Reducing Avoidable Delay in the Processing of Criminal Cases in Northern Ireland

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Summary: This paper draws upon the inspection fieldwork and reports of The Criminal Justice Inspection Northern Ireland on the problem of excessive and avoidable delays in the processing of criminal cases. Much of the delay is caused by the inherent ineffectiveness and inefficiencies of a ‘system’ that lacks a whole-systems approach to the delivery of its core services. This is demonstrated by the lack of joint accountability structures, competing targets, an over-reliance on models of operational independence, inadequate performance management systems, and cultural and administrative resistance to fundamental change. The main recommendations of the single integrated criminal justice inspectorate are focused on promoting and facilitating a shared and collaborative approach.

Keywords: Delay, inspection, Northern Ireland, justice, performance, partnership, criminal cases, police, prosecution, probation, courts.

Introduction

Criminal Justice Inspection Northern Ireland (CJI) was established in 2004 following a recommendation by the Criminal Justice Review Group (2000), which called for a single unified inspectorate. This was the first such integrated body in a common law jurisdiction. The prevailing model, as it operates in England and Wales, Scotland and the Republic of Ireland is of stand-alone inspection bodies, focused on one justice agency or part of the justice system.

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