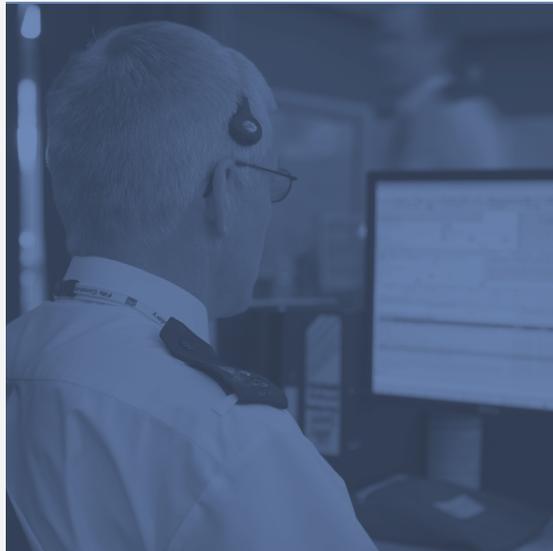




HM INSPECTORATE OF CONSTABULARY IN SCOTLAND

Independent Assurance Review Police Scotland – Call Handling Interim Report

September 2015





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A report of an inquiry directed by Scottish Ministers under section 74(1) of the Police and Fire
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HM Inspector of Constabulary in Scotland

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

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

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

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

This assurance review is an inquiry directed by Scottish Ministers under section 74(1) of the Police and Fire Reform (Scotland) Act 2012 and laid before the Scottish Parliament under section 78(3) of that Act.

¹ Police and Fire Reform (Scotland) Act 2012, Chapter 11

² HMICS Corporate Strategy 2014-2017, May 2014



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Our Review

1. This assurance review has been directed by the Cabinet Secretary for Justice following the tragic incident involving the deaths of John Yuill and Lamara Bell. This review sits alongside the independent investigation being undertaken by the Police Investigations and Review Commissioner (PIRC) into that specific incident.
2. The background to this review, the objectives and methodology are outlined within the Terms of Reference,³ which was published on 22 July 2015. At that time, HMICS committed to providing Scottish Ministers with a full report by the end of October 2015 and this Interim Report by the end of August 2015, including any recommendations and improvements that we consider might be necessary.
3. This Interim Report is solely intended to provide an update on the progress of our review, including a summary of our activities, our emerging findings and key areas of interest where we will now seek further assurance. We have made one interim recommendation to Police Scotland on the future direction of police Contact, Command and Control centres across Scotland. This Interim Report does not constitute a complete set of findings, as our inspection activity is still ongoing and evidence continues to be collected and assessed to further inform our final report. It should be noted that further evidence may emerge which contradicts or changes the findings set out in this interim report.
4. The Cabinet Secretary for Justice clearly set out expectations of the areas to be reviewed by HMICS, namely:
 - the **capacity** of the systems and the human resource available within the control centres to manage, receive, answer and prioritise calls;
 - the **capability** of the systems and the suitability of the training provided to those who manage, receive, answer and prioritise calls; and
 - the **process** within the control room to ensure that all calls are handled and dispatched appropriately.
5. We have sought to meet these expectations by objectively assessing the state, efficiency and effectiveness of the processes for call handling within Police Scotland and the associated procedures for governance, management, resourcing, training and quality assurance.
6. We will provide a final and more comprehensive report by the end of October 2015. This will detail our methodology and approach, explain the call handling process in plain English and outline our key findings, conclusions and any recommendations for improvement that we may identify. It will provide assurance on whether the service provided to the public is effective, whether call handling processes are working effectively and efficiently within Police Scotland and comment on the future plans for development of the national approach for police Contact, Command and Control.

³ [Terms of Reference for HMICS Assurance Review - Police Scotland Call Handling](#)



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7. HMICS acknowledges that this review is being undertaken whilst Police Scotland continues to pursue reform on a national level, the complexity and challenge of such change is recognised.

