



<b>Meeting</b>	<b>Complaints and Conduct Committee</b>
<b>Date</b>	<b>4 September 2025</b>
<b>Location</b>	<b>Video Conference</b>
<b>Title of Paper</b>	<b>Police Scotland Vetting Annual Report</b>
<b>Presented By</b>	<b>ACC Lynn Ratcliff</b>
<b>Recommendation to Members</b>	<b>For Discussion</b>
<b>Appendix Attached</b>	<b>No</b>

## PURPOSE

The purpose of this paper is to provide SPA Complaints and Conduct Committee with a Vetting progress update, including the ongoing work to monitor disproportionality within the vetting process.

Members are invited to discuss the content of this paper.

## **1 BACKGROUND**

- 1.1 A thorough and effective vetting process is a key component in assessing an individual's honesty and integrity. By identifying those who might pose a risk, vetting acts to prevent crime or harm and to protect members of the public against improper conduct by people working for, on behalf of, or in partnership with the Scottish Police Authority (SPA) or Police Scotland. The vetting process reassures the public that appropriate checks are conducted on individuals in positions of trust and supports public confidence. It also ensures there are no conflicts of interest which could adversely impact the ability of the individual to discharge their policing duties effectively and impartially.
- 1.2 When an individual applies to join Police Scotland in any role, the Force Vetting Unit (FVU) conducts relevant background checks. These checks involve researching a wide range of information on the applicant and includes information in relation to third parties and associates of applicants.
- 1.3 Police Scotland vetting is undertaken in accordance with the Vetting Manual of Guidance which is mirrored upon the content of the College of Policing's Authorised Professional Practice (APP). Police Scotland are currently developing an APP Standard Operating Procedure in support of the forthcoming delivery of Police Scotland Vetting Regulations under the Police (Ethics, Conduct and Scrutiny) (Scotland) Act 2025.

## **2 VETTING OVERVIEW**

- 2.1 The intrusive nature of vetting is recognised, Police Scotland continues to invest in training to ensure cultural and diversity awareness, and that Vetting Officers are supported to assess applicant circumstances sensitively and on an individual basis, professionally and without judgement. The most recent training being attended is the organisational Anti-Racism training delivered via Partnerships, Preventions and Community Wellbeing as well as Neuro-diversity awareness raising sessions delivered both internally and via College of Policing.
- 2.2 Police Scotland's vetting application forms do not currently request protected characteristic or diversity data as it is not considered relevant to vetting decision making or risk assessment. As part of the continuous improvement programme in respect of vetting and in support of protected characteristic monitoring, engagement has been undertaken with College of Policing to inform the development of a new Police Scotland vetting form, and it is anticipated that

upon introduction of the new vetting form provision will be made for diversity questions posed to applicants for monitoring purposes.

- 2.3 The following tables provide data to inform members regarding the number of vetting applicants that have been refused vetting, and their gender and ethnicity, between 01 April 2024 and 31 July 2025.

Applicants subject to a refusal decision can access an appeals process, where the vetting application and information gathered during the appeal process is reviewed in its entirety by an independent senior member of the Force Vetting Unit who has had no involvement in the prior refusal decision.

2.4 **Recruitment Vetting Result – Ethnic Origin - 01/04/2024 – 31/03/2025**

Candidates by Characteristics	Police Officer	Vetting Refusals	
<b>Total</b>	<b>1370</b>	<b>241</b>	<b>17.6%</b>
Male	922	167	
%	67.3%		69.3%
Female	448	74	
%	32.7%		30.7%
White Scottish	1117	200	
%	81.5%		82.9%
AOWB	115	17	
%	8.4%		7%
WME	69	5	
%	5%		2%
BME	66	19	
%	5%		7.8%
Prefer not to say	3	0	
%	0.1%		0%

## Recruitment Vetting Result – Ethnic Origin - 01/04/2025 – 31/07/2025

Candidates by Characteristics	Police Officer	Vetting Refusals	
<b>Total</b>	<b>205</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>17%</b>
Male	111	19	
%	54.1%		54.2%
Female	94	16	
%	45.9%		45.7%
White Scottish	164	25	
%	80%		74.1%
AOWB	16	3	
%	7.8%		8.5%
WME	14	1	
%	6.8%		2.8%
BME	10	6	
%	4.9%		17%
Prefer not to say	1	0	
%	0.5%		0%

