



Agenda Item 6

<b>Meeting</b>	<b>SPA Complaints and Conduct Committee</b>
<b>Date</b>	<b>1 March 2023</b>
<b>Location</b>	<b>Video Conference</b>
<b>Title of Paper</b>	<b>Continuous Integrity Screening</b>
<b>Presented By</b>	<b>ACC Alan Speirs, Professionalism and Assurance</b>
<b>Recommendation to Members</b>	<b>For Discussion</b>
<b>Appendix Attached</b>	<b>No</b>

**PURPOSE**

To provide the SPA Complaints and Conduct Committee with an overview of Police Scotland’s approach to Continuous Integrity Screening.

Members of are invited to discuss the content of this report.

## **1. BACKGROUND**

- 1.1 Police officers and staff hold a privileged position within our society and often members of the public are at their most vulnerable when they come into contact with the police service. It is imperative that officers and staff act with integrity and professionalism at all times, both within our communities and within the workforce to uphold public trust and confidence and ensure Police Scotland is an inclusive and safe place to work.
- 1.2 As a consequence in April 2022 the Chief Constable and his Strategic Leadership Board approved an uplift to the vetting function by some 16 vetting officers. The primary purpose of this uplift was to introduce additional vetting measures and enhance PSOS approach to vetting, which included;
  - Reaffirmation vetting checks for new recruits.
  - Annual randomised re-vetting programme.
  - Meet the increasing BAU demands on vetting.
- 1.3 This uplift is now complete and all vetting officers are fully trained, the re-affirmation programme is in place and operating effectively with the annual programme of randomised re-vetting commencing in April 2023.
- 1.4 Police Scotland conduct over 7000 vetting applications on an annual basis with those applications progressed on a priority basis with initial priority afforded to new police officer recruits and members of police staff. There are few instances where employment is undertaken in advance of those applications being completed regardless of the role or requirement to work within Police Scotland premises including contractors and service providers working within the Police Scotland estate. Over 5000 officers and staff are vetted to a higher level than recruitment vetting and those designated post holders have their vetting reviewed on an annual basis. Any backlogs associated with vetting are generally in relation to contractors and service providers supporting our estates function.

## **2. INTRODUCTION**

- 2.1 On 15 January 2023, Police Scotland received access to a confidential Metropolitan Police briefing paper, 'Operation Aragatsa'. This related to the criminal offending of Constable David Carrick, a serving Metropolitan Police officer charged and remanded for a number of

serious sexual and related offences (initially 53 charges involving 13 victims). The officer has subsequently pled guilty to the majority of those charges and was sentenced on 07 February 2023. The matters surrounding this officer have received extensive UK wide media attention. Multiple media requests have also been made of Police Scotland regarding the themes outlined within this case (over 30 FOI requests received to date as a direct consequence).

- 2.2 The Home Office recently announced that all forces are to check staff against national databases to identify if anyone has 'slipped through the net'. In response to the Home Office direction the National Police Chief's Council have responded by stating that all police officers and staff in England and Wales will be checked against the Police National Database (PND) to identify any intelligence or allegations that need further investigation. The direction from NPCC to Chief Constables has asked them to take immediate action to enable checks to be completed by 31 March 2023.
- 2.3 Following recent discussions in Scotland with our Chief Constable and Deputies, Police Scotland are now committed to undertake this work and more, and this paper outlines the proposed plans overseen by DCC Fiona Taylor and led by ACC Alan Speirs. This position has now been supported by our staff associations and intimated within the Scottish media.

### **3. ACTION**

- 3.1 Police Scotland will undertake a Continuous Integrity Screening exercise which will see all officers and staff checked against a number of police systems and those checks will progress on a prioritised basis. It was recommended and approved that all officers & staff are checked against PND, SID, CHS and IBase (ACU database) to provide a high level of corporate reassurance. The Continuous Integrity Screening programme will include all SPA employees as agreed recently with the SPA Chief Executive. With some additional support this work will be concluded within a 6 – 8 week timeframe and alongside other UK Forces will be completed by 31 March 2023. The Continuous Integrity Screening programme is now well under way.
- 3.2 On 21st October 2021, DCC Professionalism, commissioned a review of all complaints and conduct matters which contained sexual circumstances between 1st January 2017 and 21st October 2021 which were reported to or within Police Scotland. The purpose of this

review being to ensure Police Scotland has discharged its responsibilities in relation to the management of risk relating to reports or complaints which include sexual circumstances, sexual offending or misconduct by officers or staff of Police Scotland, and where appropriate Police Scotland has fully investigated and progressed matters within relevant legislation, powers and regulations.

