

Key messages

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# Police reform

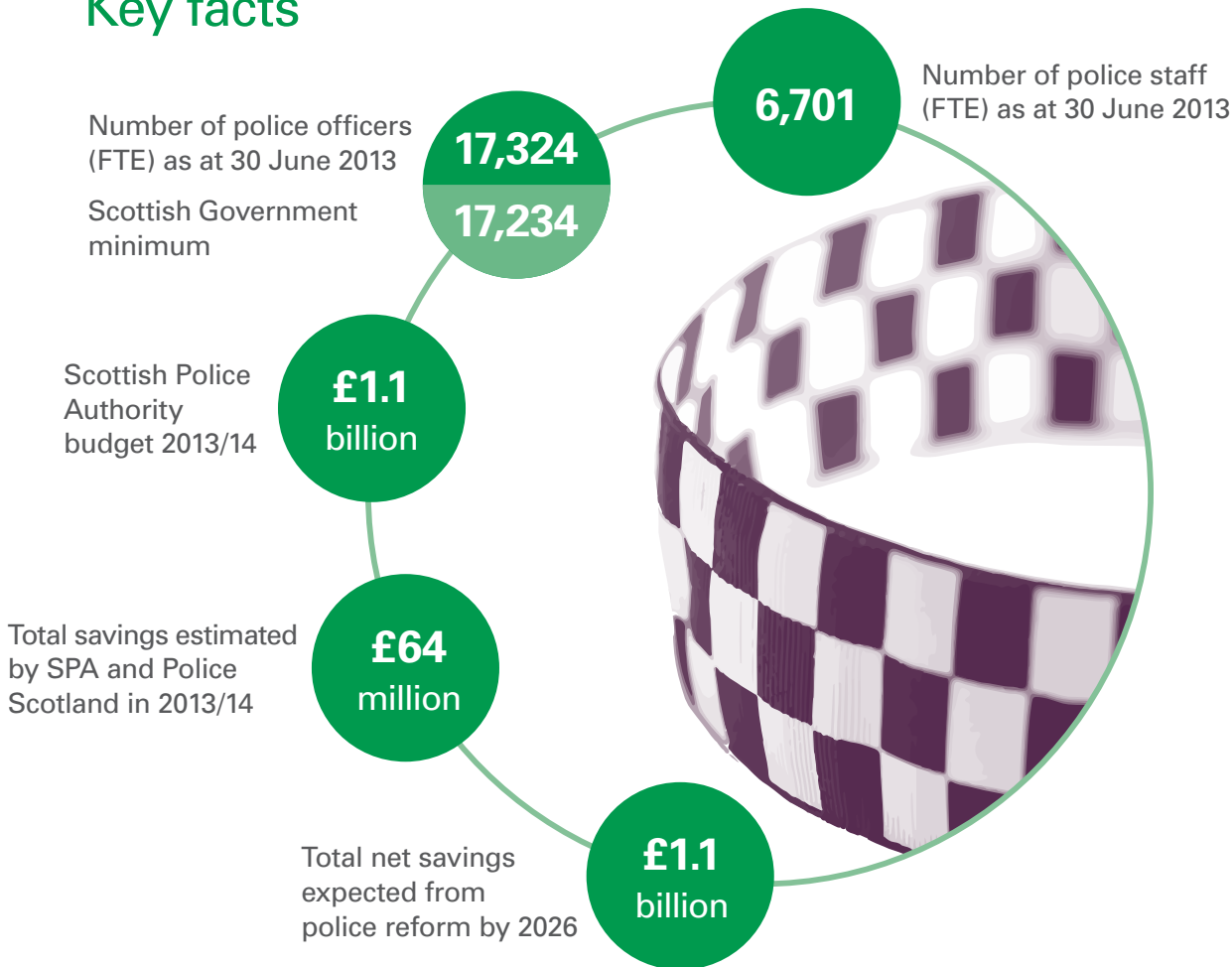
Progress update 2013



 AUDITOR GENERAL

Prepared by Audit Scotland  
November 2013

## Key facts



### What's this report about?

This report reviews the efficiency and effectiveness of the planning and early implementation of the new arrangements for police services in Scotland.

### Key messages

**1** The creation of a single police service is one of the biggest reforms in the Scottish public sector since devolution. The new arrangements became operational on 1 April 2013. Much was achieved during the transition period. Police Scotland reports show front-line services have been maintained and progress has been made towards achieving the objectives of reform.


