



Improving  
Policing  
Across  
Scotland

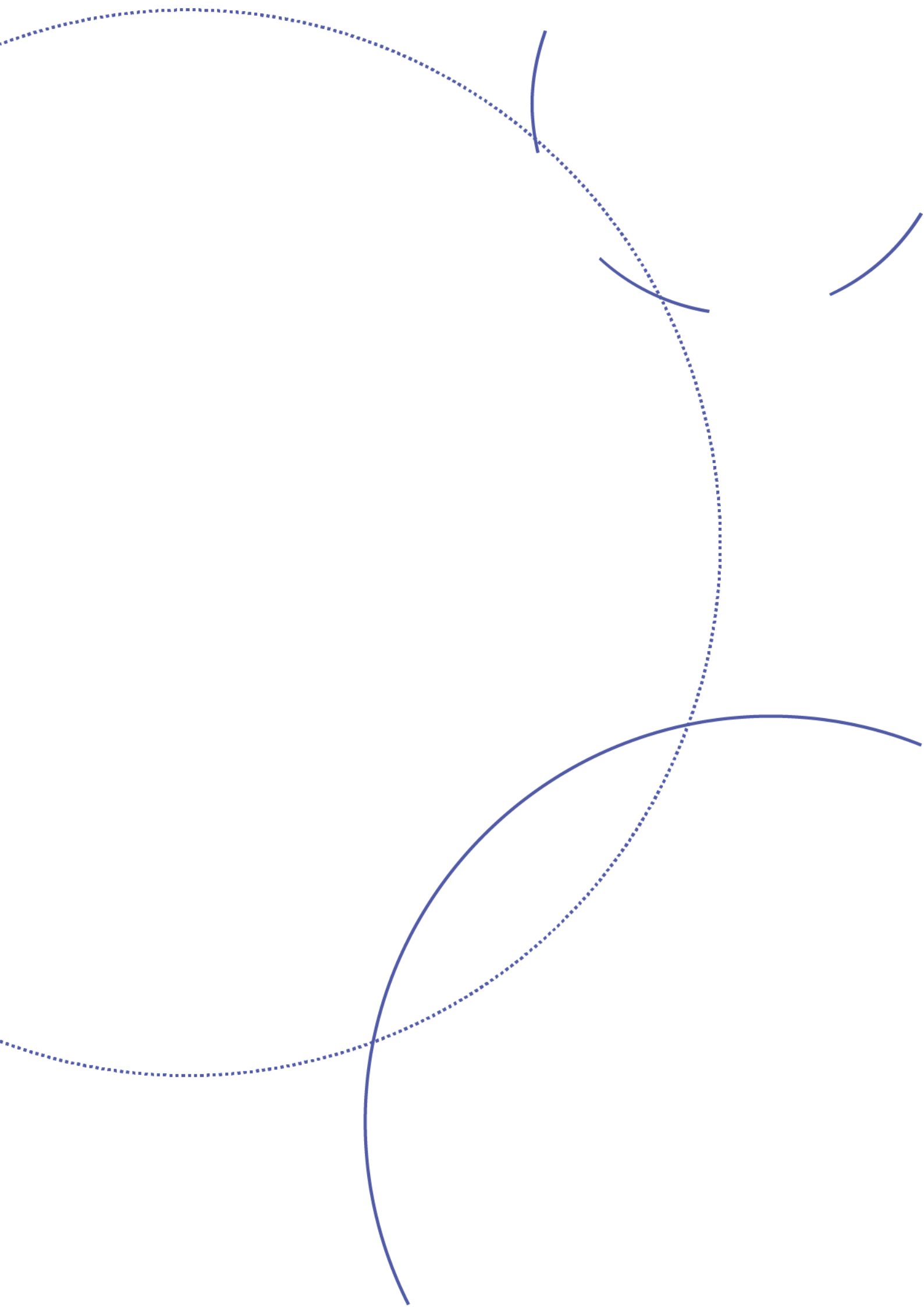


# HM Inspectorate of Constabulary in Scotland

November 2024

Thematic inspection  
of road policing  
in Scotland







# HM Inspectorate of Constabulary in Scotland

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HM Inspectorate of 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 (SPA).

We have a statutory duty to inquire into the arrangements made by the Chief Constable and the SPA to 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.



Our approach is to support Police Scotland and the SPA to deliver services that are high quality, continually improving, effective and responsive to local needs.<sup>1</sup>

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











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<sup>1</sup> HMICS, [Corporate Plan 2021-24](#), 1 February 2022.



# Contents

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	<b>Page</b>
 <a href="#">Our inspection</a>	4
 <a href="#">Key findings</a>	6
 <a href="#">Recommendations</a>	11
 <a href="#">Areas for development</a>	13
 <a href="#">Background and context</a>	15
 <a href="#">Methodology</a>	17
 <a href="#">Leadership and vision</a>	18
 <a href="#">Delivery</a>	37
 <a href="#">Outcomes</a>	66
 <a href="#">Appendix 1: Glossary</a>	74



## Our inspection

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It is an exceptionally challenging time for public services across the UK. Police Scotland is not exempt from this and has seen a significant reduction in officer numbers recently. To compound matters, the increasing role of the police in dealing with vulnerable people in society and, in particular, those experiencing poor mental health, has meant other priorities, including road policing, are likely to have received less focus because of hard decisions taken by Police Scotland about resourcing.

It is now a regular occurrence, several deaths per week, to read about another death on Scotland's roads. The total number of casualties in Scotland has increased each year since 2020. In 2023, 155 people were killed on Scotland's roads and 1,930 seriously injured. The impact this tragedy has on the people involved – and on their families and friends – cannot be underestimated. It appears there is a societal acceptance that people will die on the roads, but it is utterly unacceptable and almost every death is preventable.

This inspection shows that – while Police Scotland's purpose and vision on road policing is clearly articulated (and aligned to Scotland's Road Safety Framework to 2030) – the level of resource dedicated to improving road safety and denying criminals the use of the roads, has diminished. This applies to both specialist road policing officers and to local policing officers.

We found that external partnership working arrangements are well established and very positive, but the police role in carrying out enforcement activity has reduced significantly since the creation of Police Scotland with a 63 per cent reduction in the identification of road traffic offences since 2013/14.

We were extremely impressed by the dedication and professionalism of the officers and staff we engaged with during our inspection. However, the reduction in focus on road policing does raise questions about Police Scotland's contribution, both in reducing the number of people killed or seriously injured on Scotland's roads and supporting the objectives of the Road Safety Framework to 2030.



Key factors affecting the ability of Police Scotland to keep people safe on Scotland's roads include: the significant reduction in police officer numbers (in both local and road policing); the reprioritisation of officers away from road policing towards other matters; the number of officers (particularly from road policing) required to attend court, despite rarely being required to provide evidence; and, demand from escorting abnormal loads.

It is, therefore, vitally important that the positive partnership working arrangements are built upon, and that everything possible is done to make Scotland's roads safer. We visited Surrey, Sussex and West Midlands Police forces and identified best practice in making optimum use of intelligence, analysis and technology. I am grateful to the chief constables of these forces for accommodating my inspection team.

We have highlighted two specific examples of best practice we found during these visits that I believe should be progressed and implemented in Scotland. Firstly, the provision of educational courses as an alternative to prosecution, and, secondly, the facility to allow members of the public to directly upload footage from journey-cams to report road traffic offences (Police Scotland are the only UK force who does not have this facility). These are two initiatives that showing significant results in other parts of the UK.

The support we received from the road policing team in Police Scotland has been exceptional and I am very grateful to Chief Superintendent Hilary Sloan and her team. I would also like to thank colleagues from Transport Scotland, UKROEd and Dr Helen Wells, Director of the Road Policing Academic Network, for their support.

**Craig Naylor**

His Majesty's Chief Inspector of Constabulary

November 2024



## Key findings

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### Leadership and vision

- Police Scotland's purpose and vision on road policing is clearly articulated and is aligned to Scotland's Road Safety Framework to 2030.
- Police Scotland has reduced the number of police resources dedicated to carrying out road policing duties, which raises questions regarding its contribution to supporting the objectives of the Road Safety Framework.
- Police Scotland engages well with external stakeholders on road policing. The relationships are well established and very positive.
- Police Scotland has an effective leadership and governance structure for road policing, as part of the wider Operational Support Division.
- Police Scotland has dedicated officers to a Policing Together Team to enhance the culture across Operational Support Division, including road policing.
- Police Scotland is committed to ensuring public accountability and transparency concerning its road policing service provision.
- Police Scotland has a good system of data gathering, analysis and prioritisation at a strategic level. Analysts review information, including that provided through collaborative partnerships, and provide robust data on collisions and casualties.
- Police Scotland is engaged in a wide range of activities with stakeholders, aimed at creating an organisational learning culture.
- Police Scotland has many creative and innovative projects designed to improve the safety of road users across Scotland, developed and delivered in conjunction with key partners.
- Police Scotland has a communications plan that utilises social media to good effect in promoting key road safety messages.





## Delivery

- The specialist training available to road policing officers is of the highest standards.
- There is a considerable backlog and a lack of availability for training courses, which means many road policing officers are not able to fulfil certain aspects of their role, placing more demand on those who have been trained.
- Local policing officers are provided with limited road policing training, despite at times being required to work on the fast road networks across Scotland, increasing the risk to those officers.
- The number of officers required to attend court (and not provide evidence) is having a detrimental impact on the ability of Police Scotland to keep people safe on Scotland's roads.
- The demand from escorting abnormal loads is affecting the ability of Police Scotland to keep people safe on Scotland's roads. Police Scotland is the only UK police force that still performs this role.
- There is a lack of visible presence of road policing resources on Scotland's roads. This adversely affects the ability of Police Scotland to deter dangerous driving behaviour.
- There are often insufficient road policing resources available to conduct pursuits, meaning this tactical option is often not available to the organisation.
- Police Scotland has evidence to suggest that drug driving is a significant risk to road users across Scotland, but is unable to tackle it effectively due to a lack of trained resources and forensic services capacity.
- The reduction in road policing posts has limited the opportunity to recruit people from under-represented groups.
- We found that, while officers and staff in road policing are very committed to their roles, many feel undervalued.



- Road policing vehicles are not equipped in a uniform and coherent manner, and the views of the officers using the vehicles and equipment are not taken into account.
- The road safety equipment fitted to, and available in, local policing vehicles is inconsistent and often insufficient.
- Road policing officers are thorough and professional in completing vehicle and equipment checks, whereas local policing officers are not completing such checks as regularly as required.
- Road safety is seen as a matter of priority for local communities across Scotland and features in local policing plans across the country.
- Police Scotland has clearly established road safety and road crime priorities at the local divisional level, which are aligned to national road policing strategic priorities.
- The level of engagement and collaboration between local policing and road policing varies greatly in quality and effectiveness across Scotland.
- The effectiveness of the relationship between the road policing department and the contact, command and control function in Police Scotland varies in quality and effectiveness in different parts of the country.
- Police Scotland has well-established effective relationships with a wide range of stakeholders in relation to road policing. The priorities of these stakeholders are discussed at strategic, tactical and operational levels.
- The Transport Scotland liaison officer roles have contributed positively to partnership working.
- Police Scotland actively prepares for and responds well to major incidents and events on the roads, including during severe weather events.
- We identified acute resourcing issues in road policing, particularly in the north of Scotland during nightshift hours.



- The National Calendar of Road Safety Activity, led by Police Scotland, involves close liaison with Road Safety Scotland on road safety education programmes.
- The number of police referrals by Police Scotland to Brake's National Road Victim Service, has been increasing in recent years, although the percentage of police referrals (as opposed to self-referrals) is still slightly below the UK average.
- Police Scotland is not using ANPR to its fullest effect compared with other UK police forces.
- Police Scotland has not sustained its fleet of safety camera vans, which has, at times, reduced its ability to fully deploy that resource.
- Police Scotland is the only UK police service that does not have a facility to allow members of the public to report road traffic offences by directly uploading journey-cam footage.
- Enforcement activity is carried out in line with the National Calendar of Road Safety Activity; this involves both road policing and local policing.
- We identified that local policing officers have limited opportunity to carry out proactive road policing enforcement activity.
- Police Scotland's planning and performance processes are currently undergoing a review.
- There is a lack of dedicated analytical staff for road policing, and more analytical focus is required for road crime.
- There is a lack of effective tasking and coordination, and gaps in intelligence support, meaning limited evidence of proactive tasking to address road safety/road crime concerns.
- Police Scotland was slow to react to the introduction of The Road Traffic Act 1988 (Police Driving: Prescribed Training) Regulations 2023, which may have contributed to the backlog in police driver training courses.



## Outcomes

- There is a strong perception among officers, staff and some partner organisations that road policing is a low priority for Police Scotland.
- The total number of casualties in Scotland has increased each year since 2020. In 2023, 155 people were killed and 1,930 people seriously injured on Scotland's roads.
- Identification of road traffic offences has reduced significantly over the last 10 years (Scottish Government data shows a 63% reduction).
- The provision of educational courses, as an alternative to prosecution, has not yet been implemented to best effect in Scotland.
- We heard that the challenging targets set out in Scotland's Road Safety Framework to 2030 are unlikely to be met.
- Road policing officers contribute to tackling serious and organised crime groups, with regular Proceeds of Crime Act 2002 cash and drug seizures.
- Police Scotland uses public surveys to help understand where improvements are required and to recognise good practice.
- There are insufficient family liaison officers to deploy to every fatality, meaning the service provided to the families of victims is inconsistent.
- It is imperative that a trauma-informed approach is adopted by officers who are supporting people affected by a serious road collision.
- Police Scotland engages with a range of partner organisations who represent vulnerable road users, to ensure their lived experiences inform future policing activity.



