to euthanise the cattle were made in consultation with veterinary professionals and were necessary to protect the public and animal welfare.

We concluded the use of firearms was proportionate, justified, and executed with care and coordination.

OBJECTIVE 2:

To improve victims and survivors' confidence in the justice system and support The Executive Office Ending Violence against Women and Girls

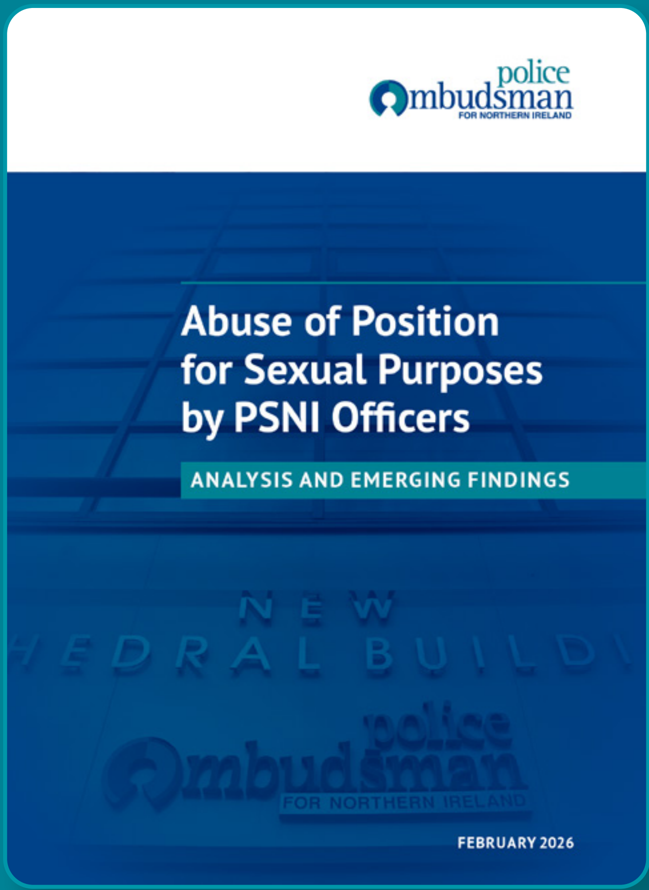
Contributing to the Programme for Government objective of Ending Violence against Women and Girls is a key priority for the Office. During 2025-26 a key target to support this objective was to develop a strategy for enhancing our capacity and capability to deal effectively with Police Predatory Behaviour. During the reporting period a Section 61 Report into the Abuse of Position for Sexual Purposes (APSP) by PSNI Officers was published in March 2026. This report set out the emerging findings of our analysis of APSP cases in the seven years to December 2024. There was a number of key findings, which are outlined in the following case study, which have been presented to a range of stakeholders and there was significant media interest in the report. Work is ongoing to update the findings and we will report further in 2026-2027. The Office also progressed the remaining recommendations to the Office arising from the Criminal Justice Inspectorate Northern Ireland (CJINI) Inspection into Abuse of Position, which were received in March 2025.

Enhancing the quality and accountability of the service we provide to the public and police officers was also a key area of work. This work focused on improving standards of written communication with service users to better explain decisions, findings and recommendations as well as the establishing of a mechanism for the analysis of customer service complaints and user information obtained to improve the customer experience and reduce complaints. This involved collaboration from across the Office with staff from a number of Departments feeding into this work and progress being reported via the Transformational Change Programme Board. This work will continue into the next reporting period with a work group established and work commenced on reviewing policy and implementing recommendations.

CASE STUDY

Ending Violence Against Women and Girls: Milestone Report Published on Police Predatory Behaviour

In February 2026 we published the emerging findings from an analysis of alleged 'abuse of position for sexual purposes' (APSP) by PSNI officers across a seven-year period (2018 – 2024), marking a milestone in our investigations into police predatory behaviour and demonstrating that the Police Ombudsman's work is supporting the Northern Ireland Executive's strategy to end violence against women and girls.



Police predatory behaviour now makes up 30% of the most serious cases being investigated by the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland, a figure which continues to rise.

The report highlighted the often significant vulnerabilities of the 36 victims identified in the cases and built a picture of the characteristics of the police officers involved.

Every victim of alleged predatory police behaviour in the analysis was female and all were vulnerable to some degree. A significant number had multiple vulnerabilities. The most common of 18 vulnerabilities identified in the report, was being a victim of crime, while others also included vulnerabilities as a result of mental health issues, domestic abuse, suicidal ideation or addiction. Some victims were involved in crimes themselves, a fact which made them more vulnerable to exploitation by a police officer.

Commenting on the report, Police Ombudsman Chief Executive, Hugh Hume, said police predatory behaviour is one of the most serious forms of corruption in policing:

"Although this is a small number of officers relative to the size of the PSNI, the abuse of their position for their own sexual gain inflicts significant and long-lasting damage on their victims.

"Such is the power imbalance that many women do not report the offending directly for fear of reprisal and others can be so vulnerable that they do not recognise that the officer is abusing them and instead see him as a 'knight in shining armour' figure.

"Others do not see themselves as victims at all.

"We hope one of the outcomes of publishing this report will be that any woman who has had a similar experience with a police officer will feel reassured that we take this kind of offending seriously and know that if this has happened to them, we will listen and we will investigate."

The review also mapped how the women first encountered police and found it was most commonly in relation to reporting a crime.

- In almost one in three cases, the Police Ombudsman found evidence to suggest that officers made contact with the victim on the same day as their police contact.
- In three cases, the officer had sexual contact with the victim on the same day they met in the course of his duties.
- In a further ten of the investigations, the officer had engaged in sexual contact with the female within a month.
- In two thirds of cases there was a gradual escalation of contact with the victim by the officer over a period. This varied from text and social media messages to visits to the victim's house.
- In one case contact is reported to have taken place over the course of 20 years.
- There was evidence of targeted exploitation of women, with police officers often making inappropriate use of police systems to identify women for sexual exploitation or acquire further information in relation to potential victims.

"The fact that in three cases there was sexual contact between the police officer and the victim in the space of just one day is shocking," said Mr Hume.

"Our findings show that other officers test the boundaries over time, for example by initially friendly texting which then becomes increasingly flirtatious and sexual, leading to a sexual approach.

"Others will make an attempt which is unsuccessful and contact may never become sexual. While that may at first seem to lessen the severity of the behaviour, even the attempt to exploit their trusted position is a breach of an officer's professional standards".

The analysis identified that all the police officers were male, most were constables, aged between 30 and 50, and the majority had a length of service of between zero and ten years. The majority also worked in local policing teams although given these teams make up one of the largest departments in the PSNI, the report notes that this is not an unexpected finding.

The report also reflects the findings of two academics, Fay Sweeting and Terri Cole, who published their research into police officers' abuse of position for sexual purposes in England and Wales in 2023.

In it, they identified two types of offenders, the 'Sharks' and the 'Fishermen'.

The 'Sharks' tend to be younger, more sexualised in their interactions with victims, to choose marginalised women with significant vulnerabilities, to make rapid sexual contact and are more likely to target victims using police systems.

The 'Fishermen' tend to be tentative or exploratory, make careful checks for a 'bite' before reeling a victim in, show evidence of 'grooming behaviour' and to be older with more service in the police.

The Police Ombudsman analysis has identified a third emerging category of the 'Gull' who tends to be reactive, unplanned and opportunistic, shows no evidence of a pattern of repeat behaviour, may still be in the relationship with the victim who is less likely to report and less likely to consider themselves as a victim. This will, however, be tested as analysis of further cases takes place in the future.

We also confirmed that at that time, we were investigating allegations of police predatory behaviour which involved a total of 39 victims and 20 serving and two former police officers, cases which continue to rise.

We reported that the majority of new cases were being referred by the PSNI, showing a very clear willingness at the most senior level to identify and eradicate this kind of behaviour.

The report's emerging findings will continue to be tested against the outcomes of more investigations as they conclude.

OBJECTIVE 3

Supporting the Programme for Government priority for Safer Communities and through the analysis of our complaints, identify opportunities to improve sharing of insights to inform ourselves, partners etc.

During 2025-26 supporting the Programme for Government objective for Safer Communities also remained a priority for the Office. To support this, we undertook an analysis of our data to identify thematic areas for improvement within policing and to share our insights with stakeholders and partners. Tri-partite meetings with the Policing Board of Northern Ireland (NIPB), Professional Standards Division and the Office were agreed with our Director of Impact undertaking to establish a new mechanism to oversee and improve quality of recommendations made to PSNI. Work has continued in house to develop a Quality Improvement group to focus on this work. During this period eight Regulation 20 reports supporting this objective have been released by the Office.

Also supporting this objective was the development of a strategic communication, stakeholder and engagement plan. Again this area of work reported to the Transformation Programme Change Board and communication and engagement plans were developed for three workstreams of the board. The Stakeholder engagement strategy was completed across the period, due to be ratified in April 2026 and, in addition there was strategic engagement across the year with organisations including Women's Aid, the Commissioner for Victims and Survivors and Political parties across Northern Ireland.

CASE STUDY

Towards meaningful partnership and stakeholder engagement

In 2025-26 we have been moving beyond raising awareness of our work to creating meaningful, collaborative relationships with partners and stakeholders which build confidence in the complaints system, demonstrate our positive impact on policing and allow us to learn from others' insights.

We have been realistic about what we can achieve with ever-diminishing resources and have been purposeful in targeting our engagement to align with, and directly support, the achievement of our strategic priorities and statutory responsibilities.

Our analysis of police predatory behaviour – notably the insight that being a victim of domestic abuse featured prominently as one of the vulnerabilities of victims in our report – was a catalyst to meeting with the Women's Aid Federation Northern Ireland in August 2025. That engagement led to further separate meetings with several of the individual Women's Aid organisations across Northern Ireland.

Engagement with Women's Aid as the lead voluntary organisation in Northern Ireland addressing domestic abuse and providing services for women and children, has also deepened our understanding of the issues victims and survivors face, and in particular the barriers to making complaints to us. One small but significant outcome included a member of our staff meeting with individual women in a neutral space to listen and provide support for them to make their complaints about police.

While we are using our evidence-based research to inform others, we are equally committed to drawing on their insights and experience to inform our work.

In the last year, for example, we have developed an invaluable connection with Victim Support NI.

We recognised that although we are not a named criminal justice agency in respect of the Victim Charter here, we nonetheless interact with victims of crime through our investigations.

As an initial step, our staff benefited from a wide-ranging and thought-provoking presentation from Victim Support NI in January 2026 at one of our regular all-staff 'Connection Days' when we come together to share our progress as an organisation and hear from a range of internal and external speakers.

Examples of the charity's work with people affected by crime resonated with staff and the clear intersection with our own investigations led to further conversations and, critically, to further practical outcomes.

By deepening our understanding of victims' needs, we have been able to better reflect those needs in different aspects of our work, from how we interact with and support victims in the course of our investigations to how we communicate externally about victim impact and victim support services.

This ongoing drive to develop a victim-centred approach as a complaints oversight body is integral to contributing to the creation of safer communities and to supporting the Northern Ireland Executive's 'Safer Communities' priority.

At the same time this year has seen us also cement relationships with other statutory bodies. Our partnership-working with the Northern Ireland Policing Board has been enhanced by regular attendance at meetings of the Board's Performance Committee, and greater sharing of information and insights with Board members.

Our work to end violence against women and girls and the emerging evidence from our analysis of allegations of police predatory behaviour have formed the focus of much of this formal engagement.

However, we have also shared broader statistical insights, discussed future areas of work, notably in relation to the recruitment of new police officers and the likelihood of increasing complaints associated with officers with less than five years' service, and formally responded to Board consultations.

We were able, for example, to comment meaningfully on the proposed additions to the PSNI's Code of Ethics which sets out standards of conduct and practice for police officers.

We welcomed the inclusion of a new Duty of Candour, together with other proposed changes around communication and the use of social media whether in a professional or personal capacity, drawing on evidence from our casework to support the need for change.

An investigation into the sharing of offensive messages within a closed WhatsApp group and another where police officers used derogatory language about a victim who had reported domestic abuse were two of the cases which served to illustrate the importance of several new additions to the Code of Ethics:

"*Police officers shall use social media responsibly and ensure that nothing is published that is discriminatory, abusive, oppressive, harassing, bullying, victimising, offensive or otherwise incompatible with their role as a professional police officer. Police officers should note that this provision also applies to their private messages and group chats.*

"Police officers shall not communicate with each other and with others by using misogynistic and other discriminatory behaviour and language including online or other private and public platforms.'

A proposal in respect of privacy and confidentiality "*Police officers shall not view any material held by the PSNI unless they have a legitimate reason for doing so and it is in the course of their duties*" reflected the findings from a Police Ombudsman investigation which identified that 74 officers had viewed body worn video footage without a legitimate reason.

Developing these relationships with partners and stakeholders and using a sound evidence base, analysis and research to do so, is ensuring we reflect both the challenges experienced in modern policing and the contemporary issues we find in our role as the complaints body.

OBJECTIVE 4

Transforming our operating model to reflect current fiscal realities, digital opportunities and best international practice, improving our effectiveness, and enhancing the confidence in our Office.

Transforming our operating model to reflect fiscal realities, digital opportunities and best international practice to improve the Office's effectiveness remains a key strategic priority and these areas of work have reported to the Transformational Change Programme Board across the period of review.

The delivery of a new Case Management solution that supports our complaints and investigations process is of significant importance and will replace an antiquated system with much needed efficiencies. In the period in review a business case was approved, procurement progressed and a successful tender appointed with the project moving onto delivery phase.

The establishment of an operating model for Non Troubles related Legacy matters was a area of focus. The development of a new policy for dealing with Non-Troubles related legacy complaints was completed along with a workplan. Two non troubles related cases were completed during the period of review with assessment of remaining cases to continue during 2026-27.

The ongoing development of a Legacy Operating model to ensure that all residual legacy demands are met was also an area of work for the Office delivered via a Legacy Operations Board. This Board ensures the understanding of increasing demands in the area of Legacy which encompasses provision of information to ICRIR, Core Participant status at the Omagh Bombing Inquiry and disclosure of relevant information to inquests.

The development of People Strategy has also been ongoing over the period in review with a focus on setting the direction for how the Office will attract, develop, engage, reward and recognise, and retain it's workforce aligning with strategic objectives, values and statutory remit. During the previous year significant work was carried out on our Values (outlined on pages 11-12) with staff consultation embedded in this process and a Values framework rolled out during the summer of 2025. On a positive note sickness absence rates reduced during the year compared with previous period as reported on page 86.

The relocation of the Office to a suitable, modern and sustainable building supporting the vision of a contemporary police oversight organisation has been a project which has been in place in some form for an extended period. Significant work has been undertaken this year with the identification of a suitable location and ongoing communication with a large number of stakeholders. This project has been met with a number of barriers, not least identification of storage options for information held and the associated protracted time and cost issues related with this along with a challenging financial situation being reported across Northern Ireland Public sector in terms of funding. This resulted in the need for a lease extension for 12 months in the current accommodation. The Office submitted a business case seeking approval for this, to move the lease break from June 2026 to June 2027 in December 2025. LPS Strategic Asset Management Unit (SAMU) made a number of observations in relation to this request and did not provide approval. A request to DoF Supply was subsequently submitted for retrospective approval, however this approval was not granted resulting in the expenditure on the lease extension being classed as irregular. A business case for the relocation remains pending with ongoing communication with the relevant stakeholders and this on track to be submitted early in 2026-27.

The undertaking of a legislative review to develop contemporary legislation for the Police Ombudsman to explore the existing police complaints system and to ensure that the Office keeps apace with local, national and international developments in police oversight and Ombudsman legislation is a significant and important area of work for the Office. Work on a Five Year Review was concluded and the Ombudsman signed off on the Review prior to leaving the Office. Whilst it was envisaged stakeholder consultation would occur prior to the sign off of the review this was impossible given the timing of the Ombudsman's retirement from Office. A consultation was on the Five Year Review was opened on 04 February 2026 for a period of eight weeks and the Office is currently in the process of collating those results.

CASE STUDY

Transformation: modern legislation and contemporary digital infrastructure

Our transformational change programme has evolved in response to significant change and challenge, from the end of this Office's remit for legacy investigations to the ongoing financial pressures that we, and all the public sector, face.

Collectively, the programme's seven distinct workstreams seek to transform our operating model into one which supports a contemporary police oversight body.

This includes having modern legislation and in 2025-26, we developed a total of 23 wide-ranging recommendations, which sought to bring the Office into line with contemporary police oversight legislation in Scotland, England and Wales, and the Republic of Ireland.

Some of the proposals for change relate to the role of the Police Ombudsman, recommending that the Ombudsman should be an Officer of the Assembly, accountable to the Assembly Audit Committee and that the Office's budget should be allocated directly by the Assembly.

The legislative review also recommends that there should be a power to appoint an interim Police Ombudsman to address a vacancy during any Ombudsman's term of office.

The discretion to decide whether it is appropriate to begin or continue an investigation, recognising that there are occasions when an investigation isn't practical, proportionate or in the public interest, is also a focus of the review. This could be, for example, when a complainant unreasonably fails to engage with an informal resolution process, where there are irreconcilable differences between the complainant's account of an incident and that of the police officer, or where there are no independent witnesses or no investigative opportunities.

Legislation should, we believe, also define 'vexatious, ill-founded and oppressive complaints' allowing the Police Ombudsman the discretion not to investigate a complaint which falls into these categories. This is an issue which is raised repeatedly by police officers in annual satisfaction surveys and has also been raised by the Police Federation Northern Ireland.

A number of proposals are linked to a change in the law to ensure greater transparency about the Office's work. One recommends that the Police Ombudsman should have a general power to publish a report on the outcome of an investigation when it is in the public interest. Another relates to the Police Ombudsman having the ability to release details of disciplinary recommendations and the sanctions or outcomes in any disciplinary proceedings to the complainant and the general public, which is not currently permitted.

Unlike the PSNI Chief Constable, legislation does not currently allow the Police Ombudsman to use a 'fast-track procedure' where there is incontrovertible evidence from an early stage in an investigation that there is criminality or gross misconduct which could result in an officer being dismissed without undue delay. The recommendations include a proposal that the Police Ombudsman should be able to submit an early written report in such cases to the Chief Constable, helping to avoid delay in the most serious investigations.

The review also proposes that, under the new Public Office (Accountability) Bill which is currently making its way through parliament and does not yet apply in Northern Ireland, the definition of a sexual offence contained in the Sexual Offences Act 2003 should be expanded to include a conviction by a police officer for seriously improper acts where the benefit sought or obtained is sexual in nature.

A further proposal seeks an expansion of the Police Ombudsman's remit to include whistleblowing, allowing allegations from serving police officers and civilian police staff about serious criminal wrongdoing or gross misconduct to be investigated independently.

And if we require a legislative framework which supports our work, we need an equally strong digital infrastructure.

This year we secured the investment required to move from a case management system which has reached the end of its lifespan to a case management system which reflects modern digital capabilities and customer expectations.

By the end of the 2025-26 financial year, we had completed a substantial procurement exercise which included receipt of an above average 16 bids, and appointed a new software provider specialising in Microsoft Dynamics, an effective and highly configurable solution to meet the complexity of our requirements.

The new system which is now under development will provide customers with a simple and clear way to make complaint, gathering only the information required at an initial complaint stage, automatically creating a case and a unique reference point, and storing data securely.

Internally, automated case creation and case workflows from opening complaints through to complaint closures, dashboards and document management, will all bring more efficient processing and lead to more effective complaint management.

The system will become operational in the 2026-27 year and mark the completion of a significant project which uses digital technology to transform our service model.

Measuring Awareness and Customer Satisfaction

Securing the confidence of the public and the police in the complaints system is a statutory objective for the Office. We use information and insights from a range of surveys to measure awareness of the office and our work, and levels of satisfaction among those who make complaints about police and police officers themselves.

Public Awareness and Confidence

Each year, we participate in the Northern Ireland Life and Times (NILT) survey to monitor levels of awareness of the Office and confidence in our work.

In the 2025 survey, public awareness remained at a high level, with 91% of respondents confirming they had heard of the Police Ombudsman and 62% confident that complaints are dealt with in an impartial way. In addition, 71% of respondents believed that the Police Ombudsman would help ensure that police in Northern Ireland do a good job.

