



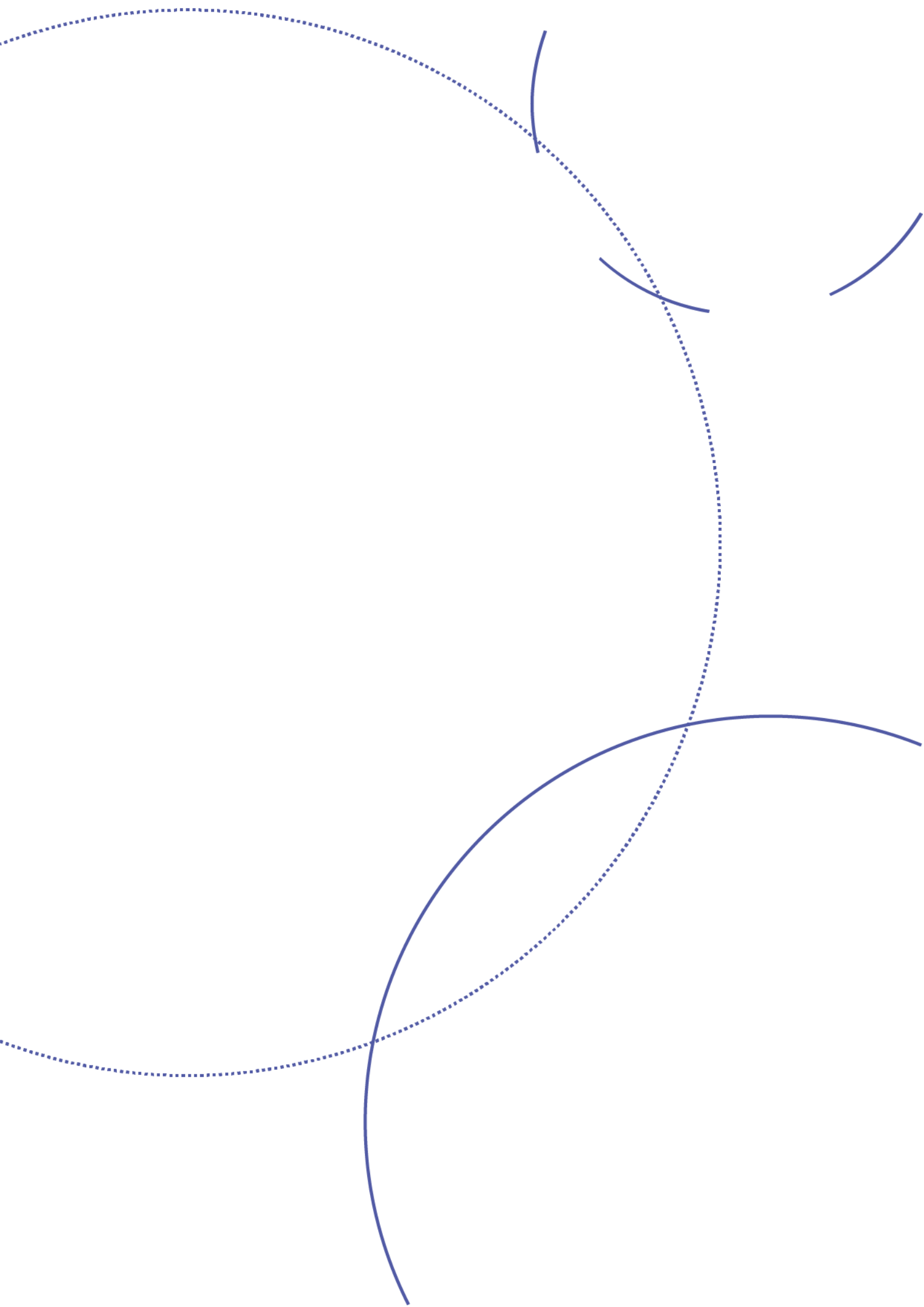
Improving
Policing
Across
Scotland



HM Inspectorate of Constabulary in Scotland

ANNUAL REPORT
2023-24







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).

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.







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.¹

This annual report is produced under section 82(3) of the Police and Fire Reform (Scotland) Act 2012 and presented to Scottish Ministers for laying before the Scottish Parliament.

¹ HMICS, [Corporate Plan 2021-2024](#), 1 February 2022.



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Introduction by HM Chief Inspector of Constabulary in Scotland

State of policing 2023-24

HMICS's function is to improve policing in Scotland. We do this through rigorous assessment and analysis, providing valuable insights into the effectiveness and efficiency of policing services across Scotland, highlighting areas for improvement and innovation. We aim to achieve this in every piece of inspection work that we do – whether acting individually or with partner bodies when we undertake joint inspections.

As a key member of the Scottish Public Sector Scrutiny Network, our inspection and advice function aims to meet the guidance provided in the [Crerar Review](#), to improve policing services for the public and provide assurance to ministers, parliament, other elected members, stakeholders and other service delivery partners. Our intention is to ensure that the police service is:

- efficient and effective; and
- cognisant of the programme for government

while ensuring the operational independence of the Chief Constable.

Our work during the year

During the past year, we have produced inspections of organisational culture; vetting; mental health; wellbeing of officers and staff; and SPA forensic toxicology. We have also worked with key scrutiny partners on four custody inspections, four children at risk of harm inspections, and seven adult support and protection inspections. The range of these inspections was determined both to focus on the totality and governance of policing, ensuring that the value provided by the service is commensurate with the revenue expended on it.

