

## **HM Inspectorate of Constabulary in Scotland**

### **Police Scotland – Call Handling:**

### **Terms of Reference for HMICS Assurance Review**

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# HM Inspectorate of Constabulary in Scotland

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HM Inspectorate for Constabulary in Scotland (HMICS) is established under the Police and Fire Reform (Scotland) Act 2012<sup>1</sup> and has wide ranging powers to look into the ‘*state, effectiveness and efficiency*’ of both the Police Service of Scotland (Police Scotland) and the Scottish Police Authority.

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

- Our powers allow us to do anything we consider necessary or expedient for the purposes of, or in connection with, the carrying out of our functions.
- The Authority and the Chief Constable must provide us with such assistance and co-operation as we may require to enable us to carry out our functions.
- When we publish a report, the Authority and the Chief Constable must also consider what we have found and take such measures, if any, as they think fit.
- Where our report identifies that the Authority or Police Service is not efficient or effective (or best value not secured), or will, unless remedial measures are taken, cease to be efficient or effective, Scottish Ministers may direct the Authority to take such measures as may be required. The Authority must comply with any direction given.
- Where we make recommendations, we will follow them up and report publicly on progress.
- We will identify good practice that can be applied across Scotland.
- We work with other inspectorates and agencies across the public sector and co-ordinate our activities to reduce the burden of inspection and avoid unnecessary duplication.
- We 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.

Our approach is to support Police Scotland and the Authority to deliver services that are high quality, continually improving, effective and responsive to local needs.<sup>2</sup>

**This assurance review will be undertaken by HMICS in terms of Section 74(1) of the Police and Fire Reform (Scotland) Act 2012 and will be provided to Scottish Ministers and published in terms of Section 78(1) and (2) of the Act.**

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<sup>1</sup> Police and Fire Reform (Scotland) Act 2012, Chapter 11.

<sup>2</sup> HMICS Corporate Strategy 2014-17.

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## Our review

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### Aim

1. This assurance review has been directed by the Cabinet Secretary for Justice following the tragic incident involving the deaths of John Yuill and Lamara Bell. The review will provide an independent assessment of the operation, systems and procedures in place in contact, command and control centres across Scotland. It is expected that any recommendations to Police Scotland and the Scottish Police Authority (SPA) will support the improvement of current and future service delivery to the people of Scotland.
2. This review will be complementary to the more specific independent investigation being undertaken by the Police Investigations and Review Commissioner (PIRC) into this incident and the associated missing persons enquiry. Both HMICS and PIRC have a statutory duty<sup>3</sup> to co-operate and share information and have an established Memorandum of Understanding setting out a framework for collaboration. HMICS will work closely with PIRC to ensure that any relevant issues identified from its specific investigation are captured within this wider assurance review of call handling and processes within Police Scotland contact, command and control centres across Scotland.
3. The HMICS review will be undertaken in terms of Section 74(1) of the Police and Fire Reform (Scotland) Act 2012 and will be provided to Scottish Ministers and published in terms of Section 78(1) and (2) of the Act.
4. The aim of this review will be to assess:
  - **the capacity of the systems and the human resource available within the control centres to manage, receive, answer and prioritise calls;**
  - **the capability of the systems and the suitability of the training provided to those who manage, receive, answer and prioritise calls; and**
  - **the process within the control room to ensure that all calls are handled and dispatched appropriately.**
5. HMICS will ensure that appropriate stakeholder consultation to gather views is undertaken as part of the assurance review process.

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<sup>3</sup> Police and Fire Reform (Scotland) Act 2012, Section 85(1).

## Background

6. When a member of the public contacts the police, it is generally to report a crime or incident which will require police attendance, another appropriate response or to pass on information. Making direct contact with the police can be a major step for the public. Information obtained through such contact fundamentally contributes to providing an effective service and, therefore, it is important that all calls are effectively managed and callers' experiences are positive, maintaining public confidence in policing.
7. The police non-emergency number '101' was launched in March 2013. The number is intended to offer the public a new way to contact the police, to report a crime that does not need an emergency response, to get advice, or to speak to a local officer. The new number was also intended to make police more accessible to communities and reduce pressure on the 999 system, as well as helping police to cut crime by making it easier for the public to pass on information.
8. The majority of public contact with the police is by telephone and through police contact centres. The contact, command and control centres receive circa 600,000 emergency (999) calls and 3,600,000 non-emergency (101) calls per annum<sup>4</sup>. As at June 2015, there were 1,427 staff comprising 325 officers and 1,102 staff. The people budget for Police Scotland Contact, Command and Control Division (C3) is circa £51.45 million per annum.<sup>5</sup>
9. Prior to the establishment of Police Scotland on 1 April 2013, all eight legacy forces operated contact, command and control centres. As part of police reform, C3 has undergone and is still undergoing a significant change programme which has seen the re-location and transfer of work from a number of sites:
  - Dumfries – 27 May 2014
  - Glenrothes – 16 March 2015
  - Glasgow Pitt Street – 16 March 2015
  - Stirling – 27 January 2015
10. The new C3 model, approved and monitored by the SPA, which is currently being implemented, consists of three operational sites and a support base. These sites answer emergency 999 and non-emergency 101 calls, provide Police National Computer checks, Criminal History Database checks and try to resolve calls at first point of contact through public assistance desks. The approved model is:
  - *West Command Area Control* – Govan and Motherwell combined
  - *East Command Area Control* – Bilston Glen
  - *North Command Area Control* – Dundee
  - *Inverness* – National systems support base for C3

