

HMICS Scrutiny Plan - review


August 2023



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Introduction

In April 2022 HMICS published a three-year scrutiny plan for the years 2022-25. This is the first time that a three-year plan has been consulted, developed, and implemented. The work undertaken to understand the key issues facing policing in Scotland was of greater depth and wider scope than previous versions thus giving greater weight to the plan.

The plan has been welcomed by key stakeholders in terms of both the topics to be assessed and the forward plan that allows for Police Scotland and the Scottish Police Authority to consider their own capabilities and to self-evaluate against the key areas that HMICS will inspect. This deliberate approach is aligned to both a desire for continuous improvement and adoption of the EFQM (European Foundation for Quality Management).

In keeping with the pledge by HMICS that the content and chronology of the plan would be kept under review, this update is a reflection of this review to ensure transparency of approach in line with our values.

Since the commencement of the plan, there have been significant changes within HMICS in terms of staffing, in addition to a revised workforce operating model, which has concluded following ongoing recruitment in the past 12 months. Furthermore, HMICS has embedded a revised inspection methodology and improvement plan to ensure that we continue to deliver a scrutiny and inspection programme that prioritises quality of work and supports our vision to improve policing across Scotland.

We are confident that the content of the plan remains current and valid and have sought to revise the chronology of the inspections to ensure appropriate levels of scrutiny balanced with organisational capacity within HMICS and the subsequent capacity of those subject to inspection to act on recommendations to make sustainable improvement to policing services.



Progress to date

Since the publication of our previous update in December 2022, HMICS has continued to progress the scrutiny plan, with the publication of a number of inspection reports, both by the inspectorate as single agency publications, and increasingly with other scrutiny partners in recognition of the multifaceted challenges being managed by those organisations who seek to deliver an optimal public service.

The [Domestic Abuse Phase One](#) inspection report was published in January 2023, and HMICS is grateful to everyone who participated in this work, in particular those who have suffered from domestic abuse. Their courage in coming forward and contributing to this work will undoubtedly assist in enhancing the service offered further still. This significant piece of work looked closely at the victim's journey and drew from engagement with victims, support organisations and professionals who engage with Police Scotland in supporting them.

Healthcare in custody has been delivered by NHS services across Scotland since 2014. Until this year there has been no inspection of this critical service nor an accurate understanding of the service provision across Scotland. A baseline assessment has been undertaken by Healthcare Improvement Scotland and HMICS to define the level of service and capability across the custody facilities and to outline a methodology for inspection in future years. This [report](#) was published in January 2023, with geographical inspections of [Lanarkshire](#) and [Tayside](#) published in April and July respectively, and have commenced an inspection within Dumfries and Galloway. It is our intention to undertake a programme of three joint inspections per year going forward to meet our obligations under NPM/OPCAT.



A [joint inspection of diversion from prosecution](#) in partnership with HM Inspectorate of Prosecution in Scotland, Care Inspectorate and HM Inspectorate of Prisons for Scotland was published in February 2023. A key element of the justice strategy, in addition to reducing re-offending, is ensuring that those cases that require to be prosecuted are in the court system as quickly and effectively as possible. Diversion from prosecution is an effective method to address criminal behaviour at an earlier point, reducing demand on courts and delivering justice in a timely and proportionate manner. This inspection considers the process and procedures to deliver these interventions and how the outcomes can be improved.

In June 2022, the Chair of the Scottish Police Authority (SPA) requested HMICS conduct an [Assurance Review of SPA Forensic Services Toxicology Section](#). The review focused on the end-to-end processes, from roadside to court, for drug driving offences as described in sections 4 and 5A of the Road Traffic Act 1988. The report, published in April 2022, provides an overview of the issues leading to the drug driving cases that were unable to be prosecuted, with an assessment of the effectiveness surrounding the processes in place for obtaining, analysing, and reporting drug driving blood samples to support criminal proceedings. A total of 25 recommendations were made in order to drive improvement in this critical area of road safety.

HMICS has a long-standing commitment to collaborate with the Care Inspectorate, Healthcare Improvement Scotland, and Education Scotland on joint inspections of services for children and young people. We continue to be active participants in the joint inspection programme, led by the Care Inspectorate and recognise the drive across all local authority areas and partner organisations to improve the services provided and achieve the best outcomes for children at risk of harm.

Scottish Ministers have also requested that the Care Inspectorate lead joint inspections of adult support and protection in collaboration with Healthcare Improvement Scotland and His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary in Scotland. The programme is ongoing and will continue throughout this scrutiny period and into 2025, following approval for the continuation of a second phase of this work, which will seek to augment geographical inspections with thematic work in a number of areas. An overview report of the initial phase of this joint work will be published in August 2023, on the Care Inspectorates [website](#).



Updates to our programme

Year 2 (2023 / 2024)

HMICS is currently progressing a number of significant areas of work, which are in the latter stages of development using our revised methodology and will be due for publication in the coming months. This will be progressed concurrently with additional inspection work that will be initiated within this inspection year as described below.

Organisational Culture (including Vetting)

Of note, the Organisational Culture inspection, for which [Terms of Reference](#) were published in January 2023. During the fieldwork for this inspection, which involved a review of Vetting processes within Police Scotland, it became apparent that the vetting work was in itself a significant area for assurance, and as such a bespoke report is being developed and will be published separately but in conjunction with the inspection into organisational culture.