## Recommendations

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### Recommendation 1

Police Scotland should review its commitment to and investment in its road policing function, to ensure it is effectively supporting Scotland's Road Safety Framework and that road crime is being actively addressed.

### Recommendation 2

Police Scotland should take urgent steps to address the backlog in specialist driver training.

### Recommendation 3

Police Scotland should review its policy position, and the training and equipment provided, for local policing officers responding to incidents on the fast road networks.

### Recommendation 4

Police Scotland should engage with its criminal justice partners to explore options (including virtual appearances) to reduce the time requirement for officers attending court.

### Recommendation 5

Police Scotland should engage with Scottish Government to progress a legislative change that will allow the escorting of abnormal loads in Scotland to be carried out by another agency.

### Recommendation 6

Police Scotland should progress the implementation of a road policing performance framework that provides an indication of progress towards achieving the targets set out in Scotland's Road Safety Framework to 2030.

### Recommendation 7

Police Scotland and the Scottish Police Authority should create and implement a joint action plan to identify and address the risk posed by drug driving.



### **Recommendation 8**

Police Scotland should implement a process to ensure vehicles are equipped in a consistent manner. The views of officers who will be using the vehicles should be taken into account when considering the type of equipment to be fitted, and how and where it is fitted.

### **Recommendation 9**

Police Scotland should identify and adopt best practice in the deployment and use of ANPR.

### **Recommendation 10**

Police Scotland should progress the facility for members of the public to report road traffic offences by directly uploading journey-cam footage.

### **Recommendation 11**

Police Scotland should review its intelligence and analytical commitment in relation to road safety and road crime, to improve focus on these areas.

### **Recommendation 12**

Police Scotland should engage with UK Road Offender Education and other key stakeholders to progress the full implementation of educational training courses for people who commit driving offences that may be appropriately addressed through learning.

### **Recommendation 13**

Police Scotland should review its policy on the deployment of family liaison officers, to ensure a consistent level of service to people who have been bereaved following a fatal collision.



## Areas for development

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We have identified several areas for development across key processes. They are designed to improve policing services in Scotland. We expect these will be included in the improvement plan for road policing in Scotland.

Section	Areas for development	Number
Leadership and vision	Police Scotland should monitor and evaluate the impact of the Policing Together Team, particularly in relation to the recruitment and retention of people from under-represented groups into Operational Support Division.	1
Leadership and vision	Police Scotland should strengthen its internal and external communications plans, using a range of media platforms to reach the widest possible audience and to focus on prevention messages.	2
Delivery	Police Scotland should ensure that it is fully prepared for any legislative changes, and that officers and staff are trained and equipped to implement legislation within appropriate time-frames.	3
Delivery	Police Scotland should review the road policing training provided to local policing officers.	4
Delivery	Police Scotland should consider the career development opportunities available to road policing officers and staff.	5
Delivery	Local policing divisions should take steps to ensure officers conduct regular vehicle and equipment checks and that such checks are recorded.	6
Delivery	Road policing and local policing should take steps to ensure a level of consistency and positive engagement between these two functions across Scotland.	7
Delivery	Road policing and C3 should take steps to ensure a level of consistency and positive engagement between these two functions across Scotland.	8



Delivery	Police Scotland should review the Safety Camera Unit to improve the manner in which this important resource is managed and deployed.	9
Delivery	Road policing should review its on-call arrangements to ensure a consistent approach across Scotland.	10
Delivery	Police Scotland should develop a means to measure the level of prevention activity, focusing on the 'fatal five' causes of death and serious injury.	11
Delivery	To ensure more families receive the support they need following serious road collisions, Police Scotland should review its information-sharing protocols and referral processes, and consider a 'consent based, opt-out' approach.	12
Outcomes	Police Scotland should ensure a trauma-informed approach is adopted when supporting people who have been affected by a serious road collision.	13





## Background and context

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1. HMICS has committed to a thematic inspection of Operational Support Division (OSD) during the period of our [Scrutiny Plan 2022-2025](#). OSD is a national division within Police Scotland that provides a number of different specialist services across the country.
2. Before publishing our scrutiny plan, we conducted a consultation and engaged in discussion with key stakeholders and partners. The main themes that emerged during our scrutiny planning consultation were road policing, air support and armed policing. During the scoping for this inspection, it became apparent that it would be beneficial to adopt a phased approach to the inspection. This first phase of our inspection focused on road policing.
3. The aim of this thematic inspection was to assess the state, effectiveness and efficiency of road policing arrangements in Scotland.
4. Road policing services across Scotland are delivered by local policing officers, and by officers and staff from the road policing department. The road policing department is part of OSD and provides a wide range of specialist road policing functions across Scotland.
5. In 2014, only 10 months after the creation of Police Scotland, HMICS conducted a [Thematic Inspection of road policing in Scotland](#). This inspection made five recommendations to Police Scotland and one recommendation to the SPA.
6. In 2020, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) published [Roads policing: Not optional – An inspection of roads policing in England and Wales](#). This report found that the importance of roads policing in England and Wales had been in decline for some years with less enforcement of drink/drug driving and seatbelt offences, alongside an increase in deaths attributed to these offences. The report made 13 recommendations to improve the effectiveness of road policing in England and Wales.



7. The Police Scotland Strategic Threat and Risk Assessment (STRA) 2023/28 document aims to ‘provide a risk based assessment of the threat, risk and harm, complexity of demand and organisational challenges/opportunities facing police Scotland to inform the Operational and Organisational Policing Priorities and recommendations’. The STRA states that Police Scotland remains committed to working with key partners to reduce those killed or seriously injured as a result of road traffic collisions (RTC), by targeting the identified contributory factors and priority risk groups.
8. In 2021, Transport Scotland published [Scotland’s Road Safety Framework to 2030](#), which set out an ambitious long-term goal for road safety where no one dies or is seriously injured on the roads by 2050. This framework states that road safety will remain a key priority for Police Scotland, and that senior police officers are involved in the Strategic Partnership Board, which was established to govern the framework.
9. The road safety framework identified speed, motorcyclists, young drivers, older drivers, cyclists and pedestrians as the priority focus areas for further consideration.
10. Our inspection sought to establish how effectively Police Scotland is contributing to the STRA and to the road safety framework, as well as to local policing plans across Scotland.
11. We sought to examine how enforcement and preventative approaches are being best used to make Scotland’s roads safer. We also considered how effectively technology and innovation are being used.



## Methodology

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12. We interviewed officers and staff from across Police Scotland, staff associations, trade unions, partner organisations and other key stakeholders.
13. During our inspection, we visited West Midlands, Surrey and Sussex police services, and we engaged with the National Police Chiefs' Council, to identify best practice in other parts of the UK.
14. We set up focus groups and interviewed officers and staff based in the north, west and east command areas of Police Scotland. One division from each command area was identified to gain an appreciation of the issues in contrasting parts of the organisation, as follows:
  - North – North East Division (A Division)
  - West – Greater Glasgow Division (G Division)
  - East – Fife Division (P Division).
15. We issued a self-evaluation to Police Scotland and, on its completion, we reviewed an extensive range of relevant documentation including policies, procedures, performance and management information, strategies, plans and training course materials.
16. During our inspection we were assisted by a number of charitable organisations who support vulnerable road users and people who have been affected by serious road collisions.



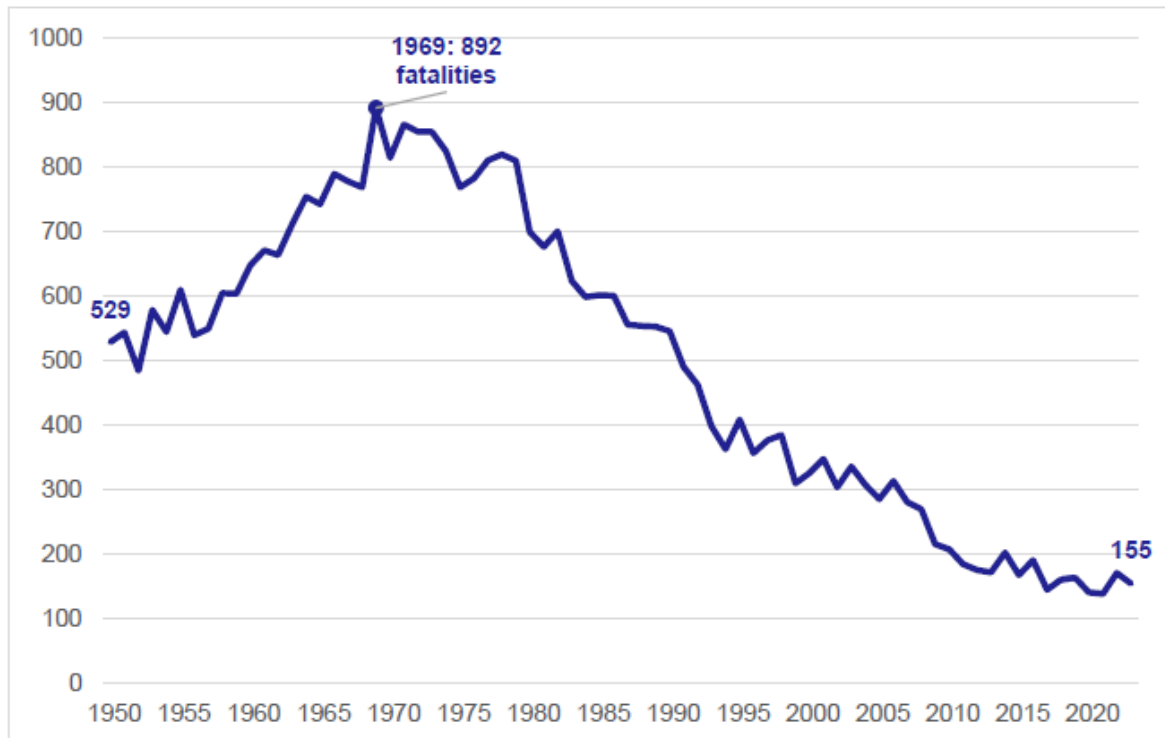
## Leadership and vision

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17. Police Scotland understands its purpose and vision of improving road safety and tackling road crime. It has clearly articulated these roles and laid out how it intends to continue providing policing services towards them. However, during our inspection we found that, in practice, other priorities (such as protecting the vulnerable in society) are preventing officers and staff from focusing on road safety and road crime, and fulfilling this commitment.
  
18. It is important to understand the current and historical picture for road safety in Scotland. Data from [Transport Scotland](#) in 2023 shows a clear and significant downward trend in the number of people killed or seriously injured (KSI) on Scotland's roads since 1969. As seen in the graph below, the trend shows a reduction from a high of 892 fatalities in 1969 to 155 in 2023 (a similar downward trend has been replicated across the rest of the UK). While such a reduction is significant and welcome, too many people continue to be killed and seriously injured on Scotland's roads.
  
19. Police Scotland and its partners continue to have a key role in reducing Scotland's KSIs. They achieve this through enforcement and education, to improve driver and road user standards and behaviour, and by supporting engineering changes, making both roads and vehicles safer.



Figure 1: Total Number of reported road fatalities, 1950 to 2023



Source: Transport Scotland

20. We were pleased to find that Police Scotland aligns its strategic road safety priorities to that of the Transport Scotland Road Safety Framework to 2030. This, in turn, drives Scottish progress towards the Safe System approach and Vision Zero, an international concept with the aim of eliminating all traffic fatalities and severe injuries in road users by 2050.
21. During our inspection we interviewed many officers and staff in Police Scotland, key road safety partners, road safety subject experts, and representatives from UK and Scottish governments and other UK police forces. There was a common perception that much of the reduction in KSIs over the past seven decades could be attributed to:
  - the development of safer vehicles (which are better maintained and equipped with more internal and external safety features); and
  - work done to design and build safer roads (through analysis and engineering to identify and design better roads, barriers, lighting, junctions and speed limits, etc).



22. There was also a perception that many improvements were down to a change in public acceptance and tolerance towards drink driving and the wearing of seatbelts.
23. Despite the downward trends, 155 people still lost their lives on Scotland's roads in 2023. While that was a reduction from the previous year (171), there was a 9 per cent increase in those seriously injured in 2023 – rising from 1,778 in 2022, to 1,930. In fact, road casualties (i.e., deaths and injuries) have increased in Scotland since 2020 and the downward trend in KSIs appears to have stalled or, in some categories, increased.

### Competing priorities

24. Improving road safety and tackling road crime are among the many different types of services provided by Police Scotland to the people and communities of Scotland. We found that Police Scotland has appropriately assessed and articulated the threat, risk and harm associated with road safety and road crime in Scotland and that the key issues and concerns have been set out in writing at strategic, tactical and operational levels in a language that is appropriate and understandable.
25. From documentation submitted to us as part of this inspection's self-evaluation exercise, we are content that Police Scotland has appropriately assessed the threats and risks associated with road safety, and note it has identified this as a high priority at both national and local levels.
26. HMICS acknowledges that police resources are finite and, as noted above, there are many competing matters requiring officers' and staff's time and commitment on a daily (and longer term) basis. Improving road safety was found to be positioned among other police priorities such as tackling hate crime, counter-terrorism, and violence and disorder. Very high priorities were noted as community wellbeing, violence against women and girls, serious organised crime and cyber-crime. In tackling these priorities, Police Scotland is also required to act with a policing purpose of improving the safety and wellbeing of persons, localities and communities in Scotland, as set out in the Police and Fire Reform (Scotland) Act 2012.



