

FYFE, N., WOOLVIN, M., ANDERSON, S., BLAND, N., MITCHELL, J. and REID, S. 2016. *Evaluation of police and fire reform: year 1 summary report*. Edinburgh: Scottish Government [online]. Available from: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/evaluation-police-fire-reform-year-1-summary-report/documents/>

# Evaluation of police and fire reform: year 1 summary report.

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2016

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# Evaluation of Police and Fire Reform: Year 1 Summary Report



CRIME AND JUSTICE

# **Evaluation of Police and Fire Reform: Year 1 summary report**

SIPR, What Works Scotland and ScotCen

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# Executive summary

## Context

- Police Scotland and the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) became operational in 2013 following the passing of the Police and Fire Reform (Scotland) Act in 2012. In terms of policing, the Act brought together the eight regional Police forces, the Scottish Police Services Authority and the Scottish Crime and Drug Enforcement Agency into two new national bodies: Police Scotland and the Scottish Police Authority. In relation to Fire and Rescue services, the Act established the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service , replacing the eight former Fire and Rescue services and the Scottish Fire Services College. Both sets of reforms are set within a context of decreasing budgets and involve making significant financial savings in relatively short timescales. Both Police Scotland and SFRS are also experiencing important shifts in demand for their services.
- The aims of this evaluation are to: (i) assess if the three aims of reform (reduced duplication, more equal access to specialist expertise and greater engagement with communities) have been met; (ii) learn the lessons from the implementation of this reform to inform the process of future public service reform; (iii) evaluate the wider impact of reform on the Justice and the wider public sector.
- The evaluation began in February 2015 and will conclude in February 2019. This first report focuses on findings emerging from the initial two stages of this work: (i) a review of publically available evidence up to the end of November 2015 and (ii) national key informant interviews. The latter were undertaken with a sample of senior representatives across policing and fire in Scotland and a range of national bodies outwith the two services, including other criminal justice sector agencies, local authorities and third sector organisations. This will be complemented with local geographical case study work in years two and four of the evaluation by engaging with local stakeholders including police officers, firefighters, elected members and community representatives.
- The purpose of the interviews was to focus on perceptions of the processes and experiences of reform in order to help understand ‘how’ and ‘why’ the aims of reform have (or have not) been met. The interviews have also highlighted possible lessons for future public service reform processes and the wider impacts of police and fire reform on the justice system and public sector more broadly. No claims can be made for the representativeness of the views articulated by the interviewees but they do give an important if partial perspective on reform. A sample of these interviewees will be revisited at a later stage in the evaluation to capture perceptions of change over time.
- This Executive Summary section gives an overview of the key themes which have emerged from this first year of work. These are elaborated upon in the

main body of the report which captures in greater detail important differences and distinctions in the experiences of reform for the two services

## **To what extent have the aims been met?**

- On the basis of both documentary evidence and the national key informant interviews, there is plausible and credible evidence of progress being made towards achieving the three long-term aims of reform. However, the picture is complex and the evidence presented in this Year 1 report will need to be supplemented by other perspectives (to be addressed in the next stages of the evaluation) before a more comprehensive assessment can be made.
- For both Police Scotland and SFRS, there is strong evidence of the establishment and functioning of new processes, structures, projects and programmes designed to enhance efficiency, effectiveness and engagement with communities. However, there are also some important evidence gaps. Documentary evidence tends to indicate ‘integration’ rather than ‘transformation’, is largely process rather than outcome focused, oriented to ‘producer’ rather than ‘consumer’ perspectives and stronger on national rather than local information.
- With respect to Aim 1 of reform (reducing duplication), documentary evidence and national key informant interviews suggest that progress has been made toward rationalising service provision and reducing duplication whilst maintaining frontline delivery. Interviewees across the Police and Fire and Rescue Services suggested that not only has the level of local service provision been sustained since reform, despite reduced budgets, but that aspects of services have been enhanced in ways which could not have happened without reform. However, this process is not complete and has proved complex and challenging. There are also significant inter-dependencies which mean that improvements in one area of service delivery might come with costs to other activities.
- With respect to Aim 2 (equal access to specialist expertise and national capacity), the removal of legacy boundaries has made it much easier to achieve this and several interviewees suggested that of the three aims of reform this was the one in which greatest progress could be demonstrated. Responses to major incidents are perceived by interviewees to have improved, including the capacity to maintain ‘business of usual’ at a local level during times of high demand. Moving forward there are on-going challenges for Police Scotland about the impacts of the creation of specialist units on local policing, and for SFRS about the most equitable and appropriate geographical location of assets in the context of variable risk profiles of different areas and the changing nature of the demands on the service as a whole.
- With respect to Aim 3 (strengthening the connections between services and communities), there is evidence of the establishment of local scrutiny and engagement arrangements and the production of local plans. Local scrutiny

arrangements were generally felt to be an improvement on previous arrangements for local governance but are of variable quality and in relation to policing there were concerns about the scope of local committees to discuss and challenge decisions taken at a national level that impact locally. The speed at which national decisions with local impacts were taken in the early stages of reform led to a poor assessment of Police Scotland's approach to local engagement. For the SFRS, there was a perception that local engagement is generally working well and the level of scrutiny they are subject to from local committees is much less than that experienced by Police Scotland.

## **What other important themes have emerged?**

- Beyond offering views on progress towards achieving the aims of reform, the interviews offered a range of additional insights into the broader processes of reform. These insights include the role of leadership and organisational culture, governance arrangements and the financial context. In terms of leadership, for example, there were different views on the qualities required in order to achieve the aims of reform. Some interviewees thought that a very directive approach was initially needed in order to achieve change in the timescale required, with a different style orientated towards collaboration and engagement required at later stages of this process. Others believed that communication and relationship building were the key qualities required for effective leadership from the start of reform..
- In terms of the experience of reform for partner organisations, the issue of stakeholder engagement featured strongly in many of the interviews: SFRS was seen as recognising the need for consultation and strong partnerships from the beginning of reform; Police Scotland was seen to be focused on engagement rather than consultation, informing local partner organisations of decisions that had already been taken centrally.
- With regard to wider impacts and implications of reform, key themes emerged with regard to the opportunities created for partnership and prevention. Examples of significant strategic initiatives that take forward partnership at a national level included the Scottish Crime Campus and the role of SFRS in responding to out-of-hospital cardiac arrests. It is also recognised that reform has facilitated a strong focus on prevention at a local level because of the capacity that now exists nationally to deal with high risk but low frequency major incidents, which in the past would have been met by local resources.

## **Recommendations, lessons learned and next steps**

- Representatives of Police Scotland and SFRS routinely invoked the notion of a reform journey that begins with 'preparing', moves on to 'consolidating' and 'integrating' and concludes with 'transforming'. Currently, both services see themselves in the 'consolidating' and 'integrating' phase of the journey and that real 'transformation' of service delivery has still to take place. The



challenges associated with the ‘transformation’ phase are seen as being at least as significant as those already encountered in integrating the services.