3.3 The review focussed on reports which stemmed from complaints or conduct allegations across the following business areas:

- Complaints about the Police (sexual element)
- Referrals through the PSD Gateway Assessment Unit
- ACU related referrals, intelligence reports and investigations
- PSD Misconduct matters containing sexualised behaviours
- Vetting (emphasis on failures and learning which may be drawn therefrom)

3.4 An overview of grievance related matters was also included to highlight the scale, range and outcomes in respect of sexual related grievances.

3.5 During the course of this review 410 reports of sexual misconduct, for the period 01 January until 2017 until 21 October 2021, were reviewed across each work stream within PSD. The most prevalent reports included Sexual Assault (30%), Inappropriate Comments (17%), and Inappropriate Messaging (13%), 37% of which occurred whilst officers were off duty. This was shared with SPA and whilst no significant issues were identified, all available learning was extracted.

3.6 It has now been determined that this review be reinstated to cover the period 21 October 2021 to the present day. It has further been agreed that the Terms of Reference (ToR) surrounding the review be extended to include all domestic abuse related matters. The domestic abuse element of this review will initially cover the last 3 years to present day, a TOR has been developed and the review has now commenced.

3.7 Police Scotland are currently developing a policy surrounding the investigation of sexual or domestic abuse offending by Police Officers on or off duty. Notwithstanding that COPFS have a key role to play in directing the investigation of on duty criminality it was recommended and has been agreed that Police Scotland will immediately develop and introduce a policy which addresses investigative ownership. It is proposed that this plan be developed between PSD and SCD PPU and

shared with CAAPD and the Sexual offences Unit at COPFS for agreement. Engagement has now commenced between PSD and SCD PPU to develop such a policy.

- 3.8 Finally, the wellbeing of our officers and staff is vital whether they are considered a victim or a subject in relation to on duty or off duty matters. Providing the correct level of support demonstrates our commitment to treating everyone fairly, with integrity and respect. In December 2021, SLB approved the introduction of a PSD led "Investigative – Wellbeing Guidance" document, and this was duly rolled out across the Force. This guidance remains fit for purpose and a communication plan will now be developed to refresh and reinforce the principles contained within the Guidance which are already well understood across Police Scotland.
- 3.9 All of the above actions were endorsed by the Chief Constable and Senior Leadership Team for immediate implementation on Monday 23 January 2023.

#### **4. PROPOSED NEXT STEPS**

- 4.1 SPA members will be aware that in recent months PSOS launched our 'Policing Together Programme'. Contained within this programme are numerous activities in the Professionalism and Preventions portfolio. There are largely PSD led activities with the role out of a refreshed programme highlighting the Standards of Professional Behaviour, which is progressing well.
- 4.2 A key element of this programme focuses on vetting within PSOS and as outlined, the uplift of vetting resources will significantly enhance the capabilities of our vetting function.
- 4.3 As previously intimated, Police Scotland are progressing towards the introduction of an annual randomised re-vetting programme which will commence on 01 April 2023 and see over 1200 vetting reviews of officers and staff being conducted each year.
- 4.4 To further enhance our vetting position within Police Scotland a number of other actions are ongoing which will both complement our vetting approach but also support our 'continuous integrity screening', and they can be summarised as follows;
- Continuation of the re-affirmation vetting for all new recruits
  - Review of timing within the training programme when probationary constables undertake their oath of office

- Review of the Application of the Regulation 9 processes in respect of probationers for their entire 2 year probationary period as an alternative to conduct processes.
- Publication scheme in respect of redacted conduct outcomes, dismissals, retrials and resignations as a consequence of conduct matters.
- Review and benchmarking of Police Scotland against HMICFRS review of vetting, misconduct and misogyny within the Met and also Baroness Casey's published interim findings in respect of her recent review of the Metropolitan Police.

## **5. CONCLUSION**

- 5.1 It is recommended that committee members note the updates in respect of Continuous Integrity Screening as well as other parallel activities outlined within the foregoing report.
- 5.2 Members will be regularly updated through the SPA Complaints & Conduct Committee.

## **6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 The Continuous Integrity Screening programme is being met within current budget lines. A small overtime budget has also been acquired in respect of same.

## **7. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 Unknown at present, dependent upon outcome of screening programme.

## **8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1 There are no legal implications in this report.

## **9. REPUTATIONAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1 The Continuous Integrity Screening programme aims to promote reassurance however, the full reputational implications are unknown at present and are dependent upon completion of the exercise.

## **10. SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 10.1 There are no social implications in this report.

**11. COMMUNITY IMPACT**

11.1 There are no community implications in this report.

**12. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

12.1 There are no equality implications in this report.

**13. ENVIRONMENT IMPLICATIONS**

13.1 There are no environmental implications in this report.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

Members of are invited to discuss the content of this report.