



HM Inspectorate of Constabulary for Scotland

safety first

A THEMATIC INSPECTION OF PERSONAL PROTECTIVE
EQUIPMENT IN THE SCOTTISH POLICE SERVICE

safety **first**

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Contents

Executive Summary	ii
Introduction:	1
Duty to Protect	1
HMIC Thematic Inspection Methodology	3
Aim	4
Chapter 1: Data Capture	5
1.1 Understanding the Environment	5
1.2 Case Study - Boston Police Department	8
1.3 Collecting Data	10
Chapter 2: Equipment	11
2.1 Standard Officer Safety Equipment	11
2.2 Batons	11
2.3 CS Incapacitant Spray	13
2.4 Handcuffs	14
2.5 Additional Items of Equipment	15
2.6 Protective Body Armour	16
2.7 Care and Maintenance	22
Chapter 3: Training	23
3.1 A Core Skill	23
3.2 Recruit Training	23
3.3 Force Training	24
3.4 Reinforcing the Lessons	27
3.5 Developing Good Practice	27
Chapter 4: Operational Uniform	29
4.1 Drivers for Change	29
4.2 Agreed Principles	29
4.3 A Uniform Approach	30
Chapter 5: Future Developments	31
5.1 Uniform and Equipment	31
5.2 Less Lethal Technologies	32
List of Recommendations/Good Practice	35



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In delivering a service to the public, the role of police officers, special constables and police support staff can regularly involve a requirement to respond to situations involving confrontation and violence. Very often, these situations carry a clearly associated risk of personal injury.

Chief Officers and Police Authorities have, in common with other employers, many legal duties in respect of the safety of the staff in their employ. Statutory health and safety responsibilities require employers to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare of employees and others affected by their work activities.

Legal obligations aside, as caring employers, Chief Constables and Police Authorities strive to ensure the safety of their employees at all times and, as professional public servants, police officers aim to discharge their duty to protect the public to the highest possible standard. This frequently requires officers to place themselves directly between danger and the public whom they are sworn to protect. A most striking feature of police work is the constant variety and unpredictability that is inherent in dealing with human behaviour, emotion and activity. The potential for violence, confrontation and danger is ever present, yet occasionally not easy to foresee.

Throughout the United Kingdom, the provision of appropriate levels of physical protection and effective officer safety training receives consideration at the highest levels. Within Scotland, ACPOS maintains clear strategic ownership and ensures that due consideration and attention is given to developments in officer safety issues both throughout the UK and, indeed, across international boundaries.

After a decade of developments in the field of personal protective equipment, this thematic inspection represents a health check on officer safety in Scotland. The following issues were identified as significant factors in relation to the safety of operational police officers and support staff throughout Scotland:

- the ability to gather and analyse meaningful data
- the provision and deployment of appropriate equipment
- the delivery of effective, regular training.

HMIC has found that the Scottish Police Service has made steady progress in addressing officer safety issues in a balanced way which reflects its roots in community policing. The report highlights good practice in the areas of equipment, training and risk assessment. However, the report also identifies scope for further improvement, particularly as it relates to the potential for commonality and consistency of approach across all Scottish forces.

Taken together, HMIC is satisfied that the police service in Scotland has responded positively to the ever-changing threat to officer safety and the range of solutions available to deal with this threat.

INTRODUCTION

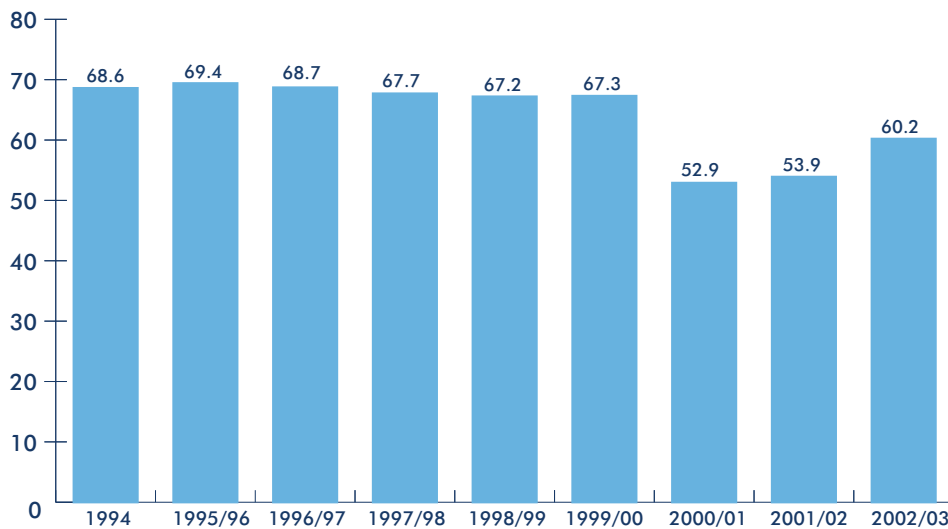
Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) has a statutory duty under section 33(3) of the Police (Scotland) Act 1967 (the 1967 Act) to report to Scottish Ministers on the effectiveness and efficiency of the police service in Scotland. This duty is discharged through an inspection programme that involves primary and review inspections of forces and common police services, as well as thematic inspections on areas of particular interest or concern.

The objective of thematic inspections is to establish the state of current practice by consulting widely with stakeholders and then formulating comment and recommendations to advance policing in the particular subject. Recommendations may be directed at individual forces or organisations, representative bodies and the Scottish Executive. HMIC revisits recommendations arising from thematic inspections during subsequent force primary and review inspections. Occasionally, a further thematic will be undertaken specifically to measure general progress made.

Duty to Protect

In delivering a service to the public, the role of police officers, special constables and police support staff can regularly involve a requirement to address confrontational and violent situations, which carry a clearly associated risk of personal injury. Thankfully, instances of members of staff being seriously injured or killed as a result of criminal activity do not occur frequently, however, over the past 10 years, as shown in the following table, a significant number of officers and members of staff were subjected to some form of physical assault.

Table 1: Total number of assaults over the last decade across Scotland, per 100 officers.



During the period 1994–2003, an average of 9519 assaults upon police staff were recorded each year. In simple numerical terms, this means that, on average, somewhere in Scotland, an officer is subjected to some form of physical assault at least once every hour.

The apparent reduction in the incidence of assault over the period 1999/00–2002/03 coincides with the introduction and full operational deployment of CS incapacitant spray, however, due to an insufficiency of sound statistical data, HMIC cannot be entirely sure as to what extent the reduction shown here was, in fact, influenced by the introduction of CS spray. It may well have had a significant impact, however, the lack of robust data in this regard leaves the subject somewhat inconclusive.

Chief Officers and Police Authorities have, in common with other employers, many legal duties in respect of the health, safety and welfare of the staff in their employ. The most relevant to this report are those outlined in Sections 2 and 3 of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974, Regulations 3 and 4 of the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999, aspects of the Police (Health and Safety) Act 1997, the Police (Health and Safety) Regulations 1999 and the Personal Protective Equipment at Work Regulations, 1992. Taken together, these statutory responsibilities require employers to ensure, as far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare of employees and others affected by their work activities.



Legal obligations aside, as caring employers, police forces strive to ensure the safety of their employees at all times and, as professional public servants, officers generally aim to discharge their duty to protect the public to the highest possible standard. This frequently requires officers to place themselves directly between danger and the public whom they are sworn to protect. A striking feature of police work is the constant variety and unpredictability that is inherent when dealing with human emotion and activity. The potential for violence, confrontation and danger is ever present, yet occasionally not easily or reasonably foreseen.


Protecting officers from, and equipping officers to deal effectively with, violent confrontation is also cost-effective. The time and money invested in safety is invariably outweighed by the savings in human suffering, legal costs, compensation, days lost to public service through injury and the need to replace equipment.

Throughout the United Kingdom, providing appropriate levels of physical protection and ensuring that officer safety training is entirely effective receives consideration at the highest levels within the service. Within Scotland, the Association of Chief Police Officers in Scotland (ACPOS) gives due consideration to developments both throughout the UK and, indeed, across international boundaries. On a national level, issues regarding protective equipment and officer safety training are progressed through the work of a variety of ACPOS committees, including the General Policing Standing Committee, the Uniform and Protective Equipment Group, the Personnel and Training Standing Committee, and the Occupational Health and Welfare Group. In addition, the Association of Police Health and Safety Advisors in Scotland ensures that a focus is kept upon the issue of officer and employee safety across Scottish forces. Within forces, officer safety and associated issues receive clear deliberation through the existence of a variety of uniform and protective equipment groups, many headed by a member of the force executive and comprising representatives from various interested parties throughout the force area, including operational and specialist practitioners, health and safety advisors and procurement specialists.