- On the basis of the work conducted so far, however, there are a number of recommendations that can be made along with some key lessons for future public service reform. In terms of recommendations, there are four key areas highlighted here:
  - **Addressing evidence gaps highlighted in this report:** as work continues to assess the progress of reform against the key aims, the focus should be on gathering more information about the outcomes and impacts of reform, allowing the ‘voices’ of the consumers of police and fire and rescue services to be heard, and ensuring that there is a mix of local and national insights;
  - **Improving the articulation of the opportunities and the challenges of reform:** to date much of the focus of the services has been on the complex process of integrating the legacy organisations. However, an unintended consequence has been limited communication to the public and partner organisations of the scope of the opportunities for transforming the delivery of police and fire services, as well as the challenges of the reform process.
  - **Developing a strategic approach to innovation:** as the reform process moves from the ‘consolidation’ to the ‘transformation’ phase, opportunities open up for significant innovation in service delivery. The executive teams and boards of both services have a pivotal role in leading this transformation activity and this should include ensuring a robust and evidence-based approach to innovation;
  - **Undertaking regular reviews of skill requirements needed for transformational change:** as reform enters the ‘transformation’ phase, the need for a wide range of expertise complementing the professional experience of practitioners within policing and fire and rescue, will be needed in the form of specialists in areas of strategic importance to the future delivery of services, such as financial planning, ICT, communications, analysis and project management.
- In terms of key lessons for future reforms of public services, the findings from the evaluation demonstrate that both Police Scotland and SFRS have embraced many of the recommendations from Audit Scotland’s report *Learning the lessons of public body mergers*.
- Building on these lessons, the evaluation also highlights three further strategic considerations that should inform reforms of public services:
  - **Reform involves cultural as well as structural change:** while much of the focus during the planning and implementation of reform is on structural changes around ‘back office’ activities and service delivery, the process also involves significant cultural adaptations. During

periods of reform the vision, values, ideas and practices which are the basis of organisational culture will typically take much longer to establish than new administrative structures and processes so there may be tensions between 'old' and 'new' ways of working that need to be carefully managed;

- **Reform may be driven centrally but is experienced locally:** reforms that lead to the merger of existing bodies typically involve a degree of centralization in decision-making. The resulting changes to central-local relationships (particularly in terms of levels of flexibility and discretion) and the differential and inter-dependent impacts of decisions taken centrally on local services and communities need to be carefully assessed throughout the reform process;
- **Reform narratives should focus both on the need for change and how change will happen:** while much attention is typically focused on why reform is needed, there is often less focus on how that change will happen in terms of linking activities and outcomes to explain how and why the desired change is expected to come about. Reforms therefore need to be underpinned by a well articulated 'theory of change' which will set out the causal connections between the necessary pre-conditions to achieve long-term outcomes.
- The later stages of this evaluation will provide new evidence - and synthesise further additional evidence - to inform our conclusions further. These stages include updating the evidence review each year; undertaking four geographical case studies to explore the ways in which reform has been experienced on the ground; undertaking two thematic case studies to explore two issues pertinent to the aims of reform in more detail; two international workshops; and re-interviewing a sub-sample of the key informants interviewed in year 1.

# Introduction

## What is the purpose of this evaluation?

The aims of this evaluation are to:

1. Evaluate if the three aims of Police and Fire reform have been met, namely:
  - To protect and improve local services despite financial cuts, by stopping duplication of support services eight times over and not cutting front line services;
  - To create more equal access to specialist support and national capacity – like murder investigation teams, Firearms teams or flood Rescue – where and when they are needed;
  - To strengthen the connection between services and communities, by creating a new formal relationship with each of the 32 local authorities, involving many more local councillors and better integrating with community planning partnerships.
2. Learn the lessons from the implementation of reform to inform the process of future public service reform;
3. Evaluate the wider impact of the reform on the Justice and the wider public sector.

## Who is undertaking the evaluation?

The Scottish Institute for Policing Research (SIPR), ScotCen and What Works Scotland have been commissioned by the Scottish Government to undertake the four-year evaluation, which started in February 2015.<sup>1</sup>

## What is the broader context of the evaluation?

Following the passing of the Police and Fire Reform (Scotland) Act in 2012, the resulting reforms to the organisation, governance and delivery of Police and Fire and Rescue services are some of the largest and most complex changes to the public sector in Scotland for a generation.

In terms of policing, the Act brought together the eight regional Police forces, the Scottish Police Services Authority and the Scottish Crime and Drug Enforcement Agency into two new national bodies: Police Scotland and the Scottish Police Authority. 'Local policing' became a statutory requirement at the level of the 32 council areas with local councils responsible for establishing local scrutiny arrangements. The Act also sets out a normative vision for policing in the form of a set of 'principles' focussed on community well-being, partnership working and harm reduction. In relation to Fire and Rescue services, the Act established the Scottish

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<sup>1</sup> See: [www.sipr.ac.uk](http://www.sipr.ac.uk); [www.scotcen.org.uk](http://www.scotcen.org.uk); and <http://www.whatworksscotland.ac.uk>

Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS), replacing the eight former Fire and Rescue services and the Scottish Fire Services College. The Act also makes new arrangements for local engagement and partnership working, including a new statutory role in the Local Senior Officer and the development of local Fire and Rescue plans linked to community planning. As with policing, the purpose of SFRS has been articulated in terms of working in partnership on prevention, protection and response, and improving the safety and well-being of people in Scotland.

Both sets of reforms are set within a context of decreasing budgets and involve making significant financial savings in relatively short timescales. Police reform is forecast to save more than £1.1 billion over the 15 years to 2026 while SFRS is expected to save £328 million by 2027/28. Both Police Scotland and SFRS are also seeing important shifts in demand for their services. Although there has been a long-term reduction in volume crime in Scotland (with recorded crime at a 41 year low), there are other areas where demand is increasing. These include the increased reporting of sexual offences, growing threats in relation to cyber crime and terrorism, and the impacts of broader demographic, environmental and policy changes that have consequences for policing. In relation to the Fire and Rescue service, there has been a long-term reduction in the number of fires and fire-related casualties and there are now on-going reviews of how SFRS delivers services in the future. These include exploring opportunities to be involved in a broader community safety role, mapping the distribution of resources in relation to risk, examining the future configuration of the retained duty system, and volunteer Firefighters who provide emergency response in many of Scotland's rural and remote communities.

A key difference between the services in the period since they were established has been the level of political and media scrutiny they have experienced. While the new SFRS has received relatively little political or media attention, Police Scotland has been the subject of intense interest in relation to the new arrangements for Police governance and its approach to delivering policing in local communities. In terms of governance, there were initial differences between the Chief Constable and the Chair of the SPA regarding the exact remit of SPA's responsibilities. In addition, the Scottish Parliament's Justice Committee established a Sub-Committee on Policing in March 2013 which has provided its own scrutiny of the implementation process. In terms of the approach to policing, the first eighteen months has seen significant attention given to a number of decisions regarding the use of tactics such as 'stop and search' and the standing authority for trained Firearms officers to carry their weapons in public while on patrol. Scrutiny of these decisions has come in the form of inquiries established by SPA, HMICS, and debate within the Scottish Parliament's Sub-Committee on Policing.

A final observation on the context of these reforms is that Scotland is not alone in undertaking major structural reform of policing. Over the last 10 years, Denmark, Finland, Norway, the Netherlands and Sweden have all embarked on significant administrative re-organisation of their Police forces, typically involving the merging of Police districts to create more centralized structures. The Netherlands in particular has followed a very similar journey to Scotland by establishing a national Police force in January 2013 through the merger of 25 regional forces. Most of

these countries are also currently engaged in evaluations of Police reform, creating significant opportunities for international learning and knowledge exchange.