Awareness of the Police Ombudsman

	Yes %
Have you heard of the Police Ombudsman?	91
Do you think the Police Ombudsman is independent of the police?	88
How confident are you that the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland deals with complaints against the police in an impartial way?	62
If you were to make a complaint against a police officer to the Police Ombudsman, do you think you would be treated fairly?	72
Do you think that the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland will help ensure that the police do a good job?	71

Complainant Satisfaction

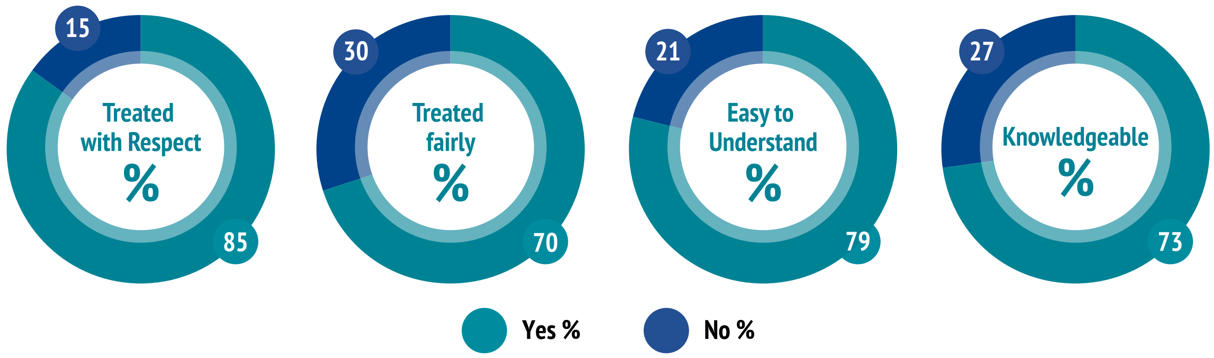
Our complainant satisfaction surveys provide an insight into how people who made complaints about police felt about the service they received from the Office and how they were treated by the staff who dealt with their complaint.

Each time a complaint about police is closed, the person who made the complaint receives a survey. During 2025-26, we issued 2,465 questionnaires and 275 were returned (66 digitally), representing an 11% response rate. This is lower than response rates in the three previous years (14% in 2024-25,13% in 2023-24 and 14% in 2022-23). The results from the 2025-26 complainant satisfaction survey show complainants continue to have positive views of staff, just as they have done in previous years.

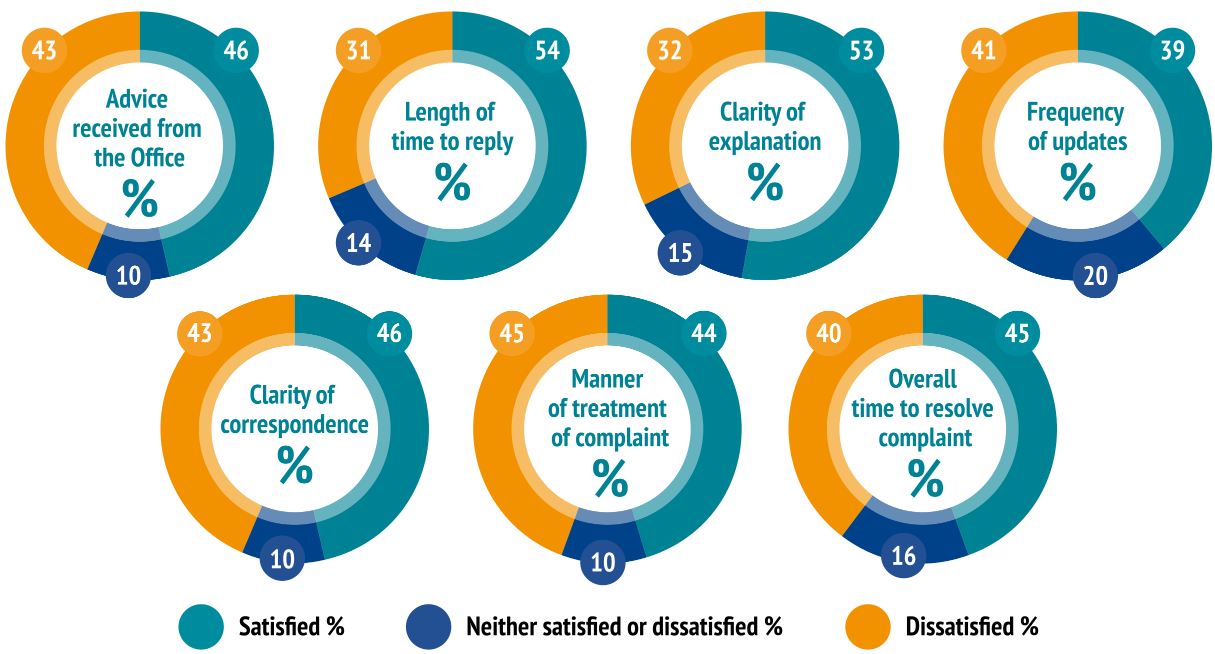
When it came to the complaints process, results from the 2025-26 survey were similar to previous years apart from four aspects of the process; advice received from the office, length of time to reply, manner of treatment or complaint and overall time to resolve, which had decreased last year.

Complainants in 2025-26 were just as likely to understand and accept the reasoning behind closing their complaint as they were of other years and just as willing to contact to the office again if they had a new complaint

Perceptions of Police Ombudsman staff: people who made complaints



Satisfaction with aspects of the complaints process



Survey respondents also have an opportunity to comment on whether they thought their complaint was dealt with independently and whether they would use the service again. In 2025-26 the proportion of respondents who believed their complaint was dealt with independently was 53% and 56% said they would use the service again. These figures are broadly comparable to the previous two years.

The outcome of a complaint is likely to be linked to a person's level of satisfaction with an investigation. However, 75% of the survey respondents indicated that they accepted the final decision reached on their complaint.

The full results are published online in our Annual Complainant Satisfaction Report.

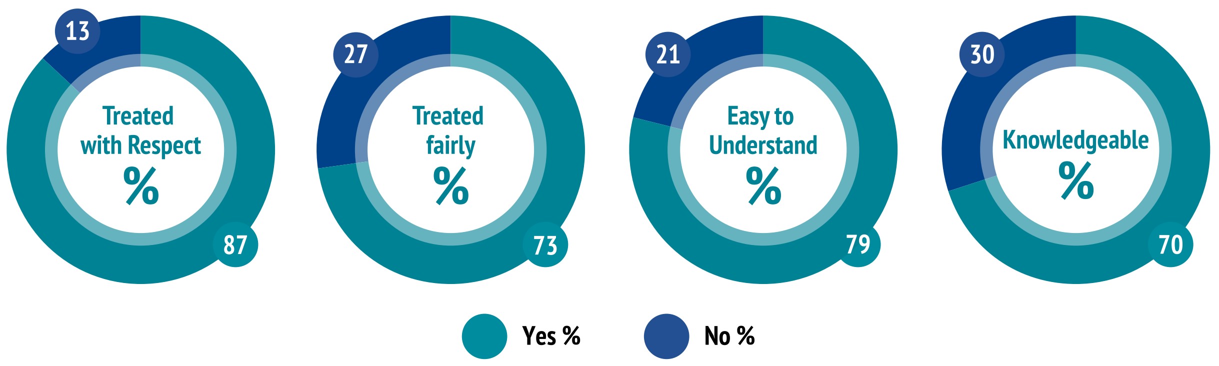
Police Officer Satisfaction

In the same way that we survey those who make complaints about police when their complaints have been closed, we also ask police officers who were the subject of an investigation to express their views on how they were treated by staff and how satisfied they were with aspects of their experience.

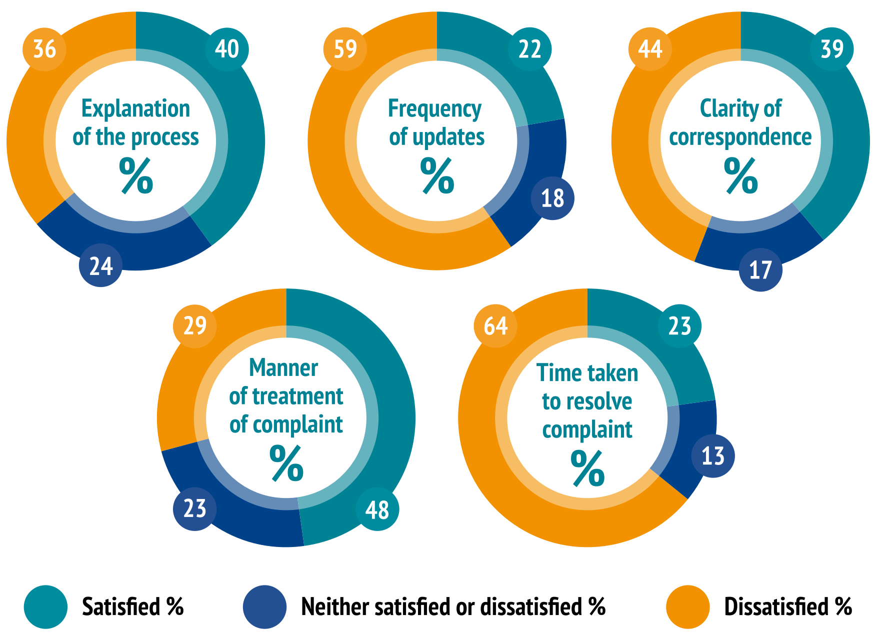
This year the overall percentage of police officers who felt they had been treated with respect remained high at 87% (86% in 2024-25) with positive figures for officers feeling they were treated fairly, and that the Ombudsman staff were easy to understand continuing to be largely comparable with the last two years.

However, the findings also show that 59% of officers were dissatisfied with the frequency of updates, with 64% dissatisfied with the time taken to resolve the complaint.

Perceptions of Police Ombudsman staff: police officers



Satisfaction with aspects of the complaints process



Police officers also have an opportunity to comment on whether they thought their complaint was dealt with independently and a high proportion – 72% agreed. 52% believed that the complaints system makes police more accountable. These figures are also largely comparable with the last two years.

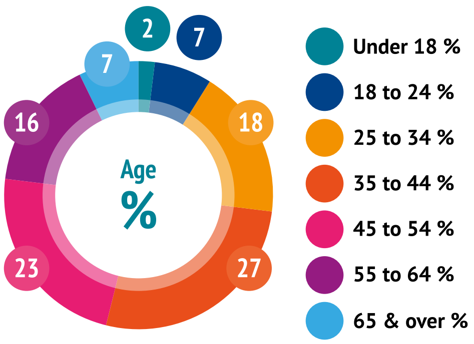
The full results are published online in our Annual Police Satisfaction Report.

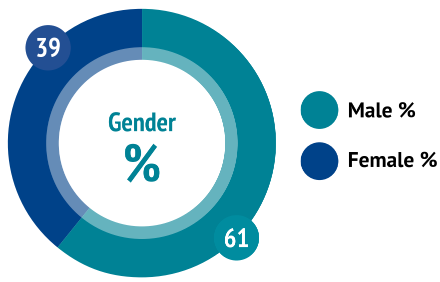
Equality Monitoring of Complainants

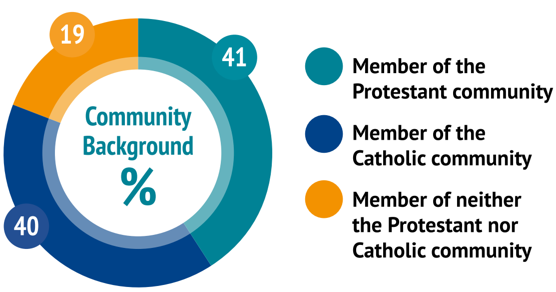
Every person that makes a complaint to the Police Ombudsman is asked to complete an equality monitoring form, which seeks to gather information based on the categories of age, gender, marital status, employment status, sexual orientation, community background, race, country of birth, disability, dependants and political opinion.

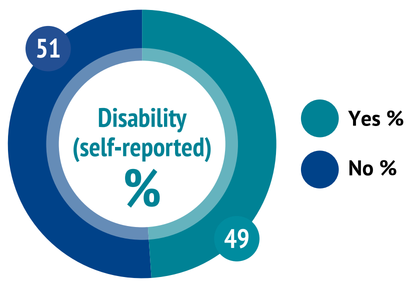
During the year, we issued 2,631 equality monitoring forms. 522 were returned, equating to a 20% response.

Our monitoring information is, therefore, based on the completed forms, except for age and gender which we have been able to determine from information provided through the complaints process. Age is known for 93% of complainants and 100% is known for gender.









The full results are published online in our Annual Equality Monitoring Report.

Customer Service Complaints

Our staff manage more than 3,000 complaints about police in any year and our commitment is to provide the highest possible standard of customer service to those who make complaints about police, or who engage with us generally. Although we receive a relatively small number of complaints about the behaviour of our staff and the service they have provided, we take any service complaint seriously.

In 2025-26, we received 45 service complaints, a reduction from 74 in the previous year. Of these, 42 were from members of the public and three from police officers, and the majority related to how our staff interacted with members of the public.

We closed 39 of these complaints in the course of the year:

- Ten complaints were informally resolved (compared with 4 last year)
- In seven complaints we issued an apology
- We re-opened one investigation as a result of a service complaint
- We took remedial action in five complaints
- We provided an explanation in respect of one service complaint
- There was related action taken as the result of three service complaints
- In five cases there was no further action taken
- Two complaints could not be concluded as the complainant did not cooperate with us
- Two complaints were withdrawn
- Three service complaints were out of time.

Our independent complaints assessor carries out a review where a complainant remains dissatisfied with how we have dealt with the issue they raised. During 2025-26 we referred to the independent assessor one complaint for a first review (six in the previous year); one complaint for a second review; and two complaints for a third review.

Risk Management

As outlined on page 19, ELT formally review the Risk Register quarterly and this is considered at monthly ELT and quarterly ARC meetings. Risk Management in the Office as detailed in the Risk Management Framework on the Governance Statement on page 62 defines the extent to which assessment of risk is encouraged and tolerated across the Office. Following recommendations made in an Internal Audit on Corporate Governance, the Risk Management Framework was updated in October 2025. Risk appetite applied is the amount of risk that the Office is prepared to accept, tolerate or be exposed to at any point in time. It influences how risk will be managed and the extent and type of controls that should be put in place. There are four categories of risk appetite –

- Averse – Risk and uncertainty to be avoided – safe options preferred over riskier options accepting there may be an impact on efficiency,
- Cautious – Preference for safe options – however some relatively low risk options may be considered in the interest of efficiency,
- Open – Willing to consider all options and choose the one most likely to deliver services most efficiently,
- Keen – eager to be innovative and to choose maximum service delivery despite greater inherent risk.

In general, the Office strives to have 'open' risk appetite however individual risks will each have their own risk appetite. Where a 'keen' risk appetite is agreed for a particular area of work, the residual risk will be robustly managed. The categories applied against the risk groups outlined in the performance overview are:.

- Budget -; Cautious
- Capability and Capacity -.; Open
- IT Capability -; Open
- Historic Investigation Reporting: Averse
- Legal Obligation - Cautious
- Uncertainty around Accommodation – Open
- Corporate Governance Oversight - Cautious
- Information Governance / Cyber Security – Averse
- Confidence in the Office of the Police Ombudsman – Cautious
- Critical Incident - Cautious

Sustainability

The Climate Change Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 sets out a clear statutory target of zero emissions by 2050 and places a number of duties on each NI department, with the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) named as the lead department in the Act.

This sustainability report has been prepared in accordance with NI's Sustainability Reporting Guidance 2025-26 which is aligned with HMT sustainability reporting guidance and the Task Force on Climate-related Financial Disclosures (TCFD) recommendations.

All information included in this sustainability report conforms to the normal public sector financial year of 01 April to 31 March. NI's Sustainability Reporting Guidance 2025-26 was issued mid year i.e. departments were unaware of the information they were expected to collect at the start of the 2025-26 financial year. This may have led to omissions in data reporting.

The Office is committed to operating in a sustainable, responsible and environmentally conscious manner. We continue to segregate our recyclable waste and encourage reduction in power consumption including ensuring lights remain off where possible and heating times restricted during summer months. As noted in the previous report the number of pool cars was reduced from five to three with continued encouragement of sharing of business journey and in the next contract consideration will be given to lower the carbon footprint further.

The NI Executive approved a Single Use Plastic Action Plan produced by DAERA. Consistent with this plan, the Office is currently seeking to identify ways in which it can reduce its use of Single Use Plastics and have encouraged staff to adopt a plastic free Friday initiative.

In accordance with SECR requirements, OPONI reports emissions across Scopes 1, 2 and selected Scope 3 categories. Emissions remain primarily associated with building energy use and business travel.

Energy Consumption (scope 1)

Energy Type	Consumption (kWh)
Electricity	243,816.40 (over 12 months)
Gas	290,365 (over 12 months)

Water usage for the previous 12 month period (from end of April 25 to April 26) was 1,574m3. Due to the timing of the release of the sustainability guidance document, data was not collected in relation to mileage and emissions by pool cars or information related to business travel. This is information which the Office will collect for future sustainability reporting.

The Scoring Social Value policy approved by the Executive, mandated that from June 2022, tenders must include a minimum 10 percent of the total award criteria to social value. On 5 December 2024 DoF secured Executive approval for a revised PPN (Procurement Police Note) 01/21 – Social Value in Procurement. This came into effect on 24 February 2025 and strengthened and broadened the theme 'Delivering Net Zero' to 'Delivering Climate Action'.

For information on the meaning of Social Value: the Public Procurement Policy Statement which was approved by the NI Executive on 5th June 2025 states "Social Value means economic, environmental and social benefits in support of the Programme for Government." The DoF Social Value Strategy document 2025-2027 states "Social Value refers to wider financial and non-financial impacts on the wellbeing of individuals, communities and the environment. It incorporates ethical and sustainable supply chains, community benefits and wealth building, job and skills creation and efforts to combat climate change.

The Procurement Policy Note (PPN 01/21)- Scoring Social Value has been revised to Procurement Policy Note (PPN) 01/21 – Social Value in Procurement and came into effect on 22 February 2025.

The development and establishment of a Sustainability Strategy, including the governance frameworks, practices and arrangements, remains a target for the Office, and although this was not achieved in this reporting year, it will be carried into the 2026-27 financial year and will aim to set out the Office's long-term goals in relation to supporting sustainability. The Office does not have a dedicated corporate environmental sustainability board, and instead, it is proposed that sustainability reporting be included as ARC meetings updates, promoting transparency and ensuring frequent updates are provided to members of the Committee. Specific climate-related goals will be set as part of the Sustainability Strategy, and the relevant metrics will be reported against targets as part of the overall monitoring. Overall performance against these metrics for the year will then be reported in the Annual Report & Account. The Office also considers sustainability in respect of its procurement practices, with some key procurement project considerations noted below.

The Office incorporates sustainability considerations into procurement practices in line with public procurement policy. The business case completed in relation to a Case Management System, which represents an element of digital transformation included environmental and climate considerations with a range of Social Value (SV) initiatives presented to tenderers and accounting for 10.2% of the total score. The successful tenderer committed to developing an Environmental Action plan within 90 days of the contract award which will commit them to

- Reduce the impact of project delivery –
- Organisational sustainability practice enhancements
- Environmental Activities undertaken by the delivery team

Going into 2026-27 an opportunity in relation to the Office's accommodation is of significance. The Office's current leased accommodation at NCB no longer represents value for money and fails to meet sustainability standards. A move to new accommodation provides an opportunity to reduce our carbon emissions (and energy costs) in line with the NI Executive's Energy Strategy, DoJ Sustainability Strategy and Climate Change (NI) Act 2022. Our evaluation of accommodation options will prioritise options that deliver best against environmental sustainability objectives. A project objective is to deliver on Environmental and sustainability goals by reducing energy costs in a modern, energy efficient building with a target of reducing energy costs at new premises by at least 35%.

Budgetary Framework

DoF is responsible for management of the NI Executive's Budget process in line with a budgetary framework set by His Majesty's Treasury (HMT). The total amount a department spends is referred to as the Total Managed Expenditure (TME); which is split into Departmental Expenditure Limit (DEL) and Annually Managed Expenditure (AME). HMT and DoF do not set firm AME budgets as AME expenditure is volatile or demand-led in a way that departments and arm's length bodies cannot control. The DoJ monitors AME forecasts closely and this facilitates reporting to DoF, who in turn report to HMT.

As DEL budgets are understood and controllable, HMT sets firm limits for DEL budgets for Whitehall Departments and Devolved Administrations at each Spending Review. The NI Executive, based on advice from the Finance Minister, will usually in turn agree a local Budget that will set DEL controls for Executive departments.

