



HMICS HM INSPECTORATE OF
CONSTABULARY FOR SCOTLAND

Summary report: an examination of how the
police forces in Scotland manage the very high
priorities of the Scottish Strategic Assessment

December 2009

To monitor and improve the police service in Scotland



1. Executive summary

- 1.1 During the summer of 2009, HM Inspectorate of Constabulary for Scotland (HMICS) conducted a high-level review examining how the eight Scottish police forces were managing the very high priority (VHP) risk areas identified by the 2007/08 Scottish Strategic Assessment (see Appendix for further explanation of these terms). This report does not therefore cover the broad spectrum of police activity, instead it focuses on these specific areas.
- 1.2 We found that two forces are very well placed to develop and deliver a robust control strategy to manage those risks that pose the greatest threats identified through the Scottish Strategic Assessment. We found three forces to be well placed and a further three to be reasonably well placed, to do so.
- 1.3 In this report we have drawn together the findings of our eight force visits to produce a national summary. The focus is primarily on the areas for improvement that we identified. Our purpose is not to ignore the examples of better practice that we encountered, and which can be found in the individual force reports, but to highlight areas that may benefit from being considered nationally.
- 1.4 We found clear leadership by chief constables and their executive teams, and collective commitment on the part of senior managers to delivering their respective force control strategies.
- 1.5 We identified a number of areas for improvement in all forces. In some cases these were exclusive to a particular force, but in many cases there was a good deal of commonality. The areas for improvement listed below have a more national and strategic perspective:
 - the integration of forces' business planning processes and their resulting plans and strategies;
 - the alignment of the Scottish Strategic Assessment and Scottish Control Strategy into the Scottish Policing Performance Framework;
 - the effectiveness of forces' approaches to monitoring and reviewing performance against their control strategies; and
 - analysis and evaluation of the impact of forces' activities, in terms of financial costs, resources, outputs and outcomes.
- 1.6 We will be seeking assurance from all forces that the areas for improvement identified in section 10 of their individual reports are being addressed. For this reason, we have requested progress updates by the end of March 2010.
- 1.7 In addition to reviewing how forces are managing the VHP areas, we also examined what progress they had made against the recommendations of recent HMICS thematic inspections and their action plans from their 2008 self-assessment exercise. The findings of this work are summarised in sections 8 and 9 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 forces' self-assessments and examined how some of the evidence and related judgments were used in the process itself, we identified some specific areas for further examination, particularly around how forces manage the most serious risks to society identified through the Scottish Strategic Assessment. This is a specific area of activity that the self-assessment tool, as a more generic model, does not cover in detail. This is something that we will want to address in the future, but in the meantime we sought assurance that these risks were being managed effectively.
- 2.3 The 2009/10 Scottish Strategic Assessment was published in April 2009, shortly after we began our initial desktop research. We therefore took the 2007/08 Scottish Strategic Assessment as the starting point for this high-level follow-on inspection. Our aim was to focus on what the Assessment had identified as the six VHP 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 into 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 focus of the work was specifically on how forces managed the VHPs through their control strategies and related processes. It did not review, for example, planning processes or performance management regimes in the broader context of forces' activities, as these were addressed through the self-assessment process.
- 2.5 Although we have outlined processes that we considered to be more robust in some forces than in others in this report, we have not produced a formal list of good practice examples. To do so, a more detailed inspection and research phase would have been necessary.
- 2.6 In addition to reviewing the six VHP risk areas, we conducted a high-level assessment of forces' progress in implementing a) the recommendations of recent HMICS thematic inspection reports and b) force-wide actions arising from their 2008 EFQM self-assessments.

Methodology

- 2.7 Data to inform our assessment was gathered through a combination of desktop research, interviews and focus groups in forces. Forces were not required to prepare any additional information for this exercise.