Following the introduction of rigid handcuffs in 1993/94, side-handled batons in 1994/95, body armour between 1996 and 1999 and CS spray in 1999, it was appropriate for HMIC to carry out a health check in relation to officer safety by way of thematic inspection.

HMIC Thematic Inspection Methodology

HMIC methodology is to conduct inspections through the use of protocols aligned with the Business Excellence Model created by the European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM). This provides a structured and comprehensive examination of key organisational functions and ensures HMIC inspections are evidence based. The approach is now established HMIC practice.



As part of this thematic inspection, the opportunity was taken to review literature and research that may assist the identification of equipment and approaches that might improve the current position in Scotland. With a similar objective, consultation was undertaken with other agencies that were in a position to offer useful information to the inspection, such as the Health and Safety Executive and the Police Scientific Development Branch.

Aim

The aim of this thematic inspection was to undertake an examination of the policies, protective equipment and training available to assist in securing the safety of police officers as they undertake routine operational duties.

The objectives were defined as follows:

- examine policies within forces regarding the wearing of body armour
- examine policies applied to assess personal safety risks and inform policing practice
- review the range and relative effectiveness of body armour used by police forces
- consider the range and relative effectiveness of equipment available to officers to assist them in violent confrontations
- review the training provided to officers in connection with their personal safety and protective equipment provided
- identify good practice
- make recommendations to enhance the safety of officers and promote effectiveness and efficiency.

It should be noted that the aim and objectives did not extend to an examination of policies and equipment associated with the police use of firearms.

The project was undertaken in a phased manner based on a strategic planning model, whereby key stages and milestones were identified. These stages included planning and preparation, information gathering and analysis of data. Following these stages, a formal inspection of forces was conducted by HMIC during January and February 2004. Inspection visits included an initial top level interview with senior staff in forces to identify key issues, followed by interviews with personnel who have particular responsibilities in this aspect of policing. In addition, front line staff were interviewed to ascertain the extent to which policy and equipment are considered practicable. Consultation visits were also undertaken with external agencies identified through the research and option appraisal processes. These agencies included the Health and Safety Executive, equipment manufacturers, the Police Scientific Development Branch and other police forces outwith Scotland. Following the inspection stage, a draft report on the thematic inspection was prepared and circulated to forces to ensure factual accuracy before the final report was completed.

CHAPTER 1

DATA CAPTURE

1.1 Understanding the Environment

Policing policies and practices across Scotland are continually being developed and adjusted as the social, economic and cultural environment changes. The principles of public service inform all aspects of Scottish policing and the developments around officer safety have been built upon the fundamental ideal of professionally protecting and serving the people of Scotland.

Understanding the contemporary operational policing environment is an important component in developing a sound and effective approach to both officer safety and public protection. Gathering relevant and accurate information is an essential element in coming to terms with the threats to officer and public safety. Having a clear understanding of the types of threat being faced is also a critical factor in terms of completing proper risk assessments.

The Scottish Police Service utilises statistical information, accredited research material and professional knowledge in the compilation of generic risk assessments. The risks and control measures involved in duties such as general patrol, escorting prisoners and dealing with violent confrontation are all clearly documented in a range of generic risk assessments currently in use. This process of general risk assessment is supplemented by a system of dynamic risk assessment, which can be applied by officers to spontaneous events and emerging operational circumstances.

HMIC noted that a number of forces issue their officers with a booklet providing detailed guidance upon the issue of dynamic risk assessment. HMIC considers this to be good practice.



At present, most Scottish forces utilise a number of different processes to gather a great deal of data with regards to both the prevalence and effects of violent confrontation. Some information is collected and retained to ensure that statutory obligations can be discharged, for example, details of injuries sustained by staff. Other information is gathered to help inform the general understanding of the prevalence and scope of violence within a force area, along with the effectiveness of police responses to that violence. In addition, much data is gathered for the purposes of criminal statistics and to assist in the operational management of policing areas. Health and Safety managers and advisors within forces play an important role in both the management of various risks and also in the collation of a variety of statistical information which can help inform forces as to the range and extent of the potential threats to staff safety. Importantly, this information can help in the development of control measures designed to remove or minimise the risks identified. HMIC noted wide variations in the range and scope of data being collected across Scotland. The lack of consistency in terms of the actual data being collected limits the ability to reach any meaningful conclusions as to frequency or intensity of physical attacks on police officers across Scotland and also stifles the potential to develop and share effective responses to possible emerging trends.

The following tables represent examples of the range and type of data routinely gathered across different Scottish police forces. Unfortunately, not all forces gather the same data or use the same criteria in relation to the definitions used.

Table 2: Police officer days lost through injury following assault.
(An example from one medium-size force)

Sickness and injury	Police days lost	
	2002-03	2001-02
Sickness or injury	10,519	7,561
Of which days lost as a result of assault/resist arrest	72	10
Of which days lost as a result of accident on duty	234	167
Total Assaults on Staff	238	76
No. of serious injury assaults	1	1
No. of minor injury assaults	54	65
No. of other (no injury) assaults	183	10

Table 3: Police assaults as a percentage of all assaults (April 2001 to March 2002)
(An example from one force)

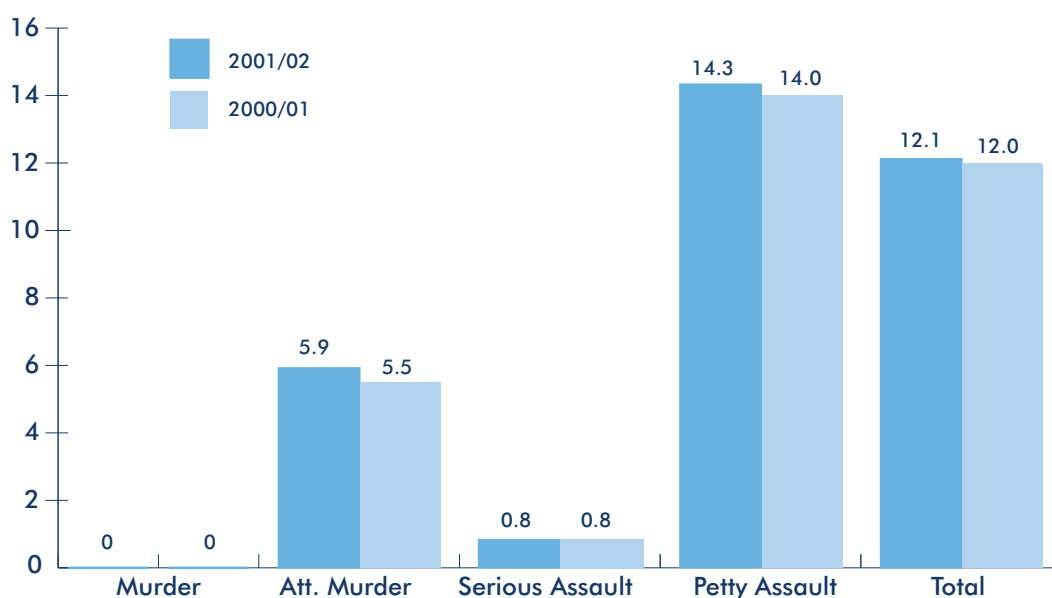
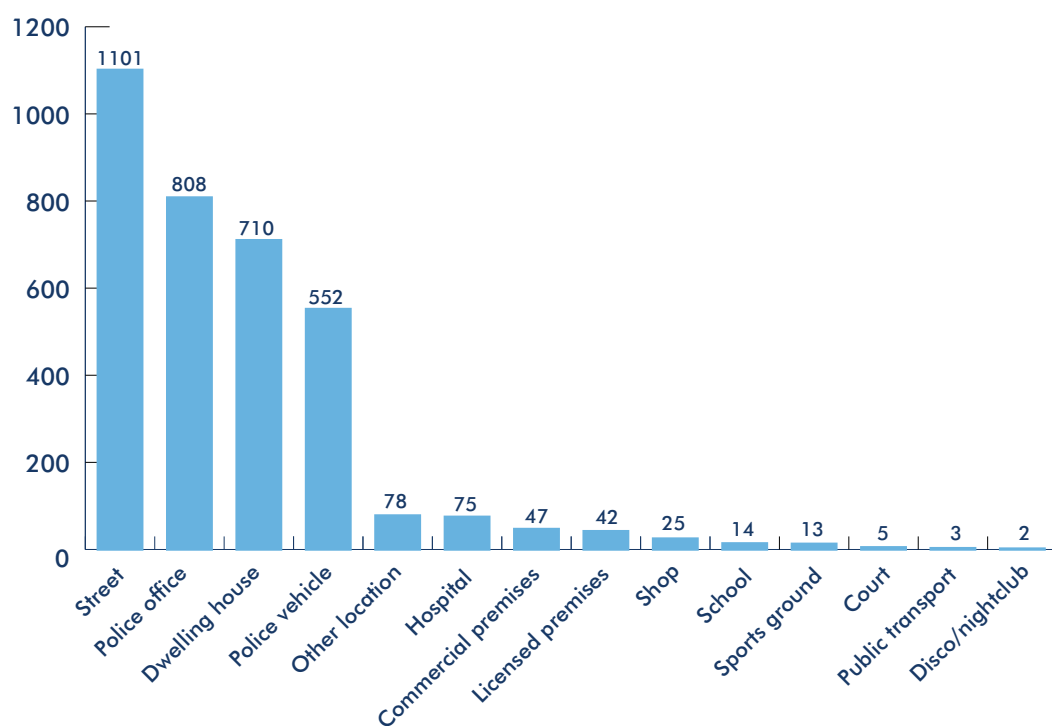



