



**HMICS** HM INSPECTORATE OF  
CONSTABULARY FOR SCOTLAND

## Corporate Plan

2009-11

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## Foreword by HM Inspector of Constabulary for Scotland

### Bill Skelly



This plan presents an overview of HMICS' objectives for the next two years. It provides the underpinning principles for our detailed programme of inspection work .

The origins of Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary for Scotland (HMICS) can be traced back to the Police (Scotland) Act in 1857, which described the purpose of our inspection activity as being to "render more effectual the Police in Counties and Burghs in Scotland". Since then the structure and composition of police forces has changed markedly as have some, though not all, aspects of the police role. And while our function too has evolved over the years, our primary aim of monitoring and improving the police services in Scotland remains constant.

One of the fundamental principles of our work is its independence. Although as an organisation we comprise a mix of civil service staff and seconded staff from police forces, we strive to maintain independence of thought, both from the government and the police forces/ services that we inspect. We report the findings of our inspection activity to Ministers and monitor progress of the resulting improvement plans through forces and their police authority/ joint board.

In 2008, in line with the recommendations of the Crerar review, we introduced a consistent form of self-assessment into all police forces across Scotland. Similarly we conducted a self-assessment of our own organisation. The findings of that exercise have led to the publication of this corporate plan. The outcomes we expect as a result of this plan are:

- A programme of risk-assessed and proportionate scrutiny informed by robust, assisted self-assessment by forces and common police services.
- A focus on improving outcomes for service users.
- Greater transparency in our work.
- A better understanding and evaluation of the impact of our work to inform our future scrutiny programme.

## Overview

**Our purpose:** to monitor and improve the police service in Scotland

**Our mission:** on behalf of the Scottish public -

We will monitor, through self-assessment and inspection, how effectively the police service in Scotland is fulfilling its purpose and managing risk.

We will support improvement by identifying good practice, making recommendations and sharing our findings in order to achieve better outcomes for Scotland's communities

**Our values:** in carrying out our work we will strive to -

be objective and impartial in our judgments

be transparent in our processes and decisions

be proportionate in our activities

consider the perspectives of service users

focus on achieving better outcomes

and everything that we do will be underpinned by our commitment to equality and diversity, Best Value, and partnership working.

**Our activity:** what we will do -

Self-assessment

We will continue to work with the police service in Scotland on driving forward an annual self assessment programme that promotes continuous improvement.

Inspection

We will exercise our scrutiny role by undertaking a risk-assessed programme of thematic inspections, including working with partners on joint inspection activity.

Good practice

We will seek to highlight and share good practice that we find as a result of our work and through wider scanning and consultation activity.

Recommendations

Our recommendations will focus on promoting better practice and outcomes and be monitored jointly with ACPOS, individual forces and police services, and police authorities and joint boards.

Advice and communication

We will give independent advice to Ministers, police authority and joint board members and police forces and services and through our publications share our findings with all stakeholders.

## Our organisation: what resources we have to achieve our objectives -

Attracting the best people	In order to attract the best people, we will strive to establish and maintain a reputation as a highly credible, fair and appealing employer.
Developing our capacity	In the spirit of continuous improvement, we will encourage, monitor and review the professional and personal development of our staff.
Managing and motivating our people	Through strong leadership, effective management and an inclusive approach to communication we will cultivate a workforce that is focused and motivated.
Managing our resources	Through our annual self assessment and stakeholder consultation we will identify ways in which we can more efficiently and effectively manage our resources.

## Our results: how will we know how well we have done

External feedback and review	Our intention is to conduct a formal, annual consultation exercise with stakeholders and to supplement this with additional consultation where appropriate, e.g. following an inspection. We will monitor, assess and review our performance informed by stakeholder feedback.
Internal feedback and review	All members of staff will have personal objectives and development plans that are linked to our organisational objectives, and performance against these will be appraised bi-annually.  We will conduct exit interviews with all staff leaving the organisation
Performance measures	We will continue to develop our performance measures to provide a quantifiable record of our performance. These will reflect both corporate and business activities.

## Our purpose

HMICS' primary aim is to monitor and improve the police services in Scotland. We do this independently of police forces, police authorities/joint boards and the Scottish Government, by:

- inspecting and advising the eight Scottish police forces and the five police services of the Scottish Police Services Authority (SPSA),
- inspecting how Best Value is achieved by police authorities/joint boards, and
- providing advice to Scottish Ministers.

## How we will achieve this

Over the last two years we have been developing and implementing some fundamental changes to the way we monitor police activity and performance. Our new approach has largely been informed by Professor Crerar's review, published in 2007, which recognised that primary responsibility for improving services should lie with the organisations that provide them. The role of external scrutiny, the report concluded, is to provide independent assurance that services are *well-managed, safe and fit for purpose, and that public money is being used properly*. Consequently, the major difference between our past and current approach is a move away from a broad, cyclical programme of external scrutiny to one that is focused and informed by the results of the self-assessments of police forces and services.

