



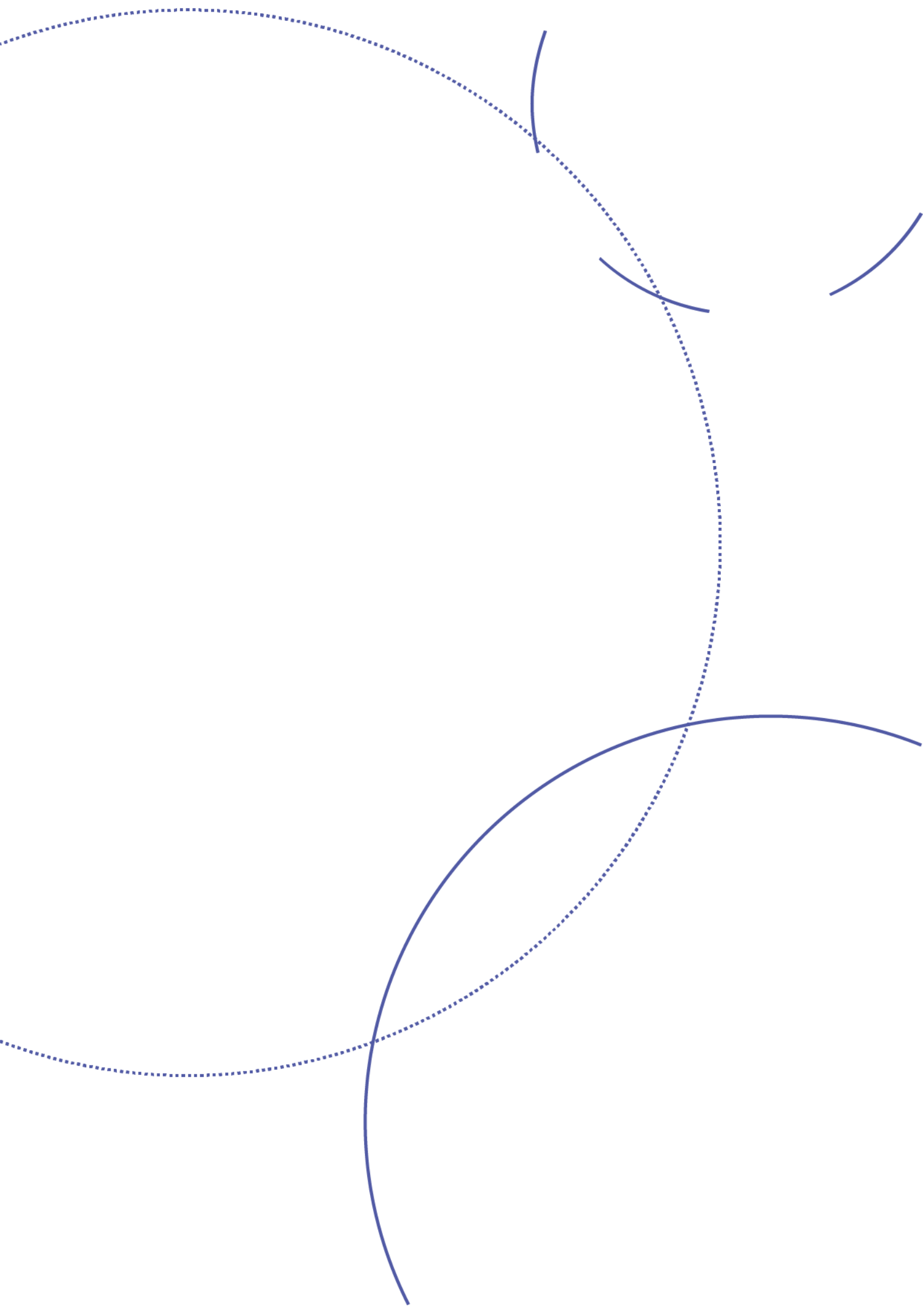
Improving
Policing
Across
Scotland

HM Inspectorate of Constabulary in Scotland

Scrutiny plan review 2025-28

April 2026







Contents

 [Introduction](#)

 [Progress to date](#)

 [Updates to our programme](#)



Introduction

In March 2025, we published our second three-year Scrutiny Plan. The plan was developed following consultation with the public, key stakeholders and partner organisations. This engagement informed the identification of priority areas and ensured that our programme of work is focused on the key challenges facing policing in Scotland.

The Scrutiny Plan provides a proportionate and realistic balance between the scope of the scrutiny activity we aim to undertake and the capacity of our small, specialist inspectorate. This ensures that resources are targeted effectively and directed towards the areas where they will have the greatest impact.

We remain committed to maintaining the highest standards of scrutiny and assurance, supported by staff with the skills and flexibility required to respond to emerging priorities over the course of each three-year planning period. The Scrutiny Plan is kept under review to ensure it remains relevant and responsive.

This revised plan sets out the outcome of the latest review and includes changes we have made to the programme of work to ensure our inspection and assurance activity remains proportionate, risk-focused, and aligned to emerging priorities, including areas of higher risk.



Progress to date

Year 1 (2025 / 2026)

In the first year of our [Scrutiny Plan 2025-28](#) we have undertaken a series of inspections, audits and assurance reviews issuing a number of reports both as standalone publications and jointly with partner scrutiny bodies. This collaborative approach reflects the complex and interdependent challenges faced by organisations working to provide high-quality public services.