Table 4: Assaults upon police officers by location.
(An example from one large-size force)





Whilst the general information gathered across Scotland is of a similar nature, there is limited consistency in terms of the exact data gathered, how the required information is defined or indeed, the manner of collation and analysis. For this reason, it is difficult to identify clearly patterns of violent conduct towards officers across Scotland and the opportunity for forces to maximise upon shared learning in this arena is reduced greatly. Whilst there are some examples of information being utilised effectively within forces, occasionally the processes can appear cumbersome and bureaucratic in nature and it is not always clear as to how this processed information is used to inform force policy or operational practice. HMIC is of the view that there is scope to streamline these processes and develop a more consistent, coherent approach.

1.2 CASE STUDY - BOSTON POLICE DEPARTMENT

In November 2002, the Boston Police Department issued new regulations regarding the use of force and introduced a training programme for all police officers within the department. On completion of the training programme, a new, Use of Force Database was established to gather data on incidents involving the police use of force and the experience of violent confrontation.

The development of an automated incident based police 'use of force' reporting and analysis tool is now beginning to provide significant policy, training and management benefits for the Boston Police Department, along with the associated benefits it provides for the public of Boston. The Use of Force Database provides comprehensive information regarding the extent and range of violent confrontation, along with detailed information on the effectiveness of the police officer's response to each situation. As well as detailing the incidence of confrontation, issues such as the suspect's resistance level, officer and suspect injury, type of crime involved, location, time of incident and age and experience of the officer are all examples of the kind of data that is captured and available for closer scrutiny or analysis.

A more detailed and accurate picture of the extent of violent confrontation between police officers and the citizens of Boston has provided real benefits in terms of resource deployment, training and guidance, and the development of more effective methods of approaching the issue of violent conflict. A further benefit has related to the enhanced ability of the Boston Police Department to respond to questions or enquiries from any source regarding the police use of force or, indeed, their officers' involvement in responding to violent situations.

The following two tables provide an example of the type of data collected and analysed within the Boston Police area.

Table 5: Officers with over 50 repeat use of force incidents (Boston Police Department)

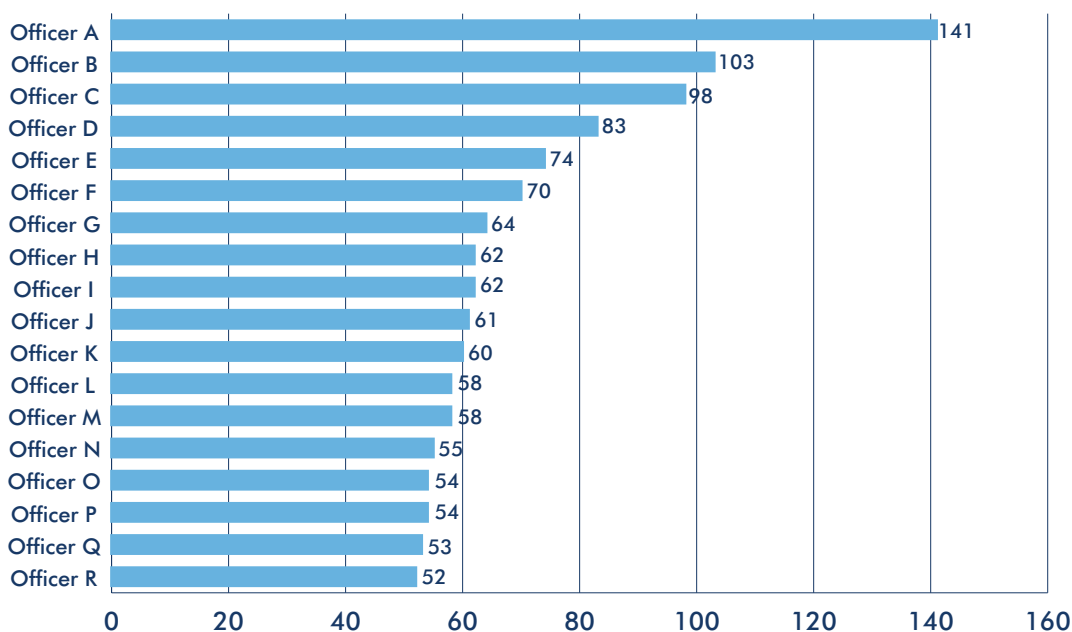
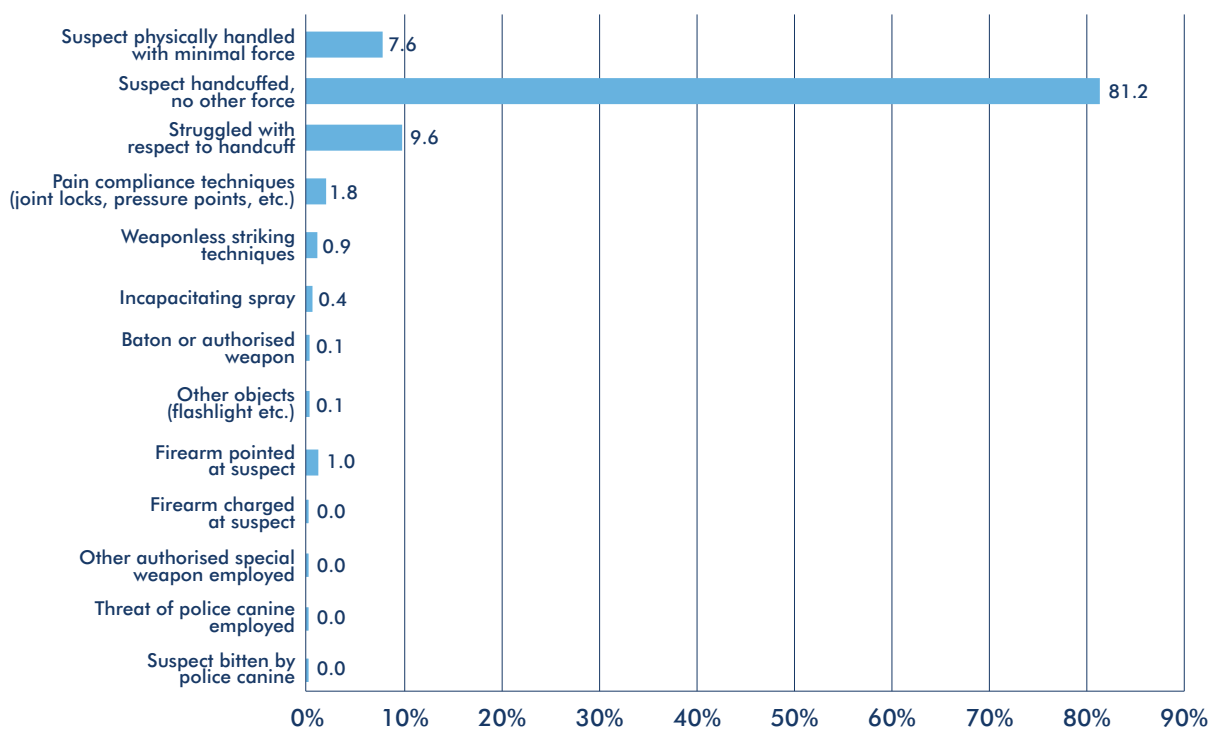


Table 6: Level of force used (Boston Police Department)





1.3 Collecting Data

HMIC has identified that there is scope for Scottish forces to give further careful consideration to the issue of data collection, especially regarding scope and range of the information to be collected. There is clearly benefit in having a detailed understanding of the prevalence and range of violence occurring across Scotland, and indeed in developing a fuller knowledge of what constitutes an effective police response. It is important that in addition to the discharge of statutory obligations, forces focus their efforts on collecting and analysing data that provides meaning and value in this area. Efforts to reduce the bureaucratic burden upon the service, demand that forces ensure that the information being gathered must have real relevance or impact upon policing policy or practice.