We have also been engaged in work to address the recommendations made in [Lady Elish Angiolini's report](#) and to provide response to the consultation on the [Police \(Ethics, Conduct and Scrutiny\) \(Scotland\) Bill](#) as it moves through parliamentary scrutiny – evidence of which was seen in the stage one report recently published by the Scottish Parliament.



This work is crucial in building trust and confidence in the systems and processes in place to respond to complaints about the police, to manage the conduct of officers and staff, and to ensure that those within the organisation are suitable for the roles for which they are engaged. Key elements of this are to ensure that:

- vetting at recruitment stage and regular checks on this vetting are in place;
- the Chief Constable has the power to remove officers and staff from the organisation if they are unable to sustain that vetting; and
- the public are assured that, if they complain, matters are dealt with effectively – and that those who pose a risk of harm are removed from the organisation.

Our findings

During our inspection of the vetting regime in Police Scotland, we were impressed with the quality and dedication of staff within the unit. They perform a difficult task, with significant complexity in decision making and risk management. We were also pleased with the appetite for change that was demonstrated; Police Scotland understood our emerging findings and responded to them during the inspection work. This included ensuring that the work being done to assess officers and staff against existing databases was enhanced with checks against the Police Scotland interim vulnerable persons database, increasing the data wash. In doing so, the service demonstrated its determination to understand the risk posed by its existing workforce, while also taking steps to improve the vetting of new staff and creating processes to re-vet existing officers and staff.

The service has also responded to the Angiolini review recommendations, making many changes to the way in which it deals with misconduct (with additional improvements in the pipeline, pending further work on legislation). As part of our scrutiny plan, HMICS has begun work on an inspection of how Police Scotland and the SPA manage conduct and discipline matters.

One aspect of this area of policing that is missing in Scotland is the concept of misconduct in a public office. This charge has a high evidential test but is used, sparingly, in England and Wales, where it exists as an option when there is misuse of the office of constable (or other powers or information that officers and staff have access to).



The offence is committed when a public officer, acting as such, wilfully neglects to perform their duty and/or wilfully misconducts themselves:

- to such a degree as to amount to an abuse of the public's trust in the office holder; and
- without reasonable excuse or justification.²

This test, and the case law associated with it, provides options that could strengthen public protection from officers or staff who misuse their position for personal gain. Establishing a code of ethics based upon a legislative position, would put the service in very strong position. This could be further enhanced by supporting those investigating misconduct with appropriate tools.

While recognising that there is no current appetite within Scottish Government for this change, I would advocate the consideration of such legislation. This would offer equity with England and Wales but – more importantly – it would provide opportunities to address those situations where behaviour does not currently meet the threshold for an existing criminal act (where the service finds it difficult to remove individuals who pose a threat to the public or their colleagues).

Change of leadership

The new Chief Constable took up office in October 2023. Her early commitments to a new performance framework and a refresh of the organisation's vision for the future are both welcome and there is strong evidence that these are being worked on at pace.

² The Crown Prosecution Service, [Misconduct in Public Office](#), 07 July 2023.



Historically, Police Scotland has struggled with describing its performance and many of the service's early problems can be attributed to an overly simplistic and mechanistic target infrastructure. Sir Iain Livingstone moved the service away from the previous red and green target system and the perverse outcomes that this drove. The pendulum appears to have swung too far in the opposite direction and that performance reporting, especially to the SPA Performance and People committees, became a narrative venture with large amounts of prose describing what was happening in the service. These documents regularly ran into the hundreds of pages which is a significant commitment to produce and to digest for those holding the service to account. This overload of data hid the real issues in the mass of, often irrelevant, information with little analysis.

Police Scotland's proposals to redefine the performance management framework are promising and there are significant efforts being made to show not only what has been done but the difference that this has made and whether this is what is expected and acceptable. We will continue to engage with Police Scotland as this work progresses.

Our scrutiny plan indicated that we would conduct assurance work on strategy and performance in this scrutiny year. However, having discussed this with both the SPA and senior leaders in Police Scotland we decided to delay this for at least a year to allow the new performance framework and vision for 2030 to get underway. Meanwhile, we will observe performance meetings of the service and those run by the SPA to understand the improvements that are being made and the impact of these across the service.

Police Scotland must uphold principles of fairness, integrity, and respect against a constantly-evolving landscape of social, technological, and geopolitical change. In previous reports we have praised its ability to balance complex policing events and human rights, and this must be replicated on a daily basis, with the code of ethics and human rights sitting at the heart of all policing activity.

We are pleased to see the service acknowledging this, particularly in its Policing Together programme. However, our inspections of organisational culture, vetting and wellbeing tell a different story, since divisional officers and staff rarely see senior leaders, hear how the service is performing or how the Chief Constable's commitments are being delivered (or even what the vision of the future is.) We are aware of the work taking place on the vision for 2030, which places stakeholders and understanding their needs as its cornerstone, with a communication plan to bring the vision to life.



Achieving best value

We work closely with Audit Scotland to ensure best value in policing. Our work has led to a recent report on the Scottish Police Authority and will develop into a full best value inspection of policing in 2025.

I am aware of the comments made by the Auditor General Stephen Boyle on wider reform of the public sector in Scotland:

“Significant reform of the public sector – including its workforce – is needed to protect services over the long term.

