



HM Inspectorate of Constabulary in Scotland

Improving Policing Across Scotland

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PRESS RELEASE

HM Chief Inspector of Constabulary in Scotland Annual Report 2015-16

Although it has been a year of significant change for both Police Scotland and the Scottish Police Authority (SPA), overall performance remains strong for the third year of the single service according to the HMICS Annual Report published today (22 December 2016).

HM Chief Inspector of Constabulary Derek Penman said: "It has been a year of significant change for both Police Scotland and the SPA and the fact that overall performance remains strong is testimony to the continued commitment of staff at all levels, in often challenging circumstances."

HMICS inspections during the past year have covered a wide range of policing activity including local policing, the use of biometric data, counter corruption and call handling.

In addition, HMICS completed its second major audit of crime recording. HMICS noted that while official statistics show overall crime continuing to fall across Scotland, the nature of crime is changing and increasingly taking place online. Mr Penman states, "It is reasonable to consider that volume crimes, including fraud and other cyber-enabled offences, will increase significantly and impact on the historic reductions in reported crime."

Police Scotland currently assess that 80% of its demand is non-crime related, with much of this relating to vulnerable people and mental health issues. In acknowledging that this places additional pressure on officers and police staff across Scotland, Mr Penman believes there is now an urgent need for Police Scotland to (i) better understand and manage its demand; (ii) create capacity from within existing resources; and (iii) reinvest this into prevention, partnership and tackling new challenges of policing public, private and virtual spaces.

Mr Penman is of the view that, "the single service is better placed than the legacy forces it replaced to respond to the challenges from changing demand and increased vulnerability. The unique opportunities of the single service to be connected locally, nationally and even internationally will facilitate major change, whilst still providing sufficient resilience to maintain operational effectiveness and deal with both major events and major crime."

In his 2014-15 annual report, Mr Penman highlighted the need for an on-going focus on sustainability, scrutiny and localism to realise the benefits of reform. In this year's annual report, he acknowledges that the creation of Police Scotland was only the beginning of a

major change programme. The last three years of police reform have concentrated more on consolidation and delivering operational stability rather than delivering major change. Progress in planning for this change has been slow and there is now a need for Police Scotland and the SPA to embark upon a second transformative phase. He added, "I welcome the work being carried out jointly by Police Scotland and the SPA on a new ten-year strategy but, to be successful, it must be supported by a professionally managed implementation programme, as well as a financial strategy that identifies the additional investment necessary to transform policing and achieve the longer-term savings needed to make policing in Scotland sustainable."

Major financial challenges persist. Mr Penman notes that, "Although there have been changes in the strategic financial leadership of both Police Scotland and the SPA, urgent work is still needed to strengthen their finance function and improve their scrutiny governance."

Through various inspections, Mr Penman has reported on the reduction in skilled police staff and the increased use of police officers in back office and other roles. He states that, "Another critical element of the new ten-year strategy will be a balanced workforce. It is essential that the Chief Constable has sufficient flexibility to work with the SPA and deliver the right mix of officer numbers and police staff. This should include a mix of specialists to meet the changing nature of crime and the wider demands on policing."

Effective scrutiny remains one of a number of critical success factors. While Mr Penman welcomed the Review of Governance in Policing report by the Chair of the SPA, he questioned the benefits of committee meetings being held in private and supporting papers not being published. However, he acknowledged that it is a matter for the SPA to agree its own governance arrangements and welcomed the decision by members to review these after six months. HMICS will also review the overall effectiveness and efficiency of the SPA as part of its 2017-18 Scrutiny Programme.

In terms of effective localism, Mr Penman observed that engagement with communities remains fundamental to the success of Scottish policing. He considers that, "The role of the local police commander has the potential to be developed into a more empowering public sector leadership role to encourage innovation and collaboration with local partners to deliver better outcomes for communities." The report also notes that recent changes in community planning and community empowerment offer new opportunities to strengthen local policing and streamline local scrutiny.

Mr Penman acknowledged that over the last 12 months, there have been several new executive appointments into Police Scotland. These have established a new team to take forward the second transformative stage of police reform and deliver the new ten-year strategy for policing. In concluding his report, Mr Penman stated, "Confidence in policing will remain a key measure of success, not only in terms of strengthening public confidence but critically in building this confidence in all officers and police staff working in Police Scotland and the SPA. Opportunities exist under this new leadership to develop and articulate a clear vision for the policing of Scotland and to build a sustainable, locally responsive and accountable police service."

Background

This Annual Report covers the period 1 April 2015 to 31 March 2016 and details our activity since our previous Annual Report which was published on 18 December 2015.

The full report can be found at www.hmics.org

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 and the Scottish Police Authority.

HMICS has a statutory duty to ensure that the Chief Constable and the SPA meet their obligations in terms of best value and continuous improvement. If necessary, HMICS can be directed by Scottish Ministers to look into anything relating to the SPA or Police Scotland as they consider appropriate. HMICS has an established role in providing professional advice and guidance on policing in Scotland.

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

Note to editors

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