

SIPR Responsive Research Fund Good practice in transfer of care – A review

Background

The Scottish Police Authority, over the last few years, has maintained an increased focus on vulnerability and mental health distress related demand, specifically how policing best responds to calls for service.

In early 2022, following discussion with the Authority on pressures being faced by Police Scotland in responding to mental health related demand, Martyn Evans, SPA Chair, made a commitment that the Authority would place a greater focus on the appropriate police response to calls for service around mental health issues.

The Scottish Parliament's Criminal Justice Committee also expressed an interest in this area of policing and held an [evidence session](#) in May 2022 which the Authority and Police Scotland contributed to. To take these discussions further, the Authority convened a discussion on the societal-wide impact of poor mental health in the community; with a focus on vulnerability and distress in December 2022. This [event](#), chaired by Professor McQueen on behalf of the Authority, with speakers drawn from across the public and third sector, aimed to establish four things: 1) a common understanding of the topic; 2) set this 'wicked' issue in the context of a growing challenge; 3) describe the proactive and prevention focused work being taken forward by Police Scotland in collaboration with key partners; and 4) recognise the interdependencies, partnership interfaces and opportunities in the system, identifying current best practice that could be adopted as common practice and then nationally consistent approaches.

A number of commitments were made by Police Scotland as a result of the event in December 2022, with [progress reported](#) to Policing Performance Committee in September 2023. Following this event the Authority also published a briefing on [mental health and policing](#), which details the strategic position in relation to mental health related calls for service and the Police Scotland response to these.

The Authority, Police Scotland and Scottish Government agree that mental health related demand on policing, requires a multi-agency and multi-faceted approach including effective partnerships, training, community engagement, and support mechanisms for officers.

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Overview and rationale

In October 2023 the Authority, Police Scotland and the Scottish Government made a commitment to hold a series of workshops focused on understanding transfer of care in different NHS Board areas. These sessions took place in March/April 2024 and focused on understanding current models at a practitioner level with a focus on understanding what works and where the system blockages are.

A Partnership Delivery Group has now been established to support whole system work on the issue of mental health distress and policing demand, with a commitment to develop a series of initiatives over the next five years. To inform this work we are looking to understand transfer of care practice for individuals in mental health distress in other policing systems worldwide.

Research aims

To identify models of practice of policing to NHS / public body transfer of care for individuals in mental health distress.

Research questions

1. What information is publicly available in other policing jurisdictions to describe the transfer of care of people in mental health distress from police officers to NHS/mental health/community-based support?
2. What are the core elements of practice across the different models for the transfer of care?
3. What does 'good' look like for the transfer of care of people in mental health distress? For example:
 - How does transportation work in other jurisdictions?
 - Do officers stay with individuals while awaiting triage in emergency departments/ healthcare settings?
 - What information sharing processes are in place between agencies?
 - Is there inter-agency or joint training in place?

Outcomes / impact of research

It is anticipated that the outputs from this activity will inform development of a model of delivery for policing in Scotland. This model will be principle based, describing a standard of provision to be delivered consistently across different communities in Scotland.

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To inform the model it would be helpful for outputs from the research to focus on principles underpinning good practice, using a review of literature to provide links and sources to inform a next steps discussion.