At present, staff working within the Scottish Police Information Strategy (SPIS) are developing a human resources application for the Scottish Police Service. This personnel system represents a real opportunity to streamline the recording processes in relation to the recording of data regarding violent confrontations and the associated police response. Provided the service grasps this opportunity to define clearly the information that is considered meaningful in this arena, it offers the potential for a reduction in bureaucracy, an elimination of duplication, an enhanced analysis capability (especially around individual officer performance) and the provision of a limited asset management capability in relation to protective equipment. HMIC is of the view that careful planning for, and management of, this significant development would also provide a platform for a consistent approach to officer safety across Scottish forces.

HMIC recommends that ACPOS identifies the range, scope and type of data that adds value to the development of policy, operational response and training in the arena of confronting violence and conflict. HMIC recommends the development of an agreed Scottish-wide approach to this issue.

CHAPTER 2 EQUIPMENT

2.1 Standard Officer Safety Equipment

Over the last decade, a growing concern about the safety of officers and the obvious inadequacies of protective equipment available has led to a number of developments in the field of police officer safety. These developments have resulted in front line operational officers across Scotland being routinely issued with a range of equipment designed to assist their personal protection as they serve the public.

Today, the core of an operational officer's safety equipment comprises the following items:

- baton
- CS spray
- handcuffs
- protective body armour.

2.2 Batons

Seven of the eight Scottish forces now issue a 'straight' autolock or friction lock baton to operational officers. This type of baton is primarily designed as a striking weapon to be deployed in the most extreme situations where officers require to increase the level of force being used to protect themselves or the public from violent attack, or on occasions when the potential for violence or resistance is present. The 'straight', extendable style baton is lightweight and can be easily carried in its contracted state. It extends to a length of between 21–24 inches depending upon the model. Initial and refresher training in the skills required to use this type of baton is relatively straightforward and can be delivered in a fairly short timescale.





One Scottish force issues a slightly different style of baton to uniformed operational officers. This baton, which was deployed across most other Scottish forces until fairly recently, is known as the PR 24 side handled extending baton. This item of equipment can be utilised as a striking weapon in much the same manner as the 'straight' baton. However, this style of baton has increased potential to be utilised in a more defensive, blocking type manner. This baton is more awkward to carry and training, in relation to the fundamental skills needed to use it effectively, is marginally more involved than for the 'straight' baton.

Table 7: Recent use of batons across Scottish police forces

Year	Total	Rate per 100 officers
2001/02	292	1.9
2002/03	262	1.7

(Figures include instances of baton being drawn but not used to strike)

Since the introduction of CS incapacitant spray across Scotland between 1999 and 2001, most forces have witnessed a reduction in the actual use of batons by their officers. Officers who are confronted with extreme violence are finding that the drawing and deployment of CS spray affords them the opportunity to maintain a greater distance from a potential attacker. This has resulted in a reduced requirement for a baton with defensive, blocking type characteristics and has, in the main, allowed the migration from such batons to the more easily carried, and less visually obtrusive 'straight' style of baton.

HMIC is supportive of the migration to 'straight' style batons and would encourage Scottish forces to seek to capitalise upon the opportunities presented by a common, Scotland-wide approach to this item of equipment. As well as shared learning in relation to the deployment and use of such equipment, forces should be in a position to maximise the advantage of the joint procurement opportunity that may be offered if a preferred manufacturer and supplier of a 'straight' baton can be agreed upon.

2.3 CS Incapacitant Spray

CS incapacitant spray is made up of the white crystalline solid chemical, chlorobenzylidene malononitrile, dissolved in a chemical solvent, namely methyl isobutyl ketone. These two chemicals are then pressurised within a canister by means of nitrogen gas. The spray is delivered from the hand-held canister in a liquid stream and can be directed very accurately. It has a maximum range of 4.5 metres (15ft) and is normally accurate to a range of 3 metres (10ft). A burst of CS incapacitant spray into the face will normally affect eyes, respiratory system and skin, causing severe discomfort and, in normal circumstances, temporary incapacitation. HMIC is unaware of any evidence of lasting side-effects, however, in a small number of cases, CS can cause flaking or blistering of the skin 6-8 hours after spraying.

In Scotland, following extensive trials in the Strathclyde and Tayside police areas, formal authority was given for the issue and deployment of CS incapacitant spray across all forces. During the period 1999 to 2001, Scottish forces conducted extensive training programmes and completed the transition to full operational deployment of CS spray.

Only those officers formally trained and certified in the use of CS spray are authorised to carry or use the spray. It is stressed in all training programmes that CS spray may only be used as a response option in circumstances where an officer perceives that there is a significant threat of harm or violence and the use of the CS spray is proportional to that threat.



Table 8: Recent use of CS spray across Scottish police forces.

Year	Total	Rate per 100 officers
2001/02	403	2.6
2002/03	382	2.5

(Figures include instances of CS spray being drawn but not discharged)

2.4 Handcuffs

For purposes of effective restraint and control, all Scottish forces issue 'rigid' style handcuffs to operational officers along with detailed written policies on the appropriate use of such handcuffs. Such use includes occasions when it is thought that an escape may be attempted, where an attempt at rescue may be made or where the prisoner appears to be especially hostile or threatens violence. In some circumstances, the appropriate use of handcuffs can avoid the need for an officer to resort to a greater use of force.

Restraint and control handcuffs are only effective if officers are proficient and skilled in their proper use and all officers require initial and refresher training in this regard. Whilst handcuffs are an essential and fairly routinely used part of an officer's safety equipment, their use generates many complaints by persons subjected to the experience. Where this amounts to an allegation of assault, the complaint is referred to the Area Procurator Fiscal to enable him/her to consider, independently, the issue of criminal proceedings.



All 'rigid' handcuffs being utilised in Scotland are manufactured by the same company and HMIC is pleased to note that forces have adopted a standard approach in relation to this item of equipment.

2.5 Additional Items of Equipment

HMIC noted that a number of forces across Scotland have extended the range of protective equipment available to officers.

Some forces are now issuing restraint belts, sometimes referred to as leg restraints or emergency restraint belts. These items of equipment are often carried in vehicles and can be readily deployed to assist officers struggling to restrain extremely violent people. With appropriate training, these items represent a valuable aid to operational officers faced with trying to control exceptionally violent individuals safely.

Other items include the availability of devices designed to improve officer safety during routine searches of suspects and vehicles. These devices resemble large tongs and can be used by officers to search confined, concealed areas, such as pockets or pouches, safely. Again, properly used, these items of equipment can help prevent serious injury and damage to operational police officers and members of support staff.

In one force, HMIC was informed of the issue of knife/slash resistant gloves to officers for use in routine operational environments. This kind of protective glove can offer everyday practical protection to an often vulnerable part of an officer's body.

HMIC recognises the increased availability and provision of additional items of protective equipment, such as emergency restraint belts, search and retrieval devices and knife/slash resistant gloves, subject to suitable approval, as good practice.

All the items mentioned above are now routinely issued or made available to officers across all or many of the Scottish forces and HMIC would urge forces to use this platform to achieve a consistency of approach which would not only assist in the generation of shared learning as the equipment is deployed, but also offers a real possibility of achieving best value in the procurement of such equipment.

HMIC recommends that ACPOS gives consideration to the question of commonality of protective equipment to ensure that opportunities for shared learning and development are realised along with the potential financial benefits of joint procurement of such equipment.

