Evaluation of Police and Fire Reform: Year 2 Report

CRIME AND JUSTICE

social
research

Evaluation of Police and Fire Reform: Year 2 Report

SIPR, What Works Scotland and ScotCen

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Contents

1 Executive Summary

In 2016, the first report on the evaluation of police and fire reform in Scotland reported that there was plausible and credible evidence of progress being made towards achieving the long-term aims of reform and strong evidence of the establishment and functioning of new processes, structures, projects and programmes. But the Year 1 report also highlighted some important evidence gaps. The documentary evidence was largely process rather than outcome focused; oriented to 'producer' rather than 'consumer' perspectives; focused on strategic rather than operational matters; and offered national rather than local perspectives. It was also noted that senior representatives of Police Scotland and the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) frequently invoked the notion of a reform journey that begins with 'preparing', moves on to 'consolidating' and 'integrating', and concludes with 'transforming'. At that time both services saw themselves in the consolidation and integration phase of the journey.

Against that backdrop, the four local case studies drawn on in this Year 2 report form a key element of the evaluation, providing the opportunity to hear the voices of those experiencing reform 'on the ground', exploring how national changes are playing out at a local level and examining the extent to which different contexts play a part in facilitating (or hindering) the objectives of reform. This report provides insights into the local experiences of consolidation and integration. In each case study area, qualitative interviews and focus groups were used to capture the experiences and perspectives of different stakeholders in the reform process including local police officers and firefighters, the public, councillors and council staff, and community and third sector organisations. Interviews with police and fire officers were conducted between June and August 2016 and those with other groups took place between June and December 2016.

The case studies were selected to include both urban and rural communities, areas with high and low crime rates, and with levels of greater and lesser deprivation. In each area the focus has been on assessing the perceptions of the impact of reform on delivering a local service, accessing specialist support and national capacity, and on strengthening connections with communities. How people think and feel about reform as an important *part of* the social reality under investigation: although perceptions should not always be read at face value, they do need to be taken seriously as an essential part of the wider terrain of reform.

1.1 Assessment of the case study evidence against the aims of reform for Police Scotland

In relation to protecting and improving local services, the evidence from across the case study areas shows that since reform local policing teams have continued to provide a service which is valued by local communities and where the capacity to deal with increases in demand driven by major incidents was perceived by officers to have been enhanced in some of the case study areas by being able to access national resources. Those who had contact with the police in an emergency are generally positive about the response they received but there are mixed views from

the public regarding more routine interaction, depending on the type of area. In more deprived areas, public perceptions of officers tended to be more negative while in rural and affluent communities views were more positive.   For local officers one of the main issues was the cumulative effect of decisions taken at a national level to restructure and refocus the organisation which have had a variety of intended (and unintended) consequences at a local level. This has resulted in concerns among officers, confirmed by the public, councillors and community and third sector organisations, regarding the visible presence of local officers and a perception that local resources available to deal with routine response and community engagement activities are increasingly stretched over larger geographical areas.

In relation to creating more equal access to specialist support and national capacity, evidence from the case study areas indicated that local officers' experience had improved in some respects since reform. There was also a perception that there had been no change or that the process had become more bureaucratic. When national capacity was deployed it allowed local policing teams to maintain service delivery in times of high demand, and specialist teams brought high levels of skills and expertise to apply to specific local policing issues, such as a high risk missing person or murder investigation. However, local officers also expressed concerns about the capacity in some of the specialist teams to respond to local incidents in a timely way. Officers also felt there was still scope for improving internal communication between local and specialist teams and for assessing the longer term implications of this model of service delivery for the distribution of skills across the organisation.

In relation to strengthening the connection between services and communities, in all the case study areas the public and local councillors were generally very positive about their interactions with local policing teams, particularly in rural areas where there was a strong sense of the need to work collaboratively. Nevertheless, local officers, councillors, third sector organisations and the public were aware that community engagement activities and locally based joint initiatives were under pressure from other demands on policing.   Dissatisfaction with the use of the 101 non-emergency number was expressed by some members of the public as well as with the closure or limited opening times of some police stations. With respect to partnership working, there was clear evidence that this was viewed positively by police, councillors, council staff and third sector organisations, and that it was of strategic importance and was well supported by the attendance of senior officers at partnership meetings. Nevertheless, in all 4 areas the evidence suggests that for local police officers their ability to work effectively with partner agencies was under pressure from resource constraints across the public sector, and that there was scope for improving information sharing and internal and external communication about the outcomes of partnership initiatives.

1.2 Assessment of the case study evidence against the aims of reform for the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service

In relation to protecting and improving local services, there was clear evidence in each of the 4 case study areas that firefighters, councillors, community groups, council staff and the general public perceived that the level of local service had been maintained since reform. However, firefighters did report feeling stretched as a result of declining numbers of administrative staff and had concerns regarding the centralisation of support services, poor information technology (IT) and their ability to access some equipment.

In relation to creating more equal access to specialist support and national capacity, across the 4 case study areas, firefighters generally had positive experiences. However, some concerns were expressed regarding the logistics of engaging specialist teams and the risks of de-skilling local firefighters because of a reliance on specialists from out with their areas.

In relation to strengthening the connection between services and communities, in all the case study areas firefighters, councillors, council staff, community organisations and the general public identified the contribution that fire and rescue made to community well-being and how prevention was now a key part of the firefighter's role. Partnership working was also viewed very positively by all groups in each case study area but with scope for improvement around data sharing, communication and retaining informal networks in rural areas.

1.3 Conclusions, areas for improvement and wider lessons

Although drawn from four very different areas of Scotland, the local case study evidence presents a remarkably consistent picture of both the progress towards, and perceived challenges remaining with regard to, achieving the long term aims of reform. From the perspective of local police officers and firefighters there were positive achievements in relation to improvements in accessing national capacity and specialist expertise. There were also strong commitments to partnership working. But the perceptions of those involved in the routine delivery of local services was that they are operating with diminishing resources, that work to strengthen connections with communities was often hampered by other organisational pressures, and the reductions in the budgets of other public services sometimes frustrated attempts to work more collaboratively.

These different and diverse challenges of reform are very similar to the experiences of other countries that are undertaking major structural changes to the way policing and fire services are organised. However, Scotland now benefits from being at the centre of an international hub of knowledge exhange activity around police and fire reform which means it is learning from and contributing to debates in this arena. The challenges experienced as a result of police and fire reform are also very much in line with issues identified in the wider research evidence base realting to organisational change in the public sector. The insights from this evidence base are being used to inform both the understanding of the reform proicess and the recommendations for change going forward.

