Partners in Crime – Solving and Reassuring

A Thematic Inspection of Crime Management in Scotland

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executive summary

This HMIC report is a study of the management of volume crime. It reflects on incident handling, crime recording, investigation, police reporting, the use of technology, and the needs of victims. In some respects the recommendations may be seen as aspirational. They are certainly challenging in terms of prioritisation of resources. However, they offer a foundation for practical progress.

The work is complementary to that undertaken for 'Narrowing the Gap' which emphasised police visibility as an important element of public reassurance. 'Partners in Crime' confirms the need for balance in police deployment to ensure there is sufficient investment in the support infrastructure essential to sustained crime detection as a measure of public reassurance. The police role is not simply one of visible street presence. The capacity for quality investigation is a fundamental component of effective policing.

The main findings highlight the following:

- Over the past decade, a greater focus on the management of crime by all Scottish police forces has contributed to a generally sustained downward trend in reported crime and a consistently increasing detection rate.

- Imminent changes to the crime recording standard will result in more incidents being categorised as crimes and bring the level of crime recorded by police forces closer to that recorded by the Scottish Crime Survey.

- Scottish forces eagerly embrace change designed to improve service delivery. Adoption of the National Intelligence Model with its attendant professional analytical support, expansion of forensic science capability and creative partnership working with procurators fiscal are examples of this. Further investment in these important areas will undoubtedly deliver even more benefits.

- Victims of crime are quite properly occupying a more central position within the criminal justice system. Scottish forces are responsive to victims and have worked hard to ensure key services such as Victim Support are made available to many people. Particular emphasis has gone into the identification and supporting of repeat or vulnerable victims. Building upon initiatives such as 3rd party reporting schemes, the service currently has an opportunity to exploit emerging technologies to enhance the ease with which victims and witnesses can report crime.

- Some forces have experienced benefits by exploiting the Crime Management function to control and support the investigation of crimes. By centralising expertise, forces can increase overall quality and compensate for any inexperience in an individual investigator.

- Technology is central to many recent advances in service delivery by forces. Accepting the importance of technology being driven by strategy rather than vice-versa, it is apparent that developments within and outwith Scotland now collectively offer vast opportunities to support the processes that solve crime and reassure victims.

- The system by which police report alleged offenders to the Procurator Fiscal has been automated and standardised but scope exists to both reduce the number of cases reported and also the level of bureaucracy associated with many of the remainder.

Conclusion

These findings point to the need to ensure effective joined up working within and across forces and the criminal justice process. This kind of sustained partnership in addressing volume crime has the potential to make significant strides in both solving reported crime and reassuring the wider public.

summary of recommendations

HMIC makes 18 recommendations with regards the further progression of the Management of Crime in Scotland. HMIC recommends:

1. Forces should publish a clear and concise attendance policy which retains an element of flexibility but details the level of service victims of crime can expect to receive on reporting a crime to the Police (page 22).

2. Forces should establish a Crime Management Unit either at divisional or force level staffed by the properly trained and equipped staff to facilitate the proper and professional investigation of crime, founded on a consistent allocation policy (page 23).

3. Forces review their current volume crime management policies and, if necessary, include guidance on minimum standards expected in the investigation of all crimes and confirm that every activity undertaken in respect of a crime investigation is formally recorded on the associated crime report (page 25).

4. Forces, within the overall resource equation ensure the fullest possible use of SOCO and Volume Crime Examiners and forensic scientists (page 27).

5. Forces have in place a competent and reliable method of recording the results of crime scene examinations (page 28).

6. Forces should adopt a strictly adhered to protocol in relation to SOCO attendance at volume crime scenes (page 29).

7. The recognition of analytical staff should be enhanced by:

   • Forces putting in place a career structure to ensure the continued recruitment and retention of properly qualified and trained analytical staff.

   • the setting up of a National Forum for analytical staff to allow for the sharing of good practice and dissemination of methodology.

   • the SPC reviewing its training package with respect to the training of analysts particularly in relation to using past data to inform future resource deployment (page 31).

8. Forces should look at ways of integrating their available IT systems to prevent duplication of work and thereby allowing analytical staff to provide maximum returns from the information available (page 31).

9. That sufficient priority is afforded to resourcing the intelligence function within forces to ensure that it is adequately staffed to allow for the effective implementation of the National Intelligence Model and its associated processes (page 32).

10.	Forces audit their existing training and briefing process to ensure all officers are aware of the ethos of the NIM and the part they have to play in its successful implementation (page 32).

11.	Forces should embrace more fully the concept of predictive analysis and put in place an IT system to provide a management information system which allows the analysis of past and emerging trends as a basis for anticipating likely future trends in crime (page 32).

12.	Under the aegis of SPIS, ACPOS continues to review progress and opportunities with emerging developments including:

- Single data capture

- Exploitation of the e-portal, and

- The potential of mobile data (page 41)

13.	That Chief Constables implement the following processes with regards repeat victims:

- review their in-force arrangements for identifying all repeat victims at the earliest possible point and preferably before first face to face contact with a police officer

- where necessary, exploit best practice available elsewhere

- carry out a review of policies in respect of action to be taken when a repeat victim is identified (page 46).

14.	Forces review the mechanisms by which victim information needs are identified, recorded, delivered and monitored (page 48).

15.	ACPOS considers the development of a standard chapter relative to victim issues be incorporated, within an appropriate timescale, within the crime reports utilised by each Scottish force (page 49).

16.	Forces significantly increase the number of referrals to VSS in respect of people adversely affected by crime (page 49).

17.	ACPOS in liaison with COPFS review how respective responsibilities might be addressed in relation to how victims of volume crimes including housebreaking and car crime receive progress reports relative to their particular case once the case is forwarded to COPFS (page 50).

18.	The Scottish Executive and ACPOS review where ISCJIS sits within the wider criminal justice strategy and look at the existing ISCJIS protocols to establish if they reflect the priorities of such a strategy (page 57).

summary of suggestions

In addition to the recommendations a further 6 suggestions are made throughout the report.

It is suggested that:

1.   Forces consider an auditable IT process to ensure that every reported incident is either subsequently recorded as a crime or is endorsed with the details of the manager confirming the incident is non-criminal (page 19).

2.   Forces participate in the Council for the Registration of Forensic Practitioners scheme, which provides proof of an individual's continuous professional development in the field of scenes of crime examination (page 27).

3.   Forces re-evaluate their IT policy to ensure that come renewal time the required and compatible product is obtained to support Analysts to carry out their duties with the maximum efficiency. Included in this is the requirement to permit analytical staff to influence product purchase (page 31).

4.   Simply restructuring the format of crime reports, incorporating a range of optional chapters and, perhaps more relevantly, offering more guidance to investigators by the creation of specific fields to encourage consideration of certain activities would undoubtedly lead to a more effective investigative process and a better report to COPFS and SCRA (page 39).

5.   ACPOS review training to ensure it reflects the reasonable expectations of victims (page 47).

6.   The Scottish Executive considers if short-term increases in the technical capacity of transferring data betwen police and COPFS would provide justifiable improvements to the process (page 59).

Partners in Crime
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chapter 1: introduction

1.1   **'I'll have someone attend as soon as possible'**

Traditionally the response heard by those contacting the police to report a crime or incident. The opening gambit in a process in which the staff member receiving the call was also directly responsible for ensuring the deployment of a police officer to the scene to conduct an initial assessment. In this process, the police 'controller' aimed to manage a 'queue' of calls and patrol officers attempted to work through their list of 'outstanding incidents', trying where possible to prioritise them appropriately. But does this accurately describe how the Scottish Police Service of today deals with calls for service from its public?

This is a study about crime management; the process which runs from the time when the police become aware of an incident or crime, to the recording of a court, or other, disposal. It is a complex process with several alternative routes and the involvement of a number of external agencies.

1.2   **Stage I – Deciding to Report**

The process actually starts a stage earlier than this first contact with the police; at the point where a member of the public has to decide whether or not a situation should be reported to the police. This is not just an issue of the seriousness of the incident, it might also relate to the level of confidence the reporter has that the police service will do something constructive to deal with the situation.

There has always been a gulf between the level of crime as indicated by the British and Scottish Crime Surveys and that appearing in official police crime statistics. The magnitude of the level of 'unrecorded crime' is in the region of 50%; the 2000 Scottish Crime Survey[1] gave the total level of crime as 840,000 and police recorded crime statistics for the same period showed 423,172 (this issue is examined more fully in para 5.2). It also showed that 1 in 5 people had been the victim of one crime covered by the survey in that year with 1 in 17 having been victims on two or more occasions

Consequently changes in the level of recorded crime rates may be due, in part, to fluctuations in the willingness of the public to report some types of (mostly minor) crimes. The corollary of this of course is that proactive measures designed to reassure the public may have the counter-intuitive effect of leading to significant increases in the levels of recorded crime, as police statistics eat into unrecorded crime.

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[1] Crime and Criminal Justice Research Findings No 51 – the 200 Scottish Crime Survey: First Results

1.3 Additional Influences

This study takes place at a time when the Scottish Police Service is in the process of moving to a revised crime recording standard in which the perception of the victim will be more influential in the assessment of whether or not a crime record will be created. This is explained more fully in Chapter 2 (paragraph 2.7). There have also been, in recent times, efforts to implement a National Intelligence Model, to handle, sort and grade the information coming in to the police from various sources and use the derived intelligence to inform a Problem Solving Policing approach to resource deployment.

1.4 Relationship Between Incidents and Crimes

When reports are received, the next variable in the relationship between actual and recorded crime relates to the policies or procedures within forces leading to decisions as to which of the incidents coming to their notice actually constitutes a crime and should be recorded as such.

Accordingly this Report will address 'Incident Management' as well as Crime Management, examining the way such classification decisions are made, and importantly how they are recorded and audited.

1.5 Incidents, Crime and Police Resource Deployment

Against a background of these factors and influences, forces are endeavouring, at this initial report stage, to provide a structured assessment process to determine what type of police response is appropriate to deal with a particular incident. With the resource constraints which apply to policing today, the traditional approach of taking minimal details and sending an expensive police resource to assess the situation is not viable, perhaps with the exception of quite rural areas with low crime the overwhelming proportion of which is local in nature.

The crime management system is now an integral part of problem solving as well as being the bureaucracy which processes cases to the Procurator Fiscal for prosecution. It is essential that public confidence in the police ensures that all relevant situations are drawn to their attention – reducing the gap between actual and recorded crime statistics, and rather than simply dispatch a police officer, there is an assessment mechanism that looks at what police response is appropriate to the situation. This may well take the form of rapid uniformed police attendance or it might become the stimulus for multi-agency problem solving, with a plethora of graded responses in between.

In recent years, all forces in Scotland have reviewed how crime scene attendance and subsequent investigation can best be managed. Forces have arrived at different conclusions, depending on a variety of factors, not least of which is their perception of public expectation. With the decision to move to a more comprehensive system of crime recording in 2004, forces are re-assessing how they record crime under the current system. Accordingly this is a dynamic situation; implementation of the National Intelligence Model is rolling out in all Forces although they are at different levels of maturity in this, and the process for the transition to a new crime recording standard has effectively begun.

1.6 Scotland's Falling Crime and Increased Detections

The following graph shows how recorded crime in Scotland has reduced over the last decade. This trend is echoed in the most recent Scottish Crime Survey[2], which shows a 20% reduction in 'survey' crime levels between 1992 with 1999/2000. Importantly, the graph demonstrates that, despite these reductions, the Police service in Scotland appears to be solving more crime today than ever before.

However, when England and Wales moved to a revised crime recording standard along similar terms to that envisaged for Scotland, it resulted in a substantial rise in overall crime levels as, generally very minor, additional incidents came to be included in the crime statistics. It is anticipated that this effect will be mirrored in Scotland as the revised standard comes into play.

Fig 1: Recorded Crime (Groups 1-5) and Detection Rates in Scotland: 1993-2002/03 [3]
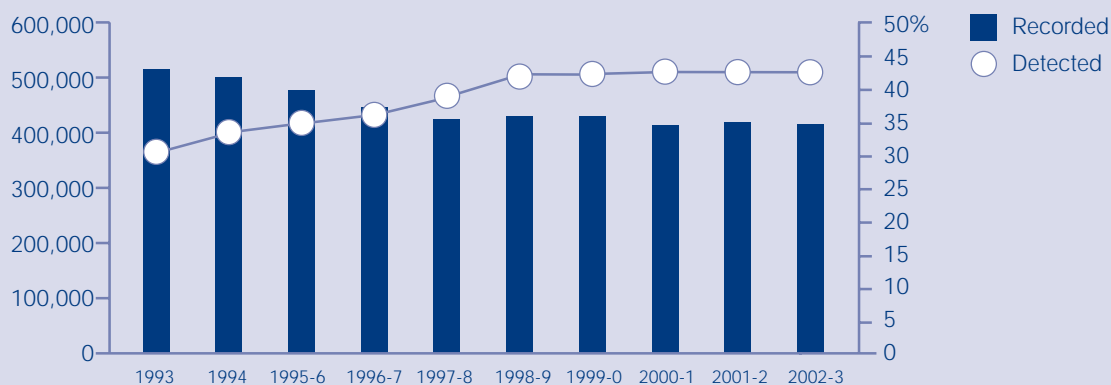
1.7 The Purpose of Crime Management

The question 'What is the purpose of crime management?' is a simple one. The answer less so. In essence, it is a managerial process for dealing with reported crime and progressing the enquiry to a conclusion. But public reassurance, and consequently aspects of quality of life, rely on a confidence that the police are able to manage crime properly: and individual victims have to feel that they are being treated fairly, with the crime they suffered being investigated professionally. Crime management, therefore, is not just about solving the case, it also includes reassuring individual victims and contributing to a general sense of public reassurance.

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[2] Crime and Criminal Justice Research Findings No 51 – the 2000 Scottish Crime Survey: First Results
[3] HMIC Annual Report 2002/3

In the HMIC Thematic Report on police visibility and public reassurance[4], it is observed:

> *'A visible police presence on the streets is an important aspect of an integrated approach to police deployment, but the prioritisation given to the various aspects of police work must be balanced against need rather than simple demand.'*

Crime Management is a backroom process but its contribution to police effectiveness should not be underestimated – it is an important aspect of how public confidence in the police is developed, and from that confidence flows reassurance and an enhanced quality of life. The police have a statutory obligation to endeavour to detect those who have committed crimes or offences but the importance of providing appropriate support and reassurance to victims and witnesses is quite properly occupying a more central focus within the Criminal Justice system. This aspect is examined in more detail in Chapter 5 (Para 5.1)

In light of this, the following issues need to be addressed:

- Are forces fully aware of the potential for solving and reassuring to be in competition for resources, rather than complimentary?

