HMICS Thematic Inspection of Organisational Culture in Police Scotland

December 2023
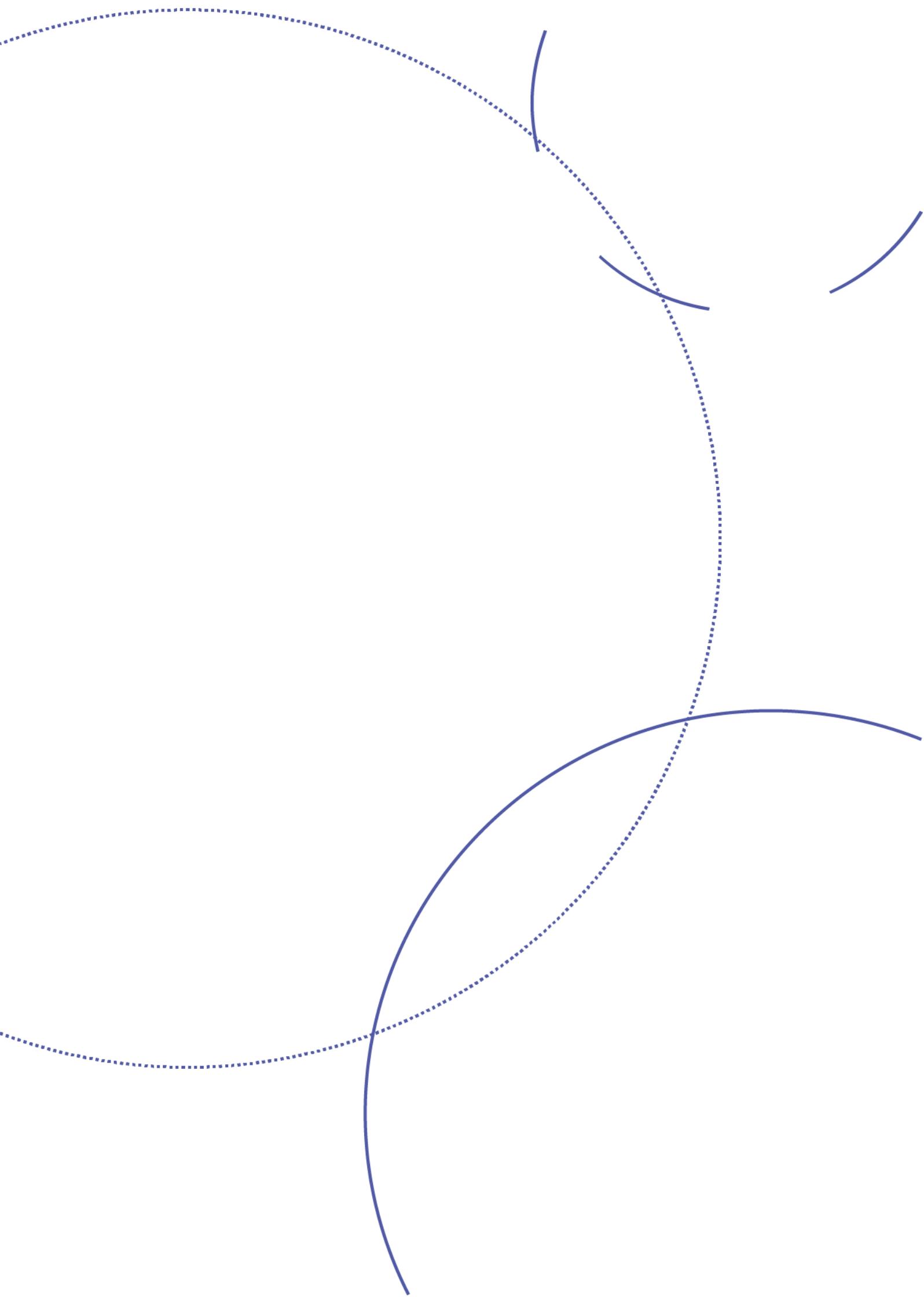
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HM Inspectorate of Constabulary in Scotland

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).[1]

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.

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

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.[2]

This Thematic Inspection was undertaken by HMICS in terms of Section 74(2)(a) of the Police and Fire Reform (Scotland) Act 2012 and is laid before the Scottish Parliament in terms of Section 79(3) of the Act.

[2] HMICS, Corporate Plan 2021-24, 1 February 2022.

Contents

Our inspection

Police Scotland was formed in April 2013, after a short but significant programme of work to establish a new national service, designed to deliver an operationally competent police service that would deliver certain benefits. These benefits were primarily cost savings of £1 billion over a ten-year period, and the ability to remove artificial force boundaries and improve access to specialist capabilities across Scotland. This has been achieved. The financial savings have been significantly higher than initially projected and the creation of national divisions such as Organised Crime and Counter Terrorism; Operational Support; Contact, Command and Control; Criminal Justice; Major Crime; and Public Protection has shown significant operational benefits, often cited by senior leadership as evidence of the success of reform.

HMICS recognises and welcomes this drive to enable specialist service access to all postcodes in Scotland and to improve capabilities such as the specialist investigation of sexual crime and domestic abuse. Such improvements to the standards expected remain a strong aspect of the value of Police Scotland.

However, the creation of the single service came with significant challenges – most notably the rapid reform of eight forces and two agencies to create one service with a single oversight body (the Scottish Police Authority). The early days of both organisations were fraught with difficulty. Some of this was personality-driven, and some a result of the significant challenge posed by the pace of change, financial constraint, existing information technology interoperability, estate and fleet that were often out of date and hampered by underinvestment. This has combined with significantly low capital and reform budgets, resulting in a slow pace of change and limiting the service's ability to maximise the data it holds to better understand demand and change the operating model to better meet the threats identified in strategic assessments.

The early days of Police Scotland were often described as a 'war footing', with every decision being overseen to ensure operational grip, significant challenge and distrust from senior leaders, and a need to drive the organisation relentlessly to achieve significant change. This pressure and demand was all-consuming, with many of the normal behaviours expected in a mature organisation not acknowledged or valued. This, in turn, led to an autocratic leadership style with a reliance on a one-dimensional performance culture.

The appointment of Sir Iain Livingstone as Chief Constable happened at a time when there was significant turmoil and dysfunction in the effective running of the service. The focus has remained on the delivery of effective operational policing while balancing a challenging budget resulting in a need for stability, consistency and resilience. Since this time there has been an emerging change in the tone and style of the organisation and a more reflective and learning organisation is beginning to develop. The last six years has seen a continued focus on delivery of high-profile events, detection rates and community-based policing, supported by a foundation of ethics and human rights. However, resourcing challenges and the continuing budget focus has also resulted in financial scrutiny that often balances the books but misses out on improvements that would be welcomed by staff and officers, and that would bring about improvements in service delivery to communities. Examples of this include run-down buildings, a lack of joined-up fully integrated IT infrastructure and the state of the fleet.

The [Casey Review](), into the Metropolitan Police Service demonstrated that cultural problems exist throughout policing, describing many of the issues that we address in this report. The Police Scotland response to that review, and our findings in this inspection, show that policing in Scotland is not immune from such behaviours. Any poor standards and behaviour can and does affect public trust and confidence in policing and it is with this in mind that this report provides areas for development and recommendations intended to enable Police Scotland to improve culture, define more effectively what is valued and how that is measured. In looking at the Casey Review findings it is clear that the operating context plays a large part in the issues identified and that this needs to be considered when looking at other organisations. As such our findings stand alone and should not be used as a comparator to the review of any other police service.

Police Scotland has made several public pronouncements on its efforts to become an anti-racist and anti-discriminatory body. The former and current Chief Constable have accepted that the organisation is institutionally racist and discriminatory, and the service has developed a new strategic intent to drive engagement and improved services. Its wider ambition, being driven by the Policing Together portfolio, is to ensure that those with protected characteristics have improved service delivery – whether they are within or outwith the organisation. The investment in this programme is significant, with a full-time dedicated executive officer leading the portfolio.

In the first five years of the new service, investment in those leading the service (at all ranks and grades) was minimal, verging on non-existent. Over the last few years, management and leadership training have been reintroduced, with a mixed response. But there are many officers and staff to train, the backlog is significant, and the skill gap has not been fully quantified.

Take, for example, a constable promoted on the first day of the new service and subsequently promoted a further two or three times. The result would be a superintendent with significant responsibility for a large team of officers and/or staff, whose management experience was entirely picked up within Police Scotland, with little or no training on how to lead, coach, encourage, mentor or set standards for their team. Such an officer would, however, have picked up useful skills from peers or previous line managers, alongside technical skills such as firearms command, public order skills and other technical aspects of the role. This 'how to lead' aspect that is fundamental in setting tone, style and 'how we do things here' (the culture of the organisation) is therefore garnered solely through experiential learning, rather than through any formal training or direction provided by the organisation.

Culture within policing is often denigrated, with negative connotations about a '*canteen culture*'. However, getting support from those around you – who share a common purpose in what is a stressful and often traumatic role – is important. Creating that bond or common endeavour defines the culture within a location or team, and this is often guided and set by the manager in charge (likely a sergeant or team leader). The visibility of local line managers in remote or rural locations remains as important as in other locations even when, as we have seen, this can prove challenging.

There are many aspects of this report that touch on areas that we have previously inspected. It is apparent that Police Scotland has taken steps to deliver a new strategic workforce plan and address recommendations in relation to training and development in line with a new People Strategy. It is of note that these recommendations remain outstanding. Work will continue with the service to ensure that the evidence provided is assessed to ensure that these matters are delivered to the standard expected once complete and will add to the delivery in the areas of organisational culture.

Our inspection took evidence from staff and officers at all ranks and grades to gain an understanding of: how culture is set; if there is a conscious effort to define and influence culture; and how people feel within the organisation. We also sought views and 'stories' from staff and officers across the organisation, receiving over 260 responses, with a number followed up in direct interviews. The detail of these is included in the report, but those who spoke up mostly raised concerns at the way Police Scotland applies its processes when dealing with the human side of policing (e.g. annual leave, grievance, time off, promotion and complaint/conduct investigation). The overwhelming feeling was that the size and scale of the organisation inhibits its ability to treat officers and staff as individuals and that there is a rush to apply processes, often incorrectly and with initial stages that are not defined in policy.

Promotion was a particular area of contention. We examined the national promotion policy and its Equality and Human Rights Impact Assessment, and the inspection team's view was that the policy is fair and equitable, and capable of providing the best opportunity for officers to succeed. However, many we spoke to held the view that divisions and departments often bolt-on random and arbitrary local processes ahead of the national process. These often require officers in specialist posts to return to operational policing roles before receiving divisional backing for promotion. This can and does lead to officers choosing not to apply for promotion due to the impact of moving from one working pattern to another that will often not suit caring or other responsibilities, and not recognise the skills built up in the specialist post. We found this to be an area of significant frustration, with officers losing faith in the system and failing to apply for promotion – thus reducing the candidate pool.

Our inspection team's assessment of people policies and strategies showed a clear regard for staff and officers, but also identified many examples where the policy had been misapplied or poorly executed. The service has suffered from this on many occasions with regular articles in national and specialist press driven by those who feel aggrieved.

Officers and staff continue to raise the issue of poor application of core policies. Many of these policies sit within the People and Development function and we question whether advice and guidance provided to line managers is sufficient and intrusive enough to ensure that the policy is followed. (This may also be a legacy of the lack of training during the early years of Police Scotland).

The SPA has a key role to play in providing assurance on many of these issues. The SPA People Committee meets quarterly to look at all aspects of human resource activity. Its workforce management information report is a data-rich document with much information describing what is happening in the workforce, but limited analysis to establish causes or solutions. A deeper understanding of what drives this data would allow more challenging conversations on the quality of the outcomes from the people part of the organisation.

The removal of the mandate for 17,234 police officers should bring opportunities to refresh and rebalance the workforce, based upon an as yet to be defined target operating model and a strategic workforce plan. This will ensure the best skillset for each role, whether that post holder is a warranted officer or member of police staff. This will ensure that, at all levels, the organisation has been designed to spend its money and deploy its people most effectively in line with the needs of the organisation and ultimately the public. It will also ensure that those officers and staff are provided with the necessary training and skills.

The removal of the mandate is welcome, but not if officer reductions are purely to meet budget challenges. Current demand on the service, alongside significant reductions, are leading to ever-increasing pressure on the frontline. Officers, staff and senior leaders regularly report that they are too busy to fulfil core basics – continuous professional development, annual appraisals, integrity conversations, etc. There needs to be a re-evaluation of all that is being done and a focus on what is a priority, with reinvestment in core operational policing being a top priority. Building a target operating model that defines the future shape and functions of the service has been ongoing for some time, but never realised. This can lead to conflict over what is prioritised and delivered.

Police Scotland spends approximately 87% of its income on its people. The nature of its business is human interaction – and that requires a culture of learning, development, questioning and improvement. The human rights of all those who live, work or visit Scotland are fundamentally affected by the activities of the service. The culture of Police Scotland is defined by many factors, but its leadership should be actively championing areas of good practice and excellence to improve the way it feels to work in the service, so that all staff and officers feel they are being treated equitably and fairly, and that the organisation is listening and responding effectively to the issues raised by the workforce and their representative associations. Only by so doing can Police Scotland realise its full potential, maximise the wellbeing of its people and ensure that it delivers the best and most efficient service for the people, localities and communities in Scotland.

HMICS has been advised and acknowledges that Police Scotland is progressing considerable work in a number of areas including the development of an updated performance framework, improvement of grievance procedures and progressing its policy review cycle. HMICS looks forward to seeing the outputs and outcomes from this work and expects they will effectively discharge some of our recommendations.

HMICS thanks everyone who has given their time, knowledge and views to the inspection team and for the significant support provided by the HMICS liaison team in Police Scotland.

Craig Naylor
His Majesty's Chief Inspector of Constabulary
December 2023

What is culture?

- Organisational culture can be described in a number of ways and there are numerous academic and management models that can be applied. There are many definitions of organisational culture, one of the best-known from McKinsey[3] is that culture is 'the way that we do things around here' or the 'cumulative effect of what people do and how they do it'. Similarly, Edgar Schein[4] defines culture as 'everything an organisation has learned throughout its history'.

- It is widely accepted that culture is driven predominantly by the common set of values and behaviours (or shared mindsets and beliefs) of the people that work within the organisation. These are usually set at senior level within the organisation, often referred to as the 'tone from the top'. While there may be some aspects of culture evident across the whole organisation, culture is often more evident in teams or specific functions within an organisation. HMICS has based its inspection approach around these definitions and derived its methodology from a number of cultural audit models.

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[3] Based on Bower M. (1996), The Will to Manage: Corporate Success Through Programmed Management, New York: McGraw – Hill Higher Education.
[4] Schein E. H. (1992), Organizational Culture and Leadership: A Dynamic View, San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Key findings

General

- We found a consensus that the service is on a journey of change and improvement, heading in a more positive direction than previously, and that culture is dramatically different from the early days of Police Scotland.

- The service, however, still feels the legacy effect of police reform and earlier leadership styles, with the residual impact of cuts to core areas such as training, reticence regarding performance management, and a lack of value placed on police staff still evident.

- Many of those we spoke to felt the service had been slow to react to wider societal change and to policing-specific events on the worldwide and UK landscape, feeling that traditional policing culture itself can be a barrier to cultural change.

- We found that financial and resource constraint was one of the primary factors adversely affecting culture change, particularly at the frontline, both in terms of driving behaviours as well as impacting on capacity, motivation and wellbeing.

- Many of those we spoke to felt there was a mismatch with the practicality of the ambitions and objectives Police Scotland has set itself in this resource-constrained environment. In particular, we found that frontline local policing officers were feeling the pressure of increasing and shifting demand, while also feeling increasingly less valued.

- We found a significant degree of organisational frustration about lack of decision-making and prioritisation by the Executive. Many felt that there was a need to make hard choices about service delivery in the context of more limited resources, noting that shifts in demand have not been reflected in the current operating model.

- The Joint Strategy for Policing sets out to achieve a positive working environment for its workforce, and includes a number of cultural aspirations, however there is a lack of effective performance reporting on how well these are being achieved.

- We found that it was unclear to many what the aspirational culture of Police Scotland should be, with many accepting that a journey was underway, but unclear on how the service would get there or how it would recognise and measure success.

- Police Scotland has previously acknowledged that there remain cultural and behavioural issues that can result in unfair or inequitable treatment in the service. We were notified of a number of individual cases of such treatment and have taken related policy, process and procedural matters into account in these findings. The perception of a lack of organisational justice was reflected in much of the evidence we collected.

- We found that COVID-19 has had a lasting impact on working style in Police Scotland, primarily for those who are office-based, however this has also resulted in a lack of physical visibility and inconsistent approaches for different groups.

Leadership and vision

Leadership behaviours

- Police Scotland is planning and undertaking a number of initiatives to embed appropriate leadership behaviours, attitudes and values at all levels in the service. As yet it is unclear how aligned and sustainable these will be and how Police Scotland will fully assess the ongoing impact of this wide-ranging work.

- At Executive level, we found that many placed trust in the former Chief Constable, whose leadership style was considered to have provided stability, operational focus and a consistent emphasis on public consent and legitimacy.

- Leadership stability was widely welcomed, and it was considered that the style has changed a lot since legacy and early days of the service. We were told this style had developed in a fairly ad hoc way and may need to be further recalibrated for the future. New external recruits to the senior ranks of Police Scotland were welcomed and considered to have brought a fresh perspective.

- The Police Scotland Executive is viewed by many as a collection of competing individuals and not always a cohesive group. They are seen to clearly espouse the correct values and behaviours, but many of those we spoke with felt that this does not translate into reality. In particular, while challenge and feedback are usually invited, any response is generally not welcomed.

- We found that traditional command and control behaviours are exhibited appropriately in operational situations, but that a risk-averse, rank-based autocratic style is also employed by many senior leaders outwith the operational environment.

- We found that visibility of the Executive was limited by their commitments to corporate governance and driving national programmes of work. This lack of visibility was felt to have a negative impact on their ability to act as role models, as well as their people management and operational responsibilities.

- We found organisational conformity to be prevalent, with many leaders at each rank valuing operational skills more highly than interpersonal and 'softer' skills and being unwilling to show personal vulnerability.

- There is a culture of 'needing to know everything' at senior officer level, which instigates a resource-heavy briefing culture that is considered contrary to wellbeing commitments and unsustainable given current resource challenges.

- We found that the Executive and wider senior leadership in Police Scotland was not functioning as well as it should be, impacting upon the effectiveness and efficiency of its work. There was a divide between officers and members of police staff and a perceived lack of accountability for performance and delivery.

- We also found that promotion drives competitive officer behaviours at all levels.

- We found that the Executive is often shielded from the true extent of risks and issues, as others perceive they only want to hear positive news and that negative reporting may result in competency being questioned.

- As an officer's rank becomes more senior, they are perceived as being increasingly focused on their own promotion, often initiating change to existing projects to demonstrate their capabilities.

- Divisional commanders, on-call supervisors and first- and second-line managers were viewed positively (in terms of leadership behaviours and role modelling) by the majority of those we spoke to. However, we found a clear disconnect in management style and behaviours between senior and middle/frontline managers.

Sub-cultures

- HMICS was able to identify a number of competing sub-cultures in Police Scotland, which limit collaborative internal working and suggest inequalities. There was no obvious action being taken to address these issues.

- Police staff at all levels told us they consider themselves to be undervalued and less respected than officer colleagues, with their professional expertise often disregarded and police officers often taking up posts where civilian expertise is more appropriate.

- Response policing, in particular, is considered as being undervalued, particularly in comparison with national Specialist Crime Division (SCD). Most of those we spoke to confirmed that working conditions are much better in SCD, with improved working hours, facilities, access to training and development and supervisor support.

Leadership development

- Historical lack of investment and de-prioritisation of leadership and people skills training has negatively impacted on the overall culture in Police Scotland. There is now a leadership and management development programme, which has evaluation strategies in place.

- We identified some negative feedback on the most senior level of leadership development being provided, as well as a risk of over-reliance on the use of e-learning packages for training and development.

- We found that, in Police Scotland, there is less value placed on empathy and other softer skills development than operational competency for managers.

- Police Scotland has undertaken work on a new Learning and Development approach to support its planned new People Strategy, which aims to provide a more integrated and aligned approach to support delivery of service priorities.

- We found good examples in both local and national policing divisions of work to improve engagement and address key workforce issues, however this was often in reaction to a lack of corporate progress in these areas.

Promotion and development

- The MyCareer appraisal system remains a work in progress in terms of uptake and value. Although providing an opportunity for broader discussion, its lack of objective setting, availability of follow-up training and continuous professional development (CPD), and no element of 360-degree feedback, restricts its effectiveness.

- Fundamentally, the lack of regular conversations with line managers, particularly in frontline policing, often due to legacy practice or lack of capacity, is having a negative cultural impact on the organisation.

- Police Scotland has reviewed its promotion processes over the last few years and, although deemed to have improved on previous iterations, these are still widely considered not to be as open, transparent and fair as they should be.

- We identified areas for promotion process improvement, a number of which Police Scotland was already considering, including reviewing the make-up of promotion panels, implementing feedback systems and considering the balance of scenarios being used for evaluation.

- The negative impact of churn (often caused by the regular movement of officers) is significant, creating instability due to constant changes in management, and disruption due to adverse promotion-seeking behaviours.

The probationer experience

■ Probationers we spoke to mostly had a strong sense of belonging and a clear motivation for joining the service 'to help people'. Most probationers who were operationally deployed told us they were working within a positive team environment, while acknowledging the challenges in frontline policing.

■ However, our research revealed a very different set of expectations, values and behaviours at the Scottish Police College at Tulliallan to those experienced in frontline policing.

■ We found that inclusivity, challenge and wellbeing were a focus at the College, but were not particularly valued at the frontline. Probationers' past experience and skills were, on the whole, disregarded once they were operationally deployed.

■ Many probationers felt ill-equipped for the challenging demands of frontline policing, and initial expectations of a focus on fighting crime had been replaced with the reality of dealing with vulnerability and mental health.

Organisational learning

■ We identified good practice work in a number of policing areas where a culture of consistent evaluation, debriefing and governance of organisational learning is in place. But, overall, there remains a fragmented and inconsistent approach. Although learning is promoted, there remains a perceived blame culture within the organisation, which is considered as a barrier to this.

■ Progress has been slow in implementing a systematic approach and embedding a culture of organisational learning, but there are positive signs that a function to co-ordinate and support this activity will be created (dependent on resource being available).

Continuous improvement

- We identified effective practice in improvement activity and initiatives within the service.

- However, the service's Continuous Improvement approach is fragmented across departments and functions, without effective links to organisational learning, best value, performance or risk management.

Governance

- Police Scotland internal governance is generally believed to be a barrier to a culture of efficient and collaborative working. Over-governance is considered to be a symptom of risk aversion, promoting a culture of activity over outcomes, and limiting delegated decision-making.

- HMICS considers that the service is now inhibited from operating effectively by the level of internal governance it is applying to itself to compensate for a lack of individual accountability and delegated or empowered decision-making.

Delivery

Ethics and values

- We found that the service embeds its values and ethics through consistent messaging and training. The Policing Together approach is strengthening these elements through targeted action.

- Police Scotland has implemented a Preventions and Professionalism programme which is designed to improve standards and to empower both officers and staff to challenge undesirable behaviours through education, early intervention and leadership support. We found that feedback on a campaign highlighting each of the ten professional standards (see Appendix 2) indicates that there is wide interest in the topics covered.

- However, we found there needs to be more business-as-usual effort at every management level in the organisation, to reinforce Police Scotland values.

Policing style and tone

■ We consider that police operations supporting both COP26 and COVID-19 demonstrated good practice in setting a clear organisational policing style and tone. However, we found inconsistent views on the default style and tone of policing and a disconnect between clear instructions for events/operations and day-to-day behaviours.

Misconduct and grievance

■ While we did not identify any specific aspects of culture which prompted misconduct, we did find behaviours that perpetuate over and under reporting. The service is not yet fully capturing these underlying causal factors in order to better understand these and take appropriate action.

■ We found that some analysis of trends associated with complaints and misconduct is taking place, but this is limited by the data being recorded and supporting analysis expertise.

■ Misconduct and grievance processes are perceived as lacking openness, transparency, fairness and pace of resolution. There was a general lack of trust in these processes, and we found they are having a direct and often damaging short and longer term impact on individuals and teams, which the service often fails to recognise.

■ Current Police Scotland reporting to the SPA Complaints and Conduct Committee provides limited assurance on the standards of integrity, ethics and values, with a primary focus on complaints and conduct.

Challenging behaviours and performance

■ We found that individual performance issues were unlikely to be challenged due to the likelihood of counter-grievances and the amount of work required to support improvement plans. At the time of our inspection, only 18 cases of performance/capability were ongoing across the whole of Police Scotland.

Understanding culture

- Police Scotland uses a number of mechanisms to understand its culture, including public confidence surveys, its Your Voice Matters (YVM) people survey and other insights and engagement work.

- The 2021 YVM survey provided a baseline for assessing employee attitudes and views, but there has been very limited progress on delivering the associated implementation plan, limiting its value to the organisation and demonstrating a lack of commitment to acting on its results.

Engagement

- We found some good practice examples of engagement and feedback mechanisms across the service; however, key forums were more focused on one-way communication rather than effective two-way dialogue and learning.

- Many of those we spoke to felt overwhelmed with internal messages and communications, with a reported over-reliance on emails and the intranet. Many felt they were consulted after decisions had been made and that feedback was not always sought, valued or acted on.

- We found limited evidence of systematic approaches being applied to engagement. There was limited consistent colleague participation or engagement, to provide ongoing measures of cultural evolution.

- Results of the 2021 YVM survey suggested a higher level of motivation among Police Scotland officers and staff than most other English and Welsh forces. Other work has also been undertaken to assess employee views on specific aspects of culture, to broaden insights on topics such as equalities and inclusion, and sexism and misogyny.

- We could not find an overall narrative of Police Scotland's change journey and how it will affect the workforce. Police Scotland engages with those affected by change on a project by project basis, using lessons learned to seek further feedback. Officers we spoke to had been most positively affected by the use of electric cars and the provision of mobile phones.

Policing Together

- Policing Together is the service's approach to integrating its Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy with other key activities tackling cultural issues. Significant work has been done on individuals' lived experience, but more could be done to co-ordinate and professionalise this work, as part of ongoing engagement.

- We identified inconsistent understanding of the scope of Policing Together and a degree of confusion about its extensive delivery mechanisms and governance. There also remains some cultural resistance to Policing Together – some people do not recognise the issues being raised and consider it 'just another central initiative', with concerns that it may not facilitate the wider cultural change required.

- We found that the Chief Constable's statement on institutional discrimination had received a mixed response, with some welcoming it and others clearly not recognising the description of the environment in which they work. This statement, its timing and communication – as well as the previous statement on anti-racism – has left many feeling disempowered and disenchanted.

- We consider that the Policing Together Implementation Plan presents a cohesive approach to addressing the issues raised in the Strategy. However the approach clearly requires further refinement as well as consideration of the delivery capacity. HMICS also considers that the actions for the first outcome (anti-racism commitment) could be improved to be more specific to this particular protected characteristic.

