



HM Inspectorate of Constabulary in Scotland
Improving Policing across Scotland

Tuesday, 2nd September, 2025

PRESS RELEASE

Police Scotland Urged to Improve Its Uniform Following Tools of the Trade Review

A new report has called on Police Scotland to improve its uniform after a review revealed many officers are buying their own trousers, fleeces, boots and jackets rather than wear the poor quality and ill-fitting kit provided.

HM Inspectorate of Constabulary in Scotland carried out a detailed review into the 'Tools of the Trade' given to frontline police officers and staff.

It found while recently introduced kit designed to improve safety – including Tasers and body-worn video – had been welcomed by officers, there were numerous issues surrounding the standard-issue uniform.

Trousers given to both police officers and staff were found to be of poor quality, ill-fitting, rapidly faded in colour and lacked stretch.

Fleeces were described as too thin.

Jackets were badly designed to stop before the waist, leaving wearers exposed to rain.

Both male and female officers said the body armour they were given – although the most protective available – was bulky, too heavy and uncomfortable to wear, often riding up and hitting them on the chin when they sat in a vehicle.

While the well-regarded boots that had once been part of the Police Scotland uniform had now been replaced by boots that were commonly described as looking ‘unprofessional’.

The report found it had become ‘normalised’ for frontline police officers and staff to buy their own individual pieces of uniform rather than wear the items provided by Police Scotland.

HMICS recommend the country’s national force improve the quality and fit of its trousers, jackets, microfleece and footwear.

HM Assistant Inspector of Constabulary in Scotland, Brian McNulty, said: “Frontline officers and staff are operating in remarkably challenging environments; they are the face of Police Scotland, and the quality of the service they provide affects the overall trust and confidence the public have in the police.

“Ensuring that officers and staff have access to uniform and equipment that is high-quality, comfortable and effective is of critical importance.

“Many officers and staff are purchasing their own items of uniform.

“This leads to a lack of uniformity across the service, and it is, quite frankly, unacceptable that officers and staff find themselves in this position.”

As part of their review HMICS inspectors interviewed officers and staff from across Police Scotland – ensuring a mix of those serving in urban, rural, island and remote communities.

They visited the Police Scotland stores site in Glasgow, and they spoke to groups including staff associations and trade unions.

They said there was a strong perception from those they interviewed that senior officers and those in specialist roles are provided with a better range and quality of uniform clothing.

The report states: “We heard repeated comments from frontline officers, staff and supervisors, that the choice and quality of uniform was poor – and we saw this first hand, with officers showing us faded trousers and torn microfleecees.

“There was a notion that all decisions on uniform and equipment provided to frontline officers were predicated on cost, ahead of quality.

“These views contrasted starkly with how officers interpreted the uniform supplied to specialist officers, and senior officers across Police Scotland, with a generally-held view that there was more investment in the range and quality of uniform available to these groups.”

The inspectors heard examples of crime scene managers wearing jackets that are widely regarded as a superior, long-lasting garment – while frontline officers, on a cordon for an entire shift, had to make do with an inferior-quality jacket.

The report states: “The general feeling is that the current system is unfair, and frontline officers should be equally, if not better, provisioned for the roles they perform.”

HMICS staff were told many female officers resort to ordering male sizes of trousers as a result of the lack of stretch and poor fit of the trousers they are offered in female sizes.

The report recommended Police Scotland should seek alternative standard issue trousers that are made of higher quality, stretchable materials that accommodate diverse body types, including a proper fit for females.

It also recommended they improve awareness and availability of items of uniform designed for officers with specific requirements or medical conditions including pregnancy and menopausal symptoms.

It said officers reported mixed views about the different types of police hat available – formal flat, formal bowler and baseball – with the formal hats being seen as giving a more professional image, but the baseball cap more comfortable to wear.

It said Police Scotland had been considering the option of a gender-neutral hat, but no decision on such a design had yet been made.

The report recommended there should be better supervision of standards of uniform and appearance – including the wearing of hats – and that Police Scotland reassert the training and guidance given to supervisors to empower them to uphold those standards.

Aside from uniform, the review looked at other ‘tools of the trade’ carried by frontline officers which ranged from Tasers, and communication equipment, to torches and even the tick removers, midge repellent and thermos flasks given to wildlife officers.

The report, ‘Frontline Focus: Tools of the Trade’, made six recommendations for improvement including that Police Scotland provide frontline officers with the same quality of core uniform options available to senior leadership and specialist roles to meet their operational needs.

It said Police Scotland should improve its engagement with frontline officers and staff about their uniform and equipment requirements and ensure their opinions are represented at the working group which decides on clothing and other new kit.

The report also listed a further 16 areas for development including that Police Scotland should consider whether the ‘considerable cost’ associated with having the wording ‘Police Scotland’ and ‘Poileas Alba’ embroidered on its tops represents value for money.

It said the force should monitor how much uniform is being returned, and why, to ensure that best value is being delivered.

And it said more should be done to explore the potential for recycling and re-using items of uniform and equipment.

The report also advised that Police Scotland should consider making Taser an available option for all operational officers – and should issue appropriate safety and communication equipment to all front counter staff.

Ends

Notes

HM Inspectorate of Constabulary in Scotland (HMICS) is 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).

It 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. If necessary, it can be directed by Scottish Ministers to look into anything relating to the SPA or Police Scotland as they consider appropriate. They also have an established role in providing professional advice and guidance on policing in Scotland.

Their approach is to support Police Scotland and the SPA to deliver services that are high quality, continually improving, effective and responsive to local needs.

Ends notes

NOTES TO EDITORS

The 'HMICS Frontline focus review of tools of the trade' will be available to download at the [HMICS website](#) from 00.01hrs, Tuesday 2nd September, 2025.

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