DEL budgets are classified into resource budgets (which include Non-Ringfenced Resources that pays for programme delivery and running costs and Ringfenced Resources that covers non-cash charges such as depreciation and impairment of assets) and capital budgets for spending on all other assets or investments.

Further detail on the Budgeting Framework can be found in the Consolidated Budgeting Guidance published by HMT at www.gov.uk/government/publications/consolidated-budgeting-guidance-2025-to-2026.

The Office's performance against Budgetary Control totals is set out in the table below.

	Final Plan 2025-26 £000	Outturn 2025-26 £000	Underspend / (Overspend) £000
Resource DEL			
Non-Ringfenced	11,100	10,813	287
Non-Ringfenced Legacy Inquests	450	388	62
Ringfenced Depreciation /Impairment	772	685	87
Capital DEL			
General Capital	71	338	(267)
Total DEL	**12,393**	**12,224**	**169**
AME			
AME Resource	1,155	635	520
AME Capital	650	263	387
Total Managed Expenditure	**14,198**	**13,122**	**1,076**

Explanation of Variances

The £287k underspend in relation to Non-Ringfenced DEL was mainly as a result of delays in the backfill of staff vacancies in the year. The £62k underspend in Legacy Inquests was again due to turnover of staff in the year and the delay in inquests being heard in court. Overall, the main area of underspend in the 2025-26 financial year was Pay, due to the delays in the backfilling of vacancies to fund other budgetary pressures, which due to reasons outside of our control, have been pushed back into the 2026-27 financial year.

Included within RDEL outturn are £486k of cash payments relating to provisions recognised in prior years (funded through Resource AME). These payments score as RDEL in the year of cash settlement. A corresponding year-end accounting treatment adjustment has been processed in-line with FReM to reduce the provision balance.

The Capital DEL overspend of £267k relates to the extension of the break-clause on our existing premises by 12-months, and capital asset disposals in the year. This was due to this information not being available at the time of preparation of the January monitoring round in November 2025. While the Office did outline this was a possibility no specific cost was provided and as such this required subsequent capital overspend approval by Financial Services Division (FSD). This relates the extension of the lease in the current building which is further explained on page 70.

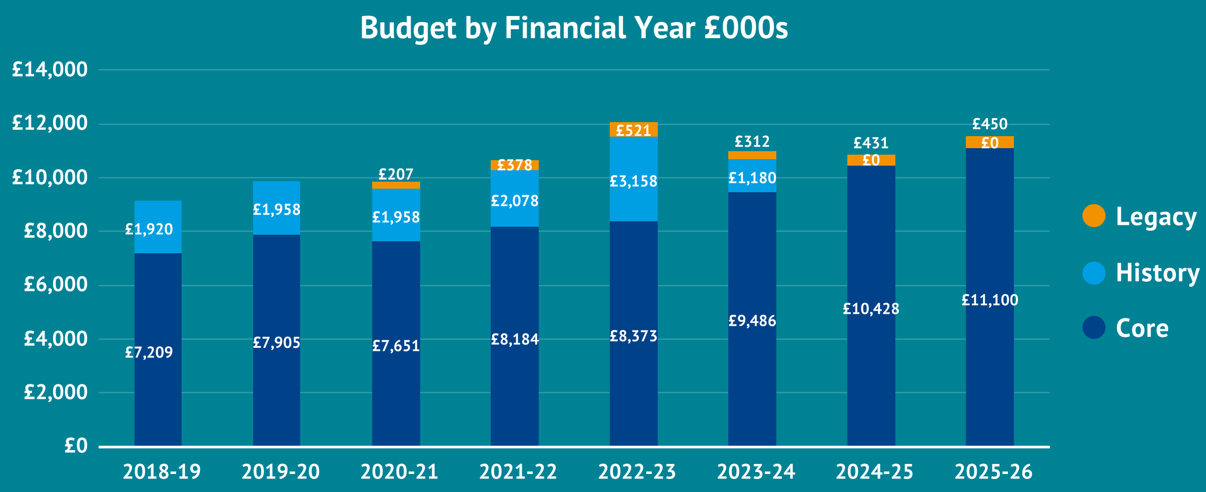
The underspend against Resource AME primarily reflects prudent financial management to ensure adequate cover was maintained for the year-end provisions balance. Provision estimates were kept under regular review throughout the year using the best available information, and through regular meetings between finance and legal staff to ensure sufficient cover was retained to manage potential future liabilities.

The underspend of £387k in relation to Capital AME is a result of the extension to the break-clause and subsequent delay in payment of dilapidation related costs. The costs incurred of £263k relate to the increase in the closing dilapidations provision in the reporting year. It is anticipated that these costs will likely be incurred in the 2026-27 and 2027-28 financial years.

Long Term Expenditure Trends

The Office, as a NDPB, is financed by public money. Therefore, the overall context of reductions to budgets across the public sector as a whole have affected the resources available to the Office.

Since 2020-21, the Office has received funding to support the development of a small-dedicated team for the purposes of supporting the Lord Chief Justice's five year plan for Legacy Inquests. £431,000 was provided in 2024-25 and £450,000 for 2025-26 (actual expenditure is detailed in accounts Note 4).



The Office budget is now split between Core budget and Legacy Inquest budget.

Financial Review

The financial position as at 31 March 2026 is set out in the Statement of Comprehensive Net Expenditure and Statement of Financial Position on pages 97 and 98 respectively. The Office incurred net operating expenditure for the year of £12,036,749 (£10,774,262 for year ended 31 March 2025).

The table below shows the total net expenditure of the Office over the last three financial years.

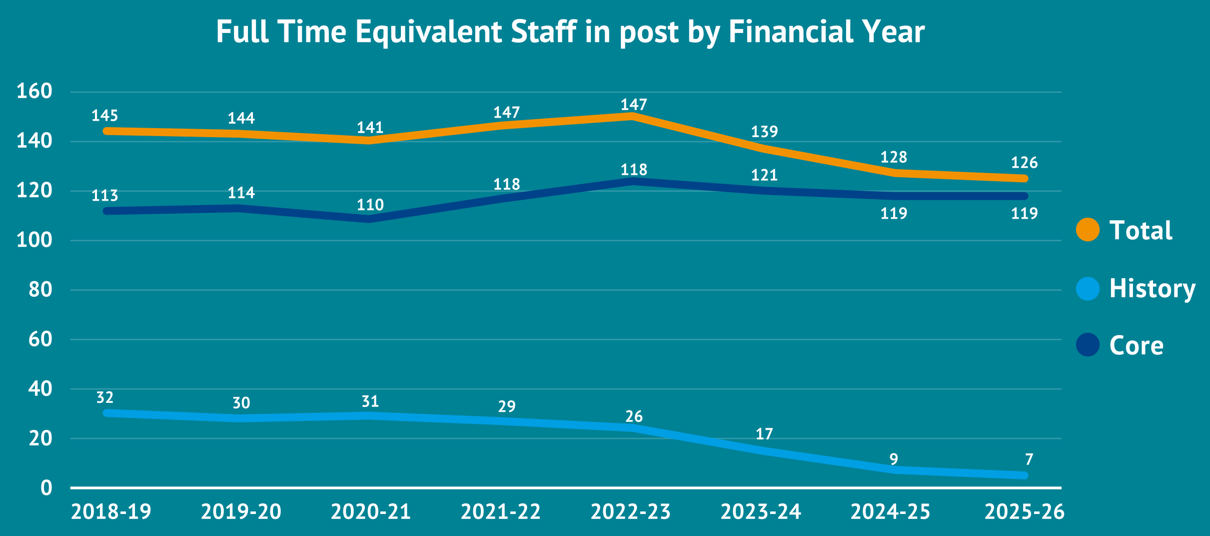
Expenditure	2025-26 £	2024-25 £	2023-24 £
Staff Costs (Note 5)	8,270,442	7,572,130	8,062,841
Other expenditure (Note 6)	2,402,524	2,252,135	2,430,729
Other expenditure – non cash (Note 6)	1,364,210	955,422	890,975
Expenditure for the year	**12,037,176**	**10,779,687**	**11,384,545**
Income (Note 3)	**(427)**	**(5,425)**	**(69,121)**
Net Expenditure for the year	**12,036,749**	**10,774,262**	**11,315,424**

The table above shows an increase of £698k (9.22%) in staff costs in 2025-26 from £7,572k in 2024-25 to £8,270k in 2025-26. As in previous years, staff costs account for a considerable percentage (68.71%) of total net expenditure (2024-25: 70.28%).

Other expenditure (excluding non-cash) increased by £150k (6.68%) from £2,252k in 2024-25 to £2,402k in 2025-26. The largest contributor to this increase was additional legal costs in relation to our Core Participant Status in the Omagh Bomb Inquiry.

Other expenditure (non-cash) increased by £409k (42.79%), mainly driven by a significant rise in legal provisions in the year.

The chart below reflects the allocation of staff between Historic investigations and other staff. The average Whole Time Equivalent (WTE) staff in post was 139 in 2023-24, decreasing to 128.1 in 2024-25. There has been a further decrease in this figure to 126.46 WTE in 2025-26.



During the 2025-26 financial year, the organisation's FTE has remained broadly flatline compared with the previous financial years. Recruitment activity in the year sought to backfill historically vacant posts, ensuring that existing operational capability was merely maintained rather than extended. On-going budgetary pressures and uncertainty over future funding allocations means the organisation must adopt a risk-aware approach to its future workforce planning.

Financial Position

The total net liabilities of the Office as at 31 March 2026 were (£1,022,373) ((£623,522) as at 31 March 2025).

Property Plant and Equipment

Assets are valued at cost, adjusted as appropriate to reflect current replacement costs. The leasehold interest in respect of improvements carried out to New Cathedral Buildings has been capitalised under land and buildings and valued on the basis of existing use value at £185,422 at 31 March 2026 (£210,473 at 31 March 2025). The open market value of the leasehold interest in New Cathedral Buildings has been valued at £nil at 31 March 2026 (£nil at 31 March 2025). Details of the movement of property, plant and equipment are set out in Note 7 to the Accounts.

Leases

From 1 April 2022, leases are accounted for under IFRS 16 - Leases. From that date, the Office recognises the assets and liabilities for leases with a term of more than 12 months. A Right of Use asset is recognised to reflect the Office's right to use the leased asset and a lease liability to reflect the Office's obligation to make lease payments.

Depreciation on the Right of Use Asset and interest on the lease liability is charged to the Statement of Comprehensive Net Expenditure. Repayments of the lease liability are applied to the Statement of Cash Flows.

Prompt Payments

The Office practice and policy is to pay bills from all suppliers within 10 working days following receipt of a properly rendered invoice or in accordance with contractual conditions, whichever is the earlier.

The overall performance to pay within 10 working days for the year ended 31 March 2026 was 99.8% (90.2% for the year ended 31 March 2025). The overall performance to pay within 30 days for the year ended 31 March 2026 was 99.8% (99.9% for the year ended 31 March 2025).

Auditors

The Financial Statements are audited by the Comptroller & Auditor General who heads the NIAO and is appointed by statute and reports to the Northern Ireland Assembly. Her certificate and report are produced at page 90.

The audit fee for the work performed by the staff of the C&AG during the reporting period was £22,000 which relates to the audit of these financial statements (£19,700 in 2024-25). The amount for this period reflects additional work carried out in relation to payments made to the former Ombudsman during a period of absence.

In Conclusion

The achievements which are outlined in this Annual Report demonstrate a high level of performance by staff, under challenging circumstances, in the delivery of our statutory duties. Staff have continued to work with dedication and commitment to maintain an effective and efficient police complaints system and it is right that I should formally record my thanks to all my staff across the Office who, individually and collectively, continue to meet the responsibility and the privilege of delivering a vitally important service to the people of Northern Ireland.

Hugh Hume
Chief Executive

25 June 2026

Accountability Report

Corporate Governance Section

The purpose of this section is to explain the Office's governance structures and how they support the achievement of objectives.

Directors' Report

Police Ombudsman

The Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland is a corporation sole and has a personal jurisdiction.

Executive Management

The Police Ombudsman was supported by an Executive Leadership Team. Members of the Executive Leadership Team during the year are outlined below. Directors were in post for the full financial year unless otherwise noted:

Mr H Hume	Chief Executive Officer
Mr P Holmes	Temporary Senior Director of Investigation (Until 30 June 2025)
Mrs N Davis	Director of Investigations
Mrs P Gillespie	Director of HR and Corporate Services
Ms J Lamont	Director of Organisational Impact, Support & Standards
Mrs A McKelvey	Director of Legal and Information

Audit and Risk Committee

OPONI is a Corporation Sole and is not accountable to a Board. The Police Ombudsman is supported in her role by the Audit and Risk Committee which is comprised of two independent external members. The Non-Executive members of the Audit and Risk Committee during 2025-2026 were Mr C Kennedy and Mr K McMahon, both of who were appointed on 27 March 2025 for a three year term.

The Audit and Risk Committee advises and supports the Police Ombudsman and Chief Executive in discharging their responsibilities in relation to issues of risk, control and governance, by reviewing the comprehensiveness, reliability and integrity of the risk, control and governance assurances available to the organisation.

Following recommendations received on an internal audit report on Corporate Governance the Terms of Reference for the Audit and Risk Committee was formally reviewed and enhanced to ensure it meets the needs of the Office as a Corporation Sole.

Register of Interests

A register of interests is maintained within the Police Ombudsman's Office for the Ombudsman and all members of the ELT as well as for Non-Executive members of the Audit and Risk Committee. No interests were identified which may cause a conflict of interest with the management responsibilities of ELT. A copy of the register is available on the Police Ombudsman website. In addition, the Ombudsman also has in place a Conflicts of Interest policy whereby staff are required to declare actual, perceived or potential conflicts of interest in order that these can be managed effectively.

Customer Service Complaints

There were 45 complaints received during the year within the Customer Complaints Policy (74 during 2023-24). Further details are included in the Performance Report on page 47 above.

Personal Data Related Incidents 2025-2026

Personal Information is defined in section 3 (2) of the Data Protection Act 2018 as, 'any information relating to an identified or identifiable living individual…'. A 'Personal Data Breach' is defined at section 33(3) of the Data Protection Act 2018 as 'a breach of security leading to the accidental or unlawful destruction, loss, alteration, unauthorised disclosure of or access to personal data transmitted, stored or otherwise processed'.

During 2025-2026 one potential breach was reported by the Office to the ICO. This did not result in any further action.

In March 2025 an updated Data Incident Policy and Procedure was approved and issued to all staff. This was also communicated as part of a 'Coffee and Learn' session open to all staff presented by the Information Governance Team. A range of training and guidance on data protection and records management has taken place including:

- Ongoing mandatory e-learning for all staff on Data Protection essentials and Cyber Security Awareness
- One-to-one bespoke training for all new staff focusing on their data protection responsibilities
- Induction session on data protection and information governance provided to group induction session
- Five Security notices relating to information/ data issued to all staff over the period
- Posters data protection responsibilities and laptop security displayed across the Office.
- A revised Retention and Disposal Schedule approved by the NI Assembly in January 2026 enabling compliance with key data protection legal requirements

The Senior Information Risk Owner (SIRO) is the Director if Legal and Information Governance, Alice McKelvey who is responsible for providing the focus for the management of information risk. The SIRO is responsible for providing assurance that information risk is being managed appropriately and effectively across the Office. Directors across the organisation are Information Asset Owners who understand the information held across each of their business areas. A training and awareness session on the role and responsibilities of information asset owners was held with members of ELT in October 2025.

The Office receives requests made under both the Freedom of Information Act and the Data Protection Act. In 2025-2026 there were 66 Subject Access requests (SARs) and 45 Freedom of Information requests (FOIs) responded to by the Office a total of 111 requests (115 during 2024-25).

The 2024-2025 annual report included details of a personal data breach which occurred in August 2024 when the surnames and initials of staff in the Office at May 2022 were inadvertently shared with a number of applicants to a recruitment campaign. The issue was dealt with immediately with a number of actions progressing including reporting to the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO). The ICO have confirmed it was taking no further action in respect of the breach and an independent review was commissioned by the Chief Executive with the report being published and a data breach working group set up to ensure the recommendations are actioned. The Office was subsequently served with a number of pre-action letters relating to the data breach. Following early communication with DoJ agreement was provided to allow the Office to consult with legal representatives. Legal advice cited that an actionable breach of the DPA/ UK GDPPR had taken place and of the significant cost risk were the Office to attempt to progress these matters to hearing and defend all of the existing claims before court. Rather than a "class action" as previously anticipated these were being prosecuted as individual cases and involved a series of legal representatives. A decision was made to make an offer inclusive of costs to those included in the data breach who were seeking damages and were legally represented, (subject to a number of considerations) as well as an offer to eligible individuals who notified the Office that they believed they had a case for an actionable damage. This was made in line with the delegated authority to make individual compensation payments following legal advice up to £10,000 per case.

A combined total of £175,250 has been paid to date in relation to this issue. This was communicated to DoJ formally in writing on 16 March 2026. While DoJ acknowledged the decision was taken with a view to minimising further costs, should the cases have proceeded to court, they have also advised that as the claims were for the same incident then the total data breach costs apply to this delegation and have noted that retrospective approval from the Department and DoF is required. This will be undertaken as soon as possible.

Health and Safety and Wellbeing

The Office is committed to providing for staff and visitors an environment that is as far as possible safe and free from risk to health and safety. A standing sub-committee on health and safety and wellbeing operates under the Joint Negotiating and Consultative Committee. The Committee meets quarterly to discuss provision and maintenance of a safe, healthy and supportive environment for all staff, workers and visitors. Key focus includes safety and environment, staff engagement, training, risk management, information and awareness and wellbeing support. A quarterly health and safety report covering a number of areas is also considered on the ELT agenda.

All health & safety information is displayed on the Human Resource noticeboards on each floor of the building.

No incidents were recorded during 2025-26 and there was nothing to report to the Health and Safety Executive for Northern Ireland under the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations.

All staff have access to independent and confidential counselling support and advice services.

Statement of Accounting Officer's Responsibilities

Under the Police (Northern Ireland) Act 1998 as amended by the Northern Ireland Act 1998 (Devolution of Policing and Justice Functions) Order 2010, the DoJ has directed that the Police Ombudsman prepare accounts for each financial year detailing the resources acquired, held or disposed of during the year and the use of resources during the year by the Office.

The accounts are prepared on an accruals basis and must give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the Office for the Police Ombudsman and of its income and expenditure, Statement of Financial Position and cash flows for the financial year.

In preparing the accounts, the Accounting Officer is required to comply with the requirements of the Government Financial Reporting manual and in particular to:

- Observe the relevant accounting and disclosure requirements, and apply suitable accounting policies on a consistent basis;
- Make judgements and estimates on a reasonable basis;
- State whether applicable accounting standards, as set our in the Government Financial Reporting Manual, have been followed, and disclose and explain any material departures in the accounts;

- Prepare the accounts on a going concern basis; and
- Confirm that the Annual Report and Accounts as a whole is fair, balanced and understandable, and take personal responsibility for the Annual Report and Accounts and the judgements required for determining that it is fair, balanced and understandable.

Under the Police (Northern Ireland) Act 1998 as amended by the Northern Ireland Act 1998 (Devolution of Policing and Justice Functions) Order 2010, the Department of Justice has appointed the Chief Executive Officer as Accounting Officer for the Office of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland. The responsibilities of an Accounting Officer, including responsibility for the propriety and regularity of the public finances for with the Accounting Officer is answerable, for keeping proper records and safeguarding the Office of the Police Ombudsman's assets, are as set out in Managing Public Money published by the Department of Finance.

As Accounting Officer, I have taken all the steps that I ought to have taken to make myself aware of any relevant audit information and to establish that the Police Ombudsman internal and external auditors are aware of that information. So far as I am aware, there is no relevant audit information of which the auditors are unaware.

Hugh Hume
Chief Executive

25 June 2026

Governance Statement

Introduction

As Accounting Officer, I have responsibility for maintaining a sound system of governance and internal control to support the achievement of the Office policies, aims and objectives as set out in our Corporate Plan and associated Business Plans, whilst safeguarding the public funds and assets for which I am directly responsible. This is carried out in accordance with the responsibilities assigned to me in Managing Public Money Northern Ireland (MPMNI).

In law, the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland is a corporation sole and has a personal jurisdiction. The Office is not accountable to a Board. As a Non Departmental Public Body (NDPB) of the DoJ the Police Ombudsman is accountable to the Northern Ireland Assembly through the Minister of Justice. The Police Ombudsman is constituted and operates independently of the DoJ, the PSNI and the NIPB.