Outcomes

■ Police Scotland does not fully understand how culture affects service delivery performance, relying on service satisfaction ratings to assess this. Neither does it effectively measure cultural change (and the impact of supporting activity).

■ Although the service has made progress in developing its performance framework and reporting, there remains a deep-seated negative perception of performance management. This is an after-effect from previous experience of an autocratic approach to target-setting and accountability.

■ There is clear evidence that wellbeing within Police Scotland is being affected by elements of policing culture, although pride in policing is still strong. We identified positive workforce motivation, particularly at local and team level, with a diminishing sense of commitment to wider Police Scotland as the service has developed.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1

Police Scotland should improve leadership behaviours across the organisation to ensure that officers and staff work in a culture that is supportive, collaborative and welcomes challenge.

Recommendation 2

Police Scotland should develop and deliver a set of actions to address the fundamental inequalities between officers and police staff, and frontline policing and other national/specialist functions.

Recommendation 3

Police Scotland should ensure that the probationer training syllabus is more reflective of actual frontline demand and the Competency and Values Framework, to allow officers to feel equipped to deal with the realities of policing.

Recommendation 4

Police Scotland should prioritise the completion of an organisational maturity assessment of continuous improvement, organisational learning and best value involving all improvement-related functions within the organisation and use this to inform a unified approach.

Recommendation 5

Police Scotland should review its Corporate Governance Framework and Scheme of Delegation to ensure that delegated decision-making and approval processes are streamlined.

Recommendation 6

Police Scotland and the Scottish Police Authority should reinforce the human rights and ethics-based approach for all policing activity.

Recommendation 7

Police Scotland should rename and refocus its grievance process to resolution/mediation, providing mandatory initial steps (in line with contractual and regulatory entitlement) and clear training on the management of the process.

Recommendation 8

Police Scotland should develop and implement a cohesive engagement and feedback framework (which should include a regular whole-service people survey).

Recommendation 9

Police Scotland should invest in organisational development and design in order to develop a clear model of adopting cultural change, with supporting implementation steps towards a clearly defined aspirational culture.

Recommendation 10

Police Scotland should develop its performance framework to encompass the impact of organisational culture, while regularly reporting to the Scottish Police Authority.

Recommendation 11

The Scottish Police Authority and Police Scotland should put in place measures to monitor progress against the areas for development outlined in this thematic inspection, ensuring regular public reporting to allow assessment of progress.

Areas for development

| Areas for development	Number
Police Scotland should reflect on the mixed response to the Your Leadership Matters programme and consider how future delivery will be sustained in a more cohesive ongoing approach.	1
Police Scotland should review the Your Leadership Matters development programme in order to embed reflective practice for all officers and staff.	2
Police Scotland should consider the training approach to the Competency and Values Framework and MyCareer, to achieve the depth and breadth of understanding required.	3
Police Scotland should consider, measure and assess the level of 'churn' on the organisation and develop workforce planning approaches to both understand the effective level of turnover and mitigate its impact.	4
The Scottish Police Authority should consider commissioning regular reporting on Police Scotland promotion outcomes to ensure that there is fairness and equity in both national and local processes.	5
Police Scotland should consider the impact of the tutor constable role and review the training provided, with a particular focus on the Competency and Values Framework.	6
Police Scotland should improve awareness and accessibility of reporting methods for probationers, while generally improving the culture of willingness to challenge and report.	7
Police Scotland should consider its wider approach to learning culture and systems, and reflective practice, across the organisation.	8
Police Scotland should consider how it can best facilitate innovation in future, in terms of resourcing and support.	9
The Scottish Police Authority should consider how cross-cutting issues such as culture, equalities and inclusion are consistently scrutinised at each committee and by the Board.	10
The Scottish Police Authority and Police Scotland should consider how they will support local commanders to provide consistent reporting and assurance on policing culture to local area committees.	11
Police Scotland should consider the business-as-usual approach to reinforcement of values.	12

Police Scotland should review policies and procedures to ensure they fully embed its values and ethics and are not discriminatory.	13
Police Scotland should focus analysis of misconduct, grievance and associated HR processes on identifying causal factors and underlying cross-cutting themes for wider organisational learning.	14
Police Scotland should improve throughcare and aftercare for misconduct and grievances cases, taking into account both the individuals and the teams involved.	15
Police Scotland and the Scottish Police Authority should develop a clear approach to regularly gathering workforce views on key cultural measures, as part of a wider framework for engagement.	16
Police Scotland should, as part of a wider review of governance (see Recommendation 5), consider jointly with representative associations and unions where they could add most benefit.	17
Police Scotland should consider the use of key forums such as the Senior Leaders Forum as an opportunity for effective engagement and feedback, rather than solely as a communication or information dissemination mechanism.	18
Police Scotland should consider more consistent guidance for hybrid and home working. Where there are inequalities, these should be examined in terms of the operational imperatives of the functions being performed.	19
Police Scotland should further develop its quarterly reporting to the Complaints and Conduct Committee to provide improved analysis and insights.	20
Police Scotland should develop a Policing Together Evaluation approach to support delivery of the Implementation Plan.	21
Police Scotland should consider alignment of outcome reporting across workforce, complaints and conduct, wellbeing, and health and safety information to provide improved consistency and oversight of cultural change.	22
Police Scotland should consider the appropriate use of targets and performance benchmarking when next reviewing its performance framework and ensure that performance is considered at all management team meetings.	23

Context

1. Organisational culture was one of the thematic inspection areas chosen for inclusion in the HMICS Scrutiny Plan 2022-25 as part of our scrutiny risk assessment and planning process. The aim of this thematic inspection is to make an assessment as to whether Police Scotland has a healthy organisational culture and ethical framework, and whether the appropriate values and behaviours are consistently lived across the organisation.

2. The creation of Police Scotland in April 2013 was described, at the time, as the most fundamental change to policing in 40 years and the biggest public service reform in Scotland since devolution. As it has recently passed its ten-year anniversary, we considered this a good time to assess how the service's culture reflects the history and values of the legacy forces and the organisations it replaced. Reform of this scale has not been attempted beyond police and fire in Scotland, and while the funding and workforce of most other sectors has grown, in policing it has shrunk.[5]

Figure 1 - FTE breakdown of Scottish devolved Public Sector, Q4 2022 (FTE)
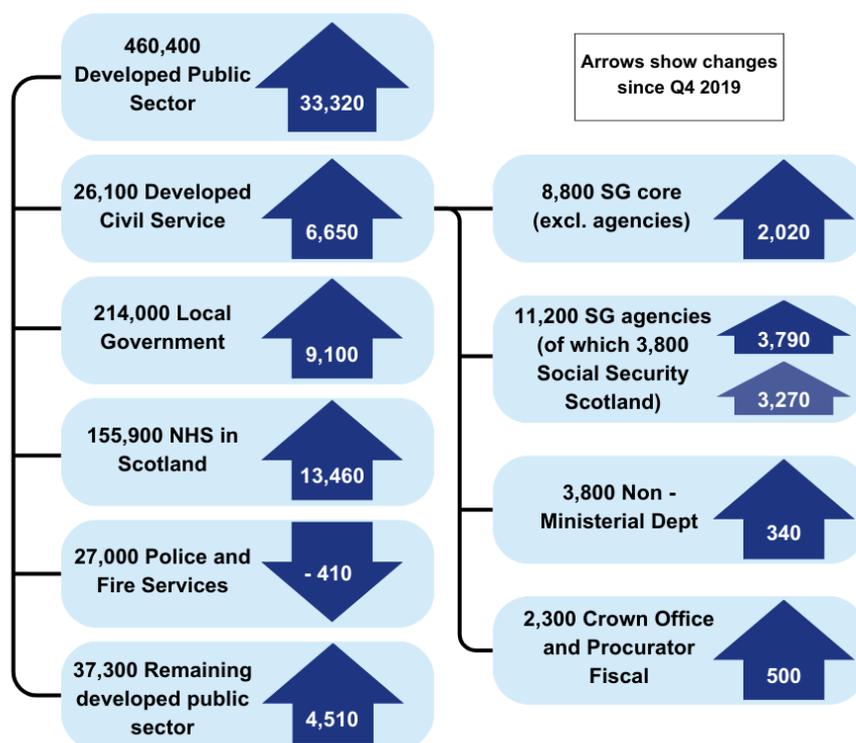
Source: Scottish Government

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[5] Scottish Government, Public sector pay strategy 2023 to 2024, 22 March 2023.
See also Audit Scotland, The Scottish Government's workforce challenges, 26 October 2023.

3. Recent incidents and media reporting in Scotland (and elsewhere in the UK) have made organisational culture in policing an area of significant public interest, with concerns expressed about issues such as misconduct, abuse of power, misogynistic behaviour and attitudes towards equality and diversity. Although these cases have mostly related to English forces, there have been a number of high-profile cases in Scotland, and we cannot assume these issues are not relevant here. HMICS does, however, acknowledge the different context in which policing has developed in Scotland. Our work over the past ten years has demonstrated many positive aspects of policing culture in Scotland, as well as the benefits of a single police service.

4. In his opening statement to the Sheku Bayoh Inquiry, on 11 May 2022, the former Chief Constable focused on the issue of racism and policing in Scotland. At that point, he committed Police Scotland to being anti-racist.

5. The Chief Constable's statement on institutional discrimination was made formally at the SPA Board meeting on 25 May 2023, in which he acknowledged that Police Scotland is institutionally racist and discriminatory, and that there is no place in the organisation for those who reject the values and standards that have been clearly set out. While the statement has been welcomed in some quarters, its reception has been mixed.

6. Our inspection has taken account of work undertaken by the service in response to these statements and has considered our previous findings and recommendations. In particular, issues identified in our Training and Development Phase 1 and 2 inspections have been considered, as well as work undertaken by His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) on Leadership (Leading Lights), and on vetting and misogyny. Our future planned HMICS scrutiny activity in the related areas of wellbeing, training and development, conduct, HR processes and governance will follow up on any specific cultural issues we have identified.

7. Organisational culture can be described in a number of ways and there are numerous academic and management models that can be applied. There are many definitions of organisational culture, one of the best-known from McKinsey is that culture is 'the way that we do things around here' or the 'cumulative effect of what people do and how they do it'. Similarly, Edgar Schein defines culture as 'everything an organisation has learned throughout its history'.

8. It is widely accepted that culture is driven predominantly by the common set of values and behaviours (or shared mindsets and beliefs) of the people that work within the organisation. These are usually set at senior level within the organisation, often referred to as the 'tone from the top'. While there may be some aspects of culture evident across the whole organisation, culture is often more evident in teams or specific functions within an organisation. HMICS has based its inspection approach around these definitions and derived its methodology from a number of cultural audit models (see Appendix 1 for our methodology).

Strategy

9. The current Strategic Policing Plan, the three-year [Joint Strategy for Policing (2023-26)](), was approved in May 2023 by the SPA. This strategy sets out a purpose, values, vision and five strategic outcomes with supporting objectives for the service. The strategy, which is typically refreshed every three years, makes references to and commitments on culture, and we will consider these in this report.

10. One of the five strategic outcomes set in the strategy is that 'Our people are supported through a positive working environment, enabling them to serve the public'. The plan describes one of its current challenges as having 'a developing organisational culture which reflects legacy force foundations and builds towards collective improvement' and a future where 'all our people identify with and demonstrate Police Scotland values and have a strong sense of belonging'. To achieve this outcome, Police Scotland sets out to:

   ■ Prioritise wellbeing and keep our people safe, well equipped and protected

   ■ Support our people to be confident leaders, innovative, active contributors and influencers

   ■ Support our people to identify with and demonstrate Police Scotland values and have a strong sense of belonging.

11. The strategy also sets out a number of specific cultural commitments:

- Focus will be on building an organisational culture which generates trust and where all our people feel safe and supported

- Build and maintain a supportive workplace culture where individual contributions and different perspectives are celebrated and valued

- Promote a culture of change to see a drive for continuous improvement at the heart of every operational team and business area, empowering all officers and staff to be innovative and improvement-focused in their day-to-day practice

- Embed a positive culture that supports innovation and provides opportunities for all our people to contribute and develop their leadership skills

- Promote a culture of inclusivity, where diversity of background and perspective is valued

- Combine heritage, experience and fresh thinking, taking the best ideas from across the country and beyond and applying these throughout the service to develop a strong culture.

12. The People Strategy 2018-21, approved by the SPA in August 2017, has expired and is overdue for replacement. Police Scotland made a conscious decision to prioritise the development of an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy before developing a new People Strategy (due November 2023). The previous People Strategy set out a number of key supporting actions and outcomes for culture including:

- empowerment

- recognition and reward

- flexibility and inclusivity

- learning and development

- health and wellbeing

- flexible/agile working practices (work-life balance)

- coaching

- open dialogue

- technically enabled workforce.

13. The [People Strategy 2018-21 – Implementation Evaluation Report](#) (SPA People Committee - June 2022) did not assess cultural change or impact, but did look at delivery in a number of related areas. It consistently refers to the need for ongoing outcome-focused evaluation to assess the tangible results from People Strategy delivery programmes. Its identified areas for future focus (for the next iteration of the strategy) correlate well with our own findings. Police Scotland intends to launch a new strategy in November 2023.

14. Appendix 3 sets out further context to the development of the Policing Together approach in Police Scotland.

General findings

15. During our inspection, we identified some general themes which we wish to draw attention to in this initial section of our report. These have been derived from our key lines of enquiry and reflect elements of a full cultural audit.

16. We found consensus that the service is on a journey of change and improvement, that it is heading in a more positive direction, and that culture is dramatically different from the early days of Police Scotland. Many of those we spoke to reflected on legacy force cultures and the initial focus of the new service on savings and operational imperatives to maintain and improve service levels. The relatively short timescale for transformation of the previous organisations into a single entity left little time to focus on cultural change. Leadership style then was observed to be autocratic with a target-driven performance culture. The journey over the past ten years was therefore seen as very challenging at times, but it is generally accepted that the service is now in a better place – but with more still to do.

17. We found that the service still feels the legacy effect of police reform and earlier leadership styles, with the residual impact of cuts to core areas such as training, reticence regarding performance management, and lack of value placed on police staff still evident. The initial removal of all but essential operational training has resulted in a generation of leaders not receiving adequate development, and operational skills being prioritised.

18. Many of those we spoke to felt the service had been slow to react to wider societal change and to policing-specific events on the worldwide and UK landscape. There was also a perception that traditional policing culture can itself be a barrier to cultural change. Examples cited to us included the Sarah Everard case, the George Floyd murder (and other international and national events), and the #MeToo movement. While we acknowledge that the service has responded to these events, many felt there had been prolonged silences and a lack of clear policy direction to these issues.

19. We found that financial and resource constraint was one of the primary factors adversely influencing culture, particularly at the frontline, both in terms of driving behaviour as well as affecting capacity, motivation and wellbeing. Financial, workforce and facilities challenges were raised in almost all of our inspection work. The limitations on investment in technology, the estate, training and development, and the direct impact of managing to a target number of officers had influenced how valued people felt, their attitude to their work, and their general level of commitment and goodwill. In spite of these pressures, we still found that people wanted to do a good job and provide the best possible service to the public.

20. Many of those we spoke to felt there was a mismatch between the practicality of the ambitions and objectives Police Scotland has set itself and the resource-constrained environment. While being ambitious for the future was seen as laudable, there was a perception that the organisation had lost sight of its core purpose. In particular, we found that frontline local policing officers were feeling the pressure of increasing and shifting demand, while also feeling increasingly less valued.

21. In terms of future direction and sustainability, we found a significant degree of organisational and personal frustration about the lack of decision-making and prioritisation by the Executive. Many felt that there was a need to make hard choices about service delivery in the context of more limited resources, noting that shifts in demand have not been reflected in the current operating model.

22. The [Joint Strategy for Policing 2023-26](#) sets out to achieve a positive working environment for its workforce. This includes cultural aspirations, but there is a lack of effective performance reporting on how well these are being achieved. We found that reporting on performance and people often relied on a narrative about the many initiatives and actions underway in the service. Where data was available, there was a general lack of insight and analysis on what this meant, or the actions required to address improvement and share good practice. Ultimately, there was little to demonstrate the impact that these activities are having on the workforce or how they would be measured in the future.

23. We also found that it was unclear to many what the aspirational culture of Police Scotland should be, with many accepting that a journey was underway, but unsure how the service would get there and how it would recognise and measure success. We consider that clarity of purpose and direction are essential elements in delivering cultural change and while most are clear on purpose (usually reverting to 'Keeping People Safe' as their mantra) there was a lack of clarity about the organisation's future direction. The Strategic Policing Plan sets out consistent strategic outcomes for service delivery, but we still consider it lacks a long-term vision for policing.[6]

24. Police Scotland has acknowledged that there remain cultural and behavioural issues that can result in unfair or inequitable treatment in the service.[7] The Chief Constable's statement makes it clear that policy and processes can be discriminatory. We were notified of a number of individual cases of unfair treatment via our contact form and engaged directly with a sample of those officers and staff. While it is not within our remit to investigate individual cases, we have taken the insights gathered seriously and ensured that related policy, process and procedural matters have been taken into account in our findings. The feeling of a lack of organisational justice[8] (employee perceptions of fairness and equitable treatment) was reflected in much of the evidence we collected.

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[6] HMICS, Assurance Review of Police Scotland Strategic Workforce Planning - Recommendation 7,.2 August 2022.

[7] See Quinton et al. (2015), in a survey of police officers and police staff with Durham Constabulary, those experiencing unfairness was described as a 'significant organisational risk' with implications for policing including disengagement, less perceived value in delivering a quality service, greater cynicism, and reduced commitment to ethical policing. Fair Cop 2: Organisational justice, behaviour and ethical policing.

[8] Organisational justice can be divided into four categories: distributive justice (fairness of outcomes); procedural justice (fairness of processes); informational justice (fairness of communication); and interactional justice (fairness of interpersonal treatment).

Leadership and vision

25. The importance of leadership behaviours cannot be underestimated in setting and influencing the culture of an organisation. As we have noted, the 'tone from the top' at each level of leadership and management strongly influences individual and team behaviour. Being engaged and visible, and role modelling ethics and values are essential to ensuring that the appropriate behaviours are embedded throughout Police Scotland.

26. Although HMICS has not carried out an inspection solely on leadership within policing in Scotland, we routinely assess leadership as part of our [inspection framework](#) in our thematic work. We also considered leadership development in our HMICS [Training and Development (Phase 1)](#) report and participated in the HMICFRS-led [Leading Lights](#) report (August 2019). That report found there was a limited approach to CPD for senior police officers, with a marked contrast to the experience, practice and culture of many other professions, including the military.

27. This work has allowed us to understand prevailing leadership behaviours and approaches to development in Police Scotland over the past ten years. In September 2020, we reported that a lack of resources dedicated to leadership training had limited the support given to police leaders. Leadership training had not been provided in any meaningful way since the national service was established in 2013, and officers and staff who had been promoted since then had received no leadership training or development since their attendance on a first line managers' course. We noted that this lack of development had consequences in terms of leadership behaviours and associated cultural norms.

28. Police Scotland has consistently maintained that leadership development is a priority. One of the three priorities set out in the previous Police Scotland People Strategy 2018-21 is 'Inspiring Leadership – winning hearts and minds to drive success'. That strategy set out a number of outcomes for this priority including:

- Leaders at all levels of Police Scotland are supported and empowered to build commitment to our vision, values and developing culture

- Our leaders provide clarity of vision and purpose, aligned to clear and compelling goals for working with the public and communities in Scotland

- Leadership support is provided at all levels

- We attract and retain talented people who have the right skills and mind-set

- We have a strong executive leadership team acting cohesively and providing one leadership voice.

Leadership behaviours

29. Many of those we spoke to welcomed executive leadership stability over more recent years. It was also considered that leadership style had changed a great deal since legacy and early days of the service. However, we were told this style had developed in a fairly ad hoc way and may need to be further recalibrated for the future.

30. The make-up of the Executive has changed over the past few years to include senior officers and senior staff from other forces and organisations across the United Kingdom, providing an increased mix of experience and skills. We found that the new external recruits to the senior ranks of Police Scotland were welcomed and considered to have brought a fresh perspective.

31. We found that many senior officers followed the lead of the Chief Constable in terms of appropriate behaviours. They told us that the Chief Constable sets the values and culture for the organisation and holds accountability for this. In particular, at Executive level we found that many placed trust in the former Chief Constable, whose leadership style was considered to have provided stability, operational focus and a consistent emphasis on public consent and legitimacy. His tenure of over six years was seen as a positive achievement.

32. While this stability had brought a degree of conformity at senior levels, we also found that many viewed the Executive as a collection of competing individuals, rather than a cohesive group. So, although they were seen to clearly espouse the correct values and behaviours, many of those we spoke with felt that this did not translate to reality. In particular, many felt that, while challenge and feedback are usually invited, responses are not generally welcomed.

33. We found that the Executive and wider senior leadership in Police Scotland was not functioning as well as it should be, impacting upon the effectiveness and efficiency of its work. There was a divide between officers and members of police staff and a perceived lack of accountability for performance and delivery.[9]

34. We also found that promotion drives competitive behaviours at all levels. As an officer's rank becomes more senior, they are perceived as being increasingly focused on their own promotion, often initiating change to existing projects to demonstrate their capabilities. We were also told that change leadership capability in senior officers is not always well established, even though there is an immediate expectation of competence that seems to come with higher rank (with many unwilling to admit a lack of experience).

35. We found that traditional policing 'command and control' leadership behaviours are exhibited appropriately in operational situations, with Police Scotland demonstrating good practice in planned events such as COP26 (Operation Urram) and in its response to the COVID-19 pandemic (Operation Talla). However, many told us that a similar rank-based autocratic style is also employed by many senior leaders outwith the operational environment. This was mainly attributed to a strongly risk-averse culture at senior levels in the organisation, with most value being placed on operational-style leadership. We found that this has promoted organisational conformity – many leaders at each rank value operational skills more highly than interpersonal and 'softer' skills and are unwilling to show personal vulnerability.

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[9] See Ramshaw and Simpson (2019), whose study of changes in police leadership highlights the characteristics necessary for effective police leadership, and the skill in adapting styles of leadership relating to changing circumstance. The Art of 'Flexing': Translating a New Vision of Police Leadership from the Top.

36. We were told that this risk-averse culture often resulted in the Executive being shielded from the true extent of risks and issues, since others perceive they only want to hear positive news and that negative reporting may result in competency being questioned. Many of those we spoke to also associated this risk aversion with a culture of 'needing to know everything' at senior officer level. This instigates a resource-heavy governance and briefing culture, which is considered contrary to wellbeing commitments and is unsustainable given current resource challenges.

37. We heard about a lack of collaborative working and a general lack of wider peer support and respect from the Executive (including Deputy Chief Constable (DCC)/Officer, Assistant Chief Constable (ACC) and director levels). The role and responsibilities of ACC, in particular, was felt to be interpreted inconsistently and not in line with most people's expectations. This was evidenced both by a lack of empowered decision-making and accountability, as well as an environment of competing agendas and an absence of consultation about strategic direction. Some saw this as a structural issue, which the new Chief Constable should address.

Recommendation 1

Police Scotland should improve leadership behaviours across the organisation to ensure that officers and staff work in a culture that is supportive, collaborative and welcomes challenge.

38. We also found a perceived lack of parity for senior police staff, with officers often being considered experts over professionals. Subject matter expert professional advice was not always seen to be respected, with rank often over-ruling experience and competence.

39. We were told that the visibility of the Executive was limited by their commitments to corporate governance and driving national programmes of work. While there was a genuine will to engage more directly for some of those we spoke to, this lack of visibility was felt to have a negative impact on their ability to act as role models, as well as on their people management and operational responsibilities. Frontline officers felt that this lack of visibility and willingness to engage had resulted in a lack of understanding of, and disconnection from, the reality of day-to-day operational policing challenges.

40. In May 2023, an Independent Review Group (IRG), established in 2021, presented its first [interim report](#) on the service's progress on equality, diversity and inclusion, and human rights (EDIHR). The group noted that there is an awareness gap between those responsible for oversight and leadership, and the reality on the ground. The IRG identified that this was clearly evident in the ownership of the equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) agenda at middle management level (sergeant, inspector, chief inspector).

41. Most people we spoke to had a positive view of the leadership behaviours and role modelling shown by divisional commanders, on-call supervisors and first- and second-line managers. We were also told that challenge was more likely to be accepted by these managers at lower rank, again highlighting the difference in management style and behaviours at local and middle management to that at Executive level.

42. These 'middle' ranks were also felt to be under significant pressure and often attempted to 'protect' their people by filtering information. We found that key messages and behaviours undergo a degree of reinterpretation at this level, often resulting in a dilution of the messages and potential skewing of frontline culture in terms of values and behaviours (see section on engagement).

43. The [Casey Review](#) (March 2023) reported it was repeatedly told that the sergeant rank in the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) was the most critical for instilling and enforcing culture and values, but that – at a time when culture and values were being questioned – supervisors were not being given the tools to deliver this important role. This absence of basic management and supervision created cultures where poor practice was tolerated and those who did work hard were not recognised. We consider this, and our own evidence, serves to emphasise the importance of the middle management tier and the need to ensure they have both the capability and capacity to lead and manage effectively.

44. Our findings echo those evidenced in the 2020 independent review by Dame Elish Angiolini into Policing – complaints handling, investigations and misconduct issues (the Angiolini Review) which also heard

"significant evidence of the depletion of the sergeant rank across Police Scotland and of the absence of appropriate role models to provide support and guidance. Police Scotland should consider the workload of the sergeant rank at the front line and the supervisory ratio of sergeants to constables in order to create sufficient capacity for management, coaching and mentoring duties."

Sub-cultures

45. We found that, on the whole, officers and staff felt that legacy force sub-cultures were now very limited in their influence and that the service was much more culturally cohesive. However, we were able to identify a number of competing sub-cultures in Police Scotland, which limit collaborative internal working and suggest inequalities. There was no obvious action being taken to address these issues.

46. Police staff at all levels told us they consider themselves to be under-valued and less respected than officer colleagues; their professional expertise is often disregarded, and police officers take up posts where civilian expertise would be more appropriate.[10] A divide between all areas of operational policing and corporate support services was also observed at the highest levels of the organisation. Many senior officers, while valuing the services provided, believe too much priority and resource is given to corporate areas of business.

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[10] See Atkinson (2016), who in his study of police intelligence work, describes how there appeared to be an 'us and them' situation between intelligence analyst staff and police officers in Scotland. Patriarchy, gender, infantilisation: A cultural account of police intelligence work in Scotland.

47. We were told that response policing in particular is considered as being under-valued, particularly in contrast to the national Specialist Crime Division (SCD). Most of those we spoke to confirmed that working conditions are much better in SCD, with improved working hours, facilities, access to training and development, and supervisor support. We were told there is a clear local/uniform and national/non-uniform officer divide, with many officers willing to stay in unpromoted SCD posts rather than return to frontline operational policing. Response policing is considered to be the most challenging of environments, given its ever-increasing demand and lack of resources, affecting wellbeing and motivation. We heard the view that a number of national services are considered to be delivering a '*gold standard*' service, which is deemed unsustainable (due to the financial position) and does not compare with the challenges faced by frontline policing.

