Police Call Management
Summary impact report

The report findings and recommendations

1. This report provides the Accounts Commission and the Auditor General with details of the impact made by the joint performance audit study, *'Police call management: an initial review'* which was published on 27 September 2007.

2. The study report concluded that all forces have centralised how they manage their calls from the public and more calls to the police are now being answered, with the public generally being satisfied with the service they receive when they call. However, a lack of national strategy has resulted in wide variations, and this, along with the limited performance information available makes it difficult for forces to demonstrate whether the new arrangements were providing value for money of fully delivering the anticipated benefits.

3. The report made 18 recommendations aimed at the Scottish Government, police authorities / boards, the eight police forces, and the Scottish Police Services Authority (SPSA), with the intention of helping to improve police call management in Scotland. Details of specific progress against these recommendations are listed in Appendix 1, although progress may not always be directly or solely attributable to the study report.

4. This report distinguishes between immediate and continuing impact, and also highlights a number of areas where longer term and ongoing impact is anticipated.

Immediate impact

5. The report was a high profile publication, generating a significant amount of media interest, with 15 press articles, 18 radio bulletins (a number of which included interviews with the study team) and 4 television news items. This reflects the public interest in policing issues.

6. The main report had 1,405 downloads from our website in the first year, with a further 343 downloads of the podcast. The highest monthly download figure was 229 in November 2007, which coincided with the report first being considered by the Scottish Parliament's Audit Committee.

7. The Association of Chief Police Officers in Scotland (ACPOS) set up a short life Police Call Management Working Group following the publication of the report. Its remit was to:

"agree robust national progress in the area of police call management taking forward the recommendations contained in the Audit Scotland report on police call management where forces and/or ACPOS have primary responsibility and also providing a forum to engage with other bodies, such as the Scottish Government, COSLA etc where there is joint responsibility for some of the Audit Scotland recommendations."

Medium Term Impact

8. In February 2008, and as part of an internal project review process, forces were asked what impact the report had had locally and all agreed that it had helped raise the profile of police call handling within individual forces, as well as nationally, and that recommendations were being incorporated into business and action plans across Scotland. A number of forces also commented that they were now looking at specific policies (such as recruitment and staff surveys as a result of the report). Results of a more recent check of progress are incorporated in Appendix 1.

9. The publication of the report coincided with a parliamentary inquiry by the Justice Committee into the effective use of police resources. The findings from the report, together with the results of pilot Best Value work of a police board undertaken by the Commission in 2006, formed the basis of a joint submission to the Justice Committee by the Auditor General and Accounts Commission. The Commission Chair and the AGS also gave direct evidence at an Inquiry session. The report and evidence given clearly influenced the Committee inquiry as a number of findings from our study report were quoted in the Justice Committee's final report. The Inquiry led to an Independent Review of Policing being established, and a number of the points raised in the Police Call Management report, particularly the issues of governance and accountability of police boards and ACPOS, have been included in the review's report and recommendations (January 2009).

Longer term impact

10. The National Call Handling Standards Working Group (NCHSWG – already established when the report was published) was given fresh impetus by the report and a clearer set of objectives from ACPOS. A set of performance indicators has now been agreed, primarily focussing on call handling processes, such as answering time. These are being systematically measured and reported on from April 2009 as part of the Scottish Policing Performance Framework (SPPF), and should improve comparison of performance and benchmarking between forces.

11. A Scottish Communication Centre Management Group has been formed and is carrying forward many of the proposals of the NCHSWG.

Parliamentary Scrutiny and Government policy

12. The report was first laid before the Scottish Parliament's Audit Committee on 24th October 2007 and it generated great interest from MSPs. During 2008, the issues raised in the report were discussed by the audit committee on several occasions, with exchanges of correspondence between the Convenor and the Accountable Officer within the Scottish Government (Robert Gordon, Director-General of Justice and Communities) on a number of matters, including the use of 999 and non-emergency numbers and accountability and governance of ACPOS. The committee also wrote to the Cabinet Secretary to request a response.

13. In considering all of the responses to the various issues raised by its members, the Audit Committee decided that it would lay a report before Parliament. This was issued in January 2009, and the government response was discussed by the audit committee at its meeting on 20th May 2009. There remains a number issues that the Committee wishes to monitor progress on, and the government has been asked to include the following in its Progress Report to the Public Audit Committee in September 2010:

- Development of a non-emergency response times indicator within the SPPF;
- How working in partnership can improve the 999 service to the public;
- Developments in non-emergency numbers at local force level;
- Developments to establish a minimum standard for call handling;
- Implementation of the recommendations on governance and accountability contained in the HMCICS review of policing in Scotland;

Appendix 1 – Summary of report impact, and analysis by Audit Scotland's framework for measuring impact