The Police Ombudsman is required by virtue of section 51(4) of the Police (Northern Ireland) Act 1998 to ensure that in the exercise of her functions, she provides an effective, efficient police complaints system, which secures the confidence of both the public and police.

Purpose of the Governance Framework

Corporate governance describes the way in which an organisation is directed, controlled and led. The purpose of a Corporate Governance Framework is to facilitate accountability and responsibility for the effective and efficient delivery of an organisation's statutory responsibilities or aims and objectives. The Corporate Governance arrangements provide the framework to ensure that the organisation delivers on its statutory obligations and that it does so in accordance with the requirements placed on all publicly funded bodies regarding the stewardship of resources. The Police Ombudsman has an established system of internal control, which is based on an ongoing process designed to identify and prioritise risks to the effective and efficient achievement of the Ombudsman's key strategic and business objectives and priorities. The system of control also provides an assessment of the likelihood of risks being realised and the consequent impact for effective and efficient management of risks. This system of internal controls has been designed to manage risk to an acceptable level rather than to eliminate risks entirely and as such does not provide absolute assurance of effectiveness.

The Corporate Governance Arrangements framework document provides information on the structures, roles and responsibilities, which have been established to ensure proper and effective management of affairs.

Governance Framework

(i) Sponsorship Arrangements

The Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland operates under a Management Statement and Financial Memorandum (MSFM) with the Permanent Secretary of the DoJ. The MSFM sets out the broad framework within which the Office operates, subject to the legislation under which the Office was established and is required to comply. The MSFM is supplemented by a MOU, which provides an operating protocol, which recognises the operational independence of the Ombudsman and also satisfies the rules of accountability and oversight for the effective and efficient use of public resources. The current MSFM and related MOU were agreed in October 2012. Unfortunately a new Partnership Agreement is not yet in place due to resource constraints at DoJ, however the Office remains committed to collaborate in order to get this important area of work progressed and it is hoped this will be completed during 2026-2027. Sitting alongside the MSFM, the Office has an established set of arrangements for Corporate Governance which was put in place in October 2012. The Corporate Governance Arrangements document was last reviewed and endorsed by the Police Ombudsman, the SMT (now known as ELT) and the Office's Audit and Risk Committee in May 2021. These Governance Arrangements will be reviewed to ensure they remain appropriate in conjunction with the work to establish a new Partnership Agreement.

The Corporate Governance Arrangements document (which is available on the Office's website) details the key principles of corporate governance which include openness, integrity and accountability and provides information on the structures, roles and responsibilities which have been established to ensure proper and effective management of the Office's affairs. In the absence of a Board, the role of the Non-Executive members of the Audit and Risk Committee includes the requirement to provide 'constructive challenge', a fresh, objective perspective and new ideas and a safe sounding board for new approaches. The Terms of Reference for ARC was updated following an internal audit on Corporate Governance to make this clear.

As part of the sponsorship arrangements, the DoJ considers the performance of the organisation on a quarterly basis in line with the MSFM. This includes meeting formally with the Head of the sponsor Division within the Department to discuss performance against the objectives and targets set out in the Annual Business Plan. In 2025-26 one meeting (Q1 and Q2 combined) and one desktop review (Q3) were held with DOJ. In addition, there is an annual meeting between the Police Ombudsman, Chief Executive and Minister of Justice. I also keep the Department informed of relevant matters on an ongoing basis.

(ii) The Police Ombudsman

The Police Ombudsman has responsibility for establishing the overall strategic direction of the Office within the policy and resources framework determined by the Minister for Justice and the DoJ. She is also responsible for promoting the efficient, economic and effective use of staff and other resources. In law, the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland is a corporation sole and has a personal jurisdiction. The Office is not accountable to a board and has an Audit and Risk Committee who advise on the strategic processes for risk control and governance and provide a strategic level of governance in the oversight and stewardship of funds and in the general functioning of the Office. In the annual report and accounts for 2024-25, it was reported that the Police Ombudsman had announced her decision to retire in December 2025 and take a temporary leave of absence. At that time it was also confirmed that to ensure the vital work of the Office continued the Police Ombudsman was delegating authority to her Chief Executive and senior staff as appropriate. The Office followed legal advice indicating that authorisations, properly made in accordance with the applicable statutory scheme, could continue during the period of the vacancy. This was communicated with DoJ on 22 December 2025. The appointment of a new Police Ombudsman was made on 24 June 2026 with a commencement date of 26 June 2026.

(iii) The Chief Executive, as Accounting Officer

The Chief Executive is designated as Accounting Officer for the Police Ombudsman by the Departmental Accounting Officer of the DoJ.

As Chief Executive and Accounting Officer, I am personally responsible for safeguarding the public funds for which I have charge and for ensuring the propriety and regularity in the handling of these public funds and for the day to day operations and management of the Office. I am also responsible for ensuring the effective and efficient achievement of the objectives and targets of the Office which are set out in the Annual Business Plan in support of the Police Ombudsman's strategic direction.

(iv) The Executive Leadership Team (ELT)

The ELT supports the Police Ombudsman by providing collective leadership and taking ownership of organisational performance and risks. The ELT oversees how the organisation plans, sets, communicates and monitors corporate objectives. It operates in an advisory and consultative capacity to the Police Ombudsman in respect of those matters for which the Ombudsman has specific statutory responsibility. 2025-26 was the first full year of membership of ELT for several years with a Director of Investigations, Director of HR and Corporate Services, Director of Legal and Information, and Director of Impact, Support and Standards all in post for the full review period.

(v) The Audit and Risk Committee

The Police Ombudsman is supported in her role by the Audit and Risk Committee who advise on the strategic processes for risk control and governance and provide a strategic level of governance in the oversight and stewardship of funds and in the general functioning of the Office. The Audit and Risk Committee has oversight of key governance matters including Raising Concerns, Fraud and Theft, Gifts and Hospitality, Health and Safety and Direct Award Contracts. The Audit and Risk Committee produces an Annual Report on the effectiveness of the Committee in the discharge of their responsibilities in support of the Police Ombudsman and the Chief Executive as Accounting Officer.

The Audit and Risk Committee includes two independent external members who chair all Audit and Risk Committee meetings on an alternate basis. The Non-Executive members of the Audit and Risk Committee during 2025-26 were Mr C Kennedy and Mr K McMahon, both of whom were appointed on 27 March 2025 for a three-year term.

Audit and Risk Committee meetings are convened on a quarterly basis and on an ad hoc basis if necessary. The Police Ombudsman, the Chief Executive and the Director of HR & Corporate Services normally attend each meeting along with a representative from the DoJ, the Head of Internal Audit and a representative from the Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO) as external auditor.

The Audit and Risk Committee has an established Terms of Reference, which was last reviewed and updated in October 2025 as referenced on Page 63.

(vi) External Audit

The External Auditor of the Office is the C&AG of the NIAO. The NIAO undertakes an audit of the financial statements of the Office on an annual basis and provides a certificate for inclusion in the Annual Report and Accounts. The NIAO also provide, on an annual basis, a Report to those Charged with Governance (RTTCWG) which makes recommendations where matters have come to the attention of the NIAO during the course of their audit. In 2024-25 a Priority Three recommendation was provided on the RTTCWG in relation to the requirement to conduct a review of the Fixed Assets held on the balance sheet of the Office. The Office accepted this recommendation, and conducted a full review of the Fixed Assets during the 2025-26 financial year, and any subsequent disposal adjustments have been reflected within the financial statements.

The range of statutory functions and performance of the Police Ombudsman's Office is subject to independent inspection by Criminal Justice Inspection Northern Ireland (CJINI). The Office fully participates in these reviews to transparently account for its performance. During 2024-25 CJINI launched an inspection in relation to the Police Ombudsman's investigation of Abuse of Position. The inspection resulted in a number of recommendations for the Office and an action plan was put in place during 2025-26 to address recommendations. These recommendations and our responses to them will be reviewed in 2026-27.

(vii) Internal Audit

NICS Internal Audit Services provide internal audit within the Office. Internal Audit is an independent and objective function designed to add value and improve an organisation's operations. The Audit and Risk Assurance Committee receives internal audit reports and reviews management responses to recommendations arising from such reports.

As reported in the 2024-25 annual report and accounts, follow up audits on two areas (Oversight of Investigations and the Property Handling Policy) which had been previously assessed as limited were carried out early in this reporting period with both audits being raised to satisfactory. Internal Audits on Corporate Governance and Finance reported on in June 2025 were also assessed as limited. In this reporting period the Corporate Governance area was raised to satisfactory and significant work on the Finance arrangements recommendations have been made. During the period of review satisfactory assurances were provided following audits on Information Security and Managing Attendance with ongoing work on ensuring all accepted recommendations are being actioned.

(viii) Conflicts of Interest

A standing item of Conflicts of Interest is included at the start of all Audit and Risk Committee, Executive Leadership Team, Information Assurance and Security Group meeting agendas. Any conflicts of interest declared are managed by the Chair of the relevant meeting and will normally require the withdrawal from the meeting in full or for the relevant part of the meeting by the individual who has declared the conflict. All such conflicts of interests are recorded in the minutes of the meeting and are forwarded for inclusion in the organisational Conflict of Interest register. In the year to 31 March 2026, no conflicts of interest were declared in either: the Audit and Risk Committee or Executive Leadership Team meetings. Similarly, there were none in the year to 31 March 2025.

(ix) Risk Management and Internal Control

The Police Ombudsman has established procedures for risk management which include a Risk Management Framework which was updated in October 2025. There is an established Corporate Risk Register for the Office which details the key organisational risks that are faced at a point in time. These are outlined on page 19 of the Performance Analysis. The Risk Register is formally reviewed on a quarterly basis by ELT, however it is also considered as a standing item at each ELT meeting where new risks or significant changes to existing risks are discussed on a monthly basis. The Risk Register is also reviewed by the Audit and Risk Committee at each quarterly meeting.

Each risk has been assigned to a member of ELT who is designated with responsibility for ensuring the oversight of that risk. These key risks are prioritised by likelihood and impact and categorised as low, moderate, high or extreme. Each individual risk on the risk register is also supported by a schedule which maps out the existing controls in place to manage the risk, any further work that is necessary and updates on progress to date.

During 2025-26 the Office also implemented Departmental Risk Registers enabling escalation / de-escalation of risk between departmental and corporate risk registers.

Review of the Effectiveness of the Governance Framework

Department of Justice sponsor arrangements

Governance meetings are held on a regular basis throughout the year between the sponsor Division of the DoJ and in line with the provisions of the MSFM to discuss and monitor performance against the Annual Business Plan throughout the year. Agendas and papers are circulated in advance of these meeting to provide sufficient time for review. During the 2025-26 year there was one meeting and one desktop review held. The Office also responds to a significant number of requests for information and to the requirements to submit returns to the DoJ on a regular basis on a range of matters to satisfy the governance requirements of the DoJ. There were no Ministerial directions given during the year.

Executive Leadership Team (ELT)

The Executive Leadership Team, which is chaired by the Chief Executive or in their absence by the Police Ombudsman, meets on a regular basis throughout the year. During the financial year, there were eleven ELT meetings held. These meetings are designed to ensure the effective management of the day-to-day operation and governance of the Office and to ensure effective progress against the objectives and targets of the Annual Business Plan. The Police Ombudsman normally attends ELT meetings. The attendance by members at ELT meetings across the year was:

Marie Anderson, Police Ombudsman (retired 31/12/25)	4
Hugh Hume, Chief Executive	11
Paula Gillespie, Director of HR & Corporate Services	11
Nikki Davis, Director of Investigations	8
Jennifer Lamont, Director of Organisational Impact and Support	11
Alice McKelvey, Director of Legal and Information	10
Ursula Mezza, Head of Communication (Non-Executive Member)	10
Warren McCully, Grade 7 Investigations (Non-Executive Member)	1

Audit and Risk Committee

The Audit and Risk Committee met on six occasions in total across the year. Each meeting was chaired by a non-executive member. There was regular attendance at these meetings as outlined below:

Colin Kennedy, Non-Executive Member	6
Kevin McMahon, Non-Executive Member	6
Marie Anderson, Police Ombudsman (retired 31/12/25)	2
Hugh Hume, Chief Executive	6
Paula Gillespie, Director of HR & Corporate Services	6
Nikki Davis, Director of Investigations	5
Jennifer Lamont, Director of Organisational Impact and Support	3
Alice McKelvey, Director of Legal and Information	1
Christopher Molyneux, Head of Finance	4
DoJ, Sponsor Department	4
NICS Internal Audit Services	6
NIAO, External Auditor	6
External Audit Contractor	6

Each financial year, the Audit and Risk Committee produces a report on the effectiveness of the Audit and Risk Committee in support of both the Police Ombudsman and Accounting Officer. The report for the year ended 31 March 2026 concluded that the Audit and Risk Committee considered that, for the 2025-26 year, the overall system of controls, governance framework and risk management provide satisfactory assurance that the Office can effectively and efficiently meet its objectives.

During the financial year, the ELT and Audit and Risk Committee received a wide range of information within an agreed schedule including; the corporate risk register, statistical information on complaints and investigation caseloads, balanced scorecard information in relation to performance against business plan targets, management accounting information and other relevant material.

Budget Position and Authority

The Budget Act (Northern Ireland) 2026, which received Royal Assent on 20 March 2026, together with the Northern Ireland Spring Supplementary Estimates 2025-26 which were agreed by the Assembly on 23 February 2026, provide the statutory authority for the Executive's final 2025-26 expenditure plans. The Budget Act (Northern Ireland) 2026 also provides a Vote on Account to authorise expenditure by departments and other bodies into the early months of the 2026-27 financial year.

The Department is currently operating under the authority provided by the Vote on Account which provides 45% of the 2025-26 financial year's cash and resources. The cash and resource balance to complete for the remainder of 2026-27 will be authorised by the 2026-27 Main Estimates and the associated Budget Bill based on an agreed 2026-27 Budget.

In the event that this is delayed, then the powers available to the Permanent Secretary of the Department of Finance under Section 59 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 and Section 7 of the Government Resources and Accounts Act (Northern Ireland) 2001 will be used to authorise the cash, and the use of resources during the intervening period.

Significant Internal Control Issues

Effective governance arrangements and senior oversight are maintained to ensure appropriate and timely responses to such issues that arise.

As reported in last year's annual report follow up internal audits on Oversight of Investigations and Property Handling policy were pending. These took place early in this reporting period and both were raised to satisfactory. Audits on Finance arrangements and Corporate Governance had also recently resulted in limited assurance ratings, however Corporate Governance was raised to satisfactory reflecting the work which has been done on this area and while the Finance arrangements is still considered limited, recommendations are well progressed. The Head of Internal Audit also produces an Annual Assurance report which provides assurances to me as Accounting Officer as to the effectiveness of the Office's overall systems of control. The Head of Internal Audit Annual Assurance report for the year ended 31 March 2026 provides 'satisfactory assurance'.

As outlined on page 59, on receipt of legal advice following being served with a number of pre-action letters in relation to the 2024 data breach offers, payments were made to individuals seeking damages and who were legally represented and to eligible individuals who notified the Office that they believed that had a case for actional damage. While the individual amounts paid were within the Office's delegation limits for individual cases and this had been communicated with DoJ Officials, when it was confirmed in writing this action had been taken, the Office was informed the total data breach costs should apply and as such retrospective approval is being sought. Until retrospective approval is received these payments are considered irregular.

As outlined earlier in the report, the Office is seeking to secure alternative accommodation to meet a number of requirements. Delays in a number of areas of this project outside our control resulted in the requirement of further 12 month lease extension via a Deed of Variation to the current accommodation.

A business case outlining this requirement was provided to LPS via our Sponsor body in December 2025. LPS SAMU made observations in relation to previous approval and conditions, non compliance with better business cases NI guidance, lack of agreed timeline and project plan and policy controls and recommended DoF Supply assume responsibility for any further decisions in line with its remit for managing irregular expenditure. The Office subsequently submitted a request to DoF Supply for retrospective approval in February 2026 but given LPS rationale this could not be granted and expenditure on the lease extension is classed as irregular. This totals revenue expenditure of £636,298 and capital of £319,047. While this is unfortunate I do not consider that the Office could have taken any other action given the delays in what is a complex project which were outside of our control and impacted by other stakeholders. The Office has now comprised an external Project Board comprising of a number of relevant stakeholders to the project. The first meeting took place in January 2026 with a further meeting scheduled for June 2026.

The Police Ombudsman retired in December 2025 and at the time of reporting the role remains vacant with The Executive Office taking the lead in recruitment. On 31 December 2025 prior to retiring in line with the statutory scheme the Police Ombudsman delegated her authority to me as Chief Executive and other and senior staff as appropriate. The Office has subsequently followed legal advice indicating that authorisations, properly made in accordance with the applicable statutory scheme, can continue during the period of a vacancy and the Office is continuing to function and deliver it's statutory objectives.

Accounting Officer Statement on Assurance

In providing my statement on assurance I am informed by assurances provided to me from a range of sources. These include:

- an Annual Assurance Report from the Internal auditor which provides an overall assurance rating to me on the basis of work undertaken across a range of internal audit areas. The overall assurance that has been provided to me as Accounting Officer by the Internal Auditor is 'satisfactory';
- the Audit and Risk Committee Annual report which provides an overall assessment as to the effective functioning of the Audit and Risk Committee. As noted on page 68 the report received from Non-Executive Committee members notes that the overall systems of controls, governance framework and risk management provide satisfactory assurance that the Office can effectively and efficiently meet its objectives.
- the system of risk management including an updated Risk Management Framework within the Office with the Corporate Risk Register regularly reviewed and included in monthly ELT meetings and quarterly ARC meetings. In addition the inception of Departmental Risk Registers which enable the escalation / de-escalation of risks as appropriate;

- The three limited internal audit reviews which have been moved to satisfactory over the period in review. This leaves one review which is limited but with significant work progressed and the other reviews carried out in year reported as satisfactory;
- Progress against key objectives measured via our Balanced Scorecard and discussed at ELT, ARC and Governance Meetings with DoJ;
- The updating of ARC Terms of Reference;
- Review, update and application of key Policies in line with best practice;
- Action plans resulting from the data breach and CJINI report to ensure recommendations are put in place;
- Ongoing legal advice sought where necessary;
- Bi-Monthly review of case work by the Chief Executive to ensure the efficiency and effectiveness of key investigations;
- An information Assurance Group advising on information security issues
- A transformational change programme board that ensures all change programmes are being effectively managed in line with organisational strategy and within available budgets;
- A Legacy Operations Board

Subject to the above I consider that the overall system of controls, governance framework and risk management provide assurance to me that the Office can effectively and efficiently meet its objectives.

Signed:

Hugh Hume
Accounting Officer

25 June 2026

Remuneration and Staff Report

Remuneration Policy

The Pay Remit for the Northern Ireland Civil Service, including senior civil servants (SCS), is normally approved by the Minister of Finance. Following the approval of the 2025-26 Budget by the Assembly, on 19 May 2025, in which the Finance Minister outlined the overarching approach to public sector pay, the NI public sector pay policy guidance was published on 27 May 2025 in FD (DoF) 04/25.

Annual NICS pay awards are made in the context of the wider public sector pay policy. The 2024 pay award, due from 1 August 2024, was paid in August 2025. The 2025 pay award, due from 1 August 2025, was paid in October 2025.

The pay of NICS staff is based on a system of pay scales for each grade, including SCS, containing a number of pay points from minimum to maximum, allowing progression towards the maximum based on performance and other eligibility criteria.

Service Contracts

The Civil Service Commissioners (NI) Order 1999 requires Civil Service appointments to be made on merit on the basis of fair and open competition. The Recruitment Code published by the Civil Service Commissioners for Northern Ireland specifies the circumstances when appointments may be made by exception to merit.

Unless otherwise stated below, the officials covered by this report hold appointments, which are open-ended. Early termination, other than for misconduct, would result in the individual receiving compensation as set out in the Civil Service Compensation Scheme.

The Police Ombudsman is appointed for a maximum of seven years as provided within paragraph 1(4) of Schedule 3 to the Police (Northern Ireland) Act 1998. Marie Anderson was appointed as Police Ombudsman on 16 July 2019. Mrs Anderson resigned from her position on 31 December 2025.

Salary and pension entitlements

The following sections provide details of the remuneration and pension interests of the most senior officials in the Office.