We continue to visit forces and the constituent bodies of the Scottish Police Services Authority (SPSA) as part of our overall inspection programme. Where possible and appropriate, we strive to do so in partnership with other scrutiny bodies. This allows us to make good use of other skills and abilities, for example specialist technical skills, and to reduce the impact of scrutiny wherever possible. We continue too, to identify areas for improvement by highlighting examples of good practice, making recommendations and sharing our findings and expertise with our stakeholders.

Our plan for 2009-11 takes account of current changes in public sector scrutiny. We are engaging in the wider scrutiny improvement agenda and working in support of the Accounts Commission in its role to promote greater collaboration amongst scrutiny agencies. We are committed to working with our stakeholders to continuously improve our own approach to scrutiny, and to consulting them on the content of our inspection programme. The detail of the plan will be periodically updated to reflect relevant changes taking place and any new or emerging risks that have a bearing on our activities.

## What values we will bring to bear

### *Being objective and impartial in our judgments*

The collaborative nature of our work brings us into contact with many organisations, including the association of chief police officers (ACPOS), police authorities/joint boards and government. Any judgments we make must and will be objective and impartial. We will seek to bring in an external/ lay perspective to challenge our judgments, to ensure that our decisions are defensible and focused on improving outcomes for service users.

### *Being transparent in our processes and decisions*

If we are to maintain the trust of our stakeholders we must be transparent in the processes we operate by and the decisions we make. This applies as much to the way in which we work internally as to our dealings with the organisations we inspect. We have been testing a new approach to gathering evidence and making judgments about performance. This approach provides a clear audit trail for all inspection decisions.

### *Focusing on achieving better outcomes*

In all our activities our focus is on how we can bring about better, sustainable outcomes that will tangibly improve the service provided to the public and other stakeholders. Over the period of this plan we will be working to improve our understanding of the needs of service users.

### *Being proportionate in our activities*

The prevailing emphasis on joint working and self-assessment means opportunities to reduce not just the amount of external scrutiny we exercise but also the financial and time costs this entails. Since our inspection programme is based on an assessment of risk, it must be recognised that proportionality can mean more as well as less activity, and that there may be circumstances in which additional scrutiny is necessary.

### *Considering the perspectives of service users and the public at large*

If we are to be credible to the public, we must take account of their views in terms of how we both direct and carry out our activities, and make it clear to them how we intend to do this.

At all times we will have regard to equality and diversity and Best Value, and we remain committed to engaging with stakeholders and working with partner agencies where possible and appropriate.

## What we will do

### Self-assessment

*“We will continue to work with the police service in Scotland on driving forward an annual self-assessment programme that promotes continuous improvement.”*

Last year we implemented a self-assessment programme across the police service in Scotland. This year we intend to build on the results this produced. We have examined the findings to select areas for further, more detailed, inspection. Consequently, we will be visiting all eight forces during summer 2009 to examine how they manage the most serious risks to society, specifically:

- how they assess and prioritise these risks;
- how they prioritise and co-ordinate activity related to the very high risk areas, and how these activities are integrated into other force priorities; and
- the impact of their responses since publication of the 2007/08 Scottish strategic assessment.

As part of these visits we will also be reviewing forces' progress in implementing the improvement plans that they put in place as a result of this first exercise. The findings for each force will be published at the same time but in a series of separate reports.

Self-assessment has become an established part of the wider scrutiny agenda in Scotland. It is widely accepted that effective processes can take some time to mature, and for this reason we have approached it very much as a learning experience. This year, 2009, will be the second time that self-assessment will be conducted across all forces in Scotland. We will continue to focus on how the process and its outputs can be improved to achieve the ultimate purpose of improving policing across the country. We will further seek to use the outputs to inform our continuing scrutiny plan.

### Inspection

*“We will exercise our scrutiny role by undertaking a rolling programme of thematic inspections and working with Audit Scotland on Best Value audits.”*

We have listened to feedback from forces regarding our programme of thematic inspections and are now engaged in structured consultation with stakeholders on themes for future thematic inspection activity.

We have revisited our thematic inspection methodology and will continue to monitor our approach to ensure that it remains valid and robust. One important aspect for us to consider is how to incorporate a lay or user perspective across all our activities. We recognise the considerable contribution that lay involvement can make to scrutiny, which both the Crerar Report<sup>1</sup> and a subsequent discussion paper by Consumer Focus Scotland<sup>2</sup> have emphasised.

Under the provisions of the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003, both we and the Accounts Commission have the power to examine Best Value in police authorities and joint police boards. We have both therefore agreed to conduct pilot Best Value audits and inspections jointly, in order to test police compliance with the 2003 Act and related statutory and non-statutory guidance. May 2009 will see the first pilot audit/inspection of this kind, in Tayside, followed later on in the year by a second one in Northern. Once published, reports will be available from both websites. As well as serving a vital scrutiny function, this work will be useful in informing how we work collaboratively in the future.

### **Good practice**

*“We will seek to highlight and share the good practice that we find as a result of our work and through wider scanning and consultation activity.”*

For our purposes, the term ‘good practice’ can mean one of two things: either compliance with widely recognised or established methods of doing things; or, going beyond compliance to make practices even better. We also take the view that what is effective can depend on the context in which it occurs. Therefore, while we would expect forces and police services to reflect upon any highlighted examples of good practice, we do not go as far as recommending that all adopt these.