48. We believe that Police Scotland needs to do more to address these perceived inequalities and preferential treatment, as this is fundamental to how the organisation functions on a day-to-day basis. These cultural barriers influence relationships, behaviours, willingness to co-operate and, ultimately, the ability to deliver efficient and effective services.

Recommendation 2

Police Scotland should develop and deliver a set of actions to address the fundamental inequalities between officers and police staff, and frontline policing and other national/specialist functions.

Leadership development

49. As noted at paragraph 27 above, the historical lack of leadership and management training and development in Police Scotland was always likely to have consequences for leadership behaviours and associated cultural norms. We have no doubt that this lack of investment and de-prioritisation of leadership and people skills training has negatively impacted on the overall culture in Police Scotland.[11]

50. The Police Scotland People Strategy for 2018-21 (considered by the SPA Board in August 2018, and published in December 2018) described Police Scotland's commitment to empower, enable and develop officers and staff. It also included '*Inspiring Leadership*' as one of its strategic themes, alongside a positive environment and organisational health.

51. The original People Strategy Implementation Plan included an action to '*modernise the way we deliver leadership development and training*' resulting in '*better delivery of leadership development and training*'. The Strategy included, as an Appendix, a new Leadership Framework for Police Scotland, which set out the various levels of leadership and supporting actions and products.

52. At the point of our 2020 Training and Development Phase 1 inspection, various leadership courses had taken place on a pilot basis but were not then developed into an established training programme. We noted that, despite the commitment made at the end of 2018, this programme still lacked prioritisation and resources, leaving police leaders without adequate training and development support.

53. In our Training and Development Phase 2 inspection (October 2021) we were encouraged by the progress made since the publication of our Phase 1 report in 2020. The first phase of the '*Your Leadership Matters*' (YLM) training programme had been rolled out between March and July 2021, to 250 senior leaders (including superintendents and chief superintendents) with a focus on EDI. This externally provided programme cost £250,000 and we considered it as tangible evidence of the service's renewed commitment and investment in this area. However, we also acknowledged the challenge that extending this training to sergeants and inspectors presented.

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[11] See Engelmann (2021), whose study of the value and role of learning for police officers and Police Scotland found that there is a lack of leadership development opportunities in relation to people management skills. This leaves middle and senior managers underprepared to deal with officer wellbeing and development. The role and value of learning for police officers and the police organisation in Scotland.

54. Police Scotland reported that Phase 1 delivery of YLM was well received, with 72% of respondents stating that a follow-on to the programme would be beneficial (within a year). The SPA Board approved a further £1.35 million investment in August 2022, to deliver Phase 2 over the next two years. A YLM Strategic Reference Group and YLM Steering Group were established to support the rollout.

55. YLM aims to develop the motivation, capability and environment for three leadership behaviours, with a baseline of expectations and skills for all leaders in Police Scotland. These behaviours are supported by clear learning outcomes:

Figure 2 – Your Leadership Matter Behaviours

Have the courage to do the right thing

Display moral courage in decision-making to do the right thing for our teams, partners, and the public. Lead with confidence but with the vulnerability and humility to admit to and learn from mistakes. Role model personal accountability and set clear boundaries of authority so others can do the same.

Learn and lead inclusively

Build inclusive teams with diverse perspectives to proactively strengthen decisions and solutions. Learn with a restless curiosity, prioritising development, and continuous improvement. Be deliberately appreciative about our people, public and partners and the work we do together.

Collaborate for growth

Collaborate to build trust with our people, public and partners as one collegiate team. Constructively challenge with honest, open feedback to improve performance and decisions. Support each other with compassion so we all remain healthy, resilient, and well.

Source: Police Scotland

56. An update on Phase 2 of the programme was reported to the SPA People Committee in May 2023, outlining the progress of development prior to launch and describing the implementation and delivery plan to Police Scotland leadership, as well as an overview of the communications and engagement plan and a summary of the process of evaluation.

57. As part of our inspection, we asked those we spoke to for feedback on YLM to date. We found a very mixed response:

- Some were very positive – despite having had very little other training to date (espousing a '*better than nothing at all*' attitude)

- Others felt that the programme could be improved by a less generic and more policing-specific leadership focus

- Some were very negative about their Phase 1 experience – particularly because of online delivery during the COVID-19 pandemic

- A number of those we spoke to described the programme as a '*patchwork*' of opportunities, which needed to be much more cohesive with more focus on a sustainable future programme

- There were opposing views as to where the priority should lie for future development, with both frontline managers and Chief Superintendent/Superintendent being suggested.

58. We understand that YLM is still at an early stage and also recognise that evaluation strategies have been put in place to ensure that learning is captured for future iterations of the programme. However, the mixed response we found suggests that further work will be required to refine the approach. While we support the rollout of leadership development and management training, we are unable to make a judgement on its effectiveness. Our comments later in this report regarding the effectiveness of reporting on culture and behavioural change should be considered in terms of how well the impact of the programmes can be demonstrated.

Area for development 1

Police Scotland should reflect on the mixed response to the Your Leadership Matters programme and consider how future delivery will be sustained in a more cohesive ongoing approach.

59. Other complementary leadership and management programmes have also been put in place by Police Scotland including:

- UK Police Leadership Programme – Stage 5 (Executive Leaders)

- Superintendent/Chief Superintendent

- Inspector/Chief Inspector

- Police Leadership Development Programme (PLDP)

- People Management Development Programme (PMDP)

- First Line Managers Programme

- Accelerated Leadership

- Coaching

- National Mentoring Programme.

60. These offers form part of a '*leadership ladder*', with each type of training providing a gateway to progression to more senior ranks, alongside formal promotion processes.

Figure 3 – Leadership Ladder

Source: Police Scotland

61. The Police Promotion Exams are no longer offered by Police Scotland and the Diploma in Police Service Leadership and Management ('*qualifying diploma*' as per the [Regulations](#)) concluded in 2021. As a result, the only mechanism to become qualified for promotion is the new PLDP, which launched a pilot in April 2021 (concluding in March 2022). The SPA People Committee considered a six-month evaluation report of this in [February 2022](#), with a full evaluation in November 2022.[12]

62. We identified that findings in the report suggest that the PLDP has been relatively well received, however there are a number of areas for development that require to be addressed before the course can be considered a qualified success. This includes improvements to supporting infrastructure and lines of communication with stakeholders and facilitators at local level. Importantly almost half the participants reported struggling to find time to pursue the vocational element of the learning. We consider that while there are clear benefits from remote learning it is also apparent that this approach brings different considerations and barriers to be overcome. It is important that the identified shortcomings are quickly addressed to ensure momentum in the project is maintained and the course is seen as being a valuable and credible source of learning.

63. The PMDP, launched in September 2023, is mandatory and complements ongoing leadership development programme(s). It will focus on two areas:

   - understanding how to create a positive workplace for people managers and their teams, while identifying how to put these behaviours into practice; and

   - expanding practical knowledge and understanding of key topics such as health and wellbeing, attendance management, duty modifications, capability, and workplace issues and grievances.

64. The PMDP involves two days of facilitated online learning, involving peer-to-peer dialogue, discussions and collaboration sessions. This is also supported by a dedicated intranet site, bringing together all of the guidance, toolkits and information about the programme.

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[12] SPA People Committee, Item 6.2 PLDP 12 Month Evaluation (private paper), 30 November 2022.

65. Police Scotland is planning and undertaking other initiatives, alongside its training, to embed appropriate leadership behaviours, attitudes and values at all levels in the service. These include an Engagement Essentials toolkit (launched in February 2023), and a campaign to embed ethics and values. While we found the contents of the toolkit to be a useful reference point (and complementary to training), feedback from our fieldwork suggests that awareness of their existence is low. Coaching and mentoring approaches have also been introduced, with the intention of supporting and embedding leadership behaviours across the organisation, but assessment of these has yet to take place.

66. Generally, we identified strong feelings about a risk of over-reliance on e-learning (Moodle) packages. Similarly, while hybrid delivery of training was considered a positive option, there was a concern that some routine courses were reverting to primarily online access. We have often commented about overuse of e-learning, and we are concerned that the benefits of face-to face learning are being diminished, often to save resources. In its May 2023 interim report, the IRG noted that the use of self-directed learning via Moodle was almost universally criticised, being repeatedly referred to as a '*tick-box*' approach and easy to '*work around*'.

67. In our divisional fieldwork, we were told that managers place a lower value on empathy and softer skills than they do on operational competency. This comment was often (but not always) associated with female officers, who felt their skillset was not fully appreciated or respected. Similarly, female officers told us that they welcomed the reflective elements of YLM, whereas male officers we spoke to were much less likely to be positive about this. Police Scotland should review these elements of the development programme, to encourage reflective practice for all officers and staff.

Area for development 2

Police Scotland should review the Your Leadership Matters development programme in order to embed reflective practice for all officers and staff.

68. Police Scotland has undertaken a review to support the development of a new Learning and Development approach to support its planned new People Strategy. The Learning and Development approach is intended to provide a model for integrating and aligning delivery to service priorities and provide individual learners with a framework against which to understand their opportunities and responsibilities. Police Scotland plan to submit their proposals for approval (likely to be February 2024) after the new People Strategy is launched later in 2023.

69. A new Strategic Learning and Development Governance Board has been established to oversee the development of the Learning and Development approach, with wider formal consultation beginning over the next few months. The detail of the approach is likely to remain aligned to the findings from the Learning and Development review, which acknowledged that the current model of mainstream police training delivery is a relatively hybrid and reactive approach with a strongly technical focus.

70. In our Assurance Review of Police Scotland Strategic Workforce Planning (August 2022), we identified that Police Scotland should include the training review as part of the Strategic Workforce Plan refresh (now due later in 2023). We also identified that a strategic Training Needs Assessment of ranks and roles was needed. A '*Framework for Strategic Workforce Planning 2019-26*' (approved by the SPA Resources Committee in May 2019) included a specific commitment to '*develop and introduce a training needs analysis and strategic training plan based on the skill requirements identified*'. This action was originally scheduled for completion by March 2020.

71. We consider that there has been significant progress in terms of the provision of leadership development within Police Scotland, but the impact of this on culture and behaviours has not yet been assessed. We also remain concerned that effective links between Strategic Workforce Planning and the learning and development programme have yet to be fully embedded.

Promotion and development

72. In 2019, Police Scotland introduced a [Competency and Values Framework](#) (CVF). This set out nationally recognised behaviours and values, which Police Scotland stated:

   "*will ensure that there are clear expectations of everyone working in policing.*"

   Within the CVF there are six competencies, with lists of behaviours that indicate if a person is displaying such competence. Many of these behaviours refer specifically to culture, for example:

   - I promote a culture that values diversity and encourages challenge

   - I actively ensure a supportive organisational culture that recognises and values diversity and wellbeing and challenges intolerance

   - I work to create an innovative learning culture, recognising and promoting innovative activities.

73. Each competency and list of behaviours is split into three levels:

   - **Level 1** – Practitioner

   - **Level 2** – Supervisor/middle manager

   - **Level 3** – Senior manager/Executive.

74. Police Scotland's promotion process requires applicants to provide evidence of CVF competencies and behaviours, at the appropriate level for promotion. We are aware that promotion has a significant impact on behaviours, wellbeing and morale in the organisation, and this is often attributed to an accepted norm that promotion through the ranks is the definition of success (often skewing supervisory behaviours).

75. The Police Scotland appraisal system MyCareer was launched as a Proof of Concept on 1 October 2020. It was rolled out to a national and a local policing division, and SPA Forensic Services (a total of 3,052 officers and staff). Its nine-month programme was due to end on 30 June 2021, but this was extended to 31 August 2021, as a result of COVID-19. MyCareer, which is underpinned by the CVF, aims to support CPD for officers and staff, while providing a gateway for future development and promotion.

76. An evaluation [report](#) to the SPA People Committee in February 2022, included 39 recommendations to help shape MyCareer's national rollout (planned for 1 April 2022). The rollout was supported by online training, intranet resources and the establishment of a national user group.

77. Police Scotland has set out an annual cycle for MyCareer from 1 April - 31 March. A yearly MyCareer discussion (between colleague and line manager) can happen at any point during this 12-month cycle. The deadline for the first conversations to be recorded was 31 May 2023.

78. In our Training and Development Phase 2 Inspection we reported on the aspiration of Police Scotland to have an appraisal system which is '*easy to use and promotes the importance of development conversations for individual and organisational performance*'. During our fieldwork, which straddled the deadline for annual MyCareer conversations, we found that MyCareer was familiar and used by the majority of the officers and staff we spoke to. Divisions were actively monitoring completion rates and encouraging all officers and staff to complete the process.

79. However, we were also told that many failed to see the relevance of MyCareer to them, unless they were seeking promotion or lateral movement. Similarly, police staff we spoke to felt it was primarily designed for police officers. Many of those we spoke to did not see the relevance of MyCareer as a '*reflective performance appraisal tool*'. We found a reticence about self-promotion, with evidence to suggest that the pervading culture did not offer an opportunity for self-reflection and praise, making it difficult for individuals to recognise '*good*' work and creating reluctance to articulate it when they did.

80. One of the key elements of MyCareer is the ability to record reflection logs.[13] This is mandatory for those seeking promotion (a minimum of six logs are required). We identified a degree of confusion over these logs, in terms of what they should contain and their purpose, particularly outwith promotion. It was also noted that the logs are seen as a replacement for the '*examples*' sought in previous promotion applications. We consider this further embeds behaviours where officers instigate unnecessary change in order to gather such '*examples*'.

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[13] A reflection log will describe what they did, how they did it and how this meets the criteria of a specific CVF descriptor.

81.   The IRG had also noted there was:

"a perceived risk that MyCareer may drive the wrong sort of behaviours because it will be used primarily as an evidence gathering tool, driving mini-initiatives or 'pet projects' and evidence gathering for individual promotions rather than culture and system change."

82.   There was a reported absence of one-to-one conversations with line managers outside of the MyCareer process (with many citing this as the only conversation they had had regarding their performance or wellbeing). Many of the MyCareer conversations that had been held were felt to be driven by meeting targets, rather than investing in people or valuing individuals.

83.   We found that the impact on workload (for first-line supervisors in particular) had been underestimated, with many viewing this as a barrier to engaging fully with the MyCareer process. Many supervisors told us that they were concerned about not being able to support their people fully in the promotion process due to a lack of understanding and that, while there was a commitment to make it work, this was affecting other daily business or personal time.

84.   We found evidence that the CVF is viewed positively and has been embedded within promotion, leadership development and MyCareer processes. However, like MyCareer, it is viewed by many as relevant only to those seeking promotion or lateral movement. We found little evidence to suggest it is considered in day-to-day interactions or activity, and tends to be used only when considering documentation of activity on MyCareer, or when compiling an application form.

85.   Concerns were raised with us about a lack of understanding of both CVF and MyCareer. It was repeatedly highlighted that online training had been provided for both (via Moodle), which was widely considered as ineffective, with officers and staff completing the training while managing other aspects of work. Many of those we spoke to felt vulnerable when applying for lateral movement or promotion, as they felt there was insufficient guidance and a lack of experience across the organisation, so it was unclear what was being asked of them in the application process.

86. We found little evidence that MyCareer is being used as an objective-setting tool, and there had been limited evaluation of the quality of input to MyCareer. It was unclear whether information about the aspirations of officers was being collated, or how that linked to training needs analysis, divisional or organisational work. This lack of oversight (about individual aspirations and those seeking development) engendered a sense of unfairness and a perceived lack of transparency regarding promotion and development opportunities.

> **Area for development 3**
>
> Police Scotland should consider the training approach to the Competency and Values Framework and MyCareer, to achieve the depth and breadth of understanding required.

87. We consider that MyCareer remains a work in progress in terms of uptake and value. Although we were told that it provides an opportunity for broader discussion, it is restricted in its effectiveness by a lack of objective-setting and performance discussion, availability of follow-up training and CPD, and absence of 360-degree feedback.

88. We found that Police Scotland had reviewed its promotion process over the last few years, and this was considered to have improved on previous iterations. Improvements currently being considered include greater consideration of the gender and ethnicity balance of panels; regularly varying panel members; implementing systematic feedback from participants and panel members; and reviewing the balance of scenarios (operational vs people skills). While we acknowledge that there is unlikely ever to be a process in which all participants will be happy, promotion processes need to demonstrate fairness and transparency. We consider this is not currently the case.

89. We found that those with concerns about promotion felt they had limited opportunities to raise those concerns outwith formal grievances, with many feeling that this would inhibit future prospects. We were told that appeals were perceived not to be handled impartially and that there was no mechanism to identify unconscious bias in the process. We found that organisational conformity was prevalent – most of those we spoke to perceived that leaders were expected to fit a particular mould. This was particularly the case for skillsets, with operational skills being valued more highly than people management skills. However, as noted in the Angiolini Review, HMICS considers readiness for promotion should be viewed in terms of how an officer demonstrates and aligns to the values of the organisation, rather than technical expertise.

90. We found that feedback was not systematically sought from participants in the promotion process, leaving a significant gap in data. While it may be the case that unsuccessful candidates will view the process less objectively, we were told that most felt their views were largely discounted. This minimises the opportunity to make improvements.

91. In contrast, line managers and supervisors reported feeling reluctant to highlight that individuals were not ready for promotion, due to fears of having a grievance raised against them. We were told that some individuals felt it was their right to expect promotion after a certain amount of time. Overall, both perceptions suggest a lack of transparency in the process, and it was clear there was a strongly felt lack of organisational justice about the promotion process, particularly among those who were unsuccessful.

92. We found that, in the absence of honest conversations about readiness levels, individuals felt instead that they were expected to overcome subjective and localised barriers – for example, leaving specialist posts to return to frontline policing to demonstrate their ability and commitment.

93. We heard that behaviours of those seeking promotion are often skewed, with candidates feeling pressure to secure recent '*examples*'. Being able to demonstrate the ability to drive change, for example, led to token '*pet projects*' at all levels of the organisation. Although there was acknowledgement that promotion-seeking behaviours can also be positive (determination, drive, commitment etc.) most felt that these were temporary changes, relating only to the process ahead of them.

94. Throughout our inspection work, we heard about the effect of the regular movement, or '*churn*', particularly of supervisors. This was frequently due to promotion-related moves (whether individuals were successful or unsuccessful), or opportunities to gain further '*examples*' to support promotion aspirations. We found the impact of this on the workforce to be significant, with individuals feeling less supported in terms of wellbeing, or being affected by constant change and initiatives in support of promotion aspirations. Many felt their supervisors were not motivated to get to know them and understand their needs, or to treat them as individuals.

95. By contrast, police staff who were supervised by other police staff welcomed the consistency and stability provided by line management who had been in post for some time. We consider that the constant churn, described to us as an organisational norm that just has to be accepted, should be better managed, with a more planned approach that supports individual aspirations and takes account of the impact on those left behind. Churn not only has negative effects internally, it also damages external relationships, results in a loss of organisational memory, experience and expertise. We consider this to be a workforce planning issue, where individual moves should be more carefully considered. Concepts such as fixed tenure in key roles should be further explored.

Area for development 4

Police Scotland should consider, measure and assess the level of '*churn*' on the organisation and develop workforce planning approaches to both understand the effective level of turnover and mitigate its impact.

96.　Tables 1A and 1B below demonstrate that female officers, black and minority ethnic (BME) officers, and white minority ethnic (WME) officers remain under represented as successful candidates in promotion processes, when compared with their representation in the service as a whole. Police Scotland has stated that it is carrying out further analysis to understand the monitoring findings and establish insights and actions.

Table 1A – Profile of officers successful in promotion process (between 1 April 2021 and 31 March 2022) – Gender split

Group	Number of police officers	Percentage of all police officers	Officers promoted between 1 April 2021 and 31 March 2022 number	Percentage of Total Officers promoted between 1 April 2021 and 31 March 2022
Male	11342	67%	913	71%
Female	5698	33%	370	29%
Total	**17040**		**1283**	

Source: Police Scotland

Table 1B – Profile of officers successful in promotion process (between 1 April 2021 and 31 March 2022) – EDI characteristic split

Group	Number of police officers	Percentage of all police officers	Officers promoted between 1 April 2021 and 31 March 2022 number	Percentage of Total Officers promoted between 1 April 2021 and 31 March 2022
Disability	589	3%	42	3%
BME	276	1.6%	16	1.25%
WME	376	2.2%	14	1.09%
LGB	683	4%	56	4%
Total	**1924**		**128**	

Source: Police Scotland

Table 1C – Profile of officers successful in promotion process (cumulative between January 2020 and November 2023)

Group	Total number of police officers at 31 March 2023*	Percentage of all police officers	Number of applications for promotion	Percentage of total applications	Officers successful at NPPP between January 2020 and November 2023	Percentage of officers successful at NPPP between January 2020 and November 2023
Male	11051	66%	2940	72%	1418	70%
Female	5759	34%	1167	28%	615	30%
Total	**16810**		**4107**		**2033**	

The total number of officers will have varied during the period Jan 2020 – November 2023, HMICS has chosen to use the number at end March 2023 to show indicative representation.

Source: Police Scotland

97. These figures (in Table 1A and 1B) were included as part of the latest statutory EDI mainstreaming report. There is currently no other regular public reporting on Police Scotland promotion processes. We consider that there should be increased transparency about the promotion process.

> **Area for development 5**
>
> The Scottish Police Authority should consider commissioning regular reporting on Police Scotland promotion outcomes to ensure that there is fairness and equity in both national and local processes.

98. Police Scotland also provided HMICS with updated data on the national promotion processes at each rank and further detailed analysis for EDI characteristics, which had been produced for internal purposes. These showed that more males participate in each process than females, but females are now more likely to be successful than their male counterparts (see Table 1C). The reporting does demonstrate that Police Scotland are analysing the process and its outcomes to a degree. However it remains unclear what specific actions are being taken to address any issues and how these are monitored.

99. Promotion was one of the most frequently referenced issues in our inspection by those we engaged with. It was also perceived as the area most lacking in openness and fairness in both local and national selection processes. These perceptions should be tackled more systematically by Police Scotland, with actions already established from surveys needing to be more openly addressed.

Probationer experience

100. We spoke with a significant number of probationers – both those at the Scottish Police College at Tulliallan and those operationally deployed in local policing. During these semi-structured interviews, we discussed their motivations for joining Police Scotland and their expectations of the role. When giving their reasons for applying to Police Scotland, most respondents gave a variation on '*to help people*', with a strong focus and expectation on crime fighting.

101. We heard from those who were operationally deployed that these expectations were not being met. Many reported that their experience of dealing with crime was low and that the majority of their activity related to policing mental health.[14] They observed that the training provided at Tulliallan was insufficient to prepare them for this work, since it only covered the legislative aspects of policing mental health, with no focus on trauma or appropriate response to those in crisis. This left probationers feeling ill-equipped and vulnerable.

102. We heard that the majority of probationers at Tulliallan felt clear on the cultural aspirations of Police Scotland, with inclusivity referenced frequently. Similarly, most felt that it was clear from the demographics of their peers that Police Scotland was an inclusive organisation. This feeling became more diluted among operational probationers, who were less clear on the aspirational culture. Both groups felt that they had no clarity about what was expected of them by the organisation to contribute to cultural change.

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[14] HMICS, Thematic review of policing mental health in Scotland, 18 October 2023.

103. The sense of belonging felt by probationers at Tulliallan was strong and was frequently spoken about by them and those around them. This sense of belonging continued with those deployed in local policing, although this was described more as belonging to the immediate team environment. We were also made aware of a few instances where probationers did not feel they belonged, but felt isolated and ostracised, both in their operational team and at Tulliallan. This feeling of being on '*the outside*' was so acute that those experiencing it were considering resignation.

104. Probationers at Tulliallan felt their wellbeing was a priority, with regular activity to support them (including one-to-one conversations with instructors and ad hoc check-ins). This was in stark contrast to probationers in local policing, who did not consider their wellbeing as a priority and who had limited contact with their supervisor outside a briefing, tasking and co-ordinating setting. We heard concerning reports from probationers in rural environments who did not know who their inspector was, and who had not seen their sergeant for some time. It was clear from the responses that this was affecting their wellbeing.

105. We heard that tutor constables had the most influence on probationers.[15] Largely, tutors were described as experienced, skilled, patient and invested in the development of probationers. The probationers commented on the lack of effective training provided to tutor constables, though this appeared to be a situation described to them by others, as they themselves held the tutors in high regard. We recognise that Police Scotland has introduced and reviewed tutor constable training but consider that further work is required.

> **Area for development 6**
>
> Police Scotland should consider the impact of the tutor constable role and review the training provided, with a particular focus on the Competency and Values Framework.

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[15] See Charman (2017), whose longitudinal study on police socialisation, identity and culture highlights the influential position of the tutor constable in police learning, and urges good quality selection and training for the role. Police Socialisation, Identity and Culture: Becoming Blue.

106. Most probationers who were operationally deployed felt they were working in a positive environment, while acknowledging the challenges in frontline policing. Many described a lack of job satisfaction, with an inability to meet the demands placed on them. Cynicism in local policing was felt strongly, particularly from those officers and staff with longer experience, though this was mitigated by camaraderie and a positive team environment. We found a strong sense of teams pulling together and peer support.

107. We heard from probationers at Tulliallan that they were encouraged to challenge poor behaviour and felt empowered to do so. They were vocal and firm in their position that they would either challenge an issue directly or raise it with their supervisor. This was less obvious from respondents in local policing, who were more aware of the dynamics of the team environment and would be less likely to challenge. An understanding of the formal mechanisms (beyond raising issues with a supervisor) was absent in both groups.

108. The IRG has also reported that incoming probationers were more enlightened and likely to speak up and challenge a traditional command and control culture. However, it was also reported that this willingness to speak up and challenge ebbed away the longer officers stayed in the service.

109. We consider that new probationers are more likely to challenge the behaviour of others, but that this is diluted as they gain operational experience. HMICS considers that this decreasing challenge over time leads to increased organisational cultural conformity over time. Also, this reduction of willingness to challenge, and uncertainty of how to report, means that poor behaviour and misconduct matters are potentially going unreported and, ultimately, not being addressed (see paragraph 185 on under-reporting in misconduct).

Area for development 7

Police Scotland should improve awareness and accessibility of reporting methods for probationers, while generally improving the culture of willingness to challenge and report.

110. The previous experience probationers had gained before joining Police Scotland was reportedly valued at Tulliallan, with strong messaging about having been recruited for their uniqueness. This contrasted with those in local policing, who reported that their previous skills and experience were not known, understood or of apparent interest to their peers and supervisors.

111. In general, probationers reported that they felt their previous experience and skills were not valued, and that they were restarting as '*probationers*' at the very bottom of the rank structure. It was also reported that probationers felt they were unfairly allocated tasks such as washing cars and making tea/coffee, as opposed to this being equally shared throughout a team.