Our Activities

8. Our review commenced with a pre-review planning and preparation phase. This included the development of review tools, identification of key documents and liaison with Police Scotland, police staff associations and key stakeholders. It also involved the design and launch of an on-line public questionnaire and the detailed design and scoping of our call handling audit.
9. This phase was followed by three weeks on initial fieldwork with a team of inspectors visiting Govan, Motherwell, Dundee, Aberdeen, Inverness and Bilston Glen sites. During these visits we have :
 - interviewed 45 staff
 - conducted 29 focus groups involving approximately 180 staff
 - observed daily and weekly management meetings
 - conducted general observation of service centre staff and processes
10. We also made a formal information request for documents to Police Scotland which included:
 - strategies, policies, guidance and standard operating procedures
 - agendas, minutes and internal memoranda and emails
 - briefings and presentations
 - action and improvement plans
 - ICT specifications and plans for development
 - training materials
 - quality assurance and quality control processes
 - staffing structures and management reporting
11. This request has since been followed by a number of individual follow up enquiries for specific documents which have been highlighted to us during our fieldwork. Over 1500 documents have been provided alongside statistical, performance and benchmarking information. We are currently reviewing these documents and all supporting information to inform our findings and identify relevant evidence for our final report.
12. HMICS launched a public online questionnaire on the 29 July 2015. This questionnaire was closed on 23 August 2015. A total of 3826 questionnaires were completed, with 46% being completed by members of the public, 2% by elected representatives, 46% by officers and police staff and 7% by others. Feedback from the questionnaire has informed the key lines of enquiry used during our fieldwork. The data is undergoing detailed analysis. We will report on the themes identified from the questionnaire in our final report.



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13. HMICS has sought views from all local authorities across Scotland and is currently undertaking an analysis of the responses received to date.
 14. HMICS also commenced a detailed audit of 1,500 calls made to the police via the emergency 999 and non-emergency 101 numbers from across Scotland. This involves listening to calls, assessing how well they were handled, reviewing computer systems and records to ensure they accurately reflect the contents of the call and concerns of the caller, and assessing whether the calls were appropriately prioritised. This work is being undertaken separately from our fieldwork and will be used to provide specific assurance within our final report over the quality of call handling and accuracy of recording across Scotland.
 15. We have maintained regular liaison with the Police Investigations and Review Commissioner (PIRC) throughout the initial phase of our review to ensure the exchange of relevant information and the integrity of the ongoing PIRC investigation. This liaison will continue through the remainder of our review and the publication of our final report.
 16. We have provided initial feedback to Police Scotland and briefed both the Scottish Police Authority and the Scottish Government on the basis of the interim evidence we have obtained from our activities so far. We have highlighted our emerging findings and shared our initial recommendation in respect of the future direction of police Contact, Command and Control across Scotland.

Emerging Findings

17. HMICS has found that staff at all levels in the division are strongly committed, in often challenging circumstances, to providing a good service to the public. They continue to be committed to doing a good job and demonstrate considerable flexibility in their working practices whilst endeavouring to meet call demand. HMICS has been impressed by the engagement of Contact, Command and Control staff with our review process.
18. HMICS has examined the latest call handling performance statistics from Police Scotland. Whilst these performance figures do not in themselves provide a comprehensive view of the effectiveness and efficiency of call handling or the quality of service to the public, they illustrate that force targets⁴ for answering both 101 (non-emergency) and 999 (emergency) calls are currently being met across the main sites in Govan, Motherwell and Bilston Glen.
19. These figures have improved over the previous few months and continue to show a positive trend, however HMICS notes that there have been significant issues with poor performance in the recent past. We will therefore be examining both the quality and accuracy of the information now being used.
20. Performance in the North (Dundee, Aberdeen and Inverness) is currently falling below the force target for answering 101 (non-emergency) calls. HMICS acknowledges that a number of mechanisms have been put in place by Police Scotland to support call handling in the north, but pressure of call demand on remaining staff remains unacceptably high, with overflow calls being routinely diverted from Dundee and Inverness to the sites in Govan, Motherwell and Bilston Glen.
21. HMICS recognises the constraints facing Police Scotland as a result of significant staff shortages in Dundee, Aberdeen, Inverness and Bilston Glen. HMICS does however consider that the current practice of diverting unanswered 'overflow' calls to the sites in Govan, Motherwell and Bilston Glen is creating additional risk by passing incidents back to the north Area Control Rooms in the absence of a single national Command and Control system.
22. We consider that this will not be fully resolved until (i) the service centres in Govan, Motherwell and Bilston Glen are fully functional with the full complement of trained staff supported by stable systems and processes which are capable of taking the additional call demand from the north and (ii) the new Area Control Room in Dundee is fully operational. However, we believe strongly that the service centres in Dundee, Aberdeen and Inverness should be maintained and staffed appropriately until these key elements are fully in place.
23. HMICS notes that Business Continuity Planning across the sites has been tested regularly, and although reliant on legacy force plans, has proven to maintain service and performance during periods of down time.

⁴ Police Scotland Grade of Service Targets are 90% of 101 (non emergency) calls answered within 40 seconds and 90% of 999 (emergency) calls answered within 10 seconds.