HOLDING TO ACCOUNT AND HELPING TO IMPROVE		Assurance and accountability	Planning and management	Economy and efficiency	Quality and effectiveness
Impact against Objectives and Recommendations					
Achieve high profile including media interest through the report's publication	This report was categorised as high profile by the Communications Team. There were almost 40 media items (press, television and radio). There have been 1,405 downloads of the report, and a further 343 downloads of the podcast.	●			
Stimulate action by the Scottish Parliament and its Committees.	Since October 2007 until present time the police call management report has been considered by the Audit Committee several times. Written responses have been required from the Accountable Officer on two occasions and the Cabinet Secretary for Justice, Kenny MacAskill. The report continues to be of interest to members of the Scottish Parliament. For example, in the last two months, there have been two parliamentary questions on SNEN and response times, both triggered by the report.	●		●	●
The Scottish Government, together with the emergency services, should explore the potential for increased efficiencies in handling 999 calls through improved partnership working and sharing of resources.	Scottish Government officials have always participated in the UK 999/112 Liaison Committee, which looks at UK issues concerning use of 999. However, partly as a result of the report, Scottish Resilience has now established a 999 Issues in Scotland Group which is considering the effective delivery of 999 call handling. The group includes representatives from the Scottish Government, police, fire and ambulance services and BT. A table-top exercise will take place in December 2008 to test the resilinece of the 999 arrangements. Forces are working with BT and Cable &Wireless on introducing EISEC/ALSEC facilities to give additional geographic information to help forces manage responses to 999 calls. Forces anticipate that the implementation of the national Command and Control system will contribute to improving responses to cross-border 999 calls.		●	●	●

HOLDING TO ACCOUNT AND HELPING TO IMPROVE					
Forces should improve their information systems to identify the extent of the inappropriate use of 999, work together to agree and implement best practice in how to handle these calls and work with the Scottish Government and other emergency services to improve the public's awareness of when to use 999.	The Scottish Government did consider a national campaign to raise public awareness, but decided that such work would be best carried out at force level, along with promotion of force non-emergency numbers. The Scottish Communcation Centre Management Group is considering a project to establish the extent of inapproriate use of 999. Some forces have done work in this area. For example, Strathclyde routinely analyse and categorise 999 calls that are not emergencies; Grampian has done research on how to best asses the extent of misuse of 999 calls; and Tayside has been marketing their SNEN.		●	●	●
Forces should work with their community planning partners to improve awareness within local communities of what numbers to call in different situations.	AO said that Ministers should consider further how more effective marketing could be usefully undertaken to make public more aware of the numbers to call in an emergency. Agreed to consider how best to develop a marketing campaign and working with others to increase awareness. Some examples of local force activities are: • Strathclyde - the launch of a community policing initiative, with contact details for each multi-member ward and the number to call in which circumstances being considered. • Grampian - the Service Centre Manager attends community council meetings, and an internal and external marketing plan being delivered in 2008, continuing into 2009/10. • Central - the telephone directory and the force internet site have been updated to give clear contact details and an explanation of grading systems and prioirties. • Tayside - an officer attends all community council meetings and all relevant local authoritieshave been written to with details of SNEN. There have also been early stage discussions with councils about opportunities for sharing services to improve overall service provided to public.	●	●	●	●

	HOLDING TO ACCOUNT AND HELPING TO IMPROVE				
The Scottish Government should liaise with ACPOS, CoSLA, the Scottish Police Authorities Conveners' Forum and other public services to look at options for providing easily accessible nonemergency numbers across police and local authorities.	The Scottish Government, police forces and other partners met on 13 November 2007 to discuss issues around improving access to non emergency numbers. Following this meeting and further consideration, the Scottish Government concluded that the considerable expense in terms of funding and organisational change needed to install a Scottish single non-emergency number would not be justified by the possible benefits. The Government view is that the most appropriate way forward is through police forces and local authorities collaborating to develop solutions that work best to meet public demands and expectations.			●	●
Forces should ensure that the new Scottish Incident Recording Standard is designed to provide more consistent and comparable information on call demand and is implemented consistently.	A sub-committee of the former National Call Handling Working Group has made proposals for the standardisation of reporting. Work is now being carried forward by the newly formed Scottish Communication Centre Management Group (SCCMG)		●		
Forces should agree standard criteria for call grading.	As above. Revised call types and disposal codes have been agreed and will be introduced nationally in conjunction with the common Command and Control application At force level, Central have introduced new attendance and call resolution policies	●	●	●	●
The Scottish Government, ACPOS, and the Scottish Police Authority Conveners' Forum should work together , with the SPSA, to agree a national strategic approach to developing call management in Scottish police forces.	The Scottish Government has worked with police-led groups in considering a Single Non Emergency Number, call managment indicators and the Audit Scotland recommendations in relation to police call management. This work is ongoing and the Government will continue to participate where it is appropriate to do so. SPSA is currently reviewingall the IT systems in place across forces			●	●
Forces should implement the new command and control system consistently across all forces, ensure it delivers the antiticpated benfits, and monito thr imapct	All forces are now committed to the STORM MA command and control system and it will be delivered to all Scottish forces though the National Command and Control Project. Work is being done to address issues of consistency across the forces.		●	●	●