- Do systems and processes exist to alleviate any tensions that this might generate?

- Do officers and support staff fully understand their role and its contribution to the wider aspects of policing?

Consideration also has to be given to the impact which streamlining crime management processes might have on public perceptions in relation to reassurance. Will the public see a lean and efficient process of managing crime as being mechanistic and depersonalised; with efficiency gains having to be off-set against a reduction in the perceived quality of the service being delivered?

1.8 Focus on Volume Crime

To encompass all the relevant issues within the timescale of the study, it was decided this inspection would focus upon those crimes which, due to their volume, will affect a larger number of people. Housebreaking (to dwelling houses and commercial properties) and theft of, or from, motor vehicles were chosen for specific in-depth study.

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[4] 'Narrowing the Gap' – Police visibility and public reassurance – Managing public expectation and demand. HMIC 2002 (Page 17)

However, the nature of these crimes and how they are dealt with encompasses all the key generic elements in the crime management process, including:

- Reporting & Recording of Crime

- Investigation, including Intelligence & Forensic Support

- The role of Information Technology

- Victims issues

- Criminal Justice Issues

1.9 Methodology

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) has a statutory duty to report to Scottish Ministers on the effectiveness and efficiency of the Scottish Police Service. It does this through an Inspection programme, which incorporates primary and review inspections of forces, and by conducting a series of thematic inspections on areas of particular interest or concern.

The main objective of thematic inspections, is to establish the state of current practice within the Scottish Police Service by consulting with various stakeholders and then, taking account of developments and good practice in other police forces or other organisations, provide comment and recommendations.

HMIC carried out a previous thematic inspection on crime management in 1995[5], but since then there have been significant advances in various fields in particular:

- Information Technology

- Forensic Support

- Implementation of the National Intelligence Model

1.10 Related HMIC Studies

This Inspection, which was undertaken between January and June 2003, forms part of a suite of studies which collectively aim to provide a body of informed recommendations to facilitate continuous service improvement. It follows on from 'Narrowing the Gap'[6] which was published in 2002, and which, when addressing the need for an organisational balance between 'visibility policing' and the other demands which must be met by forces, suggested that meeting the expectations of the public would involve closer forms of engagement between them and the police, to help forces to use their resources to tackle problems in an agreed order of priority. That report focussed on strategic issues and heralded a series of more specific but related studies.

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[5] Thematic Inspection on the Management of Crime in Scotland, HMIC 1995
[6] 'Narrowing the Gap. Police visibility and public reassurance – Managing public expectation and demand' HMIC 2002

Already published in 2003 are reports on family liaison arrangements[7] and on race relations[8], undertaken in response to Dr Jandoo's report[9] into the death of Surjit Singh Chhokar. In these it is made clear that the criminal justice system in Scotland is moving towards a much more victim centred focus (which is examined in more depth in Chapter 5 Para 5.5) and the police service will be required to respond to this. The HMIC reports highlight the information needs of victims and their families in relation to police investigations and draw to attention diversity issues and the particular needs of victims from the minority ethnic community and other minority groups when they become the victims of crime. These factors are at the heart of this report.

The issue is not merely how well forces are managing crime today, it is also about how prepared they are to respond to the challenges presented as the criminal justice system develops and, in consequence, the expectations of the public change.

In the wake of this report HMIC will undertake studies focussing on community engagement, and performance and information management.

Following an initial literature review and desktop research, HMIC visited 8 forces in England and Wales, the Home Office, the Police Information Technology Organisation (PITO), the Police Standards Unit, the Swedish Police Service and non-police organisations regarded as leaders in the field of customer service. Liaison was established with representatives of all relevant Scottish criminal justice agencies and Scottish Executive Departments.

The Inspection of Scottish Forces, which was conducted between March and May of 2003, was preceded by completion of a comprehensive 73 question 'protocol' by each force. This standard aspect of the HMIC inspection process provided a wealth of detailed information on force policies and procedures, permitting the inspection team to focus on the most relevant issues within each force, but also identify common or strategic issues.

The conduct of the inspection was greatly assisted by the involvement of an Advisory Group comprising representatives of key stakeholder groups ranging from Victim Support Scotland to the Police Staff Associations.

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[7] 'Relatively Speaking – A thematic inspection of Family Liaison in Scotland' HMIC May 2003
[8] 'Pride and Prejudice – A review of Police Race Relations in Scotland' HMIC June 2003
[9] Report into death of Surjit Singh Chhokar – Dr Raj Jandoo, Advocate

1.11 Research Commissioned

For the purposes of the study, HMIC commissioned two independent research projects to examine specific issues, namely:

- the principal methods by which the target crime types are detected (the results of which are summarised in this report)

- victim perceptions of the police and the wider criminal justice system (which is due to be published by the Scottish Executive, Criminal Justice Research Unit)[10].

The inspection was structured to take a systematic view on the way crime is dealt with by all the concerned parties, incorporating:

- the initial interaction between victim and police

- the subsequent police activities and decision making processes

- involvement of the Crown Office Procurator Fiscal Service (COPFS) and the Scottish Children's Reporters Administration (SCRA).

It is important to emphasise that the principal issues featured in this report are considered to be inter-related and equally important. The order in which chapters are produced simply reflect, to some extent, the natural chronology of a crime investigation.

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[10] 'Victims of Volume Crime in Scotland, Perceptions of the Police and the Criminal Justice System' – commissioned by HMIC from De Montford University and University of Stirling, June 2003 (due to be published by the Scottish Executive Criminal Research Unit)

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chapter 2: reporting and recording

2.1 How to Report

Once a victim or a witness has decided to report an incident to the police, the next stage is how to make contact. Research conducted for this inspection[10] suggests that a majority still consider the telephone to be the most effective way. It also confirms that, in general, people know when it is, and is not, appropriate to use the '999' system. Most people also have ready access to the telephone number of their local police office.

However, with developments in technology new issues arise, for example;

• How does a stranger to, or someone just passing through, an area, particularly if they are using a mobile phone, establish the local police telephone number?

• What steps are being taken to capitalise on the increased use of e-technology as a means of reporting non-urgent crimes to the police?

2.2 A Single Non-Emergency Number

The advisability of, and development towards, a 'single non-emergency' telephone number for the Scottish Police Service is examined in some detail in 'Narrowing the Gap'[11].

All Scottish forces have recently completed, or are conducting, reviews of customer contact arrangements, with most favouring a call-centre, or virtual call-centre, approach to handle initial telephone contact from the public. During the inspection HMIC noted discussion on whether or not to operate a single non-emergency number within each force, as an interim measure to the implementation of a national non-emergency number. There was little argument that a force-level non-emergency number could be simpler for each force to address in the short term; avoiding the need for the formal protocols and technical solutions required to transfer calls from one force area to another. It is recognised that a direct move to a single non-emergency number for Scotland would provide a testing challenge for the police service, both in terms of linking telephony and in harmonising call-handling procedures.

Notwithstanding the challenge, HMIC considered anything less than a single national number would not maximise the ease of accessibility and other advantages available. It is therefore heartening to note that the potential interim step of individual force numbers is no longer being considered and HMIC would encourage Chief Constables to exploit any opportunity available for early implementation, particularly in view of the exponential rise in the use of mobile phones.

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[11] 'Narrowing the Gap' – Op Cit – Chapter 4

2.3 E-Technology

The advancement of e-technology in both the public and private sector will undoubtedly affect the way in which the Police service deals with many issues, including the management of crime and as such the subject will be dealt with, in depth, in Chapter 4.

With the developing focus on the victim in the criminal justice system, the police service will become more involved in playing a part in the overall thrust towards keeping victims informed about the progress of inquiries, and with the changes in the crime recording standard more incidents will fall into that category. There is a clear need for police IT systems to be configured in future to facilitate this increased public information provision, with as much automation of the process as is needed to strike the balance between the information and reassurance needs of individual victims.

2.4 The Kent Constabulary Call Centre

Kent Constabulary in England are at quite an advanced stage of development in this field, having recently opened a new Force Communications Centre housing several integrated departments, designed to assist in the handling of public contacts in an efficient and timely manner.

The Centre incorporates call handling, help desk and crime recording functions with all calls to the Centre being timed and the subject of a management information audit. Modern management techniques coupled with the latest technology produce an effective operation in which all staff are continually updated, via large plasma screens, of key messages and current operational information.

Kent's experience suggests victims are content to be dealt with through a call centre rather than a local police office so long as the overall quality of service provided meets or exceeds reasonable expectations.

2.5 Recording of Incidents by Police

When victims make initial contact with a police officer or member of support staff, they will generally explain in some detail what has transpired. How much of this information is captured at that time is questionable. In busier offices, the story is likely to be summarised to a single line e.g. 'reports theft from vehicle' or 'housebreaking at location'.

The most obvious implication of this is that the next representative of the police service having contact with the victim is likely to be unaware of the detail already provided. Does this hamper the investigation process? Does it adversely affect reassurance of the victim?

It is also the case that in most forces in Scotland incident data is stored on one computer application whilst crime data is stored on another with no electronic linkages between the two. Staff, anticipating that full details will subsequently appear in the crime system may understandably be reluctant to spend valuable time updating the incident system with such detail.

This becomes problematic if the information is ultimately recorded in neither system. Some Scottish forces already possess combined incident and crime systems in which data need only be entered once but it is somewhat ironic that at least one force is planning to replace this with standalone incident and crime systems.

Several of the English and Welsh forces visited during this inspection have adopted a single database system which avoids duplication of entry and encourages detail to be recorded as soon as it is available. Some forces have ventured towards mobile data with appropriate force IT systems being available on a vehicle based or hand held portable laptop/palmtop. One force refers to this policy as 'self-service' – the officer can select the information or data whenever or wherever this is necessary.

While mobile data systems, in a UK policing context, are in their infancy, the potential in relation to crime management appears to be significant and will be fully discussed in Chapter 4.

2.6 Incident Classification

In general when a report of an incident is made to the police, it will be recorded on the force Incident or Command and Control system, including details of the incident and subsequent actions taken, such as the deployment of officers to the scene. At this early stage an initial decision is often taken as to whether the circumstances constitute a crime or should be treated as, and recorded as, some other type of incident.

In addition, following initial assessment by a police officer at the scene, the first classification can be amended, more often from crime to incident than vice-versa. Studies of policing frequently point out that the vast majority of calls for police service are not directly crime related. Although these proportions may change slightly under the revised recording standard there will always be a large proportion of contacts with the public which quite properly do not become part of the crime management process.

2.7 Impact of the National Crime Recording Standard for England and Wales

In April 2002 the National Crime Recording Standard (NCRS) was introduced to all English and Welsh forces, its main purpose being to achieve consistency in crime recording throughout the 43 forces. The NCRS changed the emphasis from the recording of evidential or established crimes, to perceived or prima facie crimes. This resulted in some forces reporting an increase of over 25% in recorded crimes although the totality of incidents recorded by police continued along previous trends.

This appears to confirm it was police recording practices rather than criminal activity that changed. The benefits of NCRS included:

- Police statistics closing the gap on those reflected in the British Crime Survey.

- Police recording a more comprehensive picture of criminal activity and therefore being in a more informed position to tackle developing problems.

It is planned that the Scottish Crime Recording Standard will be introduced in Scottish Forces during 2004. The aim is similar to that of the NCRS; to provide an ethical, victim orientated approach to the recording of crime. It is a reflection of how seriously the Scottish Police Service is taking the accurate and standardised recording of crime that it has been recommended by the Association of Chief Police Officers Scotland (ACPOS) Crime Recording Methods Working Group that every force should employ a suitably qualified Crime Registrar.

Until recently, Scottish forces operated similar principles to those traditionally utilised in England and Wales in that a reported incident would only be recorded as a crime once evidence of that crime had been established. The anticipated Scottish Crime Recording Standard is likely to more accurately reflect victim perception than established fact. As mentioned in paragraph 1.6 there is likely to be an increase in recorded crime as a consequence of this change in process.

It is envisaged that once recorded as a crime, an incident would only be de-classified after investigation clearly established that no crime had been committed.

2.8 The Swedish Approach

During the study HMIC visited Sweden, where aspects of the police and criminal justice systems have striking similarities to those in Scotland.

However, there were stark differences in how crime statistics were viewed. In Sweden, victim reassurance is very high on the agenda but detection rates are not viewed with the same interest as they are here. Once a crime is recorded, there is no mechanism to cancel or declassify it, even if it is unequivocally clarified that the allegation was not founded. While this eliminates the potential for mistakenly cancelling a recorded crime from the statistics, the downside is that in a Scottish context it could provide scope for knowingly retaining inaccurate information.

The revised Scottish Standard, to retain credibility, must be capable of balancing these where public perception is important, but the data also has to remain credible.

2.9 The Wider Use of Police Crime Statistics

The accurate recording of crime and provision of the associated data to the Scottish Executive and other relevant agencies is an important role undertaken by Scottish police forces.

Such data informs many public policy debates and influences priorities beyond policing. As forces, local authorities and other partners address their responsibilities with regard to Community Planning Partnerships, many consider baseline data to be essential.
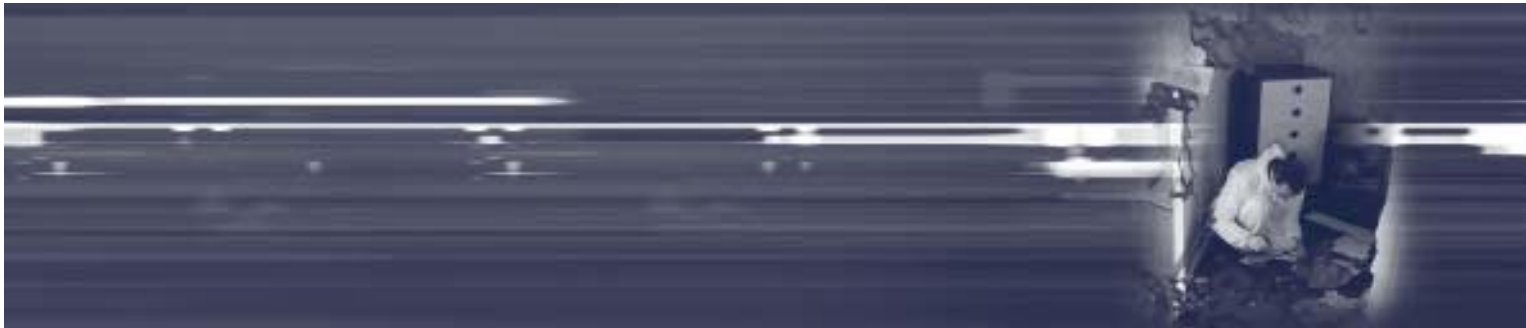
2.10 Audit of Incident and Crime Systems

It is therefore important that all forces have confidence in their data collation processes. The current area of potential vulnerability within most Scottish forces is when an incident is established to be criminal in nature. The incident details are likely to be recorded on the force's Incident or Command & Control database which is likely to be separate from the crime database, requiring a re-keying of similar information to the crime database. Error or omission at this stage could result in the crime not being formally recorded and it is clearly important that a process exists to avoid such occurrences.

