



HM Inspectorate of Constabulary in Scotland

Improving Policing across Scotland

Tuesday, October 20, 2015

PRESS RELEASE

HMICS Publish Inspection of Local Policing in Edinburgh

Strictly EMBARGOED until 1100 hrs, Tuesday, October 20

The officers and staff of Police Scotland's Edinburgh Division are working hard to provide a service to their communities, says a report published today (Tuesday, October 20).

Local police are also actively engaged with the city's licensed trade to tackle antisocial behaviour associated with the night time economy, which helped reduce violent crime in Scotland's capital city during 2014/15.

However the report found that overall crime rates in Edinburgh Division are amongst the highest in Scotland while detections are the lowest.

The need for sufficient officers in response and community roles is a consistent theme to many of the challenges affecting Edinburgh Division of Police Scotland and the report calls for a review of the balance between local policing and specialist resources across the city.

The HMICS Inspection of Edinburgh Division, which contains eight recommendations, is the latest in the rolling programme under which all 14 local policing divisions of Police Scotland will be inspected to assess their state, effectiveness and efficiency.

This inspection highlights the additional demands placed on the division in policing Scotland's capital city and the regular need for local officers to cover other areas such as custody, front counters and Edinburgh Airport.

It also looks at the abstraction of officers to maintain public order at courts and recommends that discussion take place between Police Scotland and the Scottish Courts and Tribunal Service to reduce this.

It is estimated the equivalent of 55 officers every day are being drawn from local policing teams to provide temporary cover for a range of additional demands, including policing the 1150 pre-planned events the city typically hosts each year. This impacts on the availability of these officers to respond to public demand.

The report also comments on the changing demands of policing with a significant proportion of police time now spent responding to vulnerable people, whose needs could potentially be better met by other agencies.

In planning how best to use its resources in Edinburgh, HMICS believes Police Scotland should take into account and balance the competing demands from both public and protective policing, and the significant pre-planned demand arising from the numerous events in the city.

HM Inspector of Constabulary, Derek Penman said: “We have taken the view that many of the issues affecting Edinburgh Division have arisen because of the specific challenges that come with being the capital city. The single force has provided greater access to specialist support and has provided additional officers to assist in meeting these challenges. However I believe there is now a need for Police Scotland to review the balance between local policing and specialist resources to ensure there are sufficient officers within response and community policing roles across the division.

“The positive trends across Scotland of reducing crime levels and improved detection rates are not mirrored in Edinburgh. However these challenges around performance existed before the creation of Police Scotland; and the reasons for them are complex and examined in our report.”

The inspection notes that Police Scotland is fully aware of the challenges facing Edinburgh Division and a range of activities and initiatives have been put in place to improve performance.

Housebreaking is one such area where Police Scotland supported the division in a co-ordinated response after increases of over 20% in 2014/15. This has seen the number of these crimes within the division beginning to reduce.

HMICS found that the division has a good approach to consultation, using a variety of methods to identify national and local priorities. This ensures policing priorities meet the needs of its communities. Local scrutiny arrangements and the “Think Twice” initiative in the city centre are also highlighted as examples of effective practice.

During the inspection, HMICS looked in detail at the division’s approach to partnership working, assessing the impact of change both locally and nationally on this critical area of policing.

Edinburgh Division and its partners have the shared aims of community safety and wellbeing. While some partners commented that police have focused on enforcement rather than partnership in recent years, this trend is now reversing and partners are optimistic the division is refocusing its attention on local relationships.

During its inspections of each local policing division, HMICS also inspects custody facilities to assess the treatment of and conditions for those detained. Of the four custody centres in Edinburgh, the one at St Leonard’s Police Station is the primary facility.

The unannounced inspection of St Leonard’s custody centre found detainees are well treated and benefitted from the 24 hour health care on site and good cell conditions. However the physical layout of the premises and the volume of detainees processed there, have led HMICS to recommend Police Scotland consider long term options for meeting custody demand in the Edinburgh area.