- 2.5 Additional detail has been sought via Police Scotland Recruitment Department to understand the current pipeline of applicants and how many applicants identify as minority ethnic. The “pipeline” covers individuals from application stage through to offer of appointment. As at 11 August 2025, 8.6% of applicants identify as minority ethnic, with 3.8% of those identifying as BME and 4.8% as WME.
- 2.6 The 2011 Census found that 96% of Scotland’s population identified as White. The population in Asian, African, Caribbean or Black, Mixed or Other ethnic groups was 4% and African Caribbean or Black, Mixed or Other ethnic groups was 1%. The 2022 Census overview of Scotland’s ethnic diversity outlines that 87.1% of Scotland’s population identified as Scottish/Other White British and 5.8% attributed to White minority ethnic groups, 4% Asian minority groups, 1.2% Black minority groups and 1.1% mixed/multiple ethnicity groups.

Although this data continues to suggest a lack of diverse candidates within Scotland, it is recognised that the role of a warranted Police Officer is regulated and carries specific eligibility criteria such as age, residency, requirement for UK drivers’ licence which can also impact on BME and WME applicants.

- 2.7 Alongside Recruitment Department, the Force Vetting Unit continues to monitor these statistics, seeking opportunities to enhance our approach and review and keep abreast of the progress made by College of Policing.

### **3. FORCE VETTING – NEXT STEPS**

- 3.1 On 16 December 2024, the College of Policing launched the updated Vetting Authorised Professional Practice (APP) for England and Wales which introduces more robust vetting standards for potential and currently serving police officers and staff, ensuring only those suitable can join and remain in policing. In parallel, new vetting application forms have been introduced which collate protected characteristic information from applicants.
- 3.2 Approval has been given from the College of Policing for Police Scotland to adapt the APP for 'local' use and a draft APP Standard Operating Procedure, DPIA, EQHRIA and revised application form in support of the delivery of Police Scotland Vetting Regulations under the Police (Ethics, Conduct and Scrutiny) (Scotland) Act 2025 is under development.
- 3.3 The Force Vetting Unit has established a dedicated team to progress policy matters including delivery of vetting requirements under Police (Ethics, Conduct and Scrutiny) (Scotland) Act 2025 and the HMICS recommendations from the Assurance Review of Vetting 2023. A separate paper has been provided to outline the progress of the HMICS recommendations work.
- 3.4 Financial investment has been secured to support an upgrade to Police Scotland's Vetting case management system "Corevet" and this is currently being progressed. This upgrade and introduction of revised vetting forms will provide additional capability to the Force Vetting Unit to gather and monitor applicant diversity information.
- 3.5 The Force Vetting Unit continues to develop its' transparency and communication to vetting applicants, offering and providing additional support to all applicants during form submission and any subsequent vetting interview from the outset.
- 3.6 The Force Vetting Unit will continue to seek opportunities to benchmark and engage other forces across the UK as well as the ongoing College of Policing work to ensure Police Scotland vetting is aligned to best practice and corporate and public reassurance in respect of vetting matters is delivered.

#### **4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 Work is being progressed within the Force Vetting Unit alongside business-as-usual commitments. There are no additional financial implications at this time.

#### **5. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 There are no personnel implications in this report.

#### **6 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 There are no legal implications in this report.

#### **7 REPUTATIONAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 There are no reputational implications in this report.

#### **8 SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1 There are no social implications in this report.

#### **9 COMMUNITY IMPACT**

- 9.1 There are no community implications in this report.

#### **10 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

- 10.1 There are no specific equalities implications in this report however the Force Vetting Unit have completed Equality and Human Rights Impact Assessments (EqHRIA) where required. In addition, the Force Vetting Unit have completed an EqHRIA for the vetting aspects of the Police (Ethics, Conduct and Scrutiny) (S) Act 2025 and a separate EqHRIA for the Vetting Authorised Professional Practice – Standard Operating Procedure.

#### **11 ENVIRONMENT IMPLICATIONS**

- 11.1 There are no environmental implications in this report.

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Members are invited to discuss the content of this paper and advise of ongoing data requirements to monitor disproportionality in vetting.