

Justice Committee

Demand-led policing: service of first and last resort

Written submission from Police Scotland

I am writing in response to your invitation to attend a round table discussion on the above subject on 24 January 2017 and welcome the opportunity to explore the subject with the wider collective.

The following information seeks to provide an insight into current and future challenges ahead of the discussion.

Measuring and Understanding Demand

We know that the demands on our services are changing and that public requirements of policing in Scotland are more complex than just responding to, and preventing, crime. Whilst I recognise the often devastating impact that crime has on individuals and communities, the impact of non-criminal incidents is just as evident. Last year Police Scotland received over 3.4 million calls and attended over 900,000 incidents, Analysis of available data indicates that only around 1 in 5 incidents resulted in a crime being recorded. Many of the most time consuming incidents relate to concerns for persons, missing / absconded persons and dealing with sudden deaths. These calls are often linked to vulnerability and people in crisis; recorded crime alone is therefore not an accurate measure of demand on policing services. As such, it is essential that we understand the demands of both criminal and non-criminal incidents to ensure we are better enabled as a service, or collectively with partners, to respond in ways based on the threat, risk and harm posed to the needs of individuals and communities.

Understanding Vulnerability – Where are we now?

Vulnerability increases demands on policing as it does with other public services, but with no single definition of what constitutes “vulnerability”, either within the police service or agreed across partners, it has proven difficult to build an accurate picture. Mental health concerns are only one aspect of vulnerability and these concerns are not necessarily a fixed or inherent characteristic.

It is also important to note that not all matters categorised as a mental health incident by Police Scotland actually equate to a clinical diagnosis. However, as mental health charity ‘MIND’ report in their document, ‘*Mental Health Facts and Statistics*’, 1 in 4 people currently suffer from mental health problems in any given year, giving some indication as to the scope of the demand.

The Current Demands on our Service

Ensuring that we understand the demands on our service has been a cornerstone of the Policing 2026 Programme. This aims to develop a long-term strategy for consultation with the public on building a flexible and sustainable policing service that will inform implementation plans for how we meet new and existing demands and deliver improved benefits for communities across Scotland.

Central to that work has been work to measure and analyse current demand to ensure our services are delivered in the right areas with collective measures put in place to protect the most vulnerable within our communities. Three areas of material increases in demand around vulnerability are in the areas of mental health, missing persons, and sexual harm.

The extent of vulnerability related demand is evident within research conducted in 2014/15, which indicated that officers across Scotland attended over 42,000 incidents where mental health or distress was a factor. Whilst dealing with these incidents over 26,000 individuals were identified as either in distress or suffering from a mental illness. A more recent local study conducted in West Lothian identified that an incident relating to mental health or self-harm/attempted suicide takes officers an average of four hours and twenty minutes to deal with.

Intrinsically linked to demand caused by vulnerability is the significant commitment of police resources conducting missing person investigations. In many instances, a person being reported missing can be linked to a mental health crisis.

Between April 2014 and the end of March 2015, Police Scotland recorded just under 40,000 incidents where an individual was reported missing with 35,271 of these being confirmed as missing episodes. An inspection carried out by HMICS (Local Policing+ Inspection of the approach to Missing Person Investigations in Aberdeen City Division (June 2015)) noted that the cost to Police Scotland in managing missing person enquiries each year could range from £43 million to £80 million, equivalent to between 3% and 5% of the annual policing budget.

The last six years has seen incremental increases in the reporting of sexual crime, often committed against the most vulnerable. There will be various reasons for the rise in reporting, such as increased public confidence, however, irrespective of the reasons, the impact of these offences on those affected is not underestimated. Victims can remain silent for years after the offence, which has been evident within recent high profile child abuse cases. It is apparent that once one survivor is brave enough to speak out, there is often a proliferation of similar reports, the volume and intensity of such investigations having the potential to overwhelm investigative capability. Operation Hydrant, the UK wide coordination of investigations of child abuse where suspects are of public prominence or where acts have taken place in institutional settings was created in June 2014 and reports UK forces are now investigating 3057 offenders against 2975 victims.

