

News Release

ISSUED ON BEHALF OF HER MAJESTY'S INSPECTORATE OF
CONSTABULARY FOR SCOTLAND

May, 12, 2008

POLICE MUST IMPROVE QUALITY OF SERVICE TO MAINTAIN PUBLIC SUPPORT

A report on the way the police respond to calls for service from the public, published today by HMICS, makes a number of recommendations aimed at improving how the police service updates victims, witnesses and other more general callers after contact with the police.

The police inspectorate has made seven recommendations to forces for a programme of work that will produce the following outcomes:-

- published standards for members of the public who may need to use policing services, setting out what can and cannot be expected in a police response and the ways in which individual needs will be identified and taken into account
- internal management processes that make clear to all police staff what is expected when responding to service users
- improved survey arrangements in order to understand the experiences and expectations of service users
- recruitment, selection and training arrangements that have a focus on quality and customer service
- better use of technology and partnerships to help meet service user expectations for feedback with minimal impact on police personnel

The Assistant Inspector of Constabulary Malcolm R Dickson said:

"This inspection was prompted by a widespread recognition within the police service that one of the weakest areas in its dealings with the public is a failure to provide updates or 'feedback' on how an enquiry was progressing. During the inspection we confirmed this weakness but we also found that over the last 10-15 years there has been a reducing focus on the wider issue of the quality of service provided by forces.

This is a time when the public quite properly expect good quality services. There have been tremendous improvements in the way the private sector provides information to its customers making full use of people skills training and technological advances. The police service cannot allow itself to fall behind and it will be extremely important to keep quality of service as a key priority while developing other important service improvement themes such as performance management.

During the inspection we found some areas where police officers have real difficulty in providing feedback to the public through sheer pressure of work and it will also be important for forces to recognise this when they consider our recommendations. It is as important for the public to understand what the police service can deliver as it is to understand what it cannot deliver.

Nevertheless, we believe the public should be told what to expect when they call the police and police staff should understand how they can try to meet the public need. The recommendations in this report are designed to match these expectations on both sides and if they are properly addressed we believe public satisfaction with police services will markedly improve.”

NOTES FOR NEWS EDITORS

1. Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary for Scotland (commonly known as the Police Inspectorate or HMICS) is responsible for inspecting the eight Scottish police forces and five police services. HMICS operates independently of the police forces, police authorities and the Scottish Government and exists to monitor and improve the police services in Scotland.

2. The Quality of Service and Feedback thematic inspection report will be available from 0800 hours on Friday 30 May 2008:
<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Justice/Police/>. Advance copies for the media are available from the Scottish Government press office on the number below.

3. Mr Dickson will be available for broadcast interviews between 2.30 pm and 3.30 pm on May 30, 2008. To reserve a slot please contact 0131 244 2939.

Contact: Vikki Quinn 0131 244 2939 or 07825 175 223
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