Other recommendations relate to ensuring person escort records are completed properly, maintaining supplies of items required by detainees, the use of suitable vehicles for

transferring custodies to other facilities and regular checks on the state of readiness of the three other overflow custody centres at Craigmillar, Wester Hailes and Drylaw.

The force will be asked to incorporate the HMICS' recommendations into its own improvement process and ensure good practice is shared across Scotland to promote continuous improvement.

Ends

NOTES TO EDITORS

Key Findings and Recommendations from the Report are listed below.

The HMICS Inspection of Local Policing+ Edinburgh Division is available to download at the HMICS website www.hmics.org from 11:00hrs, Tuesday, October 20, 2015.

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The performance data cited in this report was the data available at the time of our inspection from January to July, but it should be noted there may have been some fluctuation since.

The HMICS inspections of custody facilities contribute to the UK's response to its international obligations under the Optional Protocol to the United Nations Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (OPCAT). OPCAT requires that all places of detention are visited regularly by a National Preventive Mechanism (NPM), an independent body or group of bodies which monitor the treatment of and conditions for detainees. HMICS is one of several bodies making up the NPM in the UK.

Part 1 – Inspection of local policing in Edinburgh Division

Outcomes

- Crimes per 10,000 of population in Edinburgh Division is the highest in Scotland and is well above the Scottish average.
- Edinburgh has the lowest detection rates of all divisions in Scotland and is well below the Scottish average.
- The division has made positive progress in only six out of 15 local policing plan objectives.
- Crimes of violence have decreased by 3.4% compared to the previous year and decreased 25% against the five-year average.
- During 2014-15 reports of housebreaking increased by 20.8% although the long-term trend remains downward.
- Overall confidence and satisfaction in service delivery in Edinburgh is declining and is below the national average.
- Edinburgh has improved performance in crime recording standards.

Leadership and governance

- The setting of measurable objectives to achieve local policing plan priorities provides the division with a method of reporting progress, although not all priorities have measurable objectives.
- The division has a good approach to consultation using a broad range of methods to contribute to the identification of national and local priorities.
- The division has supported the development of effective local scrutiny arrangements by raising awareness of wider policing issues.
- The Scottish Police Authority has established links with the local scrutiny committee to improve dialogue between national and local scrutiny and accountability bodies.
- The division has introduced a number of ways to improve visibility of leaders as a result of recommendations arising from a recent peer review.

Planning and process

- Changes to some processes have increased bureaucracy for officers in local policing teams.
- The division has the capability to plan for significant events within its area.
- Events in the city have significant resource implications for policing.
- The division works well with the licensed trade to tackle violence and antisocial behaviour associated with the city centre night time economy.
- The division recognises the need for continuous improvement and has taken steps to ensure it identifies its strengths and areas for improvement.

People

- The division is working to address weaknesses in tutoring and gaps in experience caused by a high proportion of probationer constables in response and community teams.
- Morale amongst officers and staff is mixed, with concerns over the impact that increasing demand along with reducing response and community officer numbers is having on their ability to provide an effective service.
- The division has a good approach to absence management with some of the lowest sickness rates in Scotland.
- The division has a good approach to equalities and is making progress toward the achievement of most of Police Scotland's equalities outcomes.

Resources

- There are challenges for the division in meeting demand from the public within its current level of local policing resources and staff abstractions. Although these challenges are largely being met through the flexibility of staff and are supported by good internal processes, this is not sustainable in the medium to longer term.
- There is a downward trend in the number of calls for service from the public, although the nature of demand is changing.
- In Edinburgh, there has been a 13.1% increase in calls reporting vulnerability, which equates to nearly 38 calls every day, some of which involve individuals who threaten or attempt suicide or self-harm in some way.
- Officers are regularly dealing with vulnerable individuals whose needs would be better addressed through timely interventions by other agencies, and which would arguably result in better outcomes for those individuals.
- While the impact of creating specialist national, regional and local units has been experienced by many divisions across Scotland, we are of the view that Edinburgh experienced a greater impact due to the levels of legacy local policing resources inherited by Police Scotland

- The loss to local policing in providing temporary cover to other divisions and the policing of events equates to around 55 officers every day and impacts on the division's capacity to meet public demand.
- The current level of officers maintaining public order and engaged in administrative duties in courts is not an efficient and effective deployment of limited local policing resources.
- There is a need to review the current resourcing arrangements for Edinburgh, taking into account the balance of public demand, protective demand and the significant pre-planned demand arising from the city's capital status.