- 2.8 Specialist advisers seconded from the Association of Chief Police Officers in Scotland (ACPOS) National Intelligence Model (NIM) team undertook the initial desktop research. 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.
- 2.9 The purpose of this research phase was to examine how forces had addressed the priorities and recommendations in the 2007/08 Scottish Strategic Assessment, during 2008 and 2009.
- 2.10 We also reviewed both the outputs of forces' self-assessment exercises and their progress in implementing the recommendations of recent HMICS thematic inspections. The findings of each of these three research elements informed our subsequent interview and focus group questions.
- 2.11 The fieldwork component of the inspection involved HMICS staff visiting each of the eight forces between May and August 2009. During this period we carried out interviews with individuals from the force and its partner organisations.
- 2.12 The main aim of our visits was to clarify any queries or gaps from our desktop findings, and to observe forces' activities and experiences first-hand. The limited scope of our fieldwork means that our findings are necessarily high-level. The aspects that we covered in each force varied according to the findings of our desktop research. This approach has also meant that we have sometimes identified areas for improvements in one force that may not have been covered in others and therefore may not be unique to that force.
- 2.13 We would like to thank all forces for the help and support we received in 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 Leadership of the control strategy across forces was generally good, with the chief constable and executive team taking overall responsibility for setting the force priorities and driving tactical processes. The approach adopted was not entirely consistent from force to force, but was adapted to suit force executive structures. Where we could, we took this into account when arriving at our judgments.
- 3.2 We found assigning strategic leads or 'champions' to individual VHPs and prevention, intelligence and enforcement (PIE) strands to be an effective mechanism for increasing corporate commitment, improving accountability and building staff awareness of their force's control strategy priorities.
- 3.3 Similarly, staff awareness of activity in the VHP risk areas was higher in those forces where the control strategy was a primary driver for force business and where planning processes were well integrated. Where there was a disconnection between the force control strategy and force policing plan, we found that staff were relatively less well informed of their force's VHP risk activity.



4. Assessment of risk

- 4.1 There are a number of recognised models for assessing risk, which is to some extent reflected in the various models used by the eight forces. To our knowledge, there is no one model that is generally accepted as being the best. For that reason, our view is that forces should consider whether the model they use is professionally recognised, and ensure that all staff who are required to perform risk-assessments are suitably trained.
- 4.2 We were impressed by the extensive community and partner consultation that occurs in most forces, particularly the quality of information being gathered at ward level and through partner organisations. Nevertheless, it was not always clear how community views gathered in this way are then used to inform force or divisional strategic assessments and control strategies.
- 4.3 Not all forces produced separate divisional strategic assessments. In divisions where this was not done, we found little or no risk-based evidence to support the local priorities that had been adopted. Conversely, not all divisional control strategies, contained as a minimum, all the force VHP areas either because such an approach was not rigorously maintained or because there was no mandate to do so. In our view, all divisional control strategies should complement and support the force control strategy.
- 4.4 The extent and way in which analysts were used, varied between forces. In some, there appeared to be limited understanding of how analysts and analytical products can be used to manage the VHP areas. This was reflected in the narrow range of analytical products typically requested by officers. We believe that there is greater scope for more focused use, aligned to the VHP areas, of forces' analytical resources. We acknowledge that, at the time of our inspection, this was to some extent undermined in several forces by vacancies in key analyst posts and the limited availability of training nationally.

5. Resources to support the control strategy

- 5.1 The extent to which forces were able to systematically identify the necessary resources to support their control strategies varied. In some cases, fully devolved financial management arrangements and the effective use of formalised bidding process for additional resources, linked to VHPs, ensured that the force was well placed to make the best use of available resources. In others, bidding processes were circumvented and decisions made on a more ad hoc basis.
- 5.2 In most forces, consideration of their control strategy VHP risks was not apparent in their training plans. There is scope to improve this link and ensure that training is prioritised accordingly, though we accept that that there are invariably competing demands to respond to, e.g. new legislation, new recruits and officer safety.
- 5.3 A key finding across all forces was their limited understanding of the detailed costs associated with particular PIE activities. Some forces had recognised this gap and were already instigating work to address it. In the context of ever more challenging financial constraints, this will be crucial to ensuring that budgets and resources are apportioned to PIE activity to best effect.