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<sup>4</sup> Source: Police Scotland 2014-15 full year management information figures.

<sup>5</sup> Police Scotland, [Paper to SPA Board: Contact, Command and Control Proposed Strategic Direction](#), 30 January 2014.

11. These sites are all currently in operation along with the centre in Aberdeen which is programmed to close before the end of this financial year. Call handling at the centre in Inverness is also programmed to transfer to Dundee by the end of this financial year after which Inverness will be established as the new national systems support base for C3.

### **Development process**

12. The Scottish Police Authority (SPA) approved C3 Strategic Direction proposals<sup>6</sup> at its Board meeting on 30 January 2014. The benefits and savings which are to be realised as a result of adopting the preferred C3 model and approach are associated with the wider benefits of police reform as well as the specific C3 change programme. The benefits<sup>7</sup> were outlined by Police Scotland as:
  - Improve the response to 999 and 101 calls
  - Introduce systems to better assess vulnerability at first point of contact
  - Fully integrate the command and control of officers nationally
  - Ensure that the nearest/most suitable resources respond to incidents
  - Increase capability to meet the demands of responding to critical and major incidents, irrespective of location.
13. The C3 project estimated the overall release of between 155 and 212 staff posts with savings to employment costs of between £4.28 million and £5.88 million per annum.
14. Recurring annual ICT savings of circa £905K were also anticipated as a result of rationalisation and modernisation of supporting C3 ICT systems and infrastructure, as well as associated (as yet undetermined) savings from the subsequent release of police buildings.
15. Police Scotland currently track and report upon a range of performance data on a daily basis including:
  - Number of calls received
  - Number of calls discontinued
  - Number of calls discontinued after 120 seconds
  - Average speed of answer
  - Longest wait time
  - % of 999 calls answered in 10 seconds (grade of service)
  - % of 101 calls answered in 40 seconds (grade of service)
16. Police Scotland have a target for 999 calls of 90% of calls being answered within 10 seconds of being presented to the police for answer. For 101 and other non-emergency calls, the target is 90% of calls in 40 seconds.

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<sup>6</sup> See note 5.

<sup>7</sup> See note 4.

17. There has been continuing oversight of C3 by the SPA – through public updates to the full SPA board on four occasions, pre and post-consultation consideration of each phase of organisational change through the Human Resources and Remuneration Committee (HRRC), and on the status of the underpinning technology programme through their ICT Scrutiny Forum (also on four occasions).

### **Impact of C3**

18. The change programme and the closure of local contact, command and control centres have prompted a great deal of interest from local and national politicians and communities and have been further highlighted through both local and national media. There has also been parliamentary interest and media reporting regarding concerns over the time taken to answer calls from the public and calls potentially not being answered or responded to. Concerns have been raised by trade unions and staff associations about resourcing levels within contact centres to deal with call demand. The morale of staff has also been highlighted.
19. Following discussion of these issues in Parliament in March 2015, further assurance was sought from the SPA and Police Scotland regarding the performance of the three main C3 centres.
20. Since May 2015, Police Scotland has provided weekly performance reports to the SPA. The SPA subsequently undertakes an additional assessment on this report, which is provided on a weekly basis to the Scottish Government. Police Scotland has also been reviewing its own processes and performance in this area. Subsequent to the incident involving the deaths of John Yuill and Lamara Bell, the Chief Constable wrote to the Cabinet Secretary requesting a review of call handling procedures across the country.

### **Assurance review – Terms of reference**

21. This assurance review has been directed by the Cabinet Secretary for Justice and will be undertaken by HMICS in terms of Section 74(1) of the Police and Fire Reform (Scotland) Act 2012. It will be provided to Scottish Ministers and published in terms of Section 78(1) and (2) of the Act.
22. The terms of reference for this assurance review will enable HMICS to independently assess the current practices of Police Scotland in relation to call handling and provide assurance in terms of Police Scotland's approach compared to recognised best practice.