Against this background, three strategic areas for improvement flow from the analysis presented in this report. First, there is a need for improved **internal communication**. Both Police Scotland and SFRS have new internal organisational boundaries that local staff have to navigate, with new divisions of labour between functional areas, and changing patterns of responsibilities between civilian staff and officers. Second, there is a need for greater clarity for local personnel about **career development and training opportunities within the new national organisations**. Although much work appears to have been done centrally to reconfigure the delivery of training and articulate new career pathways, there is still significant uncertainty and anxiety locally about what this means for individuals. A third area for improvement and one recognised by Scottish Government, Police Scotland and the Scottish Police Authority, is **a renewed and refreshed commitment to localism** in policing. There needs to be a focus on understanding better how communities want to communicate with their local officers and also giving officers greater clarity about their roles and priorities within the community. The strategic priorities and objectives set out by Scottish Government, Police Scotland and the Scottish Police Authority clearly recognise the importance of this area which is vital to building long term trust and confidence in policing.

Three wider lessons for public sector reform emerge from the evidence gathered in this phase of the evaluation. First, there needs to be **careful modelling of the inter-dependencies and cumulative consequences of decisions taken centrally for local service delivery**.   Many of the more challenging issues faced locally by policing and fire and rescue are rarely the result of a single change in policy or practice. Rather, they are the unintended consequences of a whole series of individual decisions which come together in specific ways in local environments. Second, there is a need for, **meaningful, authentic and open communication within an organisation throughout the reform process**. There has to be a commitment at a senior level to explaining not just the 'what' and 'how' of organisational change but also the 'why'. This should also open up a space for dialogue so that staff at all levels of an organisation feel engaged with the decision-making process and that the scope to influence change is dispersed through the organisation. Third, issues of improved communication also apply to **relationships with local service users, partner organisations and communities**. Against a background that recognises that collaboration and co-production are vital to the future delivery of sustainable public services, prioritising local consultation, engagement, and communication with service users and partners at a time of rapid and radical reform will all contribute to attempts at achieving the long term aims of transformational change.

2 Introduction

The evaluation of police and fire reform in Scotland began in February 2015 and is being undertaken by the Scottish Institute for Policing Research (SIPR), ScotCen Social Research and What Works Scotland.

The main aims of this evaluation are to:

1. Assess the extent to which the three aims of Police and Fire reform appear to have been met, namely:

    o To protect and improve local services despite financial cuts, by stopping duplication of support services eight times over and not cutting front line services;

    o 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;

    o 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. Identify lessons from the implementation of reform that might inform the process of future public service reform

3. Evaluate the wider impact of the reform on the Justice system and the wider public sector

The Year 1 report of the evaluation was published in June 2016 and comprised a Summary Report[1] and Evidence Review[2]. It focused on findings emerging from the initial 2 stages of the work (i) a review of publicly available evidence up to the end of 2015 and (ii) national key informant interviews undertaken with a sample of senior representatives across policing and fire and a range of national bodies outwith the 2 services, including other criminal justice sector agencies, local authorities and third sector organisations.

Key findings from the Year 1 report included:

* Plausible and credible evidence of progress being made in key areas towards achieving the 3 long-term aims of reform.

* Strong evidence in both Police Scotland and SFRS of the establishment and functioning of new processes, structures, projects and programmes designed to enhance efficiency, effectiveness and engagement with communities.

But the Year 1 report also highlighted some important evidence gaps. The documentary evidence is largely process rather than outcome focused; is oriented

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[1] http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0050/00502138.pdf

[2] http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0050/00502122.pdf

to 'producer' rather than 'consumer' perspectives (so reform is seen largely from the position of those holding senior positions from within policing and fire and rescue rather than from the position of those using the services); focuses on strategic rather than operational matters; and offers national rather than local perspectives so fails to capture the diversity of experience of reform for different people and places across Scotland.

On the basis of the work conducted for the Year 1 report, a number of recommendations were made including the need to address evidence gaps about the outcomes and impacts of reform, allowing the voices of the consumers of police and fire services to be heard, and ensuring that there is a mix of local and national insights. The report also emphasised that although reform may be driven centrally, it is experienced locally so the changes to central-local relationships 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.

2.1 The case study element of the evaluation

Against that backdrop, the four local case studies drawn on in this report form a key element of the evaluation, providing the opportunity to hear the voices of those experiencing reform 'on the ground', explore how national changes are playing out at a local level and examine the extent to which different contexts play a part in facilitating (or hindering) the objectives of reform. From research already carried out by SIPR and ScotCen on police reform, there is evidence that local perceptions of the impacts and implications of reform vary significantly with context[3]. Cities, small towns and rural areas appear to be experiencing reform in different ways, for example, and there are also important differences by area related to whether there are high or low levels of demand and/or need for police and fire and rescue services.

Local case studies therefore provide the opportunity to assess the extent to which these differences in context are significant in terms of understanding progress towards the three aims of reform. The case studies provide insights into how the different policy decisions taken nationally on reform are being experienced locally, and the extent to which there is both continuity and variation across settings. In each area the focus has been on assessing the perceptions of the impact of reform on delivering a local service, accessing specialist support and national capacity, and on strengthening connections with communities, while also acknowledging that it is sometimes difficult to disentangle the specific effects of reform from wider sets of changes affecting the services.

Case studies of this kind can be highly detailed, involving large numbers of individual and organisational interviews, multiple data collection methods and rich contextual data relating to social, cultural and economic history of the communities under investigation. Such depth was beyond the scope or methodology of the

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[3] See Hail, Y. (2017) *Local policing in transition: examining the impacts and implications of police reform in Scotland* (PhD thesis, University of Dundee).

present exercise, which used the four locations more as a means of ensuring that the evaluation examined diverse local contexts rather than to produce systematic, stand-alone accounts of each area. Where appropriate the commonalities and differences found across are referred to through this report.

2.2 From local voices to global contexts: interpreting the data from the case studies

Like any public service, policing and fire will generate a plurality of views, opinions and experience, within and across stakeholder groups, organisational contexts and geographies. One of the tasks of the evaluation is to make sense of these sometimes competing or apparently contradictory voices and perspectives – not by weighing 'perceptions' against 'reality' and determining which is most accurate, but by treating the way that people think and feel about reform as an important *part of* the social reality under investigation. Perceptions should not, then, always be read at face value, as telling us directly about the 'thing' that is being talked about but they do need to be taken seriously, understood and analysed as an essential part of the wider terrain of reform not least because perceptions have real consequences. As research on topics such as procedural justice demonstrate, for example, if the police are perceived as legitimate and trustworthy, there will be higher levels of public confidence in policing and a greater willingness among individuals to report crime, share information and comply with the law. The focus of this report then is on understanding local perceptions of the experience of reform and drawing out the wider significance and implications of these perceptions for the next stages of the reform journey.