Key Areas of Interest

24. This Interim Report does not constitute a complete set of findings, as our inspection activity is still ongoing and evidence continues to be collected and assessed to further inform our final report. However as a result of our initial review, we have identified the following key areas of interest where we will now seek further assurances:
- Overall **workforce planning**, including resource modelling and call demand management.
 - **Staff communication and engagement** in the context of major change and cultural differences across legacy areas.
 - The effective and timely **assessment of risk and vulnerability** in prioritising calls and dispatching appropriate resources.
 - Development of a balanced set of measures of performance which reflect both call processing as well as **quality of response and customer focus**.
 - The effective use of **risk management** in both project management and day to day business.
 - The communication of the purpose and **use of 999 and 101 to the public**.
 - Stability of current **ICT systems** used in Contact, Command and Control and the capacity of Police Scotland **network infrastructure**.
 - Access to and the effectiveness of **key supporting information systems** including Address Gazetteer and internal directories.
 - Development of a consistent **training model**, linked to clear competencies, a quality assurance approach for staff, continuous professional development and appraisal system.
 - Documentation and understanding of consistent well defined **processes and procedures**.
 - Development of an underpinning **quality assurance framework**.
 - Effective and efficient processes for **transfer of calls** between service centres across the country.
 - Clear articulation of the **future vision** for Contact, Command and Control and the impact of this model on local policing and other operational areas.
 - The effective management of '**business as usual**' day to day operations of the division and the delivery of a **major change programme**.
 - Clarity of **governance and oversight** and **accountability for key decisions**.
25. These key areas of interest will provide a focus for our evidence gathering in the next stages of our review and may inform any key findings, areas for improvement or recommendations within our final report.

Interim Recommendation

26. **HMICS recommends that Police Scotland should consolidate and stabilise their staffing, systems, procedures and processes in both the East and West service centres and area control rooms. While this is being progressed, detailed planning for the previously agreed end-state model should continue, with consideration given to accelerating the recruitment of staff and early commissioning of the North Area Control Room.**
27. To support this recommendation, HMICS notes the following:
 - Contingency planning should deliver flexibility around the retention of service centre staff in Aberdeen, Inverness and Dundee to ensure these centres are maintained and staffed appropriately until the other key elements of the end-state model are fully in place. This should minimise operational risk and reduction in the quality of service to the public should there be delays to the project. Should it be necessary to retain specific staff beyond 31 March 2016, the Scottish Police Authority should provide that any Voluntary Redundancy/Early Retirement offers are honoured.
 - Governance and independent assurance processes must also be put in place to guarantee that sustainable resourcing, systems, training and processes are fully tested and ready prior to any transfer of functionality from Aberdeen, Inverness and Dundee.
 - Detailed and independently assured stage plans will be required to demonstrate the key milestones, dependencies and timescales to deliver the end-state model, including the relocation of services from Aberdeen, Inverness and Dundee.
28. HMICS notes that the consequences of any delay to the planned programme of delivery will have an impact on the achievement of savings and may result in additional risk. Police Scotland must at every stage evaluate the impact of such delays, provide assurance and seek appropriate approvals to manage this process.
29. HMICS also notes that in order to effectively manage this change process and effectively learn the lessons from previous stage implementations, Police Scotland are likely to require to secure additional resources. This should be subject to the development of a business case and associated scrutiny and approval.
30. As this is an Interim Report, HMICS will not make further recommendations at this stage.

Next Stage of Assurance Review

31. HMICS will now commence the second stage of fieldwork. This will involve additional interviews with senior management and corporate support services within Police Scotland. Additional sessions will be made available to staff to ensure all that who wish to do so, have an opportunity to engage with the review team. We will also:
- visit sites at Stirling, Glenrothes and Pinnacle House in Glasgow to engage further with staff there.
 - complete our detailed audit of a sample of call handling records from across Scotland and analyse the results, conducting any follow-up activity required.
 - complete our detailed analysis of the themes emerging from the responses to our online questionnaire.
 - complete our review of the information and documentation provided by Police Scotland and other key stakeholders in order to further strengthen our evidence base gathered during fieldwork.
 - complete our benchmarking exercise, examining good practice elsewhere in policing and other emergency services. We will visit both the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service and the Scottish Ambulance Service. This will provide us with comparators in terms of performance and processes.

HMICS will then review all the evidence collected from differing sources and produce a final report which will be provided to Scottish Ministers by 31 October 2015. Ministers will then lay the report before the Scottish Parliament and it will be published on the HMICS website.

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31 August 2015



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About Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary in Scotland

HMICS operates independently of Police Scotland, the Scottish Police Authority and the Scottish Government. Under the Police and Fire Reform (Scotland) Act 2012, our role is to review the state, effectiveness and efficiency of Police Scotland and the Scottish Police Authority. We support improvement in policing by carrying out inspections, making recommendations and highlighting effective practice.

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