

Strategic Police Priorities for Scotland

Laid before the Scottish Parliament by the Scottish Ministers under
Section 33 of the Police and Fire Reform (Scotland) Act 2012
October 2016
SG/2016/139

Introduction

We have a world class police system in Scotland, supported by a hugely dedicated and professional workforce who work each and every day to secure the safety and wellbeing of people and communities across the country.

It is important that we continue to ensure our police are well placed to deal with emerging threats and to meet changing expectations across our society. The Strategic Police Priorities are key to that process and form the foundation of the planning system for our police services. Set under the Police and Fire Reform (Scotland) Act 2012, they set out our communities' collective expectations for policing.

These Strategic Police Priorities have been developed following an extensive programme of engagement with individuals, communities, public and third sector partners across Scotland. It will be for the Scottish Police Authority and Police Scotland to translate them into more focussed objectives and operational policing activities. In doing so, we expect that they will seek to utilise the knowledge and expertise of people from across Scotland, working in partnership to shape the way forward.

Whilst set out under discrete headings, the seven Priorities are closely related and interdependent:

Localism – Ensure that the needs of local communities are understood and reflected in the planning and delivery of policing at a local and national level.

Inclusion – Ensure our police service is accessible and responsive to the needs of all people in Scotland.

Prevention – Ensure our police service works to protect people by preventing crime and reducing fear of crime through communication, education, innovation and partnership working.

Response – Focus policing on improving the wellbeing of individuals and communities by tackling crime and responding to and investigating incidents effectively and efficiently.

Collaborative Working – Ensure that our police service works productively with partners at local, national and international levels to deliver better outcomes for people in Scotland.

Accountability – Continuously improve public confidence in policing and inspire trust by being transparent, accountable and acting with integrity, fairness and respect.

Adaptability – Ensure our police service takes advantage of new opportunities and meets emerging threats and challenges.

More detail is attached about our intention for these priorities in the Annex. For further information please contact:

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Localism

Strategic Priority

Ensure that the needs of local communities are understood and reflected in the planning and delivery of policing at a local and national level.

What this means

Policing must be carried out with the support of local communities throughout Scotland. Building relationships and responding to the needs of those communities must therefore remain a core priority.

Localism represents what all communities across Scotland want to see from the police: police officers who will respond whenever there is a need in local areas; who work in partnership through our schools, community groups and local community initiatives; and whose visibility reassures our communities on a daily basis.

There is a wide range of expertise in Scotland's communities and it is right that we should seek to harness this local knowledge when it comes to policing. Community empowerment is, amongst other things, about enabling local partners and communities to work with local commanders to shape the delivery of services at both local and national level, ensuring they meet their needs and expectations. Local Authority Police Scrutiny Committees have a key role to play as do Community Planning Partnerships, Community Councils and a host of other local and national bodies.

When it comes to policing, we appreciate that what works and is right for, for example, a rural community in one part of Scotland won't necessarily work as well elsewhere. That is why it is crucial that local communities have a strong voice in the policing decisions which affect them.

Inclusion

Strategic Priority

Ensure our police service is accessible and responsive to the needs of all people in Scotland.

What this means

No one should be discriminated against or denied opportunities on the basis of race or ethnicity, disability, gender or gender identity, sexual orientation, age, religion/belief or because of where they live. The police have an important role to play in this regard, supporting community cohesion and fostering good relations amongst all individuals and groups within Scottish society. Our police service needs to act objectively, working proactively to understand and adapt to the needs of all individuals and communities whilst protecting and upholding everyone's fundamental rights.

This means engaging effectively with people of all backgrounds and characteristics on all aspects of policing, both locally and nationally. It also means taking steps to address inequalities when it comes to people's experiences of crime. For example, we know that the risk of being the victim of a crime is higher for adults living in our most deprived communities and that our young people are more likely than others to experience crime. We also know that women and girls are particularly affected by certain types of crime as are ethnic minorities.

These problems must be addressed if we are to create the fairer, more equal and more prosperous Scotland to which we all aspire.

Prevention

Strategic Priority

Ensure our police service works to protect people by preventing crime and reducing fear of crime through communication, education, innovation and partnership working.

What this means

Prevention is a key element of public service reform, changing the way we deliver services to create better outcomes for people in Scotland. For policing this means a focus on preventing and reducing the impact of crime and preventing harm for people, communities and businesses, resulting in a more sustainable model of service delivery. Effectively tackling the drivers of crime will allow us mitigate the impacts on those who might otherwise have been victims, in particular vulnerable people.