We also need to keep in mind that such perceptions are a snapshot of views at a particular moment in time. The evidence captured in this phase of the evaluation is rooted in longer narratives about policing, fire and social and organisational change. Over many decades and across different jurisdictions, for example, it has been noted that 'frontline' police officers often express a degree of cynicism about the nature or direction of 'the job' (and particularly about its management). Similarly, public attitudes towards the police have long reflected concern about the decline of beat policing and the closure of local stations. One of the tasks – and challenges – of the research, therefore, has been to try to understand what is *distinctive* about contemporary views of policing and fire and, in particular, the extent to which reform has contributed to or shaped those, either directly or indirectly, which is made more difficult given the limited baseline evidence available for the period pre-reform.

The findings should also be situated within the broader context of research on organisational change and academic and policy research[4] in this field which highlights how complex and challenging any organisational change is and identifies a number of crucial and overlapping elements that can either help or hinder the implementation of change at a local level. These include:

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[4] Bayley, D.H. (2008) Police Reform: Who done it? In *Policing & Society*, (2008) 18:1, pp7-17 accessed at http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/10439460701718518; Osborne, S and Brown, K (2005) *Managing Change and Innovation in Public Service Organizations* London: Routledge; Audit Scotland (2012) *Learning the lessons of public body mergers* (Audit Scotland: Edinburgh).

- **Communication within an organisation**: communication aimed at preparing, coaching, and supporting a workforce through the planning and implementation of change is of key importance. A distinction is often made between monologic and dialogic communication. The former is one-way, typically top-down and can be problematic for achieving change; the latter involves two way exchange and can help gain support and monitor concerns about reform, reducing the likelihood of resistance;

- **The degree of openness to the local external environment**: if organisations are open to engage with their local environments, they are more likely to change and adapt in ways which are supported by external stakeholders;

- **The extent of change to organisational cultures**: the development of shared ideas, expectations, assumptions and values within an organisation are all important during periods of organisational change and affect how the workforce interpret and attach meaning to the reform process. Where different organisational cultures persist, these can sometimes be a source of tension and a barrier to implementing change.

The local cases all help shed light on these issues which are vital learning points for future public service reform.

The case studies are also located within a rapidly changing policy environment at Scottish, UK and international levels, all of which are important for helping make sense of the evidence presented in this report. At each level, there has been significant pressure for change but jurisdictions have responded in different ways:

- At a Scottish level, the reform of the police and fire and rescue services is set within the overall context of the Christie Commission on the future of public services[5] and a fiscal environment of decreasing budgets that has required making significant financial savings in relatively short timescales. Police reform is expected to save more than £1.1 billion over 15 years to 2026 while SFRS is expected to save £328 million by 2027/28. It is also important to note that a new Chief Constable was appointed to Police Scotland from January 2016 who over the last 12 months has set out a new strategic direction for the force focused on understanding the needs of local communities, preventing crime through collaboration and partnership, and maintaining public confidence in policing. Since completing the data collection, there have also been several significant policy statements setting out new strategic priorities and objectives for Police Scotland[6] and SFRS[7] which are highly relevant to the issues raised in this report regarding localism, collaborative working, improving public contact and investing in information

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[5] http://www.gov.scot/Resource/Doc/352649/0118638.pdf

[6] Scottish Government (2016) *Strategic Police Priorities for Scotland* http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0050/00506835.pdf

[7] SFRS (2016) *Strategic Plan 2016-19* http://www.firescotland.gov.uk/media/1005163/scottish_fire_and_rescue_service_strategic_plan_2016_19.pdf

and technology. Further reference to these new priorities and objectives will be made in the conclusions to this report.

- At a UK level, police and fire and rescue services are also facing significant budgetary pressures but many of the resulting changes to these services have followed a rather different trajectory to that in Scotland. Individual local police forces and fire and rescue services have had to adapt to significant reductions in government funding, resulting in changes to the size and composition of their workforce. In England and Wales, for example, the National Audit Office figures show that the central government grant for policing fell by £2.2 billion (22%) in real terms between 2010/11 and 2015/16. This has led to reduction in the police workforce between March 2010 and March 2015 of over 37,000, of whom nearly 17,000 are police officers (a 12% reduction) while Civilian staff numbers have fallen by 16,000 (20%)[8]. The fire and rescue services in England and Wales have also seen significant budget cuts of 22% in real terms between 2010/11 and 2015/16, which is expected to reduce by a further 22% between 2016/17 and 2019/20. In England, approximately 42,300 full time equivalent (FTE) Fire and Rescue Service (FRS) staff were employed in 2016. This figure is 4% lower than in 2015 and 17% lower than five years before[9];

- At an international level, many countries are reforming their police organisations, partly because of austerity measures but also in an attempt to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of policing. This creates opportunities for Scotland to learn from the experience of other jurisdictions but also for Scotland to contribute insights and understanding about reform to an international audience[10]. Like Scotland, the **Netherlands** has merged its regional police forces to create a single national police organisation; **Sweden** has restructured its national police so that what were 21 regional police authorities are now seven regions; and the national police in **Norway** has also been undergoing a gradual process of centralisation, reducing the number of police districts from 54 to 12 and the number of local police units from 354 to 210. Progress with the reforms in these different jurisdictions has occurred more slowly and proved more difficult than expected for a combination of reasons. The implementation process has been more complex and time-consuming than predicted and gaps have emerged between what managers and employees expect from reform. In each of these countries, the focus in the initial stages of implementation appears to have largely been on central management and reinforcing national structures, with the result that less attention has been given to engaging with employees in the new organisation. There have also been tensions between needs of national and local levels of the new organisations: a focus on establishing consistency at a

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[8] House of Commons Library (2016) *Police funding*. Briefing Paper 7279, 25/2/16.

[9] Home Office (2016) *Fire and rescue authorities: Operational statistics bulletin for England 2015 to 2016* https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/563118/fire-rescue-operational-statistics-201516-hosb1216.pdf

[10] An International Seminar on Police and Fire Reform took place on 11th November 2016 in Edinburgh and included participants from Norway, Sweden, Netherlands, Belgium, Switzerland, Wales, Northern Ireland, Wales and Scotland.

national level has taken priority over local flexibility and autonomy. The need for greater coordination and prioritisation during the reform process also emerges as a common theme across all these jurisdictions. These different and diverse challenges all underline the way in which Scotland's reform journey has involved negotiating a similar network of complex issues and relationships, many of which have also been encountered in other countries.

