

News release

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Policing must deliver next stage of reform

Policing in Scotland is well managed and led, but more needs to be done to reform the service and make the best use of its resources.

A joint best value audit by Audit Scotland and HM Inspectorate of Constabulary in Scotland found that policing in Scotland benefits from effective leadership and governance. It also says that:

- senior leaders work well together and have a clear vision
- lots of improvement activity is taking place
- financial management is strong
- and partnership working is a continuing strength.

However, the audit identified clear areas where more needs to be done. Policing has been slow to put in place effective changes to modernise how it operates. Workforce planning remains underdeveloped. And there is no evidence that 16,500 police officers and around 5,900 police staff are the right numbers to deliver an effective police service for the future.

Auditors also found that current performance reporting cannot show if policing in Scotland is achieving its strategic goals. And while public trust in the police remains high, confidence in local policing has declined.

Stephen Boyle, Auditor General for Scotland, said:

‘Policing in Scotland has a clear vision and senior leaders who work well together. But there’s more to do, especially around workforce planning and managing absence and officers on modified duties.

‘Crucially, to deliver its vision and the next stage of reform, policing needs to put clear measures of success in place to ensure it can report on whether its goals are being achieved.’

Craig Naylor, His Majesty’s Chief Inspector of Constabulary, said:

‘Policing must constantly adapt to new forms of crime, evolving societal demands and expectations. The nature of threat, harm and risk has been

changing and becoming more complex, moving from communities into homes and online.

‘Much has been achieved since the reform of policing services in 2013. That’s included more equal access to specialist resources, better use of technology and an increased focus on equality, diversity, and inclusion.

‘But policing knows it needs to increase scrutiny and delivery of its transformation programmes, as some modernisation plans haven’t been well managed in the past.

“At a time when the Scottish Government has set a new reform strategy for public services, there is now a real opportunity to effectively deliver the next stage of policing reform and ensure the service continues to improve.’

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Notes to Editor:

1. The report is based on a joint audit by Audit Scotland and HM Inspectorate of Constabulary in Scotland (HMICS). It aimed to assess how effectively policing today is run in Scotland - in terms of how Police Scotland and the Scottish Police Authority (including Forensic Services) are demonstrating continuous improvement in the delivery of strategic objectives and services to communities across the country.

2. The audit focused on how policing performs as a whole. When the report refers to policing, it means the Scottish Police Authority (including Forensic Services) and Police Scotland.

3. The Auditor General for Scotland and HMICS have specific powers under the Police and Fire Reform (Scotland) Act 2012 to examine the arrangements made by the SPA and the Chief Constable to secure best value.

4. Under the 2012 Act, the Auditor General and HMICS are required to co-operate and co-ordinate their activities to ensure a joined-up approach to scrutiny.

5. HMICS reports are available at www.hmics.scot

- The statutory role of HMICS is set out in Sections 71 to 82 of the Police and Fire Reform (Scotland) Act 2012. The role of HMICS is to make inquiries about any matter relating to the SPA or Police Scotland as they consider appropriate about the state, efficiency and effectiveness of the Authority and the Police Service, and arrangements made by the SPA and Chief Constable to secure

best value. Its work is all conducted with the aim of improving policing in Scotland.

6. All Audit Scotland reports published since 2000 are available at www.audit.scot

- The Auditor General appoints auditors to Scotland's central government and NHS bodies; examines how public bodies spend public money; helps them to manage their finances to the highest standards; and checks whether they achieve value for money. The Auditor General is independent and is not subject to the control of the Scottish Government or the Scottish Parliament
- Audit Scotland is a statutory body set up in April 2000, under the Public Finance and Accountability (Scotland) Act 2000. It provides services to the Auditor General for Scotland and the Accounts Commission for Scotland.

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