112. While we acknowledge that the value of on-the-job learning in operational policing cannot be underestimated, most respondents who were operationally deployed felt that they were expected to start afresh and discount learning from Tulliallan, which reduced the value and meaningfulness of the training environment.

113. Many felt a disconnect between training and the reality of policing. A combination of factors – the realities of policing not meeting their expectations of the role, not feeling equipped and prepared to deal with vulnerability and mental health, and their limited ability to complete tasks due to the demands of the role – left many doubting their future in the organisation or questioning the sustainability of their role.

114. We heard repeatedly about a commitment and enthusiasm for policing, a genuine desire to make a difference in the lives of those in their communities, and to provide good public service. However, there is a clear disparity in the values espoused (inclusivity and wellbeing, and the ability to challenge) and the treatment of probationers at the College, compared with that in operational deployment. We found that the expectations of new probationers have changed in many ways, but consider that the organisation has not fully recognised this fact. Police Scotland needs to better reflect the reality of policing today and manage the expectations of a new generation of officers, both in their training and their probationary period.

> **Recommendation 3**
>
> Police Scotland should ensure that the probationer training syllabus is more reflective of actual frontline demand and the Competency and Values Framework, to allow officers to feel equipped to deal with the realities of policing.

Organisational learning

115. Organisational learning is the process by which an organisation improves itself over time through gaining experience, using that experience to create knowledge, and disseminating that knowledge throughout the organisation. The Police Scotland learning and development review states that:

"A learning organisation is an organisation skilled at creating, acquiring, and transferring knowledge, and at modifying its behaviour to reflect new knowledge and insights, continuously transforming itself. It has a collaborative learning culture, lifelong learning mindset, room for innovation and forward-thinking leadership."

116. We have identified a number of areas of good practice in organisational learning across Police Scotland. It has publicly reported on lessons learned from a number of major operations, with examples including Operation Talla and Operation Unicorn (SPA Board Meeting, 21 June 2023). It has also begun reporting on lessons learned from complaints and misconduct cases. Police Scotland set out this process in a report to the SPA Complaints and Conduct Committee on 1 June 2023. Police Scotland also now publishes anonymised outcomes from conduct hearings internally, to further promote learning.

117. The Annual Police Plan 2022-23 set out the aim of establishing an organisational learning function (to promote and support the sharing of learning and best practice across the organisation). This was not achieved in 2022-23, and it was not included in the Annual Police Plan 2023-24, although that plan still emphasises the importance of organisational learning. The original commitment to creating such a function does appear in the DCC (Professionalism and Digital Transformation) Delivery Plan for 2022-25.

118. In May 2022, a Business Justification Case (BJC) was approved to secure £350,000 consultancy funding to deliver a full business case and target operating model for an organisational learning function. In that BJC, Police Scotland noted that 14 related recommendations had been made by external/independent bodies, with many noting the need for process improvement and established learning structures. Police Scotland later decided the business case should be reconsidered (in conjunction with planned internal audit work), given the challenging financial situation.

119. The SPA Audit, Risk and Assurance Committee considered the internal audit report on organisational learning in January 2023. The audit was an advisory-style review, reflecting the relative infancy of work in this area and the lack of pre-existing, defined processes for organisational learning.

120. Similar to our own findings, the report also found there was a range of activity taking place across Police Scotland focused strongly on the identification of learning. This included a variety of different activities taking place, such as structured debriefs, lessons learned exercises, post-implementation reviews, and third party and internal scrutiny reports. These provide rich sources of learning, but supporting processes for the retention and transfer of this knowledge were less well-developed, with a lack of alignment and inconsistency between the approaches adopted.

121. At that time, Police Scotland agreed with the findings and recommendations of the audit report, noting that it was seeking transformation funding to procure professional services to assist with the implementation of its organisational learning framework and structure.

122. Since then, work has been developing to identify options for progression. This has involved assessing the extent of internal practice, participating in the College of Policing Organisational Learning Network, benchmarking approaches in other organisations, and initial identification of potential Information and Communications Technology (ICT) solutions to support knowledge sharing. Although progress has been slow, there are positive signs that progress will be made.

123. We found that there was widespread support for better organisational learning and sharing of effective practice. We were told of frustration that '*reinventing the wheel*' was commonplace; where learning, improvement or change had been implemented in the past, but not sustained, or where officers seeking promotion implemented change unnecessarily. Although we found evidence of learning being promoted in local divisions, there remains a perceived blame culture within the organisation, which is considered as a barrier to this. The Angiolini Review also highlighted that:

"A blame culture does not encourage a learning culture and Police Scotland must be mature in how it responds to its people making mistakes."

124. We consider that organisational learning is a cultural issue and part of a wider approach to continuous improvement and the statutory requirement to demonstrate best value. We acknowledge the good practice work that we identified in some policing areas, where a culture of consistent evaluation, debriefing and governance on organisational learning is in place.

125. However, we also consider that putting a function in place adds limited value to policing while there remains a lack of embedded consistent cultural behaviours and governance on improvement. Retaining and recording organisational learning is not yet systematic across the organisation and there is a lack of clear governance and controls on how it is managed.

126. We consider that Police Scotland needs to embed learning systems and a culture of reflective practice across the organisation. Simple approaches can be easily adopted (e.g. Plan-Do-Study-Act-Learn, or Select-Try-Reflect-Refine), which better employ use of evidence and measurement, as well as recording. Facilitating this with learning networks (a safe place to share what works and what does not) and support resources are also key to becoming a successful learning organisation.

Area for development 8

Police Scotland should consider its wider approach to learning culture and systems, and reflective practice, across the organisation.

Continuous improvement

127. As with organisational learning, we have identified some effective practice in terms of improvement approaches. These include:

- Continuous Improvement Team (currently within Change function)
    - process improvement activity
    - training in Lean Six Sigma Green Belt (17 FTE trained in 2022-23)
    - skills building workshops
    - innovation initiatives

- Governance and Assurance (within Professionalism)
    - organisational learning
    - European Foundation for Quality Management-based self-evaluation
    - learning and support to inspection and audit
    - recommendations management

- Best Value (in Corporate Services)
    - audit toolkit-based self-evaluation
    - Service Efficiency Review and Redesign (currently led by Change function)

- Research and Insights (within Strategy and Engagement)

- Learning and Development (both within Professionalism, and People & Development functions)

- Policing Together – inclusion, equality and diversity

- Divisional governance and improvement functions and local initiatives.

128. A relatively recent development is the bi-monthly Continuous Improvement (CI) Board forum. The Board has been instigated and is chaired by the CI Team, with colleagues from across divisions, to provide a platform to share learning and expertise, collaborate, and increase visibility of CI activity. This group set out its terms of reference in 2022, stating its remit to:

- Ensure that all CI-related activity is highlighted and effectively managed

- Review and prioritise pipeline requests for formal CI team support and resource allocation

- Ensure that any CI-related risks, issues and dependencies are being managed and resolved appropriately

- Share best practice and lessons learned – both internal and external

- Report on benefits delivery and outcomes from all CI activity

- Review national and local CI suggestion portals (Smart Thinking and others, and report on progress/ideas implemented)

- Review and evaluate Post-implementation and Assurance reviews to ensure benefits and CI initiatives are being sustained

- Provide a discussion forum for CI activity, generate and discuss ideas and agree prioritisation of initiatives

- Exercise flexibility in any prioritised and agreed activity (e.g. not set in stone).

129. The Board reports to the Head of Portfolio Management and the Chief Digital Information Officer on overall CI delivery progress, confirming that initiatives and projects remain on course to achieve the desired outcome. This reporting also includes resultant benefits realisation (both forecast and achieved), summary of active and ongoing CI-related activity, and new projects and initiatives assigned to the CI Team for progression.

130. A Continuous Improvement Strategy (2021) was also provided to us as evidence, focusing on the continuous improvement team's work and what Police Scotland needs to do to achieve a culture of continuous improvement. The strategy sets out five priorities:

- Deliver best value for Police Scotland

- Promote a culture of continuous improvement

- Build organisational capacity

- Empower our people

- Develop a continuous improvement centre of excellence.

131. We found that awareness of this strategy (and the work of the CI Team) was very limited in the other improvement-based functions in Police Scotland, and there was concern that the strategy had been developed in relative isolation. While we endorse the vision and priorities set out in the strategy, it and the CI Team remain relatively disconnected from the other organisational learning, best value and improvement functions and activities across the organisation.

132. The CI Team 2022 Delivery Plan outcomes include a '*CI organisational maturity assessment*'. This had been placed on hold (to enable prioritisation of project delivery activity to be completed at a later date) and rescheduled to quarter four 2023-24. We believe that this should be prioritised, but undertaken jointly with the other improvement functions, to provide a comprehensive assessment of organisational capacity and capability.

Recommendation 4

Police Scotland should prioritise the completion of an organisational maturity assessment of continuous improvement, organisational learning and best value involving all improvement-related functions within the organisation and use this to inform a unified approach.

Innovation

133. Innovation is a key element of both improvement culture and an overall CI framework. We saw evidence of the '*Smart Thinking*' initiative, where an intranet-based application is available to officers and staff to submit ideas for CI. The administration of the platform is now managed by the CI Team (having previously been led by Strategy and Insight). In 2022, there were 139 suggestions (there had been 186 in 2021). At the time of our inspection, from those 139 suggestions, 69 were in progress, 39 would not be progressed and 16 were duplicates; another 18 were not currently being taken forward but would be revisited.

134. We were told that 'J' Division (Lothians and Scottish Borders) had been introduced to Smart Thinking in 2022, with 34 training workshops facilitated by the CI Team. We were informed that that this demonstrated the typical local divisions' willingness to engage in improvement activity and developing organisational culture, despite the pressures they face.

135. The CI Team is engaged with points of contact across the organisation, and these contacts are now actively engaged in the CI Board, alongside divisional representatives, discussing and sharing ideas and best practice. More work will take place in 2023 to identify process improvements for Smart Thinking, with a view to increasing its implementation success rate. We were given examples where suggestions had been put into action, but noted these were mostly process improvements.

136. Although we see this scheme as a positive development, we consider that it falls short of genuine innovation. While we recognise examples of innovation throughout the service (e.g. in cyber technology and forensics), we believe Police Scotland must consider how it can best facilitate true innovation in future, in terms of resourcing and support.

Area for development 9

Police Scotland should consider how it can best facilitate innovation in future, in terms of resourcing and support.

137. We consider that Police Scotland's approach to CI and best value is fragmented across a number of departments and functions. There are examples of good practice across the service – and we found genuine commitment to improvement – but this was often not supported by the capability and capacity needed to deliver the change required.

138. The level of improvement an organisation can sustain is often constrained by its resources, and how committed senior leadership is to empowering people and making room for innovation and change. Police Scotland sets out a clear aspiration to embed a CI culture but has not developed a systematic approach to developing it thus far. There are many improvement initiatives and day-to-day approaches that can be demonstrated; however their disjointed nature and lack of overall support and direction undermines their effectiveness.

Governance (and structures)

139. As noted above, we identified a clear association between internal governance in Police Scotland and risk aversion. We also noted that commitments to chairing and attending governance forums were affecting the capacity of senior leaders.

140. We found that Police Scotland internal governance is generally believed to be a barrier to a culture of efficient and collaborative working. '*Over-governance*' is considered to promote a culture of activity over outcomes, while also limiting delegated decision-making. The landscape was described to us as complex, cluttered and overly bureaucratic. Many were unclear on defined governance routes for reporting and approvals, with examples given of time-consuming navigation of different groups and forums. Police Scotland's own internal YVM employee survey identified governance/bureaucracy as a key hindrance stressor.[16]

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[16] Hindrance stressors refer to work-related demands; individuals view these demands as constraints that hinder their performance and achievements at work. This impacts strongly on their wellbeing and reduces their engagement in discretionary behaviours.

141. We found many examples of Short Life Working Groups (SLWG) and Gold Groups, without defined outputs or timescales, and multiple delivery groups aligned with individual workstreams. We also observed a number of groups with duplicated membership and agendas, with no decision-making taking place and non-attendance by key members. A trend toward creating strategic oversight boards/groups with supporting tactical groups was also evident. Use of policing operation names for non-incident/event programmes and projects was also considered by many to be confusing and unhelpful.

142. Many of those we spoke to shared concerns about the volume of papers circulated, often at the last minute, for many of these meetings. This leaves group members unable to digest all of the information, with key papers and decisions often progressing unchallenged through the system. Our own observations of internal forums have shown a progressive dilution of internal scrutiny and challenge. This '*under-governance*' is a direct consequence of the cluttered bureaucratic landscape.

143. HMICS is fully aware that, in the past, Police Scotland has been criticised for a lack of internal governance in some areas and so has implemented external recommendations to address these issues. However, it is apparent that the service is now inhibited from operating effectively by the level of internal governance it is applying to itself to compensate for a lack of individual accountability and delegated or empowered decision-making. Much of the governance used as evidence during our inspection was considered to be supporting the delivery of a large volume of activity rather than outcomes.

144. We were told that the balance between governance applied to tasking and co-ordination and corporate and programme/project governance is now heavily weighted to the latter, to an unsustainable level.

145. The Police Scotland Corporate Governance Framework is regularly reviewed alongside a Scheme of Delegation. We consider these should be reconsidered in light of our findings, with a more agile approach taken to governance (which does not in any way circumvent the principles of good governance or existing frameworks such as financial and programme/project approaches). Similarly, the reduction in delegated decision-making - the result of the need to increase budget controls for savings - should be carefully considered, given the service's commitment to empowered decision-making.[17]

> **Recommendation 5**
>
> Police Scotland should review its Corporate Governance Framework and Scheme of Delegation to ensure that delegated decision-making and approval processes are streamlined.

146. In our discussions about governance, many of those we spoke to noted that the current portfolio structure of the Executive often leads to silo-based behaviours and duplication. We were also told that, although some areas such as Criminal Justice and Contact, Command and Control had undertaken significant reform and restructuring, others had remained relatively unchanged since the inception of the service. There remained a perception of boundaries between national and local divisions, which were not effectively supporting frontline policing.

147. We accept that some restructuring and service redesign is underway, with some major programmes ongoing. However, it is evident that current structures reinforce a culture of silo-working and competing for priority and resources. The lack of an overarching Target Operating Model (TOM) – which we have referenced in both our Assurance Reviews of Demand Management and Strategic Workforce Planning – remains an obstacle to realigning structures to demand and financial circumstances.

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[17] See Martin, Leslie and Graham (2023), who describe how the inclusivity of police leaders in decision making processes is likely to lead to notions of organisational identity and empowerment, as well as greater commitment to organisational objectives and to a positive effect on the outcomes of interactions with the public. Policing the pandemic: Frontline officers' perspectives on organisational justice.

148. We are aware that the service is reviewing its Executive structures, so will not make recommendations regarding structural change, but urge that the new Chief Constable should consider these findings. As noted above, we have previously made a recommendation[18] requiring Police Scotland to establish a clear model and plan for producing a TOM, and to set out a route map for its delivery through business planning and change activity. We acknowledge that Police Scotland has been working on this for some time, but the recommendation remains outstanding.

SPA and local governance

149. In our self-evaluation, we asked whether the SPA Board (or local Council Committee) members had identified any cultural issues. Police Scotland told us that:

"*SPA Board Members have the opportunity to request additional information/challenge Police Scotland through the Committee structure.*"

When we asked how governing bodies understand and assess its culture, Police Scotland responded that a range of reporting is provided which include cultural elements. It also acknowledged that:

"*the service is developing our approach to enhance how we measure the colleague experience, culture and the impact of our leadership.*"

150. We found that the SPA understands and assesses policing culture primarily through the range of public reporting at SPA Committees, generally in an open and transparent manner. However, the Board members and staff we spoke with were clear that this reporting still requires improvement in terms of the insights provided. Police Scotland gave us evidence of private meetings, briefings and workshops which had been held to facilitate increased understanding and more detailed scrutiny by SPA members.

151. We observed that SPA members were now consistently challenging reports to seek information on outcomes, and were questioning verbal reassurances (that action was being taken) by seeking assurance that the actions had had the desired impact.

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[18] HMICS, Assurance Review of Police Scotland Strategic Workforce Planning - Recommendation 3, 2 August 2022.

152. The feedback we received on Police Scotland's reporting to the SPA Complaints and Conduct Committee was of particular note. This reporting was still viewed as a work in progress, with continuing reticence about putting more sensitive data into the public domain, since individuals could be identified (e.g. from anonymised outcomes from misconduct hearings, which are now available internally). Ultimately, reporting was considered to provide limited assurance on the standards of integrity, ethics and values, focusing primarily on complaints and conduct (see outcomes section).

153. As noted above, reports and information continue to be considered in isolation, reinforced by committee structures. As with our previous commentary on change governance, we consider that the SPA should consider how cross-cutting issues such as culture, equalities and inclusion are consistently considered at each committee and by the Board.

Area for development 10

The Scottish Police Authority should consider how cross-cutting issues such as culture, equalities and inclusion are consistently scrutinised at each committee and by the Board.

154. We were told in our local fieldwork divisions that police and fire ('*blue light*') committees within councils were now seeking more information and reporting on policing '*culture*' issues, as public interest had increased over the past year or so. We consider this to be a valid area of interest at local level. The SPA and Police Scotland need to consider how they will support local commanders to provide consistent reporting and assurance to local area committees.[19]

Area for development 11

The Scottish Police Authority and Police Scotland should consider how they will support local commanders to provide consistent reporting and assurance on policing culture to local area committees.

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[19] HMICS notes that Councils may have different arrangements for local committee structures.

Delivery

155. Police Scotland's values – integrity, fairness and respect – are integral to the culture to which it aspires and should underpin everything that it does. The Code of Ethics for Policing in Scotland sets out what the public should expect from the service. It outlines the values of the organisation, its commitment to protecting human rights and the standards of behaviour that communities can expect. It also sets out what police officers and police staff should expect from each other.

156. In June 2018, the then Justice Secretary and the Lord Advocate commissioned an independent review to assess the framework and processes for handling complaints against the police and for investigating serious incidents and alleged misconduct. The review was chaired by Dame Elish Angiolini who, in her report Review of Complaints handling, investigation and misconduct within Police Scotland, (Recommendation 1) stated that:

"Police Scotland's Code of Ethics should be given a basis in statute. The SPA and the Chief Constable should have a duty jointly to prepare, consult widely on, and publish the Code of Ethics, and have a power to revise the Code when necessary."

157. Standards of Professional Behaviour (see Appendix 2) are also enshrined within the Code of Ethics and conduct regulations. These standards reflect expectations of police officers, whether on or off duty. Importantly, they promote an expectation that officers and staff will report, challenge or take action against any conduct not befitting of those standards. The standards encompass behavioural expectations relating to honesty, integrity, equality and diversity, as well as confidentiality.

158. Police Scotland also has a published (Conduct) Regulations 2014 Standard Operating Procedure (latest version January 2019), which covers procedures for the assessment, investigation and disposal of misconduct allegations. Misconduct procedures underpin the Standards of Professional Behaviour, which set out the high standards that the service and the public expect of police officers. Any failure to meet these standards may undermine the important work of the police service and public confidence in it.

159. Police Scotland seeks to maintain its values and code of ethics by providing consistent messaging and training. The Policing Together approach (see paragraph 285 and Appendix 3) places crucial importance on listening to officers and staff, and acting on their suggestions and views. At its core lies the Code of Ethics, providing practical guidance on the values of Police Scotland. Policing Together aims to enable officers to provide a consistent, fair, just and effective policing response to all members of the public (with an understanding of the cultural and social needs of individuals and the community), carried out with consideration and empathy and a pride in policing. We found however, that awareness levels and understanding of Policing Together vary widely across the organisation (see paragraph 290).

160. We were also told that there needs to be a greater business-as-usual effort at every management level in the organisation, to reinforce the values of Police Scotland. Most ranks expressed the belief that the values set out in communications are demonstrated in practice by their immediate line managers. There was also a view that informative posters in divisions were very helpful in reinforcing value expectations. However, there was also some concern about the content of these posters, as some people felt that the language used (directive and negative) did not align with core values.

161. In November 2022, a Preventions and Professionalism programme was launched. This aims to improve standards, and to empower both officers and staff to challenge undesirable behaviours through education, early intervention and leadership support. This programme aims to use innovative approaches to highlight prevention messaging and raise awareness of five priority themes:

- Promote the Code of Ethics and Values, recognising the achievements of officers and staff members who deliver on these every day

- Work with partners and academia to improve understanding of Professional Standards, ethics, vulnerability and corruption, sharing this knowledge to empower staff and enhance organisational learning

- Promote Wellbeing support in all Professional Standards functions to protect our people and deliver a person-centred approach to all parties involved in an investigative process

- Identify individual vulnerabilities, corruption threats and ethical drift within the organisation to ensure early intervention and protecting people and the organisation from harm

- Work with external partners to share best practice and improve resilience within Police Scotland and across the Criminal Justice sector.

162. Through this programme, a year-long initiative is being delivered, highlighting each of the professional standards and providing relatable context for expected behaviours from officers, alongside practical examples of behaviours that fail to meet these standards.

163. Feedback to date indicates that engagement/viewing rates for the campaign have been very positive, suggesting wide interest in the topics covered. As the final stages of the current campaign approach, next steps include creating a tactical plan of continued prevention activity for 2024, which aims to consolidate awareness, with a particular focus on recurring or emerging concerns. Police Scotland has acknowledged that a key element of the campaign is evaluating the impact of prevention activity, particularly increased awareness and understanding of personal responsibility in demonstrating standards, alongside increased confidence in reporting and addressing issues. Work is ongoing to consider the most effective way to evaluate its impact – something we feel should have been done at the outset of the programme.

164. While we found there are processes in place to ensure that values and ethics are embedded within policy and procedure (as part of existing policy review cycle), the previous Chief Constable's statement on institutional discrimination implies there is much work still to do. We also found that there needs to be more ongoing business-as-usual effort at every management level in the organisation to reinforce values.

Area for development 12

Police Scotland should consider the business-as-usual approach to reinforcement of values.

165. Police Scotland reports to the SPA on a regular basis on its complaints and conduct information. There is, however, limited reporting and assurance on compliance with the code of ethics and values. Evidence provided by Police Scotland indicates that its review of values and code of ethics relates to the effectiveness of the organisation's engagement with the public, and feedback received. We consider that this provides only limited assurance.

Area for development 13

Police Scotland should review policies and procedures to ensure they fully embed its values and ethics, and are not discriminatory.

166. We consider that this has now become an area that requires more scrutiny, in light of the Angiolini Review (this recommends a code of ethics being enshrined in law, for the many reasons she outlines in her report). The introduction by the Scottish Government of the Police (Ethics, Conduct and Scrutiny) (Scotland) Bill will see a code of ethics enshrined in law, if passed as currently drafted.

167. We consider it is now time for Police Scotland to consider how it will evidence compliance with any code of ethics legislation. Currently, the code of ethics holds a central position in the CVF, which sets out clear standards of expected behaviours in Police Scotland to increase public safety and satisfaction. We believe that gathering evidence and scrutinising developments in this area would help improve public confidence in policing.

168. As we will see later in this report (see outcomes section), current reporting to the SPA Complaints and Conduct Committee provides limited assurance on the standards of integrity, ethics and values, as it focuses primarily on complaints and conduct.

Policing style and tone

169. The policing style adopted in Scotland derives from both strategy and operational approaches, with an ethos influenced and supported by organisational culture, behaviour and values. The service states on its website that:

"How we deliver policing has a direct impact on our communities. It will influence the trust and confidence people have in us. How we deliver is as important as what we deliver."

170. Police Scotland adopted a '*rights-based approach*' to policing of the COVID-19 pandemic (Operation Talla) during a time where police were given unparalleled powers to restrict liberties. This approach, which sought to work collaboratively with the public in navigating far-reaching police powers which placed significant restrictions on personal liberty given the efforts to control the effects of the pandemic, was founded on the principle of using enforcement as a final option. This was encapsulated within a policing style that was promoted as a '*Four E's*' approach, namely Engage, Explain, Encourage, Enforce. This resulted in positive engagement between officers, staff and the public with a documented increase in public confidence in policing. This was not the case elsewhere in the UK where some forces faced criticism for their interpretation of lockdown restrictions and their resulting actions.

171. The policing style and tone of Operation Talla was set, as it is with all Police Scotland operations, within a Gold Strategy.[20] This clearly states to officers and staff the strategic objectives of the operation and articulates the manner in which they should conduct themselves, reminding them of the importance of the principle of '*policing by consent*' and that their focus should be on keeping people safe.

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[20] Gold Strategy is a plan of action designed to achieve a series of objectives or a particular goal. It sets out the high-level overview of the police response and, as such, does not get drawn into tactical or operational detail.

172. Similarly, the style and tone set for the COP26 event (Operation Urram) focused on the values of integrity, fairness and respect, and '*Keeping People Safe*'. All actions were to be taken with due cognisance of the principles of policing by consent and were underpinned by adherence to the requirements of the European Convention on Human Rights, being sensitive to the needs and dignity of all attending. Officers were clearly directed to adopt a friendly, fair, accessible and accommodating style of policing, and to recognise the value and importance of positive communication and engagement, at all levels.

173. We consider these police operations as good practice examples in setting a clear policing style and tone. However, when we queried the default or day-to-day style and tone of policing, we found highly inconsistent views. Many identified the service values, the CVF, Standards of Professional Behaviour and '*Keeping People Safe*' as reference points. In divisions, it was more likely that officers identified with their commander's local priorities or legacy force approaches. These views were at odds with the clarity of instructions for specific events or operations.

174. We consider that this inconsistent picture results from a lack of clear messaging about '*how we police*', which may need to include better articulation of the stated rights-based approach. Police Scotland can clearly demonstrate its ability to effectively set a style and tone in key operations, but does not apply this same rigour in a daily setting. It is considered therefore that there may be merit in identifying and promulgating a default policing style and tone such as that adopted for Operation Talla.

175. Internal culture will influence behaviours when engaging with the public and may also transfer any discriminatory norms such as class, gender, disability and race bias. Police Scotland and the SPA should therefore carefully consider how to assess these behaviours and assure themselves that monitoring systems align to clearly articulated style and tone guidelines.

Recommendation 6

Police Scotland and the Scottish Police Authority should reinforce the human rights and ethics-based approach for all policing activity.

Misconduct

176. We note that the independent inquiry into the standards of behaviour and culture in the MPS (the [Casey Review](#), March 2023) demonstrated that cultural problems exist throughout policing, and are not limited to that particular service. The Police Scotland response to that review, and our findings in this inspection, show that policing in Scotland is not immune from such behaviours. Any poor standards and behaviour can potentially result in complaints against the police and misconduct investigations.

177. Police Scotland reports regularly to the SPA Complaints and Conduct Committee on [Professional Standards Department (PSD) Quarterly Performance](#) (example from August 2022). These reports provide quarterly and annual statistical and trend information on overarching performance for complaints and conduct matters regarding Police Scotland employees. Details of numbers of complaints, allegations, [Police Investigations and Review Commissioner](#) (PIRC) referrals, investigations and complaint handling reviews are also provided. This reporting is intended to encourage a culture of learning and development for individuals and the organisation.