2.3 How the data for the case studies were collected

In each case study area, qualitative interviews and focus groups were used to capture the experiences and perspectives of different stakeholders in the reform process. The case studies were selected to include both urban and rural communities, areas with high and low crime rates, and with levels of greater and lesser deprivation. All of the areas had both a police and fire station, and some included fire stations staffed by retained firefighters.

The resulting case study selection is summarised below (but in order to maintain the anonymity of the case study areas further contextual details are not provided):

- Case study Area A - Urban area
- Case study Area B - Urban area (within the former Strathclyde region[11])
- Case study Area C - Small town in remote rural area (firefighters were all retained)
- Case study Area D - Town in rural area (firefighters were retained and full-time)

Across the four areas as a whole, a purposive sampling approach was employed in order to capture both local 'producer' (police and fire and rescue service) and 'consumer' (partner and public) perspectives. Interviews were conducted with the following interviewees (divided roughly equally across areas):

- Local police officers (constables, sergeants, inspectors in community and response roles) n = 25
- Local fire officers (firefighters, watch managers and station managers) n = 24
- Locally elected councillors n = 8
- Local authority staff n = 9
- Local third sector organisations and community council members n = 15
- Members of the public – 8 focus groups (2 per area with 8-10 participants in each).

Interviews with police and fire officers were conducted between June and August 2016 and those with other groups took place between June and December 2016. Face to face interviews were conducted with police and fire officers, and phone interviews were conducted with all other community groups. Members of the

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[11] The inclusion of a case study area within the former Strathclyde region was to assess whether change impacted differentially on those inside and outside the area covered by the largest legacy organisation.

general public took part in face to face focus group discussions facilitated by two researchers.

The police officers interviewed formed part of local policing teams and were both community and response officers. In this report they will be referred to as local officers. The firefighters interviewed were both full-time and retained and will be referred to as local firefighters.

Ethical approval for the case study element of the evaluation was obtained from NatCen Social Research (NatCen) Ethics Committee. Access was granted to conduct the research with police officers and firefighters through the Scottish Government protocols.

Access to police and fire officers was arranged through a named contact at the police or fire station. Councillors and local authority staff were invited to take part in the research by email and asked to contact the research team if they were willing to participate. Local third sector organisations and community council members were identified through other participants as relevant partners in the local area. They were then approached directly by phone or email by members of the research team to seek their consent to take part. In each area, one general public focus group took place with those aged 55 and over and another with those aged under 55. All focus groups contained both men and women, a mix of ages (within the parameters set for the group), and of unemployed, employed, retired people and students. The majority of participants had had some form of contact with the police, from attending a local public meeting about policing to reporting a crime, but they were not recruited on the basis of their contact. Those who had a close relative in either service were not eligible to take part.

The purpose of the evaluation and why they had been invited to take part was explained to all potential participants before interviewing commenced. Verbal consent was recorded before commencing interviews with all respondent groups.

With the consent of participants, the interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed verbatim. All interview data were stored securely, with access limited to the research team. Interview data were coded with NVivo, a software package for qualitative data analysis, using an analytical framework based on the key themes discussed by interviewees. This system of coding facilitates the organisation and analysis of qualitative transcripts and provides a tool to explore the range and diversity of views expressed by participants.

2.4 Overview of the report

This document provides a summary of the themes and findings emerging from research carried out during the second year of the evaluation and has three main components. It presents the key findings from the case studies, with separate sections dealing with police and fire. Each section offers an assessment of the cumulative case study evidence in relation to the three aims of reform and the wider impacts and implications of reform for the working environments of local police officers and firefighters.   The Annexes are published separately and comprise:

a) an evidence review (Annex 1) which describes and summarises the publicly available evidence base between the end of November 2015 and the end of December 2016 and b) a summary of findings by case study area of the local experience of police reform (Annex 2) and fire reform (Annex 3).

3   Assessment of case study evidence against the aims of reform for Police Scotland

3.1 Aim 1: To protect and improve local services despite financial cuts

3.1.1   Context

The evidence gathered in the Year 1 report suggested that significant progress had been made in Police Scotland towards rationalising service provision while maintaining routine operational delivery. There was a view at a national level that not only had the local level of service been sustained since reform but in some respects had been enhanced in ways which could not have happened without reform. In particular, the ability to surge resources into an area without having to draw on local personnel meant that a 'business as usual function' could be maintained even at times of increased demand. However, the Year 1 report also highlighted a number of on-going challenges:

- Improvements in the quality and consistency of service through establishing specialist units had been viewed as having a negative impact on the resourcing of local policing teams;

- Reductions in civilian staff had led to a perception that police officers were now undertaking roles previously undertaken by civilians;

- Data from the Scottish Crime and Justice Survey published in March 2016 showed since 2008/09 there have been statistically significant increases in public confidence across six measures but small and statistically significant reductions in positive attitudes towards policing in the period 2012/3 to 2014/5 for the proportion of adults confident in their local police forces ability to investigate incidents, deal with incidents, respond quickly and solve crimes.

3.1.2   Key findings from case studies

Summary

Across the case study areas, the evidence shows that since reform local policing teams have continued to provide a service which is valued by local communities and where the capacity to deal with increases in demand driven by major incidents was perceived by officers to have been enhanced in some of the case study areas by being able to access national resources.   Those who had contact with the police in an emergency are generally positive about the response they received but there are mixed views from the public regarding more routine interaction, depending on the type of area. In more deprived areas, public perceptions of officers tended to be more negative while in rural and affluent communities views were more positive. For local officers one of the main issues was the cumulative effect of decisions taken at a national level to restructure and refocus the organisation, which have had a variety of intended (and unintended) consequences at a local level. This has resulted in concerns among officers, confirmed by the public, councillors and community and third sector organisations, regarding the visible presence of local officers and a perception that local resources available to deal with routine response and community engagement activities are increasingly stretched over larger geographical areas.

In all four areas, there were local policing teams comprising community and response officers whose role involves responding to calls for service from the public and engaging with local communities. This local service was valued by local communities who saw the police having to do a difficult job in challenging circumstances and where local resources were in some of the case study sites increasingly stretched over larger geographical areas.

