



HM INSPECTORATE OF
CONSTABULARY FOR SCOTLAND

An examination of how Northern
Constabulary manages the very high
priorities of the Scottish Strategic
Assessment

For operational security reasons, small sections of this report have been redacted. These are clearly indicated (*text redacted*)

December 2009

To monitor and improve the police service in Scotland



1. Executive summary

- 1.1 During the summer of 2009, Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Scotland (HMICS) conducted a high-level review examining how the eight Scottish police forces are managing the very high priority (VHP) risk areas identified by the 2007/08 Scottish Strategic Assessment (see Appendix for a further explanation of these terms). This report presents our findings for Northern Constabulary.
- 1.2 Overall, we found that Northern Constabulary is reasonably well placed to develop and deliver a robust control strategy for managing those risks that pose the greatest threat to communities.
- 1.3 In particular, we found that the force is good at prioritising resources for the VHP areas and has well-established and structured consultation processes in place across the organisation. All of this is supported by the clear and visible leadership provided by the chief constable.
- 1.4 We identified the following key areas for improvement:
 - the use of analysts and analytical products;
 - *(text redacted)*;
 - arrangements for monitoring progress against the force's control strategy; and
 - the way in which briefing information is presented and can be searched.
- 1.5 We will be seeking assurance from the force that the areas for improvement identified in section 9 are being addressed, and we request an update on progress by end of March 2010.
- 1.6 As well as reviewing the six VHP areas, we also examined the force's progress on implementing the force-wide actions emerging from its EFQM self-assessment. The findings of this additional work are summarised in section 8 of this report.

2. Introduction

Background

- 2.1 During 2008 all Scottish forces completed an internal self-assessment exercise using the European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM) model. The intention was that forces would be the primary users of the self-assessment outputs, and that we would use the results to identify where further, more detailed, inspection work might be required.
- 2.2 Having reviewed the improvement action plans arising from each force's self-assessment and how some of the evidence and related judgments were used in the process itself, we were able to identify some specific areas for further examination, particularly around how forces manage the most serious risks identified through the Scottish Strategic Assessment. This was an aspect that had not been covered in detail by the self-assessment tool, and we wanted assurance that these risks were being managed effectively.



- 2.3 The 2009/10 Scottish Strategic Assessment was published in April 2009. We therefore took the 2007/08 Scottish Strategic Assessment as our starting point for this high-level follow-up. Our aim was to focus on what the Assessment had identified as the six very high priority risk areas for Scottish policing - anti-social behaviour, terrorism, child protection, serious organised crime groups, drugs and violence - and within this to examine:
- how forces assess and prioritise risks;
 - how forces prioritise and co-ordinate activity related to these very high risk areas, and how these activities are integrated with other force priorities; and
 - the impact of forces' activities in these areas over the last two years, i.e. what difference they have made.
- 2.4 The VHP risk areas remained broadly unchanged in the 2009/10 Strategic Assessment, apart from child protection now being included in the wider area of public protection. However, many of the recommended prevention, intelligence and enforcement (PIE) activities had been updated.
- 2.5 In addition to reviewing the six risk areas, we conducted a high-level assessment of the force's progress in implementing force-wide actions arising from its self-assessment. In all other forces we also looked at the progress being made in implementing recommendations from recent HMICS thematic inspection reports. However that element was included instead as part of the Northern Constabulary Best Value audit and inspection, and will therefore be reported on in that inspection report.
- Methodology*
- 2.6 Data to inform our assessment was gathered through a combination of desktop research and fieldwork interviews and focus groups in the force. Forces were not required to prepare any additional information for these exercise.
- 2.7 The initial desktop research was undertaken by specialist advisers seconded from the Association of Chief Police Officers in Scotland (ACPOS) National Intelligence Model (NIM) team. The documents reviewed included forces' strategic assessments and control strategies, minutes from tasking and co-ordinating group meetings, intelligence requirements, policing plans and/or business plans and relevant performance information.
- 2.8 The purpose of this research phase was to examine how forces had addressed the priorities and recommendations of the 2007/08 Scottish Strategic Assessment, during 2008 and 2009. We also reviewed the outputs of the force's self-assessment exercise. The findings of both of these research elements informed our subsequent interview and focus group questions.
- 2.9 In order to examine the impact of forces' activities on the VHP risk areas, we had intended to look at the indicators of the Scottish Policing Performance Framework (SPPF). We found few direct links, though, between the SPPF indicators and the six VHP risks, and we were therefore unable to make our assessments. The integration of the Scottish Strategic Assessment into the Framework is one of the national areas for improvement that we have identified.