Current Response to Dealing with Demand

Prevention driven approaches, early intervention, early resolution and diversion enable us to better address chronic issues in society, whilst also reducing the demand on police resources. We are striving to achieve this and manage demand through various internal and collaborative approaches, below are some examples;

Repeat Caller: Short Life Working Group

It is evident that many of those requiring our services, and those of our partners, are repeat callers. Often their requests for help are related to complex needs and

vulnerability and as such the 'Repeat Caller: Short Term Working Group' has been established to devise a means of identifying those individuals, to enable us to ensure their needs are being addressed at the earliest stage by the most appropriate organisation(s).

THRIVE

A pilot is currently under development to assess the proposed implementation of THRIVE (Threat, Harm, Risk, Investigation, Vulnerability and Engagement) model within Police Scotland. THRIVE is a multi-faceted approach to assess risk and vulnerability at the earliest point of contact. It aims to ensure that a tailored response is provided to all those who come into contact with police, prioritising services to the most vulnerable.

The THRIVE approach presents a clear opportunity to enhance the services we deliver to those in need while creating capacity for front line officers to focus on wider community needs and prevention. Implementing the THRIVE model will see appropriate training to staff with call handling staff and officers enhancing their skills in assessing risk and vulnerability.

Partnership Working

There are numerous examples of effective partnership working which highlight the benefits of a collaborative approach.

Between January 2015 and June 2015, Police Scotland, NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde Crisis out-of-hours Community Psychiatric Nurse Service piloted 'Community Triage'. The aim was to improve the out-of-hour's response to mental health and crisis incidents, where there was no immediate danger or threat to life. During the pilot, Community Psychiatric Nurses assessed 234 individuals following initial police attendance. 96% of those individuals received appropriate advice and support within their own home. 85% of these incidents were resolved in less than 3 hours. The '*Community Triage*' scheme has been retained and is still in use across Greater Glasgow. The evidence would suggest that wider use of Community Triage initiatives across Scotland will reduce demand on both the Police and NHS A&E departments.

Between 1 December 2015 and 30 November 2016, a National Partnership Protocol pilot '*Looked After Children who Go Missing from Residential and Foster Care in Scotland*', took place within Dundee City, South Lanarkshire and Edinburgh. Whilst the results are still being analysed this collaborative approach to engaging and preventing young people from going missing appears to have been successful, with a reduction in missing person reports. More importantly, the outcomes resulted in children feeling more included in decision-making and less criminalised whilst improving relationships with staff and police.

Workforce Capability

Whilst we recognise the vital role of collaboration and partnership working, there are some functions that only the police can perform. Over time we need to consider the shape and size of the workforce and ensure we have the most capable and effective individuals in every role. New threats and demands require us to increase the

flexibility of our workforce, ensuring that our organisation is more diverse, multi-skilled and experienced.

An example of this is recognising the crucial role that police officers and staff have in working with and supporting people with mental health problems. In September 2016, Police Scotland started a programme of mental health training, devised alongside NHS partners, to enable officers and staff to respond more effectively to situations involving people in mental distress or crisis. It is anticipated that 17,000 officers will be trained by the end of February 2017.

We will continue to support and empower our employees, providing training to allow them to reach their full potential and to provide the best policing service to Scotland.

Future Considerations

As Scotland continues to change, it is essential to recognise, understand and anticipate the factors likely to impact on future demand. The Policing 2026 Programme has carried out research and analysis to provide a better understanding of the nature and scale of risks likely to develop in the coming years. One such factor is Scotland's population, which is growing in size and getting older. As the average age of the population continues to rise mental health issues will become more prevalent. For example, The Alzheimer's Society predicts an increase in UK dementia sufferers to over one million by 2025. Additionally, there is likely to be more people living alone, leading to more social isolation and increased vulnerability, especially for the elderly.

Scotland's communities are no longer restricted to geographical locations but also exist as virtual communities. People are spending more of their lives online and as technology advances so do the threats posed. Criminal enterprises are moving from traditional methods of criminality into cyberspace, where they have more opportunities to commit crime and exploit the vulnerable. As they evolve so must our response to cyber-crime and cyber-vulnerability. We intend to achieve this by exploring partnership opportunities, improving our forensic science capability and by training our workforce to better respond to the evolving cyber threats.

Conclusion

It is clear that both criminal and non-criminal events, especially surrounding mental health and vulnerability, have considerable implications for Police Scotland in terms of resources. We remain committed to working collaboratively to provide the best outcomes to meet the changing needs of the people of Scotland.

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17 January 2017