## Annual Police Plan

27. In its [2023-24 Annual Police Plan](#), Police Scotland addressed road safety:

“Outcome 1 – Threats to public safety and wellbeing are resolved by a proactive and responsive police service’, where Police Scotland sets an objective of ‘designing services jointly to tackle complex public safety and wellbeing challenges”.

To achieve this, Police Scotland proposed to reduce deaths and serious injury on Scotland’s road network through the increased use of intelligence-led policing and proactive engagement with all road users. Four progress milestones were set out:

- review of engagement and enforcement undertaken in support of the National Calendar of Road Safety Activity
- use of proactive enforcement, including speed enforcement and targeting of impaired driving, to protect all road users (particularly vulnerable road users)
- flexible deployments of Safety Camera Unit resources to address emerging casualty trends
- optimise understanding and maximise learning through an in-depth roads fatality study.

28. We found these activity descriptors and milestones to be unhelpfully vague and suggest they could be achieved with the minimum of effort, which would be unlikely to make any genuine impact on improving road safety or tackling road crime. We also found a lack of effective tasking and coordination, and gaps in intelligence support, meaning limited evidence of proactive tasking to address road safety/road crime concerns.

29. In its [2024-25 Annual Police Plan](#) (published March 2024), there is no detailed mention of road safety or commitments to any other specific types of police work. There is, however, a commitment to improve the culture of Police Scotland alongside increasing its front-line strength and improving service delivery. There are two further priorities about supporting workforce wellbeing and redesigning and reshaping its internal support functions.



30. While the 2024/25 Annual Police Plan has changed in style and content, the Chief Constable, in her foreword, commits to finding a balance with key partners to minimise police officer engagement with vulnerable people once the moment of crisis has passed and public safety is assured. The Chief Constable further states that Police Scotland should focus on its core duties and what matters to the people of Scotland, highlighting road traffic enforcement as one of the areas of police work that she will ‘be a champion and voice for’.

### Scotland’s Road Safety Framework to 2030

31. In 2021, Transport Scotland published its Road Safety Framework to 2030, a strategic document setting out its continued ambitious plan to work towards Scotland having the best road safety performance in the world. Key interim targets, to be achieved by 2030 (in comparison to a baseline period of 2014-18), were:
- 50 per cent reduction in people killed;
  - 50 per cent reduction in people seriously injured;
  - 60 per cent reduction in children (aged <16) killed; and
  - 60 per cent reduction in children (aged <16) seriously injured.
32. [Transport Scotland’s latest update](#) on progress against the targets (published 29 May 2024), shows that only the second target (50 per cent reduction in people seriously injured) was tracking to be achieved by 2030. The other three reduction targets were marked as ‘not on track to meet the framework target for 2030’.





## Road Policing Delivery Plan

33. Police Scotland's Road Policing Division is part of one of Police Scotland's national divisions, namely Operational Support Division (OSD). It is a singular function which provides a specialised road policing service on a national basis. This means that – while road policing officers and staff are based and work all over Scotland – they are managed by a single senior management team, who may be based elsewhere.
34. In its Delivery Plan 2023-24, Road Policing Division stated it will work with internal and external partners to tackle road safety and road crime issues and address shared priorities. The plan sets out the following four objectives:
  - effective patrolling of the roads
  - influence driver behaviour and road user behaviour
  - deter and detect all types of criminality on our roads
  - combat the threat in terrorism.
35. We found no numerical targets against any of these objectives, so suggest it may be difficult to correlate police activity to any improvements or otherwise in Scotland's road safety picture. The plan also provides that Road Policing Division will address these objectives by targeting priority routes (those with a history of road collisions where people have been killed or seriously injured) and focusing on 'fatal five' enforcement. This is police enforcement of the main causes of collisions:
  - careless driving
  - speeding
  - drink or drug driving
  - not wearing seatbelts
  - being distracted while driving (mobile phone use, etc.).
36. Road Policing Division further state it will tackle the objectives using the Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) system, with enhanced enforcement and intelligence-led targeting of offenders, by conducting high-visibility operations on priority routes and working collaboratively with partners.
37. Road Policing Division, through its plan, is central in providing Police Scotland's commitment to contribute to the Road Safety Framework to 2030.



## Local Policing Plans

38. It should be noted that Road Policing Division makes up around just 3.5 per cent of Police Scotland's current police officer numbers and, as such, it would be unreasonable to expect Road Policing Division alone to be singularly responsible for Police Scotland's continued efforts to improve road safety or tackle road crime.
39. In almost every community in Scotland, road safety is noted as a local concern and priority policing issue. Territorial local policing divisions, which make up the bulk of Police Scotland's front-line officers, have each developed [Local Policing Plans](#), which tend to be limited to four or five key issues specific to the areas and communities they concern. Police Scotland's website notes these plans were developed through feedback from local authorities and other partners, as well as from the views of members of the public in those areas (via Police Scotland's 'Your Police Survey' submissions).
40. Despite road safety being a priority in almost every local plan, we heard repeatedly and consistently during interviews with local policing officers that they were unable to dedicate time to improving road safety, or tackle road crime. This was down to a lack of available police officers, or their being tasked to other, often non-core, policing duties (involving protecting vulnerable people in society).

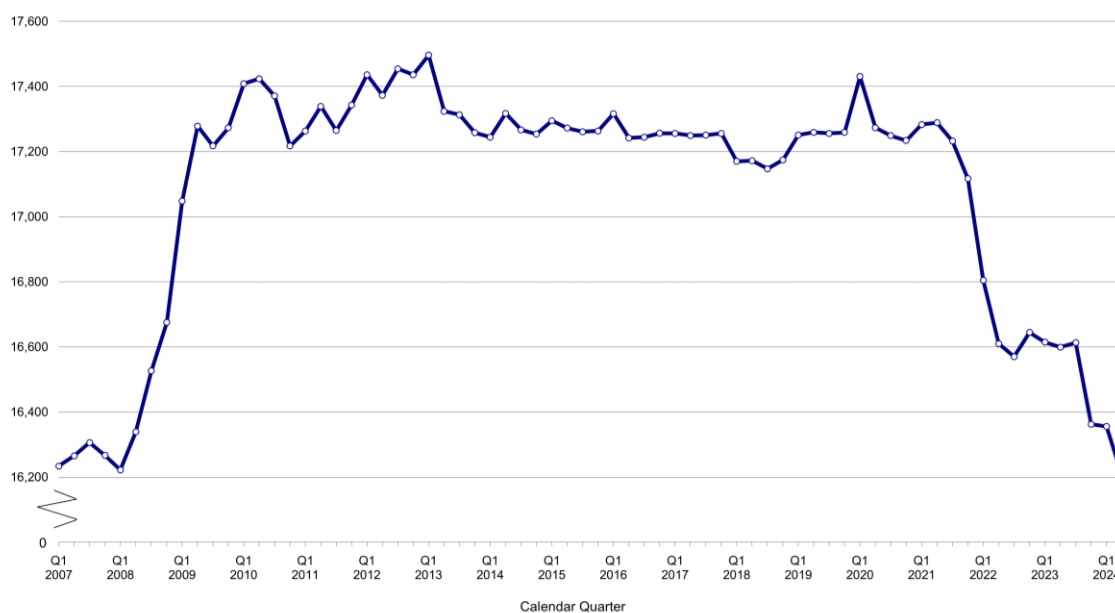
## Resources

41. We heard repeatedly during interviews, and noted in documentation submitted during the self-evaluation process, that police officer numbers in Road Policing Division have reduced significantly since the creation of Police Scotland (with a further reduction in recent times). These reductions are aligned to the reduction in both Police Scotland's and Road Policing Division's budgets. In a published [Freedom of Information Response](#), Police Scotland stated that – at the creation of Police Scotland – there were 656 roles/posts in Road Policing Division (although it could not say how many roles/posts may have been vacant).
42. In March 2023, Road Policing Division reported a reduction of another 43 police officers (down from 544 to 501).



43. In November 2023, as a result of this further reduction in road policing officer numbers (combined with increased court abstractions) the senior management team of Road Policing Division decided that:
- its current operating model was no longer sustainable; and
  - its continued effort to fulfil a 24/7, 365 days-per-year model was negatively impacting both operational effectiveness and staff health and welfare.
44. A proposal was therefore put forward to change Road Policing Division’s shift pattern to focus on day and late shifts only. (We note that the proposal for change has been put on hold pending the publication of this report.)
45. The reduction in police officer numbers across Police Scotland is unquestionably significant and will, no doubt, affect all communities in Scotland. In June 2024, the [Scottish Government](#) reported (see below graph) the police officer full time equivalent (FTE) strength to be 16,207, the lowest in Scotland since 2007. By way of comparison, the reported FTE figure on [31 March 2020](#) was 17,431, showing a 7 per cent FTE reduction (1,224 police officers) since then.

Figure 2: Total number of police officers (full-time equivalent) in Scotland, 2007-24



Source: Scottish Government



46. In the self-evaluation process, Police Scotland stated that, 'the allocation of funds to road policing continues to be challenging. In 2022/23 this led to a reduction in the number of full time posts within road policing'. Police Scotland further stated that, 'at the time of writing, the challenging targets set by the Road Safety Framework to 2030 are unlikely to be achieved'.

### Visibility, local policing and Contact, Command and Control Division (C3)

47. As may be expected from such a significant reduction in police officer numbers across Police Scotland and Road Policing Division, there has been a significant reduction in the visibility of both road and local policing officers on Scotland's roads, dealing with road safety and road crime matters. During our interviews with local and road policing officers, as well as interviews with partner organisations and key stakeholders, interviewees consistently noted a considerable reduction in the number of road policing vehicles patrolling Scotland's roads.
48. This reduction in availability and visibility will inevitably lead to a reduction in enforcement and prevention activity. It will also lead to a reduction in the public's fear of being caught, which – in turn – is, as highlighted by a [2023 systematic review on the effectiveness of police presence](#), likely to lead to an increase in the type of activity and driver behaviour that leads to serious and fatal road collisions.
49. The HMICFRS Road Policing – Not Optional report, published in 2020, made the following recommendation to all chief constables in England and Wales.
- “With immediate effect, chief constables should satisfy themselves that the resources allocated to policing the strategic road network within their force areas are sufficient. As part of that process they should make sure that their force has effective partnership arrangements including appropriate intelligence sharing agreements with relevant highways agencies.”
50. The review of road policing instigated by Police Scotland has been paused pending the publication of this report. Given the importance of detecting and disrupting criminals who use the roads, we consider that any future review of road policing by Police Scotland should consider its ability to properly resource and police (on a 24/7 basis) the road and motorway networks that connect major cities, towns, airports and ports across Scotland.



## Police priorities

51. In addition to the impact of the reduction in police officer numbers, we believe that – since the creation of Police Scotland – there has been a change in focus away from road safety and road crime, towards other matters.
52. In our [Policing Mental Health in Scotland report](#) (October 2023), we noted that – over time and for a variety of reasons – Police Scotland had shifted its focus away from what could be considered the more traditional, core policing roles of preventing and detecting crime and antisocial behaviour, towards supporting the vulnerable in society. In that report, we did not provide specific examples of the type of police activity reduced or stopped, but it is clear from this inspection that road policing activity (both in terms of improving road safety and denying criminals the use of the roads) is one of the areas of policing that now receives less focus.
53. Prioritising the response to calls from the public can be difficult. Police Scotland uses the THRIVE risk assessment process that asks those receiving, reviewing and prioritising calls to consider the six elements of threat, harm, risk, investigative opportunity, vulnerability and engagement. To highlight the difficulty in applying this methodology, we highlight two specific examples that were provided to us.
54. Drink/drug driving is one of the ‘fatal five’ enforcement priorities, but we heard that calls from the public about suspected drink/drug drivers were often not routinely tasked to officers to trace and establish whether any crimes or offences were being committed. Instead, we heard that such calls were often broadcast over the police radio channels for officers’ awareness. This appeared a common response, as there were often other calls that were considered higher priority than a suspected drink or drug driver. If no further calls were received from the public about the vehicle in question, the call would often then be closed, without further police attention or action.
55. We heard that a report of a pedestrian on a motorway or other fast road would receive a swift police response as the THRIVE risk assessment may lead to it being considered a more important call than a report of a drink/drug driver.



56. Given the complex nature of prioritisation of calls, we are pleased to note the progress Police Scotland is making in providing additional training to control room staff following our [Assurance Review of Police Scotland Contact Assessment Model](#) (2022).
57. While road safety is, in theory, a high local and national priority, we found it to be the lowest of priorities for local policing officers. Local policing officers said that due to the reduction in officer numbers and the type and nature of calls they normally dealt with, they were already operating at maximum capacity. They told us that the bulk of their day is taken up by what they described as demand-type calls (such as missing person investigations, concern for persons and mental health-related calls). We heard that there is an expectation that everyone takes their fair share of demand-type calls, which they said reduced their capacity to be proactive about road safety and road crime matters.
58. We also noted that few local policing officers were aware of the term ‘fatal five’ or ‘fatal five enforcement’ and while some had, no one was able to name all five enforcement activities. Local policing officers said there was little to no encouragement from supervisors or management teams to be proactive on road policing issues.