178. The National Gateway Assessment Unit (NGAU) within PSD receives and assesses all referrals related to potential wrongdoing, (some of which may be whistleblowing) in areas such as sexual misconduct, controlled drug use and supply, and performance. An Anti-Corruption Unit also instigates enquiries and investigates such issues, as well as areas including inappropriate association and vulnerability.[21]

179. During our inspection, we did not identify any specific aspects of culture that directly prompt misconduct. However, we do believe that the extent of the problem in Scotland, and the underlying causal factors to these behaviours, is not as yet fully understood.

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[21] Police Scotland, Notifiable Associations Divisional Guidance (Internal document), July 2021.

180. Statistical information relating to complaints and misconduct matters from the Quarter 1 report for 2023-24 provided to the SPA on 22 August 2023 is presented in Table 2 below.

Table 2 – Summary of complaints and misconduct (April - June 2023)

Police complaints
■ A total of 1,640 complaints received year to date (YTD), down 4.1% from the previous year to date (PYTD) and a -1.4% decrease from the 5-year average (1,663). Complaints YTD are at level comparable with an average year (Chart 1).
■ 33.8% were non-criminal (555), 9.1% abandoned (149), 4.5% withdrawn (74), 4.1% ongoing (67), and 6.6% criminal (108).
Conduct assessments
■ A total of 116 preliminary conduct assessments were undertaken YTD, an increase of 36.5% from the PYTD total of 85 (Chart 9).
Misconduct hearing disposals
■ In the current YTD, eight gross misconduct hearings were scheduled and had resulted in the following disposals: one verbal warning, two written warnings, four retirals/resignations, one dismissal, two final written warnings and one no action (Chart 10).
Misconduct meeting disposals
■ In the current YTD, four misconduct meetings took place with outcomes being two written warnings, one final written warning and three verbal warnings (Chart 11).
Restrictions/suspensions
■ At the conclusion of Q1 YTD (2023), 64 police officers were suspended and 102 subject to duty restrictions. A further 14 members of police staff were suspended at this time (Chart 12).

Police Scotland indicates that each meeting or hearing may involve multiple subject officers and multiple allegations, with a disposal attached to each allegation.

Source: Police Scotland

181. We acknowledge that this information is limited by the data being recorded and analysis expertise required to fully understand the issues and any potential trends in behaviour. We consider the lack of more detailed analysis is limiting Police Scotland's ability to identify issues and trends before they potentially become more widespread. This is, in part, due to limitations with the ICT system used to record police complaints (Centurion). Police Scotland has reported that work is ongoing to upgrade this ICT system. This should, in particular, improve its '*recording and analysis of diversity data, ensuring the organisation has an enhanced understanding of any emerging issues or trends affecting particular groups or communities*'.

182. We do not consider that improvements in the analysis of information should wait for ICT upgrades. Police Scotland should use its existing analytical resources to better understand trends and areas of concern relating to complaints and conduct matters.

183. We welcome the new initiatives that Police Scotland has introduced, including the publication of misconduct outcomes internally. We also welcome the introduction of the PSD quarterly newsletter '*The Standard*', which "*is intended to raise awareness of key themes and trends arising from complaints and conduct investigations to prevent reoccurrence and enhance service delivery to the public*", which was discussed at the SPA Complaints and Conduct Committee on 22 August 2023. These approaches serve an important role in showing officers and staff what types of behaviours are not acceptable and the consequences that will result from them. This should also improve the confidence of officers and staff in being able to come forward and report similar matters, if they see action being taken against those who fall below the standards set.

184. We also commend the training that PSD carries out on how to professionally deal with complaints (for probationers to operational supervisors). However, dealing with complaints is only one aspect of continued development, and we feel that identifying underlying issues, trends and causal factors more accurately would potentially lead to fewer complaints and conduct matters. We consider that effective and early analysis and an interventionist approach is key to improving public trust and confidence.

> **Area for development 14**
>
> Police Scotland should focus analysis of misconduct, grievance and associated HR processes on identifying causal factors and underlying cross-cutting themes, for wider organisational learning.

185. We also consider that there is an element of under, over and miscategorising of incidents. For example, we identified that officers fear challenging some behaviours, resulting in under-reporting of misconduct incidents. This was particularly prevalent in younger officers. As noted in the previous section on probationer experience, while officers at the Scottish Police College are encouraged to challenge inappropriate behaviours and conduct, probationers told us that challenge is less welcome at local divisions and, in some cases, even actively discouraged. We heard from some officers that there was a fear of harming their career should they speak up about potential misconduct by fellow colleagues. This reluctance is not restricted to younger officers and can apply to officers of any length of service and any rank.

186. For over-reporting, we found that there was an underlying training issue for supervisors where, because of a lack of understanding of (or confidence in) processes, and their responsibilities and role in those processes, they escalated issues to formal misconduct processes, rather than trying to resolve issues at an earlier, more appropriate stage. This can lead to more incidents being reported to the PSD than is appropriate or necessary. It correlates with the Angiolini Review finding that the internal approach to the disciplinary system kicks in early and quickly, while other processes involving HR and the grievance procedure are underused (which also suggests they are not trusted or valued).

187. This lack of confidence in dealing with matters at lower level was clear during our interviews. There was a general fear of getting it wrong and some supervisors preferred to err on the side of caution. Police Scotland has taken steps to produce guidance for supervisors, with their ten standards for professional behaviour communications work as part of the [Policing Together](#) implementation plan. This, alongside other training, should see a more accurate picture being created, but monitoring will be required to assess the impact of this work.

188. The third element of miscategorising is again due to a lack of understanding or confusion by some supervisors between behaviours being reported as a grievance, which actually amounts to misconduct, and vice versa. The training programme adopted by Police Scotland should, if sustained, remove some of that confusion.

189. In our 2020 [Training and Development (Phase 1) report](#), we noted that a lack of training had been evident regarding some performance and conduct issues, where representative associations reported a lack of reflective behaviour from managers, resulting in avoidable grievance and misconduct proceedings.

190. We also found a perception from some officers that Police Scotland will take a punitive approach when officers make a genuine mistake, rather than viewing it as an opportunity to learn from mistakes ('*a blame culture*'). We consider that adopting a genuine learning culture relies upon officers having the confidence to admit their mistakes, but such confidence can only come about when they see behaviours which support a learning culture (see section on organisational learning).

191. We also heard some evidence to suggest that officers still had negative perceptions of how investigations by the PIRC are handled. Officers feel the focus of the PIRC and PSD is all about the investigation, with little consideration given to wellbeing during such investigations. Police Scotland has introduced an Investigative Wellbeing Toolkit and Aide Memoire, which is given to individuals (including witnesses) at the initial meeting stage. It explains the key stages of the process, as well as the roles and profiles of People & Development and Legal Services functions.

192. We consider more work should be done to improve officers' experiences of these processes, while still protecting the integrity of such investigations. Similarly, we found the impact on the colleagues and teams of those involved in misconduct processes needs to be better considered.

193. We also support the introduction of body worn video (BWV) at the earliest opportunity, with very clear guidelines. It is widely accepted that BWV will reduce the number of complaints against the police and bring investigations to a swifter conclusion, for the benefit of all parties involved in investigations. We are clear that the use of BWV is both for the benefit of the public and officer safety. We are aware that the BWV programme is progressing and that the First Minister has recently made a commitment to support its rollout over the next two years, in the [Programme for Government 2023-24](#).

194. During our inspection, we found a general perception of a lack of openness, transparency and fairness, and lack of trust, in how complaints and misconduct processes are dealt with. We also found that officers and staff found the process took too long and that there was minimal support available to them, either during the investigation or even after the process had concluded. We were told that these processes are having a direct and often damaging short and longer term impact on individuals and teams, which the service often fails to recognise.

195. We consider that investigations should have improved investigative timescales and – where vulnerability is identified in any party involved in the process – regular scrutiny and priority should be applied. Lengthy and protracted investigations have a harmful impact on both officers' welfare and policing effectiveness, as officers may be on restricted duties as a result of the investigation for a significant period of time.

196. There should be support available to all parties involved (directly and indirectly) in the investigation to ensure that their wellbeing is considered throughout the process (and beyond if necessary). We would always advocate adopting a trauma-informed approach when dealing with individuals involved in such cases. We consider that an open and transparent approach should be adopted wherever possible. This should include regular communication with officers subject to investigations, or their representatives, on the progress of such investigations.

> **Area for development 15**
>
> Police Scotland should improve throughcare and aftercare for misconduct and grievances cases, taking into account both the individuals and the teams involved.

197. Police Scotland has also carried out review work on a Professional Boundaries review. It has examined all complaints and conduct matters involving sexual circumstances between 1 January 2017 and 21 October 2021. This involved external reports to Police Scotland and internal reports assessing whether it had discharged its responsibilities relating to the management of risk, and had thoroughly investigated all matters in line with relevant legislation, powers and regulations.

198. The review focused on complaints and conduct allegations reported across the following business areas:

   ■ complaints about the police

   ■ referrals through PSD Gateway Assessment Unit

   ■ Anti-Corruption Unit-related referrals, intelligence

   ■ reports and investigations

   ■ PSD misconduct

   ■ vetting.

199. In May 2022, Police Scotland reported that, between 1 January 2017 and 21 October 2021, there were 410 reports of complaints and conduct matters with sexual circumstances involving officers and staff which were reviewed. The most prevalent of these included sexual assault, inappropriate comments and inappropriate messaging. Of these, 118 were assessed as criminal, with the remaining 292 assessed as non-criminal. The reports related to 360 named individuals and 28 unknown persons; 150 related to off-duty matters and 260 to on-duty matters. During proceedings, 44 officers retired or resigned and 16 reports were subsequently withdrawn. Police Scotland also stated that reports of this nature have increased year on year since 2018. A number of recommendations were made internally, including enhancing vetting arrangements.

200. In November 2022, an update on the review and its recommendations was reported. It was noted that a further 49 reports had been recorded between October 2021 and December 2021. At the time of the report, findings for the six months between 1 January 2022 to 30 June 2022 were that:

- 84 reports were received between 1 January 2022 and 31 July 2022

- reports related to 72 named individuals and 12 unknown persons

- most reports related to sexual assault, followed by inappropriate messaging

- 26 reports related to off-duty matters and 53 to on-duty matters

- to date, 20 matters had been reported to the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service.

201. At the SPA Complaints and Conduct Committee on 1 June 2023, Police Scotland indicated that there would be a further PSD Case Review on Professional Boundaries covering instances between 22 October 2021 and 31 January 2023. To date, research of relevant cases has been conducted to identify those requiring analysis. The update provided detail of the 19 internal recommendations made: 15 of these were complete; three were in progress; and one was being considered under another PSD workstream. Activity including engagement meetings, the work of the Preventions and Professionalism Board and its delivery programme was also reported.

202. Police Scotland also intimated that the PSD had started a Domestic Abuse Case Review. This covers instances between 1 January 2020 and 31 January 2023, with 206 cases under review. Of these, five cases have been reviewed by the Domestic Abuse Task Force, with additional lines of enquiry identified.

203. It should be noted that the Casey Review also identified that MPS internal misconduct processes took too long and did not identify patterns of poor behaviour. The review identified similar problems in the MPS system for handling grievances. HMICS will not make recommendations on misconduct in this inspection, but we will look at processes in more detail during our forthcoming inspection on conduct.

Grievance

204. As a national organisation, Police Scotland has a large, diverse workforce operating from multiple sites across the country. Policing generates a constant churn of personnel, where officers and staff are continually deployed into new and complex hierarchical relationships, often in pressured situations. Within any organisation, a credible, well understood and effective grievance process is important to allow employees to confidently raise concerns, problems or complaints with their employer.

205. During our fieldwork, we learned from officers and staff across Police Scotland that, as with misconduct processes, grievance processes are generally considered to lack transparency, effectiveness, and support.

206. Police Scotland introduced its first grievance policy in 2013. The current standard operating procedure (SOP), [Police Scotland – Grievance V4.00](#), was published in April 2019 as a policy simplification. We consider this document to be fit for purpose and the detail and guidance within to be entirely relevant. However, we found evidence that the procedures referenced in the SOP were not consistently applied and also heard that there was limited awareness of the SOP.

207. Between January 2017 and May 2022, 344 grievances were formally recorded and progressed by Police Scotland. In an internal working group report provided to us by Police Scotland (dated May 2022), 60 cases remained open. Of these, 43 were initiated by police officers and 17 by police staff. Bullying and harassment was the most common year-on-year source of concern, but equality and diversity-related matters were also prominent.

208. Data received from Police Scotland indicates that there were 73 grievance cases (plus one anonymous) recorded during the period April 2022 to end March 2023. Table 3 below highlights the key grievance case statistics for this period.

Table 3 – Police Scotland Grievance Analysis 2022-23

Total Number of Grievance Cases Recorded	73 (+1)

Breakdown	Officers	Staff	Male	Female	Anonymous
	56	17	43	30	1

Number of live cases in Employment Tribunal process	Number of closed cases in Employment Tribunal process
12	5

Number of individuals with mental health absence before, during or immediately after process	Percentage of individuals with mental health absence before, during or immediately after process
39	53%

Source: Police Scotland (internal report)

209. Analysis of the data presented indicated that the majority of the 73 grievance cases were in relation to inappropriate/unacceptable behaviours within the workplace with 41% of the cases being bullying and harassment related and 30% being related to perceived discrimination. The data also highlighted that the majority of the bullying and harassment cases were in relation to individuals reporting unreasonable treatment from line managers and the discrimination claims were relating to discrimination on the grounds of; age, disability and sex. A number of the grievances recorded later in the year related to the clean shaven policy (for FFP3 face masks) and a small number were connected to recruitment and promotion practices. The data also highlights that the average length of time to conclude a grievance from date of submission to delivery of outcome, was six months. The longest case being concluded in 10 months.

210. We found evidence that initial reporting often moved directly to formal grievance without managers exploring the source of the workplace issue, or considering appropriate alternative support interventions. Concerns raised with us were often about personal feelings and the impact of behaviours, and less about establishing facts or apportioning blame.

211. The [SPA People Committee: August 2023 Q1 Workforce Management Information Report 2023-24](#) provides helpful metrics on people and development (including absence). Psychological disorder remains the highest cause of sickness, at 2.1% for staff, and 1.7% for officers (as a proportion of all working days lost). Our fieldwork reaffirmed the link between grievance and sickness, with many of those we spoke to telling us of the stigma associated with the process, and resultant impact on their wellbeing. Current workforce reporting does not offer a commentary on this causal link.

212. We found that officers and staff were reluctant to initiate grievance, with little confidence in the process or those managing its delivery. The benefits from resolution were perceived to be outweighed by the risks involved, with outcomes seen as punitive and often detrimental, rather than promoting learning and mending relationships. It is therefore likely, as with misconduct, that there is significant under-reporting of grievance issues. We were also told that support is provided by the Scottish Police Federation (SPF) to its members during grievance processes. However officers we spoke to perceived that the SPF cannot impartially support both sides of a grievance (where one officer has raised a grievance against another). Many felt they would be happy to talk to an external impartial organisation for support.

213. We consider that when a grievance is raised, the journey to reach an appropriate outcome should be transparent and aligned to established SOPs. Those involved in facilitating informal discussions and the formal grievance process should be appropriately trained, understand their role, and have access to, and knowledge of, available support such as HR advisers and mediation services.

214. Police Scotland's grievance procedures have been subject of much recent scrutiny, referenced in several prominent organisational reviews and considered as part of at least one high-profile employment tribunal (involving a former police officer). The Angiolini Review reported that:

"to encourage appropriate use of mediation and grievance procedures Police Scotland should raise awareness and understanding amongst all members of the service of their own internal systems and which matters belong where in order to ensure a proportionate response."

215. In October 2021, the Judgment of the Employment Tribunal Mrs R Malone v Chief Constable of the Police Service Of Scotland found for the claimant, a former Police Scotland police officer, in proceedings relating to victimisation. Among the determinations, the tribunal found that named Police Scotland personnel dealing with two separate and significant grievances failed to adhere to the service SOP, to the detriment of the claimant.

216. Operation FUSTIC was the subsequent review of the findings of this tribunal, commissioned by Police Scotland and undertaken by the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI). The report, published in 2022, provided recommendations relating specifically to the grievance process, its delivery, monitoring and facilitation.

217. An associated internal review of employment tribunals, non-criminal complaints and grievances was undertaken to develop effective, consistent management of all such complaints, and to ensure wellbeing and employee relations issues are assessed and acted upon from the outset. This work resulted in a pilot of a Complaints Allocation Review Panel (CARP), a tripartite forum that aims to consistently gather, summarise and assess complaint submissions to determine the competence of the complaint and applicable procedure (and ownership), identify relevant stakeholders, and consider appropriate action for wellbeing support and any other issues identified. A paper detailing the work of the CARP was provided to SPA Legal Committee members on 13 December 2022.[22]

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[22] SPA Legal Committee, Item 6 - Case Assessment and Review Panel (CARP) Pilot (private meeting), 13 December 2022.

218. Police Scotland's update on the response to Operation Fustic (and the findings of the [External review: employment tribunal judgement](#)), was presented to the SPA People Committee on 28 February 2023. The paper reports on progress made against a 17-point action plan. Recommendation 3 – that Police Scotland should review and update its grievance procedures – was recorded as discharged, with work on all other grievance-related recommendations ongoing. HMICS considers this may have been premature.

219. In May 2023, the Police Scotland IRG presented its [first interim report](#) on the service's progress on EDIHR. While recognising a number of positives, the group reported that the move to formal grievance process without mediation persisted, despite the findings presented in the Angiolini Review. It had also encountered scepticism from people about raising concerns, either informally or formally, fearful that it would lead to detrimental outcomes for them (such as being sidelined in their teams or moved to a less convenient location).

220. The IRG made a telling observation about poor behaviour being known and seen in plain sight, with no action taken:

   "*a vicious circle of the personnel affected not having the confidence to report concerns, peers not speaking up, and managers not taking action, exacerbated where the concern relates to a manager.*"

   It is significant that we found similar themes during our inspection, with instances of people being exposed to overt and repeated inappropriate behaviour, but lacking confidence in available systems to progress matters to grievance. Where a grievance was initiated, the process was perceived to be adversarial. Their perception was that they were stigmatised, viewed as being '*difficult*' by managers and colleagues, and, on occasions, ostracised, with teams divided and others driven to take sides. We learned that, as a consequence, police officers and staff often experienced poor mental health, with minimal post-event support. This impact was not limited to work, but also carried over into home life.

221. Much of the work on grievance has been driven by the Creating a Positive Workplace SLWG, and its associated subgroups. This includes a subgroup with specific terms of reference to consider the grievance process. The stated purpose of the group was to develop and implement a fit for purpose grievance approach and related processes. This also involved exploring early intervention solutions and understanding organisational and individual behaviours that negatively impact on grievance experiences. The work was initially supported by unions and representative associations. We were told that the group members are now engaged through email correspondence and individual meetings are arranged as and when required to discuss progress.

222. An internal report presented to the Policing Together Strategic Oversight Board in May 2023 ('*Creating a Positive Workplace*') provided an overview of the service's position to that date. Six internal recommendations were identified as a focus for change:

   - A fundamental leadership and culture change regarding how grievances are viewed, both by the organisation and its people

   - Increased awareness of support available

   - Implementation of more training for managers and supervisors

   - Triage or filtering at the initial grievance stage

   - Greater availability of investigating officers, who are afforded time and space to investigate the grievance

   - External service available for reporting and support.

223. An employee survey was conducted by the group and provided an important insight into staff and officer views and experiences. The group has also developed intranet content and manager briefings to advise on managing and resolving workplace issues. A line manager's toolkit was also developed, and a further range of support and learning tools signposted online. A mediator refresher course was delivered to eight individuals with existing skills, and a further eight were trained in conflict management. Police Scotland has also looked across the UK to better understand relevant service provision in public and private sector organisations.

224. We have found that the work to further develop and improve the approach to grievance has been relatively slow. Some work has been completed, other work is under development, and some elements have been considered but are subject to ongoing budgetary considerations. Work under development includes a revised version of the Workplace Issues and Grievance Procedure. A training product has also been designed for managers and supervisors and absorbed into a module in the PMDP.

225. We acknowledge Police Scotland's focus on further incorporating welfare into the revised guidance and procedures, moving away from grievance and instead signposting early intervention, mediation and additional support/guidance. We will be interested to note progress made on these significant pieces of work.

226. The Creating a Positive Workplace SLWG has also been tasked to explore supporting tools that could help promote positive and more inclusive internal cultures. Early scoping has taken place on options to introduce a reporting and support tool, which would complement the Integrity Matters approach.[23] Police Scotland believes that the ability for the workforce to communicate and report matters confidentially and securely would help drive cultural change. This project presently remains under consideration until the organisation is able to commit further time and resource.

227. Recommendation 4 of Operation Fustic was that robust monitoring procedures be introduced to ensure compliance with grievance processes and timescales. In response, Police Scotland reported that it has redesigned the way it reports and tracks live grievances, to support a case compliance review process. The tracker will cover the end-to-end process (including appeals and cases that move to an employment tribunal) and identify steps in the process that have exceeded a reasonable timeline. A Case Compliance Review Panel (CCRP) had been set up to routinely monitor the tracker and focus on monitoring casework to ensure adherence with processes.

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[23] Any reports received through Integrity Matters that are related to workplace issues or grievances are typically returned to the relevant business area for progression.

228. Following analysis of the cases presented to the CCRP and assessment of overall compliance, the panel has identified a pattern of broadly similar themes which demonstrate that the timescales of the grievance procedure are not currently being achieved and a best practice approach is not always being applied when conducting the grievance process. In particular, mediation and informal processes are not being considered or used, many of the cases relate to line managers and inappropriate style and tone being adopted or inappropriate language being used. Over the year, 53% of individuals who submitted a grievance had experienced or were experiencing mental health absence with evidence that is linked to the grievance (see Table 3). This is slightly higher than the previous year.

229. During our fieldwork, we heard that some believed their managers were wedded to legacy approaches and outdated views, and that Police Scotland was too big to allow for a common and consistent approach. Those we spoke to were clear that the issue is not actually the grievance SOP itself, but how it is interpreted and applied. This included managers associating grievance with blame and acting to protect their own domain and the reputation of the organisation.

230. Based on our own findings, and those of the other significant pieces of review work, we remain to be convinced that the organisation's end-to-end approach to grievance is sufficiently developed to properly meet the needs of the service and its people. In acknowledging the ongoing efforts of Police Scotland to address identified deficits, it is clear that officers and staff remain to be convinced that the grievance process is fit for purpose. We consider it essential that momentum is maintained, and the current work translated to tangible and measurable impact within the organisation.

Recommendation 7

Police Scotland should rename and refocus its grievance process to resolution/mediation, providing mandatory initial steps (in line with contractual and regulatory entitlement) and clear training on the management of the process.

Challenging behaviours and performance

231. We heard from Police Scotland that it acknowledges there remain cultural and behavioural issues that can result in unfair or inequitable treatment in the service. This was supported by a number of individual cases we were alerted to during our fieldwork, where concerns were raised, not only about behaviours of individuals, but also a reported lack of addressing these behaviours (see paragraph 24).

232. As we have set out above in the sections on promotion, probationers, misconduct and grievance, we found clear evidence that individuals are reluctant to challenge processes and the behaviours of others, due to a perception that they will not be taken seriously or supported, or that issues will not be dealt with. We also heard from managers who were reluctant to challenge those under their supervision, due to a perceived risk of counter-grievance. This was found to be affecting the wellbeing of all those concerned.

233. The NGAU (see paragraph 178) provides a formal mechanism to report concerns regarding behaviours. However, we found that there was little opportunity to assess and understand trends in behaviours, or effectiveness of interventions, whether through the NGAU or through other processes. It was reported that the NGAU often had an upsurge of reports relating to those applying for promotion – the inference being that these were dubious or malicious reports – however we could not find data to support or refute this assertion.

234. We found that resourcing constraints were a significant factor in driving behaviours and the capacity to challenge. Many of those we spoke to felt undervalued, which was diminishing motivation and adversely affecting wellbeing, leaving little desire to enter into difficult conversations or conflict.

235. We were also told that individual performance issues were unlikely to be challenged, due to the likelihood of counter-grievances and the amount of work required to support improvement plans. At the time of our inspection, only 18 cases of performance/capability were ongoing, across the whole of Police Scotland. Data on the total number of cases from 2015 to 2023 is included at Table 4 below. The majority of cases over this period related to police staff (88%). Overall female staff and officers accounted for 63% of all cases. These numbers remain relatively low for a service the size of Police Scotland, which we consider reflects an unwillingness to engage in the process.

Table 4 – Capability Data (2015-23)

Year	Instances
2015	1
2016	3
2017	20
2018	41
2019	58
2020	37
2021	29
2022	52
2023	26

Source: Police Scotland

236. In a report to the People Committee on 28 February 2023 , Police Scotland noted that an action to review how capability is managed had been reprioritised:

"*over the intervening period the organisational operating context and priorities have moved on and this activity will be reconsidered balanced against current challenges and competing needs.*"

No further update has been reported.

237. The IRG found an absence of effective performance management systems during the first decade of Police Scotland's existence. Middle managers (sergeants, inspectors, chief inspectors) were considered to be the most neglected in this regard – but also the most important in helping to understand and shape culture on the frontline. The IRG found that a degree of scepticism (and even outright fear) existed about raising concerns at all, either informally or formally, as well as poor behaviour being known and seen '*in plain sight*' with no action being taken.

238. The Casey Review noted that the prevailing culture in the MPS did not encourage reporting of wrong-doing, rather that those who experienced it feared the consequences of being ostracised, bullied or moved for speaking out. The failings apparent in the Wayne Couzens case, and many others, were compounded by a culture that discouraged speaking out. We believe that Police Scotland must consider how to fundamentally change similar behaviours, otherwise credibility and trust will be further diminished.

Understanding culture

239. Police Scotland uses a number of mechanisms to understand its culture, including public confidence surveys and other insight and engagement work. Other key measures of culture-related issues include trend analysis of: exit interview feedback and turnover; absence (all categories); and health, safety and wellbeing. Police Scotland also reports regular management information to the SPA People Committee, although we do not consider that these constitute an effective presentation of organisational culture. A number of representative associations also conduct their own independent research and survey work with their members, although these are not all peer reviewed.

240. Police Scotland therefore places significant reliance on its YVM survey and other employee insight work to assess and understand its culture.

241. The first whole-organisation employee survey in Police Scotland was carried out in June 2015, with just over half of the workforce taking part. Findings at that stage, which reflected the post-reform environment, included:

- One in three saying they were considering leaving the organisation over the next three years (mainly due to pension changes)
- Just 8% of respondents who thought the service was genuinely interested in employee wellbeing
- Less than a quarter of police officers saying they had sufficient resources to do their job properly
- Over three-quarters saying they trusted their colleagues and line managers
- Just under three-quarters who thought their team worked well to improve services.

242. A follow-up to the 2015 survey was originally scheduled for 2017, but this was subsequently delayed on a number of occasions. The YVM survey was finally conducted in March 2021. The main part of the survey took place over four weeks and was followed by a shorter, follow-up survey over three weeks in April 2021. The survey took place during the COVID-19 pandemic and was led by independent researchers from Durham University Business School.