Joint Custody Inspection activity continued throughout 2025, with work conducted alongside Healthcare Improvement Scotland across Forth Valley (July 2025) and the Highland and Islands (November 2025) and the **Joint Custody Progress Inspection** of Argyll and West Dunbartonshire (July 2025). These inspections assessed the treatment of detained individuals, the quality and consistency of custody centre operations, and the provision of healthcare. Across the three reports, we highlighted recurring issues previously identified elsewhere in Scotland, underscoring the need for sustainable and system-wide improvement. While the Forth Valley inspection resulted in no new recommendations for Police Scotland, the other inspections produced a series of further recommendations for Police Scotland and the relevant Health and Social Care Partnerships and Health Boards, particularly relating to governance, healthcare provision, and oversight arrangements.

We continue to work alongside the Care Inspectorate, Healthcare Improvement Scotland and Education Scotland to support joint inspections of **Services for Children and Young People at Risk of Harm (CARH)**. We also contributed to joint inspections of **Adult Support and Protection** in collaboration with Healthcare Improvement Scotland and the Care Inspectorate.



In September 2025, our **Frontline Focus review of Tools of the Trade** examined how well frontline officers and staff are equipped and supported to perform their duties. Feedback from serving officers played a significant role in shaping the findings—particularly around the quality, comfort, and consistency of uniform and equipment. This inspection attracted notable interest among officers and staff, and generated meaningful engagement on practical frontline issues that directly affect service delivery. The topic also gained media attention, with several outlets reporting on officer experiences and perspectives on equipment standards.

Our thematic inspection of **Police Response to Drug Harm Reduction**, published in December 2025, assessed the efficiency and effectiveness of the service’s strategic and operational approach to harm reduction. The report highlighted examples of strong partnership work and made seven recommendations to support continued development in this area.

In January 2026, with Audit Scotland, we published the **Joint Best Value Audit of Policing in Scotland**. The audit found policing in Scotland to be well-led and generally well-managed while identifying areas where reform and improved use of resources remain necessary. This work generated considerable interest with public reporting focusing primarily on the need for continued transformation, financial and workforce planning and the changing demands faced by policing.

Our most recently published report, the joint inspection of **Citing Witnesses in the Sheriff Court**, was carried out with HM Inspectorate of Prosecution in Scotland, which assessed the effectiveness and efficiency of processes for citing public, professional and police witnesses.



Updates to our programme

Year 2 (2026 / 2027)

We are progressing a number of significant areas of work in line with our Scrutiny Plan. This programme will continue alongside the additional activity we have been directed by Ministers to undertake and that scheduled to commence during this inspection year.

Assurance Review of Conduct and Discipline

We will soon publish the Assurance Review of Conduct and Discipline, which examined the governance, procedures and preventative activity relating to misconduct allegations within Police Scotland and the Scottish Police Authority. Both areas continue to attract significant public interest, and securing improvement in these domains is essential to maintaining public confidence in policing and enhancing the experience of officers and staff.

National Review of Group-Based Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation

In December 2025, the Scottish Government directed HMICS and the Care Inspectorate, working with Healthcare Improvement Scotland and His Majesty's Inspectorate of Education in Scotland and any other scrutiny bodies deemed appropriate, to undertake a national review of how public protection partners are working together to identify and act appropriately on instances of group-based child sexual abuse and exploitation (GB CSAE), and assess Chief Officer Groups' level of understanding of the current scale and nature of child sexual abuse and exploitation in Scotland. The scrutiny partners have agreed an 18-month programme of work, structured across assessment, assurance and improvement phases, reflecting the scale and complexity of this national activity. [National review of group-based child sexual abuse and exploitation – overview and scope](#)

Commonwealth Games

Glasgow's hosting of the 2026 Commonwealth Games requires extensive policing preparation. We will undertake a strategic review of planning for the policing of the Games, assessing preparedness, governance and resource arrangements for both the event and core policing. We will also engage with Police Scotland's Internal Audit function, which is conducting separate assurance activity related to finance, resources and operational controls. [Terms of Reference Strategic Review of policing the Commonwealth Games 2026](#)



Crime Audit

Accurate and ethical crime recording is fundamental to public confidence. Following our last [Crime Audit in 2020](#) we will carry out a further national crime audit to assess Police Scotland's compliance with the Scottish Crime Recording Standard and Counting Rules. This work will make use of data drawn from the new single national crime recording system, enabling a more consistent assessment of practice across Scotland.

Violence – Including Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG)

Violence and violent crime affect all sections of society. It has long been an operational priority for Police Scotland, but in recent times rates have been rising. This thematic inspection will consider how effectively policing in Scotland addresses violence and violent crime against women and girls. It will also look at how well preventative approaches are embedded and co-ordinated.

Sexual Offender Policing Units (SOPU)

We will inspect Police Scotland's arrangements for monitoring and managing registered sex offenders in Scotland. Our inspection will examine the efficiency and effectiveness of Police Scotland's dedicated sex offender policing units, which are based in each of the thirteen police divisions, and the quality of work undertaken with relevant partners.

Year 3 (2027 / 2028)

It is anticipated that the remaining inspections identified in our Scrutiny Plan will begin towards the end of Year 3 and continue into the next scrutiny period (2028–2031). The timing of this activity will be informed by risk, capacity and ongoing consultation with partners to ensure the programme remains current and proportionate.



HMICS HM INSPECTORATE OF
CONSTABULARY IN SCOTLAND

HM Inspectorate of Constabulary in Scotland
1st Floor, St Andrew's House
Regent Road
Edinburgh EH1 3DG

Email: hmic@gov.scot

Web: www.hmics.scot

About His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary in Scotland

HMICS operates independently of Police Scotland, the Scottish Police Authority and the Scottish Government. Under the Police and Fire Reform (Scotland) Act 2012, our role is to review the state, effectiveness and efficiency of Police Scotland and the Scottish Police Authority. We support improvement in policing by carrying out inspections, making recommendations and highlighting effective practice.

© Crown copyright 2026

HMICS/2026/03