Remuneration and pension entitlements (AUDITED INFORMATION)

Official	Salary (£000)		Benefits in Kind (to nearest £100)		Pension Benefit (to nearest £1000)		Total (£000)	
	2025-26	2024-25	2025-26	2024-25	2025-26	2024-25	2025-26	2024-25
Marie Anderson[1] *Police Ombudsman*	130–135 (170–175)*	165-170 (re-stated)	-	-	48	58	175-185 (215–225)*	220–230 (re-stated)
Huge Hume *Chief Executive*	110–115	75 - 80 (100–105)*	-	-	-	10	110–115	85–90 (110–115)*
Paul Holmes[2] *Temporary Senior Director of Investigation*	25-30 (90–95)*	70–75 (85–90)*	-	-	-	-	25–30 (90–95)*	70–75 (85–90)*
Nikki Davis *Director of Investigations*	75 - 80	65–70	-	-	25	26	100 - 105	90–95
Jennifer Lamont *Director of Organisational Impact*	70–75	10–15 (60–65)*	-	-	28	4	95–105	15–20 (65–70)*
Alice McKelvey *Director of Legal*	85–90	5–10 (80–85)*	-	-	-12	24	70–80	30–35 (110–115)*
Paula Gillespie *Director of HR & Corporate Services*	70–75	65–70	-	-	24	26	95–100	90–95
Non-Executive Audit and Risk Committee members								
Colin Kennedy	0 – 5	-	-	-	-	-	0 – 5	-
Kevin McMahon	0 – 5	-	-	-	-	-	0 – 5	-

* These figures represent WTE (Whole Time Equivalent) annualised salary figures.

(1) Marie Anderson retired from the organisation on 31st December 2025. The 2024-25 salary figures have been restated to reflect the remuneration properly attributable to that year, based on the relevant salary scale. This follows a delay, by the Office, in implementing the agreed pay uplifts. Amounts relating to the previous uplifts were paid in 2025-26 and are included within the totals disclosed above.

(2) Paul Holmes contributed to a partnership pension arrangement and as such there is no relevant pension disclosure. Paul Holmes retired from the organisation on 30th June 2025.

The figures included in the above table in respect of salary represent the actual salary figures (including back-pay) which was received by the most senior members of staff within the organisation.

Salary

'Salary' includes gross salary; overtime; reserved rights to London weighting or London allowances; recruitment and retention allowances; private office allowances and any other allowance to the extent that it is subject to UK taxation and any severance or ex gratia payments. This report is based on accrued payments made by the Office and thus recorded in these accounts.

Benefits in kind

The monetary value of benefits in kind covers any benefits provided by the Office and treated by HM Revenue and Customs as a taxable emolument. There was £Nil benefits in kind for the year ended 31 March 2026 (£Nil; for the year ended 31 March 2025).

Bonuses

The Office does not make bonus payments in respect of staff performance. No bonuses were payable to staff or to senior managers in respect of the year ended 31 March 2026 (£Nil, 31 March 2025).

Fair Pay Disclosures

Pay Ratios (AUDITED INFORMATION)

Reporting bodies are required to disclose the relationship between the remuneration of the highest-paid director in their organisation and the lower quartile, median and upper quartile remuneration of the Office's workforce.

The banded remuneration of the Police Ombudsman, the highest-paid director in the Office, in the financial year 2025-26 was £170,000 – £175,000 (2024-25 [re-stated], £165,000 – £170,000). The 2024–25 salary figures have been restated to reflect the remuneration properly attributable to that year, based on the relevant Judicial Salary scale. This follows a delay in the implementation, by the Office, of the previously agreed pay uplifts, which saw the relevant associated back payments paid in the 2025-26 financial year. The relationship between the mid-point of this band and the remuneration of the Office's workforce is disclosed.

2025-26	25th percentile	Median	75th percentile
Total remuneration (£)	£34,266	£38,990	£47,304
Pay ratio	5.03:1	4.42:1	3.65:1

2024-25 (re-stated)	25th percentile	Median	75th percentile
Total remuneration (£)	£34,433	£36,503	£45,906
Pay ratio	4.86:1	4.59:1	3.65:1

Total remuneration includes salary, nonconsolidated performance-related pay, and benefits- in-kind. It does not include severance payments, employer pension contributions and the cash equivalent transfer value of pensions. The total remuneration figures have been annualised and adjusted for WTE to ensure comparability with prior year figures.

The 2024-25 total remuneration and pay ratio figures have been re-stated to reflect the ratio against the remuneration properly attributable to that year for the highest paid director, based on the relevant Judicial Salary scale. This follows a delay in the implementation, by the Office, of the previously agreed pay uplifts, which saw the relevant associated back payments paid in the 2025-26 financial year.

The values for the salary component of remuneration for the 25th percentile, median and 75th percentile were £34,266 (2024-25: £34,433), £38,990 (2024-25: £36,503) and £47,304 (2024-25: £45,906) respectively. The 25th percentile, median and 75th percentile figures for 2024-25 include a £1,500 non-consolidated payment, which was paid to staff during the 2024-25 financial year.

In 2025-26, no employee of the Office (2024-25: None) received remuneration in excess of the Ombudsman.

Remuneration ranged from £24,952 to £172,500 (2024-25: re-stated £18,306 to £167,500). As noted above, the 2024-25 remuneration figure for the highest paid director has been re-stated to reflect the remuneration properly attributable to that financial year, based on the relevant Judicial Salary scale.

Percentage Change in Remuneration

Reporting bodies are also required to disclose the percentage change from the previous financial year in:

a) salary and allowances, and
b) performance pay and bonuses of the highest paid director and of their employees as a whole.

The percentage changes in respect of the Office are shown in the following table. It should be noted that the calculation for the highest paid director is based on the mid-point of the band within which their remuneration fell in each year.

Percentage change for:	2025-26 v 2024-25	2024-25 v 2023-24 (re-stated)
Average employee salary and allowances	6.62%	5.69%
Highest paid director's salary and allowances	2.99%	6.35%

The 2024-25 v 2023-24 figures in the above table have been re-stated for the highest paid director, to reflect the correct movement between the mid-point of the relevant band on the Judicial Salary scale between the two financial years, based on the remuneration that was properly attributable to the relevant financial year.

No performance related pay or bonuses were payable in these years.

Pension Benefits (AUDITED INFORMATION)

	Accrued pension at pension age as at 31/3/26 £000	Real increase in pension and related lump sum at pension age £000	CETV at 31/3/26 £000	CETV at 31/3/25 [re-stated]	Real increase in CETV £000	Employer contribution to partnership pension account (Nearest £100)
Hugh Hume *Chief Executive*	0 - 5	0 - 2.5	9	9	0	N/A
Nikki Davis *Director of Investigations*	20 - 25	0 – 2.5	276	246	12	N/A
Jennifer Lamont *Director of Organisational Impact*	0-5	0 – 2.5	26	3	18	N/A
Alice McKelvey *Director of Legal & Information*	25 - 30	0	364	351	-10	N/A
Paula Gillespie *Director of HR & Corporate Services*	15 - 20	0 – 2.5	231	204	12	N/A
Non-Executive Audit and Risk Committee members						
Kevin McMahon	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Colin Kennedy	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

The pension benefits of any members affected by the Public Services Pensions Remedy which were reported in 2022-23 based on* ***alpha* *membership for the period between 1 April 2015 and 31 March 2022 have been reported since 2023-24 based on PCSPS(NI) membership for the same period.*

Some of the previous 2024-25 CETV figures have changed slightly to what was reported in the 2024-25 Annual Report and Accounts, due to a re-classification of some scheme figures on the input table, as confirmed by Northern Ireland Civil Service Pensions.

Northern Ireland Civil Service Pensions

Pension benefits are provided through the NICS pension schemes which are administered by Civil Service Pensions (CSP).

The alpha pension scheme was initially introduced for new entrants from 1 April 2015. The alpha scheme and all previous scheme arrangements are unfunded with the cost of benefits met by monies voted each year. The majority of members of the Classic, Premium, Classic Plus and Nuvos pension arrangements (collectively known as the Principal Civil Service Pension Scheme (Northern Ireland) [PCSPS(NI)]) also moved to alpha from that date. Transitional protection measures introduced alongside these reforms meant any members who on 1 April 2012 were within 10 years of their normal pension age remained in their previous scheme arrangement (full protection) and those who were between 13.5 years and 10 years of their normal pension age were given a choice between moving to alpha on 1 April 2015 or at a later date determined by their age (tapered protection).

McCloud Judgment and 2015 Remedy

In 2018, the Court of Appeal found that the transitional protections put in place back in 2015 that allowed older workers to remain in their original scheme, were discriminatory on the basis of age. As a result, steps have been taken by the Department of Finance to remedy this discrimination.

The Department has now made regulations which remedy the discrimination by:

- ensuring all active members are treated equally for future service as members of the reformed alpha scheme only from 1 April 2022, and
- providing each eligible member with options to have their pension entitlements for the period when the discrimination existed between 1 April 2015 and 31 March 2022 (the Remedy Period) retrospectively calculated under either the current (reformed) scheme rules, or the older (pre-reform) legacy rules which existed before 2015.

This means that all active NICS Pension Scheme members are in the same pension scheme, alpha, from 1 April 2022 onwards, regardless of age. This removes the discrimination going forwards in providing equal pension provision for all scheme members.

The Department is now implementing the second part of the remedy, which addresses the discrimination which was incurred by affected members between 1 April 2015 and 31 March 2022.

Eligible members with relevant service between 1 April 2015 and 31 March 2022 (the Remedy Period) will now be entitled to a choice of alternative pension benefits in relation to that period. i.e. calculated under the prereformed PCSPS(NI) 'Classic', 'Premium' or 'Nuvos' rules or alternatively calculated under the reformed alpha rules. As part of this 'retrospective' remedy most active members will now receive a choice about their Remedy Period benefits at the point of retirement. This is known as the Deferred Choice Underpin (DCU). For those members who already have pension benefits in payment in relation to the Remedy Period, they will receive an Immediate Choice. There are a significant number of Immediate Choice Remediable Service Statement (RSS) packs to issue. This process involves complex calculations to provide members with individually tailored statements. Due to the complexity of the calculations and some prolonged work to finalise policy elements of the remedy, not all Immediate Choice packs have been able to be issued by the original regulatory timeline of 31 March 2025. The scheme manager has invoked the discretion allowed by the remedy legislation and has extended the timeline for issuing Immediate Choice RSS packs to 31 March 2027. The Pensions Regulator has been notified of this extension. Our priority remains to provide members with all the accurate information they need to make a choice. It can be noted that other Public Service Pension Schemes are also in a similar position. Further information on the remedy will be included in the NICS pension scheme accounts which, once published, are available at **DoF Annual Report and Accounts | Department of Finance**.

As part of the remedy involved rolling back all remediable service into the relevant legacy PCSPS(NI) arrangement for the 7-Year Remedy Period, the value of pension benefits for the 2024-25 pension disclosures for affected members continue to be based on the rolled back position.

Alpha

Alpha is a 'Career Average Revalued Earnings' (CARE) arrangement in which members accrue pension benefits at a percentage rate of annual pensionable earnings throughout the period of scheme membership. The current accrual rate is 2.32%.

From 1 April 2015, all new entrants joining the NICS can choose between membership of alpha or joining a 'money purchase' stakeholder arrangement with a significant employer contribution (Partnership Pension Account).

Information on the PCSPS(NI) – Closed Scheme

Staff in post prior to 30 July 2007 were eligible to be in one of three statutory based 'final salary' legacy defined benefit arrangements (Classic, Premium and Classic Plus). From April 2011, pensions payable under these arrangements have been reviewed annually in line with changes in the cost of living. New entrants who joined on or after

1 October 2002 and before 30 July 2007 will have chosen between membership of Premium or joining the Partnership Pension Account.

New entrants who joined on or after 30 July 2007 were eligible for membership of the legacy PCSPS(NI) Nuvos arrangement or they could have opted for a Partnership Pension Account. Nuvos was also a CARE arrangement in which members accrued pension benefits at a percentage rate of annual pensionable earnings throughout the period of scheme membership. The rate of accrual was 2.3%.

Benefits in Classic accrued at the rate of 1/80th of pensionable salary for each year of service. In addition, a lump sum equivalent to three years' pension is payable on retirement. For Premium, benefits accrued at the rate of 1/60th of final pensionable earnings for each year of service. Unlike Classic, there is no automatic lump sum (but members may give up (commute) some of their pension to provide a lump sum). Classic Plus is essentially a variation of Premium, but with benefits in respect of service before 1 October 2002 calculated broadly as per Classic.

Partnership Pension Account

The Partnership Pension Account is a stakeholder pension arrangement. The employer makes a basic contribution of between 8% and 14.75% (depending on the age of the member) into a stakeholder pension product chosen by the employee. The employee does not have to contribute but where they do make contributions, the employer will match these up to a limit of 3% of pensionable salary (in addition to the employer's basic contribution). Employers also contribute a further 0.5% of pensionable salary to cover the cost of centrally provided risk benefit cover (death in service and ill health retirement).

Annual Benefit Statements

Active members of the pension scheme will receive an Annual Benefit Statement. The accrued pension quoted is the pension the member is entitled to receive when they reach their scheme pension age, or immediately on ceasing to be an active member of the scheme if they are at or over pension age. The normal scheme pension age in alpha is linked to the member's State Pension Age but cannot be before age 65. The Scheme Pension age is 60 for any pension accrued in the legacy **Classic**, **Premium**, and **Classic Plus** arrangements and 65 for any benefits accrued in **Nuvos**. Further details about the NICS pension schemes can be found at the website **Civil Service Pensions (NI) | Department of Finance**.

Pension Increases

All pension benefits are reviewed annually in line with changes in the cost of living. Any applicable increases are applied from April and are determined by the Consumer Prices Index (CPI) figure for the preceding September. The CPI in September 2025 was 3.8% and HM Treasury has announced that public service pensions will be increased accordingly from April 2026.

Employee Contribution Rates

Percentage rates for employee contributions were revised for all members from **1 July 2025** as a result of the Northern Ireland Civil Service Pension Scheme: Consultation on Scheme Yield / Member Contributions | Department of Finance as shown below*:

Annualised Rate of Pensionable Earnings (Salary Bands) 1 April 2025 to 31 August 2025		Contribution rates – All members from 1 April 2025 to 30 June 2025	*Contribution rates – All members from 1 July 2025
From	**To**		
£0	£27,091.99	4.6%	4.65%
£27,092.00	£61,645.99	5.45%	5.65%
£61,646.00	£165,793.99	7.35%	7.55%
£165,794.00 and above		8.05%	8.25%

Salary bands were also updated from 1 September 2025 as follows:

Annualised Rate of Pensionable Earnings (Salary Bands) 1 September 2025 onwards		Contribution rates – All members
From	**To**	
£0	£28,716.99	4.65%
£28,717.00	£65,343.99	5.65%
£65,344.00	£175,740.99	7.55%
£175,741.00 and above		8.25%

Cash Equivalent Transfer Values

A Cash Equivalent Transfer Value (CETV) is the actuarially assessed capitalised value of the pension scheme benefits accrued by a member at a particular point in time. The benefits valued are the member's accrued benefits and any contingent spouse's pension payable from the scheme. A CETV is a payment made by a pension scheme or arrangement to secure pension benefits in another pension scheme or arrangement when the member leaves a scheme and chooses to transfer the benefits accrued in their former scheme.

The pension figures shown relate to the benefits that the individual has accrued as a consequence of their total membership of the pension scheme, not just their service in a senior capacity to which disclosure applies.

The CETV figures, and from 2003-04 the other pension details, include the value of any pension benefit in another scheme or arrangement which the individual has transferred to the NICS pension arrangements. They also include any additional pension benefit accrued to the member as a result of their purchasing additional years of pension service in the scheme at their own cost.

CETVs are calculated in accordance with The Occupational Pension Schemes (Transfer Values) Regulations 1996 (as amended).

HM Treasury provides the assumptions for discount rates for calculating CETVs payable from the public service pension schemes. On 27 April 2023, HM Treasury published guidance on the basis for setting the discount rates for calculating cash equivalent transfer values payable by public service pension schemes. In their guidance of 27 April 2023, HM Treasury advised that, with immediate effect, the discount rate adopted for calculating CETVs should be in line with the new SCAPE discount rate of 1.7% above CPI inflation, superseding the previous SCAPE discount rate of 2.4% above CPI inflation. All else being the same, a lower SCAPE discount rate leads to higher CETVs. The HM Treasury Guidance of 27 April 2023 can be found at **Basis for setting the discount rates for calculating cash equivalent transfer values payable by public service pension schemes - GOV.UK**. **As at the year-end** there have been no further changes to the SCAPE discount rate of 1.7% above CPI inflation since the HM Treasury guidance was published.

Real increase in CETV

This reflects the increase in CETV that is funded by the employer. It does not include the increase in accrued pension due to inflation, contributions paid by the employee (including the value of any benefits transferred from another pension scheme or arrangement) and uses common market valuation factors for the start and end of the period (which therefore disregards the effect of any changes in factors).

Compensation for loss of office [audited information]

Redundancy and other departure costs are paid in accordance with the provisions of the Civil Service Compensation Scheme (Northern Ireland), a statutory scheme made under the superannuation (Northern Ireland) Order 1972. Exit costs are accounted for in the full year of departure. Where early retirements are agreed the additional costs are met by the Office and not by the Civil Service pension scheme.

Payments to Past Directors [audited information]

There were no payments made to any former member of SMT/ELT or former Police Ombudsman for the year ended 31 March 2026 (£nil for the year ended 31 March 2025).

Off Payroll Payments

The office had no off-payroll payments during the year to 31 March 2026 (£nil for the year ended 31 March 2025).

Police Ombudsman's Remuneration

The Police Ombudsman did not receive any benefits in kind during the year (£Nil, for the year ended 31 March 2025).

The Police Ombudsman is a member of the NICS Pension arrangements. For the year ended 31 March 2026, £55,425 was payable by the Office in respect of the Police Ombudsman's pension contributions (£50,481 for the year ended 31 March 2025).

Staff Costs
(This section is subject to audit)

			2025-26 £000	2024-25 £000
	Permanently employed staff	***Others***	***Total***	***Total***
Wages and salaries	5,053,412	906,053	5,959,465	5,522,280
Social security costs	678,395	7,752	686,147	531,187
Other pension costs	1,604,970	19,860	1,624,830	1,518,663
Sub Total*	**7,336,777**	**933,665**	**8,270,442**	**7,572,130**
Less recoveries in respect of outward secondments	-	-	-	-5,025
Total net costs	**7,336,777**	**933,665**	**8,270,442**	**7,567,105**

*Of the total, £nil has been charged to capital.

The Northern Ireland Civil Service main pension schemes are unfunded multi-employer defined benefit schemes but the Office of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland is unable to identify its share of the underlying assets and liabilities.

The Public Service Pensions Act (NI) 2014 provides the legal framework for regular actuarial valuations of the public sector pension schemes to measure the costs of the benefits being provided. These valuations inform the future contribution rates to be paid into the schemes by employers every four years following the scheme valuation.

The Act also provides for the establishment of an employer cost cap mechanism to ensure that the costs of the pension schemes remain sustainable in future.

The Government Actuary's Department (GAD) is responsible for carrying out scheme valuations. The Actuary reviews employer contributions every four years following the scheme valuation. The 2020 scheme valuation was completed by GAD in October 2023. The outcome of this valuation was used to set the contributions for employers from 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2027.

The Cost Cap Mechanism (CCM) is a measure of scheme costs and determines whether member costs or scheme benefits require adjustment to maintain costs with a set corridor. Reforms were made to the CCM which was applied to the 2020 scheme valuations and included the introduction of a reformed-scheme-only cost control mechanism which assesses just the costs relating to reformed schemes (alpha for the NICS) and introduced an economic check. Prior to the cost control mechanism reforms, legacy scheme (PCSPS(NI)) costs associated with active members were also captured in the mechanism. The reformed-scheme-only design and the economic check were applied to the 2020 scheme valuations for the devolved public sector pension schemes, including the NICS pension scheme. The 2020 scheme valuation outcome was that the core cost cap cost of the scheme lies within the 3% cost cap corridor. As there is no breach of the cost control mechanism, there is no requirement for the Department of Finance to consult on changes to the scheme. Further information can be found on the Department of Finance website **https://www.finance-ni.gov.uk/articles/northern-ireland-civil-service-pension-scheme-valuations**.

For 2025-26, employers' contributions of £1,604,439 were payable to the PCSPS (2024-25: £1,475,412) at one of four rates in the range 28.7 to 34.2 per cent (2024-25: 28.7 to 34.2 per cent) of pensionable pay, based on salary bands. The contribution rates reflect the benefits as they are accrued, not when the costs are actually incurred, and reflect past experience of the scheme.