Mental Health

During the consultation phase for the development of the scrutiny plan, the subject of police involvement in dealing with mental health was a recurring feature, and was therefore included as a topic for inspection, with [Terms of Reference](#) published in January 2023, and which is in progress and scheduled for publication in September 2023. This inspection work considers the role of Police Scotland in relation to mental health in Scotland and will assess the state, efficiency and effectiveness of Police Scotland's provision of mental health related policing services. While this is an HMICS inspection, the development of this work has been significantly enhanced by the establishment of an advisory panel, comprising expertise from other public and third sector partners.

Frontline Focus (Wellbeing)

The first of our Frontline Focus inspections will focus on Wellbeing and will re-commence in autumn following a decision to pause this to allow the progression of the Organisational Culture inspection work. The [Terms of Reference](#) for the Wellbeing inspection have already been published and are available on our website.



Missing Persons

Another significant area of demand on police services. Much of which is not crime-related, is the investigation of Missing Persons, which was a significant feature in our consultation. From August 2023, HMICS will initiate scrutiny work in this area and seek to review and provide assurance around the processes and practices employed and will also seek to examine the effectiveness of the new Missing Persons Database application that was launched in recent years.

Operational Support Division

Operational Support Division (OSD) is a national division within Police Scotland that provides a number of different specialist services across the country. A review will seek to explore if there is equal access to these services across the country, the service provided to communities and the opportunities for officers and staff. Our inspection will take a phased approach to focus on specific areas of OSD identified within our consultation.

Scottish Police Authority

Later in 2023, HMICS will undertake a review of the Scottish Police Authority (SPA). This review will take the format of a validated self-evaluation, assessed against best value criteria. This approach will encourage reflection by the SPA and its continuous improvement, whilst ensuring an element of independent assurance on their core role and governance approach.

Conduct

Following on from the work in relation to Organisational Culture and Vetting, towards the end of the scrutiny year HMICS will begin work to assess how work in relation to conduct matters is undertaken. HMICS will seek to examine how misconduct is dealt with by the organisation, whilst also looking at preventative approaches and how Police Scotland seek to ensure appropriate behaviours by all members of staff, which is vital for public confidence.



Year 3 (including future scrutiny plan inspections)

Strategy & Performance

Following reviews on demand analysis and strategic workforce planning, HMICS had previously committed to a third in our phased series of assurance reviews around achieving a sustainable policing model, specifically considering strategy and performance. As part of this inspection, HMICS will consider the strategic planning, tasking and co-ordination processes; how Police Scotland measure, record and manage performance; and whether their approach is outcomes based.

Drugs Harm Reduction

The increasing number of drug related deaths in Scotland has been of significant public and political concern. Misuse of drugs continues to have a significant impact on individuals, their families and communities and can lead to other issues such as crime, disorder, and mental health concerns. In the early part of the final year of this inspection period, HMICS will review Police Scotland's approaches to drug harm reduction, including partnership approaches to prevention for this increasing public health issue.

Frontline Focus (Role of a Frontline Officer / Tools of the Trade)

The second in the series of Frontline Focus reviews will comprise a review of the Role of a Frontline Officer. Building on the previous inspection type which considered wellbeing matters, we will continue to engage with and seek the views of officers to inform this work. This will be immediately followed with a similar focus on the "Tools of the Trade" of officers in the operational environment.

Domestic Abuse Phase 2

Following on from the publication in January 2023 of the police response to domestic abuse as part of a 3-phased approach, this second phase will seek to focus on domestic abuse practices and support available to victims, in addition to which we will also look at conduct within the police, linking this to concerns about misogyny. It is anticipated therefore that the third phase, where potential joint inspection work with the Inspectorate for Prosecution Services will be undertaken, will commence as part of a new scrutiny period.



Cyber Crime & Online Fraud

Cyber crime and online fraud represent a growing threat as technology pervades every part of society, and in addition to the physical space, as the public increasingly spends more time in the digital space, so must police services to prevent and detect crime. HMICS will seek to examine Police Scotland's approaches to this growing risk, including their cyber capability and approaches to economic crime.






Revised Scrutiny Plan

It is anticipated that the following inspections will commence either towards the end of Year 3 of the plan, therefore continuing into the beginning of the refreshed scrutiny plan, or at the beginning of the new scrutiny period, which will cover the years 2025-2028. This will be subject to similar rigour and consultation towards the latter part of this scrutiny period to ensure the new plan maintains the approach of currency and collaboration.

This includes our planned Crime Audit, which will move into Year 1 of our next 3-year programme to allow for full implementation of the new national police Crime Management System. Notwithstanding those topics referred to earlier in this review, further inspection topics which will now be reviewed as part of a new scrutiny plan include HR Governance & Policies, Frontline Focus – Training, Probationer Training, Public Contact & Engagement, and SPA Forensic Services.



Scrutiny plan overview

-  Strategic Reviews
-  Collaborative Reviews
-  Thematic Reviews
-  Audit & Assurance Reviews
-  Requested



* Inspection work will overlap into the next year.



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About Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary in Scotland

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

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