- The Police and Fire Reform (Scotland) Act 2012 created new arrangements for policing in Scotland. Around £1.1 billion of annual spending and over 24,000 people, including 17,496 police officers, were transferred into two new bodies, Police Scotland and the Scottish Police Authority (SPA) ([paragraphs 1-11, main report](#)) (PDF)

- Police Scotland reports that recorded crimes, including serious crimes, have continued to drop compared to 2012/13. Centres of expertise for specialist areas, such as domestic abuse, have been established. By July 2013, the new national non-emergency number (101) accounted for 53 per cent of all calls to the police ([paragraphs 21 and 54-56, main report, Exhibit 1](#)) (PDF)


**2** Planning the move to a single police service was hampered by poor baseline information, a lack of clarity in roles and responsibilities, and difficult relationships between the Scottish Government, the SPA and Police Scotland. There have been significant changes to governance arrangements and some important strategies and plans are still under development.

- There was a lack of good data on non-operational areas from the eight police forces. This has made it difficult for the SPA to make informed decisions on different options for reform ([paragraphs 35-39, main report](#)) (PDF)


- There were different views about what some of the legislation meant in practice for the SPA. In June 2013, the SPA changed its approach for delivering its statutory responsibilities, focusing on governance and scrutiny rather than directly delivering support services ([paragraphs 40-44, main report](#)) (PDF) .


- Planning for reform has been affected by difficult relationships among the main stakeholders. The Scottish Government, the SPA and Police Scotland have still to agree formally how they will work together under the new governance arrangements ([paragraphs 45-46 and 102-103 main report](#)) (PDF) .


**3** The costs and savings estimates for reform are based on the Outline Business Case prepared by the Scottish Government in September 2011. These estimates were not updated nor a full business case prepared. The SPA and Police Scotland have still to finalise and agree a financial strategy showing how savings will be achieved beyond 2013/14.

- The SPA and Police Scotland estimate they will need to save £64 million in 2013/14 to stay within budget, and they have yet to finalise a longer-term financial strategy. This requires good understanding of the costs of policing and there has been limited progress on this ([paragraphs 62-67 and 70-77, main report](#)) (PDF) .

**4** The SPA and Police Scotland face continuing challenges in delivering the savings required. Their limited flexibility in managing police officer and staff numbers and delays in decision-making contribute to this.

- In the absence of a longer-term financial strategy, we estimate the SPA and Police Scotland will have to save up to £68 million in 2014/15 and £63 million in 2015/16 (real terms) ([paragraphs 84-87, main report](#)) (PDF) .
- Government policies to maintain police officer numbers at 17,234 and no compulsory redundancies for police staff limit the SPA's and Police Scotland's flexibility to deliver savings. The slow progress in developing a workforce strategy and agreeing voluntary

redundancies or early retirements increase the risk that savings will not be delivered in time ([paragraphs 88-98, main report](#)) (PDF) .

- Better information is needed to support effective scrutiny of police performance. The Scottish Government, the SPA and Police Scotland have still to finalise how they will measure progress in achieving the objectives of reform ([paragraphs 109-119, main report](#)) (PDF) .

## Key recommendations

### The Scottish Government, the SPA and Police Scotland should continue to work together to:

- develop positive and effective working relationships, based on a mutual understanding of and respect for each other's roles, including agreement on the responsibilities relating to sponsorship, governance and delivery of police services
- agree and implement arrangements for monitoring and reporting progress on the benefits of reform by the end of March 2014 and take collective responsibility for delivering these.

### The Scottish Government and the SPA should continue to work together to:

- ensure that all the agreed proposals on the SPA's organisational requirements are fully implemented by the end of March 2014, including the appointment of permanent senior staff.

### The SPA and Police Scotland should continue to work together to:

- agree a financial strategy by the end of March 2014, informed by evidence-based options for achieving savings, and take joint responsibility for its delivery
- agree long-term strategies in the main areas that will contribute to savings including estates, workforce, procurement and ICT.

### The Scottish Government should:

- carry out a comprehensive lessons learned exercise after the first year of the new policing arrangements and share findings within the Scottish Government and with other public bodies that are starting a merger process.

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This report is available in PDF and RTF formats, along with a podcast summary at:

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