### Decline in identification of road traffic offences

59. Notwithstanding the work of the Police Scotland Safety Camera Unit, which manages the average, fixed and mobile speed detection cameras in Scotland, most road traffic offences are detected and recorded through police officer pro-activity.
60. Interviewees also told us that speed detection activity by police officers has become rare, despite this being one of the fatal five enforcement activities.



61. As we will highlight later in this report, there has been a 63% reduction in the number of all road traffic offences recorded in Scotland since 2013/14. Road traffic offences, which include all of the fatal five enforcement activities, as well as some other offence types, are set out below:

- Dangerous and careless driving
- Driving under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs
- Speeding
- Unlawful use of motor vehicle
- Vehicle defect offences
- Seat belt offences
- Mobile phone offences
- Other road traffic offences

62. The road safety charity [Brake](#) highlights excessive speed as a contributory factor in one in three fatal road collisions, and speed as a critical component in road collisions. They note that the kinetic energy of a car hitting someone or something at 30 mph has twice as much energy as a crash at 20 mph. Given this, it is concerning to note that speed detections by police officers in Scotland have reduced by 75 per cent since 2014/15.

63. Prevention activity must always be preferred over road deaths/serious injuries and subsequent investigations and prosecutions. We heard from people with experience of losing loved ones to road collisions, and the impact this has on the families and friends cannot be understated.

64. The financial cost to the Scottish and wider UK economies is also significant. [Transport Scotland](#) 2020 data showed that, in Great Britain, the costs to the economy was approximately:

- £2m per fatal collision;
- £246k per serious injury collision; and
- £24k per slight injury collision.



65. By applying these estimates to the recent KSI statistics, the total cost for fatal and serious collisions in Scotland in 2023 would be around £784m.

### **Recommendation 1**

Police Scotland should review its commitment to and investment in its road policing function, to ensure it is effectively supporting Scotland's Road Safety Framework and that road crime is being actively addressed.

### **Leadership with Road Policing Division**

66. During our inspection, we found that the Road Policing Division had a clear and effective leadership structure, with many experienced and highly dedicated officers and staff. While we found the structure to be an appropriate size, we heard that the levels of engagement and visibility across the division was mixed, with some members of the leadership team being more visible and engaging with staff more than others.
67. Within Police Scotland's executive team, an Assistant Chief Constable (ACC) has responsibility for Road Policing Division (as part of a wider portfolio of responsibility and oversight). Again, we found this clear and appropriate, and noted that the ACC holds informal meetings with road policing officers and staff.
68. There were mixed views about whether having past road policing experience was beneficial in being part of the division's senior management team. Most road policing officers we spoke to felt that while it was helpful to have some past experience in the role, since this would provide a better understanding of day to day duties, it was not essential.
69. The scale of the national Road Policing Division means that there are very few officers of Chief Inspector and above available to regularly engage with operational road policing teams unless they are based in the same buildings.
70. In terms of senior management team (SMT) resilience, we heard countering views about the relatively small SMT of Road Policing Division. While some felt the size was appropriate, others felt it could be increased by at least one additional officer at superintendent rank.





71. Police Scotland has recently widened the role of the support superintendent and chief inspector to provide oversight across all of OSD, including road policing. Albeit the support superintendent may provide better resilience, it should be noted that the chief inspector post was previously dedicated to road policing, and is now OSD wide which may impact resilience at that level, although the impact of this change should be monitored.

## Governance, risk assessment and prioritisation

72. Road Policing Division has well-established and appropriate systems of internal governance in place, monitoring both Police Scotland's and Road Policing Division's support of the Road Safety Framework to 2030, as well as day-to-day operational, developmental and wellbeing-related matters.
73. Road Policing Division tracks operational activity and outcomes, and provides support and direction on a daily basis, controlling and driving progress with internal and external partners through the Road Safety Governance Board and the Tactical Operations Working Group.
74. The threat, risk and harm associated with road safety issues has been well identified, correlated and assessed. Data on road safety is routinely gathered, quality assured and assessed to establish any changes in trends that require further police attention or reprioritisation.
75. Police Scotland also works closely with Transport Scotland to understand trends and identify emerging threats associated with collision classes, and to identify specific casualty types (with a focus on vulnerable road users). This data is shared with partners at meetings, allowing resources to be dedicated in a collaborative manner to the areas of greatest risk. (That said, we noted that the data-sets of Police Scotland and Transport Scotland do not align in terms of the dates used to define a year.)
76. Analytical and intelligence work in support of road safety issues across road and local policing was found to be very limited. A lack of staff in relevant units, alongside a lack of direct tasking to develop road safety and road crime packages, has led a reduction in road safety intelligence-led taskings or briefings for officers. In the divisions we visited, and the officers we interviewed, there was little understanding of road safety picture/trends/hotspots, etc. in their areas.



77. Understanding the causes of KSIs on Scotland's roads can only assist Police Scotland and its partners improve road safety. The publication of the jointly-authored [In-Depth Road Traffic Fatalities Report 2015-2020](#), was a significant step towards understanding that picture; however, society changes its behaviour regularly and there are frequent road safety innovations and improvements. We believe that maintaining a good understanding of the causal factors for KSIs is vital and we note that the current in-depth fatalities study has been paused due to funding issues. We understand a staff member has now been appointed to progress this work.

## Culture

78. Road Policing Division is not representative of either Police Scotland or Scottish society, being largely made up of white, male officers. As part of this inspection, we visited a number of other road policing units in forces in England and Wales (and spoke to representatives from other forces online), and found that this non-representative picture was the norm in both road policing and firearms units.

79. We heard that the leadership team within the division has made efforts to address the issue and to seek a more balanced model, through communications and management of resource deployments. However, despite such remedial measures, we heard reports of:

- female officers feeling uncomfortable;
- cultural issues possibly preventing new female officers joining road policing; and
- a female road policing officer leaving the department due to feeling discriminated against by male colleagues.

80. Police Scotland's [Policing Together](#) strategy was launched in June 2022. Subsequently, former Chief Constable Sir Iain Livingstone acknowledged institutional discrimination within Police Scotland. The Policing Together strategy reflects both his and Chief Constable Jo Farrell's commitment to become an anti-racist and anti-discriminatory service with an inclusive environment where people know they belong, and which delivers for all Scotland's communities in accordance with its [values and standards](#).



81. We heard that female officers may be disproportionately affected by centralised driver training. This was described as ‘un-family-friendly’ and it was suggested local training availability would boost the retention of female officers, since it would reduce the need to stay at the Scottish Police College (SPC) for the duration of the training course. We heard that the decentralisation of specialist driving courses would also allow for better access for officers in rural areas, where lack of local availability is potentially discouraging officers from pursuing the specialism.
82. We support the concept of Policing Together and do not underestimate the challenge (to both Police Scotland and wider UK police services) of the non-representative nature of many road policing functions. We believe that Police Scotland should monitor and evaluate the impact of the Policing Together team and consider progress made towards improving the representative nature of the division.

#### **Area for development 1**

Police Scotland should monitor and evaluate the impact of the Policing Together Team, particularly in relation to the recruitment and retention of people from under-represented groups into Operational Support Division.

83. Good work in Road Policing Division is recognised through personal interaction with supervisors and divisional SMT, and through a monthly bulletin. There is also an internal system to acknowledge good work through the OSD Recognition Awards.
84. During our inspection we found almost every officer and staff member engaged with us in a positive, open and honest manner. Most had a genuine hope that their participation could lead to improvement in Police Scotland and the service it provides to the communities of Scotland. We are very grateful to all those who engaged with us during the inspection and would also note the Road Policing Division inspection liaison team were found to be capable, professional and helpful throughout the inspection.



## Accountability

85. Police Scotland regularly and publicly reports road safety data to the SPA. We found the information provided to be limited and not fully reflective of the overall contribution the organisation is making towards Scotland's Road Safety Framework.
86. Accountability and transparency in local policing divisions is formally provided through local scrutiny panels, where a range of information and statistics are provided, normally by the relevant local policing divisional commander.

## Innovation

87. Police Scotland has been (and continues to be) innovative in creating projects and activity to improve road safety in Scotland. It conducts analysis of road collision and road casualty data and has attempted to focus on those groups of road users most at risk of being killed or seriously injured on Scotland's roads. This includes vulnerable road users such as cyclists, pedestrians, motorcyclists and older or newer/younger drivers.
88. Police Scotland also dedicates some focus in support of UK-wide issues, such as summer and festive drink/drug driving and national speed campaigns.
89. Operation Close Pass, designed to support vulnerable road users such as cyclists (by encouraging wider and safer overtaking by motorists) was a well-known and understood innovative programme among police officers and staff, with evidence provided of it being implemented positively in a number of areas.
90. However, there appears to be limited evaluation of such innovative programmes. We support innovation – and the focus given to it, but would expect better evaluation of any such programmes, with a view to rolling them out nationally, should they be considered worthwhile.



## Communication

91. During document reviews and interviews, we found little evidence that Police Scotland communicated road safety as a force and local priority anywhere other than within Road Policing Division.
92. We found that most local policing officers did not know who their local senior lead for road safety was. In the divisions we visited, we found that responsibility for road safety was held by a member of the local senior management team, normally at the chief inspector level. We also found a lack of road safety-specific tasking, performance management activity or briefings. We did hear that road safety tasking was commonly provided to officers as a result of specific issues raised by the public, local/pressure groups, Members of Parliament (MPs) and Members of the Scottish Parliament (MSPs), or local elected officials. Such tasking normally fell to the few dedicated community policing officers to try and tackle the specific issue.
93. In terms of public engagement, Police Scotland uses social media to promote key road safety messages. Its corporate communications function helps to deliver key messages throughout the year and also maintains a road safety communications calendar, with messaging supporting events occurring or likely to occur in different parts of Scotland (e.g. motorcycle safety campaigns from spring to early autumn, and drink driving campaigns during peak summer and festive periods). Other campaigns (pavement parking, Get Ready for Winter (along with Transport Scotland), Operation Close Pass and mobile phone campaigns) are all delivered to a schedule to limit any overlapping with other Police Scotland media campaigns and messaging. The close relationship with communications partners, coordination and planning means Road Policing officers are actively taking part in marketing campaigns led by Road Safety Scotland and Cycling Scotland. Road Policing officers are doing broadcast interviews, radio interviews and being quoted in traditional print media from Police Scotland issued press releases, as well as contributing to partner press releases. Other benefits of contributing to marketing campaigns mean Police Scotland feature on paid-for radio adverts, national TV adverts and bus advertising (e.g. Operation Close Pass) to maximise the audience reach and work efficiently with partners.



94. The impact of social media cannot be underestimated. It provides an effective and efficient medium for Police Scotland (and other key road safety partners) to influence road users, raise awareness and help improve road safety, on a daily basis. Given the lack of priority on road safety matters, and the still-high numbers of people killed and seriously injured on Scotland's roads each year, greater use of social media (in all its forms) could reach many drivers who might not otherwise come into contact with police messaging on road safety and improved driving. The use of social media should not, however, be solely relied upon otherwise people who are unable to use digital technologies would be excluded.
  
95. Given the significant number of people killed and seriously injured each year, we believe Police Scotland should upgrade and increase its communications plans to encourage preventative action and better driving behaviour, which should improve road safety.

#### **Area for development 2**

Police Scotland should strengthen its internal and external communications plans, using a range of media platforms to reach the widest possible audience and to focus on prevention messages.



## Delivery

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### Training for road policing officers

96. Road policing officers are given in-depth training in specialist road policing and road safety aspects such as pursuit management, hand-held speed detection and vehicle pursuits. There are also inputs on protecting of the scene of road collisions (locus protection) and the policing of the fast road network. This specialist training is highly valued by road policing officers.
97. A fully-qualified Police Scotland road policing officer must complete the following, as a minimum:
  - road Patrol Officers course (RPO) module (5 days)
  - RPO module 2 (10 days)
  - advanced driving course (20 days)
  - pursuit management tactics course (5 days)
  - work towards completing the Road Policing Award Portfolio.
98. On completion of the minimum requirements, officers are then entitled to apply to attend further specialist courses. These include:
  - motorcycle training
  - crash investigation
  - driving/motorcycle instructor
  - hollow spiked tyre deflation system (HOSTYDs) (tire deflation tactics) instructor
  - large vehicle prohibition
  - tachograph analysis
  - pursuit tactical advisor.
99. All courses delivered by driver training/road policing training are overseen, governed, monitored and audited by Police Scotland Quality Assurance Department. Courses are regularly inspected and audited to ensure compliance and accurate delivery.