An obvious corollary to the above is the need to be able to demonstrate improvement as a result of any practices. If we are to achieve the better policing outcomes to which we aspire, then it is essential that we are able to (a) identify, and (b) share professional knowledge of, what works well. Through our inspection and assessment activities we are able to capture examples in police forces and services. We will also look to external sources for examples that could be applied to good effect within the police service in Scotland. To make it easier to share this information, we intend to design a searchable database of our findings. Our hope is that anyone interested in learning more about these will be able to do so via our website.

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<sup>1</sup> Scottish Government: *Report of the Independent Review of Regulation, Audit, Inspection and Complaints Handling of Public Services in Scotland*, September 2007: <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2007/09/25120506/0>

<sup>2</sup> Consumer Focus Scotland: *User Focus in the Scrutiny of Public Services*, April 2009:

## Recommendations

*“Our recommendations will focus on promoting better practice and outcomes and be monitored jointly with ACPOS, individual forces and police services, and police authorities/police boards.”*

Traditionally we have reviewed the arrangements and progress of individual forces in responding to Service-wide recommendations; our authority does not extend to directing recommendations at the association of chief police officers in Scotland (ACPOS) as the collective leadership of the Service. We welcome the current engagement with chief officers to establish a process that will allow ACPOS to work more closely with us on taking forward national recommendations - a step that we welcome. And, as we become more involved in joint inspections, we will need to establish processes that allow us and other inspectorates to monitor progress jointly.

In the meantime we will pursue force-specific recommendations with the relevant forces during our annual self-assessment follow-up visits. A summary of their progress will form a section of our subsequent force self-assessment reports (see below, under *Advice*). This being the first year of conducting these visits, we intend to review their effectiveness in holding forces to account in a rigorous, uniform and timely manner.

Another change to our approach to recommendations will be a greater emphasis on outcomes. In the past we have been prescriptive in terms of the remedial action we have expected forces to undertake. While there will be cases where this remains the most effective method of driving improvement, our preference will be to articulate the outcome we are seeking and allow forces to themselves to decide on what approach or process to adopt.

## Advice and communication

*“We will give independent advice to Ministers, police authority and joint board members, and police forces and services, and through our publications share our findings with all stakeholders.”*

Advising Scottish ministers on policing matters is one of the primary responsibilities of HM Inspector of Constabulary. In addition, members of HMICS staff regularly attend a range of meetings held by forces, ACPOS, police authorities/joint boards, Scottish Government and partner agencies.

More generally, through our reports we are able to share our professional knowledge and findings more widely. It is therefore essential that they are accessible to all stakeholders. Unless for reasons of security we are unable to, we publish all our reports and other documentation on our website; to anybody who does not have internet access we are happy to send downloaded copies. We also recognise the importance of making the contents of our reports accessible, and to this end we seek to adopt the principles of Plain English.

Other information presently on our website includes further details about our activities, a database of recommendations that we have made and police statistics. Over the coming two years we will continue to think about how we can extend the range of information we make available in this way. This is likely to include the good practice database mentioned above and progress against recommendations, as well as corporate information such as our annual work-plan and associated performance measures.

We will ensure that all forces/ police services have a nominated single point of contact and we will work closely with force liaison officers when planning our activities. We are also working to produce a regular update bulletin for key stakeholders, which will be publicly accessible from our web site. Each edition will describe our current inspection programme, what progress has been made against it, and our findings and recommendations.

## What resources we have to achieve our objectives

In comparison with other scrutiny bodies, we are a small organisation. Our core staff comprises ten seconded members of staff - primarily police officers but also one member of police staff and one member of Audit Scotland staff - and four permanent civil service staff. Our budget last year was just under £950,000<sup>3</sup>.

In common with the rest of the public sector, it is essential that we are able to optimise the resources that we have. Our plan is to attract the best people, enhancing and developing their skills while they are with us, and continuously supporting and motivating them through effective management and strong leadership. Over the coming period we will be re-examining our approach to personnel matters, including recruitment, professional and personal development and communication.

We will also examine ways in which we can make our own efficiency savings. For example, we have recently installed video-conferencing facilities to cut down on unnecessary travel. Where

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<sup>3</sup> This is more or less comparable to the finance and resource profiles of the Police Complaints Commissioner for Scotland and the Risk Management Authority.

possible staff are issued with laptops and mobile 'phones to encourage working from remote locations, and we adhere to the Scottish Government's guidelines for travel and subsistence.

## How we will measure our performance

Through our own regular self-assessment we will be able to understand where we are performing well and where we need to do further work on the following criteria: leadership, policy & strategy, people management, partnerships and resources, processes, customer results, people results, society results and key performance indicators.

We also intend to develop our stakeholder consultation so that we can capture their views. Following last year's self-assessment we have set specific operational objectives through our 2009-10 work plan. Progress against these is regularly updated and discussed at weekly internal meetings, which all staff attend. Personal objectives for individual members of staff fall out of the work plan, and are typically assessed twice during the year.