243. The results were published in October 2021, with over 7,000 responses (31% of the workforce) to the main survey and over 5,000 responses to the follow up (23% of the workforce). The final sample consisted of 5,313 police officers, 2,029 police staff, and 17 special constables. The main findings reported were:

- Public service motivation reported at very high average levels
- Very high scores for job and life satisfaction, work engagement, proactivity, and work being personally meaningful and important
- Average scores for fear of making mistakes
- Almost half of officers and staff reporting high levels of fatigue
- Understanding of the organisation's vision and objectives reported as moderately average
- (In terms of leadership), officers and staff experiencing supportive leadership from their immediate manager at a moderately high average level
- Concern over workplace incivility – generalised as low-intensity, subtle, harmful behaviour directed towards another, the consequences of which were not immediately obvious.

244. The organisational response was defined through an implementation plan with divisional implementation plans feeding into this. The plan comprises 18 ambitions (each with an Executive sponsor) within 5 key themes:

- leadership

- wellbeing

- hindrance stressors

- behaviours

- enablers.

245. Progress against each of the ambitions is reported to the SPA People Committee bi-annually. In the [update](#) on 31 May 2023, Police Scotland confirmed that six of the ambitions had been completed, with the remaining 12 on track. A YVM Steering Group hears directly from Executive ambition owners on progress.

246. Responding to the survey was one of the Chief Constable's commitments for 2022-23, and although some good work has been carried out in response to the survey, we consider that overall progress has been slow, with less progress against some of the ambitions than might have been expected. We believe there should be greater organisational focus on responding to such surveys, to ensure momentum is not lost and benefits are felt. The service also needs to consider how it will more effectively measure the impact of this work in the future.

247. We consider that a more focused approach is needed in future. YVM is seen as a key indicator of culture in the organisation, but we also heard concerns that it was too academic in its focus, unwieldy to complete and understand, and that, although it provided a good baseline of comparative data and analysis, results were often looked at in isolation.

248. We consider other assessment forms could complement the survey. Pulse checks, for example, solicit the employee voice and, more importantly, take swifter action on the issues raised (see paragraph 265). The Angiolini Review also recommended[24] that increased use of face-to-face and focus groups would be beneficial. If the Durham University approach (or equivalent) is to be continued (which we consider beneficial, providing a baseline and comparative data), then this should be carried out at more regular intervals, rather than waiting for sufficient progress on outstanding ambitions.

> **Area for development 16**
>
> Police Scotland and the Scottish Police Authority should develop a clear approach to regularly gathering workforce views on key cultural measures, as part of a wider framework for engagement.

249. We also identified other pockets of good practice in terms of engagement which support a deeper understanding of cultural issues, such as insights drawn from the Sex Equality and Tackling Misogyny Working Group. The group was set up to focus on Police Scotland's commitment to provide a workplace that supports women, enhancing their lived experience of working within the organisation, to be achieved through creating an environment free of sexism and misogyny that stretches beyond inclusion to equity and ensuring that the workforce feel they belong in all areas of policing. A priority area of early focus for the group has been leading engagement and communications with colleagues throughout the service to acknowledge existing concerns and seek to understand lived experience to inform a range of actions to enable and support change where appropriate.

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[24] Scottish Government, Independent Review of Complaints Handling, Investigations and Misconduct Issues in Relation to Policing - Recommendation 15, 11 November 2020.

250. An anonymous online survey (which ran from August to October 2022) invited all officers and staff to share their experience of sexism and misogyny at work and submit suggestions on how to create a more welcoming and inclusive working environment. In addition, an online ideas platform enabled colleagues to share reflections and suggestions for what could be done to tackle sexism and misogyny. Interviews and engagement sessions with colleagues also helped to build a better picture of the nature of challenging experiences and how those in a position to make a difference responded. The engagement was undertaken with a commitment to confidentiality and discretion. The insights were shared with all colleagues via a message to all staff, short film and update on the Policing Together intranet site.

251. Some of the insights which were highlighted include:

- Sexism and misogyny has generally improved over the years – there have been particular improvements since the early 2000s but there are still areas that need improvement

- The organisation is learning from past mistakes and putting effort into change. It is clear that the organisation and its leaders are taking '*proactive steps*' to address issues and make change. This improves colleague confidence in the organisation

- Female leadership is viewed positively. This is seen as a positive step, showing the organisation is willing to listen, accept and modernise – colleagues no longer see it as '*token gestures to have females on shift*'

- The visible work (for example, the working group, engagement activities, actions and information on the intranet) shows these behaviours will not be tolerated

- Improved arrangements to support flexible working plans is a positive step forward

- There continue to be common inappropriate comments and behaviours, both in and outside of the workplace, including while off duty

- There remains unfair treatment in the workplace and direct discrimination.

252. Police Scotland states that these insights align well with its identified areas of focus as well as with work that is underway in Policing Together. This particularly applies to findings relating to training, mechanisms for reporting and policy and procedures. It also notes that where it is possible to provide early resolution to concerns raised this will be progressed at pace.

Engagement

253. In exploring how well staff and officers within Police Scotland feel they are listened to, our inspection revealed various main routes to engagement: the involvement and consultation of representative associations and unions; ad-hoc surveys and insight work; the internal engagement programme, and the MyCareer appraisal tool.

254. While Police Scotland understands the difference between formal consultation and regular engagement, we found this understanding does not translate fully into action. We were told that consultation sometimes happened after decisions had been made, and most of those we spoke to felt there was significant opportunity and need to improve the voice of the workforce in culture-setting, decision-making and challenge.

255. We were told that engagement with representative associations and unions takes place in various ways, including formal mechanisms such as the Joint Negotiating and Consultative Committees (JNCCs) for officers and staff, involvement in internal governance forums and steering groups, and strategies that relate to operational/people matters, and/or change (e.g. the YVM and Creating a Positive Workplace steering groups). This involvement is for the most part positive and we identified pockets of good practice in terms of engagement, such as insights drawn from the Sex Equality and Tackling Misogyny Working Group (see paragraph 249). While we did not consider the effectiveness of the JNCCs in this inspection, we have noted that both the People Strategy Evaluation and the Fair Work Assessment have identified that further improvements in terms of clarity of purpose, scope and escalation have been identified for progression.

256. Other examples of representative associations and union involvement include provision of feedback on the Engagement Essentials toolkit content, and the development of the next iteration of the People Strategy. However, participation in such governance forums and steering groups does not always guarantee accessibility or inclusion of wide or fully representative audiences or voices (e.g. the Truth to Power initiative is an invitation-only group). We were also advised that representative associations and unions do not feel that they have sufficient capacity to support all of the meetings/groups to which they are invited, and that there is an opportunity to review where they could add most benefit.

> **Area for development 17**
>
> Police Scotland should, as part of a wider review of governance (see Recommendation 5), consider jointly with representative associations and unions where they could add most benefit.

257. In our inspection, we were told about the internal engagement programme led by Corporate Communications, which is welcomed, as is the Engagement High Level Plan for 2023. These include Senior Leaders Forums (SLF) and Extended Leaders Forums, as well as other targeted activities such as engagement roadshows, and digital, change and transformation events. Police Scotland reported that, since 2018, it has held over 650 engagement events/briefings; engaged with over 8,000 people; and had over 230 Change Network volunteers. Such events enabled positive engagement with the frontline, as well as presenting challenges, such as the capacity of the workforce to attend and the capability to effectively deliver key messages at these events. We also heard about the valued (though limited) role that the Corporate Communications team plays in directly meeting with frontline teams and individuals to listen, talk and discuss change (and the importance of honesty in such discussions).

258. The engagement programme is relatively new and its impact not yet fully assessed, but we found that, overall, it is lacking clear outcomes and measurement to demonstrate its effectiveness. For example, the report for the Extended Leaders Forum contained '*before*' and '*after*' measures and feedback, but these were not sufficiently detailed to gain a good understanding of the impact of the event.

259. We consider that the impact and outcomes of these engagement activities should be measured and recorded, to establish whether engagement is successful and learning embedded. Police Scotland has told us it recognises that improved quality data and insights across EDI and workforce data will enable a better understanding of the impact of culture on service delivery performance, which includes improved insight into its engagement with the workforce.

260. As described above, mechanisms are in place to engage with representative associations and unions, and there is an engagement programme and plan. We also found strong examples of innovation, insight and engagement in Police Scotland. However, other than the YVM survey, we did not find evidence of a comprehensive engagement programme for colleague participation/engagement, to provide ongoing measures of cultural evolution. We consider that the service still lacks a systematic, structured and consistent approach to internal engagement and feedback. This finding was evident in the focus groups we conducted during the inspection; some people did not feel listened to at all by the organisation, and those who did named differing ways in which engagement took place – an approach that lacked consistency.

261. At a local divisional level, we found strong alignment to overarching strategy and plans. Regional and Divisional People Boards were meeting regularly and focusing on both national and local workforce issues. We also found good examples in local and national policing divisions of work to improve engagement and address key workforce issues, such as the introduction of Citizen Space for engagement. However, this was often in reaction to a lack of corporate progress in these areas.

262. In terms of awareness of organisational purpose and strategy, we were told that it was perhaps to be expected that those at the frontline had a less complete understanding of strategy than more senior ranks. This was viewed as acceptable, as long as key points and day-to-day requirements of strategies were clearly communicated, and ethos remained undiluted. However, we believe that all employees should be able to understand and articulate what the organisation is trying to achieve.

263. We found limited strategies for engagement with and feedback from employees at an individual level, with ad hoc research and surveys used as the primary tools. Opinions about YVM and similar surveys were mixed, with some feeling that they were a good way to listen to the workforce (with anonymity being a positive) and others expressing doubts about the extent to which such surveys were listened to or acted upon.

264. We were told that efforts had been made to make YVM accessible through various means, including mobile devices, paper copies on request, and line manager requests for completion by those not in work. However, some felt that operational officers and police staff may simply lack the time to participate meaningfully in such survey or insight work.

265. As described in the previous section, it was felt that organisation-wide surveys should be delivered alongside '*pulse*' or short, sharp checks, to build up a regular picture and enable timely responses to emerging issues. We were informed that, without adequate follow-up or acknowledgment of findings, surveys could lose value and lead to survey fatigue. Many of those we spoke to suggested that YVM needed to be repeated more regularly to be of true value, and that its findings should be addressed more promptly.

266. It was acknowledged that while surveys can help an organisation understand its culture and people, they cannot give the full picture. Rather, we were told that the insights drawn from surveys could be strengthened by a continuous whole-service approach to engagement and feedback. Some also felt that results should always be broken down into divisions when presented, as there can be much regional/divisional variation, and this would make them more useful.

267. Many we spoke to in the course of the inspection felt that access to line managers was key to engagement, and to feeling listened to, but we found that one-to-ones with managers were limited, often non-existent. This absence can result in a '*don't ask, don't tell*' approach, with critical opportunities for meaningful engagement with staff missed. As discussed earlier, although MyCareer (designed to facilitate effective communication) has the potential for engagement between managers and their people, interviewees told us there is often a perceived lack of time to do this effectively. Austerity, workload and resourcing were given as reasons for this, and we found that a culture of regular '*checking in*' does not exist widely across the organisation.

268. The development of Engagement Essentials, an employee engagement toolkit, developed as an action from the Organisational YVM Implementation Plan, is therefore welcome. This has guidance on day-to-day engagement, with specific reference to inclusivity, and may go some way towards addressing current limitations on regular line management and one-to-ones. It addresses skills for line managers, with definitions, areas for engagement and suggested actions to strengthen engagement. It also outlines best practice on championing and embracing uniqueness; ensuring team activities and meetings are inclusive of all work patterns; and the importance of engagement with team members not in work. Topics covered include:

- engaging one to ones

- engaging team meetings

- mainstreaming engagement

- sleep and recovery

- support services

- supportive conversations

- supportive leadership

- reducing incivility

- hindrance stressors.

269. The toolkit is hosted on the Police Scotland intranet with a feedback mechanism. As we note at paragraph 65, feedback from our fieldwork suggests that awareness of its existence was low. So continuing to promote its use and measuring its outcomes and impact will be important. We were also told that the current version does not fully cover EDI, which is planned for inclusion in future.

> **Recommendation 8**
>
> Police Scotland should develop and implement a cohesive engagement and feedback framework (which should include a regular whole-service people survey).

270. Such communication and engagement issues have been a consistent theme of our inspection findings, with both good and poor practice uncovered. We are consistently told of '*information overload*' and difficulty in locating or being aware of key information. While we accept that this is likely to be found in any large, complex organisation, effective communication and engagement is a key aspect in influencing culture: we were told that communication and engagement over particular issues, such as deaths in service, was viewed as exceptionally important.

271. Our focus groups showed that, while there were mixed views regarding to what degree they felt listened to, what was common was feeling overwhelmed with internal messages and communications. It was suggested that there should be improved prioritisation of communications to ensure receipt and absorption of the most critical messages, with greater consideration given to audience, purpose and timeliness of messaging.

272. As we have found in previous inspections, there is an over-reliance on emails and the intranet to communicate key messages, with content and style not always the most appropriate for the audience. Some felt that the intranet was overly complicated, and that content could be difficult to find or read. Although communications or publications on the intranet were sometimes accessed very quickly and successfully by many across the service, we were told that items on the intranet were not always followed through locally.

273. It was suggested that other social media channels and better use of technology could support frontline communications more effectively, alongside face-to-face or other communication, to reinforce or alert people to intranet content. We were told that officers complain of being overwhelmed by information and briefing notes, when other means (such as recorded video briefings) were sometimes seen as preferable. Interestingly, we were also told about the high degree of interest in the publication of anonymised misconduct hearings on the intranet, demonstrating that some topics can gain widespread coverage where word-of-mouth is also involved.

274. Police Scotland provided positive examples of communication strategies, such as '*You Said We Did*', '*That Guy*' and YLM. The new quarterly newsletter, The Standard, with its inclusion of lived experience, was welcomed as a way of communicating preventions messaging across the service. However, we found that other communication strategies were not always as well received (e.g. some campaign posters were felt to convey negative messaging critical of officers and staff (see paragraph 160)). We consider that wider testing of such materials, to seek feedback, would be of benefit in the future.

275. The recognition from some of those we spoke to that communications alone cannot drive or change behaviour, was positive. However, we were also told that one-way communication was sometimes confused with engagement, with a lack of insight about how messages are used, understood and interpreted.[25] We identified that the Research and Insight function was not always involved, nor their professional advice sought in engagement activity. We were told that there is work to be done in joining together internal communications and engagement work, to develop a more cohesive and consistent approach.

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[25] See Hartley and Khalil (2018), in their survey results from 32 forces across England and Wales, described how more attention needs to be paid to how messages are 'received and heard' within organisations, not just the means of dissemination. Implementing the Transformation of Police Training Learning and Development: Baseline Survey Report.

276. Some of those we spoke to described how Police Scotland has shown an increasing understanding of the importance of involving Corporate Communications at an early stage in the development of strategy/change/operational guidance, and how this ensures consistency of internal communications in style, tone and delivery. Operation Talla is a good practice example, where Corporate Communications played a significant role in ensuring that the Chief Constable-led style and tone was communicated and reflected in everything (e.g. changes to regulation, guidance and policing style). Having a common corporate brand header for campaigns or strategies was also suggested.

277. In many of our discussions, the concept of a briefing style culture was brought up, where communication was one-way only, with a lack of opportunity to feed into discussion and decision-making. We heard about the lack of value placed on feedback, and that it was not always sought, nor acted upon. We were told that many officers do not feel that there is a suitable mechanism to provide feedback, or to access senior management, and that communication about decisions does not always filter down, leading to confusion and questioning of new initiatives/directives/actions.

278. As previously noted, the Policing Together approach places great importance on listening to officers and staff and acting on their suggestions and views, but, at the time of our inspection, there were no feedback mechanisms in place. However, we were told that Police Scotland have now been using a dialogue tool to involve colleagues in shaping their approach to sex equality and tackling misogyny (see paragraph 250). It is planned that this will be live for the next few months to support the delivery workstreams. The service have also created a section on the platform for engaging colleagues on their ideas for change to support Policing our Communities and making financial savings. This platform is an open space for anyone to share their ideas or rate and comment on existing ones, and is moderated in order to keep feedback constructive and anonymous.

279. The Angiolini Review noted issues with two-way communication, describing it in relation to the Police Scotland employee survey, whereby it was viewed that open conversation was avoided due to fear of criticism. The review stated that better use should be made of the survey to elicit understanding (particularly of the experiences of minority groups) and that it should be followed up with focus groups.

280. Key forums such as SLF were felt to be more focused on information dissemination rather than effective two-way engagement, development and effective change. A number of those we spoke to during the inspection felt that SLF was not meeting its potential in terms of development and engagement. Although there is a real opportunity to improve inclusion of the employee voice, the SLF was not seen as collaborative enough, nor engaging sufficiently with those attending to determine their needs and opinions. We were told that people were not always confident to give their opinions at the SLF, due to perceived lack of importance or lack of anonymity, and others spoke of a lack of consultation or discussion over SLF meeting agendas. The cascade of information from SLF to the frontline was felt to be limited, either stopping higher up, or being modified at middle management.

281. These findings point to issues of dilution of message interpretation and perception at various levels in the organisation (see also paragraph 42). In particular, Executive-level officers, divisional commanders and middle/frontline managers/supervisors often appear to have varying understanding of and appetite for corporate messages and expected cultural behaviours. We were told that middle managers' level of engagement was particularly inconsistent. We are aware of efforts to redress this; for example, a change engagement event specifically for inspectors, which was well attended and received positive feedback, which we were told will be repeated annually.

282. We were told that, although materials are available via intranet and email, and from posters and across teams, it still falls to line managers to cascade information and undertake engagement, with that responsibility placed upon too few people. Many felt that that messages and communications did not always filter down from the '*top*', or could be reinterpreted along the way.

283. As noted in the section on leadership behaviours, it was suggested to us that there is a disconnect between the Executive level and those in lower ranks, exacerbated by their limited exposure to the realities of the frontline (see paragraph 39). Increasing visibility of senior ranks to those on the frontline was seen as important, both in terms of their understanding of frontline challenges, and in terms of communication of key messages. We were told that honesty in such interactions was valued, even where this required a caveat of potential later change. Suggestions included senior officers being area-based where possible, and visiting those at the frontline carrying out their daily work in situ. Another suggestion was to hold meetings such as the Strategic Leadership Board in different locations, as this would increase visibility and bring about wider engagement.

284. The reported experience of individuals from under-represented groups indicated that the leadership message from the service Executive is not always received, understood and acted upon consistently throughout the organisation. We also noted that, for recruits and new starts in Police Scotland, the attitude and behaviour of tutor constables and first line supervisors (in terms of how they handle communications) has greater impact than that of senior officers.

Area for development 18

Police Scotland should consider the use of key forums such as the Senior Leaders Forum as an opportunity for effective engagement and feedback, rather than solely as a communication or information dissemination mechanism.

Policing Together

285. Policing Together is the service's approach to bringing together its [Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy](#) (approved by SPA Board on 29 September 2022), acting as a focal point and platform to share significant work already undertaken throughout the service.

286. Much work has been done to gain insights into individuals' lived experience and this has fed into the strategy's development and ongoing implementation. This includes '*Truth to Power*' sessions, engagement with a wide range of diversity staff associations (including the establishment of a Diversity Staff Association Collaboration Group) and insights into how people have experienced discriminatory behaviours.

287. The strategy sets out four outcomes, with supporting commitments:

  ▪ We are an anti-racist organisation and have zero tolerance for any discrimination, bullying or harassment. We act at all times in accordance with our values

  ▪ Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Human Rights are embraced and central to everything we do

  ▪ We are committed to an inclusive culture, which is supportive and welcoming, where colleagues feel they belong and can be at their best

  ▪ Our colleagues represent and reflect the communities we serve and keep safe.

288. Police Scotland has also identified four pillars to underpin the work of the Policing Together programme:

Source: Police Scotland

289. In February 2023, Police Scotland also created a new ACC portfolio to deliver on Policing Together. The creation of this portfolio aims to ensure the organisation maintains its momentum and gives sustainable and tangible effect to the Policing Together commitments. We found that there has been considerable effort put into the strategy and implementation plan communications, supporting both national and local activities.

290. However, we found an inconsistent understanding of the scope of Policing Together and a degree of confusion about its extensive delivery mechanisms and governance. We also identified some cultural resistance, with people in the organisation still not recognising some of the issues raised and regarding it as '*just another central initiative*' (with concerns that it may not bring about the wider cultural change required).

291. Policing Together governance was also seen to be overly complex and duplicative, particularly with the work of the Preventions and Professionalism programme, People Strategy, YVM and Violence against women and girls (VAWG)/sexism and misogyny work. We recognise that some realignment of governance has taken place since our fieldwork, resulting in the following structures:

- Policing Together Strategic Oversight Board (PTSOB)

- Policing Together Tactical Group (four main sub–groups Scotland feeding in)
  - Policing Together Community Group
  - Policing Together Colleague Group
  - Policing Together Implementation Group
  - Policing Together Performance and Impact Group

- Various SLWGs report directly to the Tactical Group, PTSOB, or via sub-groups.

Figure 5 – Policing Together governance (original structure)
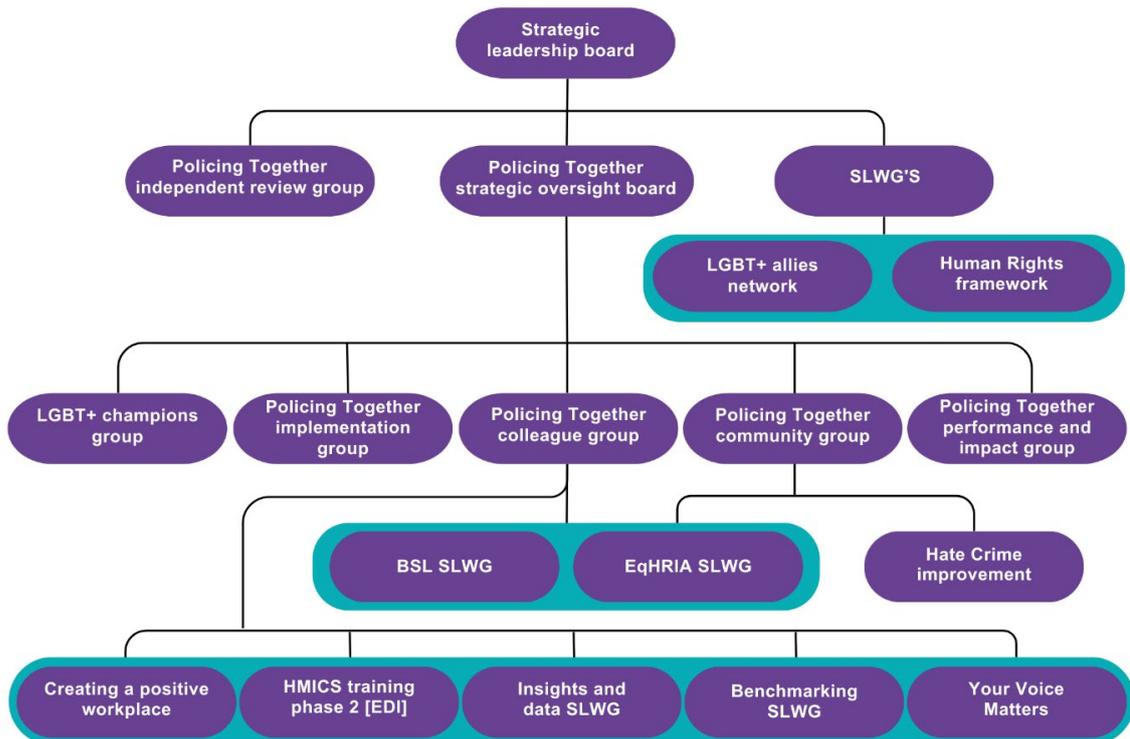
Source: Police Scotland

292. We believe that our previous comments on overly complex governance apply here and this approach is at risk of creating duplication and confused accountability. Mainstreaming is a core principle of the approach to EDIHR and there is a degree of risk in creating duplication and confused accountability in this approach.

293. Interviewees also expressed concern about the quality and consistency of the insights used to inform Policing Together planning, with actions being instigated based on individual opinion and cases, without further triangulation of findings. Future involvement of the Research and Insights Team to ensure this work is effectively co-ordinated and professionalised is essential.

294. The Chief Constable's statement on institutional discrimination was made during our fieldwork period, allowing us to assess the reaction of officers and staff. We found the statement had a very mixed response, with some welcoming it and others clearly not recognising the description of the environment in which they worked. Many felt the statement had '*come out of the blue*' and had not been well consulted on or evidenced, prior to its launch. There was a perception that the focus of communication was on external messaging rather than internal. The decision to make the statement (as with the previous statement on anti-racism) had left many feeling disempowered and disenchanted. There have since been anecdotal reports of widespread negativity toward police officers and their relatives. We also found evidence of an increase in withdrawals from the recruitment process and '*offers declined by applicant*' for the May 2023 intake of probationers, attributed to the announcement.

295. We are supportive of the statement. The challenge is clearly organisational, but we also recognise that an organisation is not simply about policies and procedures; fundamentally, it is about its people. Police Scotland has a responsibility to those people and the public it serves, to ensure it delivers its commitments and maintains focus on the cultural change required. This will undoubtedly take time and perseverance.

296. Having reviewed the version of the Policing Together Implementation Plan presented in August 2023, HMICS considers that the activities listed present a cohesive approach to addressing the issues raised in the Strategy. Each action has been allocated a priority (high/medium/low) and a timescale (short/medium/long). HMICS considers that this approach clearly requires further refinement as well as consideration of the delivery capacity for the majority of actions which are medium-high priority and medium term delivery. We also identified a number of actions designated as '*Achieved*' but still being delivered with no indication of assessment of impact. We also identified some degree of duplication across the actions and acknowledge that Police Scotland is undertaking further work to streamline these. HMICS also considers that the actions for the first outcome (which is their anti-racism commitment) could be improved to be more specific to this particular protected characteristic.

297. The first interim report on EDIHR by the IRG was considered by the SPA Board on 25 May 2023. This sets out the emerging reporting framework and gives an indication of initial findings based on data and evidence gathered to date. This IRG work correlates with many of our own findings. In particular, it notes that the greatest challenge to driving cultural change within the service is the pressure on frontline resourcing.

298. The IRG stated it was able to provide a medium to high level of assurance on commitment and intention but only a low to medium level of assurance on implementation and delivery. HMICS concurs with this assessment and we comment further in our section on Outcomes on the '*insights and measures*' included within the implementation plan.

299. The group also reported a sense of '*initiative-it is*',[26] with a constant stream of initiatives, projects, activities, and communications, all well-intentioned and of merit, but not joined up in practice. This was compounded by a sense of 13 local policing divisions all trying to reinvent the wheel, and an urgent need to streamline and prioritise the number and range of initiatives. The service's approach to the evaluation of initiatives and delivery of benefits also appeared piecemeal, lacking consistency and rigour.

