

Police Scotland support new ethics, conduct and scrutiny bill

Police Scotland support a bill to further improve police complaints and police conduct procedures which has been passed by the Scottish Parliament.

The Police (Ethics, Conduct and Scrutiny) (Scotland) Bill will ensure allegations of misconduct among police officers and staff are dealt with more transparently and effectively.

When implemented, the legislation will mean that officers accused of gross misconduct who retire or resign from the service can still face misconduct proceedings. Those found guilty will be placed on barred lists and prohibited from being re-employed in policing.

A crucial element of the Bill relates to the ongoing vetting of police officers and staff. The new law will see mean that vetting procedures are placed on a statutory footing, that vetting is maintained throughout a career, and that the Chief Constable is given powers to remove officers and staff who cannot maintain their vetting clearance. All police officers and staff will have to go through a structured regime of on-going vetting that will continue throughout their professional life.

The new arrangements will be underpinned by a statutory Code of Ethics which sets out expectations of behaviour. To oversee

these standards, the role of the independent Police Investigations and Review Commissioner (PIRC) will be significantly enhanced.

Justice Secretary Angela Constance said: "Scotland is well served by the exceptional dedication and commitment of our police officers. It is an incredibly difficult frontline job and police officers and staff conduct themselves with integrity, and I am grateful to them for all they do to keep communities safe.

"It is vital, however, that where any officer falls below the standards expected, there are robust and transparent mechanisms in place to hold them to account. This Bill will mean that officers accused of gross misconduct can still face proceedings even if they leave the service.

"The public and police officers also need a vetting system they can have full confidence in, and this Bill gives the Chief Constable more powers to remove officers and staff who cannot maintain their vetting clearance.

"The measures in the Bill build on significant improvements to good practice within Police Scotland's vetting unit which have been recognised by His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary in Scotland (HMICS), and will further strengthen public confidence and trust in policing."

Deputy Chief Constable Alan Speirs said: "Police Scotland is committed to increasing public confidence and consent, from which policing draws its legitimacy.

"We know a strong relationship of trust with our communities is a key aspect of this, and to maintain this, we are committed to safeguarding our values and standards, including through an ongoing focus on our standard of professional behaviour, misconduct outcomes and ensuring the vetting of officers and staff is maintained.

“We have supported the introduction of the Police (Ethics, Conduct and Scrutiny) Scotland Bill and are continuing to work with the Scottish Government, our partners and the public throughout the legislative process, while ensuring all of those affected by the Bill, including our officers and staff, understand the impact and changes ahead through regular updates.