- 2.10 The fieldwork component of the inspection involved HMICS staff visiting Northern Constabulary for a week in August 2009. During this period we carried out interviews and focus groups with key individuals and staff from the force and its partner organisations. We also attended daily divisional tasking and co-ordinating meetings and the force's monthly tasking and co-ordinating meeting.
- 2.11 The force has recently undergone significant re-structuring and a staff rationalisation process. This has resulted in an amalgamation of the eight area commands into three larger territorial divisions, and higher numbers of police officer recruits part-funded by reductions in police staff positions. Both major changes are still having an impact on the force and our findings should be viewed in this context.
- 2.12 The main aim of our visits was to get an up-to-date picture of how forces were managing the VHP risks and to explore aspects of its approach to managing these. The aspects we covered in each force varied according to the findings of our desktop research. The limited scope of the fieldwork means that our findings are necessarily high-level. This approach has also meant that we have sometimes identified areas for improvement in one force that may not have been covered in other forces and therefore may not be unique to that force.
- 2.13 We would like to thank Northern Constabulary for the help and support we received when undertaking this work, and members of the ACPOS NIM team for their contribution to the desktop research.

3. Leadership of the strategic assessment and control strategy

- 3.1 The chief constable takes a proactive role in leading the strategic assessment and control strategy. It is the chief constable who chairs the force strategic process and who is subsequently personally involved in setting the force's priorities, while the chief superintendent (head of operations) chairs the force tactical process.
- 3.2 There is a lack of integration between the force's control strategy and its policing plan. The policing plan includes five broad policing priorities underpinned by a series of strategic objectives and, although there are some elements of overlap, there is no direct link to the control strategy priorities. *(text redacted)*
- 3.3 Staff awareness of the force's control strategy priorities was mixed: while senior staff were familiar with these, frontline staff with whom we spoke were more likely to refer to the priorities of the force policing plan.
- 3.4 Northern Constabulary does not appoint individual 'champions' to lead on each of the VHP risk areas. Instead the chief superintendent head of operations is ultimately responsible for every priority. We have found assigning strategic leads or champions to individual VHPs to be an effective mechanism for increasing corporate commitment, improving accountability and building staff awareness of the control strategy priorities in other forces. The force may wish to consider ways in which it might extend ownership of the control strategy among its leadership team.

4. Assessment of risk

- 4.1 Northern Constabulary has a systematic approach to risk-assessment to identify and grade its strategic priorities, based on the model used in the 07/08 Scottish Strategic Assessment. The model used in the most recent Scottish Strategic Assessment (09/10) is



considered to be more robust and has been adopted by most other forces. Northern Constabulary may wish to consider revising its approach. The assessment itself is informed by a range of data sources, including recorded statistics and surveys, force departments and partner organisations. It is limited, however, by a lack of available and robust data from some of the constituent councils.