In the short term, an appropriate approach might be an IT audit programme that, for example, withheld approval to close the incident record until either:

- the relevant cross reference from the crime system was noted on the incident record, or

- a code confirming the incident as non–criminal and approved by an identified manager who accepted accountability for that decision was recorded in an appropriate field.

Software could then be used to highlight any events containing neither of these options. The system could also be programmed to identify an appropriate range of incidents coded as non-criminal to facilitate independent audit of a suitable sample.

Scottish forces are currently employing various methodologies to oversee the integrity of the crime and incident databases. One force has gone beyond a traditional Crime Management Unit and developed a Policing Management Unit that, amongst other things, oversees and reviews data relating to a range of recorded activities including crime, incidents and intelligence.

It is **suggested** that forces consider an auditable IT process to ensure that every reported incident is either subsequently recorded as a crime or is endorsed with the details of the manager confirming the incident is non-criminal. HMIC primary and review inspections include an incident/crime audit and such a process would facilitate monitoring in this area of force performance (suggestion 1).

HMIC noted that the Scottish Police Service had identified the need for common and integrated crime recording and incident recording systems which now lie in the work plan for development as part of the Scottish Police Information Strategy (SPIS). Such is the importance of co-ordinating the information between these two databases, HMIC urges SPIS take early steps to commence work on these two key projects.

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chapter 3: investigation

3.1 Attendance Policy

On receiving a report of a crime, the appropriate police force has a number of decisions to make. These include whether police officers should attend the crime scene and, if so, how many and how quickly. A number of factors relevant to investigating the crime and also reassuring the victim may influence these decisions.

Currently force policies vary, with one force sustaining the policy of dispatching an officer to attend every scene as soon as possible. Another force, having introduced a Problem Solving Policing model, has established that almost half of the calls received for police attendance can be fully dealt with by telephone or by making an appointment for the appropriate community officer to meet with the victim or reporter in a programmed manner.

It may be reasonable to consider that the former, traditionalist approach, more fully meets customer expectations and is more likely to secure any physical or other evidence available from the crime scene. It may also be suggested however that such a policy is not fully harnessing modern policing methods including effective targeting of resources and logical prioritisation of workloads.

While it may be suggested that the more successful method is that which yields the higher detection rate, this does not factor other relevant variables into the equation. In general rural areas of Scotland continue to receive traditional policing responses with a more flexible attendance criteria applying in urban areas. Is this simply a factor of supply and demand in the availability of police resources? Is the 'urban' response more about making-do than adopting systematic resource deployment decisions?

There is little doubt that customers of any organisation are more comfortable receiving a consistent level of service on each occasion they call on that organisation's services. It is for that reason that HMIC considers a formal attendance policy, whatever the contents may be, should exist within each force.

An effective attendance criteria would include guidelines on call grading to ensure the necessary standard of response is achieved. HMIC notes that a decision not to despatch someone to a crime scene is not a decision that the crime does not warrant investigation. It may be a decision that the crime can be effectively initially investigated by comprehensive and professional interview of the victim over the telephone. This process needs to be supported by an auditable trail of decisions that ensure no legitimate investigative lines are ignored or overlooked. Any attendance policy must take cognisance of the benefits to be achieved by securing physical evidence at a crime scene.

Irrespective of what policy is implemented an acceptable balance has to be achieved and this must be understood and accepted by communities. This aspect of community engagement and the generation of realistic expectations on the part of the public is an important element in the crime management process.

As with many issues examined in this report, consistent application of policy can be supported by effective IT systems that prompt operators as to the apparently appropriate decision to take with regard to attendance decisions. HMIC considers the development of contact centres/call handling strategies within forces to be a positive step towards achieving such consistency and notes emerging benefits as IT is used to highlight such issues as repeat victims and callers and emerging problems which will feed into the problem solving process. In 'Narrowing the Gap'[12] HMIC included a case study on NHS24 where resource deployment decisions are assisted by a "rules based" software programme which helps trained operators to make consistent and appropriate decisions in prioritising or grading calls.

HMIC recommends that forces should publish a clear and concise attendance policy which retains an element of flexibility but details the level of service victims of crime can expect to receive on reporting a crime to the Police (recommendation 1).

3.2 Progression of Enquiries

Throughout the Scottish Police Service there are a number of different approaches as to how the enquiry officer for a particular crime is selected. In the majority of cases the officer who initially attends the report of a crime (other than specified serious crimes) will retain 'ownership' of that crime and will be responsible for the subsequent investigation. From the perspective of the victim, and also for general accountability, it is important there is clarity about who 'owns' a crime and has responsibility for conducting subsequent enquiries.

In some forces an early and calculated decision is made regarding who should continue with enquiries. This is generally based on such issues as the crime type or the officer's or complainer's circumstances. What is important is that those tasked with investigating crimes are provided with the necessary support and assistance to ensure that the investigation is competently managed. It is therefore important that:

- a clear line of supervision should be provided to ensure that an appropriate individual is selected and that the required level of investigation is carried out.

- the progress of enquiries is competently monitored to ensure that the requisite investigation takes place, and to a specified standard.

In the majority of forces the officer's line manager is ultimately responsible for the supervision of such enquiries, however, it is apparent that in practice, many line managers see this as an administrative function rather than the conducting of an audit of the quality of the investigation. They seemed in some instances to be more preoccupied with the record keeping than the quality control.

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[12] 'Narrowing the Gap' – Op Cit

Some forces operate a concept known as Crime Desk or Crime Management Units where dedicated staff have responsibility for the allocation and monitoring of investigations into crimes and offences. Within some forces the Crime Desk/Crime Management staff also monitor the quality of submitted crime reports and subsequently task the investigating officer to undertake further enquiries if required. This system is effective, but dependant on those deployed to crime desks/crime management units having the appropriate skills, experience and authority to undertake their role.

The 1995 HMIC crime management thematic[13] recommended the appointment of crime managers in divisions or command areas. The arguments giving rise to this recommendation remain valid today.

HMIC recommends that all forces (where they have not already done so) should establish a Crime Management Unit either at divisional or force level staffed by the properly trained and equipped staff to facilitate the proper and professional investigation of crime founded on a consistent allocation policy (recommendation 2).

3.3 Dealing with and Supporting Victims

Every officer receives significant training in communicating with victims, particularly vulnerable ones, and some receive specialist training in this field. Officers are also provided with access to information about the services and support available to the victim.

The roles of Victim Support and the Voluntary Sector support organisations are discussed in 'Relatively Speaking'[14] as are the results of specific research carried out for HMIC into the needs of victims and their families. While this study focussed on the most extreme types of crime, those necessitating formal Family Liaison arrangements, the underlying theme was that officers who are dealing directly with victims and/or their families need to be sensitive to their emotional and information needs. That report highlights training needs for officers in dealing with victims, and these will become even more important as the victim focus increases as do public expectations.

3.4 Investigatory Skills

This takes us to the question of how well equipped officers are to conduct the investigations allocated to them. All officers receive basic guidance during their initial two-year probationary period. Thereafter unless an officer undertakes a specialist role such as CID or Family Protection duties, little additional formal training is provided in interviewing or investigative techniques.

Most volume crimes in Scotland are investigated by uniform or community officers, and the continuous process of recruitment to replace retired or promoted officers makes it likely that a significant proportion of these front-line officers will be comparatively inexperienced. As highlighted

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[13] Thematic Inspection of the Management of Crime in Scotland, HMIC 1995 – Recommendation 2
[14] Relatively Speaking – A thematic inspection of Family Liaison in Scotland, HMIC May 2003 Ch 5

earlier, unless there is a mechanism which not only allocates, but provides advice on how the investigation should be carried out, and a quality control check prior to the crime report being 'filed', there is a danger that detection opportunities will be missed and the quality of service to the public may be less than it should be. There should be clear guidance on minimum standards of investigation.

It is somewhat ironic that the least experienced investigators (ie those dealing with volume crime at patrol level) can be those provided with least guidance. When a team of highly experienced detectives is drawn together to investigate a murder or other serious crime, the investigation is co-ordinated using a Major Crime Administration process. Among other things this means that every enquiry or 'action' is allocated by way of a detailed and unequivocal written instruction.

If detailed guidance is provided to the most experienced detective officers during the most serious types of investigation, it is open to question why similar guidance is not routinely provided to less experienced officers investigating much less serious crimes, but crimes which none-the-less impact on quality of life.

It is apparent that some officers are more likely to solve crimes than others. HMIC explored the possibility that such officers were responding intuitively to criminality, however analysis suggests otherwise. The 'natural thief-catcher' is in fact an officer who (whether consciously or unconsciously) makes best use of the information available, analyses the contents of briefings, is aware of ongoing crime trends, possesses high quality communication skills and has the ability to draw these elements together and produce positive and consistent outcomes. It is apparent that most of these elements can be supported/undertaken by IT processes therefore, once again, a potential IT mechanism can be developed which would improve the management of crime.

This inspection established that, in practice, many officers from different departments could be involved in one investigation. If everything that each person did was fully recorded, and co-ordinated by a Crime Manager (or equivalent) and the victim had a single available point of contact throughout the entire investigative process, then this would be a very effective process. The reality is that, on occasion, not everything is recorded in a retrievable way. This can lead to, amongst other things, duplication of effort, things being overlooked or incomplete information being imparted to victims. These overlaps or omissions may not be apparent to the various officers having a role in the enquiry, but they are patently obvious to the victim.

Some forces do use a system supporting the investigative process to good effort. An example of maximising the experience of Scenes of Crime Officers is referred to in Paragraph 3.11.

3.5 Linked/Series Volume Crime

There was little evidence in, or between, forces of any formal policy on the investigation of linked or series volume crime. It was acknowledged that an identified individual officer should collate all the available information and should thereafter either take ownership of the crimes or at least co-ordinate the subsequent investigations.

However, in practice it was often seen that trends were not identified or where they were, enquiries were not appropriately re-allocated resulting in individual officers conducting separate enquiries.

It was also found that there was little use being made of such resources as Covert Human Intelligence Sources (CHIS ie informants), ANPR (Automatic Number Plate Recognition technology) and the facilities, particularly database search capabilities, available through the SCRO/PNC (Scottish Criminal Record Office and the Police National Computer) in the investigation of volume crime. A variety of reasons were given for this mainly involving resourcing difficulties. It is felt that there should be a more pro-active and co-ordinated deployment of ANPR to assist with the investigation and prevention of volume crime. With regards the use of CHIS forces must ensure that there is sufficient investment in dedicated CHIS handlers and controllers to assist in the success of the National Intelligence Model.

It would be appropriate for Crime Reports to specifically seek progress reports, for the extent to which CHIS, ANPR, SCRO/PNC and CCTV etc., were utilised in investigations with a decision not to employ these facilities requiring to be justified, or their absence explained. Officers should be encouraged to capitalise on the available investigative tools when dealing with volume crime.

HMIC recommends that forces review their current volume crime management policies and, if necessary, include guidance on minimum standards expected in the investigation of all crimes, and confirm that every activity undertaken in respect of a crime investigation is formally recorded on the associated crime report (recommendation 3).

3.6 Scientific Support

The examination of scenes of crimes has become significantly more complex over recent years, mainly due to the continuing development of DNA technology and the increased awareness of cross contamination issues. This has resulted in Scenes of Crime Officers (SOCO) spending more time at the scenes they attend. It is not unusual in a serious case for SOCO to be in attendance at the scene for several days and then be tied up for a further period involved in the case preparation. With many high profile cases now totally dependant on the evidence obtained by SOCO, it is apparent why this area of an investigation cannot be rushed and uses a significant amount of forensic resources.

The ultimate result of this protracted examination of serious crime scenes is that volume crime scenes do not get the attention that they would otherwise receive. Despite the additional workload undertaken by SOCO, there has been no significant rise in their numbers over recent years.

The result of this is that in most cases when a fully qualified SOCO is not available to carry out a scene examination, then such an examination will probably be conducted by a Police officer who will have received basic on the job training. Research has shown that comparing crime scenes examined by a Police officer to those done by a SOCO, then the latter has a higher success rate in obtaining evidence valuable to the enquiry. This should not come as a surprise considering the level of training that SOCO now undergo at a National level.

3.7 The Value of SOCO Attending Crime Scenes

The chart shown below is a representative example supplied by one force:

YEAR	April 1998/ March 1999	April 1999/ March 2000
Scenes Examined By SOCO	73%	73%
Scenes Examined By Police	27%	27%
Fingerprints Found By SOCO	21.5%	26.8%
Fingerprints Found By Police	13.6%	18.7%
DNA Recovered BY SOCO	6.6%	8.6%
DNA Recovered By Police	1%	0.5%

As can be seen from the above figures the attendance of a SOCO at a crime scene can significantly increase the tracing of forensic evidence, especially DNA, which ultimately means that crucial evidence could be missed and a subsequent detection opportunity lost if such personnel are not deployed.

The current forensic staffing levels amongst forces throughout Scotland means that not every volume crime scene can be examined and as such forces have to prioritise their attendance at such scenes. It was noted that some forces had indicated that they would have a SOCO attend all housebreaking scenes, however it was seen that it was impossible to fully adhere to this policy due purely to resourcing implications. It was also noted that whilst most stolen cars which are recovered are the subject of an examination those cars which are broken into are not so frequently examined.

Forces are encouraged to look at a way of increasing the extent of forensic examination at such scenes. This could be achieved by either increasing the number of fully qualified SOCO or by the recruitment of Volume Crime Examiners. Volume Crime Examiners are regularly used by forces in England and Wales and are generally employed at a lower grade than SOCO and usually receive basic in-house training. They are mainly utilised to examine vehicles and lower level housebreakings such as those to garages and garden sheds. It has been reported that forces who employ such examiners have seen the number of scenes examined increased, as have the corresponding forensic hits, with no increase on the SOCO workload.

It was highlighted in the HMIC England and Wales report 'Under the Microscope'[15], which looked into the provision of forensic services that there was a direct correlation between the number of crime scenes examined and the number of forensic hits achieved. The research carried out on behalf of the HMIC for the current study clearly showed that the forces which carried out the most scene examinations achieved the highest number of hits. As such the force that carried out the highest percentage of scene examinations achieved the highest number of hits by far.