That means better workforce planning and wider changes to how staff work within and across organisations.

An approach to reform purely focused on controlling workforce numbers will not address workforce pressures and is unlikely to balance the public finances.”³

Police Scotland has been on a reform journey for the past 11 years and – while there remain opportunities to redesign the organisation to meet future budgetary challenges – I am clear that such reform cannot simply be a further reduction of capability within policing. We have shown in recent inspections the significant impact on policing in communities where there is increasing demand for police to step in and deliver services where they are either unable to attend or have no out-of-hours capability.

This was seen most clearly in our inspection of policing mental health challenges, where the voice of those with experience of the police mental health response often described it as non-conducive to improved wellbeing, especially in situations where they had been placed in handcuffs and escorted to a healthcare facility. The service is working with key stakeholders to design new systems to improve this outcome.

The key to public sector reform lies in:

- better integration of systems;
- removal of blockages; and
- better information sharing to allow effective prevention at a much earlier point.

³ Audit Scotland, [Public sector reforms must consider workforce impact](#), 26 October 2023.



I am in full agreement with the Auditor General that this cannot be about a simple reduction of staffing head count, but rather an integrated view of cross-organisational working that places the individual at its heart, with services designed to improve effectiveness and build preventive actions into all relevant bodies responsibilities.

Calls to Police Scotland

Police Scotland continues to deal with a significant number of calls, incidents and crimes on a daily basis, presenting challenges both in terms of established issues and emerging trends. Last year (2023-24) it received over 2.1 million calls (999 or 101 calls) – 6,000 a day. The volume of 999 calls has increased by almost 10% compared to the previous year (see Appendix 1 – breakdown of calls to Police Scotland).

Trends

Some emerging trends have been identified by Police Scotland (see Appendix 2 – Current issues affecting Police Scotland – from recorded crime and performance reports). There has been a shift in the ages of young people committing violent crimes recently, with peak ages decreasing to 13-15 this year (with a corresponding increase in 12 and 13 year-olds coming into conflict with the law). These complex issues are challenging to tackle and prevent, and will require significant multi-agency working.

Challenges from cyber-enabled offending are likely to increase. Scottish Government figures estimate that there were almost 17,000 cyber-crimes recorded by the police in 2023-24. This is part of an increasing trend and is responsible for an estimated six per cent of all recorded crime, 30% of sexual crimes, and more than half of recorded frauds. Cyber-crimes present particular investigative challenges (such as cross-border issues) and there is likely to be significant under-reporting of these.

The impact of the new hate crime legislation will not be fully understood until statistics and investigative outcomes are seen later in the year. At present, performance figures show that both the number of incidents and crimes has increased, compared with the previous year.



What lies ahead?

There are some significant changes on the horizon for Police Scotland. The new Digital Evidence Sharing Capability service is currently being introduced and represents a significant change in practice: the service aims to deliver a digital solution to manage how evidence is collected, edited and shared across the criminal justice sector. It is hoped that this will save time and money by reducing duplication of effort, removing the need for officers to physically seize evidence (in some cases), and reducing the level of court citations.

Police Scotland is now 11 years old and has survived a difficult start and challenging early years. This level and speed of public sector reform is incredibly difficult to deliver, and many bodies in other sectors have stopped short of commencing such reforms. The benefits brought by reform in policing were well articulated by the previous Chief Constable but should be considered afresh every time a new demand or need for change is placed on the service. The following are all well-evidenced benefits of a single national police service:

- cashable savings in the region of £200m per annum delivered
- higher officer numbers per head of population than the rest of the United Kingdom
- no unresolved murder since the creation of the new service
- high detection rates for all crime, especially crimes of a sexual nature
- an ability to deliver high-profile events to an exceptional standard.



However, as we have said many times, this is built on a creaking infrastructure held in place by committed individuals and an exceptional workforce. The need for a further reform of policing is widely acknowledged, but this must focus on defining the organisation that the future public of Scotland will need and can afford. This includes ensuring that wider systems are joined up and that responsibility for service delivery is apportioned fairly to relevant expertise across the public sector, since failing to deliver reform in other services defeats the benefits delivered by Police Scotland.