- 4.2 The force and its divisions have well-established mechanisms in place for consulting partners and local communities. For example, the chief constable represents the force at a strategic-level board of partner organisations, while the three-tier divisional consultation process ensures that officers attend a wide variety of groups and meetings. Community views have been used to inform the strategic assessment, although this process is not universally understood within the organisation.
- 4.3 *(text redacted)*. Based on its risk assessment, the force has also included alcohol abuse as an additional VHP area. The sixth VHP area, child protection, the force has assessed as being a slightly lower priority (high, as opposed to very high). They have added further high priorities of crimes of dishonesty and roads policing.
- 4.4 Divisions do not currently conduct formal strategic assessments. During our fieldwork we came across examples of divisions undertaking local consultation and then translating the force control strategy into the local context - in effect, creating an ad hoc divisional control strategy. While some aspects of a risk-assessment methodology was applied to this process, there were no audit trails of the rationale, consultation and assessment of threat and risk, and no control measures were recorded. The force has recognised this as an area requiring improvement and the restructuring, which has created a NIM unit and an analyst post in each division, provides an opportunity for a more robust risk assessment process to identify local priorities.
- 4.5 Overall, the use of analysts and analytical products in divisions remains in its infancy. Divisional and area commanders have a weak understanding of the analyst role, and the work of divisional analysts lacks focus on the force's highest priorities. There is scope for the force to make better use of both analysts and analytical products.

5. Resources to support the control strategy

- 5.1 The recent restructuring of the force's eight area commands into three larger territorial divisions has improved its capacity to manage the priority areas. For example, there are now divisional national intelligence model (NIM) units and public protection units, and divisional CID and pro-active units are centralised at each of the three divisional headquarters. The force is also nearing the end of its exercise to increase the number of uniformed police officers, in part through a reduction in its complement of police staff. This, together with the recent introduction of a variable shift agreement (VSA), has freed up greater numbers of frontline and specialist personnel for the force to deliver against the control strategy.
- 5.2 The force has developed a training strategy, which is aligned to the respective service unit policing plan. The policing plans are intelligence led and informed by the control strategy. Relevant training has included child protection and domestic abuse. The training plan is reviewed regularly by senior managers, who must balance control strategy requirements against the need for training in response to emerging demands.
- 5.3 In common with other forces in Scotland the force is facing problems sourcing courses for the training and professional development of its analysts, who can be deployed without



being fully trained. In an attempt to overcome these shortfalls, it has actively sought out alternative courses such as those run by the National Police Improvement Agency.

- 5.4 Also in common with other forces in Scotland, Northern Constabulary has limited understanding of the detailed costs associated with particular PIE activities. Without this understanding, the force cannot draw conclusions about the relative cost-effectiveness of the different activities it undertakes. The new financial coding regime that forces are planning to introduce across Scotland from April 2010 should assist in this area. The force should ensure that this regime provides information that will help it to understand the costs related to delivering its control strategy.
- 5.5 During the course of our fieldwork we found a culture of collaborative working with partners at all levels of the force, from chief constable to police constable. We also observed strong local engagement with elected members and formal protocols in place to cement collaborative working with local authorities. Divisional officers and local partner agencies recounted numerous examples of what they considered to be effective partnership working.

6. Activity related to the VHP risks

- 6.1 In our desktop research, we found limited overlap between the PIE recommendations in the 2007/08 Scottish Strategic Assessment and subsequent force strategic assessments or control strategies. The forces most recent strategic assessment and control strategy contain a large number of PIEs for each VHP area compared with those of other forces and the Scottish Strategic Assessment.
- 6.2 The force uses daily and monthly tactical meetings to implement its control strategy. However, at the time of our inspection, the format of these daily tasking and co-ordinating meetings was not based on the VHP risk areas. The force could strengthen the effectiveness of these meetings by having a clearer focus on the VHP areas.
- 6.3 The force has been influential in introducing tasking and co-ordinating into partnership working. The chief superintendent, for example, chairs a joint council and police tasking meeting. The force also involves partners in its own tasking process, with divisional-level ward managers attending divisional tactical meetings. However, better information-sharing would enhance the effectiveness of these meetings. At present, tactical meetings are divided into open and closed sessions with partners being requested to leave before the start of any closed element. This can lead to opportunities to share relevant operational and intelligence between partners being missed.
- 6.4 The electronic system used to brief staff on priority activities arising from these meetings also needs to be enhanced. In the more rural areas of the force where face-to-face briefing is not possible, briefings are carried out proactively by the officers themselves using electronic information supplied by email or an intranet briefing document. The information itself is submitted in date order only and is not subdivided by division or area. Nor is the system searchable. Thus, officers may spend a great deal of time searching through information and/or intelligence requirements that are not necessarily relevant to them.
- 6.5 *(text redacted)*
- 6.6 The following paragraphs provide a brief overview of some of the activities undertaken by the force in managing the Scottish strategic assessment VHP risks.