## **What is the purpose of this document?**

This document provides an accessible summary of the themes and findings emerging from research carried out during the first year of the evaluation. This has had two main components. First, there is an 'evidence review' which describes, assesses and summarises the publicly available evidence base that existed in relation to the reforms to the end of November 2015. Key findings from this evidence review are presented in this report but additional information is contained in Annex 1 which provides a detailed analysis of individual sources. The second component of the research for the evaluation undertaken to date comprises 33 national key informant interviews with senior representatives from across policing (13) and fire (9) in Scotland and a range of national bodies outwith the two services, including other criminal justice sector agencies, local authorities and third sector organisations (11). The purpose of the interviews was to focus on perceptions of the processes and experiences of reform in order to help understand 'how' and 'why' the aims of reform have (or have not) been met. The interviews have also highlighted possible lessons for future public service reform processes and the wider impacts of Police and Fire reform on the justice system and public sector more broadly.

No claims can be made for the representativeness of the views articulated by the interviewees but they do give an important if partial perspective on reform. A sample of these interviewees will be revisited at a later stage in the evaluation to capture perceptions of change over time.

These national level, managerial perspectives will be balanced with local geographical case study work in years two and four of the evaluation engaging with local stakeholders including Police officers, Firefighters, elected members and community members. This will give a more rounded view of the reform process.

The remainder of this document summarises emerging findings from both elements of the evaluation completed to date in relation to progress towards the three main aims of reform, but also explores a number of broader themes relating to the process of reform, how it has been experienced by different stakeholders and what its broader impacts and implications have been.

# **Aim 1: To protect and improve local services despite financial cuts, by stopping duplication of support services eight times over and not cutting front line services**

## **What has been achieved so far?**

- The documentary evidence – explored in detail in annex 1 - generally suggests progress has been made in both Police Scotland and SFRS towards rationalising service provision while maintaining frontline delivery. Interviews with senior representatives within Police Scotland and SFRS at a national level reinforces this conclusion, with a strong consensus across stakeholders from both services that significant progress has been made in terms of reducing duplication. Representatives of SFRS in particular highlighted rationalisation of back office functions relating to areas such as pay roll and Human Resources.
- These achievements have occurred against a background in which – nationally - the number of fires and fire fatalities has generally continued on a downward trend, while crime recorded by Police Scotland has also continued to decline although clear up rates for crimes decreased (by 1.1%) between 2013/14 and 2014/15. It is important to note, however, that the regional picture varies and other indicators suggest a more complex picture both for Police and Fire and Rescue. This is explored in more detail in annex 1.
- Senior interviewees across the Police and Fire and Rescue services suggested that not only has the level of local service provision been sustained since reform, despite reduced budgets, but that – in some respects – services have been enhanced in ways which could not have happened without reform.
- A number of SFRS representatives emphasised strategic investment in localities which had fewer resources under legacy arrangements, while some Police Scotland interviewees pointed to the way in which local areas now have greater access to additional resources at a regional and national level than would have been the case before reform. In relation to the latter, it was reported that the creation of specialist units at a divisional level within Police Scotland focused on rape and sexual violence exemplifies this approach. More broadly, the ability to respond to major incidents by ‘surging’ resources into an area without having to draw on local personnel means that a ‘business as usual’ function at local level can still be maintained even at times of increased demand. This is seen as a significant benefit of the reformed services. Examples used to support these views include responses to the Glasgow School of Art fire, the Clutha helicopter crash, murder

investigations, high risk missing persons enquiries, and dealing with the consequences of large scale flooding events.

- The documentary evidence available to support claims about progress towards achieving Aim 1 of reform is largely contained within the Benefits Realisation work in Police Scotland and the Service Transformation Programme in the Fire and Rescue Service. Inspectorate reports for both services also provide valuable insights into the local experiences of reform in terms of service delivery, with additional thematic reports (for example the HMICS report on Police call handling) offering detailed evidence with regard to the challenges and risks experienced in particular areas of the reform process. All of this evidence is generally of good quality, based on systematic processes of data collection and analysis, with conclusions largely evidence-based and linked to plausible chains of causal reasoning.

## Ongoing challenges

- Despite the reported progress towards achieving Aim 1, this process is not complete and it has proved complex and challenging. There are significant inter-dependencies which mean that improvements in one area of service delivery might come with costs for other activities. For example, for Police Scotland, improvements in the quality and consistency of service through establishing specialist units has been viewed by some interviewees as having a negative impact on the resourcing of local policing teams.
- Several interviewees from both policing and Fire and Rescue also believed that the scale and complexity of tackling duplication was underestimated. Challenges cited here ranged from operational differences in the processes and procedures for responding to types of incidents and variations in the terminology used across legacy organisations, to differences in 'back office' business processes in key areas like contracts and procurement. In relation to the latter, interviewees also highlighted the limited skill sets within Police Scotland and SFRS to deal with complex corporate change and that one of the lessons for the future would be the further recruitment of specialists in this field.
- The rationalisation of estate was found by some to be particularly challenging given the significant social, economic and political impacts of decisions to close premises or co-locate functions. It was also recognised by some that it is not always desirable to remove all forms of duplication as it might still make organisational sense to maintain some capacity at a local level. Training facilities was one example cited by interviewees in SFRS where retaining some regional capacity is seen as important in terms of accessibility for staff.
- On the basis of the interviews conducted, the process of reducing duplication does not appear to have fallen evenly on all staff across the organisations. Civilian/support staff have seen their numbers fall in both policing and Fire and Rescue, largely through voluntary severance and early retirement

schemes. However, there have also been important differences between Police Scotland and SFRS.

- In the case of Police Scotland, some reported the protection given to Police officer numbers but not to civilian staff appears to have contributed to a 'them' and 'us' framing of workforce rationalisation, with some also reporting perceptions that Police officers are now undertaking some roles previously undertaken by civilians but at a higher cost.
- In SFRS, there has been progress towards harmonising pay and conditions for civilian staff across the country, but this was reported by some to have led to variable outcomes because of the significant pay differentials that existed between the legacy organisations for similar roles.
- The challenges and risks inherent in the process of rationalisation were illustrated in HMICS' Independent Assurance Review of Call Handling by Police Scotland. This report exemplifies a broader strategic challenge associated with reducing duplication i.e. it does not just involve *quantitative change* ('going from 8 to 1') with the associated risks of ensuring adequate resourcing but also significant *qualitative changes* in the harmonisation of processes and procedures which might have been very different under legacy arrangements
- Where there is a perception that this process of harmonisation has been seen as taking the approach from one legacy organisation and requiring the services in other parts of the country to adopt this (as in the so-called 'Strathclydisation' or 'West is Best' approach within Police Scotland), there have been concerns about the appropriateness of approaches that were more enforcement focused and target driven than had been the norm in other parts of the country. Evidence has emerged elsewhere to support this contention, and includes the approach taken to call handling set out in the HMICS Assurance Review and the widespread use of 'stop and search' across Scotland documented by the SPA's Scrutiny Review, both of which involved policies and practices developed in the Strathclyde Police force area being rolled out to other parts of the country.
- In terms of perceptions of improvement in local service provision, independent data collected on policing through the Scottish Social Attitudes Survey shows that there has been relatively little change in public attitudes pre and post reform regarding whether a national force makes people feel more or less confident about local policing. More recent data contained within the Scottish Crime and Justice Survey (published in March 2016) shows 2-4 percentage point reductions in public attitudes towards policing in the period from 2012/13 to 2014/15 in relation to key indicators including whether the Police in local areas listen to concerns of local people and whether people have a lot of confidence in the Police in the local area. However, responses remain broadly similar or improved from early sweeps (2009-10) of the survey.



## Evidence gaps

- In terms of the evidence base, much of the documentary evidence of relevance to this aim is internally focused on processes of change within Police Scotland and SFRS. As such it is able to tell a relatively detailed story about activities being undertaken to rationalise and integrate service provision and the progress towards achieving this.
- Where there is less evidence is in relation to the local perceptions of the outcomes of these process on local services and, in particular, the extent to which service users perceive any improvements in local service provision.
- It is also important to acknowledge that the absence of accessible local baseline data impedes the ability to make precise assessments about the scale and nature of any improvements to services. Where there is publicly available quantitative information it often tends to be at a national rather than local level.