2.6 Protective Body Armour

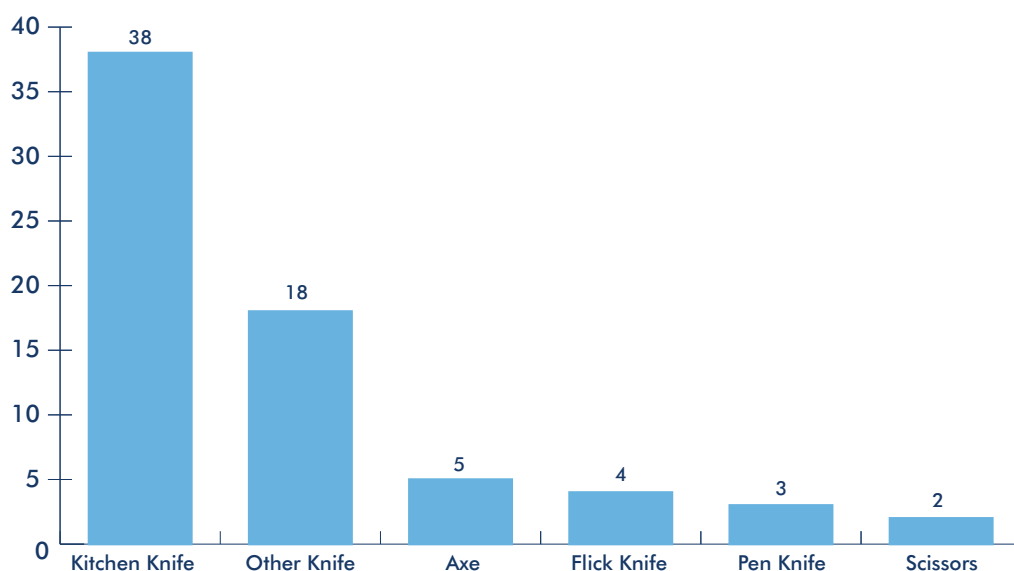
Health and Safety Regulations require that, where practicable, all work activities must be assessed in terms of the safety risks posed to the individuals carrying out the required tasks. In the main, these risk assessments should identify the potential dangers and define the safest means of completing tasks and this may include looking for alternative, safer approaches. The provision of items of personal protective equipment such as body armour is seen as a final protective measure, when all other safer working avenues have been explored. One of the major positive developments in the protective equipment issued to operational police officers has undoubtedly been the advances made in relation to the availability of dual purpose protective body armour. This type of body armour can provide protection against bladed weapon attack and a limited level of protection against certain small calibre firearms.



Fortunately, attacks on police officers involving firearms are still relatively rare. Data in relation to attacks involving knives or bladed weapons is not consistently collected across Scotland, however, examination of incident records indicate that officers are regularly called to deal with situations where knives or other sharp instruments are involved. The deaths of Constable Lewis Fulton in Glasgow in 1994, Detective Constable Stephen Oake in Manchester in 2003 and the recent death of Detective Constable Michael Swindells in Birmingham, represent a stark reminder of the lethal nature of bladed weapons.

The following table shows data collected in a large-size force with regards to the incidence of assaults upon officers where knives or other bladed weapons were used, during the period April 2001 – March 2002.

Table 9: Assaults on police officers where knives/bladed weapons used (2001/02)
(An example from one force)



The development and, ultimately, the deployment of protective body armour reflects the unique role that police officers play in responding to situations where issues of personal protection are involved. Serving and protecting the public can often require an officer to confront violence and conflict and, often, the officer's duty requires that a course of active intervention must be pursued. In such circumstances, the Scottish Police Service has recognised that providing protective body armour to individual officers can assist in securing the officer's and, ultimately, the public's safety.

Regardless of whether the threat to an officer is a bullet, a knife or a brick, the essential requirements of protective body armour are the same. An interaction must be established to capture the projectile and extract its kinetic energy, which must then be dispersed to prevent local damage to the armour or wearer. Both these aims need to be achieved without penetration or significant rearwards protrusion into the armour wearer. In addition, the armour itself must be as comfortable as possible to wear.



Standards of protective capability for various body armours are set by the Police Scientific Development Branch of the Home Office. The publication of these standards has allowed manufacturers to test and certify their armour against both ballistic and knife stab/slash resistant criteria. This allows forces to select armour appropriate to their operational requirements and to provide a level of protection to officers which matches a certain standard.



Since initial trials in Strathclyde in 1993, a great deal of progress has been made in relation to the protective capabilities, weight and general wearability of such body armour. For the past 10 years or so, Scottish forces have been issuing protective body armour to operational officers and many are now in the situation where replacement armour is being considered. Manufacturers now produce body armour which is both relatively lightweight and comfortable, but still provides a certified level of protection against both handgun attack and penetration by knife stab or slash. Operational use of such protective armour has provided some considerable evidence of the secondary protection afforded by armour, in relation to reducing the impact of trauma, occasioned not by knives or firearms, but by physical blows, punches and kicks. Armour has also been identified as a factor in reducing the impact injuries caused following road traffic collisions.

At present, all Scottish forces issue protective body armour to operational officers, however, two distinct policies exist in relation to the wearing of body armour. Some forces insist upon operational officers wearing armour whenever they are engaged in frontline, operational duties, while other forces issue the armour, but indicate that the wearing, in routine circumstances, is a matter of individual choice, this choice being informed by a process of general or dynamic risk assessment. Whilst there are undoubtedly differences across Scotland in terms of policing environments, it is difficult to account for the difference in body armour wearing policies. A secondary difference in relation to the issue and wearing of body armour relates to the particular rank of an officer. Some force body armour policies do not include reference to or, indeed, apply to officers above a certain rank, often Chief Inspector. HMIC takes the view that this is not sustainable, as any policy should be about the task to be carried out and if officers, of whatever rank, are in a public environment and are likely to be in a position where they are clearly identifiable as police officers, then they are as likely as any police officer to be faced with the potential for confrontation or violence.

The general operational policing environment in Scotland suggests an unpredictable potential for violent confrontation. The very nature of some human behaviours inevitably brings police officers into direct conflict with other people. There is often no realistic opportunity to gather information which would properly inform a dynamic risk assessment. In other words, confrontation can arise from the most unlikely or unexpected circumstances. Given this position, any risk assessment must incorporate an element of, or allow for, this unpredictability. Operational police officers and leaders of the service are aware of the general potential for unexpected or unpredicted violence. In such circumstances, HMIC takes the view that the only logical policy for the wearing of body armour involves a mandatory requirement for all officers, irrespective of rank, to wear body armour when engaged in such operational activities.

It is recognised that such a policy can only be feasible when the body armour issued is functional and practical to wear for prolonged operational duties. The introduction of a consistent, mandatory body armour wearing policy across Scotland depends upon the ability of all Scottish forces to acquire and issue armour that is fit for wearing under such a policy. Due to the different stages of forces armour procurement contracts, it is recognised that achieving this position may take time. However, there is no doubt that manufacturers are now producing armour that is both relatively lightweight and fairly flexible and, as a consequence, is generally comfortable enough to wear over a standard operational tour of duty.

Given the diverse physiological make up of Scottish police officers, there can occasionally be issues regarding the individual comfort and fit of protective body armour. Forces need to work closely with manufacturers, their own Occupational Health and Welfare Departments and individual officers to ensure that any personal difficulties can be overcome. This can include providing moulded front armour panels or extra adjustment capability. At present, there does not seem to be a definitive answer to the question of achieving an ideal fit and there is evidence of conflicting opinion on the merit or otherwise of providing moulded armour. Ultimately, the issue of individual comfort will come down to individual physiology and forces should make suitable arrangements to ensure that all officers who are subject to a mandatory body armour wearing policy are able to wear their personal issue armour without any excessive discomfort. The individual tailoring of armour, and clear, adequate guidance on adjustments are the most important elements in trying to achieve a proper and comfortable fit.

HMIC noted that a number of forces made special efforts to engage with individual officers, manufacturers, occupational health departments and specialists in a bid to ensure that body armour was individually tailored and issued with appropriate wearing and adjustment guidance. HMIC regards this approach as good practice.

A fully mandatory body armour wearing policy also needs to retain a degree of flexibility. Individual officers should be in a position to carry out a clearly defined risk assessment of the task to be performed, and if no reasonably foreseeable risk is present, then the officer should be empowered within the policy to make an individual decision not to wear armour for the period they are engaged in that task. For example, an officer delivering a talk at a local primary school may identify no risk during the actual talk, and choose to remove body armour for that specific task. It must be stressed that this flexibility would not authorise officers to remove armour in any situation where they are not able to perform a risk assessment properly, due to lack of available information. Under such a policy, routine patrol, where an officer is available to be tasked to respond to any type of situation, will always require the wearing of protective body armour. In other words, policies should state clearly that the default position for operational officers is that protective armour will be worn.