By increasing emphasis on early intervention and prevention, efforts can be focused at a national, regional and local level in order to stop problems before they start. This approach allows us to use our resources more effectively, reducing the future demand not only on the police service but on the range of other public services who are also involved in dealing with the wider effects of crime.

Communication, education and innovation must lie at the heart of the approach, whilst the appropriate involvement of the police in the planning, design and delivery of other public services is also key.

Response

Strategic Priority

Focus policing on improving the wellbeing of individuals and communities by tackling crime and responding to and investigating incidents effectively and efficiently.

What this means

Of course, responding to crime and other incidents when they occur is central to the role of our police service and it is clear that their efforts in this regard must remain a priority.

Detection rates for crime can vary significantly depending on where you live in the country and the nature of the crime that has been committed. Whilst it is right that the most serious crimes are prioritised over others, it is also important that everyone has assurance that the police will respond effectively whenever a crime has been committed and that victims and witnesses will be supported.

The demands on the police service are changing, including, for example, in relation to the nature of people's engagement with technology, the policing of public events, responding to reports of missing persons, working with other emergency responders and communities in response to weather related emergencies, and undertaking other proactive work to improve the safety and wellbeing of people and communities.

The police must continue to offer a targeted, well planned and effective response to matters which require their support.

Collaborative Working

Strategic Priority

Ensure that our police service works productively with partners at local, national and international levels to deliver better outcomes for people in Scotland.

What this means

All of our public services are facing new challenges. The changing needs of society and our collective determination to improve outcomes in what is a challenging financial environment means we must approach the planning and delivery of services differently.

We know that policing can have an impact on the achievement of wider public sector objectives in areas including health, housing, education and the economy. For example, Police Scotland are key contributors to a number of groups at a local level including Community Planning Partnerships, Alcohol and Drug Partnerships and Child Protection Committees. It is crucial that the police take an active role, working closely with all of their public sector partners, the third sector and businesses, both to improve their own effectiveness and to strengthen our public services more generally.

Efforts in this regard should not be limited to traditional policing activities. Instead, we must explore how the range of resources and assets available to the police can be used to deliver shared solutions and achieve shared outcomes. This means avoiding duplication, sharing services where possible, agreeing shared measures of success and working to deliver services in a way which is most integrated from the point of view of recipients. There is significant scope to build on existing partnerships and to develop new ones, resulting in more efficient and cost-effective ways of working.

Accountability

Strategic Priority

Continuously improve public confidence in policing and inspire trust by being transparent, accountable and acting with integrity, fairness and respect.

What this means

It is essential that all of our public services are open, transparent and accountable, supporting people and communities to engage positively with them. When it comes to the police, Local Authority Police Scrutiny Committees have a key role to play, bringing together local elected representatives and police commanders to set objectives, develop local police plans and ensure that local police services deliver.

Nationally, Police Scotland is accountable to the SPA. The SPA is, in turn, accountable to the Scottish Ministers and the Scottish Parliament. Other bodies, including Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary in Scotland (HMICS), the Police Investigations and Review Commissioner (PIRC) and Audit Scotland also have a key role to play.

It is important that the appropriate links are made and that appropriate data is available, ensuring that governance and accountability for policing at local and national levels is as robust as it can be.

This principle of 'policing by consent' is central to our justice system. It is therefore critical that the SPA and Police Scotland work closely with all relevant bodies to identify and communicate what effective policing looks like and to deliver the scrutiny and transparency that is necessary in order to maintain public confidence.

Adaptability

Strategic Priority

Ensure our police service takes advantage of new opportunities and meets emerging threats and challenges.

What this means

The demands on our police service are constantly changing and the nature of crime does not remain static. Our police service must constantly seek to improve performance, transforming the way policing is delivered where that is necessary. Our approach to improvement must be based on robust evidence of “what works” and we must actively seek opportunities to maximise the potential of the police workforce, infrastructure and resources. In doing so, our police service must communicate and consult effectively where significant change is planned.

This requires an understanding of how future demands are likely to develop, enabling the police service to operate more effectively and efficiently by ensuring that the right resources, including officers and staff with the right skills and capability, are deployed proportionately in the right way and at the right time.

In order to achieve this, we expect our police service to be resilient, flexible, responsive and efficient.



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This publication is available at www.gov.scot

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The Scottish Government
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ISBN: 978-1-78652-489-8 (web only)

Published by The Scottish Government, October 2016

Produced for The Scottish Government by APS Group Scotland, 21 Tennant Street, Edinburgh EH6 5NA
PPDAS80223 (10/16)

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