## Conclusions and key lessons

- In sum, there is good evidence of significant progress toward achieving Aim 1 of reform for both Police Scotland and SFRS. This evidence is largely at a national level and focused on processes of rationalisation and is of good quality.
- In terms of local impacts and implications, the evidence is largely confined to the local inspection work carried out by the relevant Inspectorates. There is statistical information at a local authority level with regard to performance but specific evidence regarding local experiences and perceptions of how far services have been maintained/improved, and the consequences of programmes to reduce duplication for a broad range of stakeholders, is limited. That data which is available suggests perceptions of public confidence in policing at a local level have dipped since reform but are broadly similar or improved since the position in 2009/10.
- There is, therefore, a clear potential role for the evaluation to address a number of the evidence gaps identified above, particularly with reference to:
  - Considering experiences and perceptions of how far services have been maintained/improved;
  - With regard to experiences and/or unintended consequences of programmes to reduce duplication amongst a broad range of stakeholders, and;
  - Deepening the evidence base regarding local attitudes and perceptions toward the services in light of reform.
- In terms of key lessons, having a deeper understanding of differences in structures and processes within the organisations prior to merger was viewed

by interviewees as an important consideration for any future reforms of this kind. The scale and complexity of changes required to incorporate functions within merged organisations was also highlighted as an important area of risk and one where specialist skills sets are required which are likely to sit outwith the normal competencies of those with more operational experience.

- In relation to policing, the pace at which reductions in duplication have been required, given the financial context, was also perceived as making it difficult to draw on diverse experiences of what was working well locally in the face of pressure to achieve consistency quickly by drawing on a more limited repertoire of processes and approaches. Future reforms would therefore benefit from a more detailed assessment of good practice at a local level prior to the introduction of national operating models.

## **Aim 2: To create more equal access to specialist support and national capacity – like murder investigation teams, firearms teams or flood rescue – where and when they are needed**

### **What has been achieved so far?**

- For both services, relatively detailed documentary evidence is now available about the establishment and functioning of arrangements, post-reform, for accessing specialist expertise and national capacity. In relation to policing, this comes from three main sources: the Post-Implementation Benefits Review; local inspections carried out by HMICS; and the review of armed policing by the SPA. In relation to Fire and Rescue, key sources include HMFSI's report on Equal Access to National Capacity; the SFRS Review of Specialist Equipment; benefits realisation and service transformation reports; and Audit Scotland's report on the SFRS. This evidence is generally of good quality and based on systematic processes of data collection and analysis.
- Across both services, the documentary evidence and interviews with key stakeholders suggest that significant progress has been made in creating more equal access to specialist support and national capacity. Indeed, several interviewees suggested that, of the three main aims, this was the one in which greatest progress could be demonstrated. To a large extent, this reflects the relatively cumbersome mutual aid mechanisms for accessing such resources under legacy arrangements in both services and the almost immediate scope to share resources more effectively once sub-national boundaries were removed.
- In policing, for example, it was reported that pre-reform the limited nature of formal processes for requesting specialist units from other forces and cross-charging meant the demand was sometimes artificially suppressed. A number of interviewees reflected that there is now a much clearer process with resources available via both the Operational Support Division (OSD which includes air support, marine unit, dogs and horses, and Firearms) and the Specialist Crime Division (SCD). There are Major Investigation Teams (MITs) for the North, East and West area which focus on homicide and other serious crime.
- In terms of outcomes, interviewees suggested that the Police response to major incidents (such as murder investigations or large-scale public order events) had improved as a result of the new arrangements – not only in terms of the incident itself but in managing the broader ongoing demands of local policing.

- Within Fire and Rescue, SFRS and HMFSI have established a detailed picture of variation in equipment, skills and capacity across Scotland and progress is reported in addressing these regional variations by interviewees. For example, some key resources, such as water rescue teams, have been redeployed in line with geographic risk profiles.
- Interviewees pointed to the Clutha Bar helicopter accident and the widespread flooding in December 2015 as examples of faster and more effective deployment of specialist expertise and national capacity than would have been possible pre-reform. It was identified that an important aspect of this has been the standardisation of procedures and equipment (such as Personal Protective Equipment) across the country as a whole, alongside development of a national database that ensures that all Fire control rooms have live information on the location and skillset of flexi-duty managers to support local and national mobilisation.

## Ongoing challenges

- In the context of policing, some interviewees saw the creation of national, divisional and local specialist units as having had some negative impact on the availability local 'frontline' resource, a point underlined by inspectorate reports. There are also questions – raised by both interviewees and in inspectorate reports - about the implications of a lack of crossover between national units and local Police officers. Specific issues raised here include the risk that intelligence and performance monitoring opportunities are being missed through failures to debrief specialist officers deployed locally, and the potential for local officers to become deskilled through a reliance on national expertise.
- The very real financial constraints around all public services also mean that there are limits to the extent to which dedicated national teams will be able to handle demand across Scotland as a whole. Some interviewees suggested that there is a need for greater multi-skilling of local Police staff as a result.
- A further important challenge highlighted by some interviewees in the context of policing is to ensure that attempts to establish equal access to specialist resources are not seen or experienced locally as 'imposing' approaches or solutions that do not fit that specific context. The controversy over the routine carrying of firearms is an example of this. The SPA's inquiry into this issue suggested that Police Scotland had underestimated the community impact of armed officers being sent on routine calls and suggested that better assessment and explanation of such decisions is required.
- In relation to Fire and Rescue, despite greater ease of access to specialist expertise and national capacity within the new single geography, there is ongoing work around the strategic location of both specialist and non-specialist appliances and resources, with pre-existing distribution reflecting past needs. The task of ensuring that expertise, equipment and capacity is distributed appropriately and equitably needs to take account of various

challenges, including the need to balance national and local interests and the changing role of the service as a whole.

- It is also clear in relation to SFRS that equality of access does not always imply centralisation. In relation to staff training, for example, there is a move to provide local training facilities that reduce the travel time and costs associated with receipt of training.

## **Evidence gaps**

- In relation to Police Scotland, there is strong process-based and transactional evidence and evidence relating to the functioning of the new arrangements. In SFRS, there is strong evidence of detailed consideration of variations in baseline resources and risk profiles in preparation for a more strategic approach to distributing specialist resources.
- Across both Police and Fire and Rescue in relation to Aim 2, evidence appears more limited in relation to outcomes. There is anecdotal and case study evidence but this tends to be high level and could be stronger in terms of analytical rigour. Closer examination of the causal connections and inter-dependencies would also be beneficial when considering activity underpinning work relating to this strategic aim. Consideration of the unintended consequences of the increased use of specialist units would also be useful, particularly if this is seen as diluting local expertise and reducing the pool of experienced personnel working at a local level.
- It appears that other 'voices' need to be heard both within the services and within communities about the impacts and implications of recent developments in relation to accessing specialist expertise. This would help move from evidencing 'outputs' and 'process' to 'outcomes' and 'impact' across a wider spectrum of stakeholders. In terms of the evaluation itself, future work (through, for example, geographical case studies) will balance the perspectives presented here with the views and experiences of those in local areas.

