



HM INSPECTORATE OF CONSTABULARY IN SCOTLAND

Frontline focus review of tools of the trade – terms of reference

February 2025

Improving Policing Across Scotland



HM Inspectorate of Constabulary in Scotland

HM Inspectorate of Constabulary in Scotland (HMICS) is established under the Police and Fire Reform (Scotland) Act 2012¹ 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 (SPA).

We have a statutory duty to ensure that the Chief Constable and the SPA 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 SPA 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 SPA 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 SPA 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 SPA or Police Scotland 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 SPA to take such measures as may be required. The SPA 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.

¹ [Chapter 11, Police and Fire Reform \(Scotland\) Act 2012.](#)



Our approach, as outlined in the [HMICS Corporate Plan 2021-2024](#), is to support Police Scotland and the SPA to deliver services that are high quality, continually improving, effective and responsive to local needs.

This frontline focus review will be undertaken by HMICS under section 74(2)(a) of the Police and Fire Reform (Scotland) Act 2012 and will be laid before the Scottish Parliament under section 79(3) of the Act.



Our inspection

Introduction

1. HM Inspectorate of Constabulary in Scotland (HMICS) has committed to conduct a number of short, frontline focused reviews throughout the period of the [HMICS Scrutiny Plan 2022-2025](#).
2. The concept of a frontline focus review has been introduced to help improve the delivery of frontline policing services across Scotland. It is intended that these reviews will have particular relevance for officers and staff operating in frontline roles.
3. The term frontline can mean different things to different people. We have chosen the commonly used and accepted definition used in the [Police visibility: Demanding times - His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services](#) report:-

“The police frontline comprises those who are in everyday contact with the public and who directly intervene to keep people safe and enforce the law”.

Aim

4. The aim of this frontline focus review will be to assess:
 - how well equipped frontline operational officers and staff are to perform their roles
 - whether frontline officers and staff have ready access to appropriate data to help them perform their roles.

Background

5. Following on from our [frontline focus review of wellbeing](#), our second frontline focus review was intended to be a review of the role of a frontline officer, immediately followed with a short review on the tools of the trade.
6. Our [2023 review of policing mental health in Scotland](#) considered the question of the role of a police officer and much progress is being made by Police Scotland to re-focus officers on core police work. This review will, therefore, focus on the tools of the trade of officers and staff in the operational environment.



Terms of Reference

Scope

7. For the purposes of this review, we will focus on officers in local policing divisions who are carrying out response, community policing and criminal investigation department (CID) roles. We will also include staff who engage directly with members of the public in front counter and custody roles.
8. We will consider the uniform and equipment issued to police officers and staff.

Exclusions from scope

9. This frontline focus review will not consider uniform and equipment issued to specialist officers and staff, for example, firearms officers and mountain rescue teams. If, however, the frontline officer or staff member has specialisms which require additional pieces of uniform and/or equipment to perform their frontline role, this may come into the scope of the review, for example early evidence kits, cyber forensic kits, etc.
10. Police vehicles and the equipment contained within them, including access to drink/drug driving equipment, will not be considered during this review. These issues were considered during our [forensic toxicology](#) and [road policing in Scotland](#) reviews.

Objectives and outcomes

11. The intended outcomes from the review, and its publication, are to help improve the overall effectiveness of the uniform and equipment issued to frontline officers and staff.

User Perspective

12. As set out in the Public Services Reform (Scotland) Act 2010, HMICS has a duty to demonstrate continuous improvement in user focus, i.e. involving users in the scrutiny process. We will endeavor to obtain the perspective of key stakeholder groups through self-evaluation and consultation. HMICS will engage directly with Police Scotland, officers and staff, the Scottish Police Authority and partner agencies.
13. We will also consider whether the uniform and equipment provided is meeting the needs of officers and staff who have protected characteristics, and to assist us we will engage with trade unions, staff associations, including the diversity staff associations.



Methodology

14. We will use the latest HMICS Inspection Framework which is based on the European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM) Excellence Model and Best Value characteristics. The Inspection Framework will provide a structure to our inspection which will be risk based, proportionate and focused on improving the delivery of policing in Scotland. We will structure our inspection around our objectives and three themes:
 - Leadership and vision
 - Delivery
 - Outcomes

15. Between February 2025 and May 2025 we will:
 - Liaise regularly with Police Scotland through the identified single point of contact for HMICS, who will support the inspection process and facilitate appropriate access to people and information, and maintain ongoing engagement with other key stakeholders.
 - Conduct benchmarking activities with other UK police services to identify examples of innovation and good practice.
 - Analyse and consider relevant documentation. Given the short and focused nature of this review, where possible we will minimise the amount of documents requested.
 - Conduct a document review of relevant police strategy, policies, procedural guidance and multi-agency arrangements.
 - Conduct interviews and focus groups with key members of Police Scotland officers and staff.



Publication and reporting timescales

16. We anticipate publishing a report of our findings in summer 2025. Our report will be published in terms of Section 79 of the Police and Fire Reform (Scotland) Act 2012. A copy of the report will also be provided to the Chief Constable, the Scottish Police Authority, the Cabinet Secretary for Justice and will be laid before the Scottish Parliament. A copy will also be made publicly available on the HMICS website.

17. For further information about the frontline focus review of tools of the trade, please contact Brian McNulty, Lead Inspector (brian.mcinulty@hmic.gov.scot).

Craig Naylor

HM Chief Inspector of Constabulary in Scotland

February 2025