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Mental Health Thematic

Thematic review of policing Mental Health in Scotland

HMICS, 18th October 2023: [Link here](#)

Context

- The [Scottish Health Survey 2019](#) estimated that around one in four people were affected by poor mental health each year in Scotland.
- Lady Angiolini's recommended as part of her [2020 Independent Review of Police complaints handling, investigations and misconduct issues](#), that HMICS should conduct a Review of the efficiency and effectiveness of the whole-system approach to mental health.
- Consultation feedback to HMICS' Scrutiny Plan 2022-25 from Police Scotland (PS) officers and staff suggested that policing of mental health-related incidents was a notable workforce concern.
- In December 2022, HMICS established a review team and [published terms of reference](#) in January 2023, with the review to examine five objectives:
 - How well-prepared Police Scotland is to meet the needs of people who are experiencing poor mental health.
 - Whether the police response to mental health-related demand affects the efficiency and effectiveness of the force in delivering other policing services.
 - Whether the force understands the demand associated with the provision of mental health-related policing services.
 - The effectiveness of the force's collaborative working arrangements on the provision of mental health-related policing services.
 - The impact that the involvement of the police has on the person who is experiencing poor mental health.
- Within the response for the factual accuracy check, feedback was provided by the Authority Chair to HMICS noting that not taking a whole system approach could be considered a missed opportunity.

Summary/Findings

- The methodology of the review consisted of interviews with officers and staff from across Police Scotland, the Authority, staff associations, trade unions, partner organisations and key stakeholders. Focus groups were also conducted in the following Divisions: Edinburgh (E Division), Ayrshire (U Division), and Tayside (D Division). Furthermore, a self-evaluation was issued to PS which allowed the review of documentation including policies, procedures, plans, and training materials. An advisory panel was also set up to provide advice and support, to test proposals and findings.

Mental Health Thematic (continued)

Summary/Findings (continued)

- VOX Scotland - a national membership-led charity run by people with lived experience of mental ill health – was also involved in the review to provide insight and learning from those with lived experience of mental health and police response. Alongside HMICS' report VOX have also published a [Lived Experience Report](#) to supplement the findings.
- The review team routinely heard about a perceived increase in demand to support vulnerable people meaning a re-focus from dealing with traditional policing matters (e.g. crime and anti-social behaviour). Many officers believe addressing mental health has become the most significant aspect of their work.
- The 83-page report provides findings, recommendations, and outlines further areas for development. The findings and recommendations are presented below, however the areas for development can be found in Appendix A.
- The review compiles key findings across broad themes:
 - **Whole system approach:** Recognising the complexity of mental health and that it should not solely be a policing matter but an issue requiring a whole-system response to improve services and outcomes for those experiencing poor mental health. Over last 5 years PS has faced an increase in demand associated with mental health, with a perception among some of the workforce that PS are "filling gaps" and performing the role of NHS.
 - **Leadership and vision:** With no strategy in place for providing mental-health related policing services the role of PS needs to be clearly defined and articulated to the workforce, partner agencies, and the public. Whilst there is a strategic commitment to work with partners in addressing public health and wellbeing, the review finds the need for clear guidance and training on the police's role in mental health. HMICS found a potentially risk-averse culture (driven by senior leaders focus on 'safe outcomes') resulting in officers being fearful of decision making in mental health related incidents - compounded by potential investigation by PIRC. Since sergeants manage mental health-related incident risks, there are concerns about temporary sergeants being asked to manage high levels of risk without adequate training. The C3 supervisor structure was found to be supportive, proving helpful for service advisors to make decisions on policing response. Locally, innovative work is being carried out with partners to delivery improved outcomes for people experiencing poor mental health. It is recognised that the Authority is aware of increasing mental health demand however PS is unable to clearly articulate scale to the Authority (and other stakeholders), highlighting a need for better strategic oversight and co-ordination of initiatives adopted across Scotland.

Mental Health Thematic (continued)

Summary/Findings (continued)

- **Delivery:** Officers and staff highlighted a training gap for policing mental health, with workforce relying on tacit experience. Moodle mental health training packages were not widely known about, and those who had completed them considered them not to be effective. The findings suggest that a lack of training and a risk-averse culture creates mental health demand for partner organisations. Officers and staff are unclear on policing's role in mental health: with people unsure when to signpost/refer to a more appropriate agency. Better data is needed for assurance around disproportionate impacts of police powers on under-represented groups; and for recording 'place of safety orders' across Scotland. Better arrangements should be made between PS and partner agencies; particularly around handover processes, and Psychiatric Emergency Plans (PEP) across different health board areas. Effective partnership working is stifled by barriers associated with information sharing. The Enhanced Mental Health Pathway (EMHP) was noted to be effective with Phase 1 and Phase 2 being evaluated.
- **Outcomes:** It was recognised that police carrying out welfare checks on behalf of other agencies could be detrimental for people and may lead to escalation and criminalisation of people experiencing poor mental health. Stakeholders described compassion displayed by officers responding to people in distress, despite clear difficulties. Officers entering organisation have expectations often not aligned to the reality of role, as majority of time is spent dealing with mental health and vulnerability. It was also found that policing mental health is adversely impacting job satisfaction among officers and staff.
- There are 14 recommendations presented as part of the review. Those with particular relevance to the Authority are as follows:
 - **Recommendation 1:** Scottish Government should commission a whole system strategic review relating to mental health, involving a range of scrutiny bodies.
 - **Recommendation 2:** With advisory panel support and engagement, PS should develop and publish a mental health strategy (and delivery plan) articulating its purpose and vision in dealing with mental health-related incidents. Allowing the recommendations and areas for development highlighted in this review to be progressed.
 - **Recommendation 3:** PS to establish and implement internal governance arrangements to achieve its mental health strategy and delivery plan.
 - **Recommendation 4:** Police Scotland and the SPA should develop, and report on, a performance management framework setting out how it will police mental health in Scotland.
 - **Recommendation 9:** OS to review use of recording of place of safety orders to achieve consistency of approach across organisation and ensure reporting is included in performance reports to SPA.
 - **Recommendation 10:** PS and SPA to take clear steps to establish clear demand picture for policing mental health.