- 6.7 Anti-social behaviour** - the overall emphasis of the force's activity in this area is on prevention, and the adoption of selected PIE actions from the Scottish Strategic Assessment (SSA) along with additional ones generated by the force itself, is indicative of its comprehensive coverage of this VHP. The use of divisional school liaison officers in the role of school campus officers and the significant amount of work being done with partners generally, show the force's commitment to tackling ASB at a local level.
- 6.8 Terrorism** - *(text redacted)*
- 6.9 Child protection** - in common with other forces, there is an on-call system should a complicated child protection case arise out-of-hours, and frontline staff awareness of child protection matters is good. The increased resources and resilience within the force child protection model have been deployed as a result of the Force Review and GIRFEC (Getting it Right For Every Child). Staff report constructive working arrangements with social work departments and, following its recent inspection in Orkney, the HMIE joint inspection team has confirmed that resources and resilience have since been enhanced with new roles identified and additional resources deployed.
- 6.10 Serious organised crime groups (SOCGs)** - *(text redacted)*
- 6.11 Drugs** - the focus on combating drugs is comprehensively articulated throughout the force and to partners. *(text redacted)*
- 6.12 Violence** - the creation of divisional CIDs has allowed a greater focus of specialist investigative resources on violent crime. In addition, the introduction of a variable shift agreement and an increase in frontline, uniformed officers have enabled the force to deploy greater numbers of overt policing resources at core times to reduce street violence. The force has also engaged in partnership operations during the festive period to target anti-social behaviour, drunkenness and violent behaviour. The force is piloting a MARAC group (Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference) within central division. MARAC is to monitor and ensure effective information sharing between agencies dealing with domestic abuse and child protection. Awareness amongst frontline staff of matters relating to domestic abuse was good. This aspect of the violence strategic priority has a significant link with child protection, implying as it does the need for a more holistic approach from frontline officers to the needs of families, i.e. victim, perpetrator and children.
- 7. Monitoring and reviewing the effectiveness of the control strategy**
- 7.1** The forces performance reports are not aligned with its control strategy. The Force Performance Board, chaired by the deputy chief constable, scrutinises and challenges the exception performance, either good or bad, of the force and its divisions. The main fora for scrutiny and challenge in performance comes at weekly operational commanders meetings, monthly force tactical meetings and the performance review process. However, the performance report that informs the process is designed around the forces policing plan priorities and objectives, not the control strategy priorities or PIEs, and no attempt is made to link the two. As a result, at this level there is no information or performance against either the actions identified through the PIEs or the control strategy priority areas generally.
- 7.2** Results analysis is not routinely undertaken in the force, although some post-operative analysis takes place when the SARA (scanning-analysis-response-assessment) problem-



solving model is used. Where results analysis is applied, the quality of the product is dependent upon the ability and experience of the analysts involved. There is also limited underlying understanding of what it is and the benefits it would bring. Better use of this key analytical product would improve managers' understanding of its effectiveness. This was a common finding across the Scottish forces.

7.3 *(text redacted)*

7.4 Linking outcomes to PIE activities remains a challenge for all forces. While the strategic assessment covers emerging trends in the VHP risk areas, these are not linked to specific force activities. More use of results analyses would provide more opportunities for the force to evaluate the effectiveness of its control strategy.

8. Progress against EFQM self-assessment action plans

8.1 In 2008 we changed our inspection methodology to a system of annual self-assessment. This is now conducted through a quality improvement framework that uses the European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM) model. Police forces and services are now using this self-assessment process to inform their planning and performance regimes. In this way, these organisations are able to decide themselves what their priorities for improvement and action should be.

