



HM Inspectorate of Constabulary in Scotland **Improving Policing across Scotland**

Thursday, 02 April, 2020

Fulfilling statutory duties throughout the coronavirus outbreak

Introduction

This document outlines the approach Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary in Scotland (HMICS) intends to adopt in providing independent scrutiny of both Police Scotland and the Scottish Police Authority (SPA) throughout the period of the COVID-19 pandemic in Scotland.

In recognition of the unprecedented demands associated with the COVID-19 pandemic, on 19 March 2020, HMICS suspended all routine inspection activity. It is intended that the thematic inspections on Training and Development and on Hate Crime will resume once normality has been restored. HMICS has also put on hold the publication of its Annual Scrutiny Plan for 2020/2021. Joint inspection work, which we carry out with the Care Inspectorate and others, had already been halted meantime.

In order to maintain the resilience of Police Scotland and to support their response to this crisis, HMICS has instigated its Business Continuity Plan and has returned our four seconded police officers back to the force until further notice.

HMICS Objectives

HMICS will seek to protect and support our staff throughout this period, safeguarding their health, safety and wellbeing, through the provision of flexible home working arrangements, regular Skype meetings with the team and one to one conversations.

HMICS will continue to fulfil its statutory duty, as outlined in the Police and Fire Reform (Scotland) Act 2012, looking into the "state, effectiveness and efficiency" of both Police Scotland and the Scottish Police Authority (SPA).

HMICS will be pragmatic and flexible in its approach, continuing to ensure that the Chief Constable and the SPA meet their obligations in terms of best value and continuous improvement.

HMICS will respond to direction from Scottish Ministers to look into anything relating to Police Scotland or the SPA as they consider appropriate.

HMICS will provide professional advice and guidance on policing in Scotland.

It is assessed that focus on the following areas may be particularly important in providing assurance to the people of Scotland in the coming months:

- The manner in which Police Scotland implement the additional powers afforded to them under new legislation enacted to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic;
- Custody (fulfilling our role as part of the National Preventative Mechanism in line with OPCAT requirements);
- Call handling and the maintenance of the 101 and 999 service;
- Workforce wellbeing and the availability of personal protective equipment;
- Police Scotland's ongoing planning for the COP26 climate change event; and
- The impact of Police Scotland's response to the COVID-19 pandemic upon future levels of public trust and confidence.

HMICS will also use this time to plan and prepare for future scrutiny work and continue our transformation and workforce assurance process in respect of resource planning and readiness post-outbreak. Furthermore, as part of our scrutiny development HMICS will consider Police Scotland's response and recovery from COVID-19 with particular focus on organisational and individual learning and development.

HMICS does however recognise the unprecedented challenge the COVID-19 pandemic poses. We will seek to support Police Scotland and the SPA through this critical period, balancing our supportive approach with the fulfilment of our statutory responsibilities in a way that minimises the impact on Police Scotland and the SPA.

We will liaise regularly with Police Scotland, the SPA and the Scottish Government, and will keep the approach to scrutiny of policing in Scotland under review.

We will continue to liaise regularly with other inspectorates and agencies across the public sector throughout this period to share specific expertise or jointly examine important areas where Police Scotland works in partnership and contribute to shared outcomes. We will co-ordinate our activities to reduce the burden of inspection and avoid unnecessary duplication.

We will continue to aim to add value and strengthen public confidence in Scottish policing and will do this through independent scrutiny and objective evidence-led reporting about what we find. Where relevant, we will make recommendations to Police Scotland and the SPA that aim to improve policing. We will also identify good practice that can be rolled out across Scotland.

Mrs Gill Imery QPM

HM Chief Inspector of Constabulary

02 April 2020