100. Police Scotland driving instructors must complete the accredited Police Driving Instructor course, which is only available at the SPC and runs for eight weeks (i.e., above the recommended seven-week course length). This fully prepares instructors to coach, mentor and assess students, and to prepare and give classroom lessons.
101. Robust systems are in place to record and manage training profiles for each officer, and this is reviewed on a regular basis. Officers are prompted to arrange mandatory refresher training to carry out certain tasks. For example, police drivers require a High-Speed Driving Assessment (HSDA) every five years; pursuit authorised drivers require refresher training every three years; and HOSTYDs refresher training is carried out every three years.
102. Our inspection revealed that specialist training for road policing officers was of the highest standard across the multiple disciplines within the department. This view was reflected both in the information gleaned from Police Scotland and during focus groups conducted with police officers and staff. We consider this to be good practice, in view of the elevated complexity and physical risk associated with policing of the roads.
103. However, a lack of available courses (particularly driver training) was also highlighted as a concern. Many people we spoke with felt there was insufficient importance being placed on standard and advanced driver training, which they considered to be a key training priority. Some people expressed the opinion that Police Scotland reform programmes have resulted in chronic underinvestment in training – particularly for road policing training delivery. It was suggested that this did not receive the volume of training allocation the force required.





104. There is a growing backlog of training needs across multiple specialisms, including collision investigation; family liaison officers; and pursuit management officers. This backlog has been linked to a number of contributing factors, such as:
- the continued implementation of Police Scotland's post-pandemic training needs prioritisation plan;
  - the ongoing impacts of general staffing shortages, which limit opportunities for officers to address training needs;
  - the impact of the implementation of the Police Driving (Prescribed Training) Regulations 2022, which were legally enacted on 30th November 2022.
105. The head of Police Scotland training recently estimated it would take 12 years to eliminate the backlog in training. The requirement to train armed police officers to the same level as road policing officers will reduce the cost allocation to road policing from the 2025/26 year onwards. Consequently, we understand recent figures estimate the backlog to be over 17 years.
106. Since most driver training instructors are also operational road policing officers, they (and their respective teams) experience disproportionate abstractions in servicing driver training backlogs.
107. Officers also brought up the apparent policy decision by the Police Scotland executive giving firearms and surveillance officers priority access to advanced driving courses (over and above road policing officers). Again, this is compounded by road policing officers also having to perform the required training roles.

### Police Driving (Prescribed Training) Regulations 2022

108. The Police Driving (Prescribed Training) Regulations 2022, enacted in November 2022, deal with training obligations for police drivers, including refresher training. The regulations are critical in helping support any defence in the event a police officer faces prosecution as a consequence of driving a police vehicle. In the lead-up period to enactment, Police Scotland driver training amended its training products to ensure they met (and in some instances exceeded), the standards required in the regulations. Police driver training has responsibility for the allocation of training and output, as well as a legal requirement for driver re-authorisations.



109. It was apparent that Police Scotland could have been more proactive in increasing the number of trainers to accommodate the increased demand associated with the new legislation. Relying on the existing cadre of trainers placed additional strain on training capacity for driver training and other courses.
110. Due to the enforced changes to training requirements, there is a legal responsibility on the police to assess and re-assess police drivers within specified timeframes, or risk having their authority removed. Pursuit-trained officers must attend a two day refresher every three years and all trained police drivers are required to complete a one day high-speed driving assessment every five years. This aspect of re-certification is now delivered locally by road policing instructors. These additional requirements have led to a reduction in business-as-usual police driver training, with limited resources deployed within driver training.
111. We heard that Police Scotland was among a number of UK forces who took longer than necessary to come to terms with the implications of the emerging legislation. This was particularly the case in fully understanding which parts of the legislation would apply, and whether the organisation would be required to comply with all the terms of the new Act. This created delays in implementation, which may have placed Police Scotland at a disadvantage, facing a significant challenge to reduce or clear the backlogs.
112. The changes to prescribed driving classifications resulted in the “intermediate trained road policing drivers” (a temporary qualification in Scotland gained via enhanced driver training input, prior to full advanced driving course) not being recognised as a prescribed course. This significantly reduced the number of deployable road policing drivers (as previously, such ‘intermediate’ qualified officers could still perform many functional road policing roles).
113. We heard during interviews with officers and staff that the training backlogs and loss of intermediate qualification status was placing additional strain on the cadre of qualified advanced drivers. We were told that it could take over two years for officers to attend an advanced driving course. While some short-notice cancellations are available, these can be very challenging for officers in more distant locations, as they need time to make arrangements for residential training away from home.



114. There is a risk that road policing officers may not be in a position to perform to the legal standards expected because of the backlog of officers requiring essential driver training. Police Scotland should urgently take steps to address the critical training issues highlighted in this report. This should include consideration of conducting courses locally, rather than all students having to attend the SPC in Fife.
115. We acknowledge the good practice of the Road Policing Training Board meeting regularly (quarterly) to conduct senior management reviews of the training demand. We are also aware that Police Scotland has highlighted driving training courses on its corporate risk register (because of the training backlog). However, we consider that Police Scotland could have been better prepared to deal with the implications of the legislative change and the resultant backlog of critical training is an area in need of urgent prioritisation.

### **Area for development 3**

Police Scotland should ensure that it is fully prepared for any legislative changes, and that officers and staff are trained and equipped to implement legislation within appropriate time-frames.

### **Recommendation 2**

Police Scotland should take urgent steps to address the backlog in specialist driver training.



## Training and Development

116. Road policing-related training for local policing officers begins with the initial probationary training course at the SPC, where students are given basic instruction on mostly legislation and criminal justice-related matters. This is supplemented by practical topics such as scene protection and dealing with drivers. The largely classroom-based curriculum also includes some practical training and includes activities on police considerations at RTC scenes, where they consider aspects pertaining to safety and use of locus protection methodology.
117. Police Scotland implemented a policy whereby local policing officers, in the absence of available road policing officers, could be requested to attend incidents on 'fast roads', which are typically 'A' Class single or multi-carriageway roads with national speed limits such as trunk roads and motorways.
118. At the time of our inspection, training for local policing officers engaged in operational duties on fast roads consisted of online Moodle training. This was created by driver training for all police officers and covers locus protection, safe stopping of vehicles, and health and safety advice. It is mandatory for all officers attending the standard response driving course, and officers can complete this package as many times as they feel is required, via a refresher.
119. Many local policing officers report they are being deployed to fast road loci on an ever-increasing basis. They consider the available equipment, vehicles and training to be insufficient and ineffective in preparing them for adopting safe working practices in such hazardous environments. Officers suggested no amount of classroom training could replace in-person, practical training with instruction and demonstration of the various procedures.
120. We consider that Police Scotland should not focus on the minimum standard of safety for policing fast roads, but should ensure the health and safety of its officers by utilising better equipped and trained road policing officers on the fast road network. On those occasions where road policing officers are not available, only local policing officers who are properly trained and equipped should be deployed.



121. Officers and staff we spoke to within C3 shared the common opinion that local policing officers were poorly equipped, trained and lacked the confidence to safely manage incidents on the fast road network. This view was shared by local policing sergeants we spoke to, who felt the benefits to officer safety would be matched by improvement in overall standards of investigation if direct practical training was provided by experienced road policing officers.
122. During our inspection it became apparent that the Scottish Police Federation (SPF) has, on multiple occasions during regularly scheduled road policing forums, expressed concerns about the significant reductions in Police Scotland's road policing capability since the creation of Police Scotland, which has meant that more non-specialist local policing officers are being deployed to operational incidents on the fast road network without what they considered to be appropriate or sufficient training or related equipment.

### **Recommendation 3**

Police Scotland should review its policy position, and the training and equipment provided, for local policing officers responding to incidents on the fast road networks.

### **Area for development 4**

Police Scotland should review the road policing training provided to local policing officers.

123. Road Policing Division recognises and supports its officers through a range of different approaches. The recently-developed 'My-Career' personal development framework encourages all line managers to complete discussions ahead of defined deadlines and to engage in open and honest conversations with officers about their readiness for promotion or development. The Competency Values Framework is used at every level.
124. We were told that 135 officers within Road Policing Division (i.e. around 27 per cent) did not commence a My Career form in 2022/23. This outcome was attributed to various factors including long-term absence and failure to complete on time.



125. Road Policing Division stated that it provides officers with mentoring and support in the application for promotion process. It uses the services of a 'Mentoring Single Point Of Contact', as well as facilitating online workshops by officers with significant experience of the promotion process (giving officers access to advice and the opportunity to ask questions about what is expected during the promotion process).
126. The division actively supports internal development and seeks to 'promote from within' (due to the level of specialist experience and competence available within the departmental workforce). Officers with suitable experience are also encouraged to apply to the OSD 'temporary promotion pool', which enables exposure to other departments and disciplines, broadening knowledge and appreciation of other roles within the division.
127. Road Policing Division is committed to learn from staff exiting the department. We learned that Police Scotland has an exit interview document that is used for officers transferring from road policing, with questions including the following:
- reason for leaving
  - reason for joining road policing
  - training questions, including recommendations to improve training.
  - culture – positive or negative environment
  - could road policing do better for staff
  - would staff consider returning.
128. We found that officers and staff in road policing are very committed to their roles, although many still feel undervalued as a consequence of a perceived lack of organisational recognition in the roles they perform. We also heard about dissatisfaction regarding wider career development opportunities for road policing officers, beyond the skills required to carry out their specialist roles.



129. We also discovered a lack of desire to undertake specialist training such as collision investigation training, on the grounds that this once full-time role is no longer dedicated and protected from wider road policing operational demands. Given that the post is no longer ring-fenced, less people are attracted to apply for this role, therefore there is now a shortage and road policing officers are having to pick up those duties in addition to their normal workloads.

#### **Area for development 5**

Police Scotland should consider the career development opportunities available to road policing officers and staff.

### **Demand**

130. Our 2014 inspection of road policing in Scotland, and subsequent review in December 2015, identified that there were insufficient resources on road policing late and night shifts. There were also additional resourcing challenges surrounding senior investigation cover in the east of the country.
131. A structure review began in autumn 2016 and concluded in 2017, with several key findings and recommendations for further action. Following this review there have been several changes to road policing shift patterns, the last of which was introduced in 2022.
132. Scotland has stricter drink driving laws than elsewhere in the United Kingdom, but [2006 research on the effectiveness of reducing illegal blood alcohol concentration \(Fell, J.C. and Voas, R.B.\)](#) tells us that stricter legislation only leads to a reduction in offences when and if it is properly enforced.
133. Officers informed us that the significant reductions in road policing staffing levels since the creation of Police Scotland has had an adverse impact on their ability to perform their role. We heard a lot of frustration from officers about the reductions in officer numbers.



134. We heard about the inability of road policing officers to perform key tasks, such as pursuing vehicles involved in criminality and road crime, due to insufficient resource levels. In addition, it is common for road policing officers to be unable to perform proactive intelligence-led patrols, despite this being a commitment in Road Policing Division's Annual Delivery Plan.
135. A new and concerning area of demand, highlighted to us, relates to the antisocial and dangerous use of off road and electric bikes being used throughout the country. Many officers we spoke to felt that they were unable to tackle their use, due to a lack of guidance and direction from Police Scotland. Many felt the risks associated in attempting to stop the riders was high, and there was an apparent fear of the consequences should something go wrong when attempting to do so.
136. The procurement and use of SelectaDNA (a DNA-based product that marks and protects property) to assist police officers identify users of off-road motorbikes and electric bikes was found to be innovative, but appears underused and under-assessed. The programme was introduced on a pilot basis in the north east of Scotland during 2023, but in interviews, we found very little awareness of the system either being equipped or utilised. Those we spoke to were unable to say whether the system had ever been used anywhere in Police Scotland.

## Road safety

137. We found that road safety is seen as a matter of priority for local communities across Scotland and features in almost all local policing plans. Police Scotland has clear established road safety priorities at the local policing level, which are aligned to national road policing priorities. (We also found that the level of engagement and collaboration between local and road policing varies greatly in quality and effectiveness across Scotland.)
138. Limited time and resources means local policing officers are unable to act proactively on road safety, disadvantaging the communities of Scotland, and undermining officers' proficiency. We heard from some officers that they had become largely de-skilled in road policing duties.





## Court attendance

139. A significant concern we heard about during our inspection was the impact of road policing officers' attendance at court, and its detrimental effect on the ability of Police Scotland to keep people safe on the roads. Court attendance is an important part of an officer's role in bringing those who cause (or risk) harm to justice, but a combination of increased attendance and fewer resources has affected officers' ability to perform road patrol duties, with a knock-on effect on their general wellbeing.
140. Unfortunately, it has also become common for officers to learn on the day of a court case that the case has been cancelled at an earlier date. Road policing officers receive citations to attend courts throughout Scotland and there is no central corporate function to manage the administration of citations, which is additional work for an already-challenged workforce.
141. During our inspection, we found good evidence of remote evidence provision being used in other sectors of the criminal justice business area.

### **Recommendation 4**

Police Scotland should engage with its criminal justice partners to explore options (including virtual appearances) to reduce the time requirement for officers attending court.

142. Due to variations in shift patterns and on-call arrangements, we heard that the north of Scotland is often under-resourced, particularly during nightshift hours.

### **Area for development 6**

Road policing should review their on-call arrangements to ensure a consistent approach across Scotland



## Abnormal loads

143. We found that the demand from escorting abnormal loads is affecting Police Scotland's ability to keep people safe on Scotland's roads. Police Scotland is the only UK police force that still performs this role. [National Highways](#) performs this function in England and Wales.
144. We learned that escorts of less than one hour are supported by Police Scotland without charge to the haulier, with escorts over an hour charged to the haulier. We also heard it was commonplace for road policing officers to work on rest days to perform abnormal load escort duties. This is inefficient and affects officers' rest days, and because not all road policing officers are qualified to perform this task, this has a further impact on those officers who are qualified.
145. We found the Police Scotland system of processing abnormal load information to be both inefficient and administratively burdensome. A business case was submitted in 2016, proposing the introduction of an electronic management system, but this has not been progressed further. At a time when all Scottish policing resources have been significantly reduced, alongside an increase in deaths and serious injuries on Scotland's roads, continuing to dedicate highly-trained and equipped police officers to routinely support the private haulage industry is untenable.