HMIC is of the view that mandatory body armour wearing policies should apply to all operational police officers, of whatever rank, where they have operational roles or operational tasks to perform. It may be recognised within the policy that, where it is feasible and practical, some sections of the service may exercise the option to carry out risk assessments on a more routine basis and may be in a position to elect not to wear protective armour on a more regular basis than operational response/patrol officers. This could include, for example, fraud squad officers, working on tasks which they can clearly assess as posing no reasonably foreseeable risk of violent confrontation. Furthermore, there may be occasions when officers working in plain clothes need to rely upon their anonymity for safety rather than on physical protection. Where a risk assessment indicates that this is clearly the case, and the wearing of body armour is likely to reduce an officer's safety, then of course it would not be sensible to expect officers to wear armour in such circumstances. Mandatory wearing policies should clearly highlight the value of proper risk assessment in this type of situation.

Body armour wearing policies must also document clearly the role and responsibilities of supervisors in relation to ensuring that such policies are properly adhered to.



HMIC is of the view that the physical protection of police officers engaged in operational response duties is best secured by the introduction of an agreed generic mandatory body armour wearing policy across Scotland. HMIC is, however, aware of the complexities of introducing such a policy across Scotland and recognises that ACPOS would wish to engage in a wide-ranging debate with staff associations, both locally and nationally, to enable the development and implementation of an agreed mandatory protective body armour wearing policy. The views expressed within this section are intended to stimulate and help inform such a debate.

HMIC recommends that ACPOS, in consultation with the other police staff associations, reaches agreement upon the detail of a generic mandatory protective body armour wearing policy to be adopted throughout Scotland.

Whilst the issue of body armour to members of force support staff does not fall within the original remit of this thematic inspection, HMIC did note that a number of Scottish forces were examining this particular issue and it may be useful if comment is made in this regard. As previously mentioned, Health and Safety Regulations require that, where feasible, all work activities must be assessed in terms of the safety risks posed to the individuals carrying out the required tasks.



The provision of items of personal protective equipment such as body armour is seen as a final protective measure. In essence then, if members of force support staff can readily remove themselves from potential danger or conflict, then that would be the preferable approach. HMIC does, however, recognise that some members of support staff are required to fulfil certain tasks which undoubtedly expose the member of staff to potential confrontation and where it is not feasible or practical to distance themselves completely from the threat. In these circumstances, where the risk assessment indicates potential for violence, then HMIC supports the issue of personal protective body armour to force support staff.

HMIC noted that a number of forces already issue protective body armour to members of force support staff engaged in duties where an element of risk of violent confrontation was apparent and where there exists no realistic opportunity for that member of staff to remove him/herself from the potential confrontation. HMIC considers this to be good practice.



2.7 Care and Maintenance

Regulation 7 of the Personal Protective Equipment At Work Regulations 1992 requires that all items of personal protective equipment are properly maintained and regularly inspected to ensure that the equipment remains functional and fit for purpose. In addition, there is a requirement to maintain records of such inspections and certification that the equipment is fully functional. Strictly speaking, in terms of the equipment examined within the remit of this inspection, only protective body armour fits the criteria defined under the Personal Protective Equipment Regulations, however, it makes entirely sound business sense to ensure that all items of safety equipment issued to operational police officers are subjected to an inspection and maintenance regime. The previously mentioned asset management function of the Scottish Police Information Strategy's Human Resource application may provide a vehicle to facilitate at least some of the requirement to maintain records of equipment inspections and checks, especially if allied to a regular training regime, when officers and their equipment should be available for examination.

HMIC recommends that forces introduce a documented process to ensure that all items of officer safety equipment are properly maintained and inspected on a regular basis.

CHAPTER 3 TRAINING

3.1 A Core Skill

Dealing effectively with conflict and violent confrontation is a core skill of the operational police officer. Providing a quality of service to the public requires all officers to be competent and confident in their ability to respond appropriately to situations where extreme human emotions and reactions are involved. All officers need the ability to communicate effectively, diffuse potentially violent situations and, when necessary, deploy an appropriate amount of legitimate and proportionate force if order and control are to be maintained. Training officers to the required level of competence and confidence in such a fundamental part of their public service duties is therefore of vital importance to the service.

It is recognised that the service has made great strides over the last decade in relation to the training provision designed to ensure that officers are able to respond effectively to the often complex and emotionally charged situations they encounter. Today, throughout Scottish forces, there is undoubtedly a strong emphasis placed upon officer safety and the training required to achieve the appropriate levels of competence in this fundamental area of police work.

3.2 Recruit Training

Before being deployed on operational duties for the first time, all probationary constables are trained at the Scottish Police College in all aspects of officer safety training, with the exception of CS spray training. When CS spray was initially introduced across Scottish forces, training was required for all operational officers, not just probationary constables, and in this regard individual force training departments undertook this responsibility.

Within the probationary officer safety training programme, there is clear and unequivocal emphasis placed upon communication skills and the need to respond to conflict or confrontation in an entirely appropriate and proportionate manner. Probationary officers complete their initial training and leave the Scottish Police College with a clear understanding of their legal duties and powers, along with a range of competencies in the appropriate use of their officer safety equipment. Including training in the deployment and use of CS spray would ensure that all newly appointed recruits arrived at their first operational stations fully equipped and prepared in relation to this important aspect of their duties.





HMIC recommends that initial officer safety training at the Scottish Police College should be extended to include training in the deployment and use of CS incapacitant spray.

Officer safety training at the Scottish Police College would be simplified to a degree if all Scottish forces utilised the same types of equipment. This is especially relevant in relation to the types of baton used, as different training requirements are involved, dependent upon the type or style of baton utilised. Whilst officer safety trainers at the Scottish Police College have the ability and enthusiasm to deliver safety training to accommodate individual force needs, there is little doubt that, from a practical point of view, it is entirely sensible to continue to pursue common standards of equipment thus allowing the benefits of simplified training regimes and shared learning to be realised.

3.3 Force Training

Following the initial probationer training at the Scottish Police College, individual forces provide one-day refresher training in relation to officer safety either every 12 months or once every 24 months. This training is delivered to all operational officers and special constables and represents a considerable investment in officers' time. There are some differences across Scottish forces with regards to the rank at which officer safety training is no longer deemed appropriate. Some forces do not train officers from Superintendent rank and above. Whilst there may be good reason for not training some officers, HMIC takes the view that if an officer, of whatever rank, has an operational role or is required to be deployed in an operational capacity, then that officer should be suitably equipped and trained to perform the functions and duties required of an operational officer.

HMIC recommends that all officers who are required to undertake operational duties, irrespective of rank, should be appropriately equipped and trained.

Individual forces have developed training programmes in accordance with the range and type of equipment being deployed. All forces deliver a full initial training package for special constables and most forces have developed a refresher programme involving one day's training every 12 months for all operational officers. This refresher training timescale was developed following the introduction of the 'Monadnock' PR 24 extendable baton, the manufacturers of which suggested a 12-month refresher period was obligatory if forces wished to avail themselves of the follow-up support of that company. Good practice developments also suggested that regular refresher training was appropriate for both handcuffs and CS spray but, in actual fact, there is no legal requirement or obligation which specifies a timescale for this refresher training. The timescales for refresher training have, to a large extent, been a matter of professional judgement on behalf of individual force management. This judgement has taken into account a wide range of views and professional practice across the UK, as well as receiving informed thoughts from the training practitioners and officers who are required

to deploy the equipment and skills on an operational basis. During the inspection visits, operational officers and officer safety trainers expressed an almost universal enthusiasm for regular and, at the very least, annual refresher training in officer safety issues and techniques. HMIC was impressed by the practical knowledge and general enthusiasm of operational officers and officer safety trainers across Scotland.

All forces have comprehensive and clearly detailed officer safety training manuals and there is a great deal of consistency in the actual training programmes delivered. Again, the emphasis is largely upon the communication skills required to deal effectively with confrontation and diffuse potentially violent situations. This approach is entirely consistent with the Scottish police ethos of public service but, in recognising that violence and confrontation are sometimes an inevitable part of policing, the training also provides a consistency across Scotland in relation to legal powers and the principle of the proportionate use of legitimate force. These two clearly defined aspects of training are then supported by inputs that are designed to teach the basic motor skills and competencies involved in using equipment like handcuffs, batons and CS spray. In the fullest training programmes, officer safety training also encompasses details of the possible effects of the use of force and, importantly, what actions officers can take to mitigate the impact of these effects.





HMIC found a considerable amount of good practice in the arena of police officer safety training:

In one force, general medical practitioners have been involved in the production of a training video designed specifically to provide guidance to police officers on the medical implications or consequences of individuals being involved in violent confrontation or indeed being subjected to the police use of force.

In one force, a comprehensive distance learning package provides an excellent medium for testing and refreshing knowledge prior to officers undertaking the more practical aspects of their training input.