In all four case study areas, however, local officers were also experiencing the cumulative consequences of national level decisions which were impacting on the level of available resources locally, the effects of which were recognised by local councillors, council staff and community organisations.   As the Year 1 report indicated these national decisions related to *redeployment* of officers to specialist teams, *reductions* in civilian staff, and *restructuring* of resource provision and geographical responsibilities. In relation to redeployment, the evidence gathered for the case studies confirms findings in HMI Local Inspection reports[12] that the

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[12] HMICS (2016) *Local Policing+ Inspection Programme Inspection of Dumfries and Galloway Division* http://hmics.org/sites/default/files/publications/HMICS%20Local%20Policing%2B%20Dumfries%20and%20Galloway%20Division.pdf

HMICS (2015) Local Policing+ Inspection Programme Inspection of Edinburgh Division http://www.hmics.org/sites/default/files/publications/HMICS%20Local%20Policing%2B%20Inspection%20Programme%20Inspection%20of%20Edinburgh%20Division.pdf

HMICS (2015) Local Policing+ Inspection Programme Inspection of Aberdeen City Division http://www.hmics.org/sites/default/files/publications/Local%20Policing%2B%20Inspection%20Programme%20-%20Inspection%20of%20Aberdeen%20City%20Division.pdf

creation of specialist teams had resulted in some officers being redeployed away from the local area and not replaced:

> 'The biggest thing for us is staff, since Police Scotland came along are the specialist units up here that we never used to have before, taking frontline officers and putting them in there, and never ever replaced them on shift' (Area C – police officer)

The processes of reducing duplication in support services brought about by reform has also led to reductions in the numbers of civilian staff across Police Scotland. One consequence of this rationalisation was that some support services were now being provided by centralised administrative teams. Based on experience, some local officers felt that accessing these teams worked well although others thought the lack of face-to-face contact with support staff had increased the time taken to get administrative tasks done.   There were also fewer civilian staff providing administrative support to officers at the stations. As a result, some of the responsibilities, for which civilian staff had previously provided assistance, were now more commonly carried out by police officers, such as dealing with public inquiries at the front desk in police stations, typing up notes, and running checks on databases. Community councillors also mentioned their concerns that taking on these roles meant local officers had less time to engage with them on community issues.

The rationalisation and restructuring of resources as part of the process of reducing duplication has had other impacts on local policing. The most commonly mentioned by local officers across all the case study areas was in relation to accessing custody suites.   In the case study areas local custody suites would be closed due to a lack of resources or were now permanently located further away from the local police stations where officers work than before reform, increasing travel times with detainees and leading to longer periods of absence from local area. Since reform, officers also spoke of having to cover wider geographical areas than previously, partly as a result of the closures of other police stations in the locality. The public, community organisations and councillors in the case study areas were aware of these changes and the potentially negative consequences for community engagement and levels of local knowledge. Their concerns coalesced around a number of issues including the larger police beat areas, a perception that they no longer knew their local officers and that these officers rarely attended

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HMICS (2015) Local Policing+ Inspection Programme Inspection of Ayrshire Division
http://www.hmics.org/sites/default/files/publications/HMICS%20Local%20Policing%2B%20Inspection%20Programme%20-%20Inspection%20of%20Ayrshire%20Division.pdf

HMICS (2014) *Local Policing+ Pilot Inspection of Fife Division*
http://www.hmics.org/sites/default/files/publications/HMICS%20Local%20Policing%2B%20Pilot%20Inspection%20of%20Fife%20Division.pdf

community events, more limited access to officers at the local station, and the presence of officers from outside the local area:

'I'm not saying there's none but it's more and more...not locals. So they're no' aware of the area, they're no' aware of where there is trouble'. (Area D - public focus group)

In addition to these organisational issues, the officers interviewed in all the case study areas highlighted the importance of both IT provision and access to vehicles for efficient and effective local service delivery. In relation to IT, officers spoke positively about improved access to IT support services since reform and their ability to access computers remotely. The move to a centralised system for the Vulnerable Person Database was also mentioned as a positive example of improved IT-enabled information sharing across Scotland. For the officers, the introduction of new systems which make it quicker to type up cases was seen as an improved and time-saving process. Officers also identified improvements to the staff intranet as a positive tool for communication.

Despite these positives, there were concerns about the reduction in the number of available computers, the failure to deliver I6, the time taken for IT issues to be resolved once they had been logged through the central support line and the time consuming nature of using multiple computer systems[13]. With respect to vehicles, local officers across both urban and rural case study areas felt that reductions in police budgets had impacted negatively on both access to and the quality of vehicles available to local policing teams.

3.2 Aim 2: To create more equal access to specialist support and national capacity

3.2.1 Context

In the Year 1 report it was noted that there is now detailed documentary evidence about the establishment and functioning of new arrangements for accessing specialist expertise and national capacity. Interviews with key informants indicated that, of the 3 aims of reform, this was the one in which greatest progress could be demonstrated. Pre-reform, the limited and cumbersome nature of formal processes for requesting specialist policing support from other forces meant that demand was sometimes artificially suppressed. Now there are processes in place to access resources via the Operational Support Division (OSD, which includes air support, the marine unit, dogs and horses, and firearms) and the Specialist Crime Division (SCD). There are also Major Investigation Teams (MITs) for the North, East and West areas which focus on homicides and other serious crime.

The Year 1 report also highlighted some on-going challenges in relation to accessing specialist support and national capacity and the evidence gathered in Year 2 indicates that these remain important areas for attention:

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[13] See Audit Scotland (2017) *I6: A Review* http://www.audit-scotland.gov.uk/uploads/docs/report/2017/nr_170309_i6_review.pdf

- The creation of national, area, divisional and local specialist units was having some negative impacts on the availability of local 'frontline' resources.

- The lack of cross over between specialist units and local policing teams had led to concerns about the flow of intelligence and the potential for local officers to become de-skilled through a reliance on national expertise.

- The financial constraints faced by Police Scotland meant there were concerns about the capacity of national teams to meet all the demands being placed on them from across Scotland.

3.2.2   Key findings from case studies

Summary

Evidence from the case study areas indicated that local officers' experience of accessing national capacity and specialist services had improved in some respects since reform. There was also a perception that there had been no change or that the process had become more bureaucratic. When national capacity was deployed it allowed local policing teams to maintain service delivery in times of high demand and specialist teams brought high levels of skills and expertise to apply to specific local policing issues, such as a high risk missing person or murder investigation. However, local officers also expressed concerns about the capacity in some of the specialist teams to respond to local incidents in a timely way. Officers also felt there was still scope for improving internal communication between local and specialist teams and for assessing the longer term implications of this model of service delivery for the distribution of skills across the organisation.