### **Recommendation 5**

Police Scotland should engage with Scottish Government to progress a legislative change that will allow the escorting of abnormal loads in Scotland to be carried out by another agency.



## Performance management

146. Scotland's Road Safety Framework to 2030 highlights that enforcement and prevention are essential parts of the Safe System. A report by the European Transport Safety Council (ETSC) found evidence that drivers are more willing to comply with the rules if they feel that they are otherwise likely to be caught and punished. It therefore recommends that police controls should be 'sufficiently publicized, regular and long term, unpredictable and difficult to avoid, and combine both highly visible and less visible activities.'
147. During our inspection we found that there is a lack of performance management information on the levels of enforcement and prevention activity in Police Scotland. There seems to be limited data on how effectively the organisation is contributing towards the challenging targets outlined in Scotland's Road Safety Framework. When conducting our inspection, we found data relative to each campaign, but we struggled to get an overview of all activity that had taken place.
148. Performance reports submitted to the SPA Policing Performance Committee contain information relating to the number of people killed and seriously injured, as well as data relating to specific campaigns that have been carried out. An overview of all enforcement and prevention activity, with a specific focus on the fatal five offences, would provide a more meaningful indication of progress towards the targets outlined in Scotland's Road Safety Framework.



149. Given the importance of enforcement and prevention, Police Scotland should seek to better understand the level of police activity by specialist road policing officers and by local policing officers.

#### **Area for development 7**

Police Scotland should develop a means to measure the level of prevention activity, focusing on the 'fatal five' causes of death and serious injury.

#### **Recommendation 6**

Police Scotland should progress the implementation of a road policing performance framework that provides an indication of progress towards achieving the targets set out in Scotland's Road Safety Framework to 2030.

### **Drug driving**

150. We learned that Police Scotland has evidence to suggest that drug driving has become a significant threat and risk to road users across Scotland. However, we also found that Police Scotland is unable to tackle drug driving effectively, due to a lack of trained resources and forensic services capacity. Police Scotland has taken a policy decision to restrict the use of roadside drug testing kits to road policing officers and a limited number of local policing officers on some of Scotland's larger islands (due to the difficulty in maintaining geographical cover from road policing at those locations). This reduction in road policing resources has only exacerbated the risk.
151. We believe that Police Scotland needs to ascertain the current and future drug driving problem in Scotland. This is crucial in order to allow Police Scotland to consider current and future capability and the preventative efforts required. Police Scotland must consider how to incrementally increase drug driving enforcement to local policing teams, which by scale and nature impacts on communities.



152. We conducted an [Assurance Review of Scottish Police Authority Forensic Toxicology Provision](#) in 2022. This followed the disclosure that 384 (later rising to 447) drug driving cases had been marked as 'no proceedings' by the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service (COPFS). This review was published in April 2023. We made 25 recommendations for improvement, highlighting a number of key areas, including strategy, planning, process, management, reporting, scrutiny and prevention in relation to drugs driving. There were also 17 areas of development and since we published our report, significant progress has been made. The SPA should, however, continue to work with Police Scotland and should ensure there is forensic services capacity for a potential incremental increase in drug driving cases.

### **Recommendation 7**

Police Scotland and the Scottish Police Authority should create and implement a joint action plan to identify and address the risk posed by drug driving.

## **Equipment**

153. Police Scotland has not maintained its fleet of safety camera vans, which has at times reduced its ability to fully deploy that resource. Some road policing vehicles are fitted with ANPR and speed detection equipment, while some are not.
154. We heard from road policing officers that it would be beneficial if all vehicles had standard equipment fitted. We also heard that all police vehicles should have front-facing dash-cams and that road policing vehicles should have front and rear facing dashcams.
155. We found that road policing was committed to the health and safety of staff and ensuring vehicles are safe to use. However, we also found that road policing vehicles are not equipped in a uniform and coherent manner and that the views of the officers using the equipment are not taken into account. In addition, we found that the road safety equipment fitted to, and available in, local policing vehicles is inconsistent and often insufficient.
156. We found most road policing officers to be thorough and professional in completing vehicle and equipment checks, whereas local policing officers are not dedicating the time to complete such checks as regularly as required.



157. The complex nature of road policing requires officers to have a variety of clothing and equipment, depending on need. This may include requests for riding motorcycles or working in adverse weather conditions. We were pleased to discover that Police Scotland has a formal process relating to clothing and equipment, allowing officers to report matters for decision, approval or information.

### **Recommendation 8**

Police Scotland should implement a process to ensure vehicles are equipped in a consistent manner. The views of officers who will be using the vehicles should be taken into account when considering the type of equipment to be fitted, and how and where it is fitted.

### **Area for development 8**

Local policing divisions should take steps to ensure officers conduct regular vehicle and equipment checks and that such checks are recorded.

## **Partnership working**

158. We found that Police Scotland has well-established and effective relationships with a wide range of stakeholders in relation to road policing. The partner organisations that we spoke with were extremely positive about the collaborative arrangements that they have with the road policing team in Police Scotland.

159. While all partners were very positive about the relationships with Road Policing Division, many expressed the view that road safety sat low in terms of Police Scotland's wider priorities and most felt that it should be given higher priority. Many cited the number of people being killed and seriously injured on our roads as a simple and obvious prompt that greater attention is required. Most felt that too many people were still dying unnecessarily and avoidably, and that there was a permissive and resigned attitude to road deaths and serious collisions across society.



160. Regular meetings such as the Tactical Options Working Group (with partners) and the Road Safety Governance Board (internal) are both good examples of well-established partnership arrangements, where the views and expertise of partners are brought together in a positive and open manner to inform and support each other.
  
161. During our inspection, we found good evidence of practical engagement with stakeholders. The priorities of these stakeholders was discussed at strategic, tactical and operational levels, and we found a number of examples found of productive joint working to tackle identified priorities. This included a pilot project in N Division ( Highlands and Islands) dealing with issues relating to HGV vehicles, which has provided positive results.
  
162. We attended a collision demonstration event involving Police Scotland, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service and Scottish Ambulance Service. This public engagement event involved a demonstration of the emergency services response to a collision. Stalls providing leaflets and road safety advice were supported by other organisations, including the local authority. The event, which was held in the Tayside area (adjacent to the A9), was held after a sustained period of action aimed to improve driver behaviour in an area where there have been a high number of fatal road traffic collisions (18 deaths in 2023 and 8 deaths year to date in 2024). We found this event to be a positive example of partners working together to engage with the public on road safety matters.



Picture 1 – Collision demonstration event



Source: His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary in Scotland

163. The relationship between Police Scotland and Transport Scotland is very well established and considered positive and worthwhile on both sides. Police Scotland engages with Transport Scotland on many matters and has aligned its road policing priorities with that of Transport Scotland's Road Safety Framework to 2030. Interviews with key personnel from both organisations highlighted the positive nature of the partnership working arrangements. This is to be commended.





164. Police Scotland has dedicated one inspector, one sergeant, and three constables as liaison officers within Transport Scotland. This arrangement, whereby officers are embedded in the Transport Scotland control centre and trained to work in partnership with Transport Scotland officers and contracted agencies, ensures each agency has a good understanding of their respective roles. We found that these roles have contributed positively towards partnership working. Such commitment enables good flows of information and has fostered collaborative working and joint understanding. This has been of particular benefit during extreme weather events in Scotland.
165. While we did hear of some good relationships and positive examples of joint working between local policing and Road Policing Division, we also found that the level of engagement and collaboration between local policing and Road Policing Division varied in quality and effectiveness in different parts of the country.
166. While some told us about Road Policing Division assisting local resources when they could, this was often because of strong personal relationships between operational staff in road and local policing teams, rather than organisational structures or arrangements. Others referenced the relationship as ineffective and inefficient, with Road Policing Division addressing national issues as its priority and providing limited assistance on local road safety or road crime issues. A causal factor that was evident in some areas was a lack of understanding of roles, coupled with silo working (road policing resources are often based geographically remotely to local policing, although within the same office complexes).
167. We also found a mixed picture of involvement in local and specific road policing meetings. Although Police Scotland has clearly established road safety and road crime priorities at local divisional level, which are aligned to national road policing strategic priorities, this did not always translate into attendance at key meetings. We found limited evidence of local policing being invited to road policing local or national meetings.



168. Road Policing Division assign an inspector to cover each local policing division geographically who acts as a conduit between the local division and Road Policing Division. It should be noted that each local policing division has a dedicated inspector, with the exception of Greater Glasgow and Renfrewshire and Inverclyde who share an inspector. This officer attends local divisional management meetings, however, we found that their engagement with the local policing division could be more regular and that daily engagement on local issues would be beneficial. The lack of regular communication and engagement may contribute to the lack of understanding that we saw in the tasking process (in terms of how local policing could access road policing resource).

### **Area for development 9**

Road policing and local policing should take steps to ensure a level of consistency and positive engagement between these two functions across Scotland.

169. We found a similar lack of consistency in the effectiveness of the relationship between Road Policing Division and the C3 function in Police Scotland, with variance in the quality and effectiveness in different parts of the country.
170. While we found some evidence of positive relationships and meeting attendance, this was limited. Many people that we spoke to acknowledged this needed to improve and encouragingly, we found examples of a desire to do this, including plans in the east of Scotland to have joint training between area control room and road policing staff.
171. We consider that there is some misunderstanding of road policing roles: C3 staff believe that road policing resources are often 'ring-fenced' for other roles (or that roading police are ring-fencing themselves) – resulting in their either not responding, or being slow to accept, respond or attend calls from C3 staff.



172. We found uncertainty about the types of calls that both road and local policing officers were being asked to attend. Many interviewees told us about instances where road policing officers were sent to attend minor, no injury collisions (sometime a long way away), while local policing officers were sent to calls on the fast road network, simply because they were closer than road policing resources. Local policing officers were also sent to calls where the expertise and capability of road policing officers was needed. This confusion seems to have led to some distrust and resentment between local and road policing officers, and both felt the issue lay with C3 staff, who wanted to 'clear their screens' as quickly as possible, rather than prioritise and task calls better and more efficiently.
173. In some of the divisions we visited, we found that road policing resources appeared isolated from the priorities and concerns of the local policing areas in which they were based. This apparent disconnect does not foster the best relationship between local and road policing functions.

#### **Area for development 10**

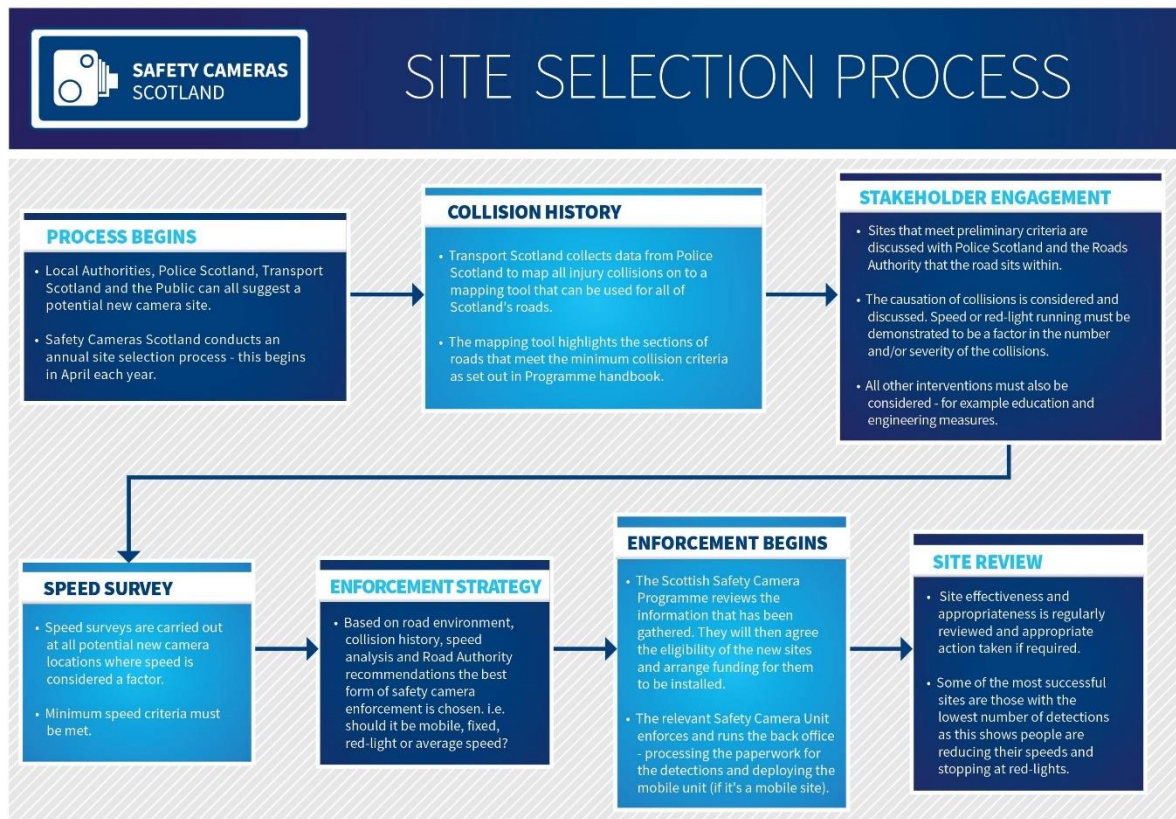
Road policing and C3 should take steps to ensure a level of consistency and positive engagement between these two functions across Scotland.