Craig Naylor

His Majesty's Chief Inspector of Constabulary

September 2024

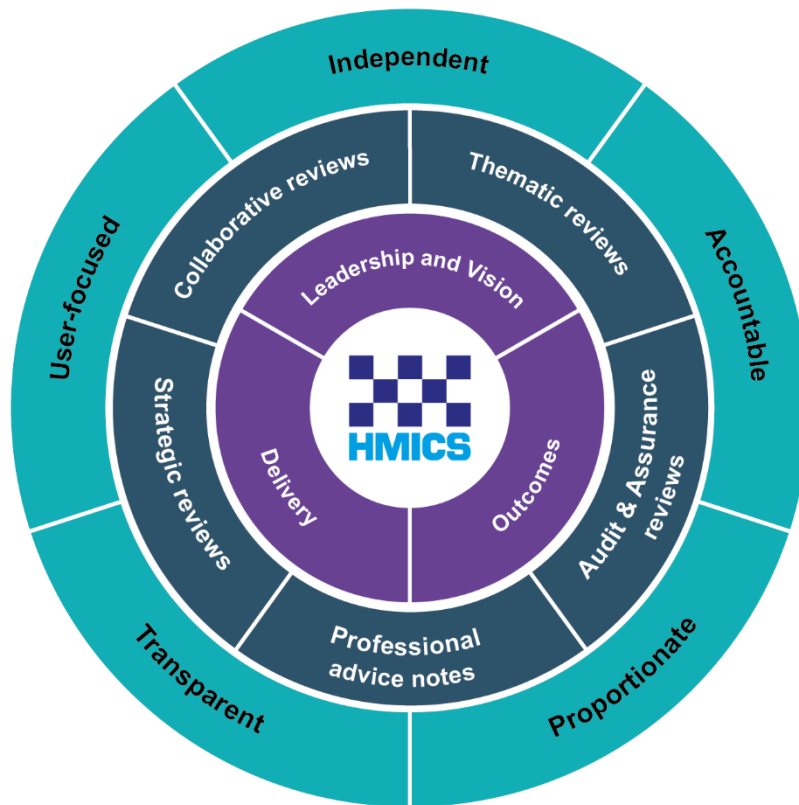


HMICS's vision, purpose, objectives and values – our plan on a page





Approach to scrutiny



We conduct our business in accordance with our values, acting independently and proportionately, focusing on how the needs of the public are served by Police Scotland, its stakeholders and the partners with whom it works. We work in an open and transparent way, and are fully accountable for what we do. We make efforts to work with cross-sector scrutiny partners and take account of the Crerar report from 2007.

Our inspection framework

Our inspection framework is based on the EFQM Excellence Model and Best Value characteristics. The purpose of the framework is to support lead and associate inspectors to take a common and objective approach to assessing policing in Scotland. The framework can be used in its entirety, or selected and adapted so that the key themes and sub-elements reflect the purpose of the inspection to be undertaken.



During 2021, we carried out a review of our corporate plan and inspection framework, together with our methodologies, governance and joint working with other public and scrutiny bodies. Our framework continues to be reviewed following each inspection and at the conclusion of our evaluation of the inspection meeting. This allows for continuous improvement of our methodology and lessons to be learned from those we inspect and work alongside. Our corporate plan, covering the period 2021-24 was published in February 2022, setting out our strategic objectives and outcomes.

During the course of our review, we conducted extensive consultation to inform our scrutiny plan which, for the first time, spanned three years (from 2022-25). This resulted in an improvement plan that will be the focus of our inspection team over the period to 2025 and will be subject to regular reviews to ensure that the plan is meeting the risks and challenges faced in Scotland. It is our intention to start the consultation for the next scrutiny plan and a revision to our corporate plan in the third quarter of 2024-25 financial year, publishing the next plan in late March 2025.

Scrutiny plan 2022-25

Our scrutiny plan sets out how HMICS aims to meet its statutory purpose to inquire into the state, efficiency and effectiveness of both Police Scotland and the SPA. It was published in terms of Section 75 of the Police and Fire Reform (Scotland) Act 2012 and sets out our scrutiny priorities from April 2022 to March 2025.

This plan is designed to provide a forward look for planning purposes for Police Scotland and the SPA and will be kept under review during the three-year period to ensure that any new and emerging issues can be addressed appropriately. Our approach is to support Police Scotland and the SPA to deliver high-quality, effective services that are continually improving, effective, and responsive to local needs and providing best value.

In September, we will begin public and stakeholder consultation to consider the areas of most interest to the public and professionals, for scrutiny in the next three-year period. Our approach will build upon our previous plan and articulate the understanding we have from inspections, stakeholder engagement and wider environmental scanning.



Partnership working

We continue to work closely with our partners in our role as a member of the Strategic Scrutiny Group (SSG). The SSG is to be replaced by the Strategic Public Sector Scrutiny Network (SPSSN), which will continue to promote collaboration and identify shared risks, priorities and learning among Scotland's main public sector scrutiny bodies, holding public bodies to account and supporting improvement in the effectiveness, efficiency and impact of public services for the people of Scotland. Scrutiny bodies involved include the Accounts Commission; Audit Scotland; Education Scotland; the Care Inspectorate; Healthcare Improvement Scotland; His Majesty's Fire Service Inspectorate for Scotland; His Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons for Scotland; His Majesty's Inspectorate of Prosecution in Scotland; and the Scottish Housing Regulator.

As a member of the UK [National Preventative Mechanism](#) (NPM), we continue to contribute to the UK's response to its international obligations under the UN Optional Protocol to the Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (OPCAT).



Scrutiny activity during 2023-24

Inspection reports

HMICS frontline focus – wellbeing

The aim of this inspection was to engage directly with frontline officers and staff to identify the issues they consider affect their wellbeing, and assess their awareness of wellbeing provision in Police Scotland.

The inspection also considered the approach taken by Police Scotland comparable to professional guidance.

Following the publication of the HMICS scrutiny plan 2022-25, we committed to conducting a series of strategic reviews, focusing on the frontline, with the purpose of identifying issues and providing recommendations to drive improvement.

Wellbeing was selected as the first review of this nature, given its significant priority to Police Scotland and its impact on officers and staff.

The inspection report contains seven recommendations and areas for development, which are intended to enable Police Scotland to focus on wellbeing provision, through an improved understanding of the factors that officers and staff considered most impactful.

HMICS thematic inspection of organisational culture in Police Scotland

The aim of this 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.

Organisational culture in policing is an area of significant public interest and rated highly in topics to be considered when HMICS consulted on its scrutiny plan 2022-25. It also recognised that a decade had passed since the formation of Police Scotland – the biggest public sector reform in Scotland since devolution.