There were some broadly positive views expressed about the improvements in access to specialist services that reform had brought about. For example, there was a view that officers can now draw upon resources and expertise which prior to reform they would have had limited or no access to. This was a view particularly voiced by those working outside the boundaries of the legacy Strathclyde Police force area who now felt that the visibility and availability of Major Investigation Teams and air support in particular had increased.   The changes in structure for specialist support teams not only meant that officers perceived Police Scotland to be better able to cope with serious incidents throughout the country, but also that they saw the centralised management of specialist support services as allowing these teams to take a broader, national view, enabling the expertise of such teams to be applied in a more targeted manner. When specialist teams did attend a local incident or event, their interventions were seen in a positive way. Local officers recognised the quality and value of the specialist skill sets they brought to the job: the specialist teams were seen as good at what they do and as hard working and helpful. The value of the specialist teams was also seen to lie in their ability to relieve pressures on local officers, both as a result of the specialist capability they

were able to provide and by allowing local policing capacity to remain focused on delivering a local service.

Nevertheless, there remained aspects of the process of accessing specialist expertise which local officers felt (based on their experience) could be improved and there are wider implications of this model of service delivery which would benefit from further consideration. In terms of process, the perception among some local officers who were now making use of a range of new processes and structures for accessing specialist support was that they were quite bureaucratic, particularly when compared with the more informal system for arranging specialist support that existed prior to reform. There was also a perception among local officers that specialist teams found it more difficult to respond to spontaneous as opposed to pre-planned incidents and that there could be delays in the deployment of specialists if they were already committed to activity in another area.   In particular, some local officers expressed concerns about the capacity of some specialist teams including the dog and road policing units and scenes of crime officers to meet all the demands that were placed on them and the competition that now exists between regions for resources.

As a model of service delivery, the division between specialists operating as a regional or national resource and generalists working at a local level has important benefits in terms of efficiency and effectiveness but this division of policing labour brings with it risks that need to be carefully managed. For example, the centralised management of specialist teams and their physical location at a distance from local policing teams meant some local officers reported that they only have limited knowledge about the role, purpose and remit of some specialist teams and would welcome further insight into what they do. Local officers also expressed concern that the centralisation of specialist support teams might present a barrier to local career progression and their opportunities to learn new skills, as investigations of a serious nature were now passed immediately from local police teams to specialist teams. Similarly, local officers perceived a potential problem in the future if those who remain in specialist teams lose the skills required to operate as a generalist in a local policing role. Improvements in internal communication and building better mutual understanding would help address these issues and mitigate the development of an 'us and them' culture between local officers and specialist teams.

3.3 Aim 3: To strengthen the connection between services and communities they serve

3.3.1 Context

The Year 1 Report highlighted the difficulty of assessing progress in relation to the third aim of reform given that much of the evidence tends to be descriptive rather than analytical, focused on the 'what' (what new arrangements are in place) rather than the 'so what' (what are the impacts and implications of the new arrangements).

Positive developments that were noted in the Year 1 report included improved access to local senior officers although this was caveated by some concerns about

perceptions of their limited autonomy with regard to decisions taken at a national level that had significant local impacts. In terms of partnership working, key informants noted that there remains a strong commitment to this within Police Scotland but also noted that some momentum was lost around this in the early stages of reform.

In terms of evidence gaps, the Year 1 report noted the lack of evidence about the nature of the interactions, experiences and relationships between local groups and the police although data from the Scottish Crime and Justice Survey (March 2016) showed since 2008/09 there have been statistically significant increases in public confidence across six measures but small and statistically significant reductions in positive attitudes towards policing in the period 2012/3 to 2014/5 for the proportion of adults confident in their local police forces' ability to investigate incidents, deal with incidents, respond quickly and solve crimes[14.]

3.3.2   Key findings from case studies

Summary

In all the case study areas the public and local councillors were generally very positive about their interactions with local policing teams, particularly in rural areas where there was a strong sense of the need to work collaboratively. Nevertheless, local officers, councillors, third sector organisations and the public were aware that community engagement activities and locally based joint initiatives were under pressure from other demands on policing.   Dissatisfaction with the use of the 101 non-emergency number was expressed by some members of the public as well as with the closure or limited opening times of some police stations. With respect to partnership working, there was clear evidence that this was viewed positively by police, councillors, council staff and third sector organisations and that it was of strategic importance and was well supported by the attendance of senior officers at partnership meetings. Nevertheless, in all 4 areas the evidence suggests that for local police officers their ability to work effectively with partner agencies was under pressure from resource constraints across the public sector and that there was scope for improving information sharing and internal and external communication about the outcomes of partnership initiatives.

Interaction with communities

The public and local councillors were generally very positive about their interactions with their local policing teams, particularly in rural areas where there was a strong sense of the need to work collaboratively. The public were aware of and valued the activities that the police undertake to engage with the local community, for example, visiting local schools, attending local events and community council meetings. However, the public perception was that police attendance at community events

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[14] The six measures of public confidence in Police Scotland from the Scottish Crime and Justice Survey (March 2016) include: investigate incidents after they occur, deal with incidents as they occur, respond quickly to appropriate calls and information from the public, solve crimes, catch criminals and prevent crime. See http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0049/00496532.pdf

and meetings had decreased in recent years and local officers also voiced concerns about their capacity to maintain community engagement activities, such as attending community council meetings, visiting schools and providing support to victims and witnesses. This was seen partly as a product of taking on additional local responsibilities, changing shift patterns and having to work across wider geographical areas since reform, but also reflected a more general perception that at a national level the expectation from senior management was for them to be more focused on response and enforcement rather than engagement activities. For local officers this experience resulted in being less well-known in local communities which reduced the opportunities for gathering local intelligence:

> 'It's sometimes hard, as much as we are community officers we don't always get to be community officers a lot of the time because the response police are quite often so small in numbers that a lot of the time we are missing community meetings. We don't get to…pop into schools - we should be visiting the schools every couple of weeks. We don't get to do it a lot of the time due to all the other factors - covering front bar, police officers covering prisoner watches, just doing different things that a lot of the time it does feel like you're not a police officer.' (Area B – police officer)

These concerns were underlined by local councillors who described police attendance at community council meetings as being less consistent since reform, although starting to improve. Local officers also felt that the decision to shut some police stations or limit their opening hours as a way of dealing with budgetary pressures had made it more difficult for the public to contact the local police. The public, councillors, and community organisations were also aware of station closures and changes in the opening hours of the police stations in their local area and had concerns about the signal this sent to the local community about the accessibility of the local police and the ability to report crime and share information.