### **Safety Camera Unit**

174. Police Scotland's Safety Camera Unit (SCU) was formerly the Scottish Safety Camera Partnership and was managed by Transport Scotland. We learned that Police Scotland is also responsible for reviewing applications for new sites and reviewing site effectiveness. It consults with road users on the effectiveness of safety cameras, with the aim of using them to reduce casualties on Scotland's roads by targeted camera enforcement and improved driver behaviour. Cameras are sited in the areas most in need (in terms of road casualty reduction), and are deployed where they will have the greatest casualty and collision reduction potential.



Picture 2 – Site selection process



Source: Police Scotland safety cameras

175. Year-on-year funding is provided by Transport Scotland through the Scottish Safety Camera Programme, which funds the entire SCU. We heard there is a need to improve the manner in which this important resource is managed and deployed. The staff of the SCU appeared uncertain about whether they worked for Police Scotland or Transport Scotland. They felt themselves to be in a difficult position between 'two masters', with Transport Scotland providing annual funding for the SCU and setting operational guidelines to control the unit's daily activity.



176. The relationship between the SCU and local policing divisions was found to be poor. Few local policing officers we spoke to understood the workings of the SCU and there appeared to be no communication between the SCU and the local policing divisions (as to where and why resources were deployed). We would expect the SCU – both as a specialist and dedicated unit within the wider Road Policing Division and a resource of Police Scotland – to be deployed to locations of greatest concern, as an additional tool to improve road safety issues.

#### **Area for development 11**

Police Scotland should review the Safety Camera Unit to improve the manner in which this important resource is managed and deployed.

### **Brake**

177. Brake is a national road safety charity. It was set up in 1995, with a remit to prevent deaths, serious injuries and pollution on roads, and to care for families bereaved and injured in road crashes through its National Road Victim Service. In 2023, the National Road Victim Service supported 152 individuals in Scotland who had been bereaved, had suffered life-changing injuries or had witnessed a fatal or serious road collision.

178. In 2022, only 20 per cent of families bereaved by road death in Scotland were given support by the National Road Victim Service; this increased to 62 per cent in 2023. In 2022, 17 per cent of the referrals in Scotland came from police officers; this had increased to 51 per cent by September 2024. This compares with a UK average of 65 per cent.

179. We established that the relationship between Brake and Police Scotland is good, and the establishment of points of contact has been positive. However, officers who have first contact with road victims come from different units and teams (rather than being exclusively family liaison officers) and this has presented logistical challenges in terms of providing appropriate training.



180. We also heard that data protection and General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) issues had slowed down the referral process from Police Scotland to the National Road Victim Service, and that it had taken around two years to initiate a data protection agreement (and then two months to finalise it). This affected victims accessing support.
181. Referrals are now made to the National Road Victim Service by Police Scotland in the body of an email sent to a secure account. Brake reports that the quality of information received is generally good, but that using a referral form would reduce the margin for error, while providing a useful structure and process for busy operational officers.
182. We also heard about the referral mechanism adopted by Kent Police – seen by Brake as the strongest example of partnership working – where a six month pilot of “consent based, opt out” (whereby in fatal collisions the family are asked if they would like a referral made to access support from the National Road Victim Service) saw referrals of road victims increase by 160 per cent. As of June 2024, over 80 per cent of road victims in Kent agreed to their details being shared with the National Road Victim Service, so they can be contacted by one of their caseworkers. This approach is considered to give road victims the best possible chance of accessing support.

### **Area for development 12**

To ensure more families receive the support they need following serious road collisions, Police Scotland should review its information-sharing protocols and referral processes and consider a ‘consent based, opt-out’ approach.



## Technology

183. Given the reduction in the number of officers in road policing across Scotland, the use of technology to focus on road safety and road crime is more important than ever. We visited West Midlands Police and were very impressed by the manner in which technology is used, particularly ANPR.
184. ANPR technology is used by police forces throughout the UK to help detect, deter and disrupt criminal activity at local, force, regional and national levels. This includes travelling criminals, organised crime groups and terrorists. As a vehicle passes an ANPR camera (fixed or mobile), its registration number is read and automatically checked against database records of vehicles of interest. This information can then be passed to officers on patrol by the control room.
185. ANPR has proved to be important in the detection of many offences, including locating people wanted for arrest, stolen vehicles and uninsured vehicles, and uncovering cases of major crime. It has also proved to be successful in locating missing persons and people who are vulnerable.
186. West Midlands Police has over 300 fixed sites across its force area, and each motorway patrol car is fitted with ANPR technology. The cameras provide great sources of data and intelligence for the police and for partner organisations.
187. Police Scotland has very few ANPR cameras when compared with other parts of the UK. We also found that very few officers in road policing are trained in its use. We heard that the department responsible for supporting this technology in Police Scotland is very under-resourced when compared with other UK forces. Experienced road policing officers we spoke to expressed frustration regarding this technology not being used to best effect.

### **Recommendation 9**

Police Scotland should identify and adopt best practice in the deployment and use of ANPR



## Operation Snap

188. [Operation Snap](#) is an award-winning initiative by GoSafe Wales (the Welsh equivalent of the Scottish Safety Camera Programme). It enables the public to submit video and photographic evidence relating to driving offences that they have witnessed, to the police for their use. Since late 2016, there has been an increase in detection rates without significant extra enforcement costs, and the public has reacted positively to this initiative, often viewed as a form of community policing.

Picture 3 – Operation snap logo



Source: West Mercia Police

189. In its 2020 thematic inspection of road policing, HMICFRS recommended that all forces provide 'efficient and effective' systems whereby the public could submit journey-cam footage for police consideration. All English and Welsh police forces now provide the public with the ability to report road traffic offences by directly uploading footage to the police. Police Scotland is the only UK police force that does not allow the public to do this.
190. We were informed that Police Scotland has been considering the introduction of a national dashcam safety portal for some time, and that the introduction of Digital Evidence Sharing Capability (DESC) will provide an opportunity for the public to upload footage. However, we also understand that this will only be accessible once the incident has been reported to the police control room, who will then send the person reporting the incident a link to upload footage.





191. While this would be a step in the right direction, we see the requirement to phone the police before being able to upload footage as an unnecessary additional step that doesn't take advantage of the opportunity to:

- make it easier for the public to report road traffic offences (thereby improving public engagement on road safety matters);
- reduce demand on the police control room;
- expand the scope for enforcement by essentially enabling members of the public to become the 'eyes' of the police; and
- positively influence and change driver behaviour by increasing the likelihood of being caught.

192. As highlighted earlier in this report, there is strong academic evidence to demonstrate that drivers are more willing to comply with the rules if they feel that they are otherwise likely to be caught and punished. We believe that Police Scotland should do everything it can to improve engagement with the public on road safety matters, particularly at a time of shrinking resources.

193. Partner organisations we engaged with were very much of the view that a facility to allow the public to directly upload footage to police should be progressed in Scotland and that it would go a long way towards making roads safer. We strongly believe that Police Scotland should progress the facility for members of the public to report road traffic offences by directly uploading journey-cam footage. This includes dashcam from vehicles, as well as from a broader range of people, including vulnerable road users such as cyclists, equestrians, motorcyclists and pedestrians.

### **Recommendation 10**

Police Scotland should progress the facility for members of the public to report road traffic offences by directly uploading journey-cam footage.



## Analysis of data

194. It is important that Police Scotland makes evidenced-based decisions, by using data to place the most appropriate officers in the right places at the right times. This will improve both effectiveness and efficiency. While we heard that there was regular high-level analysis of road safety data, we found limited use of operationally-focused intelligence and analysis to support officers.
195. As part of this inspection, we visited West Midlands Police, which serves around 2.8 million people over 348 square miles. We found it maintained around 14 dedicated intelligence/analytical/ANPR staff to support roads and local policing teams on road safety and road crime matters.
196. By way of comparison, Police Scotland serves around 5.5 million people over 28,168 square miles and its wider OSD – of which road policing is a part – maintains three analysts, of which one has a (non-dedicated) focus on road safety. Its intelligence function dedicates around eight staff to the wider OSD portfolio, but with limited focus on road safety or road crime matters in comparison with other crime types. Additionally, as of September 2024, Police Scotland now have a dedicated OSD analyst who is focused on road safety and road crime, conduction analysis to support objectives of the Road Safety Framework.
197. We also noted little to no engagement with other UK forces and little engagement between the road policing analytical/intelligence staff and local policing divisions on road safety or road crime.
198. There is a high demand for both OSD's analytical staff and those dedicated to OSD and Road Policing Division from its intelligence function, but this is focused at a strategic level towards road safety matters only. Road crime-related issues seem to be addressed infrequently, with an apparent disconnect between intelligence and analytical products developed for road safety and road crime. This is despite their apparent importance to Police Scotland, and road safety being a priority for most Scottish communities.



199. Police Scotland is undergoing a National Review of Tasking and Coordinating. We found that, in general, road policing officers are clear about their role and daily focus in tackling road safety issues, but that local policing officers – whilst not discouraged from tackling road safety issues – were not encouraged or directed towards it. We found that intelligence, analytical and tasking and coordinating work on road safety and road crime could be significantly improved.

### **Recommendation 11**

Police Scotland should review its intelligence and analytical commitment in relation to road safety and road crime, to improve focus on these areas.

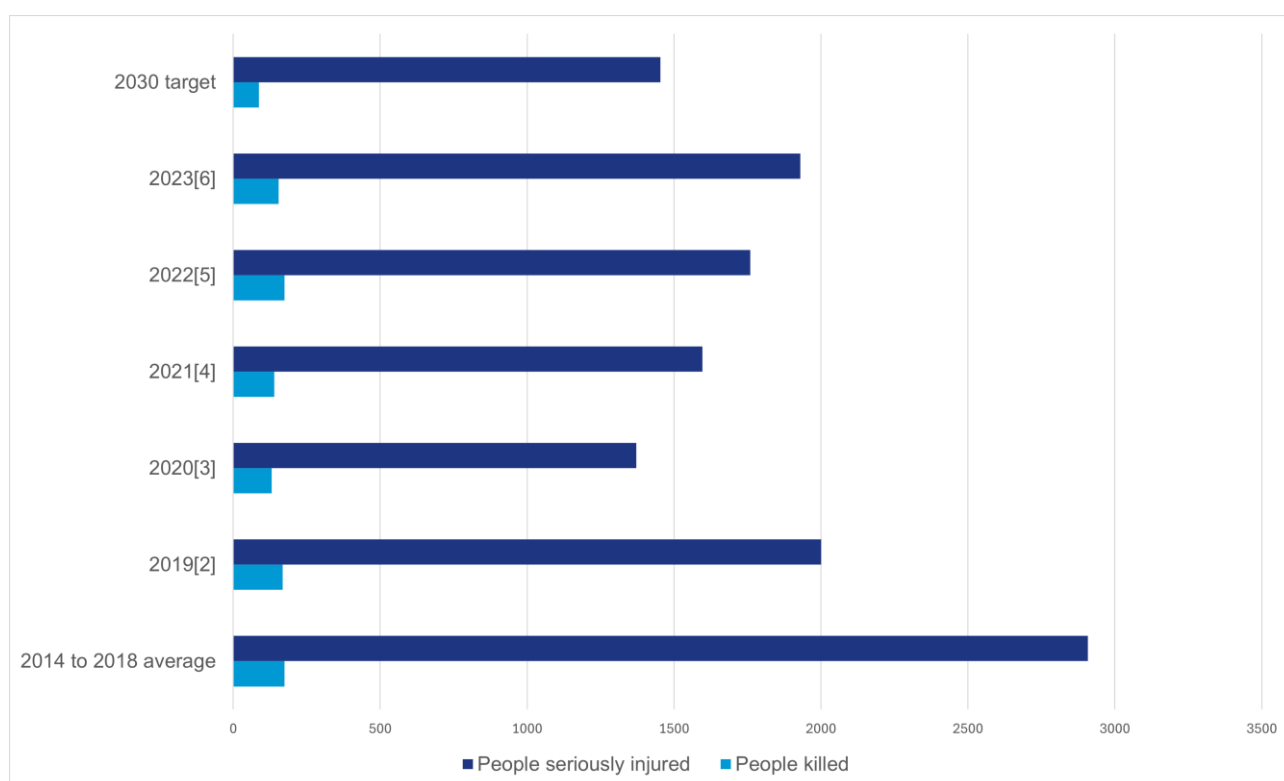


## Outcomes

### Road Safety Framework to 2030

200. The targets in the Road Safety Framework to 2030 started with a baseline number drawn from average casualty numbers between 2014 and 2018. The illustration below shows the initial baseline, casualty rates for subsequent years, and how they compare against the 2030 targets:

Figure 3 – Initial baseline, casualty rates and how they compare against the 2030 targets



Source: Transport Scotland<sup>23456</sup>

201. As can be seen above, the number of casualties dropped during 2020, probably as a result of the restrictions imposed due to COVID 19. Since the restrictions were eased the total number of casualties in Scotland has steadily increased each year. We heard that the challenging targets set out in Road Safety Framework to 2030 are unlikely to be met if the current trends continue.