HMIC acknowledges that no additional general funding is currently available to forces but Chief Constables will wish to ensure that SOCO/Vehicle Examiner levels are commensurate with the benefits available from such staff.

It is obvious that this powerful detection tool should be fully exploited as not only does it provide clear unequivocal evidence of culpability, hopefully leading to more guilty pleas, but can also drastically save time and resources on investigation. As such all forces should have a clearly defined Forensic Science protocol which should be adhered to for attending volume crime scenes to ensure that no opportunity is lost to gather evidence.

HMIC recommends that forces within the overall resource equation, ensure the fullest possible use of SOCO and Volume Crime Examiners and forensic scientists (recommendation 4).

3.8 Council for the Registration of Forensic Practitioners

SOCOs are now able to register with the Council for the Registration of Forensic Practitioners. This process is supported by ACPOS and it is **suggested** by HMIC that forces participate in the scheme, which provides proof of an individual's continuous professional development in the field of scenes of crime examination (suggestion 2).

3.9 DNA Technology

It is essential that forces capitalise on the advances which continue to be made in DNA technology. The setting up of DNA volume crime units at the various Forensic Science laboratories throughout the country must be a high priority and is of paramount importance if they are to cope with the increase in such submissions. During discussion with the personnel from one such laboratory, it was highlighted that the lack of facilities was hampering their operational ability to provide a fully effective service. It was noted that this included the need for the provision of new premises to allow for the expected improvement of equipment and the proposed automation of some processes which would result in a better turnaround time for results to be returned to the originating agency.

HMIC is pleased to note from ACPOS that a full audit to identify the future equipment and facilities needs of the various Forensic laboratories will be undertaken as part of the ongoing review of Common Police Services.

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[15] 'Under the Microscope', HMIC E&W, July 2000

3.10 Updating of Crime Reports Concerning SOC Examination

It has been established that the results of scene of crime examinations are not always being appended to the relevant crime report. This appears to be particularly prevalent when non SOCO Police officers attend a crime scene and the examination provides a negative result. It is good practice that full details of the examination, irrespective of the outcome, should be recorded on the crime report.

It was noted that several forces are looking at an IT strategy to assist with the accurate and timely recording of crime scene examination data. Although this is seen to be beneficial, it is felt that such a system must be compatible with the particular force's crime management system to allow for easy cross-referencing.

HMIC recommends that all forces have in place a competent and reliable method of recording the results of crime scene examinations (recommendation 5).

3.11 SOCO Input to 'Modus Operandi' Field

A noteworthy practice observed at one force was in relation to the accurate updating of the MO comments field of the crime report. After attending a crime scene SOCOs have direct access to the crime management system, which allows them to provide a comprehensive update for the information of the investigating officer.

However what is also of interest is that the SOCO, who is likely to have built up some expertise in this aspect of crime, is in the position to change the MO comments if they find that the details on the crime report do not agree with their findings at the scene.

3.12 Research into the Principal Means of Detection

As part of the inspection a research project was carried out in an attempt to identify the principal means of detection for specific crime types over a set period.

The expectation was that this would show DNA to have become a more effective tool in the identification of offenders. Surprisingly, this was not borne out by the research. There may be sound reasons why this was the case, mainly the low percentage of volume crime scenes examined, with only two forces showing higher than a 50% attendance rate, and the inability of the laboratories to process DNA cases quickly enough.

It was found that the average turnaround time for the submission of DNA samples was between 6-8 weeks. Improvements would reap significant benefits, given that a small number of individuals are committing crimes of this nature on a very regular (often daily) basis until detected.

Despite the continued improvement of technological advances in the field of DNA it is important that sight is not lost of the assistance that fingerprint technology can bring to an investigation. There have been significant improvements carried out to the system of fingerprint evidence

analysis over the past few years. Some forces are now achieving remarkable turnaround times with, in some cases, identifications being made on the same day that a lift is obtained from a scene examination. This is particularly evident in those forces with immediate local access to a Fingerprint Bureau.

It is hoped that once the Scottish Fingerprint Service is fully operational this anomaly between forces will be addressed and turnaround times for all forces will become more consistent.

There has also been a revaluation of the use of 'mark to mark' searching for fingerprints This is an important tool, which links unidentified fingerprints found at more than one crime scene. It assists in building up crime patterns and linking crimes.

HMIC observed in its review of SCRO in January 2003[16] the progress made in respect of mark to mark comparison and the procedures set down in the Scottish Fingerprint Service (SFS). It was noted that the procedures laid down represented a sensible utilisation of the available resources. It was observed that a technical solution to the issue was being progressed through the PITO sponsored 'IDENT 1' project which is being considered as a possible UK wide option.

HMIC recommends that all forces should adopt a strictly adhered to protocol in relation to SOCO attendance at volume crime scenes (recommendation 6).

3.13 San Diego – Volunteer Crime Scene Examination

An area of interest is the system adopted in the United States, whereby citizens can become Volunteers in Police Service (VIPS). In the San Diego Police Department some 960 volunteers are utilised to carry out clerical, administrative, technical and professional activities. One such activity involves volunteers being given basic scenes of crime examination training then being deployed to examine low-level volume crime scenes. This is not seen as an alternative to professional crime scene analysis, but an additional feature in circumstances where professional examination cannot be undertaken for quite minor crimes. Information on this and other volunteer programmes in the USA can be found on the VIPs web-site[17].

3.14 Intelligence – The National Intelligence Model

The National Intelligence Model (NIM) was introduced in the Scottish Police Service in February 2002. The Model introduced standardised processes and products and brought together the best practices in intelligence and policing to aid the development of strategy and tactics.

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[16] Review Inspection of SCRO, HMIC 2003
[17] www.policevolunteers.org

The Model is designed to impact on the intelligence product on three levels of business:

- Level 1 – Local Issues

- Level 2 – Cross Border Issues

- Level 3 – Serious and Organised Crime

The NIM has continued to develop within the Scottish Police Service and it was seen during this study that the concept of Tactical Tasking and Co-ordinating, a fundamental part of the NIM, has developed separately across all the forces and has become an integral part of individual force commitments to intelligence led policing.

It was encouraging to see that forces were fully utilising the defined processes laid out in the NIM to positively target and deal with volume crime issues, with various examples of good practice and achieved objectives highlighted at various Tasking and Co-ordinating Group meetings attended by HMIC.

In addition to the NIM the Scottish Police Service's commitment to the Scottish Intelligence Database (SID) is a significant and important step forward for the service and first in UK terms. When fully operational, the system will allow, amongst other things, for the easy access to a Scotland-wide Criminal Intelligence database, with forces sharing common intelligence practices and procedures; providing the Service with the technological means to make an even greater impact on crime at the three levels of the NIM.

The implementation of the NIM into all of the Scottish Police forces has resulted in a more process driven approach to the investigation and prevention of crime. Forces will benefit from ensuring that they continue to be Intelligence driven and that all available resources and equipment are fully and methodically deployed to provide the best return possible. Robust processes and structures must be established to ensure that the ethos of the NIM is fully implemented and the necessary, properly trained resources are put in place for its successful integration into intelligence led policing. This will result in a more focussed view of the crime being committed and subsequently result in the necessary resources being directed to the area in which they will have the most significant impact.

3.15 The Role of the Analyst

With the inception of the NIM forces have appointed Analysts, with some putting in place a distinct career structure incorporating Researchers, Analysts, Senior Analysts and Principal or Strategic Analysts. It is felt that such a structure will assist with the recruiting and retention of such personnel and ultimately provide support for the model. This need was identified in a 1997 Scottish Police College report on the development of analysis. Lack of consistent grading across Scotland may result in differing standards of analytical product being produced. It was seen that some forces have invested heavily in the appointing and training of such personnel and have set up local training courses to allow for on the job training before they are actively deployed. This is invaluable in ensuring that the personnel are sufficiently equipped to handle the rigors of the posts involved.

All Analysts attend the centrally provided training at the Scottish Police College (SPC) and although it provides a sound all round knowledge base, some attendees identified scope for delivering more training in the full range of disciplines available. That being said, the common methodologies being taught at the SPC are advantageous as they allow Analysts throughout the country to have a common language.

It was noted however that other than the SPC based training courses, there is a lack of cross-fertilisation between analysts to allow for the passing of good practice and the dissemination of methodology.

At present there is a yearly Analyst Training Conference held at the Scottish Police College. This is well evaluated and aims to expand analysts' knowledge base and influencing standards and best practice; and there is a willingness at the College to develop a training based Internet/Intranet Analyst Forum for Scotland. However HMIC feels that a more formalised process for development of this role should be developed; both to provide an opportunity for Analysts to share best practice and a reference forum in relation to policy developments or technological advances which might impact on the Analyst's role.

HMIC recommends that the recognition of analytical staff should be enhanced by:

- **forces putting in place a career structure to ensure the continued recruitment and retention of properly qualified and trained analytical staff**

- **the setting up of a National Forum for analytical staff to allow for the sharing of good practice and dissemination of methodology**

- **the SPC reviewing its training package with respect to the training of Analysts, particularly in relation to using past data to inform future resource deployment (recommendation 7).**

The main inhibitor to the work of the analyst appears to be that the current IT systems in place throughout the Scottish Police Service do not allow for the information held to be shared across the various databases and results in multiple re-keying and searches.

It is **suggested** that forces re-evaluate their IT policy to ensure that come renewal time the required and compatible product is obtained to support Analysts to carry out their duties with the maximum efficiency. Included in this is the requirement to permit analytical staff to influence product purchase (suggestion 3).

HMIC recommends that forces should look at ways of integrating their available IT systems to prevent duplication of work and allow analytical staff to provide maximum returns from the information available (recommendation 8).

3.16 Implementing the National Intelligence Model (NIM)

Although the concept of the NIM has been fully adopted by all forces, not all have put in place the full processes and structure to resource its effective implementation. NIM will be most effective if intelligence offices are adequately staffed with administrative support and investment in dedicated CHIS handlers and controllers.

Forces will benefit from having in place an allocated Intelligence Manager who ultimately is responsible for the monitoring of all intelligence and its associated data standards. The Intelligence Manager would be in a position to ensure that there is a co-ordination of all intelligence functions across their force area. With sufficiently trained resources in place forces will be in a position to fully implement the NIM and reap the information obtained from the process. An integral part of this process is having the relevant structures in place to support the NIM.

HMIC Recommends that sufficient priority is afforded to resourcing the intelligence function within forces to ensure that it is adequately staffed to allow for the effective implementation of the National Intelligence Model and its associated processes (recommendation 9).

HMIC recommends that forces audit their existing training and briefing process to ensure all officers are aware of the ethos of the National Intelligence Model and the part they have to play in its successful implementation (recommendation 10).

All forces have embraced the ethos of the NIM and are utilising the Tasking and Co-ordinating process to enable them to give a more focussed and directed approach to the way in which crime is tackled. Most forces have their Tactical Tasking and Co-ordinating meetings on a fortnightly basis, which seems to be a more workable and efficient time span than a weekly meeting. It was seen that a weekly meeting caused analysts problems in servicing the meeting with the required information and data whilst a time span greater than two weeks lost the immediacy to address arising problems and also the ability to adapt tactics. Forces are now supplementing these fortnightly meetings with Daily Tasking and Co-ordinating meetings, which have a clear agenda and purpose and allow for ongoing actions to be monitored more accurately.

The time scale for the Strategic Tasking and Co-ordinating process was seen to vary throughout the forces and appeared to be dependant on the size and logistics of the force concerned.

Incorporated into the Tasking and Co-ordinating process forces should endeavour to embrace the concept of predictive analysis to fuel the NIM with the required information to gain best results from the resources available. It was noted that no force yet has in place a fully comprehensive Management Information System which provides a quality supply of relevant analytical information to assist with the Strategic and Tactical planning process.

HMIC recommends that forces should embrace more fully the concept of predictive analysis and put in place an IT system to provide a management information system which allows the analysis of past and emerging trends as a basis for anticipating likely future trends in crime (recommendation 11).

It was seen that there was a firm understanding of the processes and structures of the NIM among senior officers and intelligence staff throughout the forces, however, it was apparent that some front line officers did not yet recognise the integral part that they have to play in optimising the impact of the model.

One force has been seen to heavily invest in educating the force through a variety of sources and it appears to have paid dividends with obvious signs that all officers are aware of the ethos of the NIM and the part they have to play in its success.

Forces would benefit from ensuring that all staff are kept fully updated on any intelligence developments and full use should be made of the available IT and briefing systems. Consideration should also be given to the implementation of knowledge maps/aide memoirs to provide officers with the relevant assistance, guidance or updates that they may require to provide an effective service.

Taking everything into account it is clear to see that forces need to maintain momentum towards the full implementation of the NIM process to ensure that the concept is fully embraced at, and by all levels, as it underpins the entire approach to the effective and efficient management of crime.

It is apparent that the quality of the infrastructure available to support operational staff will significantly impact upon the success of the investigative function. Increasing resources in the Forensic science and Intelligence fields would clearly have a disproportionately positive effect.

Partners in Crime
A Thematic Inspection of Crime Management in Scotland

chapter 4: information technology

4.1   Scottish Police Information Strategy (SPIS)

The crime management process is underpinned by various computer applications which vary from force to force. These include incident and/or crime recording, command and control, word processing, electronic registries or records management, case processing through to other Criminal Justice Organisations using the data standards developed and agreed by ISCJIS – the Integration of Scottish Criminal Justice Information Systems Programme.

The variance in systems is an issue which is being addressed through the development of an overarching strategy for the Scottish Police Service.

In essence, the initial development of a strategy for Information Systems and Information Technology (IS/IT) in the Scottish Police Service has its roots in the practitioner group of force IT managers, who in the early 1990s became concerned that their respective forces were developing and procuring systems in an uncoordinated and ad-hoc way. They highlighted the business benefits and potential financial savings in police budgets to be achieved from greater co-operation.

The group developed an initial strategy document and in 1993 this led to Scottish Office funding for a small team to be established to take this forward, under the aegis of the ACPOS Computer Policy Sub-Committee.

Accepting that change in IT is inevitable and quite rapid, the philosophy underpinning the strategy incorporated a commitment to the use of open standards and platform-independent languages, providing for the use of the best available technology. In effect, a strategy designed to be flexible and responsive to future change in this quickly developing sector. Accordingly, a formal Scottish Police Information Strategy (SPIS) emerged which recognised:

- The value to policing of access to common data

- The uncoordinated approach taken by forces in development and procurement of IT systems supporting similar or identical functions

- The need for a strategy which was capable of developing with the anticipated advances in computer technology.