8.2 This was a new approach for both HMICS and forces. One early learning point to emerge was the finding that the 2008 question set required participants to focus on force processes and internal communication rather than on operational activities or outcomes.

8.3 The self-assessment exercise was to be carried out by individual divisions and departments, in order to identify improvement actions separately at these levels. Forces were also encouraged to draw up a force-wide action plan to capture any common areas for improvement. It is progress against the force plan that forms the primary basis of our comments here.

8.4 For the purpose of the exercise, Northern Constabulary re-categorised its divisions/ departments into one corporate (the whole of HQ) department and its three territorial divisions. The outcome of this was four divisional and one force-wide action plan. The force plan covers areas of 'strategic significance' for the force, and appears to have been strongly driven by the suggestions for improvement emerging from the HQ department exercise.

8.5 The force action plan is overseen centrally by the force's Policy & Co-ordination Unit (PCU). The Unit's policy officers receive updates on progress every six weeks, and report their findings up through the Capital and Programme Monitoring Group and to the force executive team. Few of the actions have timescales, but all have been assigned owners. If divisions have a locus in any of the force-wide actions, their contribution is monitored through divisional commanders' meetings and the performance review process. Otherwise, divisions are left to decide what and how to take forward any divisional improvement actions and these are not monitored centrally.

8.6 From the latest progress update on the force-wide action plan it was apparent that improvement activity is continuing. Examples where some progress has already been made include the following:

- guidance on rewarding and recognising staff has been drawn up and will be available on the force intranet;



- a force-wide survey of the force's performance review process has now been conducted and the results are being analysed. A report will be passed on to the force executive in due course; and
 - a corporate communications strategy is now in place, a marketing strategy and plan are being developed and work to improve the force intranet is underway, all with a view to promoting the achievements of the organisation internally.
- 8.7 The force's improvement action plans give no details of how it intends to assess the impact of any improvement actions. It believes that the staff personal development review (PDR) process and electronic survey software *SurveyMonkey* are two useful methods of capturing staff feedback. There were no plans for assessing changes in terms of their impact on, e.g. business outputs or outcomes, or customer /other stakeholder perceptions.
- 8.8 We had already had some discussions with forces about the 2008 self-assessment process prior to this inspection. These discussions, along with the findings of this review, have informed the development of the 2009 process which we asked forces to complete in October/November of this year.



9. Areas for improvement

No	Area for Improvement	Report reference
1.	The consistency between the force's strategic assessment, control strategy and policing plan.	3.2
2.	The corporate management of the force's control strategy.	3.4
3.	Ensure that local risks are properly assessed and prioritised.	4.4
4.	The use of analysts and analytical products in understanding and managing the VHP areas.	4.5 / 7.2
5.	Prioritising those PIE activities that are most robust and effective.	6.1
6.	Corporate guidance on partnership attendance at tactical meetings.	6.3
7.	The accessibility and usability of the force's self-briefing systems for frontline officers.	3.3
8.	<i>(text redacted)</i>	
9.	<i>(text redacted)</i>	
10.	The measurement and reporting of force and divisional performance against the control strategy and PIE activities.	7.1



Appendix

The National Intelligence Model

The National Intelligence Model (NIM) is an intelligence-led business model used by the police to manage risk, identify operational priorities and allocate resources.

The **strategic assessment** is a key component of NIM and provides an overview of long-term issues that involve criminality or have community safety implications. Strategic assessments are produced at national, force and divisional levels.

The **control strategy** is derived from the strategic assessment and sets out the long-term priorities to be tackled.

Those priorities that are deemed to be of greatest risk are known as 'very high priority' risk areas (VHPs). The national VHPs are currently anti-social behaviour, terrorism, public protection, serious organised crime groups, drugs and violence.

The control strategy also identifies **prevention, intelligence and enforcement** recommendations (PIEs) that outline activity to tackle the VHPs.