## **Conclusions and key lessons**

- For both services, it is reported that the removal of the legacy boundaries has made it much easier to deploy specialist expertise and national capacity as and when required, and there is anecdotal and some case study evidence that this has resulted in positive outcomes.
- Within policing, the key questions are now about the impacts of the creation and deployment of specialist units on local policing, and about how to balance consistency of service delivery with local needs and expectations.
- In relation to Fire and Rescue, the main challenges are now around taking forward the most equitable and appropriate geographical location of assets and expertise linked to the three Service Delivery Areas covering the North, East and West of the country, given the very different risk profile of different

areas, increasingly significant financial constraints (also faced by Police Scotland) and the changing nature of the demands on (and expectations of) the service as a whole.

- As with Aim 1 there is a clear role for the evaluation to address a number of the evidence gaps at national and local levels around (internal and external) perceptions of the outcomes associated with changes to specialist services. Evidence gaps in relation to the causal connections between service reconfiguration and specific outcomes will also be addressed.
- One of the key lessons in relation to Aim 2 is the need to recognise and map the inter-dependencies between specialist functions and more routine activities in order to identify any potential areas of tension, particularly in terms of maintaining skills in different parts of an organisation. The need for a detailed understanding of risk and demand profiles is also fundamental to decisions around the (re)distribution of specialist expertise and physical assets with associated consequences for the relocation of staff and training requirements.

# **Aim 3: Strengthen the connection between services and the communities they serve by providing an opportunity for more local councillors to be involved in shaping local services for better integration with community planning**

## **What has been achieved so far?**

- Documentary evidence in relation to this aim is largely derived from descriptions of the establishment and, to a lesser extent, functioning of local scrutiny and engagement arrangements and production of Local Police Plans (LPPs), Multi Member Ward Police Plans (MMWPs) and Local Fire and Rescue Plans (LFRPs). There is also some evidence regarding the nature of and approaches to community engagement taken by the services as well as reports by a range of third sector, local authority and national bodies and organisations.
- The diversity of this evidence base relating to Aim 3 makes generalised assessment of its quality more difficult than for Aims 1 and 2. There is clearly a spectrum in terms of criteria such as methodological adequacy, analytical approach and independence, and this should be kept in mind when interpreting the evidence base. The evidence also tends to be descriptive rather than analytical, focused more on the 'what' (i.e. what new arrangements are in place) rather than the 'so what' (i.e. a systematic assessment of the impacts and implications of new arrangements).
- Interviewees generally echoed the findings of this documentary evidence, highlighting the formation of the appropriate structures for local stakeholder engagement as set out in the Act, with the appointment of Local Senior Officers (SFRS) and Local Police Commanders (Police Scotland) acting as a focus for engagement with Community Planning Partnerships, formulation of Local Outcome Agreements and engagement with local stakeholders. Furthermore, the associated Local Plans were identified by some as significant achievements.
- Where discussed, local Scrutiny Committees were generally felt by interviewees to be an improvement on previous arrangements for local governance resulting in policing and Fire receiving increased attention. In terms of the nature of the scrutiny, a number of interviewees acknowledged that more councillors are now involved in the scrutiny process but argued that this did not necessarily mean that there had been an increase in quality of scrutiny.

- Access to senior officers in both services was seen by most of those interviewees commenting on this issue to have improved, although some interviewees felt it was important to note that whilst each Local Authority may have senior officer as a named contact (which is perceived as an improvement) some smaller authorities share this contact with other local authority areas.
- For SFRS, a number of approaches were identified by senior staff as being effective in facilitating local-national links, including giving SFRS board members responsibility for specific geographical areas and pursuing feedback from LSOs. The appointment of LSOs to their posts prior to reform was also felt to be helpful, as was the significant degree of autonomy that LSOs appear to have to take decisions at a local level.
- In relation to Police Scotland there were concerns expressed in relation to the early phases of reform about the perceived lack of autonomy and discretion of Local Commanders, particularly with regard to decisions taken at a national level that had significant local impacts.
- Whilst there was limited discussion of how far engagement with members of communities of place had improved (or otherwise), in terms of connecting with communities more generally, it was recognised that social media are becoming increasingly important.
- Among those who reflected on what went well in the implementation of reform, clear and effective communication in articulating the nature of the reform process was felt to be important. Where effective, it was felt this could allay potential fears – for example directly engaging with councillors to explain the rationale behind relocating a specialist resource.
- The wider context of the Christie Commission’s findings and austerity was felt by some to provide important drivers for partnership working, as was the increased engagement with ‘prevention’ more widely across the public sector. Some made the observation that partnership working with legacy Police and Fire services was strong prior to reform and continues (focused on issues like vulnerability to harm and crime) but that some momentum was lost during the early stages of reform, particularly with Police Scotland although there is now an increasing emphasis on partnership working within the organisation along with an increasing focus on prevention. In relation to Fire, there had been a clear shift towards the prevention agenda prior to reform in some legacy services and this has been scaled up to a national level post reform.

## **Ongoing challenges**

- For some interviewees, Aim 3 of reform was viewed as having lower priority in the early stages of reform when the focus had been on Aims 1 and 2 in terms of maintaining the delivery of services and establishing structures for providing specialist expertise at a national level. Although greater focus now appears to be given to local community engagement it was also recognised



by a number of interviewees that there are challenges in managing tensions between local and national priorities and issues, in particular for Police Scotland. This is also a theme identified in reports produced by HMICS.

- A further common theme related to the effect of a perceived pressure to take quick decisions in the early stages of reform on the quality of, and approach to, engagement. For example, decisions regarding the withdrawal of Police Scotland Traffic Wardens were viewed very critically by some interviewees because of the lack of consultation and engagement with local authorities about the consequences for them.
- Interviewees were generally positive about the approaches to engagement and partnership working adopted by SFRS, although some variations in the quality of LSO engagement were identified. More generally, it was felt by some that there were missed opportunities early in the reform process to use local engagement to articulate the relationship between Police and Fire reform and the broader changes to public services and community empowerment that provided the context for these developments. In particular, some interviewees felt that in the course of local engagement it would have been useful to introduce people to the scope of the opportunities for transforming the delivery of Police and Fire services that reform has created, preparing the ground for changes in service delivery in the future.
- Some suggested that the nature of local scrutiny, and the standard of engagement with Local Authorities continues to be mixed, a theme also reflected by inspectorate reports. The perceived lack of geographical nuance and specificity of context evident in the first versions of Police Scotland's MMWPs and LPPs and also in some LFRPs was highlighted as an example of what some interviewees saw as a limited approach to localism.
- In relation to policing, there were also significant concerns from some around the scope of local scrutiny committees to be able to discuss and challenge decisions taken at a national level that impact locally. The need to find an effective mechanism that allows members of local scrutiny committees to escalate issues within the Police hierarchy when these cannot be resolved locally was also seen by some interviewees to be urgently required.
- A tension was evident between apparent desires for consistency in the quality of scrutiny (and plans) but for sufficient flexibility to take into account local variations, with a sense from some interviewees that the latter has been partly lost. Related to this, the level of discretion of local Police commanders was felt by some to have reduced compared to the pre-reform period, although it is acknowledged that this may now also be changing. Some also felt that a single local Community Safety Plan, rather than separate Police and Fire plans might be more helpful in supporting partnership working. Further, some interviewees suggested that the balance between engagement and critique of Police and Fire in local scrutiny was unequal, with greater attention on Police. Building a stronger shared understanding of the new

scrutiny arrangements on both sides was also identified as a potential area for improvement.