4.2   SPIS – A Common Police Service

From its roots as an aspirational 'strategy' SPIS has developed into a Common Police Service organisation, funded by the Scottish Executive to deliver and maintain a standard approach to the development of new generation systems for the police service and associated organisations in Scotland. The SPIS mission statement specifies:

'The Scottish Police Information Strategy will deliver and maintain a unified approach to future generations of police support systems that facilitate communication across traditional boundaries, improving the consistency and accessibility of information and allowing the Scottish forces to deliver an improved value for money service to its communities.'[18]

4.3 Joint Management Review of SPIS (July 2002)

In July 2002, SPIS was the subject of a Management Review[19] by a joint team involving HMIC and the Scottish Executive, which looked specifically at its organisational structure, programme management and governance and accountability. The review validated the commitment to a corporate database/data model and its use of open standards and platform-independent languages (ie its inherent flexibility, free from the sort of constraints previously applicable to computer development related to the system or language used).

The SPIS Programme continues to evolve. Its recent advances include the development and delivery in Scotland of the national PITO Criminal Justice Extranet (CJX), the procurement of the Scottish Intelligence Database (SID), the development of a replacement Criminal History System (CHS) for SCRO, development of a firearms licensing system and a national HR system, and a commitment to deliver a national Management Information System (MIS).

In April 2002 a broad representation of the Scottish Police Service including Police Force representatives and office bearers from the various Standing Committees of ACPOS met at Carnoustie to consider the future needs of the police service and the priorities of SPIS. This resulted in the completion of systems under development and new work on human resources, duty management, custody, property, incident recording, crime recording and case preparation.

4.4 Future IT Needs in Crime Management

SPIS provides a mechanism for Scottish forces to develop constantly evolving computer support facilities. Every police force in the country already utilises IT to a greater or lesser extent in relation to the management of crime but there is significant scope for further exploitation. Forces have, in the past, purchased or developed an array of systems, many of which are incompatible with other in-force systems and with few exceptions, do not offer data-sharing capabilities with other forces or partner agencies.

If the Scottish Police Service is to work smarter with regard to the management of crime, IT will be central to the progress. IT has become a medium for communication and for information, two key concepts in the area of solving crime and reassuring victims. It is therefore important that SPIS is supported by forces and that appropriate priority is given within the strategy for those facilities which will enhance service provision in this crucial area of policing; with its capacity to impact on public reassurance.

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[18] Mission statement, Scottish Police Information Strategy (www.spis.police.uk)
[19] Scottish Police Information Strategy – Management Review; Joint Report by HMIC and SE Justice Department (unpublished)

4.5 Case Studies

During the course of the Inspection, HMIC looked at a number of innovative projects in Scotland and elsewhere where IT was being employed to facilitate the crime management process, and some external organisations where IT was being used to manage processes of a similar level of complexity.

• Project Aquarius (North Wales Police)

North Wales Police have recently purchased an integrated software package from a Canadian company[20] who supplied the same package to all law enforcement agencies in the Canadian State of Ontario.

Project 'Aquarius' as it is named, delivers integrated Records Management, Duty Management, Command and Control, Data Access and Airwave capabilities. As this system incorporates mobile data, it has been dubbed 'self-service' due to the fact that the officers can select what they require and when they require it. Details are available on the force web-site[21].

• CRISP Initiative

Other options do exist to integrate the vast array of disparate IT systems currently in existence such as using software that can link apparently independent systems. The CRISP initiative (Cross Regional Information Sharing Project), co-ordinated by Northumbria Police is creating joint access and search capabilities across a range of applications in a number of neighbouring forces[22].

• Hilton Hotels

An insight into Hilton Hotels delivered an effective example of partnership working within the private commercial sector.

To enhance the likelihood of a product matching their requirements being available, Hilton Hotels let their future needs be known to the market perhaps two years prior to an optimum acquisition date. They may even second a staff member to a company to help them develop a system which may be suitable. Come the time for acquisition they look for a product that most closely fits their current needs e.g. developed beyond their anticipated requirements of two years earlier.

Software companies may be inclined to compete for a contract from the Group because of its reputation as a market leader and in the knowledge that competitor organisations may seek to purchase the same product.

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[20] NICHE
[21] www.northwales.police.uk
[22] www.northumbria.police.uk

HMIC fully understands the contextual difference between the international commercial private sector and the public service in Scotland, however it is considered that there may be valuable lessons to be learned. The generic principles of policing, like the generic principle of operating hotels, will apply to many countries in the world. Therefore if the collective Scottish Police Service could co-ordinate its requirements and sufficiently influence software developers to concentrate on a product suitable for this country, that same product could, in turn, be marketed throughout other parts of the world.

4.6 The Police Portal

It is UK Government and Scottish Executive policy that by 2005, every relevant public service will be available on-line should the citizen choose to utilise this method of access.

A National Police Portal currently provides an opportunity for victims of less serious crime, who do not require an urgent Police response, to report the event on-line.

It is neither extensively used nor extensively marketed. It also appears somewhat ironic that on receipt of an electronically reported crime, forces have agreed to contact the reporter within 48 hours by conventional means.

While HMIC accepts that for many victims electronic communication will not be a preferred method of 2-way communication with police, there are others, particularly corporate victims, who may welcome the opportunity to deal electronically with the police throughout the investigation.

An example of the benefits this could achieve was seen in one force where a bus company forwards reports of non-injury vandalisms to their property by way of pro-forma fax messages. In return, they receive a fax with the police reference number. Adapting this to electronic transfer of data would be a speedier, more efficient use of resources and, subject to suitable software existing, could result in the report from the victim, populating the appropriate data fields on the police incident and/or crime system.

4.7 Updates On Line

It is also reasonable to ask why victim information needs are not responded to on line for those who would wish to access such a facility. If people can access up to date information regarding their bank account then why not progress in relation to investigation of a crime in which they were the victim. Subject to creation of a suitable security structure, victims could be provided with access to basic non-personal information incorporating the status of the enquiry and contact details for the investigating officer.

Such information is taken further in parts of North Carolina in the USA where victims can monitor the progression of the investigation through to, and beyond, conviction of the accused. (Chapter 5, paragraph 5.6)

Beyond victim information, IT provides a plethora of options to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of crime investigation.

Drawing on the most beneficial elements of the systems currently in use and projecting where current or future developments will potentially lead, it is reasonable to suggest that all Scottish Forces could soon be operating crime systems linked to force corporate databases in which all known information about one person or one entity, e.g. an address or a vehicle, is available from one data source. Some Scottish forces already operate one data warehouse for information storage. Other forces are developing in that direction. Single databases that store both incident and crime recording information are less likely to produce omission from crime statistics than unconnected databases recording individual functions.

4.8 Mobile Data

The prospect of a single database, incorporating mobile capability, to which all persons involved in a crime investigation contribute their information in real time, is very appealing. Such a database would benefit from two enhancements:

- On-line help/guidance

- Automatic researching and linking of data

HMIC considers that a crime report designed to fulfil the requirements of all Criminal Justice system stakeholders would be of benefit. Analysts, investigators, managers, specialist and support teams, performance and quality auditors, victims, prosecutors and criminal records staff all seek information for their own legitimate purposes. Most, if not all of their reasonable needs could be fulfilled from the appropriately structured contents of crime reports but rarely, if ever, have all stakeholders been provided with the opportunity to influence the content of the document/programme in order that it delivers the data in a format that each requires.

Victims, for example, may welcome the incorporation of a field that reflects the maximum time they have been advised a specific stage in the process will take. If that time is about to be exceeded without completion of the task, further contact with the victim should be established to update them with the reason for delay and the new timescale.

4.9 Knowledge Mapping

On line prompts or drop down help menus, developed by specialists or experts in their own field could be made available to guide investigators through each type of crime investigation. Knowledge Mapping of such data is already being co-ordinated by the Centre for Policing Excellence at Bramshill Police College in England. Currently these knowledge maps are available for inclusion on force Intranet systems, however the maximum benefit may be realised when the information is available to the officer when they are at the scene of the occurrence. Mobile data will provide an opportunity for this development.

As alluded to in other sections of this report, it is **suggested** by HMIC that simply restructuring the format of crime reports, incorporating a range of optional chapters and, perhaps more relevantly, offering more guidance to investigators by the creation of specific fields to encourage consideration of certain activities would undoubtedly lead to a more effective investigative process and a better report to COPFS and SCRA (suggestion 4).

It is accepted however there is a fine balance between, on the one hand, improving quality by appropriate guidance and prompting whilst, on the other hand, creating a bureaucratic and initiative stifling structure by being over prescriptive. Appropriate consultation with all key Criminal Justice system stakeholders should identify the optimum position that forces can aspire to in this regard.

4.10 Auto Searching/Linking

One potential area of concern for police and public alike is the suspicion that the police service is in possession of many relevant items of information but has not always made the connection between them, often due to the lack of co-ordinated analysis of the contents of disparate IT systems.

Concepts such as single data warehouses or other forms of data sharing will address many of these concerns but a process that actively and automatically seeks potential links is the next logical step. One such process has been launched by West Midlands Police who do have a corporate database. Forensic Linked Intelligence System (FLINTS)[23] automatically interrogates all new items being entered into any aspect of the database against information already stored in the incident, crime, intelligence, custody, property, licensing, case preparation or criminal records applications. This process produces links or potential options for enquiry and it offers them to the operator as the new information is being added to the system. Examples of the benefits include:

- The same unidentified fingerprint, DNA profile or footprint is located at more than one crime scene. These crimes are linked as a series facilitating co-ordinated investigation and an assurance that when one is solved, all will be solved.

- A stolen car is recovered in a particular street. When this information is input, the system produces a schedule of any person previously responsible for car crime in that street and also any convicted car thief who lives in that street or area.

- A person reports vandalism to his house. Criminal records indicate he has a conviction for assault. Intelligence notes that the brother of the victim of assault has numerous convictions for vandalism to houses and has recently moved to the street where the latest vandalism has occurred. FLINTS suggests this person is a potential suspect for the vandalism.

The system has now been progressed to allow data to be supplied to officers on patrol via mobile phone technology, giving immediate access to information such as pictures of suspects or intelligence.

In each of these cases, an investigator in any Scottish force today would make the links shown but the facility to have them offered at the outset of the investigation without any investigative task being actioned appears to be a very worthwhile development. It must also be acknowledged however that, as such a database grows, the number of potential links and potential lines of enquiry being offered will significantly increase. Strong and effective management will be very important if such systems are to be a support to the investigative function rather than turning investigators into slaves of the improving technology.

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[23] www.westmidlands.police.uk

Later in this report (Para. 5.51), the relationship between police and COPFS/SCRA will be focused on. Information Technology is, and will continue to be, central to that relationship. Designing a crime report that will serve all the needs of these important partner organisations, without the requirement for any captured data or information to be duplicated or rekeyed in any way would have a significant benefit in reducing police time spent on criminal justice tasks offering chief constables an opportunity to increase visibility and consequently public reassurance. Two Scottish forces are currently developing case management systems designed to deliver a more effective product to COPFS/SCRA. HMIC supports this principle but would encourage the process to start at the report of the incident/crime rather than at the point of detection.

The largest ongoing co-ordination of IT projects within the criminal justice arena is the Integration of Scottish Criminal Justice Information Systems Programme (ISCJIS). Many issues surrounding this programme of work are examined in more detail later. (Para 6.2).

Drawing upon comments and evidence collated during the inspection, HMIC is in favour of using developing and future IT systems to hold performance management information that can accurately inform the police service about what actually works. Simple examples of this are fields that record:

- The principal and secondary means of detection for each crime. (Such data would later assist in determining where funding and other resources were likely to make the most positive impact)

- Whether or not the crime could reasonably have been prevented by operational police activity. (This could better inform the NIM process on where police visibility could have the greatest benefit)

In summary, effective enhancements to the structure and content of information recorded in respect of every crime would facilitate strategies and tactical decisions that would enable and encourage the police to work smarter.

Finally, for this chapter, and returning to the underlying theme of this report – is there conflict between solving crime and reassuring victims? – it is important to reflect that funds available to develop police IT systems should not be spent exclusively on improvements to the investigative process, important as that may be. In this regard, HMIC was pleased to note a range of initiatives and improvements including one force that has used IT to develop a high quality briefing facility that ensures patrol, response and community officers are aware of all key issues before being deployed to duty. HMIC considers the natural evolution of this concept is towards mobile data so that officers have access to this quality of information at all times.

HMIC recommends that under the aegis of SPIS, ACPOS continues to review the emerging developments including:

- **Single data capture.**

- **Exploitation of the e-portal.**

- **The potential of mobile data (recommendation 12).**

chapter 5: victims

5.1 Victim Issues

The Criminal Justice system has many players ranging from Sheriffs and Judges to accused persons and victims. Many debates have centred on who is the most important player in that system. Some suggest it must be the accused person as it is he or she who is subject to scrutiny during a trial and it is he or she who is most commonly referred to in legislation relating to the process.

However, in recent years, more emphasis has been placed on the rights of victims. Organisations and institutions from the United Nations, to the Scottish Executive and ACPOS have produced legislation and/or guidance on how victims should be treated. Against this background, HMIC has identified that service to victims by police forces in Scotland, although generally very good, is not always consistent.

The Scottish Executive's 'Strategy for Victims'[24] aims to secure a central role for victims in the criminal justice system. The principles underpinning the strategy are:

- a recognition of the importance of the victim and the need to provide practical and emotional support to assist the victim to recover and towards prevention of further crime or secondary victimisation;

- a commitment to provide explanations for victims about the criminal justice and other processes with which they are involved;

- a recognition that victims have a legitimate interest in the case with which they are involved and so have a contribution to make;

- a commitment to offer victims information on the progress of their case; and

- a recognition that victims should be enabled to have a voice throughout all stages of the criminal justice system.

The wider practical and resource implications for the police service of such a refocusing of the criminal justice system is covered in more detail in the HMIC Thematic 'Relatively Speaking'[25].

5.2 To Report or Not To Report

As mentioned in para 1.1, for many reasons it is evident that police forces only record a proportion of total crime.

It is indicative of different perceptions within the criminal justice system to acknowledge that the initial assessment was to start this inspection at the point when the police became aware of the crime. At the initial meeting of the Advisory Group, the representative of Victim Support Scotland proposed that this was too late. A key issue, he suggested, was what factors

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[24] Scottish Strategy for Victims, Scottish Executive January 2001

[25] Relatively Speaking – A Thematic Inspection of Family Liaison in Scotland, HMIC 2003

determined whether or not victims did in fact report crimes to the police. Accordingly forces were asked what processes, if any, existed to:

- encourage people to report crimes or
- to inform victims debating whether or not to report what the true implications of both options may be.