Following the introduction of the single non-emergency number for Scotland, the limited opportunity for direct telephone communication between the public and their local police officers had led to some officers voicing concerns that the public were now less likely to report low level incidents or suspicious behaviour. Members of the public felt that low level crimes and incidents, such as vandalism, which were reported through the non-emergency number were given a low priority and that it might not be worth reporting them. Consequently, local officers indicated that they were receiving less information from the community about what was happening in their local area and that some types of low level crimes might be going unreported and therefore not reflected in police crime figures. This concern was shared by the public, councillors, council staff and community organisations who mentioned delays in responses to 101 calls and not being able to speak to someone locally. This was seen as a particular issue in rural areas where community organisations also expressed concerns that the public were less likely to report crimes and provide intelligence through 101 than if they could speak directly to a local officer:

> '…And then they'll tell you something like this guy is selling drugs, or this guy is doing that or whatever. And uh...they say ah yes this is 2 weeks ago but I just

can't get hold of the front counter staff to let the police know and I don't bother with 101…' (Area C – police officer)

'So it's just you've lost the kind of...I think the police have lost a source of information you know they're not in...they're not in touch with the grassroots if you like...the people, because they're behind call centres, or...you know?' (Area C – community organisation)

The introduction of the 101 number was also perceived to be problematic by members of the public and some local officers because of their concerns about the level of local knowledge held by contact centre staff.   The public in rural areas felt that the 101 number was being covered by people who were from outside the local area and who did not know the locality, a concern shared by some officers who felt that knowledge of the local areas was especially crucial to help direct them to remote locations, for example in relation to road accidents[15].

Partnership working

In all four areas local officers mentioned a wide range of partners they worked with including: the fire service, social work, the NHS and the ambulance service, other criminal justice agencies, local authority departments (such as environmental health and community wardens) and third sector organisations (dealing with issues like drug and alcohol abuse, domestic violence and homelessness).   In rural areas with particular risks, such as flooding, there were also regular emergency planning meetings and debriefs after incidents with the different services about what worked well and what did not work well. Of the more senior officers interviewed there was regular interaction with councillors at local meetings as well as more informal contact.

Across all four areas, partnership working was viewed very positively by police, councillors and third sector organisations. It was seen as being given a high priority and of strategic importance and was well supported by the attendance of senior officers at partnership meetings. Where there was co-location of police and council staff, there were particular benefits in terms of joint working on community safety issues.   Specific examples of positive partnership activity in rural areas included joint activities between the police, mountain rescue and the coast guard, while in urban areas the relationship with community wardens was also highly valued and council workers described positively working with the police on prevention-focused initiatives.

However, the ability of local officers to work effectively in their day-to-day duties with partner agencies was being affected by the resource pressures felt by all services. There was a perception among local officers that financial cutbacks in partner services and their increased workloads have had an impact on working

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[15] A review of call handling indicates that there was over 94% in customer satisfaction in call handling at the Police Scotland Service Centre for the first two quarters of 2016/17. See HMICS (2017). *Independent Assurance Review Police Scotland – Call Handling Update Report.* http://www.hmics.org/sites/default/files/publications/HMICS%20Independent%20Assurance%20Review%20Police%20Scotland%20%E2%80%93%20Call%20Handling%20-%20Update%20Report.pdf

relationships. Services such as the NHS, social services and youth services, fire and ambulance were all seen as facing constraints which impact on their capacity for joint working and information sharing.

The scope to improve partnership working was raised by a number of interviewees in all of the case study areas. For local officers this focused on better internal communication within Police Scotland between those attending partnership meetings (typically Sergeants or more senior officers) and constables working in communities. At present, local officers felt they did not always hear directly from senior local officers or the local councillors about issues impacting on the community and they, in turn, were not able to share their own local policing knowledge. There were also some more general concerns about information sharing between police, council departments and third sector organisations. Although in some places there were positive experiences, in other areas there were often concerns expressed by the police about the length of time it took partners to provide information, and by partner organisations about a lack of information provided by the police about local crime issues. Council staff in both urban and rural areas also felt that the police sometimes wanted to make things happen faster than they were comfortable with, and had concerns about both the negative impacts of a target driven approach to policing and the high turnover of local officers on building strong long term relationships at a local level.

Negotiating boundaries of responsibility in a context of limited resources was also an issue that was raised in many of the police interviews. A wide range of examples were provided of local officers being tasked with roles they believed should be the responsibility of another agency, including responding to noise complaints, people with mental health issues, missing children, and housing issues. A particular concern is dealing with calls leading to accompanying people with mental health issues to hospital which was widely seen as not a policing role and something that social work or the health service should be dealing with. Officers did not feel that they were equipped to deal with these situations as they did not have adequate training in assisting people with mental health issues.

3.4 A changing working environment: The wider impacts and implications of reform for local police officers

In addition to providing insights into the progress towards achieving the three aims of reform, the local case studies have also provided important information on the wider impacts, implications and unintended consequences of reform for the working environment of local officers. This is important because, as the Year 1 report highlighted, the rapid pace of change, concerns about communication and feedback within the organisation combined with increasing workloads all contributed to a decline in morale during the first phases of reform. This was underlined by the SPA/Police Scotland Opinion Survey carried out in 2015 which also highlighted significant areas of workforce dissatisfaction in relation to information and communication, feedback, training, career development and well-being. The response rate to this survey was only 39% for those involved in local policing (compared with an overall response rate of 51%) and those in local roles were less positive in their views than those working in other areas of policing.

Work is being taken forward within Police Scotland to address concerns raised in the Opinion Survey and the findings presented in this section can help inform that activity by providing qualitative evidence of issues of the way reform is perceived as impacting on the working environments of local police officers and their suggestions of how this could be improved.

3.4.1   Internal communication

Wider research on organisational change consistently highlights the difficulties of sustaining effective internal communication during a period of reform.   For local officers the challenges of internal communication have been manifest in different ways. Many of the constables interviewed in the case study areas felt that they now had less access to and interaction with more senior officers than they did before reform, which was partly explained by changes to the physical location of supervision and management teams which may now be at some distance from local stations. One consequence was that local officers felt that the primary form of communication between senior and lower ranking officers was now by email. Much of that communication focused on the 'what' and 'how' of changes but there was a clear desire to hear more from senior officers about the reasons why changes were being introduced:

> 'Why can't our Inspectors and our Chief Inspectors come in and engage with us, and actually explain to us the reasoning behind why they want these things done?' (Area B – police officer)

There was also a desire to receive more open and honest communication about the resource challenges that Police Scotland faces as it moves forward into the transformational phase of reform.