- As has been noted in relation to Aims 1 and 2, perceptions of the relationship between the maintenance of local policing and the establishment of specialist units within Police Scotland differ. Some felt that this had resulted in a reduction in resources dedicated to local policing, others saw the new model as allowing national capacity to be 'accessed' via local policing and so in this way local policing had not reduced, rather it had changed in nature.
- Relating to the wider context of partnership working and the recommendations of the Christie Commission, whilst for some interviewees financial pressures meant a greater imperative to work collaboratively, a counterview was expressed that this can also lead to retrenchment and organisations focusing on what they see as core business and less inclined to think about longer term, collaborative preventative activities.

## **Evidence gaps**

- Overall, documentary evidence in relation to this aim for both services is disparate (and includes Inspectorate Reports; Parliamentary reports; reports from representative organisations and those funded by political parties) which means the quality is variable and the causal links between the activities of reform and intended outcomes are not fully developed.
- There is also a lack of specificity around some key themes. Engagement with diverse 'communities' is often referenced in evidencing progress towards this aim but it would be helpful to have further evidence of how the services are strengthening their connections with different types of community such as the young and the old, victims and others who come into contact with the services, and those living in remote rural areas, small towns and big cities. In relation to these and other groups, there is a lack of evidence about their interactions, experiences and relationships with the Police and Fire and Rescue services post reform.
- Overall, as is the case for aims 1 and 2, there is a need here to shift the evidence base from documenting the establishment, functioning and outputs to evidencing and understanding outcomes and impacts.

## **Conclusions and key lessons**

- In sum, there appears good evidence for progress being made toward achieving this aim of reform in terms of descriptions of the establishment – and to a lesser extent, functioning – of local scrutiny and engagement arrangements and production of MMWPs, LPPs and LFRPs.. There is also some evidence regarding the nature of and approaches to community engagement taken by the services.

- Overall, as is the case for Aims 1 and 2, there is a need here to shift the evidence base from documenting the establishment, functioning and outputs to evidencing and understanding outcomes and impacts.
- Looking to the future, a number of interviewees identified actions that would further strengthen engagement at the local level. This includes aligning local Police and Fire plans within local administrative geographies; strengthening engagement approaches in order to feed into local plans; seeing community planning partnership arrangements strengthened in terms of their quality and consistency, and developed further in terms of their links to communities.
- In terms of key lessons, the need for early engagement and meaningful consultation over decisions that impact locally emerges as an area of fundamental importance to ensuring public confidence in the reform process and allaying fears about centralization of decision-making. Greater authenticity about the challenges of reform in terms of the difficulties and complexities of change is also important as well as clear communication around the longer term opportunities and benefits with respect to enhanced service delivery and community wellbeing.

# Processes, experiences and the wider impacts of reform

Beyond offering views on progress towards achieving the three aims of reform, the interviews also provided insights into the broader processes, experiences and impacts of reform.

## Processes of reform

### Leadership and organisational culture

- The nature of senior leadership required to achieve reform was discussed by a number of interviewees and there were different views on this. Some felt that a very directive approach was initially required in order to achieve change in the timescale required (with a different style orientated towards collaboration and engagement required at later stages of this process). Others disagreed, however, and believed that the key qualities required for effective leadership from the start of reform are communication and relationship building. Most interviewees commenting on leadership also highlighted the possibility that leadership characteristics may need to change over time as the process of reform unfolds.
- Linked to this was the perception amongst a number of interviewees that the organisational culture that developed within Police Scotland during the early stages of reform was one weighted towards the culture within legacy Strathclyde Police, characterised by performance targets and a management style initially focused on tight central 'grip'. Some suggested this approach had resulted in a positive change in practice compared to the pre-reform situation, that it could be understood as pragmatic in the time available and that, in some respects, the approach taken in this area may well have been the most effective. However, other interviewees felt that this approach was too intrusive, limited the autonomy of local officers to respond to local contexts, and led to examples of good practice outside the legacy Strathclyde force area being overlooked.
- The skillsets required of more senior staff in both services in order to manage the transition from shorter term, transactional approaches to longer term planning and transformational activity was also raised by some interviewees. Some interviewees emphasised the need to draw on the skills of experienced project managers from outside the organisations, rather than relying on senior officers from within Police Scotland and SFRS.
- Employees' perceptions of the culture of the new organisations was also highlighted by some as an important issue, particularly in terms of overcoming a sense of 'loss' around the legacy organisations and building a new sense of identity within Police Scotland and SFRS. This was viewed as an important and long-term project but with new people coming into the organisations and new managers being appointed on the basis of their

experience within Police Scotland and SFRS (rather than their legacy organisations) there is a sense of new organisational cultures already developing. Indeed, work has been undertaken by both SFRS and Police Scotland regarding staff survey (Police Scotland) and cultural audit (SFRS) exploring in more detail workforce issues.

- A broader issue in relation to organisational culture was the relative size of Police Scotland compared to other agencies in the criminal justice sector. While the benefits of a single Police organisation are clearly recognised by stakeholders its relative dominance is seen by some as coming with a responsibility to behave as an equal partner.

### **Governance arrangements**

- The issue of the governance arrangements for Police Scotland and SFRS emerged as an important theme in its own right in a number of ways. The extent to which shadow boards and/or shadow senior management teams would have been helpful was discussed by a number of interviewees, with mixed views on the possible advantages of this (such as giving board members a better understanding of the organisations before 'Day One') and disadvantages (potentially becoming complex and challenging to manage, for example).
- The issue of relationships between the respective boards and their executive teams also emerged in the interviews. For SFRS, one issue in the early period of reform was what was seen by some interviewees as an unclear distinction and separation between involvement in operational issues and strategic oversight. In policing, concern was expressed at the length of time spent on trying to resolve issues over the respective responsibilities of SPA and Police Scotland. Some interviewees felt that this significantly delayed progress in taking reform forward and could have been resolved earlier if a more proactive approach involving neutral arbitration had been instituted.

### **Resourcing and financial context**

- Budgets and finances were discussed with regard to a number of aspects of reform. A strong link between reducing duplication and achieving budgetary targets was identified. The role of financial savings targets in driving the rapid pace of reform and the negative implications of this for consultation and engagement were identified by some, particularly with regard to policing.
- The time taken to produce long-term financial strategies in both services was noted by some interviewees, with the ongoing delay in this for Police Scotland being seen as a particular challenge. Some interviewees also suggested that effective reform requires investment 'up-front', and there were divergent views over whether sufficient resource had been invested in this. Some also suggested that long-term capital funding is required to support ongoing reform, reducing reliance on, for example, asset disposal.

- Linked to budgetary horizons – which can be shorter term – is the challenge of investing to achieve the objectives of the Christie Commission around prevention and partnership working which can require longer-term commitments. The wider context of austerity was also identified: reform is not happening in isolation, and this presents opportunities (e.g. openness to partnership working and innovative thinking) and challenges (costs associated with this, and potential organisational retrenchment). Finally, challenges in definition and measurement of efficiency were also identified.

## **Differences in experiences of reform**

In terms of experiences of reform, it is important to distinguish between experiences of those within Police Scotland and SFRS, and those in other organisations affected by reform.