Employees can opt to open a partnership pension account, a stakeholder pension with an employer contribution. Employers' contributions of £31,091 (2024-25: £30,496) were paid to one or more of a panel of appointed stakeholder pension providers. Employer contributions are age-related and range from 8.0 to 14.75 per cent (2024-25: 8.0 to 14.75 per cent) of pensionable pay.

The partnership pension account offers the member the opportunity of having a 'free' pension. The employer will pay the age-related contribution and if the member does contribute, the employer will pay an additional amount to match member contributions up to 3 per cent of pensionable pay.

Employer contributions of £975 (0.5 per cent; 2024-25: £964, 0.5 per cent) of pensionable pay, were payable to PCSPS to cover the cost of the future provision of lump sum benefits on death in service and ill health retirement of these employees. Contributions due to the **partnership** pension providers at the reporting period date were £nil. Contributions prepaid at that date were £nil.

One person (2024-25: nil person) retired early on ill-health grounds; no enhancement for prospective service has been applied and therefore there were no accrued pension liabilities in the year (2024-25: £nil)

The Office meets all of the staff costs for staff who are seconded to it as they are incurred. Although costs are fully recharged to the Office, the seconding organisation remains the permanent employer with responsibility for the pay, allowances and pension of such staff.

Average number of persons employed
(This section is subject to audit)

The average number of whole time equivalent (WTE) persons employed during the year was:

			2024-25	2023-24
	Permanently employed staff	*Others*	*Total*	*Total*
Directly employed	115	1	116	98
Other	-	8	8	28
Staff engaged on capital projects	-	2	2	2
Total	**115**	**11**	**126**	**128**

During the year to 31 March 2026, the average number of persons employed by the Office was 126. Over the same period there were 28 leavers and 38 new starts. The staff turnover during the 2025-26 year was 29.99% (20.71% during the 2024-25 year). Of those leaving, 6.31% were employed for less than one year.

Reporting of Civil Service and other compensation schemes – exit packages
(This section is subject to audit)

Exit package cost band	Number of compulsory redundancies	Number of other departures agreed	Total number of exit packages by cost band
<£10,000	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)
£10,000 - £25,000	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)
£25,000 - £50,000	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)
£50,000 - £100,000	0 (0)	1 (0)	1 (0)
£100,000- £150,000	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)
£150,000- £200,000	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)
Total number of exit packages	0 (0)	1 (0)	1 (0)
Total resource cost /£	£nil (£nil)	£55,655 (£nil)	£55,655 (£nil)

Redundancy and other departure costs have been paid in accordance with the provisions of the Civil Service Compensation Scheme (Northern Ireland) (CSCS (NI)), a statutory scheme made under the Superannuation (Northern Ireland) Order 1972. The table above shows the total cost of exit packages agreed and accounted for in 2024-25 (figures in brackets) and 2025-26. Exit costs in the band of £50,000 and £100,000 were paid in 2025-26, the year of departure (2024-25 £nil). Where the NDPB has agreed early retirements, the additional costs are met by the NDPB and not by the Civil Service pension scheme. Ill-health retirement costs are met by the pension scheme and are not included in the table.

Grade of Staff

The Police Ombudsman is remunerated on the Judicial Scales at Judicial Scale 5.2. The remuneration of members of staff in the Office is set within the NICS pay structures. The Chief Executive and Director of Legal are remunerated on SCS Pay Scales.

	2025-26	2024-25
SCS Payscale 2	1	1
SCS Payscale 1	1	2

Staff composition

The profile of staff at 31 March 2026 shows that, excluding employees from a non-determined background, 56.14% are Protestant and 43.86% are Roman Catholic. The profile of staff at 1 January 2025 showed that 54.80% were Protestant and 45.20% were Roman Catholic.

In relation to gender composition, the overall profile of staff at 31 March 2026 shows that 44.35% were male and 55.65% were female (45.19% were male and 55.81% were female at 1 January 2025). As at 31 March 2026 there were five members of ELT, one of whom was male (20%), four were female (80%).

As at the end of the **financial** year, there were two members of staff remunerated at SCS scale, the Chief Executive and the Director of Legal and Information. The Police Ombudsman is remunerated on the Judicial Scale 5.2. The Police Ombudsman is female. Of those remunerated at SCS grade, one is female (50%), one is male (50%).

The most recent ECNI monitored workforce statistics for 2022 for community background are 49.9% Protestant and 50.1% Roman Catholic and for gender are 47.5% male, 52.5% female. Within the Northern Ireland Public Sector, the level of female representation was higher at 65.9% female and 34.1% male.

Sickness Absence

For the 2025-26 financial year, the Executive Leadership Team set new absence targets for short-term and long-term absences, with a target of 3% of total working days for short-term absences and 5% of total working days for long-term absences. The overall absence target for the year was set at 5%.

Whilst the Office did not meet the 5% target set for the overall absence rate, it is encouraging to note that the absence rate was recorded as 8.61% in April 2025 and by the end of financial year it had reduced to 6.53%. The short-term absence target was met on 11 out of the 12 months of the recording year and ended the year sitting at a cumulative figure of 1.93%. The individual monthly long term absence figure was recorded below the 5% target on 6 occasions during the year. The overall absence figure saw a steady decrease month on month from September 2025 – March 2026.

An internal audit review on attendance management was conducted in November 2025 and the review confirmed there is a satisfactory rating.

All staff have access to an Employee Assistance Programme which includes access to a confidential helpline and counselling, and guidance on a range of health and wellbeing matters.

Employee Consultation and Trade Union Relationships

The Police Ombudsman recognises the importance of good industrial relations and is committed to effective employee relations. The Office has an established Joint Negotiating Consultative Committee (JNCC) with formal recognition two staff unions, NIPSA and Unison (although there are no long any Unison representatives in the Office).

The Office holds quarterly JNCC meetings with internal Union representatives and Union Officials to discuss a range of issues. We also engage in regular consultation in relation to policies, job roles and any proposed changes which impact on staff.

Staff Policies regarding Disabled People

The Office is an equal opportunities employer, committed to the promotion of equality in all aspects of working life. We are committed to the employment of disabled people and operate a Guaranteed Interview Scheme (GIS) which ensures that disabled applicants, who meet the minimum essential criteria for the role they have applied for, are offered an interview.

We are committed to ensuring that reasonable adjustments are made for staff who are or disabled to ensure that they can continue to be effectively employed in the Office.

The Office has developed a Reasonable Adjustments Passport for any staff member who presents with or discloses that they have a disability. This passport assists staff when moving teams and also helps line managers to understand the nature of the person's disability and to make adjustments, if required.

The Office has been a member of the Employers for Disability NI for quite a few years, and through attendance of a Disability Positive training course, now has a dedicated Disability Champion.

Employee Engagement

The Office maintains arrangements for regular and meaningful engagement with staff throughout the year. This is achieved in a variety of methods including quarterly 'Connection Day' events for staff during the reporting period. Regular team briefs were commenced following each monthly meeting of ELT and there are regular intranet updates as well as bespoke all staff emails when required.

During 2025-26, the Office continued work to improve on organisational culture with the Values Framework being finalised and communicated following extensive staff consultation. During the reporting period work has also commenced on the People Strategy with focus groups with staff facilitating the development of key themes

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

The Police Ombudsman values and welcomes diversity and is committed to creating an inclusive workplace for all and to promoting equality of opportunity and diversity in her Office. The Office provides equal opportunity for all job applicants and employees. One of the core values of the Office is 'Inclusive' and positive behaviours relating to this area are highlighted in the Values framework. This will also form part of the development of the People Strategy.

Learning and Development

We recognise the importance of having skilled and engaged employees and continue to invest in learning and development of staff and an annual training plan is developed to support the business plan.

The diversity of roles across the office means continuing professional development requirements, changes in legislation and professional practice are all identified as part of a varied training programme and individual staff personal development plans.

The Office has access to NI Civil Service learning and development programmes and additional resources via the LInKS digital learning platform. Our digital offering was enhanced this year by being able to access the College of Policing College Learn platform. This will give our investigations staff access to the national policing curriculum and a wealth of research materials.

New for this year was the roll out of a Group Reflective Practice Programme. The aim was to provide a facilitated, safe space for Police Ombudsman staff to share and reflect on experiences and acknowledge the professional and personal impact of their work. The sessions not only promoted resilience and wellbeing but also provided opportunities for creative problem-solving.

Northern Ireland Assembly Accountability Report

Expenditure on Consultancy

The Office incurred expenditure of £nil (£nil for the year ended 31 March 2025) on consultancy during the year ended 31 March 2026.

Regularity of Expenditure
(This section is subject to audit)

There were no losses or special payments in the year ended 31 March 2026, none for the year ended 31 March 2025.

Fees and Charges
(This section is subject to audit)

No fees are chargeable by the Office for making a complaint about police officer conduct or about the service provided by the Office. All complaints received are investigated free of charge to the person making a complaint. Under the respective agreements in place, any costs incurred in the investigation of matters in relation to the NCA or the UK Borders Authority are recharged to the relevant authority on the basis of full cost recovery in order that all such investigations are cost neutral to the Office. There have been no cost recharges under these agreements to date.

Remote Contingent Liabilities
(This section is subject to audit)

In addition to contingent liabilities which are reported in Note 16 to the accounts on page 1 within the meaning of IAS 37, the Office is also required to report liabilities for which the likelihood of a transfer of economic benefit in settlement is too remote to meet the definition of contingent liability. There were no such remote contingent liabilities for the year ended 31 March 2026.

Hugh Hume
Accounting Officer

25 June 2026

THE CERTIFICATE AND REPORT OF THE COMPTROLLER AND AUDITOR GENERAL TO THE NORTHERN IRELAND ASSEMBLY

Opinion on financial statements

I certify that I have audited the financial statements of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland for the year ended 31 March 2026 under the Police (Northern Ireland) Act 1998 as amended by the Northern Ireland Act 1998 (Devolution of Policing and Justice Functions) Order 2010. The financial statements comprise: the Statements of Comprehensive Net Expenditure, Financial Position, Cash Flows, Changes in Taxpayers' Equity; and the related notes including significant accounting policies. The financial reporting framework that has been applied in their preparation is applicable law and UK adopted international accounting standards as interpreted and adapted by the Government Financial Reporting Manual.

I have also audited the information in the Accountability Report that is described in that report as having been audited.

In my opinion the financial statements:

- give a true and fair view of the state of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland's affairs as at 31 March 2026 and of its net operating expenditure for the year then ended; and
- have been properly prepared in accordance with the Police (Northern Ireland) Act 1998 as amended by the Northern Ireland Act 1998 (Devolution of Policing and Justice Functions) Order 2010 and Department of Justice (DoJ) directions issued thereunder.

Qualified opinion on regularity

In my opinion, except for the transactions relating to the;

- extension of the building lease from June 2026 to June 2027; and
- damages paid in respect of the data breach by the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland in 2024

in all material respects the expenditure and income recorded in the financial statements have been applied to the purposes intended by the Assembly and the financial transactions recorded in the financial statements conform to the authorities which govern them.

Further detail is given in the basis for qualified opinion on regularity.

Basis for qualified opinion on regularity

Extension of building lease

Land and Property Services (LPS) in the Department of Finance (DoF) approved an extension to the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland's lease on the building it occupies, to the end of June 2026. In December 2025, the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland requested a one-year extension to the lease, but LPS refused to grant this request. The Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland subsequently extended the lease to 30 June 2027 and then applied to DoF for retrospective approval for the extension and the corresponding costs. DoF did not grant this approval and as a result, all transactions relating to the extension of this lease to the end of June 2027 are irregular. Irregular transactions in 2025-26 amount to £319,047 and impact on the right of use asset and the corresponding payable included in the accounts.

Data breach

In August 2024 the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland suffered a data breach and a decision was made to make an offer, inclusive of costs, to those included in the data breach who were seeking damages. The Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland set up a provision for these costs at 31 March 2025 and during 2025-26, £175,250 has been paid out in relation to this matter. The balance in this provision at 31 March 2026 is £50,000. DoF approval should have been sought due to the total value of the payments likely to be made. The Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland has not yet applied to the DoF for retrospective approval, and until the approval is granted, all transactions in relation to this data breach are irregular.

Basis for opinions

I conducted my audit in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (ISAs)(UK), applicable law and Practice Note 10 'Audit of Financial Statements and Regularity of Public Sector Bodies in the United Kingdom'. My responsibilities under those standards are further described in the Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements section of this certificate.

My staff and I are independent of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland in accordance with the ethical requirements that are relevant to my audit of the financial statements in the UK, including the Financial Reporting Council's Ethical Standard, and have fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with these requirements.

I believe that the audit evidence obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for my opinions.

Conclusions relating to going concern

In auditing the financial statements, I have concluded that the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland's use of the going concern basis of accounting in the preparation of the financial statements is appropriate.

Based on the work I have performed, I have not identified any material uncertainties relating to events or conditions that, individually or collectively, may cast significant doubt on the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland's ability to continue as a going concern for a period of at least twelve months from when the financial statements are authorised for issue.

The going concern basis of accounting for the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland is adopted in consideration of the requirements set out in the Government Financial Reporting Manual, which require entities to adopt the going concern basis of accounting in the preparation of the financial statements where it anticipated that the services which they provide will continue into the future.

My responsibilities and the responsibilities of the Accounting Officer with respect to going concern are described in the relevant sections of this certificate.

Other information

The other information comprises the information included in the Annual Report other than the financial statements, the parts of the Accountability Report described in that report as having been audited and my audit certificate and report. The Accounting Officer is responsible for the other information included in the annual report. My opinion on the financial statements does not cover the other information and except to the extent otherwise explicitly stated in my certificate I do not express any form of assurance conclusion thereon.

My responsibility is to read the other information and, in doing so, consider whether the other information is materially inconsistent with the financial statements or my knowledge obtained in the audit or otherwise appears to be materially misstated. If I identify such material inconsistencies or apparent material misstatements, I am required to determine whether this gives rise to a material misstatement in the financial statements themselves. If, based on the work I have performed, I conclude that there is a material misstatement of this other information, I am required to report that fact.

I have nothing to report in this regard.

Opinion on other matters

In my opinion the part of the Remuneration and Staff Report to be audited has been properly prepared in accordance with Department of Justice directions issued under the Police (Northern Ireland) Act 1998 as amended by the Northern Ireland Act 1998 (Devolution of Policing and Justice Functions) Order 2010.

In my opinion based on the work undertaken in the course of the audit:

- the parts of the Accountability Report to be audited have been properly prepared in accordance with Department of Justice directions made under the Police (Northern Ireland) Act 1998 as amended by the Northern Ireland Act 1998 (Devolution of Policing and Justice Functions) Order 2010; and
- the information given in the Performance Report and Accountability Report for the financial year for which the financial statements are prepared is consistent with the financial statements.

Matters on which I report by exception

In light of the knowledge and understanding of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland and its environment obtained in the course of the audit, I have not identified material misstatements in the Performance Report and Accountability Report.

I have nothing to report in respect of the following matters which I report to you if, in my opinion:

- adequate accounting records have not been kept; or
- the financial statements and the parts of the Accountability Report to be audited are not in agreement with the accounting records; or
- certain disclosures of remuneration specified by the Government Financial Reporting Manual are not made; or parts of the Remuneration and Staff Report to be audited are not in agreement with the accounting records and returns; or
- I have not received all of the information and explanations I require for my audit; or
- the Governance Statement does not reflect compliance with the Department of Finance's guidance.

Responsibilities of the Accounting Officer for the financial statements

As explained more fully in the Statement of Accounting Officer Responsibilities, the Accounting Officer is responsible for:

- maintaining proper accounting records;
- the preparation of the financial statements in accordance with the applicable financial reporting framework and for being satisfied that they give a true and fair view;
- such internal controls are in place as deemed necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements to be free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud of error;
- ensuring the annual report, which includes the Remuneration and Staff Report, is prepared in accordance with the applicable financial reporting framework; and
- assessing the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless the Accounting Officer anticipates that the services provided by the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland will not continue to be provided in the future.

Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements

My responsibility is to examine, certify and report on the financial statements in accordance with the Police (Northern Ireland) Act 1998 as amended by the Northern Ireland Act 1998 (Devolution of Policing and Justice Functions) Order 2010.

My objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error and to issue a certificate that includes my opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with ISAs (UK) will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of these financial statements.

I design procedures in line with my responsibilities, outlined above, to detect material misstatements in respect of non-compliance with laws and regulation, including fraud.

My procedures included:

- obtaining an understanding of the legal and regulatory framework applicable to the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland through discussion with management and application of extensive public sector accountability knowledge. The key laws and regulations I considered included the governing legislation noted above;
- making enquiries of management and those charged with governance on the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland's compliance with laws and regulations;
- making enquiries of internal audit, management and those charged with governance as to susceptibility to irregularity and fraud, their assessment of the risk of material misstatement due to fraud and irregularity, and their knowledge of actual, suspected and alleged fraud and irregularity;
- completing risk assessment procedures to assess the susceptibility of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland's financial statements to material misstatement, including how fraud might occur. This included, but was not limited to, an engagement director led engagement team discussion on fraud to identify particular areas, transaction streams and business practices that may be susceptible to material misstatement due to fraud. As part of this discussion, I identified potential for fraud in the following areas: management override of controls through the posting of unusual journals and the extent of management bias within accounting estimates;
- engagement director oversight to ensure the engagement team collectively had the appropriate competence, capabilities and skills to identify or recognise non-compliance with the applicable legal and regulatory framework throughout the audit;
- documenting and evaluating the design and implementation of internal controls in place to mitigate risk of material misstatement due to fraud and non-compliance with laws and regulations;
- designing audit procedures to address specific laws and regulations which the engagement team considered to have a direct material effect on the financial statements in terms of misstatement and irregularity, including fraud. These audit procedures included, but were not limited to, reading board and committee minutes, and agreeing financial statement disclosures to underlying supporting documentation and approvals as appropriate;
- addressing the risk of fraud as a result of management override of controls by:
    - performing analytical procedures to identify unusual or unexpected relationships or movements;
    - testing journal entries to identify potential anomalies, and inappropriate or unauthorised adjustments;
    - assessing whether judgements and other assumptions made in determining accounting estimates were indicative of potential bias; and
    - investigating significant or unusual transactions made outside of the normal course of business.

A further description of my responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements is located on the Financial Reporting Council's website **www.frc.org.uk/auditorsresponsibilities**. This description forms part of my certificate.

In addition, I am required to obtain evidence sufficient to give reasonable assurance that the income and expenditure recorded in the financial statements have been applied to the purposes intended by the Assembly and the financial transactions recorded in the financial statements conform to the authorities which govern them.

My detailed observations are included in my report attached to these financial statements.

Dorinnia Carville
Comptroller and Auditor General
Northern Ireland Audit Office
106 University Street
BELFAST
BT7 1EU

30 June 2026

Financial Statements

Statement of Comprehensive Net Expenditure for the year ended 31 March 2026

This account summarises the expenditure and income generated and consumed on an accruals basis. It also includes other comprehensive income and expenditure, which include changes to the values of non-current assets and other financial instruments that cannot yet be recognised as income or expenditure.

	Notes	2025-2026 £	2024-2025 £
Income			
Other Operating Income	3	(427)	(5,425)
Total Operating Income		**(427)**	**(5,425)**
Expenditure			
Staff costs	5	8,270,442	7,572,130
Depreciation and revaluation/impairment charges	6	709,387	749,700
Provision expense	6	641,020	195,518
Other operating expenditure	6	2,416,327	2,262,339
Total Operating Expenditure		**12,037,176**	**10,779,687**
Net Expenditure for the year		**12,036,749**	**10,774,262**
Other Comprehensive Net Expenditure			
Items that will not be reclassified to net operating costs:			
Net (gain) on revaluation of Property, Plant and Equipment	7	(72,713)	(77,902)
Net (gain)/loss on disposal of Property, Plant and Equipment	7	4,815	-
Net (gain) on revaluation of Intangibles Assets	9	-	(6,571)
Comprehensive Net Expenditure for the year		**11,968,851**	**10,689,789**

All amounts above relate to the continuing activities of the Office of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland.

The notes on pages 101 – 122 form part of these accounts.

Statement of Financial Position as at 31 March 2026

This statement presents the financial position of the Office of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland. It comprises three main components: assets owned or controlled; liabilities owed to other bodies, and equity, the remaining value of the entity.