6. Activity related to the VHP risks

- 6.1 In most, but not all, force documents we observed a clear overlap between the PIE recommendation of the Scottish Strategic Assessment and subsequent force strategic



assessments and control strategies. The different timings of the Scottish Strategic Assessment and forces' business planning cycles, as well as the cyclical nature of both, mean that some differences are inevitable at the present time. Nevertheless, we would suggest that these be monitored and reviewed, and where appropriate, re-aligned.

- 6.2 In several forces, we found that Covert Human Intelligence Sources (CHIS) tasking tended to focus predominantly on one area of activity. Better coverage across the range of VHP areas was apparent in forces that had structured arrangements in place to align CHIS tasking with the control strategy. Forces' responses to their Intelligence Requirements were similarly focused on one area of activity. In our view, forces should extend their activities to cover all VHP areas.
- 6.3 The involvement of partners in divisional NIM tasking and co-ordinating meetings varied across forces and, in some cases, divisions. In some, partners attended these tasking and co-ordinating group meetings and played an important role in working jointly with the force and divisions to address VHP risks. Where there was little or no involvement of partner organisations at meetings or through shared tactical assessments, it is likely that opportunities to benefit from their contributions to operational and intelligence activities are being missed.
- 6.4 The following paragraphs provide a summary of the kinds of activity that forces are involved in to address the individual VHP risks of the 2007-08 Scottish Strategic Assessment:
- 6.5 **Anti-social behaviour** - this VHP area is generally considered to be the main remit of community policing. Our observations suggest that it is being addressed in a structured way and we found strong evidence of good partnership working in this area.
- 6.6 **Terrorism** - we observed good staff awareness of this risk across forces. Some forces had found it challenging to engage partners in tackling this area.
- 6.7 **Child protection** - this area appears to benefit from good leadership and a strong focus, as can be seen from recent developments in support structures and staff training.
- 6.8 **Serious organised crime groups (SOCGs)**- forces' approaches to this VHP area were variable. On one hand, several forces had responded to the results of a recent SOCG mapping exercise and were making robust efforts to raise awareness of it amongst partner organisations. By contrast, in other forces we found limited staff awareness of SOCGs, and two forces did not deal with this as a discrete VHP risk area. Continued vigilance is required in all areas of criminality associated with SOCGs.
- 6.9 **Drugs** - this area was generally well understood across forces and partner organisations and continued to generate a high volume of police enforcement and intelligence-gathering activity.
- 6.10 **Violence** - we found staff awareness here to be good, and learned of many positive examples of joint initiatives to reduce violence. In some cases, forces had particularly strong analytical support in this area.

7. Monitoring and reviewing the effectiveness of the control strategy

- 7.1 Some forces had systems in place for monitoring and reviewing progress against the PIE activities of its VHP risk areas, while others had no systematic approach. Others were



working to create a set of measures that would allow them to monitor their activity and progress effectively.

- 7.2 We found limited use of results analysis in all but one force. This kind of evaluation is crucial to understanding and assessing the impact of force initiatives and interventions, and can provide a more robust evidence base for estimating the probable effectiveness of future activity.
- 7.3 Taking this further, we attempted to examine the impact of forces' VHP activity on broader outcomes. To do this we looked to the indicators of the Scottish Policing Performance Framework (SPPF). However, we found few direct links between the SPPF outcome indicators and the six VHP risks. This lack of integration detracts from the ability of forces to assess the impact of their activities against recognised public-facing outcomes.
- 7.4 Another common finding across Scotland was the absence of a performance framework for forces' Dedicated Source Units (DSUs). An effective framework would help to inform source recruitment and to identify areas for improving the effectiveness of CHIS. It would also reinforce governance and accountability in this important area of activity.