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[26] Term used in the Casey Review: '*Instead of focusing on getting the basics right, short term projects and campaigns have been launched from HQ without seeing them through, considering their impact or engaging the organisation in embedding enduring systemic change. This particularly wears down officers on the frontline. They experience slogans and spreadsheet returns instead of a single, clear and widely understood strategy for improvement. This is exacerbated by poor management within the organisation*'.

300. The Casey Review found that the MPS had '*bombarded*' people with relentless initiatives, launched from the centre and without sufficient traction by the time they reached the frontline. It found no shortage of initiatives to address culture change, but these generated more activity than action.

301. These findings mirror our own, and our general finding that the service's ambitions outweigh its capacity to deliver, with a strong tendency to over-governance creating further pressure in the system. We will therefore continue to monitor the progress of Policing Together and the work of the IRG.

Resourcing and the workforce

302. As noted in our general findings, and as reported by the IRG, we found that resource constraint was one of the main factors adversely affecting culture change, both in terms of driving behaviours and impacting directly on capacity, motivation and wellbeing.

303. Interestingly, while the service has been recognised for its improved financial management, we were told that it had become too financially focused, losing sight of its people and the public it serves. A number of budget holders told us they had been required to sign off on budgets they cannot meet, to deal with current financial challenges (a gap of approximately £20m in 2023-24). The process for identifying cuts was described as '*chaotic*' and '*reactive*'.

304. We have previously noted the former Chief Constable's comments on the lack of additional funding to respond to changing demand pressures on the service. A key example is the increase of non-crime incidents relating to mental health, much of which is viewed as demand transfer from other agencies such as the NHS and social care.[27] Other areas of resource pressure include the rising rates of cyber-related fraud, and sexual and domestic crime. These require increasingly sophisticated responses from a service that is, in some ways, still addressing its post-reform transformation challenge (including the rollout of national ICT systems and upgraded infrastructure).

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[27] HMICS, HMICS Thematic review of policing mental health in Scotland, 18 October 2023.

305. It was clear from our findings that the internal view is that a lack of Executive direction-setting and decision-making has resulted in the service not being prepared or able to address the challenges it now faces. Examples of the service failing to deliver on stated aspirations included: slow progress on reducing the number of officers on modified duties and in corporate roles; and reconsideration of rank ratios and operating base levels (OBLs).[28] Similarly, the Executive was held to have failed to realise financial and capacity benefits from transformation programmes where there had been significant investment and secondment of operational officers. Many of those we spoke to accepted the need for more radical choices and changes in the delivery model.

306. We consider that the service must set out a more compelling case for investment, based on well-evidenced demand information. Similarly, it must establish its vision for a sustainable operating model in the current financial environment and clearly set out what this means for the services it will and will not deliver, alongside the support it will offer to its officers and staff.

307. In terms of workforce, we were told that the service needs to make the best use of the people it has, focusing on their retention, resilience and wellbeing. We consider it essential that effective workforce planning processes are in place to ensure these needs are met. Our August 2022 Strategic Workforce Planning review highlighted the need for a better approach in developing a workforce based on the skillset and mix required to meet current and future challenges for policing in Scotland. Police Scotland hopes to launch a new workforce plan later in 2023 and we will consider whether this addresses the recommendations and areas for development we identified.

308. At the frontline, we found that many are still not getting breaks, with no time for one-to-one conversations with supervisors. Officers reported low numbers on shifts (often working well below OBLs) limiting operational resilience, but also being refused time off, in case a shift becomes '*below OBL*'. Overall, local policing officers felt increasingly undervalued, having to deal with the pressures of increasing and shifting demand. This often means spending hours of their shift waiting at hospitals or in custody suites, unable to respond to calls from the public.

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[28] Operating base levels give an indication of the minimum safe levels of staffing for each shift of officers within a defined geographical area. These were set early in the life of Police Scotland and have not been systematically reviewed.

309. We have already noted that Regional and Divisional People Boards were meeting regularly with a strong focus on workforce issues. Divisional commanders, in all those we looked at, were working to improve engagement and address key workforce issues. We were told that this work was often undertaken to compensate for a lack of corporate progress or clarity on what should be done locally.

310. The post-pandemic working environment was often raised in our discussions. We found that COVID-19 has had a lasting impact on working style in Police Scotland. We were told this has mainly affected those who are office-based, but it has also resulted in a lack of visibility and inconsistent approaches for different groups, despite guidance being in place.

> **Area for development 19**
>
> Police Scotland should consider more consistent guidance for hybrid and home working. Where there are inequalities these should be examined in terms of the operational imperatives of the functions being performed.

Managing change

311. Police Scotland has pursued a significant portfolio of change programmes since its inception in 2013. Various programmes and projects have supported the delivery of new technology and systems, legislation, infrastructure and cost savings. However, there has been limited focus on overall cultural change, with most programmes or projects pursuing their own communications and engagement activities.

312. Our view is that the previous Policing 2026: 10 year Strategy (Serving a Changing Scotland), approved in 2017, has come closest to setting out a compelling longer term vision for policing, stating clearly what needed to change, along with the culture required. Subsequent strategies have focused more on service delivery outcomes, rather than on future vision.

313. In May 2018, the SPF (in partnership with Police Scotland), launched a '*Change Readiness Survey*', which was structured around Kotter's' eight- step change model.[29] It had a 23% response rate and the results were presented to the Executive and SPA Chair in August 2018. The research approach was aligned to the 2026 Strategy, with the aim of understanding the degree to which individuals and the organisation had the time and motivation to implement significant change.

314. In our fieldwork, we found that this issue did not feature as a risk or issue (as it had been perceived in 2018) and that change was now seen more as the norm, with implementation of programmes for electric vehicles and mobile phones viewed very positively. We are also aware that Police Scotland carefully manages the deployment of change initiatives in divisions, using a '*change absorbability*' matrix to assess whether there is local capacity to implement.

315. An engagement team routinely runs local roadshows to provide up to date information on change programmes for those affected, and uses lessons learned from project implementation to seek further feedback. However, we could not identify a clear narrative on the overall journey of cultural change and there was no assessment as to whether this engagement process was effective.[30] Police Scotland also produces end programme/project reports examining lessons learned from change, as well as workshops assessing the benefits and impact of change initiatives.

316. When we asked who was responsible for cultural change, we received different answers, varying from '*everyone*', the Executive, People & Development and Policing Together. Police Scotland told us:

"*Culture change is led by the Executive with leadership devolved appropriately throughout the organisation to leaders, managers and supervisors.*"

The People Strategy was identified as the key vehicle for underpinning cultural change; however, no particular model of adopting cultural change could be identified.

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[29] Kotter, J. P. (2012), Leading Change, With a New Preface by the Author, Harvard Business Review.
[30] See Lewis, Higgins and Muir (2019), who found that if change within organisations is to be sustained and effective, employees need to be central in organisational development. They need to be involved and engaged in the process, and to feel that leaders are listening to and acting upon their views. Police workforce wellbeing and organisational development.

317. We have previously identified the lack of an organisational development function within the service. Organisational development uses behavioural science to design and deliver change, focusing on culture, values, capability, behaviours, relationships and ways of working. It takes a systems approach to understand these elements and how they influence behaviour and performance. We consider that these are key functions in delivering an embedded approach to cultural change, alongside organisational design and service design.

318. As noted in our general findings, we found that it was unclear to many what the aspirational culture of Police Scotland is, with most accepting that a journey was underway, but unclear on how the service would get there and how it would recognise and measure success. We consider that Police Scotland is addressing many aspects of culture through Policing Together, however it requires to provide greater clarity on its aspirational culture and consider investment in organisational development and design in order to develop a clear model of adopting cultural change, with supporting implementation steps.

Recommendation 9

Police Scotland should invest in organisational development and design in order to develop a clear model of adopting cultural change, with supporting implementation steps towards a clearly defined aspirational culture.

Outcomes

Impact of culture on outcomes

319. Understanding how culture influences or directly affects service delivery performance is essential if an organisation is to make cultural change to improve outcomes. There is much research on the influence of organisational culture on performance, showing how culture can drive outcomes when it is well-aligned to strategy and leadership. Studies have shown that a strong culture influences job performance and inspires people to do their best work, as well as having an impact on their productivity and efficiency.

320. Police Scotland provided two main sources of evidence when asked about the impact of culture on service delivery performance:

   ■ independent User Experience Survey[31] results – consistently showing high levels of satisfaction in treatment by service advisers and response officers (over 80% since 2020).

   ■ independent YVM survey (Durham University) results:
   - integrity identity/ethics high for both officers and for staff
   - (at team level), people feel valued and have a sense of belonging and connectedness
   - 12.8% of respondents reported experiencing workplace incivility monthly/few times a month, with 6.8% experiencing this weekly.

321. We consider that the evidence and context presented in the self-evaluation is limited and highly selective. For example, the latest independent polling commissioned by the SPA[32] demonstrates a decline in the levels of trust reported by the public across a six-month period (January - June 2023).

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[31] The User Experience Survey, administered by Progressive Partnership Ltd, is sent to around 14,000 people each month and a representative sample of around 1,200 individual responses are collected. The survey is delivered via SMS to those who have contacted Police Scotland in the previous month. In Quarter 1 (2023-24), 3,885 respondents were surveyed about their experience of the policing service provided, from initial contact through to overall satisfaction.

[32] SPA, Policing Performance Committee - SPA Public Polling Phase 3 - Item 4.3, 12 September 2023.

Figure 6 – User Experience Survey (Q1 2023-24) – Trust in policing

	Jul - 22	Jan - 23	Jul - 23	Difference
Police in your local area	6.23	6.23	5.84	- 0.39
Police in Scotland overall	6.14	6.04	5.66	- 0.48
To protect you	5.92	5.9	5.38	- 0.54
To care about people like you	5.92	5.89	5.36	- 0.56
To listen and respond to your needs	5.59	5.69	5.16	- 0.53
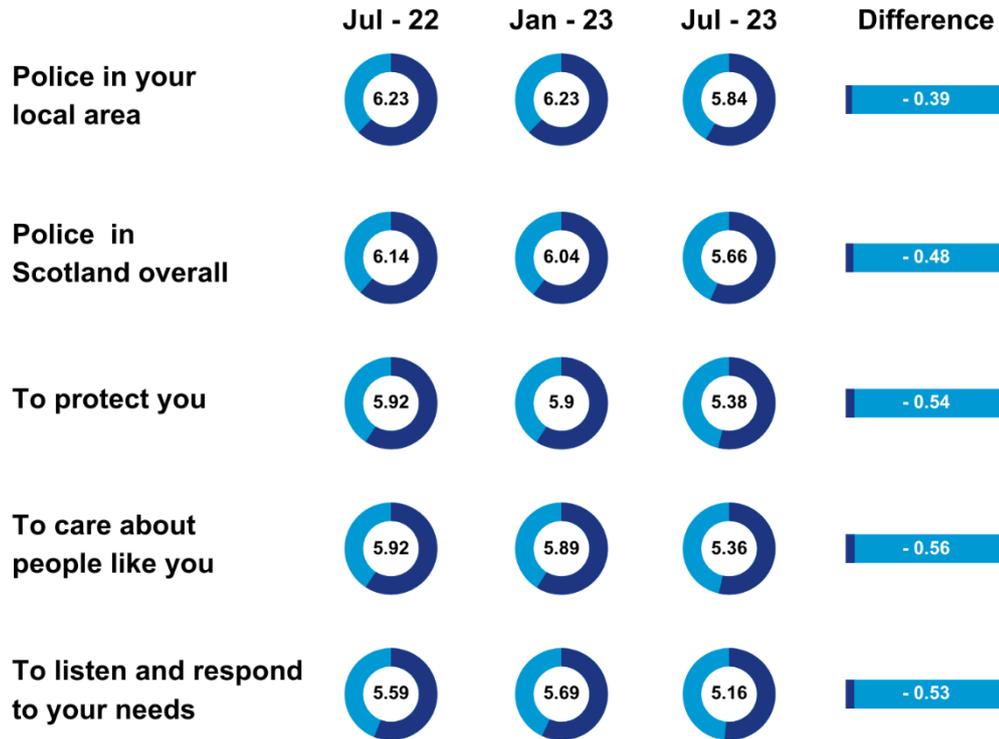
Source: Scottish Police Authority

322. Confidence in policing is also trending downwards, with lower averages for all aspects observed (January - June 2023). This is the first wave of research where the average level of confidence reported by members of the public has fallen below 5 out of 10 for any indicator.

Figure 7 – User Experience Survey (Q1 2023-24) – Confidence in policing

	Jul - 22	Jan - 23	Jul - 23	Difference
Police in your local area	6.10	6.11	5.79	-0.32
Police in Scotland overall	5.99	5.98	5.77	-0.22
Keep your area safe	5.72	5.70	5.24	- 0.48
Being there when you need them	5.48	5.56	5.06	- 0.50
Tackling crime in your local area	5.46	5.41	5.10	- 0.36
Providing an appropriate and timely response	5.34	5.35	4.82	- 0.53
Preventing crime in your local area	5.29	5.28	4.78	- 0.51
Tackling anti-social behaviour in your local area	5.02	5.08	4.50	- 0.58

Source: Scottish Police Authority

323. Police Scotland also evidenced a wide range of reporting, including employee survey results, performance information, management information, implementation plans, service user and employee insights, and progress reporting. All of this information is useful in considering specific aspects of culture; however we consider a cohesive picture is lacking, with most information produced and reported in isolation, giving only partial snapshots of the culture within the organisation. We found that connections and relationships between datasets are not being effectively made and causal factors are not being considered in the round.

324. We consider that examples of key cultural indicator areas can include:

Leadership	360-degree feedback on personal impact; levels of personal engagement (and one-to-ones); **training and development**.
Governance	Understanding; perception of bureaucracy; decision-making.
Organisational justice	Fairness of and compliance with processes; openness of outcomes; levels of engagement and feedback mechanisms.
People	**Recruitment**; progression and promotion (and churn); **abstraction/absence; pay and conditions; wellbeing; health and safety; retention/turnover; levels of overtime**; grievance; motivation; exit interview/survey analysis; compliance with HR policy.
Service delivery	**Complaints satisfaction ratings; delivery performance**.
Ethics and values	**Complaints; misconduct; vetting; grievance**; compliance with policy.
Organisational learning, change and improvement	Best value reviews; self-evaluations; debriefs; structured learning interventions; business improvement initiatives; **training**; knowledge sharing; impact of change.

*Only those in bold are being collected/reported on a routine basis. Others are not routinely measured/collected.

325. Police Scotland is not yet able to adequately demonstrate culture change, the key factors influencing that culture, nor the impact they are having on service delivery. Demonstrating organisational justice is also a key component of this. If the organisation is to effectively understand and monitor organisational culture and its impact, we believe that it must further develop its performance framework to encompass the impact of organisational culture, with regular reporting on this to the SPA People Committee.

Recommendation 10

Police Scotland should further develop its performance framework to encompass the impact of organisational culture, while regularly reporting to the Scottish Police Authority.

Motivation and wellbeing

326. We found that pride in policing among officers and staff is still strong. We also identified positive workforce motivation, particularly at local and team level, but with a diminishing sense of commitment to wider Police Scotland over time. This reflects findings in the YVM survey.

327. In its [interim report](#) (May 2023), the IRG noted the pressures on frontline resourcing. The group also reported a real concern for morale because of the impact this was having on the ability to take time off, and the concomitant effect on work-life balance. This is felt most acutely in frontline policing and by those dealing with the operational consequences of such pressures.

328. In our fieldwork, we found clear evidence of the impact of elements of policing culture on people's wellbeing and how this is often affected by daily behaviours, and the way that officers and staff are treated in processes such as misconduct, grievance and promotion. Difficulties in securing annual leave, or being able to use time off in lieu (TOIL) or re-rostered rest days (RRRD) (mainly due to low resourcing levels,) was both frustrating and demoralising. The lack of regular engagement from supervisors to discuss wellbeing and workload was also a key factor in affecting how people felt.

329. As noted earlier, we have reviewed relevant policies and procedures and generally find them to be fit for purpose. We therefore conclude from our findings that it is the implementation and inappropriate use of these policies and procedures that is the main issue facing Police Scotland.

330. As of 31 March 2023, Police Scotland [reported](#) year-end figures:

- 687 FTE officers on long-term absence (lasting for more than 28 calendar days, due to career breaks, maternity/paternity leave, sick leave and suspension) equivalent to 4.1% of officers

- of the 687 officers on long-term absence, 391 (57%) were on sick leave, 197 (29%) were on maternity or paternity leave, and 36 (5%) were on career breaks. The remaining 63 (9%) were suspended

- 391 police officers on long-term sick leave, equivalent to 2.3% of officers (compared with 2.6% in the previous year)

- 935 police officers on recuperative duties, equivalent to 5.6% of officers

- a further 1,025 officers on adjusted, Ill Health Retiral (IHR), retained or protected duties, equivalent to a further 6.1% of officers

- psychological disorder remained the highest (non-COVID) reason for working days lost for both officers and staff

- retirement (excluding Medical) remained the main reason for officer attrition over the previous 12 months. Resignations are the main reason for police staff attrition over the previous 12 months, at a combined 3.93% turnover of the workforce

- in total, due to long-term absence and duty modifications, 14% of police officers were not available to fulfil the full role of a constable (this excludes short-term absence and other abstractions from duty).

331. Police Scotland accepts that further work needs to be done to reduce these longer-term abstractions and improve availability of officers, particularly at a time of reducing resources.

332. We consider these issues to be very concerning, as there is no doubt that such factors affect internal culture, with a knock-on effect on how officers and staff deal with the public. We will be looking into this in more detail in our forthcoming HMICS Review of Wellbeing.

Reporting cultural outcomes

333. We have looked into how Police Scotland measures delivery of its cultural commitments and whether outcomes are clearly articulated. We also examined how cultural evolution is measured and monitored; whether performance or other reporting helps the SPA and the service to better understand key cultural issues; what is being done about them; and how progress is monitored.

334. In the Policing Performance Framework for 2023-24 it states that Police Scotland have aligned a suite of measures that will best evidence its commitment to improving policing culture. These measures are to be mainstreamed into quarterly performance reporting to ensure that the SPA Board, public and communities receive an assurance of progress. HMICS considers that the measures will provide further insights and an indication of progress on implementations plans e.g. tracking completion rates and assessment results of EDI e-learning package(s). However there are very limited outcome measures included e.g. Reduction of fear and increase in confidence of women and girls.

335. Outcomes remain the overall focus of the current Joint Strategy (2023-26) and policing performance framework 2023-24. As previously noted, the latest Joint Strategy has used the same outcomes as the previous version. In particular, the pledge to ensure that: "*our people are supported through a positive working environment, enabling them to serve the public*" is a continued commitment. The new Strategy places a greater emphasis on EDI and improving culture, leadership and wellbeing approaches.

336. A People Strategy would be the usual vehicle for communicating in more detail what culture the organisation aspires to and how it will deliver any required culture change and outcomes. However, at the time of our inspection, the new People Strategy was still in development, so we are unable to comment on any associated outcomes.

337. Cultural outcomes are also articulated in other supporting strategies and plans, in particular, the Policing Together Strategy Implementation Plan and the Your Voice Matters plan. Police Scotland acknowledges it has set challenging ambitions within these plans and much work is ongoing; this may take some time to deliver. It is accepted that demonstrating the impact for some of this work will be more difficult than for other parts.

338. In the [Police Scotland performance report for Quarter 1 2023-24](), the '*positive working environment*' outcomes included supporting narrative and measures of:

- assaults on police officers and staff

- training attendance rates for YLM

- percentage working days lost (overall sickness absence, COVID-19 respiratory, psychological disorder).

339. We consider that the information given is very limited in terms of outcomes relating to culture, or the activity set out in the Strategy itself. While updates on activity provide useful context and narrative on progress, this does not constitute effective performance reporting.

340. As we note at paragraph 287, the [Policing Together Strategy]() sets out four specific outcomes:

- We are an anti-racist organisation and have zero tolerance for any discrimination, bullying or harassment. We act at all times in accordance with our values

- Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Human Rights are embraced and central to everything we do

- We are committed to an inclusive culture, which is supportive and welcoming, where colleagues feel they belong and can be at their best

- Our colleagues represent and reflect the communities we serve and keep safe.

341. Although we do not consider that these are expressed as outcomes in the traditional sense (e.g. the impact that actions will have on individuals, communities and places), we believe that, as organisational commitments, these can be translated into valid measurements in the future.

342. Policing Together has a Performance and Impact Group, which will define and measure the impact of planned activities. The Group plans to develop reporting to ensure that legislative and voluntary performance reporting responsibilities for EDI are met. It will look into the insights and measures available to capture, monitor and measure the impact and outcomes of EDI activity at a national and local level.

343. In the update on Policing Together to the SPA People Committee on 29 August 2023, there is considerable evidence of progress in terms of activity relating to culture change. A draft six monthly Policing Together Performance Reporting Template was also presented. The Implementation Plan presented a list of '*Insights and Measures*' for each action, which HMICS considers lack assessment of cultural impact. HMICS fully accepts that this is challenging and it may be too early to assess this, but expects that the IRG will be closely monitoring delivery of the plan and the effectiveness and impact of this work.

344. Public reporting on progress of the YVM Implementation Plan has been a regular feature at the SPA People Committee, as well as the internal YVM Steering Group. As we note in paragraph 245, the bi-annual update report to the SPA People Committee (31 May 2023), provided detail on the 18 ambitions set out against 5 key themes (wellbeing, leadership, behaviours, hindrance stressors, enablers). Since results were published in October 2021, only 6 ambitions have been completed, with the remaining 12 on track for completion. The report provides narrative on progress but also states that:

"Greater focus is required to ensure that the remaining open ambitions within the Implementation Plan are prioritised. Responding to the survey was one of the Chief Constable's Commitments for 2022-23."

The report lists a number of anticipated outcomes against open and closed ambitions, but provides no actual measures of these.

345. The [Workforce Management Information report for Quarter 1 2023-24](#) included information on key metrics relating to the status and impact of culture:

- FTE and distribution of workforce (officers and staff)
- overall totals and totals by gender, ethnicity, length of service
- officers in temporary ranks (by number, gender and duration)
- leavers (numbers and reasons)
- turnover (numbers by gender and reason)
- officer retirals (actual by length of pensionable service, and projected)
- sickness absence (by category/type, business area, COVID-19 and non-COVID, psychological disorder)
- TOIL and RRRD balances (by business area, rank/grade and workforce proportion)
- modified duties (by type and duration)
- annual leave utilisation.

346. Much of this data and accompanying narrative provides useful indicators regarding culture. However, its presentation and lack of clear analysis limits its current value. In our [Assurance Review of Strategic Workforce Planning (August 2022)](#), we stated that this reporting does not constitute performance reporting and does not provide the SPA with the ability to track the delivery of workforce change. We also stated that a shorter escalation report would be of more benefit, with clearly set out measurable actions that can then be monitored for progress. Police Scotland [reported to the SPA People Committee](#) in February 2023 that it will be redesigning its reporting and will include a culture dashboard.

347. Other relevant reporting includes the [Year End Health and Wellbeing Report 2022-23](#) (SPA People Committee, 31 May 2023). The report describes itself as providing members with an oversight of Police Scotland/SPA health and wellbeing activity throughout the financial year. The current Health & Wellbeing Framework seeks to promote a proactive, preventative and person-centred approach, intended to understand and consider what people are experiencing (both inside and outside of work). The framework also recognises the impact of significant moments on people's lives and the importance of providing '*fit for purpose*' tools and support to empower and enable people to take positive action over their health and wellbeing.

348. The report sets out priority areas and supporting action plans detailing activity that has been undertaken, with measures including:

- Learning outcome measures regarding pre- and post-training
- Increasing demand for trauma risk management intervention for those experiencing post-incident trauma
- Drive to increase number of wellbeing champions
- Increasing number of referrals and recruitment medicals for Occupational Health
- Slight decrease in calls to HELP Employee Assistance Programme (with breakdown and number of sessions used)
- Ill health retirals
- Analysis of research findings.

349. A recent report to the SPA People Committee included a closure report on the '*Your Wellbeing Matters*' Programme. Evaluation was mostly based on the views of key internal and external stakeholders – not specific measures of the effectiveness and outcomes of the activity undertaken. The report also outlines datasets being developed to support the measurement of impact. We remain concerned that these datasets will not effectively assess outcomes.

350. The Health and Safety report Quarter 4 2022-23 (SPA People Committee, 31 May 2023) provides information including enforcement activity, proactive preventative work, and accident statistics broken down into assaults and incidents during arrest/custody. It also gives updates on internal assurance and audit work, current and emerging health and safety issues, and the development of policy and practice. A health and safety report is routinely published for each quarter and includes useful information in dashboard format, including rates of completed actions and incident trends over the year. The reports also provide clear data and trend analysis, with details on management actions. We consider that these reports have improved significantly, and would note the impact on individual wellbeing and service delivery are missing from the overall picture. We recognise that further work is to be undertaken to ensure overarching assurance in respect of this important area including compliance with Health and Safety Executive publications HSG65 and INDG417, the latter setting out the nature of assurance reporting which should be provided to an oversight Board.

351. Statistics on complaints and conduct matters about Police Scotland officers and staff are reported quarterly and annually to the SPA Complaints and Conduct Committee. The [report](#) for quarter one of 2023-24 includes detailed data and analysis on complaints and misconduct, as well as details on organisational learning and improvement initiatives. Outcomes in terms of disposals after misconduct hearings and meetings are also provided (see previous section on misconduct).

352. We understand that the content and format of these reports has improved considerably, but many areas for development remain outstanding, as is evident in annual Committee reports and the [action log](#) from the Committee. Key areas for development include:

- presenting data on Irregularity in Procedure and Quality of Service complaints on a more regular basis

- exception reporting on impact assessment against the Angiolini Review

- inclusion of diversity information for both officers and complainers (subject to an ICT system update, as not currently recorded)

- highlighting the number of officers when referring to complaints received within each command area

- public reporting on Continuous Integrity Screening (vetting)

- number of people with protected characteristics who have failed vetting

- output of organisational learning work

- additional information on complaints categories and outcomes to enable a deeper insight (including diversity data; analysis by type of policing duties and geography; demographic profile of subject officers; categories of complaints upheld)

- enhanced reporting in respect of complaint handling timescales

- ongoing trend analysis

- analysis of key themes, organisational learning and audited impact of improvement activity.

353. In general, we found that complaints information was well presented, with previous year and five-year average comparisons, and breakdowns of types, referrals, command areas and outcomes. Misconduct reporting was less well developed, using only previous year comparisons and limited analysis. The lack of gender and ethnicity analysis is also a general weakness, although we recognise that recording of this data has not been possible, due to system restrictions. Reporting on national gateway reporting, vetting and analysis of sexual misconduct has been conducted separately and would benefit from being brought into routine quarterly reporting.

354. We note that the IRG's interim report (May 2023) found that the PSD needed a deeper knowledge of EDIHR issues, and how they manifest or are breached in workplace settings. The group had also identified a view that the PSD was prepared to act where there were breaches involving an element of criminality, but less so for misconduct involving discrimination of protected characteristics. This highlights the need to include improved reporting and analysis of EDIHR issues in reporting. Our planned inspection work on Conduct will consider these issues in more detail.