Non-current assets:	Note	As at 31 March 2026 £	As at 31 March 2025 £
Property, plant and equipment	7	266,826	331,744
Right-of-use assets	8	715,162	547,276
Intangible assets	9	187,428	302,205
Trade and other receivables	10	80	338
Total non-current assets		**1,169,496**	**1,181,563**
Current assets:			
Trade and other receivables	10	154,913	145,594
Cash and cash equivalents	11	62,149	32,661
Total current assets		**217,062**	**178,255**
Total assets		**1,386,558**	**1,359,818**
Current liabilities:			
Trade and other payables	12	(736,538)	(723,464)
Provisions	13	(1,253,696)	(835,291)
Current lease liabilities	8	(334,034)	(339,922)
Total current liabilities		**(2,324,268)**	**(1,898,677)**
Total assets less current liabilities		**(937,710)**	**(538,859)**
Non-current liabilities:			
Non-current lease liabilities	8	(84,663)	(84,663)
Total assets less total liabilities		**(1,022,373)**	**(623,522)**
Taxpayers' equity and other reserves:			
Revaluation reserve		564,241	496,343
General reserve		(1,586,614)	(1,119,865)
Total equity		**(1,022,373)**	**(623,522)**

The financial statements on pages 97 to 100 were approved by:

Hugh Hume
Accounting Officer

25 June 2026

The notes on pages 101 – 122 form part of these accounts.

Statement of Cash Flows for the year ended 31 March 2026

The Statement of Cash Flows shows the changes in cash and cash equivalents of the Office of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland during the reporting period. The statement shows how the Office of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland generates and uses cash and cash equivalents by classifying cash flows as operating, investing and financing activities. The amount of net cash flows arising from operating activities is a key indicator of service costs and the extent to which these operations are funded by way of income from the recipients of services provided by the Office of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland. Investing activities represent the extent to which cash inflows and outflows have been made for resources which are intended to contribute to the Office of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland's future public service delivery.

	Note	2025-26	2024-25
		£	£
Cash flows from operating activities			
Net Operating Expenditure		(12,036,749)	(10,774,262)
Adjustment for non-cash transactions	6	1,364,210	955,422
Payments in respect of lease liabilities	8	(347,554)	(342,386)
(Increase)/Decrease in trade and other receivables	10	(9,061)	(16,670)
Movements in receivables relating to items not Passing through the Statement of Comprehensive Net Expenditure	10	-	-
Increase/(Decrease) in trade and other payables	12	13,074	(170,579)
Movements in payables relating to items not passing through the Statement of Comprehensive Net Expenditure	7,8	-	-
Use of Provisions	13	(486,080)	(59,733)
Net cash outflow from operating activities		**(11,502,160)**	**(10,408,208)**
Cash flows from investing activities			
Purchase of property, plant and equipment	7	(21,085)	(18,723)
Purchase of intangible assets	9	(17,268)	(106,295)
Net cash outflow from investing activities		**(38,353)**	**(125,018)**
Cash flows from financing activities			
Resource grants from the Department of Justice		11,570,000	10,419,000
Capital grants from the Department of Justice		-	-
Net financing		**11,570,000**	**10,419,000**
Net (Decrease)/increase in cash and cash equivalents in the period	11	**29,488**	**(114,225)**
Cash and cash equivalents at the beginning of the period	11	**32,661**	**146,886**
Cash and cash equivalents at the end of the period	11	**62,149**	**32,661**

The notes on pages 101 – 122 form part of these accounts.

Statement of Changes in Taxpayers' Equity for the year ended 31 March 2026

This statement shows the movement in the year on the different reserves held by the Office of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland, analysed into 'general fund reserves' (i.e. those reserves that reflect a contribution from the Consolidated Fund). The Revaluation Reserve reflects the change in asset values that have not been recognised as income or expenditure. The General Fund represents the total assets less liabilities, to the extent that the total is not represented by other reserves and financing items.

		General Fund £	Revaluation Reserve £	Taxpayers' Equity £
Balance at 31 March 2024		**(764,603)**	**411,870**	**(352,733)**
Resource grants from the Department of Justice		10,419,000	-	10,419,000
Capital grants from the Department of Justice		-	-	-
Comprehensive net expenditure for the year		(10,754,562)	-	(10,754,562)
Revaluation gains and losses	**7, 9**	-	84,473	84,473
Auditor's remuneration	**6**	(19,700)	-	(19,700)
Balance at 31 March 2025		**(1,119,865)**	**496,343**	**(623,522)**
Resource grants from the Department of Justice		11,570,000	-	11,570,000
Capital grants from the Department of Justice		-	-	-
Comprehensive net expenditure for the year		(12,014,749)	-	(12,014,749)
Revaluation gains and losses	**7, 9**	-	72,713	72,713
Disposal gains and losses	**7**	-	(4,815)	(4,815)
Auditor's remuneration	**6**	(22,000)	-	(22,000)
Balance as at 31 March 2026		**(1,586,614)**	**564,241**	**(1,022,373)**

The notes on pages 101 – 122 form part of these accounts.

Notes to the Accounts

1. Statement of Accounting Policies

These financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the 2025-26 Financial Reporting Manual (FReM) issued by Department of Finance. The accounting policies contained in the FReM apply International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS) as adapted or interpreted for the public sector context. Where the FReM permits a choice of accounting policy, the accounting policy which is judged to be most appropriate to the particular circumstances of the Office of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland for the purpose of giving a true and fair view has been selected. The particular policies adopted by the Office of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland are described below. They have been applied consistently in dealing with items that are considered material to the accounts. See IAS 1 and IAS 8 for further guidance.

1.1 Accounting convention

The financial statements have been prepared under the historical cost convention modified to take account of the revaluation of property, plant and equipment and intangible assets.

The financial statements are stated in sterling, which is the functional and presentational currency.

1.2 Grant-in-Aid and capital grants

The Office of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland was funded during the year to 31 March 2026 by Grant-in-Aid from the Department of Justice, Request for Resources A. All Grant-in-Aid received, which is used to finance activities and expenditure that support the statutory and other objectives of the Office, is treated as financing credited to the General Reserve, because it is regarded as contributions from a controlling party. Grant-in-Aid received towards the purchase of items of property, plant and equipment or intangible assets is also credited directly to the General Reserve.

1.3 Value Added Tax

The Office of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland is not registered for VAT. All transactions are therefore stated inclusive of VAT.

1.4 Income

Income represents services provided to the Office of the Police Ombudsman's customers in the public sector as invoiced.

1.5 Property, plant and equipment

Property, plant and equipment comprises leasehold improvements to New Cathedral Buildings, fixtures and fittings and information technology equipment.

Items of property, plant and equipment are capitalised if they are intended for use on a continuous basis and their individual original purchase cost is £1,000 or more. Items with an individual cost of less than £1,000 but, when taken together, represent a significant investment will be grouped. The materiality threshold for a group of items is £3,500. Items costing less than £1,000 that are not part of a group are written off in the year of purchase.

From 1 April 2025 HM Treasury changed the requirements in the Government Financial Reporting Manual (FReM) in respect of revaluations of property, plant and equipment. Where entities do not have a rolling programme of revaluations in place and/or the assets are not non-property assets subject to indexation, entities revalue their assets every five years with an annual indexation applied to assets during the four intervening years. In rare circumstances where an index is not available, entities revalue those assets using a quinquennial revaluation with a desktop revaluation in year 3.

Leasehold improvement expenditure has been capitalised and is revalued to a depreciated value of the leasehold improvements in their existing use using professional valuations. Valuations are carried out each year by professional external valuers, employed by the Land and Property Services (Valuations), in accordance with the Appraisal and Valuation Manual prepared and published by the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors, as at 31 March 2026. The lease of the building was renewed on 1 July 2020 for a 10-year period with the option of a break clause after 5 years, which was extended by 1 year in the 2023-24 financial year. A further extension of the break clause was exercised in the 2025-26 financial year. It has been determined that the break clause will be utilised so the lease will end on 30 June 2027. The valuation as at 31 March 2026 reflects this decision.

Other categories of PPE (including furniture and fittings and IT equipment) are carried at current value in existing use. These assets are revalued using appropriate indices on an annual basis. The March 2026 indices have been applied in 2025-26 for these other categories of PPE. In March 2025, ONS paused publication to review an issue with the chain-linking methodology affecting historical data from 2008 onwards. ONS recommenced publication of the indices in October 2025, including revised historical series. In accordance with IAS 8 the fair value of assets is an accounting estimate, and retrospective restatements are not required for changes in accounting estimates. As such, no adjustments have been made to the prior year comparative figures as a result of the changes to PPI, but the updated indices have been applied in determining the asset values for the current year-end.

Any surplus/loss on revaluation is treated as follows:

- An unrealised surplus arising from the revaluation of Property, Plant and Equipment is credited to the Revaluation Reserve unless it reverses a revaluation decrease of the same asset previously recognised to the Statement of Comprehensive Net Expenditure, to that extent.
- A loss arising from the revaluation of Property, Plant and Equipment is debited to the Revaluation Reserve to the extent that gains were recorded previously and, otherwise, to the Statement of Comprehensive Net Expenditure.

Property, Plant and Equipment is reviewed annually for impairment.

1.6 Depreciation

Items of Property, Plant and Equipment are depreciated on a straight-line basis in order to write off the valuation, less any residual value, over their expected useful economic lives.

The estimated useful lives of Property, Plant and Equipment, which are reviewed regularly are summarised under each category below:

Category:	Estimated useful lives:
Buildings - leasehold improvement expenditure	The remaining term of the lease
Furniture and fittings	3 - 10 years
Information Technology:	
- PCs, peripherals and other related equipment	4 – 7 years
- Servers	7 years

1.7 Intangible assets

Expenditure on intangible assets is recognised when the Office of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland controls the asset; it is probable that future economic benefits attributable to the asset will flow to the Office and the cost of the asset can be reliably measured.

The Office's intangible assets consist of a bespoke information technology system for recording complaints (Case Handling System – CHS), and purchased software licences where expenditure is £1,000 or more. Intangible assets are revalued annually using appropriate indices compiled by the Office for National Statistics. Any surplus/loss on revaluation is treated as follows:

- An unrealised surplus arising from the revaluation of an intangible asset is credited to the Revaluation Reserve unless it reverses a decrease of the same asset previously recognised in the Statement of Comprehensive Net Expenditure, to that extent.

- A loss arising from the revaluation of an intangible asset is debited to the Revaluation Reserve to the extent that gains were recorded previously and, otherwise, to the Statement of Comprehensive Net Expenditure.

Amortisation is calculated on a straight line basis over the shorter of the term of the licence and the useful economic life (four to ten years). Intangible assets are reviewed annually for impairment.

1.8 Pension costs

Past and present employees are covered by the Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS) Pension arrangements which are described in the Remuneration and Staff Report on pages 73 to 88. The defined benefit elements of the schemes are unfunded. The organisation recognises the expected cost of these elements on a systematic and rational basis over the period during which it benefits from employees' services by payment to the Northern Ireland Civil Service Pension of amounts calculated on an accruing basis. Liability for payment of future benefits is a charge on the Northern Ireland Civil Service Pension. In respect of the defined contribution elements of the schemes, the organisation recognises the contributions payable for the year.

1.9 Leases

From 1 April 2022, a change in accounting policy means that leases are accounted for under IFRS 16 - Leases. From 1 April 2022, the Office of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland recognises the assets and liabilities for leases with a term of more than 12 months. A Right of Use Asset is recognised to reflect the Office's right to use the leased asset and a lease liability to reflect the Office's obligation to make lease payments.

Depreciation on the Right of Use Asset and interest on the lease liability is charged to the Statement of Comprehensive Net Expenditure. Repayments of the lease liability are applied to the Statement of Cash Flows.

The rate used to determine the value of the lease liability that was recognised as at 1 April 2022 and to calculate interest on the lease liability is 0.95%.

1.10 Insurance

Insurance costs in respect of motor vehicles and buildings are charged to the Statement of Comprehensive Net Expenditure. No insurance is effected against the following: fire, explosion, common law, third party and similar risks.

1.11 Provisions

The Office of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland provides for legal or constructive obligations which are of uncertain timing or amount at the reporting period date on the basis of the best estimate of the expenditure required to settle the obligation.

1.12 Financial instruments

Financial assets and liabilities are recognised when the Office of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland becomes party to the contractual provisions of the instrument. Financial assets are derecognised when the Office no longer has rights to cash flows, the risks and rewards of ownership or control of the asset.

Financial liabilities are derecognised when the obligation under the liability is discharged, cancelled or expires. The Office of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland does not hold any complex financial instruments.

1.12.1 Financial assets

Trade and other receivables

Financial assets within trade and other receivables are initially recognised at fair value, which is usually the original invoiced amount, less provision for impairment.

Cash and cash equivalents

Cash and cash equivalents comprise cash in hand and current balances with banks which are readily convertible to known amounts of cash and which are subject to insignificant risk of changes in value and have an original maturity of three months or less.

Impairment of financial assets

The Office of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland assesses at each reporting period date whether a financial asset or group of financial assets are impaired. Where there is objective evidence that an impairment loss has arisen on assets carried at amortised cost, the carrying amount is reduced with the loss being recognised in the Statement of Comprehensive Net Expenditure.

1.12.2 Financial liabilities

Trade and other payables

Financial liabilities within trade and other payables are initially recognised at fair value, which is usually the original invoiced amount, less provision for impairment.

1.13 Employee benefits

Under IAS 19, an employing entity should recognise the undiscounted amount of short term employee benefits expected to be paid in exchange for service. The Office of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland has therefore recognised both annual and flexi leave entitlements that have been earned by the reporting period end, but not yet taken. These costs are reflected in staff costs and current liabilities.

1.14 Critical accounting estimates and key judgements

The preparation of financial statements in conformity with IFRS requires the use of accounting estimates and assumptions. It also requires management to exercise its judgement in the process of applying the Office's accounting policies. The Office of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland continually evaluates its estimates, assumptions and judgements based on available information and experience. As the use of estimates is inherent in financial reporting, actual results could differ from these estimates. The estimates and assumptions which have the most significant risk of causing material adjustment to the carrying amount of assets and liabilities are discussed below.

1. Depreciation of plant, property and equipment

Depreciation is provided so as to write-down the respective assets to their residual values over their expected lives, and as such, the selection of the estimated useful lives and the expected residual values of the assets requires the use of estimates and judgements. Details of the estimated useful lives are shown in Note 1.6.

2. Amortisation of intangible assets

Amortisation is provided so as to write-down the respective assets to their residual values over their expected lives and as such the selection of the estimated useful lives and the expected residual values of the assets requires the use of estimates and judgements. Details of the estimated useful lives are shown in Note 1.7.

3. Provisions

Provisions for legal claims are made on the basis of all known claims, estimated based on legal advice. The amount which is provided is based on an expected probability basis, where the total probable cost is provided in full if the expected risk of failure is likely to exceed 50% and on full anticipated costs of defending legal actions, where no recovery of such costs is likely. Details of the legal provisions are shown in Note 13.

1.15 Accounting standards, amendments, interpretations or other updates that were issued and effective for the 2025-26 financial year

The Office has considered those new standards, interpretations and amendments to existing Standards which have been published and are mandatory for the Office's accounting periods beginning on or after 1 April 2025 or later periods, but which the Office has not adopted early. Other than as outlined below, the Office considers that these are not relevant or material to its operations.

1.16 Accounting standards, interpretations and amendments to published standards not yet effective

The Office has considered those new standards, interpretations and amendments to existing Standards which have been published and are mandatory for the Office's accounting periods beginning on or after 1 April 2025 or later periods, but which the Office has not adopted early. The Office considers that these standards are not relevant or material to its operations.

Standard	IFRS 19: Subsidiaries without Public Accountability: Disclosures – Amendments to IFRS 19 to complete catch-up work
Effective date	January 2027
FReM application	2027-28
Description of Revision	The newly issued amendments to IFRS 19 help eligible subsidiaries by reducing disclosure requirements for Standards and amendments issued between February 2021 and may 2024, specifically: IFRS 19 Presentation and Disclosure in Financial Statements; Supplier Finance Arrangements (Amendments to IAS 7 and IFRS 17) International Tax Reform – Pillar Two Model Rules (Amendments to IAS 12) Lack of Exchangeability (Amendments to IAS 21); and Amendments to the Classification and Measurement of Financial Instruments (Amendments to IFRS 9 and IFRS 7). With these amendments, IFRS 19 reflects the changes to IFRS Accounting Standards that take effect up to 1 January 2027, when IFRS 19 will be applicable.
Comments	The Office has assessed the standard and concluded that it is not currently applicable, as it does not meet the criteria of a qualifying subsidiary and prepares its financial statements in accordance with the Government Financial Reporting Manual. No material impact on the financial statements is expected.

Standard	IFRS 18: Presentation and Disclosure in Financial Statements
Effective date	January 2027
FReM application	Yet to be confirmed
Description of Revision	IFRS 18: Presentation and Disclosure in Financial Statements will replace IAS 1: Presentation of Financial Statements and is effective for annual reporting periods beginning on or after 1 January 2027 in the private sector. The Public Sector implementation date is not yet confirmed.
Comments	The impact of IFRS 18 on the Public Sector is being assessed.

1.17 Financial reporting - future developments

The Office has considered the accounting initiatives identified by HM Treasury covering amendments or interpretations from the 2018-20 Annual improvement cycle, and projects where standards, amendments or interpretations are in development. The Office considers that these changes are not relevant or material to its operations.

2. Financial Targets

The Office of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland has no formally agreed financial targets, however in accordance with the Management Statement and Financial Memorandum, the Office must not incur expenditure which exceeds its annual budget without prior approval from the Department of Justice.

3. Income from Sale of Goods and Services

	2025-26 £	2024-25 £
Other Operating Income		
Secondment income	-	(5,025)
Misc costs recovered	(427)	(400)
Income from Services Provided	-	-
Total Income	**(427)**	**(5,425)**

Secondment income represents salary and travel costs of staff employed by the Office but seconded to other organisations.

4. Analysis of Net Operating Expenditure by Segment

	Core Office £	Historic Investigations £	Legacy Inquests £	Total £
Gross Expenditure	11,355,450	292,372	388,927	12,036,749
Income from Secondments and services	-	-	-	-
Net Expenditure for 2025-26	**11,355,450**	**292,372**	**388,927**	**12,036,749**
Gross Expenditure	9,859,217	545,411	375,059	10,779,687
Income from Secondments and services	(5,425)	-	-	(5,425)
Net Expenditure for 2024-25	**9,853,792**	**545,411**	**375,059**	**10,774,262**

The segments identified by the Office correspond with the normal segmental provision of information to ELT and is consistent with the funding provided by and reported to the sponsoring Department.

5. Staff Costs

	2025-26 £	2024-25 £
Amounts payable in respect of directly employed staff		
Wages and salaries	5,053,412	4,654,647
Social security costs	678,395	519,871
Employer's pension contributions	1,604,970	1,484,573
Total direct employee staff costs	**7,336,777**	**6,659,091**
Amounts payable in respect of staff on secondment, agency/temporary staff and contract staff	**933,665**	**913,039**
Sub Total Staff Costs	**8,270,442**	**7,572,130**
Less recoveries in respect of outward secondments	-	(5,025)
Total net staff costs	**8,270,442**	**7,567,105**

Further details on staff costs can be found in the Remuneration and Staff Report on pages 72 to 88 of the Accountability Report.