### **Objectives**

23. Scottish Ministers have clearly set out expectations of the areas to be reviewed by HMICS:
  - **the capacity of the systems and the human resource available within the control centres to manage, receive, answer and prioritise calls;**

- **the capability of the systems and the suitability of the training provided to those who manage, receive, answer and prioritise calls; and**
  - **the process within the control room to ensure that all calls are handled and dispatched appropriately.**
24. HMICS will draw on relevant elements of our Inspection Framework to support this review and ensure that our findings are evidence-based. These will specifically include:
- Leadership and governance
  - Planning and process
  - Resources
  - People
  - Outcomes
25. This will provide a focus to our review around the leadership and governance of both the daily operational business of C3 and the wider change programme, including an assessment of the impact of restructuring to date, performance and the delivery of benefits. We will also comment where appropriate on future plans for C3.
26. Our intended outcomes from this assurance review and its publication are to:
- provide an assurance to Scottish Ministers, Scottish Parliament, SPA, the Chief Constable and communities across Scotland of whether Police Scotland has established sufficient capacity and capability to provide an effective call handling service now and in the future; and
  - highlight areas of good practice and any areas for improvement.
27. This review report will firstly be provided to Scottish Ministers who will lay it before the Scottish Parliament. The report will also be provided to the SPA and the Chief Constable who must have regard to any recommendations and take such measures (if any) as they think fit in relation to the report. In keeping with our normal inspection and review procedure, we will request that an improvement plan detailing key actions and timelines be submitted to address any recommendations. We will also publish a copy of the report on our website.
28. Due to the nature of this review, HMICS will closely monitor progress against any recommendations. Should HMICS identify any areas for immediate improvement during our review, these will be communicated directly to Police Scotland and the SPA for consideration and thereafter incorporated into our review report.

## **User perspective**

29. As set out in the Public Services Reform (Scotland) Act 2010, HMICS has a duty to demonstrate continuous improvement in user focus i.e. involving users in the scrutiny process.

30. In this review we will use available data from the SPA and Police Scotland on public confidence and assurance. We will also seek other sources of independent data which reflect on the user experience of police call handling. Similarly, engagement with police officers, staff and professionals from partner agencies will also form part of the review process.
31. The Cabinet Secretary for Justice has specifically requested that 'appropriate stakeholder consultation to gather views is undertaken'. HMICS will develop a mechanism for police officers, police staff, stakeholders and the public to contact us directly and offer relevant information or experience of C3. This will be used to identify potential strengths and weaknesses within C3 and inform specific areas for our scrutiny activity. We will treat information gathered through this mechanism in confidence and solely for the purposes of our review. It should be noted however that HMICS does not investigate individual cases or complaints. If required, we will provide information on where to seek appropriate advice.

## **Methodology**

32. Our methodology will include:
  - engagement with a range of key stakeholders, including but not limited to: Police Scotland, Scottish Police Authority, Scottish Government, staff associations and unions, elected representatives, etc., to understand key issues and concerns;
  - liaison with PIRC over its current investigation and also wider issues identified through on-going complaint handling reviews;
  - review and assess end to end call handling policies, procedures, processes and systems up to dispatch and call closure;
  - review of existing supervision and management, risk management, health and safety, performance reporting and governance;
  - review and assess current and planned staffing levels (including absence and absences), structures, experience and training;
  - review workloads against projected and actual demand, including distribution of police staff and officers;
  - observation of Police Scotland contact, command and control centres;
  - qualitative sampling and audit of calls and incident records;
  - assessment of Police Scotland's own C3 data and business assurance processes;
  - interviews and/or focus groups with staff within the C3 environment and front line officers;
  - interview with relevant senior officers;
  - liaison with Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC), the College of Policing and the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) in relation to the operation of police contact, command and control in England, Wales and Northern Ireland;
  - benchmarking activity to examine the approach to call handling in comparable UK police forces;
  - review of historical performance of contact, command and control centres across Scotland during legacy force arrangements;



- literature review, review of relevant public and private sector sources of good practice and consultation with academics; and
  - collation, analysis and evaluation of information collected, identifying key themes, good practice or improvement requirements.
33. HMICS will use its established inspection framework to ensure a systematic approach to the collection and analysis of evidence.

### **Publication and reporting timescales**

34. Our report will be submitted to Scottish Ministers in terms of Section 78(1) of the Police and Fire Reform (Scotland) Act 2012. Our review is to be progressed with immediacy and HMICS will prioritise our initial scrutiny on call handling processes across Scotland with a view to providing an interim assurance review to the Cabinet Secretary for Justice by the end of August 2015, including any recommendations or improvements we consider necessary. This will be followed with a final and more comprehensive report by the end of October 2015.
35. The report will outline our methodology and approach, explain the call handling process in everyday language and report on our key findings, conclusions, and any recommendations. It will provide assurance on whether or not call handling is working effectively and efficiently within Police Scotland as well as on the future plans for development of the national approach.

**Derek Penman QPM**  
**HM Inspector of Constabulary in Scotland**  
**21 July 2015**