Mental Health Thematic (continued)

Summary/Findings (continued)

- **Recommendation 14:** PS and SPA to put in place measures to monitor progress on development and implementation of mental health strategy, this review's recommendations, and outlined areas for development (including recommendations from VOX lived experience report).
- Other recommendations: **R5:** Provision of guidance and training in line with mental health strategy; **R6:** PS engagement to partner agencies to develop leadership training; **R7:** Conduct a full training needs analysis for policing of mental health; **R8:** Monitoring and reporting of disproportionate impacts of police powers on under-represented groups; **R11** and **R12:** Review of PEP with stakeholders and consistent approach across divisions; **R13:** Encourage iVPD use by Scottish BTP colleagues.

Previous Oversight by the Authority

- Dame Angiolini's [Independent Review](#) made specific recommendations relating to the need for a strategic review of the whole system approach to mental health in Scotland. She reported that early intervention, advice and referral should ease the burden on the police service but it is inevitable that health services will still have to deal with some individuals who are in crisis.
- The Authority had oversight of the Mental Health Pathway from the planning stages through the Authority's Contact Assessment Model Oversight Group and the Policing Performance Committee in relation to Mental Health demand. In [May 2021](#), a preliminary Mental Health Pathway Evaluation was provided to the Authority Board meeting.
- The Authority provided a [submission](#) to the Criminal Justice Committee's roundtable on mental health in policing in May 2022. This submission offered the Committee additional insight in respect of the Authority's considerations and interest in examining the response to mental health issues both in our communities and in our workforce, and specifically the implications for policing.
- An [update](#) was provided to the 26 May 2022 Authority meeting in relation to the challenges faced by Police Scotland in supporting people across Scotland in mental health crisis/distress. In particular, it highlighted ongoing activity designed to address challenges including status of Police Scotland's Mental Health Strategy, the DPU's development of a Mental Health Dashboard, and Mental Health Pathway work. Further updates in [October 2022](#) on the dashboard were received.
- Through the Police Negotiating Board (with Authority involvement) a [strategic commitment](#) was agreed in August 2022 to consider the potential for a reduction in the working week for officers, but only after steps were taken to properly consider and seek to achieve increased capacity through effective system-wide management of mental health demand.
- In December 2022 the [Authority held a conference on Mental Health and policing](#). It convened multiple agencies to discuss the impact of mental health with a focus on vulnerability and distress. An event report and next steps document has been published.

Mental Health Thematic (continued)

Previous Oversight by the Authority (continued)

- In March 2023's PPC meeting, a [paper](#) on the Authority's public polling on confidence and trust in policing was presented – which contained thematic questions relating to policing, mental health and vulnerability.
- The Authority [published a public briefing](#) on the issues surrounding mental health and policing. This Briefing (initially published in May 2023) provides details about the Scottish context along with work being conducted in this area.
- The [Criminal Justice Committee](#) took evidence from HMICS on 15 November, on this report on mental health in policing. The main message communicated was the need for government and health to be part of the solution, and a recognition that policing can't solve or serve this challenge in isolation.
- In addition, the Authority hosted the [Policing and Trauma conference](#) in April 2023. The Authority will continue its leadership in this space.

Future Oversight by the Authority

- The Authority are working with Police Scotland and Scottish Government to deliver a series of local area partnership workshops in early 2024 focused on reducing demand on emergency departments and response policing caused by mental ill health and distress.
- Authority staff and Police Scotland colleagues are preparing a public briefing on trauma informed approaches.
- The Policing Performance Committee (PPC) will be briefed on this Thematic Review by HMICS representatives at its 6th December meeting.
- The Authority will attend a Scottish Police Consultative Forum in the new year with SG/PS/SPF/ASPS/SCPOSA/HMICS to discuss the Thematic Review with an aim to seek to identify areas of commonality/consensus and agreed next steps in relation to the issue of mental health demand in policing.

External Sources

- BBC News - [Mental health calls impacting police effectiveness, report says](#) – 18 October 2023
- Scottish Government - [Mental health and wellbeing strategy: delivery plan 2023-2025](#) – 7 November 2023
- Scottish Government - [What Works? Collaborative Police and Health interventions for mental health distress](#) – 16 August 2018