The speed of change and the merger of eight forces and two agencies to create one service, with associated financial savings, created many challenges.

The inspection report identifies that Police Scotland is on a journey of change and improvement and contains 11 recommendations, intended to enable the service to improve culture; address inequalities; define effectively what is valued and how it is measured; streamline processes; and enhance communication, training and guidance.

HMICS thematic review of policing mental health in Scotland

The aim of this review was to assess the state, efficiency and effectiveness of Police Scotland's provision of mental health-related policing services. Our review considered the following five objectives:

- how well-prepared Police Scotland is to meet the needs of people experiencing poor mental health
- whether the police response to mental health-related demand affects the efficiency and effectiveness of the organisation in delivering other policing services
- whether the organisation 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.

This report contains 14 recommendations and identifies areas for development to ensure the best possible service and outcomes for those experiencing poor mental health in Scotland.



HMICS assurance review of vetting policy and procedures within Police Scotland

The aim of this review of Police Scotland's vetting was to assure the quality of vetting and renewals and whether these effectively identified potential misconduct, risk or vulnerability. With recent high-profile cases of police officers abusing their positions, vetting is an integral part of the process to identify individuals who are unsuitable to work within policing. The review focused on recruitment and management vetting of officers and staff either being recruited by, or those already working within, Police Scotland.

HMICS considered the history of vetting in Scotland in the years prior to the creation of Police Scotland in 2013. It reviewed vetting case files of officers and staff over a four-year period between 2019 and 2022, as well as examining guidance and policy currently providing the basis for vetting in Police Scotland.

The report contains 15 recommendations and identifies areas for development to improve Police Scotland's vetting of its officers and staff, and subsequent identification and management of risk. The report also highlights examples of good practice within the Force Vetting Unit.

HMICS assurance review of Scottish Police Authority forensic toxicology provision

This assurance review of the Scottish Police Authority's forensic services toxicology section followed disclosure that drug driving cases had been marked as 'no proceedings' by the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service. This occurred primarily due to the section failing to analyse and report blood samples within appropriate timescales.

The review focused on the end-to-end processes (from roadside to court) for drug driving. The report 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.

The report contains 25 recommendations and identifies areas for development to improve the provision of service in relation to drug driving. Significant progress has been made in some of the recommendations and there is a clear ambition to improve the capability and capacity within the SPA forensic science capability.



Joint scrutiny activity

Joint inspections of adult support and protection services

Since the publication of the last annual report, work has progressed at pace on joint scrutiny of adult support and protection services. These joint inspections, led by the Care Inspectorate in collaboration with HMICS and Healthcare Improvement Scotland, form part of a national inspection programme that seeks to focus on whether adults at risk of harm within a specific geographic partnership area are safe, protected and supported. This culminated in the production of an overview report published in August 2023. This report provides a national baseline of how effectively partnerships are ensuring that adults at risk of harm are safe, supported and protected.

The overview report also provides the platform for a second phase of the programme, which began in August 2023 and should be completed in July 2025. This phase has identified four priority areas of focus for the joint scrutiny team, namely:

- **Year 1** – Revisit those partnerships that were previously inspected in 2017-18. This will provide an updated national picture of the partnerships inspected during that initial phase and allow for an assessment of whether progress and improvements have been made during the interim period.
- **Year 1** – Working with scrutiny partners and adult support and protection partnerships, develop a Quality Improvement Framework (QIF) that will support an improved and more consistent national approach to self-evaluation across a number of key areas relating to adults at risk of harm.
- **Year 2** – Review of improvement plan progress in those partnerships where areas from improvement identified during the initial inspection outweighed strengths.
- **Year 2** – This workstream, which will be led by HMICS and supported by scrutiny partners, will seek to work with identified partnership areas and – using the newly-developed QIF – explore and evaluate the delivery of early interventions and preventative approaches within adult support and protection (ASP) arrangements through a supported self-evaluation approach. We will consider the impact of these key tenets, and the associated overlay of trauma-informed approaches, to understand how service delivery influences outcomes for adults at risk of harm.



Joint inspection of services for children and young people at risk of harm

In keeping with our long-term commitment to collaborative working, HMICS has continued to work with the Care Inspectorate, Healthcare Improvement Scotland and Education Scotland in this critical area of scrutiny and assurance.

The remit of these joint inspections is to consider the effectiveness of services for children and young people up to the age of 18 at risk of harm. The inspections look at the differences community planning partnerships are making to the lives of children and young people at risk of harm, and their families.

As per previous years, the inspections cover specific geographical areas and perform a key role in supporting services for children and young people. The four partnership areas inspected in the current reporting period are published on the Care Inspectorate website.

In addition to the geographical inspection work, the Scottish Government requested that the Care Inspectorate lead a strategic review, supported by HMICS and other scrutiny partners, of the experiences of children and young people who were living in cross-border placements (i.e., children or young people placed in residential care settings in Scotland from other UK jurisdictions). HMICS is supporting this review by engaging with key police partners to report on the impact of cross-border placements. It is expected that this report will be published later in 2024, on the Care Inspectorate website.



Healthcare provision within police custody centres in Scotland

HMICS and Healthcare Improvement Scotland conducted a baseline assessment of healthcare in custody in 2022/23. Following the publication of this report, agreement to fund and implement a scrutiny programme delivered by both agencies was sought and agreed. In 2023/24 three joint inspections have been completed. These are detailed below and show the difference in healthcare and custody service delivery across geographical areas.

