

HMICS publish update report on Police Scotland call handling



Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary Scotland HMICS has published an update report, a year after its Independent Assurance Review of Call Handling in Police Scotland. The report considers progress on the 30 recommendations for improvement HMICS made in November 2016.

At the request of the Cabinet Secretary for Justice, HMICS has been providing ongoing scrutiny of Police Scotland call handling over the last twelve months, including over 50 planned and unannounced visits to call handling facilities across Scotland.

In the report HM Chief Inspector of Constabulary Derek Penman confirmed that of the 30 recommendations made in the Assurance Review Report, 16 are now fully completed, 12 are partially complete and only 2 remain open.

A number of key milestones have been successfully delivered including the creation of a national virtualised Police Scotland Service Centre (PSSC), upgrade of key ICT systems and the transfer of call handling from Dundee. Arrangements for transfer of call handling from Aberdeen and Inverness are still on track to be complete by the middle of the year.

Calls are being answered quickly with 97% of 999 emergency calls currently answered within 10 seconds in the East and West, with between 93 and 97% in the North. There have been improvements with non-emergency 101 calls with 98% currently being answered within 40 seconds in the East and West, and between 91 and 100% in the North. Although the time taken to

answer calls is a helpful indicator of performance, Police Scotland and the SPA are also making progress in developing new measures to assess the quality of call handling.

Mr Penman said: "It is essential that public can have confidence in Police call handling. HMICS has been working closely with Police Scotland and the SPA since our initial report was published and have been continually assessing the progress made against our recommendations.

Over half of our original 30 recommendations have been completed with another 12 having been partially completed and only 2 remaining for further action. This reflects the hard work and commitment of both Police Scotland and the SPA in implementing a new national call handling model.

The oversight and governance of this programme has improved significantly, with SPA Board members leading an effective scrutiny and approval process over the new model.

The report identifies that work is still needed to develop consistent national processes, quality assurance arrangements, a sustainable training model and more detailed information on financial savings.

Mr Penman said: "Staff have remained strongly committed to providing a good service to the public. This is despite many still being subject to significant uncertainties about their futures. Communication and engagement have improved and remains a work in progress."

"A number of my recommendations cannot be completed until Police Scotland and the SPA finalise their long term 2026 strategy and develop their approach to customer contact, demand management, risk and vulnerability assessment. These must also be supported by effective governance, crime recording systems and financial management."

HMICS had also undertaken a review of notable incidents which

has also been included in the report.

Mr Penman added: “There will always be a level of risk which must be managed in the operation of police call handling. SPA and Police Scotland are aware of these risks and continue to promote learning and improvement to mitigate them.”

The full report can be found at www.hmics.org