



HM Inspectorate of Constabulary in Scotland
Improving Policing across Scotland

Wednesday 31 August, 2022

PRESS RELEASE

Police Scotland call handling reviewed

The policing service to the Scottish public, during the pandemic, benefitted significantly from the accelerated delivery of a new police system for managing calls.

Call handling is a critically important aspect of policing, often being the first point of contact for people in need of urgent assistance, reporting a crime or seeking advice.

Around 3.400,000 contacts are made with Police Scotland every year, the majority via the Service's Contact Command and Control Division (C3).

In a report published today, Wednesday, 31 August, 2022, Police Scotland was commended for the progress it had made in contact, command and control and the change to the manner in which it responded to calls.

The assurance review by HM Inspector of Constabulary in Scotland (HMICS) looked at the operational impact of the Contact Assessment Model (CAM) and identified areas for improvement, as it continued to modernise.

HM Chief Inspector of Constabulary, Mr Craig Naylor, said : "CAM was instrumental in enabling Police Scotland to maintain an appropriate level of service to communities across Scotland during an unprecedented and challenging period.

“Our findings are positive, endorse the concept and ambition of CAM and it is important to acknowledge the considerable progress which has been made in this area of policing. Its roll out across Scotland was accelerated when the impact of the pandemic started to be felt.

“CAM was able to be adapted depending on what level of restrictions were in place at any given time, in different parts of the country. And while it is clear its long term potential benefits were adversely affected by Covid 19, it had a crucial role in maintaining public trust and confidence in policing.”

Changes to call handling procedures within Police Scotland were recommended by HMICS following the tragic deaths of John Yuill and Lamara Bell. Since then, no other operational area of policing has received such sustained levels of scrutiny from HMICS.

The service now uses an assessment framework, known as THRIVE, to consider the needs of each caller, the circumstances of each call and incident to ensure the appropriate response is provided. Given the requirement to ask sufficient questions to establish the threat, harm, risk, vulnerability and opportunities for investigation, it was recognised by Police Scotland that it would result in calls of longer duration.

HMICS found more training in this area would improve investigative opportunities, vulnerabilities and engagement, especially in more complex incidents, and ensure a thorough assessment was provided as the incident moves through the police system.

In addition, HMICS noted the ability of Police Scotland to divert incidents to more appropriate organisations had been hindered during the pandemic and C3 staff needed to be more proactive in transferring incidents to partners to ensure those most in need received the most suitable response.

Mr Naylor welcomed the steps taken within C3 to create a learning culture, especially in relation to the notifiable incident process, where experience was shared on incidents handled well or where improvements could be made.

“There is always a level of risk which must be managed in the operation of police call handling,” he said. “Notable incidents will take place, however ensuring they are appropriately investigated, trends analysed and lessons learned to drive continuous improvement is the key.”

The inspection team listened to 360 calls made to the division and found them to be of a consistently high standard handled with empathy and genuine willingness to help.

However, it highlighted that CAM had not delivered the intended benefits in terms of reduction in demand for local policing officers, nor were Resolution Teams currently able to ease that burden.

On occasion, victims of crime have had to repeat details of their incident two or three times as it is passed from the first point of contact, to Resolution Teams then to local policing officers and possibly onto a specialist investigative department.

Police Scotland has been recommended to review the training within Resolution Teams to provide a more victim centred approach and reduce the number of crime reports going to other areas of policing for completion.

A key component of CAM was the introduction of local policing appointments (LPA) where a mutually agreed time was set for police officers to attend, if there was not a need for an immediate or urgent response. LPAs work best in urban areas and there is a lack of consistency in their provision across Scotland and an associated risk of the victim disengaging.

The report contains eight recommendations for Police Scotland and the Scottish Police Authority (SPA) and these will be monitored against progress.

Ends

FOOTNOTE

The CAM Project Team was awarded the prestigious Campbell Christie Public Sector Reform Award.

HMICS conducted its first review of call handling in 2015 and has produced a further five reports, making a total of 38 recommendations to Police Scotland and the Scottish Police Authority.

The first phase of CAM was introduced in 2019 following a recommendation made by HMICS that Police Scotland should adopt a more formalised risk and vulnerability assessment model. Following the outbreak of the pandemic, full roll out was expedited and completed in April 2020 five months early.

THRIVE threat, harm, risk, investigative opportunity, vulnerability and engagement.

Resolution Teams manage direct crime recording and phone diary appointments in addition to management of incidents passed to them. Their strategic intention was to remove 15% of demand from local policing.

Ends notes

NOTES TO EDITORS

The HMICS Review of Police Scotland's Contact Assessment Model is available to download at the HMICS website www.hmics.scot from 1100hrs, Wednesday, August 2022.

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