In addition, victims participating in the independent research[26] were asked what had induced them to report the crime and, if they were repeat victims, what factors had encouraged them to formally report or not report previous incidents.

In respect of force responses, HMIC was encouraged to note that some forces supported formalised 3rd party reporting schemes aimed at encouraging vulnerable victims to report crimes. One force has developed a structure through which victims can use one of three designated voluntary organisations as a conduit to report certain classification of crimes. Action, thereafter, is victim led in that they can specify which of the following four categories is most appropriate for them to be placed in:

- Remain anonymous and provide details for police information only with no active investigation.
- Be identified to police only and provide details for police information only with no active investigation.
- Be identified and support police investigation with request that victim need not become formally involved in further proceedings.
- Be identified and support police investigation and subsequent proceedings.

Such policies are positive developments but need the support of other agencies within the Criminal Justice environment.

Mechanisms to support victims have greatly improved in recent years with the police service, partner organisations and support agencies linking to provide practical and emotional support to those in need. These facilities however are generally only accessed by those who have formally reported crimes to the police. As mentioned above, some Scottish forces are more advanced than others in actively encouraging victims to formally make the police aware of crimes. Third party reporting schemes are effective mechanisms for alerting police to specific crimes but some forces could enhance their services to reluctant victims by having a clear policy on how to record and progress investigations. It may be unhelpful to suggest investigations should only continue if the victim formally supports this course of action, as this could encourage certain criminals to intimidate victims into seeking no further action by the police. However, there are some cases where it is apparent the victim will only provide all available information if there is an agreement the matter will not result in a court case with the attendant publicity.

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26 Victims of Volume Crime in Scotland – Perceptions of the Police and the Criminal Justice System; Scottish Executive June 2003

HMIC recognises this to be a sensitive area and referred to the issue in the recent thematic inspection on family liaison[27] but would encourage some further work on the practical implications. It may be appropriate for ACPOS and COPFS to discuss the extent to which vulnerable victims, including those who may be persuaded to use a 3rd party reporting facility, may provide factual information to the police without necessarily becoming witnesses in formal judicial proceedings.

5.3 Repeat Victimisation

Another specific area worthy of comment is repeat victimisation. All Scottish forces employ systems designed to identify repeat victims. This is to provide an opportunity to review the services offered to that victim and provide additional measures, if appropriate, designed to deliver reassurance. Most Forces have employed an IT solution to identify repeat victims, however, in most cases, this IT system only identifies the repeat status following recording of the crime which is almost always after the police have left the victim. Most organisations would prefer to meet the customer's requirements at the first point of contact. In respect of police/victim interaction that would be at the first point of contact (normally the telephone) or first face-to-face contact (normally the officer dispatched to the incident). The key issue is 'How do the police establish at such an early stage if this is indeed a repeat victim?'.

Kent Constabulary have a single contact centre located at Force Headquarters which uses a relatively simple approach. All calls from the public are routed to the contact centre. If the call relates to a crime, it is transferred to a specific bank of operators who record the necessary information, prompted by on-line help menus. One of the first questions asked of the victim is 'Has this ever happened to you before'? If the answer is 'Yes', additional support options are immediately considered. Amongst other things, the next officer having contact with the victim is aware of the repeat victim status.

Clearly there are immense benefits from the Kent Constabulary system including the simplicity of the system and the fact that no matter where and when the person was previously a victim, it is immediately taken into account in the response to the most recent event. On the other hand, some victims may be disappointed they have to advise the police of facts that they believe should be immediately known to police. This may be particularly relevant in cases of repeat domestic violence, where gaining the trust of the victim is a significant responsibility for forces.

One Scottish force is about to launch a 'Vulnerable Persons Database', which will, in time, provide early identification of certain repeat victims and other people.

Once the repeat victim has been identified, HMIC also recommends that forces review their strategies for supporting action. At present there is no national standard or guidance manual prompting the range of measures to be considered. Some forces leave the decisions to the officer investigating the most recent event, supported by his/her local managers. Other forces have some policy guidance, although this is often created at local level and is not necessarily consistent across an entire force.

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[27] Relatively Speaking – a Thematic Inspection of Family Liaison in Scotland, HMIC 2003

HMIC fully acknowledges that local action will very often be the appropriate mechanism for resolution but there appear to be many benefits from guidance that reflects best practice across Scotland. One option would be to introduce a common additional chapter to crime reports in all forces. The chapter, which would only apply when a repeat victim was involved, could include a list of options available ranging from security survey or provision of personal attack alarm, through to referral to problem solving policing/multi-agency task groups.

HMIC recommends that Chief Constables implement the following processes with regards repeat victims:

- **review their in-force arrangements for identifying all repeat victims at the earliest possible point and preferably before first face to face contact with a police officer**

- **where necessary, exploit best practice available elsewhere**

- **carry out a review of policies in respect of action to be taken when a repeat victim is identified (recommendation 13).**

5.4 Victim Information Needs

Amongst the more significant challenges being addressed by Scottish Police forces is matching expectation in respect of information and general feedback. Over the years surveys have consistently identified this as an area capable of improvement. That is why HMIC commissioned independent research to address key issues around victim perceptions of policing services within a criminal justice context[28].

The detailed results of this research will be published by the Scottish Executive in the near future, and should be considered in the context of the key themes in this report. In general the perception was of a general sense of professionalism and efficiency. Victims appreciated the extent to which officers had attempted to assist them. They also expressed acute awareness of the time constraints in which many officers operate.

However, victims offered the following as areas capable of improvement.

- Implementing some crime prevention advice is outwith the reasonable means of some victims. Being aware of this can increase feelings of vulnerability

- Some officers tend to deliver more detailed advice to men than women

- Information is not standardised

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[28] Victims of Volume Crime in Scotland – Op Cit
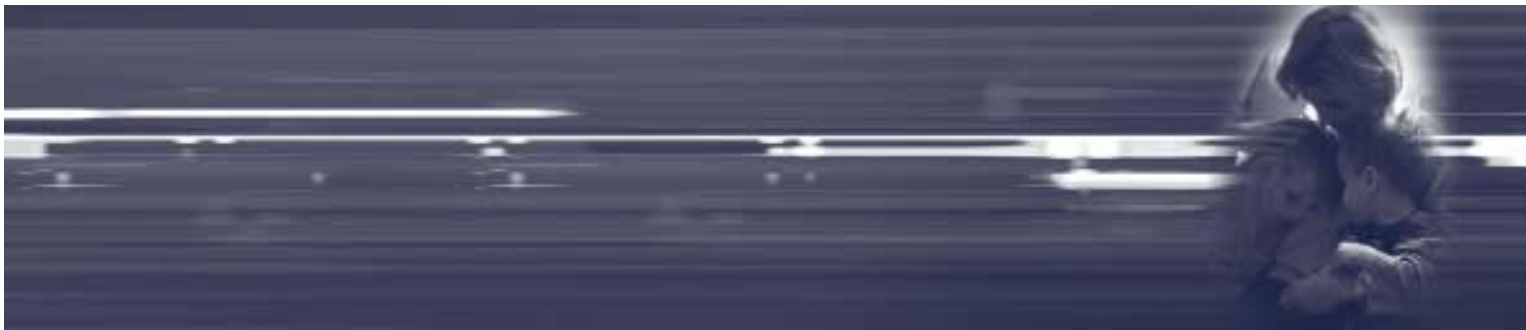
- Some officers appear unprepared for the emotional impact victims experience following the occurrence of what may be a relatively common crime type.

- Being promised updated information that did not materialise is more frustrating than not receiving the promise in the first place.

- There is an apparent correlation between higher satisfaction levels with the police and officers spending longer with victims.

HMIC acknowledges these issues reflect a small proportion of the totality of interaction between police and victims but considers the matters should not be overlooked.

It is **suggested** that ACPOS review training to ensure it reflects the reasonable expectations of victims (suggestion 5).

The research did identify that some victims seem to express higher levels of satisfaction if they are reassured by the policing response to a crime, whether or not that crime is actually solved. However, it is apparent that solving the crime often has a very positive impact upon the level of reassurance provided.

Within the scope of the survey, victims generally appeared to have a clear understanding of the role performed by the police, prosecutor and courts. In general, a perceived negative outcome at prosecution or court stage did not manifest itself in the victim recording a lower level of satisfaction in respect of the policing involvement with them. The research also produced evidence of victims expressing concern that the support and reassurance provided directly to them by the police was not matched by the level of support and reassurance from other agencies subsequently involved in the criminal justice process. The fact that those other agencies rarely have direct personal contact with victims may be a factor in this conclusion.

Scottish forces have adopted differing systems to support victim information needs. Some forces leave the decision to the investigating officer as to how and when victims should receive progress reports. Other forces have a policy of lettering most victims at certain stages in the investigation. No one method is considered necessarily better than any other but HMIC considers the key issue is to ensure the feedback is delivered. Most forces require the investigating officer to record on the crime report how and when the victim was provided with a final update. Some forces go further and seek a comment on whether or not the victim appeared satisfied with the service provided. It is implicit that if the victim expresses dissatisfaction, attempts are made to resolve that fact.

HMIC considers there is significant room to improve the supervision and auditing of victim satisfaction levels from the earliest stages of an investigation. As with so many other aspects of the management of crime, Information Technology could provide many of the solutions.

Firstly, no crime report or force policy currently provides specific opportunity to record victim expectations or requirements. To a great extent, it is anticipated that professional and experienced police officers will intuitively identify these and, in turn, deliver them. If this were correct, every victim would record high levels of satisfaction with all aspects of the police investigation. Although most surveys suggest victim satisfaction is generally good, HMIC considers service delivery could be improved by a range of relatively simple proposals:

- **Crime Reports** in all forces could include a common chapter on victim requirements. This would complement the proposed chapter relative to repeat victims and could contain mandatory fields relating to such issues as

  - **Victim expectations:** Offering options referred to at paragraph 5.2 relative to Hate Crime victims and also categorising victims who do not wish to support investigations for a variety of reasons ranging from those who only wish to report events to support insurance claims to those non-co-operative victims, many with criminal tendencies, who seek to exact their own retribution without police involvement.

  - **Referral to Victim Support or other agency:** By creating a specific field for this information rather than it appearing in a section of free text incorporating other information, police managers would more readily identify cases where Victim Support has not been properly offered. Research of a divisional or force database would, in time, identify officers whose referral rate to Victim Support or other agency is below average, thus encouraging appropriate management intervention.

  - **Victim Information Requirements:** Every victim is unique and individual information requirements are therefore potentially very different. Some victims need the reassurance of regular, perhaps daily, personal contact with progress reports whilst others may only seek knowledge of the conclusion of the process. Indeed some people in the latter category may be content to know that the matter will be investigated and an update will only be forthcoming if there is some development to the investigation. If the victim's reasonable expectation could be captured and recorded in a standard way at an early stage of the investigation, perhaps forces could better deliver against victim expectations.

  - **Provision Of Updates:** Whilst every force policy requires every investigation to be concluded with a final update to the victim, not every force can audit whether this has been achieved without sometimes painstaking research of every crime report. Inclusion of a mandatory field in a crime report would minimise the risk of this being overlooked. A properly structured field would also identify the average time between report and final update. This would again facilitate appropriate management intervention if an officer was consistently, for example, providing a final update within 48 hours of initial report. Such a short time gap may suggest that officer's investigations were not extensive.

  - **Victim Contact Preferences:** Contact with many victims in Scotland can be achieved by calling at their home address or by telephoning the same location. However, some victims have a range of contact options including home and business telephone and fax numbers, mobile phone numbers, pagers plus home and business email addresses. Rarely will officers establish all of these from a victim then record which is the preferred method of subsequent contact. HMIC considers such information should be recorded to maximise the benefits of e-technology as outlined in the Information Technology Chapter of this report (Chapter 4).

HMIC recommends forces review the mechanisms by which victim information needs are identified, recorded, delivered and monitored (recommendation 14).

HMIC recommends ACPOS considers the development of a standard chapter relative to victim issues be incorporated, within an appropriate timescale, within the crime reports utilised by each Scottish force (recommendation 15).

Victim Support Scotland (VSS) is an excellent source of support to victims of crime in Scotland. Following resolution of concerns relating to Data Protection issues, all Scottish forces are referring a sizeable number of victims to VSS. VSS is equipped and willing to support not only the principal victim, but also any person adversely affected by crime.

Currently forces do not refer many people who fit this wider criteria.

HMIC considers those adversely affected by crime to be as entitled to the service of VSS as those who were directly victimised.

HMIC recommends forces significantly increase the number of referrals to VSS in respect of people adversely affected by crime (recommendation 16).

5.5 Linking Victims to the Wider Criminal Justice System

As indicated in Chapter 1, the police service in Scotland is solving more crime today than ever before. It therefore follows that more victims are becoming involved in the criminal justice process as their cases are reviewed by prosecutors and often featuring in trials at court.

The police service remains the visible and accessible arm of the criminal justice system, so far as victims are concerned, and it is to the police service that victims mostly turn for feedback or progress reports relating to prosecution or court decisions. This is outlined fully in the recently published HMIC thematic inspection of family liaison 'Relatively Speaking'[29]. However that does not focus on the victims of high volume crimes such as housebreaking or car crime.

Within all Scottish forces, the current policy is that, unless a particular need is identified or unless the investigating officer happens to be aware of a development in the case, then the victim is simply advised the matter is now the subject of a report to the Procurator Fiscal. At that point, police liaison is essentially finished. This is a disappointment to many victims and it would undoubtedly be beneficial for formal feedback to be provided to victims at every stage of the process. HMIC does not consider this task should necessarily fall to the police, in part because the existing criminal justice process does not provide the investigating officer with feedback on progress of the case.

For some victims, and perhaps for many corporate victims, E-technology may provide a suitable solution to providing effective feedback, The principle of victims accessing extracts of data from crime reports is more fully considered at Para 4.7 of this report.

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[29] Op Cit.

However, in Scotland, at present, there is significant scope for progress in respect of victims of crime that are not classified as major. As outlined, police progress reports to victims tend to conclude when reports are submitted to the Procurator Fiscal. Victims receive no additional details. Indeed one standard letter currently in use in one force, advises victims their case has been referred to 'the appropriate prosecuting authority'. Although technically accurate, such phrases do not really offer a link to the next phase in the process. HMIC considers it would be more appropriate for Procurators Fiscal and Police to agree on a more meaningful input that would formally pass the victim's contact point from the investigating officer to the relevant person within the COPFS. It could remain the task of the police to supply the information to the victim incorporating details such as which office the case has been referred to, the PFs reference number, a contact person and telephone number and an indication of timescale before a decision is taken on the case.