Partnerships

- Strategic partnerships are good and there is a shared vision for community safety and wellbeing in Edinburgh.
- Partner agencies in Edinburgh reported a withdrawal of police from partnership activity in recent years and a focus on enforcement rather than prevention. However, there is evidence that this trend is reversing.
- A lack of information sharing by Police Scotland has hampered effective tasking and co-ordinating arrangements, but there are indications that this issue may soon be resolved.
- The new service level agreement between City of Edinburgh Council and Police Scotland provides an opportunity for the council to more effectively influence and monitor how funded officers are deployed.
- Plans to align boundaries among public services in Edinburgh, including policing, provide an opportunity to build on place-based initiatives already underway and make further progress in relation to the public sector reform agenda.

Recommendation 1

Police Scotland should develop a more flexible approach to the use of local policing resources to provide cover for other divisions. This should ensure it is based on actual demand taking account of the subsequent impact on local policing's capacity to meet public demand. (Paragraph 185)

Recommendation 2

Police Scotland should work with the Scottish Courts and Tribunals Service to discuss ways to improve the efficient and effective deployment of police officers engaged in maintaining public order and administrative duties within Scottish courts. (Paragraph 187)

Recommendation 3

Police Scotland should review current resourcing arrangements for Edinburgh Division taking into account the balance of public demand, protective demand and the significant pre-planned demand arising from the city's capital status. This should consider the overall resource allocation to Edinburgh alongside the flexibility of current regional and national arrangements to ensure that there is capacity to meet public demand. (Paragraph 190)

Improvement actions

The divisional commander should ensure that the division works with partners to ensure plans, priorities and measures are more clearly aligned and links between plans are clearly articulated. (Paragraph 201)

The divisional commander should ensure that objectives for partnership activity are clearly defined, articulated and linked to identified policing and community safety priorities with an exit strategy where appropriate. (Paragraph 218)

Part 2 – Inspection of custody centres located in Edinburgh Division

Key findings

- Detainees at St Leonards were well treated and their cell conditions were good. Staff were professional and respectful, and committed to delivering a good standard of care.
- The effective management and processing of detainees were hampered by the layout of the custody centre, the facilities available and the high number of detainees to be processed and cared for.
- There was a lack of privacy at the charge bar which had the potential to limit the effectiveness of the risk assessment.
- Some Person Escort Records had not been fully completed with all relevant risk factors.
- It was not always clear why a detainee had been assessed as low or high risk, nor was the rationale for the subsequent care plan always apparent.
- Staff sought wherever possible to hold male and female detainees in separate areas of the custody centre.
- Supplies of items required for detainee care and the general running of a custody centre were low and staff experienced delays when ordering new stock.
- The vehicle used to transfer detainees to other custody centres was not suitable for use on longer journeys.
- St Leonards benefited from 24-hour on-site, nurse-led health care provision. There were good relationships between health care and custody staff.
- The physical conditions of the ancillary centres at Craigmillar, Drylaw and Wester Hailes were of a satisfactory standard, but the centres were not ready for immediate use.

Recommendation 4

Police Scotland should develop and implement a strategy for the effective management of custody demand in the Edinburgh area.

Recommendation 5

Custody Division should ensure that staff complete Person Escort Records with all relevant risk factors. Reviewing Person Escort Records should form part of the division's quality assurance process.

Recommendation 6

Custody Division should establish an efficient process for ordering and maintaining supplies.

Recommendation 7

Custody Division should urgently assess whether the vehicle used to transfer detainees from St Leonards on journeys outwith the city is fit for purpose and identify a more suitable vehicle if needed.

Recommendation 8

Custody Division should review the state of readiness in its ancillary centres and strengthen the process under which centres are regularly checked.

Ends notes