Such a service differential is concerning and leads, in some places, to low levels of service that don't meet the needs of those who are brought into custody (other than to deliver them safe to the exit door of a police station or the court). The chance to deliver service (or referral for service) for the large number of people with mental health or substance abuse challenges is an opportunity that must be taken. The recently-published report by Community Justice Scotland (National Outcome: More people in police custody receive support to address their needs) stresses the need to seize the opportunity of a person coming into custody to receive care, treatment and onward referral to services to address either substance or mental health issues.

This preventative approach is one that is fully supported by HMICS and, as a result, our inspections will be shared with Community Justice Scotland at an early stage to ensure that there is an understanding of the pathways and mechanisms in place in local areas to support the most vulnerable on their release from custody.

The first joint inspection was published in April 2023, in the Lanarkshire area. This was the first inspection to use the new joint methodology and provided recommendations to both Police Scotland and NHS service providers. Since then, inspections have been conducted in Tayside, Dumfries and Galloway, and Fife divisions, with recommendations to both Police Scotland and healthcare providers. An escalation of concerning practice was made regarding medication in Dumfries and Galloway, with a follow-up review in late 2023 (published in 2024) addressing the issues identified and the steps taken to address them. This first use of the escalation process worked well and prompt action was taken to address the failings.



Assessing the outcomes from our activities

HMICS activity is aligned to those values detailed within the Scottish Government's National Performance Framework, namely: we are a society that treats all our people with kindness, dignity and compassion, respects the rule of law and acts in an open and transparent way.

Our activity seeks to support the achievement of the national outcomes. In particular:

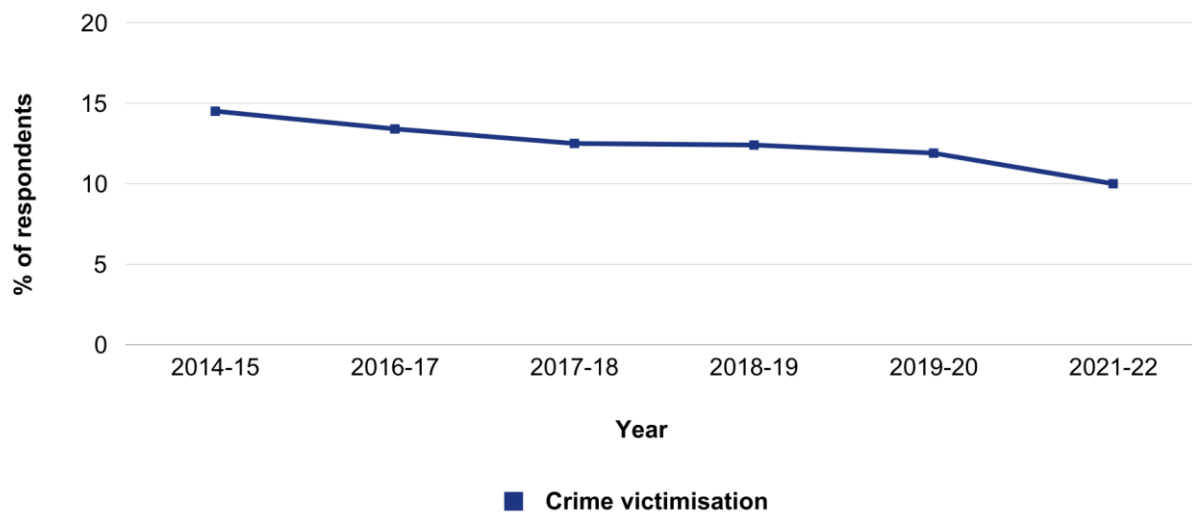
- we live in communities that are inclusive, empowered, resilient and safe
- we live in communities that are creative and their vibrant and diverse cultures are expressed and enjoyed widely
- we grow up loved, safe and respected so that we realise our full potential
- we respect, protect and fulfil human rights and live free from discrimination.

The purpose of our work is to add value and support continuous improvement in the delivery of policing in Scotland. Where relevant, we will make recommendations to Police Scotland and the SPA that aim to improve policing. Through engagement, these recommendations are regularly reviewed and will benchmark change.

The Scottish Government's [Performance Framework](#) shows the positive effect of Police Scotland's contribution, with crime victimisation data indicating that fewer citizens are becoming victims of crime.