HMIC acknowledges the practicalities of raising expectations and the finite capacity of resources, but considers it reasonable that if the interests of the victim genuinely are to be looked after throughout the entire criminal justice process, then arrangements in this area need to be kept under review.

HMIC recommends ACPOS in liaison with COPFS review how respective responsibilities might be addressed in relation to how victims of volume crimes including housebreaking and car crime receive progress reports relative to their particular case once the case is forwarded to COPFS (recommendation 17).

5.6   SAVAN Scheme – North Carolina Police

North Carolina's Statewide Automated Victim Advice Notification Scheme (SAVAN) is a good example of providing quality progress reports. Supported by an information structure not unlike ISCJIS (see para 6.2), officials in North Carolina proactively alert victims to the next event that will take place in relation to their case. At first point of contact with police, all victims, other than those who choose to opt out of this universally available scheme, agree on a preferred method of contact for progress reports. Thereafter they are advised of changes during the investigation phase, prosecution decisions, dates of all court hearings, dates of parole hearings etc. If the offender is imprisoned, victims are also alerted to when and to where the offender will be released from prison.
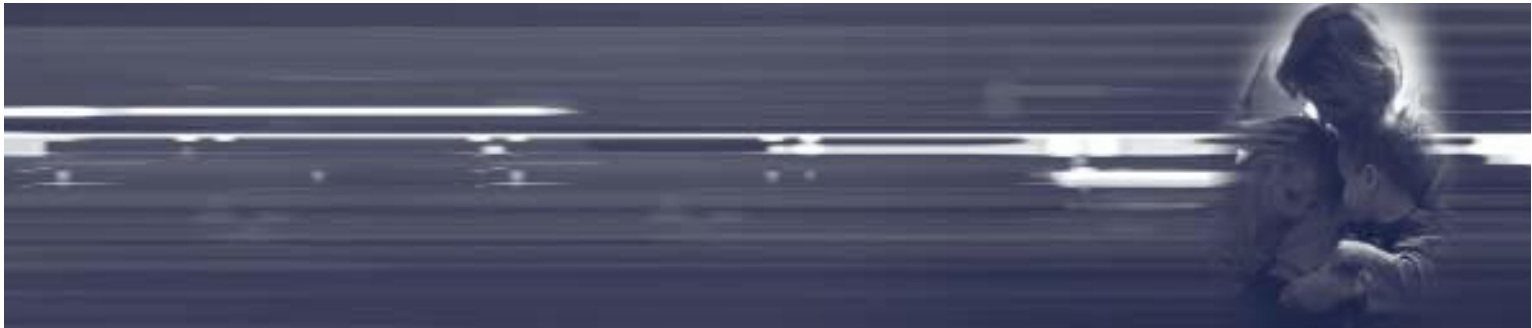
Partners in Crime
A Thematic Inspection of Crime Management in Scotland

chapter 6: criminal justice issues

6.1 Reporting Offenders to Crown Office Procurator Fiscal Service (COPFS)/ Scottish Children Reporters Agency (SCRA)

The police in Scotland do not, of course, decide whether or not a prosecution against an alleged offender is warranted. The role of the police, once in possession of a sufficiency of evidence to identify the offender is to report the facts to the Procurator Fiscal or, in certain offences committed by a child, the SCRA. In the case of adult offenders it is then the responsibility of the Procurator Fiscal to determine what further action, if any, should be taken.

In principle, beyond very minor matters where there is generally no specific victim, police officers today exercise little discretion in determining that a detected offence should not be reported to the Procurator Fiscal. Some specific examples do exist including allegations of careless driving at road accidents where no injury or significant damage has occurred. The present situation has evolved from a more flexible situation, still operating in the 1980s, when senior police managers took responsibility for concluding many matters by way of a formal police warning letter.

The method of communication between police and prosecutor has remained essentially unchanged for many years i.e. a formatted report outlining the accused person, the alleged offence(s), a summary of the facts and evidence, lists of relevant witnesses and productions and a schedule of the accused person's previous convictions, if any.

Most of this information is produced by the officer responsible for the preparation of the report, with only lists of convictions drawn from other sources, principally the Scottish Criminal Records Office criminal history system which is networked throughout all Scottish Police Forces, or for road traffic convictions, from Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA).

It has always been the case that Procurators Fiscal opted not to proceed further with a certain number of these reports from police and other reporting agencies including Trading Standards, Department for Work and Pensions, Vehicle Licensing Agency and TV Licensing Agency etc. It has also been the case that in many instances, police officers reporting the cases to the Procurator Fiscal could reasonably predict the likelihood of further action being taken. In recent years, wider options have become available to the prosecutor. These include referral from prosecution schemes and Fiscal's fines. Notwithstanding these developments, a significant number of cases reported by the police to the procurator fiscal still result in a decision not to further proceed.

Recording and tracking the history of a criminal case is undertaken by the Scottish Criminal Record Office criminal history system. In the past this tracking was achieved through a process of forwarding written updates to one of the few input bureaux around Scotland. There the information was entered in the data system and became available to all authorised users. In practice this relied on informal arrangements and in recent years, attempts to modernise this process have centred on a new Scottish Executive driven project – the Integration of Scottish Criminal Justice Information Systems (ISCJIS).

6.2 Integration of Scottish Criminal Justice Information System (ISCJIS)

Developing since its inception in 1992, the concept of ISCJIS is that a person's criminal record will reflect up to date information from the point of detection by the police. The significant changes to the previous process include making all partners in the Criminal Justice system responsible for updating the data at their own part of the process (this remains an aspirational aspect and during the transitional period, police forces are still inputting, amending or auditing data for other partners, either in respect of pre-ISCJIS cases or for partners who are not yet on-line) and transference of reports from police to COPFS through secure electronic channels.

There is a suggestion that police staff are currently spending disproportionate time auditing and correcting entries entered by other agencies. The essence of the system is that each agency has responsibility for the data it enters, editing would transfer that responsibility. It is essential that police staff make use of the proper processes to draw to attention errors, rather than taking responsibility for editing entries.

6.3 Delays in Reporting Cases to the Procurator Fiscal

Initial responses to the HMIC protocol did not indicate forces were currently having problems in the reporting of cases to procurators fiscal. However, in the course of the inspection a number of procedural anomalies were identified and considerable public, media and political interest emerged when it was reported that no proceedings had been taken in over 17,000 cases apparently largely due to delays in reporting by the police.

Indeed, one press report[30] quoted a representative of the Scottish Police Federation as saying:

> *'Officers were tearing their hair out. At one stage they were told not to dictate cases until 4 months after the incident had taken place. Cases were being dumped on the fiscal in what was essentially an electronic skip and they were plucking cases out from that.'*

In the course of inspection, HMIC has established that, although backlogs were in evidence elsewhere in 2002, these comments related specifically to the situation within one Division of a Scottish Force during the second half of 2002.

At that time the ability to submit police reports timeously to COPFS & SCRA was restricted by:

- an increasingly inadequate voicebank system on which items for typing were dictated (now replaced)

- an increasing number of detected crimes and offences

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[29] *Daily Record*, 5 June 2003.

- staff shortages (now addressed)

- amended guidelines and conventions for completing the Standard Prosecution Report which increased the time taken to complete it

- one-off delays requested by COPFS as they rolled out a new operating system to their offices.

Forces are currently required to submit reports to COPFS within a maximum of 28 days from charge of the accused (or last accused if more than one). Shorter timescales apply to a range of reports, including:

- people in custody

- people undertaken to appear at court on specific dates

- people for whom apprehension warrants were sought

- people charged with racist crime

- people charged following domestic related incidents

- people charged with football related violence

- offences involving children as victims or offenders

- persons arrested in relation to any operational initiative

- any other matter that the reporting officer or a supervisor considered to be appropriate for prioritisation.

This was intended to ensure that such cases would, as always, be prepared for submission to COPFS/SCRA within one working day of arrest/charge.

Dealing with Delays in the Affected Division

To improve submission timescales within the area highlighted in the press report, extra local funding was made available to the typing function and a structure was put in place to effectively manage the pending work.

A local divisional office systems management decision indicated that in order to manage the backlog, any remaining cases would be typed in order of occurrence. This was to be achieved by advising officers not to dictate 'non-prioritised' cases unless the offence had been committed after a certain date. There were in fact two dates, one for common law offences such as Breach of the Peace and a second, shorter time delay for Statutory Offences. This separation reflected the fact that, in general, statutory offences incorporate a fixed time limit for judicial proceedings to commence. (Indeed, direction existed that any case threatening to challenge timebar timescales should be transferred to priority status.)

The necessary information was cascaded by written memo, updated weekly, to the 'briefing register' in each operational office. Regrettable as this situation was, in the circumstances HMIC is of the opinion that this was a pragmatic and reasoned decision in the face of a fundamental incapacity to cope more rapidly with work volumes at that time. It was a case of trying to manage a typing backlog in a rational manner.

Divisional managers believe the most extreme delays were reflected during July 2002 when routine Common Law cases were restricted to 3 months and Statutory Offences, to 2 months.

Federation officials are of the opinion that the most extreme delays in relation to Common Law actually reached 4 months. However, HMIC has been unable to obtain any supporting documentation in respect of this.

In the event management activities undertaken reduced these particular backlogs which, by Spring 2003, had been eliminated. In addition, at the time of this study, an internal force review of case management was being conducted to ensure all relevant problems had been addressed and resolved.

However, this situation emphasises the need to match administrative infrastructure with operational and processual requirements and demonstrates the sensitivities of systems to overloading if processes are not resourced and co-ordinated.

Despite the obvious address to this historical situation, HMIC noted that at present no consistent process exists to determine how successful each force is in relation to the targets, situations being monitored at a very local level by police and COPFS. HMIC has learned that when a backlog of cases occurs at any one location, local action is taken to resolve this. The action may be temporary extra resources to tackle the part of the process creating the backlog or it may be something more radical like a representative of COPFS attending police offices, reviewing detected cases still be to submitted to COPFS and offering advice as to which cases should be prioritised for submission.

HMIC also notes that the actual timescale for submission is also being debated by partners in the Criminal Justice process. One option being considered is for a fixed percentage of all cases to be submitted within 28 days and a further percentage of cases within a further 7 days. However HMIC considers other factors can also impact on efficiency in the management of police reports.

6.4 The Effectiveness of ISCJIS – Strategic Implications

During the inspection HMIC sought to determine the current effectiveness of 'ISCJIS'.

HMIC found universal support for the concept of the integration of Information Systems and also standardisation of wording of many common elements in police reports. Some concerns were raised but these related essentially to either the technical capabilities and constraints of the electronic transfer of data or to the strategic issues already raised.

HMIC did find, at operational level, some confusion as to the exact nature of ISCJIS. Each agency continues to own its internal electronic communications systems. ISCJIS simply delivers the links between agencies. It is not designed to address any internal communications issues within agencies. This leads to the conclusion that rather than being the vehicle to create a co-ordinated criminal justice strategy, ISCJIS, appears to have the status of an IT project rather than part of a strategic driver to integrate appropriate criminal justice processes. As a result problems associated with internal systems in partner agencies are often seen, erroneously, as a failure on the part of ISCJIS.

Indeed, examples were offered as to where the protocols applicable within ISCJIS were viewed as potentially preventing appropriate initiatives from continuing for no clear benefit to the criminal justice process. In one case, reference was made to a force's previous ability to prepare a single schedule of persons who had allegedly committed an identical offence, normally involving road traffic issues. Notwithstanding the present conditional offers of fixed penalty, any person being reported to COPFS today requires to be the subject of a standard prosecution report, the preparation of which can remove an operational police officer from visibility and reassurance duties for a period of time.

While this can be met with the legitimate comment that the scheduling and combining of offenders is not ISCJIS compliant, HMIC identifies a distinct likelihood that, in that regard, ISCJIS, can be interpreted as driving the Criminal Justice Strategy rather than supporting it by creating solutions to optimise overall effectiveness or resources.

Further, as it currently stands, as a very large project with a sub-committees structure, each with a degree of empowerment, effective change control is essential. Otherwise, changes within one sub-committee could produce unanticipated collateral impacts upon other areas of the project. Not all stakeholders consider the present change control to be totally effective and it is important that all users have confidence in the process.

With an increasing number of agencies accessing and updating the criminal history system of SCRO, quality control and standardisation appear to be important issues. HMIC is therefore surprised to note that members of non-police agencies do not attend any national common training event before being authorised to access the system. HMIC also notes that currently police forces undertake auditing and updates on behalf of other agencies. Whilst this may be in pursuit of quality, it has the potential to impact upon police reporting processes. It has been agreed that police will, for example, input details of persons reported to the Procurator Fiscal on behalf of TV Licensing Authority. The service level agreement is that the information will be entered within 24 hours of receipt of the data from TVLA. This priority seems odd given the history of delays in the processing of police reports and the requirement to prioritise the TV Licence work to this degree may be worthy or re-examination.

HMIC recommends Scottish Executive and ACPOS review where ISCJIS sits within the wider Criminal Justice Strategy and look at the existing ISCJIS protocols to establish if they reflect the priorities of such a strategy (recommendation 18).

6.5 Impact of ISCJIS on Reporting Procedures

Backlogs of cases to be reported are not a new entity in Scotland. One significant change however, following the introduction of ISCJIS, is a perceived lack of flexibility in how such events can be tackled. This perception is a product of the drive for standardisation both in content and in process that has developed in the past decade. All Scottish forces are enthusiastic about the benefits of standardisation of product however, in the course of inspection, HMIC questioned if the product was producing Best Value and addressing the wider public interest overall.

In general, all reports concerning alleged offenders are typed to a standard format and forwarded electronically to the Procurator Fiscal. It is the experience of some users that the requirements of this communication system and the specific rules and conventions underpinning the standardisation of reports have sometimes proven to be counterproductive or inadequate for the task. Overloads of the electronic transfer systems, more prevalent in urban police areas with high report volumes, and absolute rejection criteria for apparently minor matters including an erroneous punctuation mark, can result in system crashes and associated frustrations. The content and layout of the Scottish Standard Prosecution Report has developed since its inception. It is designed to deliver all the needs of the prosecutor however prosecutors regularly require to seek clarification or amplification of facts from reporting officers. This suggests that format and structure alone do not necessarily guarantee quality.

