



HM Inspectorate of Constabulary in Scotland
Improving Policing across Scotland

Wednesday, 09th October, 2024

PRESS RELEASE

Lanarkshire policing response to missing people praised

A review of Police Scotland's response when someone is reported missing has highlighted the 'impressive' work of officers in Lanarkshire.

His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary in Scotland (HMICS) paid visits to three divisions within Police Scotland – including Lanarkshire – as part of an in-depth review into how Scotland's national police force deals with missing person inquiries.

It found a number of approaches adopted by officers in Lanarkshire deserved to be shared across Police Scotland as areas of good practice.

HM Assistant Inspector of Constabulary, Mr Mark Hargreaves, said: "We visited Lanarkshire, Highland and Islands, and Edinburgh City divisions during our inspection and the collaborative approach and practical arrangements put in place by police and partners in those areas was impressive.

"There was a clear focus on working together to achieve the best possible outcomes for missing people, to reduce repeat incidents, and to provide support to missing people once returned."

The HMICS review noted that a Missing Person Co-ordination Unit had been set up with a focus on multi-agency prevention and intervention activities to help reduce the number of people who go missing, and improve the outcome for those who do.

HMICS inspectors praised the proactive steps being taken by officers in Lanarkshire aimed particularly at reducing the number of children and young people who go missing from residential childcare.

It said as well as regular senior level meetings taking place between police and their partners to co-ordinate their missing person response, weekly operational meetings were also held between officers and local authorities.

These weekly meetings focus on the most vulnerable and those who repeatedly go missing.

The report noted local officers and their community partners often communicate daily regarding children and young people at risk of becoming missing, in order to plan an appropriate response.

This resulted in action plans being developed to provide support for the youngsters and address specific issues that would hopefully prevent them going missing in the future.

The report stated: “The division was able to provide tangible evidence of the impact of this approach where it had reduced instances of children and young people going missing, particularly for those likely to be repeat missing persons.

“This demonstrates a positive, preventative approach.

“While this level of regular engagement with partners will come at a cost in terms of time and resources, the cost of responding to a high-risk missing person investigation would be greater.”

Other positive approaches adopted by police in Lanarkshire included their use of the Herbert Protocol – which is designed to help swiftly find those living with Alzheimers and dementia who may go missing.

HMICS inspectors found officers carried out daily reviews of missing person incidents to identify those who met the criteria of the protocol – and raised awareness of it with their families and carers.

Among other areas of good practice highlighted, the HMICS report commended Lanarkshire policing division for ensuring its designated 'Missing Person Coordinator' was a protected role.

HMICS published its full 'Thematic inspection of police response to missing persons in Scotland' report last week.

The review stated more than 16,000 missing person investigations were carried out by Police Scotland last year.

Data for the last four years showed that of those who went missing – of which more than half were aged under 18 – over 99 per cent were traced alive.

But the inspection found while overall the policing response was 'very good', there were areas where improvements could be made.

It said missing person investigations placed a significant demand on policing in Scotland, with the equivalent of 900 full-time officers dedicated to such inquiries each year.

HM Assistant Inspector of Constabulary in Scotland, Mr Hargreaves, said despite the vast majority of missing people being traced, the heartbreak experienced by those whose loved ones were not found safe and well must never be forgotten.

He said: "Police Scotland has demonstrated consistent success in resolving missing person incidents and locating people as swiftly as possible.

"However, the impact on families in the relatively small number of situations where a person is not found, or tragically is found dead, can be devastating.

"We have highlighted where improvements can be made in the operational response when someone is reported missing.

"More too needs to be done to ensure that clear leadership and strategic direction is in place."

Ends

Notes

HM Inspectorate of Constabulary in Scotland (HMICS) was established under the Police and Fire Reform (Scotland) Act 2012 and has wide ranging powers to look into the 'state, effectiveness and efficiency' of both the Police Service of Scotland (Police Scotland) and the Scottish Police Authority (SPA).

HMICS has a statutory duty to inquire into the arrangements made by the Chief Constable and the SPA to meet their obligations in terms of best value and continuous improvement.

Ends notes

NOTES TO EDITORS

The 'HMICS Thematic Inspection of police response to missing persons in Scotland' is available to download at the [HMICS website](#).

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