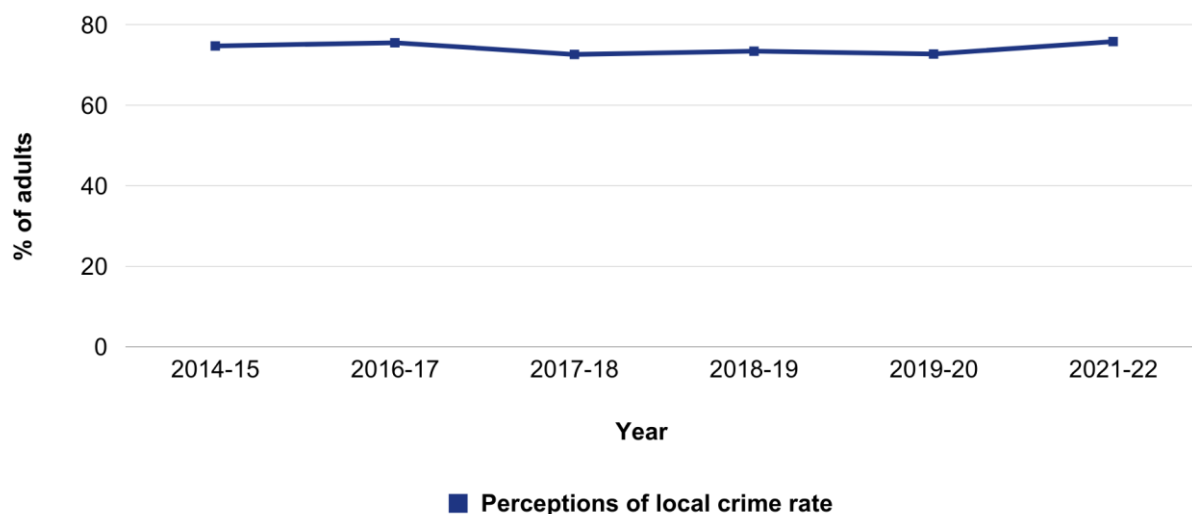
Figure 1 – Crime victimisation



Source: Scottish Government

This positive measure is further supported by the perceptions of crime in local areas. Percentage of respondents who think crime in their area has stayed the same or reduced in the past two years.

Figure 2 – Perception of local crime rate



Source: Scottish Government



Police Scotland is not the only contributor to these outcomes, but its focus on problem solving and working collaboratively is a strong factor in improvements across community outcomes throughout Scotland. HMICS's joint inspection work on services for children and adults needing additional support is also strong factor in community resilience, adding to the positive outcomes for children.

Our inspection work does not end with the publication of our reports. We also carry out follow-up work to assess evidential requirements and monitor the progress of recommendations, through regular liaison with Police Scotland and SPA. We also identify good practice that can be rolled out across Scotland.

During 2022-23, we discharged 34 recommendations and made a total of 36. The final figure for those that remained open at the end of that scrutiny year was 84.

We agreed to close 28 recommendations in 2023-24, and in the course of our inspections made a further 99, resulting in 155 outstanding recommendations at the end of March this year. These were made to Police Scotland, SPA and the Scottish Government (some of which were joint). Following our inspections with Healthcare Improvement Scotland, we also made joint recommendations involving NHS Boards and partners.

Of note, a number of older recommendations made following our inspections of MAPPA (multi-agency protection arrangements), home detention curfew, and undercover policing, remain open.

The launch of our new website will include a recommendations tracker giving real-time information on progress of all open recommendations.

We can inspect other UK police services that operate in Scotland, and are members of the National Preventive Mechanism, inspecting police custody centres to monitor the treatment and conditions for detainees. This year saw the first NPM conference since the pandemic. Members met and considered future work plans and how to work more collaboratively across public sector scrutiny bodies.



HMICS website

We mentioned in our 2022/23 annual report that work was underway to procure and develop a new, more informative website. That work has now been completed and it is anticipated that that the website is planned to be live in September 2024.



Facts and figures

HMICS staffing model 2023-24

The position of HM Chief Inspector of Constabulary in Scotland (HMCIC) is held by Craig Naylor who leads the following team:

Assistant inspector of constabulary	Mark Hargreaves
Lead inspectors	Christina Yule Brian McNulty QPM Ray Jones Dr Annie Crowley Maggie Pettigrew Jill Harper
Improvement and scrutiny programme co-ordinator	Rhona Ford
Support inspectors	Pam Colvin Dr Debbie Kyle Patricia Clark Martin McCole
Business support manager	Keri-Anne Balfour
Inspection support and design managers	Joanna Gardner Ioanna Kiriklidou
PA/Business support assistant	Rebecca Duncan



Further details about our team can be found on the 'Meet Our Team' section of our website.

Throughout 2023-24, we continued to strengthen our capacity for inspection and to engage the services of associate inspectors from a range of backgrounds, including policing, local government and academia. These inspectors provide specialist skills and experience to augment our inspection teams, as required.

HMICS budget 2023-24

HMICS is funded entirely by the Scottish Government in respect of staff, accommodation, equipment and other expenses. Our budget for 2023-24 was £1,123,000. In addition, we received a credit of £326,000 for project work, together with £107,000 (reimbursed by the Care Inspectorate) for our contribution to the adult support and protection inspection programme. We also received £193,000 towards legal fees, which were incurred for legal representation in a fatal accident inquiry. Therefore, our available budget for 2023-24 was £1,749,000. Our spend for the year was £1,749,845 which represents an overspend of £845. We received a payment of £36,000 at the start of the financial year from the Scottish Police Authority to cover some of the staffing costs for the forensic toxicology inspection from the previous financial year.

HMCIC's expenses 2023-24

The total expenses incurred and claimed by HM Chief Inspector of Constabulary in Scotland in the financial year 2023-24 was £687.05.

Public Services Reform (Scotland) Act 2010, Section 31 reporting – expenditure incurred during the year

Public relations (salary for HMICS part-time staff)	£5,440.56
Overseas travel	£1,240.22
Hospitality and entertainment	£347.51
External consultancy	£2,340.00



Appendix 1 – breakdown of calls to Police Scotland

This year saw a significant change to incoming calls to the service centres.