The inclusion of risk assessment awareness training as part of the general officer safety refresher training.

In many forces, following detailed risk assessment, appropriate aspects of officer safety training are being provided to certain members of support staff, such as custody officers, traffic wardens and public counter staff.

The delivery of practical training to officers in many Scottish forces. The focus upon creating scenarios that simulate the operational environment is welcomed by officers and there is a clear indication that this kind of training provides a meaningful method of enhancing an officer's competence and confidence when dealing with conflict or violent confrontation.

Some forces have taken the pro-active step of inviting procurators fiscal and defence agents to officer safety training demonstrations. These practical demonstrations allow both fiscals and defence agents to see and hear at first hand the emphasis placed upon communication and the focus upon the proportionality of the various techniques deployed.

HMIC did observe that most training programmes and regimes did not allow a great deal of flexibility in relation to differences of aptitude or capability among individual officers. The same basic training input was often provided, in a one size fits all type of way, to all operational officers, despite their practical experiences or indeed their own level of competence or confidence. HMIC found examples of operational officers in a number of forces, who had sought extra training and guidance during their tours of duty, as they identified a lack of confidence in their own ability to discharge their responsibilities effectively when confronted with conflict or potentially violent individuals.

3.4 Reinforcing the Lessons

Given the fundamental importance of officers professionally discharging their responsibilities in terms of dealing with violence and confrontation, HMIC is of the view that there is a definite, regular requirement to continue to reinforce and refresh those vital communication skills, knowledge of legal powers and the practical application of tactics and manoeuvres that are so vital to effective individual performance in this area. The commendable focus upon officer, and thus public safety, needs to be maintained and the importance of officer effectiveness in this arena must remain a priority for all Scottish forces. Clearer and more imaginative consideration of individual officer needs would be of real value and may perhaps represent an opportunity to introduce a less rigid method of addressing refresher training. The use of distance learning packages may help officers prepare for training, and also better assess their own level of competence in relation to the skills required when dealing with violence and conflict. Training is about so much more than simply the required motor skills and there is a need to reinforce continually and clearly the officer safety message if officers are to protect themselves and the public they serve properly.

HMIC recommends that forces continue to maintain a clear focus upon operational officer safety and that refresher training is provided to all officers on an annual basis. Within such refresher training programmes, forces should also consider how best to address individual officer needs.

3.5 Developing Good Practice

Sharing professional knowledge, good practice and ongoing developments in the world of officer safety has previously been facilitated through a semi formal arrangement whereby officer safety trainers from across Scotland met on a fairly infrequent basis. HMIC noted that such a meeting of force trainers had not taken place for some considerable time and, consequently, the opportunity to share knowledge and experience, as it continues to develop across Scotland, has been lost. HMIC recognises the need to link training developments with wider operational experience and is of the view that there is considerable value in operational practitioners and safety trainers sharing knowledge and best practice as the world of officer safety continues to develop. There are a number of different ways in which such an objective could be achieved and HMIC would not wish to be prescriptive in this regard. However, it would seem appropriate for ACPOS to consider how best to facilitate the sharing of knowledge and information in both the practical and training arenas.

HMIC recommends that ACPOS adopts an effective mechanism to facilitate the wider sharing of knowledge and good practice across Scotland in the field of operational officer safety.



CHAPTER **4** OPERATIONAL UNIFORM

4.1 Drivers for Change

The subject of operational police officers uniform did not form a part of the original remit for the thematic inspection on personal protective equipment, however, HMIC recognises that the types and style of police uniform are intimately affected by the operational safety equipment and articles that are an essential part of a police officer's everyday toolkit. Developments over recent years in the style and range of uniform items available have all been influenced, to at least some degree, by the need to accommodate the carrying and wearing of items of personal safety equipment, such as utility belts for handcuffs and batons or holders for personal radios. The introduction of body armour has played a significant part in driving the need to develop the standard operational police uniform and it is recognised that the recommendation to introduce standardised mandatory protective body armour wearing policies across Scotland may further impact upon the development of uniform styles.

In December 2002, a working group was established under the auspices of the ACPOS General Policing Standing Committee to examine police uniform and equipment issues. The remit of this group was defined in the following terms:

- to explore the feasibility of a common standard and style of uniform to be procured for the Scottish Police Service
- to ensure consistency in the Scottish Police Service in relation to the provision and procurement of officer safety equipment (and training in its use), including ongoing development.

4.2 Agreed Principles

In the short time the group has been meeting, a great deal has been achieved and a number of sound principles have been agreed which will allow for uniform development on a Scottish wide basis. One of these principles revolves around the requirement for operational police uniform and officer safety equipment to be considered in a holistic way, ensuring that any design captures the integral relationship between uniform and equipment required on an everyday basis. HMIC is of the view that uniform and equipment must be practical and fit for purpose, achieving a balance between safety, practicality, comfort, durability and smartness of image and presentation. Scottish forces have all recognised the value in approaching the issue of operational uniform in this holistic way and this has led to agreement regarding the principle of 'building'

a uniform appearance and incorporating a 'layering' concept to facilitate the wearing of body armour. If body armour is an integral part of the uniform, as a mandatory wearing policy would suggest, then it is important that all efforts are made to ensure that the effects of excessive heat and moisture from perspiration are managed effectively. People will struggle to perform at their best if these important comfort factors are not properly addressed.

4.3 A Uniform Approach

Developing a standardised uniform for the Scottish Police Service relies upon forces finding agreement across a number of areas and the adoption of the principles outlined certainly provide a helpful impetus towards reaching the required consensus. It is too easy to allow personal preferences to influence unduly the choices made with regards to uniform style. However, there are occasionally justifications for differences of approach in this arena and, in recognising this, ACPOS has agreed to the production of a 'catalogue' of uniform garments from which an overall Scottish police uniform will be drawn. Work on this catalogue is being progressed by the ACPOS Uniform and Protective Equipment Group and it is hoped that it will be completed by the late autumn of 2004. This should allow the Scottish Police Service to realise real benefits in relation to joint procurement when uniform contracts are renewed in early 2005. HMIC acknowledges that this approach is eminently sensible and would fully support the concept of a 'Scottish catalogue'. However, there is a distinct need to keep approved uniform items to a minimum to avoid the catalogue becoming just a long list of individual force preferences. Too many options would ultimately frustrate attempts to achieve a realistic form of standardisation and damage the potential to realise the benefits of joint procurement. ACPOS needs to commit fully to the concept and reality of a limited catalogue if the benefits of standardisation and joint procurement are to be realised.



HMIC recommends that ACPOS continues to pursue and commit to the concept of a limited catalogue of uniform garments for the operational police officer.

CHAPTER 5


FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS

5.1 Uniform and Equipment

Equipment and material manufacturers are undoubtedly enthusiastic about exploiting the opportunity to provide protective equipment and clothing to the police service across the UK. Developments in Europe and the United States provide further opportunities to examine the products, now available, that are designed to provide police officers and law enforcement personnel with personal protection. Materials and equipment are being developed at an astonishing rate, and it is now possible to identify some form of personal protective equipment for almost every part of the body. Protection for the hands, legs, arms and head are all being marketed in a world increasingly aware of the threats to individual safety. In relation to protective body armour, ongoing developments are leading to greater overall wearer comfort as the armour gets lighter and more flexible, without loss of protective capability.

Throughout all these developments, it is clear that the Scottish Police Service is maintaining a sense of perspective about what the real risks and dangers are and are likely to be as the Scottish policing environment continues to develop. Police officers throughout Scotland continue to be an integral part of the communities they serve and their ability to communicate effectively with all sections of Scottish society will remain an important element in ensuring that conflict and confrontation are managed effectively.

The ongoing work of the ACPOS Uniform and Protective Equipment Group provides a model of how the Scottish service can position itself to recognise the common emerging threats and dangers, agree the most appropriate and effective methods of responding to that threat and to move forward in a consistent, coherent manner. HMIC is of the view that this balanced approach, if commitment can be maintained, should allow Scottish police forces to realise real benefits in terms of shared learning and, of course, best value in the opportunities provided through joint procurement of modern officer safety equipment and associated uniform.



Personal protective equipment will undoubtedly continue to develop. However, a major influence on the future safety and wellbeing of Scottish police officers and support staff will still revolve around their skill and abilities in the art of verbal communication. Distance from a potential attacker and time to assess the risk presented, provide the staple ingredients for successful communication and conflict resolution. It is recognised however, that even the most skilled of communicators may not be able to diffuse a situation or persuade a violent individual to cooperate peacefully. In these circumstances, the protection of officers and, indeed, the public sometimes depends upon the opportunity to deal with that individual from a distance at which proactive intervention can be achieved. In this regard, CS spray has been a most successful addition to operational officers' options when confronted with extreme violence.