HOLDING TO ACCOUNT AND HELPING TO IMPROVE					
Forces should do further work with other agencies, local communities and their own staff to build greater understanding of their needs and to improve awareness of the functions and benefits of a centralised approach to call management.	Examples of work at the local level are: • Strathclyde has hosted visits from community groups, MPs, MSPs, councillors, and the public to promote effectiveness of centralised call handling. • Grampian has implemented a marketing plan • Central is working with community groups, and with three council contact centres to share info and advise of incidents.				●
Forces should continue their efforts to ensure they have appropriate staffing resources with sufficient resilience to meet anticipated call demand.	At the local level, Central reports they still have issues around this and they have little resilience at present. However, • Strathclyde have a bespoke resource management software tool and full time resource planner • Lothian & Borders have onsite performance analysts and resource deployment staff. • Tayside report having done a full review of staffing and made significant changes to staff and structures in its contact centre (and all changes to implemented by November 2009)	●	●		●
Forces' corporate HR support should recognise the specific needs of contact centres; in particular in relation to recruitment and attendance policies.	Only two forces reported progress against this recommendation: • Tayside now has a dedicated HR advisor and have appointed an administrative manager to ensure there is no latency in recruitment • Lothian & Borders report that the needs of the FCC have addressed at Executive levels through the Director of Resources, who is also addressing these issues at national level with ACPOS.	●			
Forces should conduct regular staff surveys to help understand the experiences and views of call management staff.	No evidence / examples of change.	●			●

HOLDING TO ACCOUNT AND HELPING TO IMPROVE					
Forces should undertake systematic training needs assessment and, in conjunction with SPSA, develop a national training approach to address unmet training needs, including: – skills required to meet the needs of internal customers – staff management training for supervisors – formal call management qualifications.	NCHSWG has trialled a training module for soft skills for call handlers as part of work around enhancing standards of service. The most recent Professional Development Programme by the Scottish Police College features an *'Advanced Certificate in Call Handling'*. However, there is no indication that SPSA will take on additional training in this area. At the local level: • Tayside ran a formal Training Needs Analysis in 2008 within each section of the Communications Centre. • Strathclyde is sourcing SVQ qualifications for Team Leaders and Call handlers • Grampian has introduced training courses and is aiming for Contact Centre Association accreditation in 2009/10 and therefore staff will have to have formal call handling management qualifications • Lothian & Borders has undertaken full assessment of supervisor training. • Central has reported it is finding it difficult to progress this recommendation due to not having a trainer.	●			●
Forces should improve their call management systems to provide information about the full range of calls received to enable demand to be more effectively managed.	Some examples of local progress are: • Strathclyde has bought a new ACD system which gives more in-depth reports and allow demand to be managed more effectively • Central has introduced Report Direct (telephone crime reporting) and MCAS (managed call appointment system) to streamline the service to the public and savings in operational officer time. • Tayside propose work in this area on this after their new call queuing mechanisms are in place.	●	●		●
Forces should agree a consistent approach to measuring caller satisfaction, to enable them to share best practice and allow benchmarking.	This is soon to be included on the Scottish Contact Centre Management Group agenda. All forces are now signed up to the Police National Legal database – the cost of developing a Scottish version has been around £60k, to be met by the ACPOS Information Management Business Area (IMBA),	●	●		●

HOLDING TO ACCOUNT AND HELPING TO IMPROVE

The Senior Strategic Steering Group, individual forces and police authorities, in consultation with contact centre managers, should agree a range of relevant performance indicators for call management.	Work is ongoing to review current indicators in relation to police call management, and to agree indicators for non-emergency calls, including response times but is unlikely to be completed in time for consistent reporting by all forces to be introduced any earlier than 2009/10. Waiting for ACPOS ratification Alec might be able to give you a bit more info about which indicators will be included in the SPPF and which will be collected separately by forces – the working group has definitely agreed about 5 indicators on response times etc. Results will be reported through the Scottish Communications Centre Management group.	●	●	●	●
Police authorities should, as part of their responsibilities for the strategic oversight of police performance, ensure that they regularly receive and scrutinise reports by chief constables on the effectiveness and costs of local call management arrangements.	Limited evidence of local progress except in Tayside where the force reported on our report to the Joint Board, and as a result of this, a full review of the Force Communications Centre was undertaken and progress made against the review recommendations is due in November 2008	●			
In light of the inconsistencies in approach highlighted in this report, the Scottish Government should consider clarifying which policing decisions require a national strategic approach and how to strengthen accountability for these decisions.	Within limited resources Ministers have to determine which issues they consider need to be pursued at a national level. Often there are not straightforward or clearcut answers to this question. The Scottish Government has been in detailed correspondence with the Scottish Parliament Audit Committee on the issues of accountability and a national strategic approach. Letters from Robert Gordon as Accountable Officer and the Cabinet Secretary for Justice have also been supplemented by Robert Gordon appearing in front of the Audit Committee. Following the Justice Committee's report and recommendations, the Cabinet Secretary has asked HMICS to undertake an independent review of policing in Scotland, which specifically includes a remit to make recommendations for the governance and accountability which best supports the delivery of policing responsibilities.	●	●		