Table 1 – Call handling statistics

Total calls	Totals 999 calls	Total 101 calls	Average answer time YTD – 999 calls	Average answer time YTD – 101 calls	Contact us forms	Online reports
2,191,059	814,980	1,376,079	9 seconds	5 minutes 33 seconds	193,155	116,379

Source: Scottish Police Authority

Table 2 – 999 and 101 calls records

	YTD	PYTD	% change
Total number of calls	2,191,059	2,184,926	↑ 0.3%
Total number of 999 calls	814,980	741,801	↑ 9.9%
Total number of 101 calls	1,376,079	1,443,125	↓ -4.6%

Legend: ↑ Increase, ↓ Decrease

Source: Scottish Police Authority

This shows changes from the previous year with a slight increase of incoming calls (0.3%) but this is based on a significant increase of 999 calls (9.9%). These calls are often more complex and require more police input to resolve the matter. Thus, for a relatively small increase in overall call volume, there is likely to have been a significant increase in demand for frontline services.



Police Scotland has continued to answer 999 calls within the 10 second target and has not seen significant change to the low number of dropped 999 calls (table 3 below), but there has been slippage on the average time to answer a non-emergency call. The increase in emergency calls suggests a reduction in capacity to deal with non-emergency (101) calls: the volume of 101 calls answered has decreased by almost five per cent, and the time it takes to answer 101 calls has increased by almost a quarter in the past year. This impact on non emergency calls may have a corresponding effect on public confidence and preventative work. When first considered, the 101 service was designed as a public service call where the caller could be directed to whichever service best met their needs – whether that was a local authority, health, police or other service. On implementation, the only service that adopted 101 was policing, leading to the other services being less involved in genuine public demand.

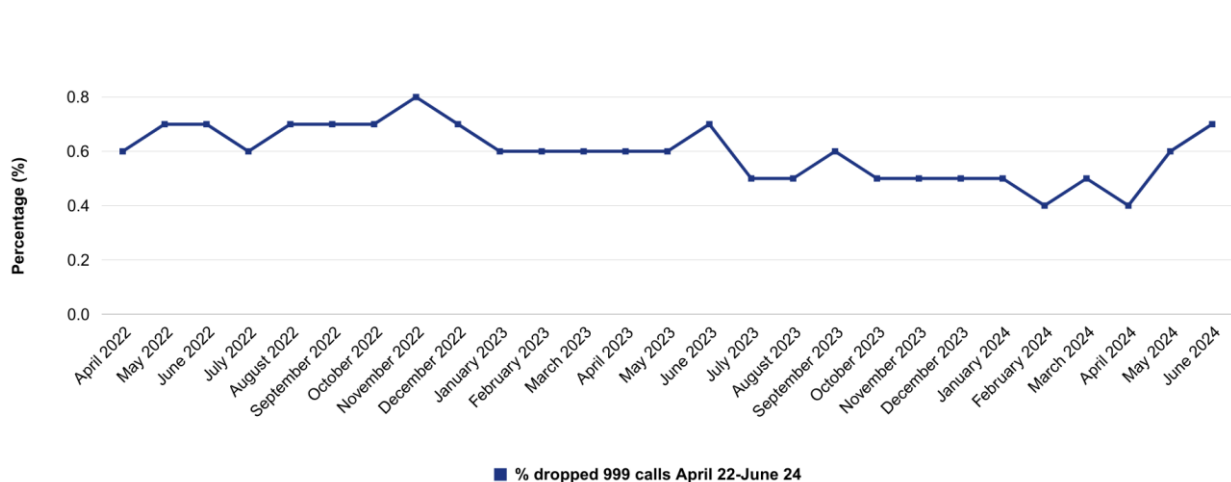
Table 3 – Average answer time for 999 and 101 calls

	Average answer time YTD	Average answer time PYTD	% change
999 calls	9 seconds	9 seconds	→ 0.0%
101 calls	5 minutes 33 seconds	4 minutes 27 seconds	↑ 24.7%

Legend: → No change, ↑ Increase

Source: Scottish Police Authority

Figure 3 – Dropped 999 calls from April 2022 to June 2024



Source: Police Scotland



Appendix 2 – Current issues affecting Police Scotland – from recorded crime and performance reports

Overall, recorded crime levels in the past year (2023-24) increased by four per cent (despite a generally decreasing trend over the long term). This increase has been driven by an increase in crimes of dishonesty, which comprised over a third of overall crimes. Crimes in this group increased by seven per cent (a figure particularly affected by an increase in shoplifting, a high-volume category that is up by 35% from last year). However, it is important to note that volume of crime is not the only factor that affects the level of resources required, since some of the lower volume crimes may require more complex investigation.

Recorded crime figures also show that violent crime has increased, driven by a higher level of common assaults (an increase of three per cent).

There has been an increase in assaults on police officers and police staff. Although this may be due to an increase in recording, giving a more accurate picture, this nevertheless highlights the challenges that officers and staff face day-to-day. The number of complaints against the police in 2023-24 increased by five per cent compared with the previous year and by eight per cent compared with the five-year average, although the percentage of closed allegations upheld has decreased compared with the previous year.

In addition to those issues reported to the police, there are some crimes that tend to reflect proactive policing (for example where crimes come to light based on patrols or other proactive initiatives). Crimes of weapons possession have increased by 17% over the past year, and drugs supply crimes have increased over the same period, although the long term trend for this is decreasing. It can be particularly challenging to find capacity for these issues in times where resources are stretched.



Improving
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About His 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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