Initiatives to tackle this issue are in evidence throughout Scotland. Some forces have created effective electronic on-line help and guidance to reporting officers. Although this principle is to be commended, in at least one force officers can only access this on-line help when they are personally typing the report which can sometimes be a lengthy and complicated document. Although the Procurators Fiscal served by that Force receive all reports on time, this is potentially at the cost of police visibility and public reassurance, another area recently inspected by HMIC[31]. That said, HMIC considers the concept of on-line help to be the effective vision of the future but, as alluded to elsewhere in this report, it is suggested such help be made available from a much earlier stage in the investigative process

One force, which also provides officers with on-line guidance on what information is relevant when completing certain documents for the Procurator Fiscal, has located a case manager within the Fiscal's office. Working independently of the Fiscal's staff, the officer is however available to problem solve and identify recurring concerns. The officer is also empowered to establish solutions, which are commonly in the form of improved on-line help and guidance, targeting actual areas of difficulty. Although the initiative is in its infancy, early indications are very positive with speedier, less bureaucratic resolutions to real time issues and effective longer term reductions in common and recurring problems.

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[31] 'Narrowing the Gap' – Op Cit.

Despite initiatives designed to improve co-ordination between police and prosecutor, difficulties in achieving set timescales for reporting cases continue to arise. This can be a simple matter of logistics. As outlined in Section 6.3 certain categories of new cases are prioritised for typing and submission each day. Other cases therefore queue for attention. Each day all priority cases are cleared before attention turns to the queue of other cases.

Depending on the make-up of solved crime in a particular police area, non-prioritised cases can wait a considerable time for typing and submission to the Procurator Fiscal. This can create a false impression about overall submission timescales. For example, when an average police submission timescale is recorded as 30 days, the reality is a sizeable proportion of cases have actually been submitted within one day with the remainder (non-prioritised cases) following some weeks later.

6.6 Potential for Change

The police report to COPFS/SCRA is an independent element of the process undertaken by the police. The efficiency of the overall process is likely to be significantly improved when that report is an automatically generated product of the data collated from the moment the incident was made known to the police. Some forces are already pursuing policies in that general direction by integrating databases and applications but, until all forces implement the earlier recommendation of creating a crime report structure that, amongst other things, provides explicitly what the Procurator Fiscal requires, an element of duplication of effort will continue to exist.

HMIC notes that discussions are already underway to enable short 'bullet-point' summaries to be used in place of full narrative in appropriate cases. This would reduce both the time taken to complete reports and the size of the data being transmitted. HMIC also acknowledges a range of other ongoing activities designed to refine the case preparation and submission process.

That said, HMIC would welcome ongoing dialogue between Scottish Executive, COPFS and ACPOS to ensure guidelines for completion of the Standard Prosecution Reports reflect that what is delivered is proportionate and relevant to the case. In addition HMIC considers there is scope for a future joint inspection with COPFS Inspectorate on the efficiency of reporting systems.

As mentioned earlier, the current IT systems supporting ISCJIS can be on occasions unreliable if faced with large volumes of work. One solution is obviously to increase the capacity of the system, and HMIC **suggests** that the Scottish Executive considers if short term increases in the technical capacity of transferring data between police and COPFS would provide justifiable improvements to the process (suggestion 6). However, it is also valuable to look beyond present volumes and establish if more effective improvements are available.

6.7 Adult Police Warning Scheme

Some parties in the Criminal Justice system accept that, in some cases, it may be appropriate to formalise police discretion in respect of certain less serious offences. HMIC is pleased to note that ACPOS are currently formally reviewing a previously suggested Adult Police Warning Scheme with a view to stopping certain cases before they become an unnecessary bureaucracy on the police and other agencies. HMIC supports these deliberations but notes the view that there is a need not only to cut unnecessary bureaucracy but also to impact on offending behaviour.

For that reason HMIC considers that conditions appropriate for ACPOS adopting an Adult Police Warning Scheme would include:

a) the range of offences suitable for warning are agreed in advance by the Procurator Fiscal

b) the warnings are recorded (perhaps on SCRO) to avoid any person collecting a large number of warnings within separate Scottish force areas

c) in certain cases, the offending behaviour is addressed by some action which may range from counselling to restorative justice.

Whilst such a scheme would often provide an enhancement to the outcome currently applied, unless such a scheme was subject of full consultation with those who promote victim's interests, there is a danger of a warning scheme being perceived as a less effective outcome than at present.

In terms of efficiency, such a warning scheme would save police time and effort currently spent on report production but HMIC accepts this may be offset against any new implications involved in administering warnings.

In addition to potentially fully removing some cases from the process through a police warning system, HMIC questions the need for every case, ranging from the most straightforward and less-serious to the most complex and serious, requiring to incorporate exactly the same information. Four specific items of evidence are relevant to this matter.

6.8 Noteworthy Developments

- During a visit to Warwickshire where one-stop justice pilot projects are being established with the support of significant sums of government funding, HMIC was impressed with the concept of supplying only the documentation that was truly required for that particular case, .e.g. if the police custody sergeant was of the professional judgement that the offender was likely to plead guilty to the less-serious charge at the first opportunity, the sergeant was authorised to secure only the minimum information

required for that matter. However if the Sergeant considered an accused person was unlikely to admit the allegation or the offence involved was a very serious one, the sergeant secured a full and detailed report including all relevant appendices. Early indications are that the judgement of the custody sergeant is correct sufficiently often to make this an effective and efficient system.

- An ongoing experiment within one Scottish force consists of reports in respect of all alleged child offenders being submitted to the local office of SCRA within one day by the forwarding of a copy of the Police Crime Report with brief additional information relating to the caution and charge included within the text of the report. This system can be seen to have significant advantages to both the police and the Justice system, however, with the pending implementation of the ISCJIS infrastructure to the Childrens Reporter, there is a concern that this initiative will no longer be compliant and any current advantages to the overall criminal justice system will be lost.

- Another initiative within a Scottish force consists of a senior member of COPFS attending a police office and reviewing cases considered to be less serious before they are typed. Police are advised which cases should be prioritised based on the likelihood of prosecution being initiated. This example of close interaction with the procurator fiscal in decisions of police reporting further demonstrates the potential which may arise from a more 'joined up' approach in this area.

- Similar effective police/prosecutor interaction was witnessed when the project team visited the Swedish Police Service. Further details are contained in a case study which follows. (at para 6.10)

6.9 Fixed Penalty Offers for Minor Offences – the ASPS View

In October 2000, during the Home Office consultation process on the role of fixed penalties in reducing public order, the Association of Scottish Police Superintendents advanced the view that it would be appropriate in Scotland for minor offences to be dealt with by way of fixed penalty notice. ASPS highlighted the time consuming bureaucracy which was necessary to process offenders engaged in minor 'quality of life' offences, and in the enforcement of warrants in relation to the non-payment of fines. The Association proposed a Conditional Offer of Fixed Penalty Scheme for such minor offences, backed by a civil power to recover unpaid fixed penalties from defaulters through arrestment of wages or benefits. They were not proposing an 'on-the-spot' fines system but the issue of a notice at the point of release of a person following arrest.

HMIC is of the view that this proposal is worthy or further consideration as a means of dealing with the high volume of such minor offences without the administrative burdens which apply when processing offenders through the normal prosecution channels.

HMIC believes the future Scottish criminal justice strategy must take maximum advantage of this existing evidence of Best Practice and endeavour to eliminate what is patently inefficient effort within police reporting procedures.

6.10 Case Study – Swedish Police & Criminal Justice System

The Constitutional set up of Sweden is very similar to that of Scotland and it was for that reason that HMIC visited the country to observe its Police and Criminal Justice system in operation.

Sweden has a national Police service. Police officers do not receive payment during initial training and must pay accommodation costs to police academies. Like members of other public sector organisations, police officers retire at age 65.

The country's police service is divided into 21 areas of varying sizes each having between 88 and 4350 officers, giving a total number of 16,400 officers to Police the population of 8.8 million.

Sitting above the areas is the National Criminal Investigation Department (NCID) that deals with serious and organised crime throughout the country and as such can be seen to deal with the equivalent of Scottish serious NIM level 2 crime.

There is no formal mechanism in place for deciding who will deal with individual cases, with a consensus being reached between areas and the NCID about who will lead on a particular investigation. If circumstances dictate officers are taken from area to form a task force to tackle a particular crime or series of crimes.

The relationship between the Police and the Prosecutor in Sweden has many constitutional and practical similarities to the situation in Scotland. The Prosecutor in Sweden notionally oversees all criminal investigations. Indeed the police have no powers to conduct investigations unless sanctioned to do so by the Prosecutor in respect of every individual crime. This is achieved by an administrative process and only in more serious investigations is there a close working involvement between investigator and prosecutor.

To satisfy the constitutional requirement for a prosecutor to authorise investigation into every reported crime, a duty prosecutor is to be found within every main police office outwith standard working hours. The practice has evolved that the prosecutor locates him or herself in the case preparation section with the result that 16 hours a day and 24 hours at weekends, informal advice and liaison is ongoing in respect of investigations and reports proposed for formal submission.

To some extent the actual product of this informal liaison reflects a similarity to the initiative earlier referred to in Scotland where a police officer is located within a fiscal's office.

In Sweden, the system is very well received by both Police officers and Prosecutors alike, with the inputs supplied by the Prosecutor in investigations considered to be of a great benefit. This coupled with the fact that the courts sit 7 days a week until 10pm and are empowered to use innovative sentencing options, provides a competent judicial system.

It is also worthy of note that police investigative training includes shared tuition sessions with prosecutors.

The use of fixed penalty notices for minor offences is widespread and there are currently moves to expand their use to cover less serious volume crime such as theft by shoplifting.

The importance of preventing and reducing crime rather than detecting it, is very pronounced in Sweden. Detection rates do not feature as an indicator of performance but issues surrounding victimisation and police visibility are very high on the agenda.

The Swedish constitutional interpretation of Human Rights legislation and guidance has resulted in a decision that technology such as public-space CCTV and ANPR is inappropriate. It was therefore considered interesting to note the police intelligence database links directly into the National Tax and Social Security database giving investigators access to the personal data held by other agencies.

Partners in Crime
A Thematic Inspection of Crime Management in Scotland

chapter 7 : conclusion

This report emphasises the need for balanced deployment to ensure the fundamental needs of crime investigation are met. It recognises noteworthy practice and indicates several areas where there is potential for improvement. Above all it indicates the value of a joined up approach within the criminal justice process which takes account of victim needs , and which can add value to solving crime and reassuring the wider public.

Solving crime can deliver reassurance whilst members of a reassured community are more likely to contribute to the process that leads to the solving of that crime.

Policing is a vital element of the criminal justice system in Scotland and the service now has an opportunity to verify if it is effectively balancing its solving and reassuring responsibilities.

This inspection has established unequivocal evidence that the police service in Scotland is progressing very positively in respect of crime reduction and detection. Key players in the Scottish Police Service are driving forward initiatives often based on best or developing practice elsewhere. A willingness to place victims at the centre of the criminal justice process is evident, as is an enthusiasm to maximise the benefits that IT can deliver.

Much of the ongoing work is in parallel, overlap or duplication with initiatives elsewhere. This presents an opportunity to consolidate research and development implications. Due to the speed with which technology is advancing, the Scottish police service would benefit from reviewing the extent to which current ICT strategies are appropriately keeping pace with commercial developments.

The Scottish police service is proud of its many traditions and its constitutional position. In recent years, many initiatives have been developed but mostly within the constraints of these traditions and constitutional principles. Whilst there are values in this heritage, HMIC has identified opportunities to explore developments that would impact upon tradition and constitution. Amongst the most potentially radical of these, are consideration of options involving police warning schemes and the extension of fixed penalty arrangements. Closer involvement with Procurators Fiscal at the preparatory stage of cases is also highlighted. It is important that such issues are considered as part of an overall modernising package that is designed to make best use of resources within the wider criminal justice system.

The recommendations in this report are designed to retain the strengths of existing processes. The recommendations also take account of the fact that a more successful police service, maximising the benefits of ongoing and potential developments, has the ability to place even more pressure on the wider criminal justice system. Absorbing these additional pressures whilst delivering effective and consistent service at all stages of the process will require some change from the situation of today.

Other contemporary influences on the criminal justice environment include Lord Bonomy's Report 'Improving Practice' (2002) a review of the High Court and Sheriff Principal McInnes' review of Summary Justice, Andrew Normand's report on Proposals for the Integration of Aims, Objectives and Targets in the Scottish Criminal Justice System, which the police service will require to consider in context along with the areas covered in this report.

The recommendations of this inspection have one very clear implication, and that is for a more proactive and measured approach to incident handling and crime management. In the future, it may be less common to hear the phrase 'I'll have someone attend as soon as possible'. To some, particularly those with a traditional vision of what victims and other customers expect from the police, this may be an unwelcome development. However HMIC is confident that nothing suggested in this report will deprive those who genuinely need a speedy and personal service from receiving it. But at the same time, victims will benefit from a better informed and more consistent professional response.

Overall the recommendations are designed to support police forces and individual officers in providing to each victim the level and method of service that is appropriate to each set of circumstances with the aim of maximising the likelihood of solving the crime whilst simultaneously delivering effective reassurance.

NOTEWORTHY PRACTICES

During the inspection process, HMIC identified numerous instances of noteworthy practice, the following examples cover the wide spectrum of processes involved in the effective management of crime. It should be noted that forces often shared the practice illustrated, however only one force is mentioned for the sake of example.

Investigation

Northern Police were seen to fully exploit the skills of their SOCOs and reap the benefits of the advances in forensic science by putting in place a policy whereby every crime scene is the subject of a crime scene examination.

The experience of the SOCOs at Grampian Police was put to good practical use where after attending a crime scene the SOCO has direct access to the Crime Management system, which allows them to provide a comprehensive update for the information of the investigating officer.

Central Scotland Police have established a Policing Management Unit (PMU) which not only manages crime, but also provides a structured mechanism to integrate the management of crime with the intelligence function, thus providing investigating officers with the most effective data to assist with their investigation. The unit also incorporates a dedicated resource to deal solely with victim liaison issues.

Victims

With regards 3rd party reporting, Lothian & Borders Police have developed a structure through which victims can use a designated voluntary organisation as a conduit to report certain classifications of crimes. The subsequent action is thereby victim led in that they can specify in which way the report is dealt with.

In relation to identification of repeat victims Fife Police have incorporated Call Line Identification into their call handling process which allows the call taker to be in a position to establish the details of a repeat caller before any words are spoken.

Criminal Justice Issues

The submission of reports at Tayside Police is assisted by on-line guidance being provided to officers via a software application incorporated into the case management system.

Dumfries & Galloway Police also provide on-line guidance to officers, during their case submission, however further guidance is provided by an officer who is located within the local Procurator Fiscals office who is in a position to problem solve and identify recurring concerns at an early stage of the process. This also allows for the early inclusion of an input by the Fiscal in specific cases.

Reporting & Recording

Strathclyde Police have entered into an agreement with the First Bus company whereby incidents of minor vandalism to buses where no injury occurs is reported via a fax submission to the force. This negates the need for either a representative from the bus company or a police officer from having to attend to report/receive the incident