5.2 Less Lethal Technologies

Police officers across the UK do not routinely carry firearms, however, in extreme circumstances police intervention can include the deployment and use of such potentially lethal weapons. The appropriate levels of authority and procedures surrounding the police use of firearms are closely governed within detailed guidance documents issued by ACPOS and it should be noted that the actual incidence of police officers discharging firearms is extremely low. Over the last 5 years in Scotland, a total of 907 armed police operations took place against persons known or believed to be armed. Over the same period, police weapons were discharged on a total of 28 occasions and all but one of these discharges related to the destruction of animals.

Managing extreme violence safely and effectively however, can depend upon an ability to deploy a range of appropriate tactical options. Following recent developments across the UK, police forces in Scotland have been seeking 'less lethal' technologies to provide options to allow a use of force commensurate with the threat being faced. It is important to stress that the term 'less lethal' is carefully defined to encompass weapons and equipment which, although less likely than firearms to result in a serious or fatal injury, nevertheless, carry some degree of risk in that regard. All Scottish forces have recently introduced baton rounds as an additional, 'less lethal' option when trying to deal with extremely violent and dangerous individuals in situations where, previously, the only alternative may have involved the police use of firearms. Chief Constables in Scotland have clearly stated that the use of baton rounds will be limited to the provision of a 'less lethal' option in the type of circumstances outlined. HMIC is supportive of the provision of such a 'less lethal' option.

Over the last 2–3 years, the Police Scientific Development Branch (PSDB) has conducted a considerable amount of work on behalf of the service, firstly, to clarify the operational requirement for ‘less lethal’ technologies and, secondly, to test the feasibility of some of these technologies. A wide variety of articles have been considered and one device, an electrical discharge weapon, was considered suitable to be further evaluated in field trials. This weapon is known as ‘taser’ and is a battery operated device that generates a high voltage electrical current. When the device is fired, two barbs, connected by wires to the weapon, are propelled towards the subject and attach themselves to the skin or clothing of the targeted individual. When the barbs strike a person, a current can be sent down the wires and through a person’s body between the two barb points. The electricity flows in a series of pulses which have the effect of temporarily incapacitating the individual.

Following the initial evaluation of the taser device by PSDB, on 30 January 2003, the Home Secretary gave authority to proceed with an operational trial of the M26 Taser in England and Wales. The trial commenced on 21 April 2003 and involved five police forces:


Lincolnshire Police, Metropolitan Police, Northamptonshire Police, North Wales Police, Thames Valley Police.

Prior to the commencement of the trial, the forces involved agreed joint policy, operational guidance and training, and funded an independent evaluation to be conducted by PricewaterhouseCoopers.

During the trial, use of the taser was restricted to officers already trained in the police use of firearms and deployment was restricted to operations where the authority to use police firearms had been granted.

Although the original trial was intended to be of 12 months duration, an Interim Report has been published by PricewaterhouseCoopers. This evaluation report included the following two conclusions:

- where taser has been deployed, it has contributed to the securing of a positive outcome
- taser has a high visual deterrent value that can enable officers to de-escalate situations relatively quickly and easily.



Following a detailed examination of the outcome of the independent evaluation of the taser trial, the Association of Chief Police Officers in England and Wales (ACPO) concluded that a further trial was required in order that consideration may be given to the deployment of taser to situations which do not necessarily warrant the granting of an authority for police officers to use firearms. Whilst the results of further research into the medical implications of taser are still awaited, ACPO (England and Wales) has proposed that:

- deployment of taser be extended, by Chief Officer agreement, to all forces for use by existing firearms officers, in situations where a firearms authority would be granted in accordance with criteria presently laid down within the ACPO Manual of Guidance on Police Use of Firearms
- existing trial forces commence a 12 month trial where the deployment of taser is extended for use by specialist units at incidents where there is presently no remit to authorise firearms, but where officers are facing violence or threats of violence of such severity that it is likely that they will need to use force to protect themselves or a member of the public.

Having considered the ACPO proposals, the Home Secretary has decided against any changes to the pilot at this time and advised that the trials should continue in their present form.

Early evaluation of the taser device has revealed its potential to provide an extra tactical option in dealing with extremely violent individuals. Whilst further detailed medical consideration is being given to the implications of the use of electrical devices such as taser, HMIC is of the view that the potential value of the introduction of such a device within a Scottish policing environment is one that should be fully tested and, in that regard, it is important that ACPOS maintains a detailed awareness of the progress of the operational trials in England and Wales. HMIC will also monitor developments in this area.

LIST OF RECOMMENDATIONS/GOOD PRACTICE

DATA CAPTURE

Recommendations:

HMIC recommends that ACPOS identifies the range, scope and type of data that adds value to the development of policy, operational response and training in the arena of confronting violence and conflict. HMIC recommends the development of an agreed Scottish wide approach to this issue.

Good Practice:

HMIC noted that a number of forces issue their officers with a booklet providing detailed guidance upon the issue of dynamic risk assessment. HMIC considers this to be good practice.

EQUIPMENT

Recommendations:

HMIC recommends that ACPOS gives consideration to the question of commonality of protective equipment to ensure that opportunities for shared learning and development are realised along with the potential financial benefits of joint procurement of such equipment.


HMIC recommends that ACPOS, in consultation with the other police staff associations, reaches agreement upon the detail of a generic mandatory protective body armour wearing policy to be adopted throughout Scotland.

HMIC recommends that forces introduce a documented process to ensure that all items of officer safety equipment are properly maintained and inspected on a regular basis.

Good Practice:

HMIC recognises the increased availability and provision of additional items of protective equipment, such as emergency restraint belts, search and retrieval devices and knife/slash resistant gloves, subject to suitable approval, as good practice.

HMIC noted that a number of forces made special efforts to engage with individual officers, manufacturers, occupational health departments and specialists in a bid to ensure that body armour was individually tailored and issued with appropriate wearing and adjustment guidance. HMIC regards this approach as good practice.



HMIC noted that a number of forces already issue protective body armour to members of force support staff engaged in duties where an element of risk of violent confrontation was apparent and where there exists no realistic opportunity for that member of staff to remove him/herself from the potential confrontation. HMIC considers this to be good practice.

TRAINING

Recommendations:

HMIC recommends that initial officer safety training at the Scottish Police College should be extended to include training in the deployment and use of CS incapacitant spray.

HMIC recommends that all officers who are required to undertake operational duties, irrespective of rank, should be appropriately equipped and trained.

HMIC recommends that forces continue to maintain a clear focus upon operational officer safety and that one day refresher training is provided to all officers on an annual basis. Within such refresher training programmes, forces should also consider how best to address individual officer needs.

HMIC recommends that ACPOS adopts an effective mechanism to facilitate the wider sharing of knowledge and good practice across Scotland in the field of operational officer safety.

Good Practice:

HMIC notes good practice in one force where general medical practitioners have been involved in the production of a training video designed specifically to provide guidance to police officers on the medical implications or consequences of individuals being involved in violent confrontation or indeed being subjected to the police use of force.

In one force, HMIC were shown details of a comprehensive distance learning package which provided an excellent medium for testing and refreshing knowledge prior to officers undertaking the more practical aspects of their training input. HMIC regards the use of such distance learning packages as good practice.

HMIC considers the inclusion of risk assessment awareness training as part of the general officer safety refresher training as good practice.

In many forces, following detailed risk assessment, considered aspects of officer safety training, such as the principles behind conflict resolution, are being provided to certain members of support staff, such as custody officers, traffic wardens and public counter staff. HMIC considers this extension of police training as good practice.

HMIC also notes good practice in relation to the practical training provided to officers in many Scottish forces. The focus upon creating scenarios that simulated the operational environment was welcomed by officers and there was a clear indication that this kind of training provided a meaningful method of enhancing an officer's competence and confidence when dealing with conflict or violent confrontation.

Some forces have taken the pro-active step of inviting procurators fiscal and defence agents to officer safety training demonstrations. These practical demonstrations allowed both fiscals and defence agents to see and hear at first hand the emphasis placed upon communications and the focus upon the proportionality of the various techniques deployed. HMIC recognises this as good practice.

OPERATIONAL UNIFORM

Recommendations:

HMIC recommends that ACPOS continues to pursue and commit to the concept of a limited catalogue of uniform garments for the operational police officer.

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