### **Experiences within Police Scotland and SFRS**

- Many of the interviewees highlighted the way in which there have been significant variations in the experience of reform within the workforces of Police Scotland and SFRS, depending on a range of factors, including role, rank and location.
- Significant reductions in civilian staff have occurred in both services through voluntary redundancy and early retirement schemes but the protection given to Police officer numbers meant that this process was seen by some interviewees as more divisive within Police Scotland.
- In both services, the reductions in the senior leadership teams were seen by senior staff as communicating an important message that processes of rationalisation extended right to the top of the organisations. However, it was also reported by some that this created a significant challenge in terms of maintaining the level of stakeholder engagement activity that existed under legacy arrangements because the capacity to do this at a senior level was radically reduced.
- In both Police Scotland and SFRS, it was generally felt that those involved in specialist roles have seen the greatest change as a result of reform, given the increased opportunities to operate at a national level. Of those commenting, it was generally felt that those operating at a local level in local policing teams and as local firefighters would have seen less change in their role, given the desire to ensure continuity and stability of service delivery at this level. However, it was also perceived by some interviewees that some members of local policing teams may (particularly within Police Scotland) have experienced increased workload pressures due to the movement of officers into specialist units.
- HMICS local inspection reports have also included specific evidence with regard to morale of frontline officers and staff in Police Scotland. Although there was some variation between divisions, it is clear that the rapid pace of change, perceptions of poor communication and feedback within the

organisation combined with increasing workloads had all contributed to a decline in morale during the first phases of reform.

- In both organisations, interviewees highlighted a range of future challenges in relation to their workforces which will need to be addressed as reform moves from the phase of 'integration' to 'transformation'. For SFRS these perceived challenges include service provision in rural areas (particularly the Retained Duty System); the need to progress the process of harmonising the pay and reward structure given the differences that existed within legacy services; and the upskilling of Firefighters as assets are relocated across the country to reflect the risk profile.
- For Police Scotland and SFRS there are perceived challenges in succession planning for senior and middle managers given the numbers that will be leaving the organisation in the next few years; and perceived challenges were also reported regarding the use of Police officers in some roles previously performed by civilian staff. There appears to be scope for claims regarding increased efficiency of this approach to be evidenced.

### **Experience of reform for partner organisations**

- The issue of stakeholder engagement featured strongly in many of the interviews, with broad agreement that a difference could be discerned between the approaches taken between the SFRS and Police Scotland. SFRS appeared to be much clearer about the need for consultation and strong partnerships from the beginning of reform and being a committed Community Planning partner prepared to think beyond silos of individual agencies.
- Police Scotland was seen to be less effective in the initial period of reform at communicating with partner organisations and as interacting in ways that tended to be orientated towards engagement rather than consultation, informing local partner organisations of decisions that had already been taken centrally (such as in relation to traffic wardens and police office counters).
- Other organisations in the criminal justice system made similar observations around the lack of communication between Police Scotland and other criminal justice partners who were being affected by changing practices and priorities in Scottish policing. For example, the increased focus on domestic abuse and domestic violence as well as the increased priority given to traffic offences, all had important downstream consequences for the capacity of prosecutors and courts to deal with this increased flow of cases.

### **Wider impacts and implications of reform**

In terms of the wider impacts and implications of reform three key strategic issues featured prominently: partnership, prevention and the broader operational infrastructure.

## Partnership

- There was a strong sense among interviewees of the significant opportunities that have opened up for more effective partnership working as a result of reform. In particular, having a single Police service alongside other national justice sector agencies is viewed by some as creating significant opportunities to drive innovation in terms of joined up approaches within the justice sector.
- Examples of significant strategic initiatives that take forward partnership at a national level which were regularly cited by senior SFRS and Police Scotland interviewees. These included the Scottish Crime Campus and the role of SFRS in responding to out-of-hospital cardiac arrests.
- Some interviewees questioned whether the potential for partnership working by SFRS was being hampered the organisation's location within the justice portfolio, given that so much of its current and future work is aligned strongly the health and social care agenda.
- More generally, several interviewees highlighted the importance of adjusting accountability and performance frameworks to reflect the priority being given to partnership working. If organisations are not being held to account for partnership activity, then they may place less emphasis on this. It was also emphasised that effective partnership depends on strong local relationships so there are limits to what can be achieved in terms of central direction.

## Prevention

- There is clear recognition that the Fire service has moved strongly towards a more pro-active prevention focused agenda while also maintaining its capacity to deal reactively with major incidents. Some suggested the emphasis on prevention may involve a reconfiguration of the traditional roles of the firefighter.
- It is also recognised by some that reform has facilitated a strong focus on prevention at a local level because of the capacity that now exists at national level to deal with high risk but low frequency major incidents which in the past would have been had to have been met by local resources.
- In policing, there is recognition that engagement with the prevention agenda among the legacy forces was quite variable but those forces which had embraced this approach were doing far more than advising about what locks and bolts to fit and focusing on vulnerable people, youth offending, mental health, missing persons strategy etc. However, in the early phases of reform, some reflected that the focus of Police Scotland was experienced as being more enforcement orientated and there was therefore less emphasis on prevention with the focus was seen to be more on meeting short term targets than longer term outcomes.
- One of key challenges highlighted by representatives from both organisations is the way in which performance measurement continues to focus on the



short term and on outputs rather than outcomes, so there is still important work to do to achieve a longer term, outcome focus.

## **Infrastructure**

- Both benefits and challenges were identified in relation to equipment and estate. Whilst positive examples of benefits were reported (standardisation of equipment making working together with colleagues from different parts of the country easier, for example) it was also reported that there are areas that could be improved and have not been as successful as anticipated. As identified in relation to Aim 1 and in Annex 1, estate has been a major theme of the reform process to date, as reflected by estate strategies for both Services. The reduction of estate was recognised as a theme by both senior Fire and Police interviewees, along with co-location between services and potentially with wider public sector bodies. Related to this, other themes included the potential for tying in with the estate strategies of other public sector bodies.
- The importance of investing in Information and Communications Technology (ICT) in realising the benefits of reform was identified by a number of interviewees. The process of merging different systems had been seen as challenging and delays in the implementation of a new ICT system for Police Scotland were seen as frustrating the pace at which improvements in efficiency could be achieved.

# Conclusions, recommendations and wider lessons

## Conclusions

- Overall, at this stage of reform and on the basis of (i) publicly available information published during the period covered by this report and (ii) the analysis of interviews carried out with national key informants, there is plausible and credible evidence of progress being made towards achieving the three main long-term aims of reform. However, the picture is complex and the evidence presented in this Year 1 report will need to be supplemented by other perspectives (to be addressed in the next stages of the evaluation) before a more comprehensive assessment can be made.
- Interviewees across the Police and Fire and Rescue services generally argue that not only has the level of local service provision been sustained since reform despite reducing budgets but that, in some respects, services have also been enhanced in ways which could not have happened without reform. In addition, across both services, the documentary evidence and interviews with key stakeholders suggest that significant progress has been made in creating more equal access to specialist support and national capacity. In relation to strengthening connections with communities, there is evidence of the formation of the appropriate structures for local stakeholder engagement as set out in the legislation, with the establishment of LSOs and LPCs acting as a focus for engagement with CPPs, LOAs and in engaging local stakeholders. Furthermore, the associated Local Plans and Multi-Member Ward Plans were identified as achievements.
- However, both the documentary evidence and the interviews underline the scale of the challenge of reforming the two services. Representatives of Police Scotland and SFRS routinely invoked the notion of a reform journey that begins with ‘preparing’, moves on to ‘consolidating’ and ‘integrating’ and concludes with ‘transforming’. Currently, both services see themselves in the ‘consolidating’ and ‘integrating’ phase of the journey and that real ‘transformation’ of service delivery has still to take place. The challenges associated with the ‘transformation’ phase are seen as being at least as significant as those already encountered in integrating the services.
- There are also important evidence gaps in relation to the aims of reform. Publicly available written evidence is process rather than outcome focused, oriented toward ‘producer’ rather than ‘consumer’ perspectives, and stronger on national rather than local information. These tend to relate to the need to move beyond evidencing ‘establishment’ and ‘functioning’ to understanding the ‘outcomes’ and ‘impacts’ of efforts to achieve reform. In so doing, understand the consequences (intended and unintended) of reform, and different experiences/perceptions from different perspectives. Further, there

is only limited data regarding attitudes and perceptions toward the efficacy (or otherwise) of Police Scotland and SFRS.

