



HM Inspectorate of Constabulary in Scotland
Improving Policing across Scotland

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PRESS RELEASE

Police Scotland plans for future workforce

Police Scotland is commended for producing a significant piece of work which considers its future workforce needs while coping with the challenges of the pandemic and COP26.

The approach to developing the Strategic Workforce Plan (SWP), however, requires to be adapted and enhanced to help deliver a sustainable policing model for the future, states a report published today.

The review, by HM Inspectorate of Constabulary in Scotland (HMICS), of Police Scotland's strategic workforce planning examines the efforts by the service to develop its understanding of workforce requirements as well as identifying areas for improvement.

It follows an inspection of demand analysis and management in 2021 and should be seen as a complementary approach to understanding how Police Scotland operates to strategically deal with the challenges it faces.

This report pinpoints some fundamental cultural and strategic issues which must be addressed, not least the notion that 17234 police officers are needed to provide a policing service in Scotland.

HM Chief Inspector of Constabulary in Scotland, Craig Naylor, said: "Since inception, Police Scotland has been required to maintain this number. HMICS has long maintained it is not supported by evidence. Scotland may need more, or fewer, police officers or, indeed, a different workforce split between warranted and non-warranted officers.

“The commitment to maintain 17234 is a blunt instrument and, given the workforce makes up around 86% of the policing budget, effective workforce planning should replace it to allow the service to balance resource levels against the budget available.”

To facilitate this, Mr Naylor urged the service to refresh its approach and come up with a credible method of planning to ensure it can demonstrate a valid way to provide effective and adaptable policing services in a sustainable way.

The implications on policing of a flat cash settlement in the recently published resource spending review for 2022, make this even more pressing, with an expectation that this will guide Police Scotland’s future planning scenarios. It is unclear, at this time, how much a financial gap this will create when pay rises and inflation are factored in to next year’s spending.

“To meet the demands and threats facing a changing Scotland, the service needs to focus on reshaping the workforce to have the right people, in the right place, at the right time, with the right skills to effectively and efficiently deal with demand for services within the financial settlement that is available,” he said.

“Effective strategic workforce planning will allow Police Scotland to deliver a policing service within a defined budget, prioritise resources to meet current and predicted service demand and expectations and address a level of ad hoc pressure.

“It is a difficult task, requiring strong leadership and prioritisation to ensure clear decision making on the resources and skills required for the future and a plan to achieve it. Hard choices have to be made and carefully managed to ensure public confidence in policing is not impacted.”

There is much to commend in the existing SWP which has been in place since January 2021, states HMICS. But limited evidence is found by inspectors to suggest the SWP effectively supports the achievement of policing strategy and objectives, nor ensures there is sufficient capacity and skills in place to deliver them.

It notes there has been limited progress in terms of delivering the SWP as yet and Police Scotland, therefore, needs to adapt its approach and take a wider view of managing demand for its services and prioritising the service which it can provide.

HMICS finds the SWP lacks planning for corporate functions, cyber, the pressure due to pension changes or linkage to skills development, recruitment and retention.

The SWP references a variety of different programmes and projects, all of which have workforce implications, but there is no analysis of their combined impact on the workforce, expected requirements or outcomes. Similarly the SWP does not address the full impact of working with partners.

“We advise that Police Scotland should focus on the development by next spring of a strategic assessment of the workforce and a refreshed delivery plan to address these gaps. In addition, it should consider how to deliver the next version of the SWP in April 2024,” said Mr Naylor.”

HMICS considers more progress could be made for roles to be filled by police staff, thus freeing officers for operational duties.

While Police Scotland has clearly demonstrated its ability to respond to short and medium term challenges like COVID-19, it needs to embrace predictive models, deal with uncertainty and be more transparent about longer term planning, states the report.

HMICS makes 10 recommendations, identifies a number of areas for development to support the delivery of a strategic workforce plan and workforce planning in Scotland and details the next steps for Police Scotland, Scottish Government and the Scottish Police Authority.

Ends

FOOTNOTE

Workforce planning is the process that organisations use to make sure they have the required number of people with the right skills to meet current and future strategic objectives.

It is a dynamic and iterative process and constantly changes as the demands placed on policing and resultant strategies develop over time – while the production of a strategic workforce plan (SWP) is fixed at a point in time.

A SWP should be regularly refreshed to coincide with the strategic planning cycle of the organisation, regular monitoring of its progress and the changing shape of the workforce is required to maintain a focus on delivery. The system of governance, decision making and information analysis processes employed by the organisation are just as important as the SWP itself.

Ends notes

NOTES TO EDITORS

The HMICS Review of Police Scotland's Strategic Workforce Planning is available to download at the HMICS website www.hmics.scot from 1030hrs, Tuesday, 02 August 2022.

For any media enquiries please contact:

Susan Lumsden

HMICS Communications

07768 412 312

Susan.lumsden@gov.scot

Twitter: [@hmics](https://twitter.com/hmics)

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