6. Other Expenditure

	Note	£	2025-26 £	£	2024-25 £
Travel and subsistence		46,051		50,145	
Training, recruitment and other personnel costs		282,998		279,948	
Rates, maintenance, electricity and other accommodation costs		627,751		556,925	
Consultancy		-		-	
Legal costs & internal audit		35,599		36,401	
Information and media		64,757		75,558	
Printing, stationery, postage and office equipment		50,742		74,773	
Direct case investigation costs		409,209		378,460	
Computer support including maintenance and telecommunications		713,576		666,355	
Other costs		80,330		43,263	
Leases - buildings		67,730		67,728	
Leases - other		1,781		2,879	
Auditors remuneration and expenses		22,000		19,700	
			2,402,524		**2,252,135**
Non-cash items:					
Interest expense on lease liability		13,803		10,204	
			13,803		**10,204**
Legal provisions - provided in year	13	908,054		295,278	
Provisions - released in year not required	13	(267,034)		(99,760)	
Depreciation and amortisation of assets:			**641,020**		**195,518**
Property, plant and equipment	7	150,271		173,784	
Right of Use Assets - Leases	8	423,441		447,991	
Intangible assets	9	111,724		129,600	
Revaluation of assets - (gains):					
Property, plant and equipment	7	-		-	
Intangible assets	8	-		-	
Revaluation gain to offset previous loss - Buildings, Leasehold Improvements	7	-		-	
Revaluation Gain to offset previous loss – Information technology	7	(3,593)		(660)	
Revaluation Gain to offset previous loss - Software licences	9	-		(1,015)	
Disposals of assets – write-off: Intangible assets – Software Licences	8	20,321		-	
Tangible assets – IT hardware	7	7,223		-	
			709,387		**749,700**
			1,364,210		**955,422**
Total Other Expenditure			**3,766,734**		**3,207,557**

7. Property, Plant and Equipment

2025-26	Buildings, leasehold improvements	Furniture & fittings	Information technology	Total
	£	£	£	£
Cost or valuation				
At 1 April 2025	210,473	484,261	566,192	**1,260,926**
Additions	-	11,872	9,213	**21,085**
Revaluations	(25,051)	7,096	12,107	**(5,848)**
Disposals	-	(58,529)	(62,117)	**(120,646)**
At 31 March 2026	**185,422**	**444,700**	**525,395**	**1,155,517**
Depreciation				
At 1 April 2025	-	444,809	484,373	**929,182**
Charged in year	93,544	12,923	43,804	**150,271**
Revaluations/Back log	(93,544)	2,876	8,514	**(82,154)**
Disposals	-	(53,714)	(54,895)	**(108,609)**
At 31 March 2026	-	**406,894**	**481,796**	**888,690**
Net book value at 31 March 2026	**185,422**	**37,806**	**43,599**	**266,826**
Net book value at 31 March 2025	210,473	39,452	81,819	331,744

2024-25	Buildings, leasehold improvements £	Furniture & fittings £	Information technology £	Total £
Cost or valuation				
At 1 April 2024	241,302	468,143	544,147	**1,253,592**
Additions	-	-	18,723	**18,723**
Revaluations	(30,829)	16,118	3,322	**(11,389)**
Disposals	-	-	-	-
At 31 March 2025	**210,473**	**484,261**	**566,192**	**1,260,926**
Depreciation				
At 1 April 2024	-	409,401	435,948	**845,349**
Charged in year	107,245	20,776	45,763	**173,784**
Revaluations/Back log	(107,245)	14,632	2,662	**(89,951)**
Disposals	-	-	-	-
At 31 March 2025	**-**	**444,809**	**484,373**	**929,182**
Net book value at 31 March 2025	**210,473**	**39,452**	**81,819**	**331,744**
Net book value at 31 March 2024	241,302	58,742	108,199	408,243

IAS 16 and IFRS 13 both require measurement at fair value. Management considers open market value to be the best available estimate of fair value. Leasehold improvements have been valued by the Land and Property Services (Valuations) on an existing use basis at £185,422 as at 31 March 2026 (£210,473 as at 31 March 2025). The open market valuation at that date was £nil (£nil at 31 March 2025).

All other assets were re-valued on the basis of the latest available indices, as at March 2026, as detailed in Note 1.5. This has resulted in an overall (increase/decrease) in valuation/write down of impairment of £76,306 as at 31 March 2026, which has been analysed below.

Analysis of property, plant and equipment revaluations

		2025-26		2024-25
	Revaluation Reserve	Comprehensive Expenditure	Revaluation Reserve	Comprehensive Expenditure
	£	£	£	£
Land and Buildings gain	68,493	-	76,416	-
Fixtures & fittings gain	4,220	-	1,486	-
Information technology gain	**-**	3,593	**-**	**660**
	72,713	**3,593**	**77,902**	**660**

Analysis of property, plant and equipment disposals

	2025-26		2024-25	
	Revaluation Reserve	Comprehensive Expenditure	Revaluation Reserve	Comprehensive Expenditure
	£	£	£	£
Land and Buildings gain/(loss)	**-**	**-**	**-**	**-**
Fixtures & fittings gain/(loss)	(4,815)	**-**	**-**	**-**
Information technology gain/(loss)	**-**	**(7,223)**	**-**	**-**
	(4,815)	**(7,223)**	**-**	**-**

Analysis of tangibles payments			
Note		**2025-26**	**2024-25**
		£	£
Tangibles additions		(21,085)	(18,723)
Increase in accruals related to tangibles	12	-	-
Total cash payments for tangibles		**(21,085)**	**(18,723)**

8. Leases

The Office of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland's leases comprise a lease for its interest in its offices at New Cathedral Buildings, Belfast and in respect of vehicles. In-line with Public Sector guidance, it has been treated under IFRS 16 and treated as a finance lease.

8.1 Right of Use Assets

2025-26	Buildings	Vehicles	Total
Cost or valuation	**£**	**£**	**£**
Balance at 1 April 2025	1,880,204	55,999	1,936,203
Additions	-	-	-
Disposals	-	-	-
Remeasurement – existing lease	319,047	8,816	327,863
Remeasurement – dilapidations	263,465	-	263,465
Balance at 31 March 2026	**2,462,716**	**64,815**	**2,527,531**
Depreciation			
Balance at 1 April 2025	1,338,160	50,768	1,388,928
Depreciation charged in year	414,537	8,904	423,441
Disposals	-	-	-
Balance at 31 March 2025	**1,752,697**	**59,672**	**1,812,369**
Net book value at 31 March 2025	542,044	5,231	547,276
Net book value at 31 March 2026	**710,019**	**5,143**	**715,162**

8.2 Lease Liabilities

	2025-26 £	2024-25 £
Buildings		
Not later than one year	338,650	**338,650**
Later than one year and not later than five years	84,663	**84,663**
Later than five years	-	**-**
	423,313	**423,313**
Less: interest element	(9,759)	**(3,959)**
Present value of lease obligations	**413,554**	**419,354**
Vehicles		
Not later than one year	5,143	**5,231**
Later than one year and not later than five years	-	**-**
Later than five years	-	**-**
	5,143	**5,231**
Less: interest element	-	**-**
Present value of lease obligations	**5,143**	**5,231**
Total present value of lease obligations	**418,697**	**424,585**
Current Portion	**334,034**	339,922
Non-current portion	**84,663**	84,663
	418,697	424,585

8.3 Elements in the Statement of Comprehensive Net Expenditure

2025-26	2025-26 £	2024-25 £
Variable lease payments not included in lease liabilities	69,511	-
Sub-leasing income	-	-
Expense related to short-term leases	31,486	-
Expenses related to low value leases (excluding short-term leases)	-	**-**
	100,997	**-**

8.4 Cash flow for leases

	2025-26 £	2024-25 £
Opening balance	424,585	747,801
Re-measurement of lease	327,863	8,967
Interest on lease	13,803	10,203
Lease rental payments	(347,554)	(342,386)
	418,697	**424,585**

9. Intangible Assets

The Office of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland intangible assets comprise purchased software licences and a bespoke information technology system (Case Handling System – CHS).

2025-26	Information technology, case handling system £	Software licences £	Total £
Cost or valuation			
At 1 April 2025	2,176,090	698,717	**2,874,807**
Additions	-	17,268	**17,268**
Revaluations	-	-	**-**
Disposals	-	(177,080)	**(177,080)**
At 31 March 2026	**2,176,090**	**538,905**	**2,714,995**
Amortisation			
At 1 April 2025	2,010,332	562,270	**2,572,602**
Charged in year	82,798	28,926	**111,724**
Revaluation/Back log	-	-	**-**
Disposals	-	(156,759)	**(156,759)**
At 31 March 2026	**2,093,130**	**434,437**	**2,527,567**
Net book value at 31 March 2026	**82,960**	**104,468**	**187,428**
Net book value at 31 March 2025	165,758	136,447	302,205

2024-25	Information technology, case handling system	Software licences	Total
	£	£	£
Cost or valuation			
At 1 April 2024	2,120,806	630,691	2,751,497
Additions	42,330	63,965	106,295
Revaluations	12,954	4,061	17,015
Disposals	-	-	-
At 31 March 2025	**2,176,090**	**698,717**	**2,874,807**
Amortisation			
At 1 April 2024	1,934,882	498,691	2,433,573
Charged in year	69,067	60,533	129,600
Revaluation/Back log	6,383	3,046	9,429
Disposals	-	-	-
At 31 March 2025	**2,010,332**	**562,270**	**2,572,602**
Net book value at 31 March 2025	**165,758**	**136,447**	**302,205**
Net book value at 31 March 2024	185,924	132,000	317,924

In-line with the revised 2025-26 Financial Reporting Manual (FReM) guidance, indexation has not been applied to intangible assets. Accordingly, intangible assets are stated at cost less accumulated amortisation and impairment. The absence of indexation is not considered to be material to the financial statements, and no restatement of comparative amounts has been required.

During the year, the useful life of certain assets was reassessed due to delays in planned replacement. This resulted in an extension of remaining useful life. In-line with IAS16 and FReM guidance, depreciation has been adjusted prospectively with no change to the carrying amount.

Analysis of intangible revaluations

	2025-26		2024-25	
	Revaluation Reserve	Comprehensive Expenditure	Revaluation Reserve	Comprehensive Expenditure
	£	£	£	£
Information technology (case handling system) gain/(loss)	**-**	**-**	6,571	**--**
Software licence gain/(loss)	-	**-**	**--**	**1,015**
	-	**-**	**6,571**	**1,015**

Analysis of intangible disposals

	2025-26		2024-25	
	Revaluation Reserve	Comprehensive Expenditure	Revaluation Reserve	Comprehensive Expenditure
	£	£	£	£
Software licence gain/(loss)	**-**	**(20,321)**	**-**	**-**
	-	**(20,321)**	**-**	**-**

Analysis of intangibles payments

	Note	**2025-26**	**2024-25**
		£	**£**
Intangibles additions	9	17,268	106,295
Increase in accruals related to intangibles	12	-	-
Total cash payments for intangibles		**17,268**	**106,295**

10. Trade Receivables, Financial and Other Assets

	2025-26 £	2024-25 £
Amounts falling due within one year:		
Prepayments and accrued income	154,913	145,594
Total	**154,913**	**145,594**
Amounts falling due after more than one year:		
Prepayments and accrued income	80	338
Total	**80**	**338**

Analysis of Trade Receivables, Financial and Other Assets

	2025-26 £	2024-25 £
Prepayments in respect of lease payments not passing through the Statement of Comprehensive Net Expenditure	-	-
	-	**-**

11. Cash and Cash Equivalents

	2025-26 £	2024-25 £
Amounts falling due within one year:	32,661	146,886
Net change in cash and cash equivalents	29,488	(114,225)
Balance at 31 March	**62,149**	**32,661**
The following balances at 31 March were held at:		
Commercial banks and cash in hand	62,149	32,661
Balance at 31 March	**62,149**	**32,661**

12. Trade Payables, Financial and Other Liabilities

	2025-26 £	2024-25 £
Amounts falling due within one year:		
Trade payables	66,349	2,762
Statutory creditors et al	5,083	5,766
Employee benefit accrual	230,030	221,087
Accruals and deferred income	435,076	493,849
Total	**736,538**	**723,464**

Trade Payables, Financial and Other Liabilities includes £4,474 for capital creditors / accruals (£nil in 2024-25).

There are no trade payables falling due for payment after more than one year.

13. Provisions for Liabilities and Charges

			2025-26			2024-25
	Legal Provision £000	Dilapidations £000	Total £000	Legal Provision £000	Dilapidations £000	Total £000
Balance at 1 April	**452,916**	**382,375**	**835,291**	**317,131**	**382,375**	**699,506**
Provided in the year	908,054	263,465	1,171,519	295,278	-	295,278
Provisions not required written back	(267,034)	-	(267,034)	(99,760)	-	(99,760)
Provisions utilised in the year	(486,080)	-	(486,080)	(59,733)	-	(59,733)
Change in discount rate	-	-	-	-	-	-
Borrowing costs (unwinding of discount)	-	-	-	-	-	-
Balance at 31 March	**607,856**	**645,840**	**1,253,696**	**452,916**	**382,375**	**835,291**

Legal claims

This represents public liability, employer liability, contract and compensation claims and dilapidations as advised by the business areas within the Department.

Public liability claims include personal injury claims. Employer liability claims include legal costs that will have to be borne by the Department and to accidents or injury caused due to faults in the fabric of a departmental building and other damages including fair employment and industrial tribunal cases.

Other legal issues

The Court of Appeal (CoA) judgment from 17 June 2019 (PSNI v Agnew) determined that claims for Holiday Pay shortfall can extend as far back as 1998. The 2025–26 Holiday Pay provision has been estimated by NICS HR and covers the period from November 1998 to 31 March 2020, reflecting an assessment of the possible extent of liability under the current legal framework: settlement remains subject to negotiation and resolution of outstanding uncertainties.

There are still some significant elements of uncertainty around this estimate for a number of reasons including:

1. Lack of agreement with claimants' legal representatives around how to treat data for years previous to 2011; and

2. Ongoing negotiations with Trade Union and their legal representatives which will determine the final scope of settlement

Provisions for legal claims are made on the basis of all known claims, estimated based on legal advice. The amount which is provided is based on an expected probability basis i.e. the provision is based on current estimates of costs to be incurred and the likely settlement (if any) where the expected risk of failure exceeds 50%.

At 31 March 2026, the Office had twenty seven ongoing cases with an overall provision of £607,856. The provision which has been calculated in respect of these matters is £165,185 for six Judicial Reviews, £60,300 for eight Court Litigations, £46,936 for nine Civil/Legacy cases and £335,435 for four employment related matters. For the majority of these cases, the provision relates to the legal costs incurred in defending these matters. At 31 March 2025, the provision of £452,916 was in respect of nine Judicial Reviews, eleven Court Litigations, thirteen Civil/Legacy Actions and two employment issues.

The dilapidations provision relates to dilapidation costs, which are an estimate of expenditure required to return vacated lease buildings to their original condition as at the date of commencement of the lease. During the 2025-26 reporting year, these costs were revised to a closing balance of £645,840 (2024-25: £382,375).

Expenditure is likely to be incurred within one year and no re-imbursement is likely to occur.

14. Capital Commitments

As at 31 March 2026, the Office of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland had contracted capital commitments amounting to £nil (£nil as at 31 March 2025).

15. Other Financial Commitments

The Office of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland has entered into a contractual commitment with a value of £534,240, including VAT, in relation to the replacement Case Handling System.

16. Contingent liabilities disclosed under IAS 37

At 31 March 2026, the Office of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland had identified fourteen cases where, in the unlikely event that the Office should lose the cases, the estimate of maximum damages and further legal costs that could arise is £547,990 (31 March 2025: £579,000).

Public Sector Pensions – Injury to Feelings Claims

The Department of Finance (DoF) is a named Respondent in a class action affecting employers across the public sector and is managing claims on behalf of the Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS) Departments. This is an extremely complex case with potential implications for the NICS and wider public sector. However, given the complexities, the cases are still at an early stage of proceedings and until there is further clarity on potential scope and impact, a reliable estimate of liability cannot be provided.

17. Related-Party Transactions

The Office of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland is an Executive Non-Departmental Public Body sponsored by the Department of Justice during the year ended 31 March 2026.

The Department of Justice is regarded as a related party. During the year, the Office of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland has had various material transactions with the Department and with one other entity for which the Department of Justice is regarded as the parent Department, namely Forensic Science Northern Ireland.

In addition, the Office of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland has had various transactions with other Government Departments and some GB police forces.

During the year, none of the key management staff or other related parties has undertaken any material transaction with the Office.

18. Financial Instruments

Due to the non-trading nature of the activities of the Office of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland and the way in which it is funded as an Executive Non-Departmental Public Body, financial instruments play a much more limited role in creating and managing risk than would apply to a non- public sector body. The Office has no powers to invest surplus funds, has limited end year flexibility and must obtain the approval of the sponsoring Department prior to entering into borrowing arrangements. The Office has no current borrowing. Financial assets and liabilities are generated by day-to-day operational activities and are not held to change the risks facing the Office in undertaking its activities. The majority of financial instruments relate to contracts to buy non- financial items in line with expected purchase and usage requirements and the Office is therefore exposed to little credit, liquidity or market risk.

19. Events after the Reporting Period

Accordingly, no adjustments have been made to the financial statements for the year ended 31 March 2026.

Date of Authorisation for issue

The financial statements were authorised for issue by the Accounting Officer on 25 June 2026 .

Annex A

REPORT BY THE COMPTROLLER AND AUDITOR GENERAL TO THE NORTHERN IRELAND ASSEMBLY

Introduction

1. As I set out in my audit certificate, I have qualified my regularity opinion on two matters:

   - The costs associated with the extension of the lease relating to the building where PONI is based; and
   - The provision set up to make payments to individuals who had been impacted by a data breach.

Buildings Lease

2. On 1 July 2020 PONI renewed its lease for space in the building it occupies, for a further 10 years. The lease included a break clause after five years and PONI had hoped to be able to exercise it in line with the NI Executive Asset Management Strategy and so that it could `relocate… to a suitable, modern and sustainable building….' (as set out in its business plan). In the 2023-24 financial year it was agreed with the Land and Property Services Strategic Asset Management Unit (LPS SAMU) that the lease could be extended by one year beyond the original five-year break point to 30 June 2025. PONI told me this would allow more time to find suitable alternative accommodation. I understand that PONI has specific additional accommodation requirements due to the nature of its work. These requirements make it more difficult to both identify suitable alternative accommodation but also, any premises would require adjustment to ensure compliance with PONI's security requirements.

3. During 2025, PONI identified suitable premises to move to. The Annual Report highlights that the remaining time on the lease did not allow sufficient time to enable a business case to be completed and approved and to carry out the adjustments needed to the new premises, to enable PONI to move into them before the extension to the lease expired in June 2026. In December 2025, PONI submitted a business case to LPS SAMU requesting approval to extend its lease for a further year to June 2027. LPS SAMU did not approve it due to the reasons outlined in paragraph 5 below.

4. PONI then signed an extension to the lease with its landlord, in December 2025. Following which, in February 2026, it requested retrospective approval from DoF Supply to the future costs associated with the extension of the lease to June 2027. In the current year's financial statements these costs are capital in nature of £319k. Further resource costs associated with this extension, which total £636k, will be included in the 2026-27 and 2027-28 financial statements covering the period 1 July 2026 to 30 June 2027. These represent the running costs associated with the building to the end of June 2027.

5. In March 2026, DoF refused to grant the retrospective approval to incur this expenditure. It did this because of the reasons provided by LPS when it did not approve the business case submitted to it in December 2025. Namely that:

   - The conditions which were attached to the approval to extend the lease to June 2026, i.e. that PONI would not seek to extend further.
   - The business case did not comply with Better Business Cases NI Guidance.
   - There was a was a lack of an agreed timeline and project plan; and
   - Policy controls. This included compliance with the `Appraisal of Accommodation Projects guidance' which notes that lease extensions are only granted in exceptional circumstances.

6. This refusal to grant retrospective approval by DoF means that both the capital expenditure incurred in 2025-26 of £319k and the resource expenditure to be incurred in 2026-27 and 2027-28, totaling £636k are irregular. It is on this basis that I have decided to qualify my regularity opinion on the 2025-26 financial statements. This issue will also impact both 2026-27 and 2027-28 and I may also modify those opinions.

Data Breach Provision

7. In August 2024, details of the surname and initials of employees who were working at PONI in May 2022 were accidentally released to a small number of individuals who had applied for a job with PONI.

8. The Annual Report for both the 2024-25 and 2025-26 financial statements outlines the actions that PONI took following its response including referral of the matter to the Information Commissioner and how its findings were addressed.

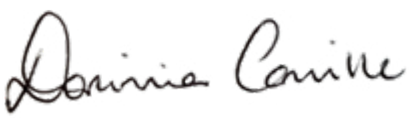
9. Last year's Annual Report outlines that PONI received several pre action letters from some individuals whose details had been accidentally released. The matter was discussed with the sponsor department (DoJ) and it was agreed that PONI could liaise with the individuals' legal representatives. Following receipt of legal advice, it was decided to offer a compensatory amount to those who believed they had a case for damages. As each payment was anticipated to be below PONI's delegated limit, PONI believed it had the authority to make the payments and included a provision in its accounts for 2024-25 of £56k at note 13. During 2025-26, £175k has been paid out and the balance in relation to this provision at 31 March 2026 is £50k.

10. In March 2026, DoJ informed PONI that the total expenditure likely to have been incurred on this matter should have been considered by it and as, cumulatively this was above the delegated limits of PONI, a request should have been made to DoF for approval. Retrospective approval has not yet been applied for, and until that is given these transactions are irregular.

11. I have therefore also modified my opinion on the total value of the transactions in the financial statement relating to this provision. This includes the:

    - Opening balance of £56k.
    - The increase in the provision in the year of £169k.
    - The payments made in the year of £175k.
    - The closing balance on the provision of £50k.

12. I will keep both matters under review in my financial audit work.



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