8. Progress against recommendations in recent HMICS thematic inspections

- 8.1 HMICS thematic inspections focus on particular themes affecting policing. Topics are identified following consultation between HMICS and ACPOS, the Scottish Government, police authorities and other stakeholders and are selected on the basis of risk. They can also arise from forces' self-assessments, reflect particular public or national concerns or be directed by Scottish ministers. Over the past two years we have carried out eleven thematic inspections, the recommendations of which are intended to support continuous improvement in the police service in Scotland.
- 8.2 As part of this inspection we took the opportunity to review each force's progress against outstanding recommendations. This was not a significant element of our fieldwork and we therefore did not undertake a comprehensive review of all recommendations.
- 8.3 In addition a number of recommendations are being taken forward nationally through various ACPOS working groups, such as the National Custody Forum. We are currently in discussion with ACPOS about arrangements to monitor progress in such instances and for this reason have excluded those recommendations from this review. Nor did we examine what progress the force has made on the recommendations of our thematic inspections on *CONTEST: Prevent* and *The Police Use of Firearms*, as these will be followed up separately.
- 8.4 The approach taken to addressing thematic recommendations varies across forces. Some integrate them into business plans; others allocate an owner to each report who compiles and drives the appropriate action plan.
- 8.5 Progress against action places is typically monitored and discussed internally at a performance-focused meeting. In some forces, however, there is no internal monitoring process. Externally, performance reports are usually, but not always, presented to either the main police board/ authority or more rarely to a Best Value Audit Sub-Committee. The extent to which these fora scrutinise progress against recommendations varies.



- 8.6 Overall forces have made good progress in implementing a number of recommendations arising from our reports. Progress in some areas has been slow even where action plans are in place. Occasionally a force may elect not to implement a recommendation. In both cases, we found that it is not always clear whether the relevant police board/ authority is made aware of such delays or decisions.
- 8.7 We found no formal approach to assessing the impact of recommendations once these have been implemented although some forces indicated that they were moving towards such an approach.

9. Progress against self-assessment action plans

- 9.1 In 2008 we changed our inspection methodology to a system of annual self-assessments. These are conducted through a quality improvement framework based upon the European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM) model. Police forces and services are now using this self-assessment process to help 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.
- 9.2 This was a new approach for both HMICS and forces. One early learning point to emerge was the finding that the original question set required participants to focus on force processes and internal communication rather than operational activities or outcomes. We acknowledged that some refinement of the model was necessary, and our self-assessment model and question set for 2009 reflects these changes.
- 9.3 The self-assessment exercise was to be carried out by individual divisions and departments, in order to identify improvement actions separately at these levels. However, forces were also encouraged to draw up a force-wide action plan to capture any common areas for improvement. It is progress against each force plan that we addressed through this inspection.
- 9.4 Some forces had made little progress against their own action plan, although this was mainly because of ongoing force restructuring. Others had made progress although only a few had prioritised their activities and applied relevant timescales to their plans. It was frequently unclear how forces establish whether their plans are on or off-track at a point in time. Typically those forces with the most robust approaches to following-up our thematic recommendations had the stronger approach to addressing the areas for improvement identified through the self-assessment exercise.
- 9.5 It is widely accepted by scrutiny bodies that self-assessment processes can add significant value to an organisation. It is also understood that the approach takes time to mature, in terms of both the development of the model and the organisation's response to it. Some forces in Scotland had been using a form of self-assessment for a number of years prior to the introduction of our model and were therefore further along this path of implementing areas for improvement.



10. Areas for improvement

10.1 From a national perspective, we have identified the following areas for improvement:

- the integration of forces' business planning processes and their resulting plans and strategies;
- the alignment of the Scottish Strategic Assessment and Scottish Control Strategy into the Scottish Policing Performance Framework;
- the effectiveness of forces' approaches to monitoring and reviewing performance against their control strategies; and
- analysis and evaluation of the impact of forces' activities, in terms of financial costs, resources, outputs and outcomes.



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.