> **Area for development 20**
>
> Police Scotland should further develop its quarterly reporting to the Complaints and Conduct Committee to provide improved analysis and insights.

355. Our review of these performance and management information reports found that, while they provide some analysis and identification of trends, they generally lack outcome measures, more detailed insights, detail of corresponding improvement or organisational learning actions and benchmarking against other forces. In general, the reports present information in isolation, without making links to other related areas (e.g. misconduct with grievance). So – although there is a great deal of reporting going on – it does not give a clear picture of cultural outcomes, or assess how culture is affecting service delivery performance.

356. In its self-evaluation, Police Scotland stated that:

"*we have work to do in terms of developing high quality data and insights across all our EDI and workforce data.*" (see paragraph 259).

We consider that Police Scotland cannot demonstrate (and therefore does not fully understand) how culture affects its people or service delivery. Similarly, it does not effectively measure cultural change and the impact of all supporting activity. We found that there is great deal of work to do in reporting effectively on the culture of the organisation.

Reporting on equality and inclusion

357. As previously noted, recent reporting on Policing Together shows considerable evidence of progress in terms of activity relating to culture change. Updates on the Implementation Plan demonstrate the actions being taken and a suite of insights and measures which will be used to assess impact. A template for six-monthly performance reporting has also been developed, which is dependent on ongoing work to improve the analysis and presentation of key data and measures. We consider that a comprehensive evaluation approach should be considered to provide effective assurance that the programme is delivering.

> **Area for development 21**
>
> Police Scotland should develop a Policing Together Evaluation approach to support delivery of the Implementation Plan.

358. The high-level focus of the IRG work centres on four outcomes across three areas established at the outset: culture, strategic direction, training and development. The group focuses on these four areas in its work and will carefully consider the data and evidence needed to assess the level of assurance for them. However the IRG does not specifically state that it will evaluate the outcome measures set out by Police Scotland.[33]

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[33] The IRG has recently provided an updated Assurance Framework for their reporting to Police Scotland, which will be published in due course.

359. Statutory reporting on EDI mainstreaming and outcomes progress continues separately from Policing Together reporting at present. The latest [EDI mainstreaming report](#) (the sixth report to have been published in July 2023) sets out eight outcomes, and details progress against these in a '*we said, we did, we will*' format. Although some data is provided, the report lacks insights, outcome measures or performance indicators.

360. Four of the outcomes set out are specific to the Police Scotland workforce:

- **Outcome 5**: We use timely insights from workforce diversity monitoring to support evidence-based planning and decision making

- **Outcome 6**: Our leaders have the right skills and confidence to lead in relation to equality, diversity, inclusion and human rights

- **Outcome 7**: Resignation rates of under-represented groups are proportionate to our current workforce profile

- **Outcome 8**: We have inclusive recruitment and promotion processes in place that prevent unnecessary barriers affecting under-represented groups.

361. We consider that Police Scotland would benefit from a combined reporting approach on Policing Together. Aligning outcome reporting across the areas we have considered (workforce, complaints and conduct, wellbeing, health and safety) would provide improved consistency and oversight of cultural change.

> **Area for development 22**
>
> Police Scotland should consider alignment of outcome reporting across workforce, complaints and conduct, wellbeing, and health and safety information to provide improved consistency and oversight of cultural change.

Performance culture

362. Although it is clear that the service has made progress in developing its performance framework and reporting, we found there remains a deep-seated negative perception of performance management. This is based on previous experience of an autocratic approach to target-setting and accountability.

363. The initial approach to performance management in Police Scotland was target-driven and viewed as highly punitive. It was considered as driving adverse behaviours to meet targets (e.g. stop and search). This regime was subsequently discredited and removed altogether. Quarterly and annual public reporting is still in place, but there remains some cultural reticence about introducing more rigorous elements such as targets and benchmarking.

364. In our fieldwork, we found that although management teams often discussed people and equality matters, they did not routinely discuss performance. We were told that discussions about performance took place in detail at tasking and co-ordination meetings (or specific performance meetings), but this was only the case in two of the divisions we examined. We believe there has been a degree of organisational drift in many divisions, away from performance.

365. We consider that performance – whether in terms of managing demand, productivity or resources – should always feature on management team agendas. This will maintain oversight of general trends, areas for development and progress against divisional delivery plans. The link between national and local performance reporting is essential to maintain a balance between national and local priorities.

> **Area for development 23**
>
> Police Scotland should consider the appropriate use of targets and performance benchmarking when next reviewing its performance framework, and ensure that performance is considered at all management team meetings.

Conclusions

366. The key output from our inspection is this final report and accompanying briefing sessions to key stakeholders.

367. Our terms of reference for this inspection set out the following outcomes:

   ■ Provide assurance that the right leaders, people, policies and procedures are in place to drive the development of policing culture

   ■ Provide assurance that the wider issues which have received media attention are being appropriately addressed by Police Scotland

   ■ Provide assurance that cultural development is integrated with other aspects of strategic planning, and being owned and implemented at both strategic and operational level within Police Scotland to support policing delivery

   ■ Assess whether suitable capacity, capability and skills are in place to support cultural development

   ■ Equip the SPA to assert its scrutiny role and to ask the right questions of Police Scotland about cultural development.

368. We have found that Police Scotland has significant work to do in terms of developing its leadership approach and on its overall cultural development. We consider that it is addressing many of the issues identified by our inspection and those highlighted by reviews such as Casey and Angiolini. We have found good and effective practice in many of the areas we have examined, but activity is often fragmented, over-governed and lacking systematic evaluation and outcome measures. We believe that Police Scotland needs to prioritise its activity more carefully, rather than initiating further activities and initiatives, which – although well-intentioned – may not have sufficient impact or be sustainable.

369. We have highlighted areas where we identified harm to individual and team wellbeing, and motivation, by policy interpretation or poor implementation. This is often due to the capability and capacity of managers, often based upon poor or no training in key leadership or management techniques. Similarly, a lack of regular one-to-one conversations about personal wellbeing, workload and development is allowing behaviours and performance to go unchallenged, with people feeling they are no longer listened to or valued. We believe this to be the result of years without effective training; limited visibility and role modelling by leaders in the service; and resourcing pressures that have been felt since the early years of the service.

370. In terms of the cultural aspirations set out in the Joint Strategy, and based on our findings in this inspection, we consider that Police Scotland has considerable work still to do on meeting its commitments.

Table 5 – Cultural commitments in Joint Strategy

Joint Strategy Commitment	Findings
Focus will be on building an organisational culture which generates trust and where all our people feel safe and supported.	Issues with organisational justice identified, with key processes described as lacking openness, transparency and fairness.
Build and maintain a supportive workplace culture where individual contributions and different perspectives are celebrated and valued.	Probationer evidence demonstrates that while skills and experience brought into the service are valued at the College, these are effectively discounted in an operational setting.
Promote a culture of change to see a drive for continuous improvement at the heart of every operational team and business area, empowering all officers and staff to be innovative and improvement-focused in their day-to-day practice.	Although effective practice in improvement is evident, a fragmented approach is limiting impact. Evidence shows a widely perceived disempowerment and command and control culture.
Embed a positive culture that supports innovation and provides opportunities for all our people to contribute and develop their leadership skills.	Opportunities for true innovation found to be limited. Engagement and feedback opportunities felt to be limited. Leadership development now in place, but too early to assess impact.
Promote a culture of inclusivity, where diversity of background and perspective is valued.	Policing Together focus is welcomed, as is work of IRG. Lack of EDI data being recorded or used effectively in analysis limits ability to demonstrate impact.
Combine heritage, experience and fresh thinking, taking the best ideas from across the country and beyond and applying these throughout the service to develop a strong culture.	Organisational learning good practice in some areas, however, overall approach fragmented.

371. We would accept that our findings provide only a partial picture of evidence in terms of all the commitments made by Police Scotland. However, they do serve to demonstrate that the service must consider carefully how it sets out its cultural aspirations and clearly show how it will account for supporting activity and impact.

372. We firmly believe that Police Scotland should prioritise the work it needs to do in order to address the issues we have found and that have been raised by its officers and staff and which are reflected in this report to effect long-term positive cultural change. Our planned HMICS scrutiny activity in the related areas of wellbeing, training and development, conduct, HR processes, strategy and performance will follow up on any specific cultural issues we have identified and will aim to further support the service as it improves.

Recommendation 11

The Scottish Police Authority and Police Scotland should put in place measures to monitor progress against the areas for development outlined in this thematic inspection, ensuring regular public reporting to allow assessment of progress.

Appendix 1 – Methodology

1. The aim of this thematic inspection was to make an assessment as to whether Police Scotland has a healthy organisational culture and ethical framework and whether the appropriate values and behaviours are consistently lived across the organisation.

2. The objectives for this inspection were to:

    ■ Identify how culture has been established, influenced and understood in Police Scotland (identifying the predominant and competing culture/sub-cultures in Scottish Policing by considering leadership, values and behaviours – standards of professional behaviour)

    ■ Assess how culture(s) impact on the efficient and effective service delivery of policing (considering performance, wellbeing, abstraction/productivity)

    ■ Consider what is being done to address any issues (from theory and practice using benchmarking and case studies).

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

    ■ Outcomes

    ■ Leadership and vision

    ■ Delivery.

4. EFQM's latest version focuses on organisational culture, which it defines as "*the specific collection of values and norms shared by people and groups within an organisation that influence, over time, the way they behave with each other and with key stakeholders outside the organisation*". The framework, which we reflect in our own approach to inspection, includes key elements of:

    ■ steering the organisation's culture and nurturing values

    ■ creating the conditions for realising change

    ■ enabling creativity and innovation

    ■ uniting behind and engaging in purpose, vision and strategy.

5. We have previously provided assurance that the footprint of this inspection will be carefully managed and make use of existing evidence as much as possible, without duplicating work already undertaken or planned. As such, we made a commitment not to do any detailed survey work, but to use existing data sources.

6. Hence, we used other evidence-gathering techniques, using existing data and information from Police Scotland, the SPA, the PIRC and other sources. This focused our methodology primarily on analysis (with input from a research associate), but we triangulated our findings using more traditional methods of interview, focus groups and observation.

7. HMICS introduced mandatory self-evaluation as a core element of our revised methodology in 2022. For the majority of our inspection work, we now provide Police Scotland with a template for completion prior to undertaking any fieldwork. This provides the opportunity for the service to honestly reflect on its progress and performance and identify where it wishes to focus its improvement efforts. The aim of this is to promote a continuous improvement approach, encourage reflective practice and limit the additional supporting evidence required. HMICS has used the self-evaluation return as the basis for many of our judgements in this report.

8. We selected a division from each of the three operational areas (North, East and West) to secure variability of divisional/legacy force cultures and to assess differences between urban, rural and remote policing. We chose an operational national division and a corporate department, to ensure that police staff were also considered as part of our work. We selected Highland and Islands (N Division), Greater Glasgow (G Division), Fife (P Division), Major Crime (Specialist Crime Division) and the Corporate Finance Department (Corporate Services) for fieldwork.

9. Our inspection work has included:

- Identifying a single point of contact for HMICS in Police Scotland to support the review process and to facilitate appropriate access to people and information

- Liaising regularly with Police Scotland and maintaining engagement with other key stakeholders

- Issuing and analysing a self-evaluation (based on key lines of enquiry) from evidence provided, as well as relevant documentation in the public domain

- Assessing existing and ongoing research on organisational culture, and benchmarking approaches to culture change in other police services and other public sector bodies

- Conducting interviews, focus groups and observing meetings/events

- Providing an online anonymous contact form, so that serving and recently-retired (within last 18 months) officers and staff could provide examples of cultural experiences

- Conducting follow-up interviews with a sample of self-nominated individuals who completed our contact form.

Appendix 2 – Police Scotland Standards of Professional Behaviour

These standards reflect expectations of Police Scotland officers, whether on or off duty:

Honesty and integrity

We act with honesty and integrity and do not compromise or abuse our position.

Authority, respect and courtesy

We act with self-control and tolerance, treating members of the public and colleagues with respect and courtesy in line with our values. We do not abuse our powers or authority and respect the rights of all individuals.

Equality and diversity

We act with fairness and impartiality. We do not discriminate unlawfully or unfairly.

Use of force

We use force only to the extent that it is necessary, proportionate and reasonable in all the circumstances.

Orders and instructions

We give and carry out only lawful orders and instructions.

Duties and responsibilities

We are diligent in the exercise of our duties and responsibilities.

Confidentiality

We treat information with respect and access or disclose it only in the proper course of our duties.

Fitness for duty

When on duty or presenting ourselves for duty, we are fit to carry out our responsibilities.

Discreditable conduct

We behave in a manner which does not discredit the Police Service or undermine public confidence in it, whether on or off duty.

Challenging and reporting improper conduct

We report, challenge or take action against the conduct of others which has fallen below the Standards of Professional Behaviour.

Appendix 3 – Background to Policing Together

1. The [Stephen Lawrence Inquiry report](#) by Lord McPherson (February 1999) and the investigation undertaken by Lord Scarman[34] into the Brixton riots in the early 1980s, both highlighted institutional aspects of racism and discrimination within the police service. The McPherson report describes institutional racism as:

   "… the way institutions may systematically treat or tend to treat people differently in respect of race. The addition of the word 'institutional' therefore identifies the source of the differential treatment; this lies in some sense within the organisation rather than simply with the individuals who represent it. The production of differential treatment is 'institutionalised' in the way the organisation operates."

2. In 1999, shortly after the publication of the McPherson report, HMICS commissioned the first inspection of police race relations in Scotland (Without Prejudice). The recommendations and the follow-up report (Pride and Prejudice) shaped the way the then eight Scottish forces responded and improved training, leadership development, accessibility of services and understanding of the needs of BME communities. Since then, Police Scotland has done much to improve organisational capability, both to meet the needs of these communities in delivering services, and for its own employees from minority communities.

3. Recent global events have increased interest in and awareness of police behaviour in terms of racism (including the [Black Lives Matter](#) movement, the George Floyd murder in 2020, and other racially-related incidents in the US). The [Me Too](#) movement has had a similar impact on awareness of sexual misconduct and abuse of power, across all areas of society including policing.

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[34] The Scarman (1981) report was commissioned by the UK government following the 1981 Brixton riots. Lord Scarman was appointed by then Home Secretary to hold the enquiry into the riots. [The Scaman Report](#).

4. The murder of Sarah Everard by a serving Metropolitan Police officer, and the policing of the subsequent vigil, raised significant public concern regarding failings in police culture. These concerns were magnified when Operation Hotton[35] and the resulting [Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC) recommendations](#) described a culture of misogyny and toxic masculinity, where bullying and oppressive behaviour allowed these issues to go unchallenged.

5. Operation Hotton uncovered:

   ■ bullying and oppressive behaviour

   ■ discrimination

   ■ toxic masculinity, misogyny and sexual harassment

   ■ difficulties in challenging behaviour and in reporting improper conduct

   ■ an underlying culture allowing conduct issues to permeate, and behaviour problems to go unchallenged.

6. The IOPC stated that:

   "*The recommendations made to the MPS focus on the cultural issues identified and are aimed at ensuring that those who work for the force feel safe with their colleagues and the communities they police feel safe with those who are there to protect them.*"

7. In October 2021, after publicity about the PC Wayne Couzens case, victims of PC David Carrick also began to come forward. Ultimately, Carrick admitted 49 charges relating to 12 victims, in December 2022. The MPS apologised after it emerged Carrick had come to the attention of the MPS and three other forces nine times, failing to identify this pattern of abusive behaviour. An IOPC [review](#) of the police handling of reports concerning Carrick prior to his arrest in October 2021 is underway.

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[35] Operation Hotton was a series of nine linked independent investigations concerning serving police officers from the MPS. Most officers held the rank of police constable and were predominantly based at Charing Cross Police Station.

8. Between June 2014 and September 2015, Stephen Port drugged, raped and murdered four young gay men in Barking, East London. Despite the obvious similarities between the deaths, the MPS failed to make a connection between the cases. Port had no criminal convictions when he committed his first murder, but he had already come to the attention of the police on two previous occasions. The MPS failed to carry out the most basic of enquiries, treated each case in isolation and did not find or seek obvious links between them. Interaction with victims' families was also deemed to be poor and uncaring.

9. Port was eventually arrested for murder in October 2015. In November 2016, he was convicted of all 4 murders and 22 offences against other men that had come to light after his arrest. He was sentenced to life imprisonment. In late 2021, inquests were held into all four murders. Based on evidence from the inquests, the coroner reported that there were matters of concern which, without attention, might result in more deaths. Due to the coroner's concerns, London's Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime requested that HMICFRS inspect the MPS's current standard of death investigations. The [inspection](#) took place between May and November 2022, and was published in April 2023.

10. The purpose of the inspection was to establish whether the MPS had learned the lessons eight years after these failures. In particular, HMICFRS sought to establish whether this could happen again. HMICFRS acknowledged that there were, and still are, homophobic officers serving in the MPS; equally, there was (at the time of the murders) a lack of understanding of the lifestyles of those they were investigating. However, during the inspection, they found that five particular issues kept arising in the deaths investigated by the MPS, as follows:

    ■ Not enough training provided to instil in officers an investigative mindset

    ■ Oversight and supervision was poor

    ■ Record keeping was unacceptable

    ■ Policy and guidance was confusing

    ■ Intelligence and crime analysis processes were inadequate.

11. These reports and events, alongside a number of high-profile stops of people primarily from BME groups, resulted in the then MPS Commissioner setting up an independent inquiry into culture in the MPS: the Casey Review (October 2021). An interim report on misconduct was published in October 2022 and a full report in March 2023.[36]

12. The then Commissioner also announced the launch of a second investigation, examining MPS practices over the past ten years, and looking at cases where allegations of sexual misconduct or domestic abuse had been made against a police officer or member of police staff still employed by the force. This has resulted in the establishment of a specialist team, which is investigating over 600 domestic and sexual abuse allegations against MPS officers, with the ultimate aim of restoring public trust in the force.

13. The Baroness Helena Kennedy independent report Misogyny – A Human Rights Issue (March 2022)[37] stated that misogyny within police forces has been exposed by cases such as the Sarah Everard murder. She also referenced the findings of the Mrs R Malone V Chief Constable of the Police Service of Scotland case (October 2019) where the tribunal accepted evidence of officers describing an "*absolute boys club culture*", with other officers giving evidence of a sexist culture.

14. In the Review of Complaints handling, investigation and misconduct within Police Scotland (November 2020), Dame Elish Angiolini also noted concerning behaviour:

"*I was deeply concerned to hear about the experience of officers and staff from Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities, as I was to hear about discrimination experienced by female police officers and by LGBTI officers.*"

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[36] The Baroness Casey Review - Metropolitan Police web page provides terms of reference, both versions of the report and correspondence with the MPS Commissioner.
[37] This report published the findings and recommendations of a working group set up to independently consider how the Scottish criminal justice system deals with misogyny.

15. She further went on to recommend that, in responding to her report, Police Scotland should consider that:

"*This is a good opportunity to reflect on the culture of the new service, address any long-standing issues and consider how everyone in the organisation can help to change that culture for the better.*"

This recommendation was noted as completed on 24 June 2021. HMICS, however, does not consider it has been fully discharged.

16. The Police Race Action Plan (released by the National Police Chiefs' Council and the College of Policing in May 2022) sets out the commitment of all chief constables in England and Wales to become an anti-racist police service, and to explain or reform race disparities. The plan seeks to create an anti-racist culture, values and behaviours within policing, with an Independent Scrutiny and Oversight Board, chaired by barrister Abimbola Johnson, playing a critical role in scrutinising the plan and its delivery.

17. The Police Scotland Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy (Policing Together) was approved at the SPA Board on 29 September 2022. The strategy and accompanying implementation plan are the result of extensive work by both the SPA and Police Scotland to address many of the issues identified above.

18. An IRG was also established in 2021[38] to support and challenge EDIHR work as a '*critical friend*'. This approach addresses recommendation 18 in Dame Elish Angiolini's report to commission a broader, fundamental review of equality matters by an independent organisation, taking into account our HMICS Thematic Inspection of Police Scotland Training and Development – Phase 2 (October 2021). In that inspection, a number of respondents referenced the culture within Police Scotland as something that needed to improve (especially in regard to behaviours and attitudes towards diversity).

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[38] SPA, Authority Meeting - Police Scotland Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Human Rights Independent Review Group - Item 11, 29 September 2021.

19. Each member of the IRG has been aligned to a Police Scotland working group related to its key outcomes, with a lead member taking responsibility for co-ordination. One of those key outcomes is to ensure that:

   "*Police Scotland has a clear diagnosis of existing cultures and behaviours and their impact, and a robust understanding of what successful cultural transformation would look like and how to achieve it.*"

20. Three workstreams have been established for the IRG: culture, strategic direction, and training and development, with consideration of culture to cut across all three. The IRG's aim is that the workstreams will conclude their work by Autumn 2023, with the group delivering its final report by the end of 2023.

21. In our 2021 [Thematic Inspection of Hate Crime](), we found that those interviewed at a senior level felt that officers and staff were provided with sufficient support and guidance from line managers and that everyone was aware of the support process where police officers or staff members were repeat victims of hate crime. However, of the officers who were interviewed, few could say they had been offered meaningful support from their line management. Again, this highlights a gap in perception and reality between senior and lower ranks.

22. Police Scotland has consistently stated its commitment to tackling VAWG. In the wake of increased public concern following recent high-profile crimes, it set out plans to deliver a VAWG Strategy, with consultation closing on 16 October 2022. A significant programme of research and engagement activity has been undertaken to develop a strategy that meets the needs of victims and survivors, and reflects the unique role policing has in tackling VAWG.

23. Police Scotland said the VAWG strategy would help achieve the Scottish Government's vision set out in its '[*Equally Safe*]()' strategy, and that it would "*recognise the need for attitudinal and cultural change and seek to inspire and influence change through, education, intervention, prevention and the robust pursuit of perpetrators*". It follows on from the Police Scotland '*That Guy*' campaign in Autumn 2021, which highlighted male sexual entitlement and misogynistic attitudes, turning the narrative away from preventative advice to women and focusing on male behaviour.

24. The [VAWG Strategy](#) and Implementation Plan was approved at the SPA Board on 23 March, 2023. It aims to drive change through the development of effective prevention strategies, the pursuit of perpetrators and the creation of safe spaces for everyone to live freely and safely. Its four strategic outcomes are:

   - Supporting women and girls

   - Preventing harm and securing justice

   - Creating safe spaces

   - Trust and confidence.

25. The strategy is aligned to a number of existing workstreams including the Joint Strategy for Policing (2023), Policing Together: Our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy, the Misogyny and Sexism SLWG and the development of a Human Rights Framework.

26. The delivery of the VAWG Strategy and its Implementation Plan are key strategic priorities for Police Scotland. However, it states that fully realising this ambition is dependent on appropriate funding being made available to deliver the resources required. The implementation plan sets out that measures of success will be included in an evaluation report and various actions are included to indicate that evaluation of individual activities will take place.

27. Further detail on the Policing Together approach is contained within our main report (see paragraphs 285 - 301).

Appendix 4 – Glossary

ACC	Assistant Chief Constable
Angiolini Review	Independent review undertaken by Dame Elish Angiolini into Policing – complaints handling, investigations and misconduct issues.
BJC	Business Justification Case
BME	Black and Minority Ethnic
BSL	British Sign Language
BWV	Body Worn Video
CARP	Complaints Allocation Review Panel
Casey Review	Independent inquiry into culture in the MPS: the Casey Review (October 2021). An interim report on misconduct was published in October 2022 and a full report in March 2023.
CCRP	Case Compliance Review Panel
Centurion	System used in PSD to manage complaints and misconduct cases.
CI	Continuous Improvement
COP26	The twenty-sixth session of the Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC, hosted by Glasgow in November 2021.
CPD	Continuous Professional Development
Cultural audit	A review process that investigates the state of an organisation's culture. Typically involves examining the working environment, processes and practices, and engages with employees, teams and departments.
CVF	Competency and Values Framework
DCC	Deputy Chief Constable
EDI	Equality, Diversity and Inclusion
EDIHR	Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, and Human Rights
EFQM	European Foundation for Quality Management
EQHRIA	Equalities and Human Rights Impact Assessment
FTE	Full time equivalent (standardised method of measurement that represents the number of hours worked by an individual in one week)
Gold Group	The principal function of a Gold Group is strategic, providing support, advice and analysis. It supports co-ordination in multi-agency-type incidents and provides links with the local community and other legitimately interested parties, as appropriate. All meetings are documented and are subject to disclosure provisions.
Gold Strategy	Gold Strategy is a plan of action designed to achieve a series of objectives or a particular goal. It sets out the high-level overview of the police response and, as such, does not get drawn into tactical or operational detail.
HMICS	His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary in Scotland
HMICFRS	His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (England and Wales)
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
Initiative-it is	Term used in Casey Review to describe projects and campaigns that have been launched without considering their impact or engaging the organisation in embedding systemic change, and that are not then seen through.
IOPC	Independent Office for Police Conduct (in England & Wales)
IRG	Independent Review Group
LGB	Lesbian, gay and bisexual

LGBT+	Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender and Others
Moodle	Online training platform used in Police Scotland.
MyCareer	Review/appraisal system used by Police Scotland.
NGAU	National Gateway Assessment Unit
NPPP	National Police Promotion Process
OBL	Operating Base Level
Operation Fustic	Codename for operation addressing the findings of the employment tribunal and the independent PSNI review into the Rhona Malone case.
Operation Hotton	Codename for a series of nine linked independent investigations concerning serving police officers from the MPS.
Operation Talla	Codename for the UK national police operation to address the requirements of the COVID-19 pandemic.
Operation Urram	Codename for the COP26 event in Glasgow.
Organisational conformity	Tendency for people in an organisation to conform to widely-held norms of behaviours or beliefs.
Organisational justice	Fairness of outcomes, processes, communication and interpersonal treatment.
Organisational learning	Process by which an organisation improves itself over time through gaining experience, using that experience to create knowledge, and transferring that knowledge throughout the organisation.
PLDP	Police Leadership Development Programme
PMDP	People Management Development Programme
PSD	Professional Standards Department
PSNI	Police Service of Northern Ireland
PTSOB	Policing Together Strategic Oversight Board
PYTD	Previous Year to Date
RRRD	Re-rostered Rest Day
Six Sigma	Set of techniques and tools for process improvement
SLF	Strategic Leaders Forum
SLWG	Short Life Working Group
SOP	Standard Operating Procedure
SPA	Scottish Police Authority
SPF	Scottish Police Federation
TOIL	Time off in lieu (for additional hours/days worked)
TOM	Target operating model, the primary purpose of which is to enable application of Police Scotland's strategy and vision to its business and operations. It is a high-level representation of how Police Scotland can be best organised to more efficiently and effectively deliver and execute on its strategy.
VAWG	Violence Against Women and Girls
WME	White Minority Ethnic
YLM	Your Leadership Matters – Police Scotland leadership programme
YTD	Year to date
YVM	Your Voice Matters – Police Scotland employee survey

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