- There are challenges around the nature of the available evidence base. In the context of the broader aims of this evaluation, there has been limited work to date that maps the activities beneath all three aims of reform onto the activities of the wider justice system, or seeks to understand in a systematic way the wider impacts of reform on partnership activities across community planning structures from the perspectives of multiple stakeholders. There are also challenges in establishing causal relationships between the indicators employed and the outcomes they are intended to evidence. This can influence the confidence with which claims might be made on the basis of the evidence available.
- We also note that much evaluation and ongoing monitoring is planned from both Police and Fire and Rescue Services. Further, there is much evidence which falls outside the immediate area of the aims of reform, but nevertheless demonstrates fundamentally important factors in achieving the aims of reform (for example, workforce surveys).
- Interviews with key informants at a national level also indicate the importance of the broader strategic issues which have been significant in shaping the reform journey of both organizations. These include issues of leadership and organizational culture, governance and the financial context. In addition, the experience of reform has been highly variable depending on the roles people play within the organization. In terms of the wider impacts and implications of reform, however, it is clear that there are now significant opportunities for Police Scotland and SFRS to contribute to broader agendas around partnership and prevention.

## Recommendations and wider lessons

On the basis of the work conducted so far, however, there are a number of recommendations that can be made along with some key lessons for future public service reform. In terms of recommendations, there are three key areas highlighted here which sit within a broader landscape of recommendations regarding reform made in the context of on-going work by HM Inspectorates and other bodies:

- **Addressing evidence gaps highlighted in this report:** as work continues to assess the progress of reform against the key aims, a key focus for those with responsibility for tracking the impacts of reform should be on gathering more information about the outcomes and impacts of reform, allowing the 'voices' of the consumers of Police and Fire and Rescue services to be heard, and ensuring that there is a mix of local and national insights. In addition, there is also a need to disentangle the complex chains of causality embedded within the benefits realisation work of both services in order to better understand how particular changes lead to particular outcomes. While this evaluation can address some of these gaps, there is also scope within Police Scotland and SFRS as well as HM Inspectorates, governance bodies

and partner organizations to look for opportunities to develop a richer understanding of the outcomes of reform. This should also include consideration of whether the original aims of reform are the only or most appropriate yardsticks by which to judge progress of change now happening in the services;

- **Improving the articulation of the opportunities and the challenges of reform for the police and fire and rescue services:** to date much of the focus of the services has been on the complex process of integrating the legacy organisations but an unintended consequence has been limited communication (to the public and partner organisations) of the scope of the opportunities for transforming the delivery of police and fire services that reform has created. Senior members of both the police and fire and rescue services at a national and local level should play a more proactive role in articulating the potential benefits to service delivery, despite declining budgets, that reform has created. Greater authenticity around the challenges of undertaking reform would also help build trust with the public and other stakeholders;
- **Developing a strategic approach to innovation:** as the reform process moves from the ‘consolidation’ to the ‘transformation’ phase, opportunities open up for significant innovation in service delivery. The executive teams and boards of both services have a pivotal role in leading this transformation activity and this should include ensuring a robust and evidence-based approach to innovation. New initiatives (which may be based on existing evidence of good practice from within Scotland or drawn from experiences in other jurisdictions) need to be targeted, tested and tracked to ensure that information is gathered around intended (and unintended) impacts on communities as well as broader outcomes. This information on ‘what works’ and ‘what doesn’t work’ can then inform decision-making around scaling up successful pilot projects. The process of innovation will also create important opportunities for collaborative reflection and learning across the public sector in Scotland;
- **Undertaking regular reviews of skill requirements needed for transformational change:** from the beginning of the reform journey it has been recognized that the complexities of the process mean that different disciplines and specialist knowledge are required in order to ensure that objectives are achieved. As reform enters the ‘transformation’ phase, the need for a wide range of expertise will continue. Complementing the professional experience of practitioners within policing and Fire and Rescue, specialists in areas of strategic importance to the future delivery of services, such as financial planning, ICT, communications, analysis and project management will be needed to help deliver the wider benefits of reform.

In terms of key lessons for future reforms of public services, the findings from the evaluation demonstrate that both Police Scotland and SFRS have embraced many of the recommendations from Audit Scotland’s report *Learning the lessons of public body mergers*. These include the need to have strong, strategic leadership; plans

which extend beyond the start date of the merger; a programme of post-implementation benefits review work; a corporate plan focusing on the purpose and benefits of the new organisation; performance reporting focused on the benefits expected from the new merged body; and regular information from service users, staff and stakeholders on performance.

The evaluation also underlines Audit Scotland's observations regarding the possible need for a period of 'shadowing' before the merged body begins through appointment of the chair and chief executive at least 6 months before the start date of the new organization; and the need to ensure there is the right mix of skills and expertise available to the organization to execute the merger and deal with the on-going challenges of the reform process.

Building on these lessons, the evaluation also highlights three further strategic considerations that should inform future national reforms of public services:

- **Reform involves cultural as well as structural change:** while much of the focus during the planning and implementation of reform is on structural changes around 'back office' activities and service delivery, the process also involves significant cultural adaptations. During periods of reform, the vision, values, ideas and practices which are the basis of organisational culture will typically take much longer to establish than new administrative structures and processes so there may be tensions between 'old' and 'new' ways of working that need to be carefully managed;
- **Reform may be driven centrally but is experienced locally:** reforms that lead to the merger of existing bodies typically involve a degree of centralization in decision-making. The resulting changes to central-local relationships (particularly in terms of levels of flexibility and discretion) and the differential and inter-dependent impacts of decisions taken centrally on local services and communities need to be carefully assessed prior to and throughout the reform process;
- **Reform narratives should focus both on the need for change and how change will happen:** while much attention is typically focused on why reform is needed, there is often less focus on how that change will happen in terms of linking activities and outcomes to explain how and why the desired change is expected to come about. Reforms therefore need to be underpinned by a well-articulated 'theory of change' setting out the causal connections between the necessary pre-conditions required to achieve long-term outcomes.

## Next steps

Over the coming three years, the evaluation's future work will include:

- Updating the evidence review each year, and broadening its scope. We expect this to include unpublished reports/data;
- Undertaking four geographical case studies, to explore the ways in which reform has been experienced 'on the ground';

- Undertaking two 'thematic' case studies, to explore two issues pertinent to the aims of reform in detail;
- Two international workshops, drawing together experiences from across to Europe;
- Re-interviewing a sub-sample of key informants, to understand how the process of reform has continued to develop.

### **How to access background or source data**

The data collected for this <statistical bulletin / social research publication>:

- are available in more detail through Scottish Neighbourhood Statistics
- are available via an alternative route <specify or delete this text>
- may be made available on request, subject to consideration of legal and ethical factors. Please contact <email address> for further information.
- cannot be made available by Scottish Government for further analysis as Scottish Government is not the data controller.



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ISBN: 978-1-78652-333-4

The Scottish Government  
St Andrew's House  
Edinburgh  
EH1 3DG

Produced for  
the Scottish Government  
by APS Group Scotland  
PPDAS74413 (06/16)  
Published by  
the Scottish Government,  
June 2016



Social Research series  
ISSN 2045 6964  
ISBN 978-1-78652-333-4

Web and Print Publication  
[www.gov.scot/socialresearch](http://www.gov.scot/socialresearch)

PPDAS74413 (06/16)