<sup>2</sup> Transport Scotland, [Key Reported Road Casualties Scotland 2019](#), 30 July 2020.

<sup>3</sup> Transport Scotland, [Reported Road Casualties Scotland 2020](#), 27 October 2021.

<sup>4</sup> Transport Scotland, [Key Reported Road Casualties Scotland 2021](#), 25 May 2022.

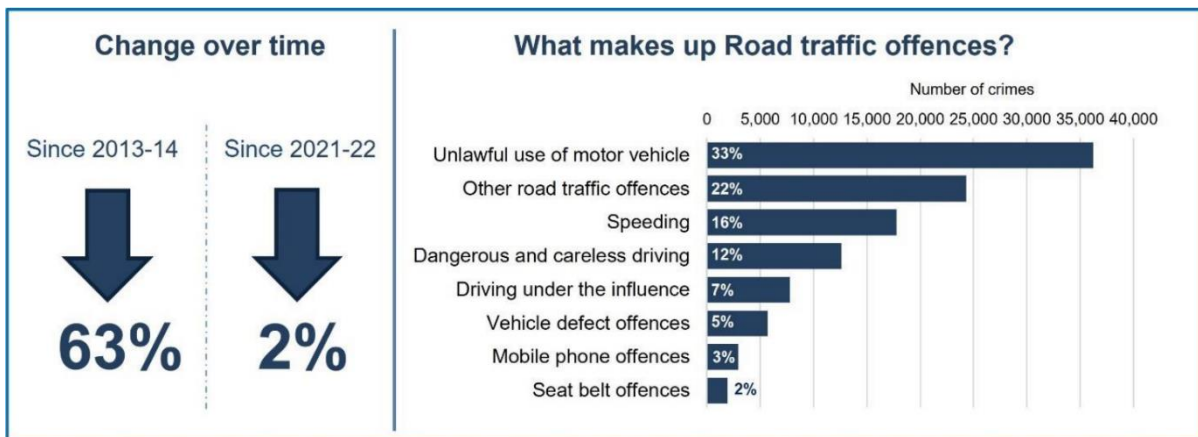
<sup>5</sup> Transport Scotland, [Key Reported Road Casualties Scotland 2022](#), 24 May 2023.

<sup>6</sup> Transport Scotland, [Key Reported Road Casualties Scotland 2023](#), 29 May 2024.



202. We also observed that enforcement of road traffic offences has reduced significantly over the last 10 years (Scottish Government data shows a 63 per cent reduction). The extract below is taken from the [recorded crime statistics](#) produced by the Scottish Government.

Picture 4 – Road traffic offences



Source: Scottish Government

203. The data shows that road traffic offences accounted for 63 per cent of all offences recorded in Scotland in 2022-23. Between 2021-22 and 2022-23, the number of road traffic offences recorded by the police decreased by 2 per cent (from 111,987 to 109,320). Over the longer term, there has been a decrease of 63 per cent since 2013-14. As highlighted earlier in this report, it is worthy of note that the overall number of police officers in Scotland in 2014 was 17,254 compared to the current overall establishment of 16,425. This means that there are now less officers available to provide visibility and enforcement on Scotland's roads. This reduction in available resources will be one contributory factor in the reduction in enforcement activity. The 2023 systematic review on the effectiveness of police presence (mentioned in paragraph 48) highlights the likelihood of an increase in the type of activity in driver behaviour that lead to serious and fatal road collisions.

204. The recent increases in road casualties is complex and there is no single factor that has caused the trend to increase. However, we are concerned that – at a time when casualties are increasing – Police Scotland has decreased rather than increased its enforcement activity in this high-priority area. Police enforcement activity and the visibility of police on Scotland's roads is a key component in changing driver behaviour and reducing the upward trend in casualties.



## Diversion from prosecution

205. The provision of educational courses, as an alternative to prosecution, has not yet been implemented to best effect in Scotland. There are limited examples of alternatives to prosecution in Scotland for driving offences. One example is the Driver Improvement Scheme (DIS), which police can suggest where someone has been charged with a contravention of [section 3 of the Road Traffic Act 1988](#) (careless or inconsiderate driving). The DIS incorporates both the National Driver Alertness Course (NDAC) for vehicles and the Rider Intervention Developing Experience (RIDE) for motorcyclists. Such an alternative would be suggested by a police officer in the standard prosecution report (SPR), which is submitted to the Procurator Fiscal after an individual is charged with such an offence. The Procurator Fiscal then decides if an alternative to prosecution is appropriate. The process is outlined in the [Police Scotland DIS Standard Operating Procedure](#), derived from the [Lord Advocate's guidelines](#) on how the scheme should be run.
206. The police and Procurator Fiscal in Scotland also have the option of imposing conditional offers of fixed penalty notice for certain road traffic offences under [Section 75 of the Road Traffic Offenders Act 1988](#). If an individual does not comply with the conditional offer issued by the police, they would then be reported to the Procurator Fiscal for a prosecution decision.
207. We do not believe that these alternatives go far enough, and more measures are required to improve driver education and behaviours on the road. While fines and penalty points have an important place in the criminal justice system in dealing with more serious driving offences, there are offences that could be dealt with in an educational manner, as seen elsewhere in the UK.
208. Police Scotland is, at present, the only UK police force not offering the National Driver Offender Retraining Scheme (NDORS) courses as an alternative to prosecution. This scheme is managed and administered by a private not-for-profit company called [UK Road Offender Education](#) (UKROEd) on behalf of the police. The courses are either provided by the police, or contracted out to a registered provider (training and registration of providers is also managed by UKROEd).



209. Courses available through UKROEd offer an alternative to penalty points and fines, and include the following:

- NMAC (National Motorway Awareness Course)
- NRRAC (National Rider Risk Awareness Course)
- NSAC (National Speed Awareness Course)
- SCC (Safe & Considerate Cycling Course)
- SCD (Safe and Considerate Driving Course)
- WDU (What's Driving Us? Course)
- YBYL (Your Belt Your Life Course).

210. As can be seen from the list these courses go beyond the DIS alternative to prosecution, and widens the scope of offences that would be available to educate drivers who have breached the law.

211. Decisions on suitability for diversion from prosecution are different in Scotland compared with other parts of the UK. In England and Wales, the relevant Chief Constable decides on the suitability of the offender to attend a course, but in Scotland any alternative scheme would require approval from the Lord Advocate, with appropriate Lord Advocates Guidelines to determine the operation of the alternative scheme.

212. As with the DIS alternative, there is a cost associated with attending a course. These costs are recoverable from the individual attending the course if they agree to attend, and include an administration fee to both UKROEd and the police for managing the courses provided. The powers associated with this cost recovery are enshrined in legislation within [section 89 of the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022](#), which is also applicable in Scotland.

213. We are aware that there is work being undertaken by the Road Traffic Diversionary Course Working Group – Scotland, chaired by Transport Scotland, to discuss diversionary courses. We are also aware that UKROEd has been invited to participate in those discussions and we welcome this development.



214. We would recommend that Police Scotland engages with both UKROEd and other key stakeholders to progress the full implementation of educational courses for people who commit driving offences that may be appropriately addressed through learning.

### **Recommendation 12**

Police Scotland should engage with UK Road Offender Education and other key stakeholders to progress the full implementation of educational training courses for people who commit driving offences that may be appropriately addressed through learning.

### **Road safety strategic outcomes**

215. The criminal use of the roads by organised crime groups transporting illicit drugs is an area that requires constant attention by Police Scotland. We identified that road policing officers play a valuable role in tackling serious and organised crime groups, conducting regular [Proceeds of Crime Act 2002](#) cash and drug seizures. It is vital that intelligence is used on a cross-border basis to target individuals and groups conducting such illegal activity on the roads. We found good examples of road policing officers causing significant disruption activity, carrying out drug and cash seizures through pro-active policing of the road network in Scotland.





## Road safety stakeholder perceptions

216. Understanding the expectations and perceptions of the public (specifically, those with lived experience) is vital in ensuring that police are delivering services to a high standard. While there is no direct contact with the public specifically on road policing, feedback is encouraged from anyone who has had contact with Police Scotland. Police Scotland carries out [user experience surveys](#) to collect such feedback. Road policing features regularly in the [Your Police](#) survey, with speeding and vehicular antisocial behaviour being two particular issues of public concern. The feedback received helps Police Scotland to understand where the issues are and what action needed.
217. Police Scotland also attends local meetings and receives correspondence from the public and elected members in order to understand what the local problems are. Vehicular antisocial behaviour of all descriptions is a common theme raised at meetings and in correspondence to the police. We found that, at times, police officers have difficulty managing the demand associated with road safety – in particular vehicular anti-social behaviour. This type of antisocial behaviour is often committed by younger adults and children, which brings an element of risk when trying to tackle it. It is usually community policing officers who are tasked with tackling antisocial behaviour. We found that those officers have limited time to deal with such issues, due to other competing priorities. We did find that there were a number of community groups who have supported the police on speed watch campaigns.
218. Police Scotland also engages with a range of partner organisations who represent vulnerable road users and families of people killed in collisions. Using the experience of victims and/or their families is vital in understanding how best to improve services and meet people's needs. We saw clear evidence that road policing has good engagement with partners in Transport Scotland, including Road Safety Scotland, as well as with third sector organisations such as Cycling Scotland/UK, and Brake.



## Family Liaison roles

219. The police have a wide range of functions when dealing with a fatal collision. Their investigative role is to ensure that the facts and circumstances of the fatal collision are established, but they also have an important role in providing support, advice and assistance to the families of those people who have died. It can be difficult for bereaved families to navigate their way through the complexities of a fatal road crash investigation and possible criminal proceedings, at a time when they are at their most vulnerable.
220. Having a family liaison officer (FLO) appointed to the family of a victim can have a significant impact on them, and their experience of the justice system if the case progresses through the courts. This role can facilitate access to other services, including support charities specialising in supporting victims and their families. The FLO also supports the family by ensuring they are kept up to date with information as it becomes available.
221. We identified clear evidence that there are not enough FLOs to deploy to every fatality, so the service provided to the families of victims is inconsistent. There should be a clear policy on FLO deployment, ensuring that there is a consistent level of service available to the bereaved following a fatal collision.

### **Recommendation 13**

Police Scotland should review its policy on the deployment of family liaison officers, to ensure a consistent level of service to people who have been bereaved following a fatal collision.

222. People who have been bereaved through a death on the road told us how important it was that the officers supporting them took a trauma informed approach. Police Scotland has pledged their ongoing commitment to the principles of trauma informed-practices when delivering services, but we found gaps when it came to dealing with fatal road collisions, including language use when dealing with victims or their family.



223. For example, we were told the use of the word 'accident' can be upsetting when someone has died, since this suggests that the collision could not have been predicted, or avoided and that it is just 'one of those things'. Using factual terms such as 'crash' or 'collision' to describe incidents is less likely to cause distress to people. Police Scotland must continue to update its guidance for officers and staff, and ensure that a trauma-informed approach is adopted by officers and staff supporting people affected by a serious road collision.

### **Area for development 13**

Police Scotland should ensure a trauma-informed approach is adopted when supporting people who have been affected by a serious road collision.



## Appendix 1: Glossary

ACC	Assistant Chief Constable
ANPR	Automatic Number Plate Recognition
C3 Division	Contact, Command and Control Division
COPFS	Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service
DESC	Digital Evidence Sharing Capability
DIS	Driver Improvement Scheme
ETSC	European Transport Safety Council
Fast road networks	Typically 'A' Class single or multi carriageway roads with national speed limits such as trunk roads and motorways
Fatal five offences	The main causes of fatal collisions, namely, careless driving, speeding, drink or drug driving, not wearing seatbelts, being distracted while driving (mobile phone use, etc.)
FLO	family liaison officer
FTE	full-time equivalent
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulation
HMICFRS	Her/His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services
HMICS	His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary in Scotland
HOSTYDs	Hollow spiked tyre deflation system
HSDA	High Speed Driving Assessment
KSI	killed or seriously injured
MP	Members of Parliament
MSP	Members of the Scottish Parliament
NDAC	National Driver Alertness Course
NDORS	National Driver Offender Retraining Scheme
NMAC	National Motorway Awareness Course
NRRAC	National Rider Risk Awareness Course
NSAC	National Speed Awareness Course
OSD	Operational Support Division
Police Scotland	Police Service of Scotland
RIDE	Rider Intervention Developing Experience
RTC	Road traffic collision
RPO	Road Patrol Officer
SCC	Safe & Considerate Cycling Course
SCD	Safe and Considerate Driving Course
SCU	Safety Camera Unit
SMT	Senior Management Team
SPA	Scottish Police Authority
SPC	Scottish Police College
SPF	Scottish Police Federation
SPR	standard prosecution report
STRA	Strategic Threat and Risk Assessment
THRIVE	threat, harm, risk, investigative opportunity, vulnerability and engagement
UKROEd	UK Road Offender Education
WDU	What's Driving Us? Course
YBYL	Your Belt Your Life Course



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## **About His 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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