In terms of supervision of local officers, there was a positive view of line managers who were described as supportive, helpful, and offered guidance on how to handle difficult situations. However, officers also felt that the increase in the number of officers that Sergeants now have to supervise meant there was less direct supervision and some officers in rural areas mentioned that supervisors can be based in a different location to some of the officers they supervise, increasing the challenges around effective communication.

Many officers also discussed communication around the use of targets within Police Scotland and although there was widespread awareness that the appointment of a new Chief Constable in 2016 had led to a change of approach in this area, some local officers interviewed for this phase of the evaluation still perceived an organisational pressure to deliver targets:

> '…they were quite clear that there were no targets for operational cops however, divisional commanders were being pressured into providing answers to...senior members of the Executive as to why their stop/search figures were down or why their assault rate was up, the commission rate, or why the volume of serious assaults were up.' (Area B – police officer)

The significance of targets was also about how these communicated a message to local officers about what the organisation viewed as important and many of the targets were seen as having an enforcement rather than engagement focus:

> 'So we're still kind of getting things there, a lot of the time it is extra pressure on us because we could be out and we're community officers, so we should be out engaging but you never ever get a well done you've went around and you've visited your schools, and you've visited the shops, you never ever get that. It's well why have you not got a return, why have you not got somebody out smoking drugs, or out drinking, why have you not got anything so I think that definitely is still a pressure of you need to come back with something and there's never a...very little is there a well done you!' (Area B – police officer)

3.4.2 Training and career development

Local officers perceived less training available since reform and that this was largely 'role-based' and orientated to those in specialist functions. Those performing more generic roles in local policing saw this as limiting the range of work that they can be involved in and restricting their ability to move to specialist teams and therefore their career opportunities:

> 'But I think ... there's a lack of a skill base for each officer. We…we're all Constables. We all detect and prevent crime, but we need to have more feathers in our cap, more things that we can go and speak to people, and help people with. If I was more knowledgeable on child protection issues, you know, I could go out and speak to local youth groups regarding this, and…but we don't get training on these things.' (Area D – police officer)

The scope to go on secondment to a specialist team to gain experience for career development was also seen as limited, in part due to these teams becoming national resources based in a small number of locations.

These concerns fed into wider issues about career development. Some officers felt that the creation of a single national police force had increased their career opportunities compared with legacy force arrangement, as they did not have to apply to a new police force to access a wider range of opportunities, although they recognised that there may still be a need to relocate to join different specialist teams.

Other officers felt that opportunities for promotion had been reduced. They perceived Police Scotland as moving to limit the overall number of Sergeants and Inspectors, resulting in promotions being on hold. Officers also perceived that there were now fewer places available on the diploma course required for promotion to Sergeant and Inspector, leading to more competition and an increasing time to wait to attend the course. The combination of these developments means officers saw themselves waiting many years before they were able to get promoted. There was also a view that younger officers may leave the service if they weren't promoted especially as other benefits, such as pensions, have also been cut back.

Many officers mentioned the lack of an appraisal process under Police Scotland. In the past, officers described having an annual appraisal, where their performance was measured against competencies for their role. This was seen as useful for discussing their career development, agreeing training needs and was seen as important if officers wanted to go for promotion.

3.4.3   Officer morale, retention and well-being

Many of the issues described above and in previous sections of the report appeared to be contributing to low levels of morale among local officers, something confirmed in HMICS local inspections and the SPA/Police Scotland workforce survey:

> '…think everyone's suffering from low morale since… since it (Police Scotland) came in. I've never seen anything like it. When I joined, it was…it was quite up… you know, it was very upbeat, you know? It was a great job to get into, you know?' (Area B – police officer)

Specific concerns included the impact of having reduced resources, or being asked to do more with the same resources; the increase in paperwork and the subsequent impact on officers' workloads; the lack of paid overtime and limited flexibility in working patterns; the reduction in pension benefits; and a lack of positive feedback from senior officers. The amount of change officers are having to cope with was also seen as having a negative impact on morale:

> 'And I think a lot o' cops are upset because they are demoralised because things are changing all the time. It may be a change in domestic procedures, stop/search procedures, roads policing procedure… er … and every couple o' days there's a change. The laws are not changing. It's just how we deal wi' them. Can we no just slow down and have a proper think? … er … make sure things are working first and then, and, if it's not working, change it? – Instead o' just saying, "Oh, quick ... quick …Right. Oh, we'll change it now"' (Area D – police officer)

While there were some differences in perceptions between more experienced officers compared with newer officers who had not worked under the previous systems, there were shared concerns about the consequences of low morale for retention and levels of stress. Officers felt that the changes in working conditions, such as the lack of overtime, reduced pension and increased workloads, had led to many experienced officers leaving the service. The police, it was argued, was no longer seen as a career for life and officers may now only work as an officer for a few years and then pursue a different career. Officers also felt that the job of a police officer had become more stressful, in part due to the experience of increased workloads and the addition of new procedures which created additional administrative tasks. Officers felt that sickness levels had increased since reform

and also that officer's physical and mental wellbeing were being affected by the changes that had occurred since reform[16]:

> 'And I just think everybody's getting stressed oot, because the workloads are getting bigger. You're no getting the time to do the enquiries, yet obviously you've got court dates to meet, you've got deadlines to meet for getting, you know, like reports done and stuff, and you're just .. You've just no got the time because you've no got the manpower to deal wi' the work that's coming in! to get stuff done' (Area D – police officer)

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[16] It is difficult to establish pre-reform baseline information in relation to officer and staff well-being. Data presented to the SPA Human Resources and Remuneration Committee in June 2016 indicates that officer and staff absence in local policing remained stable between 2014/15 and 2015/16 but at higher levels than for those working in specialist functions (see: http://www.spa.police.uk/assets/126884/183786/349830/agendaitem11.1).

4 Assessment of case study evidence against the aims of reform for the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service

4.1 Aim 1: To protect and improve local services despite financial cuts

4.1.1 Context

The evidence reviewed in the Year 1 report suggested that SFRS had made significant progress in rationalising service provision while maintaining operational service delivery. As part of a programme of work to ensure there is alignment between the distribution of assets and demand, SFRS representatives emphasised how there had been strategic investment in localities which had fewer resources under legacy arrangements. But the report also highlighted a number of on-going challenges, particularly in relation to the rationalisation of estate, falling numbers of civilian/support staff, and the complexity of tackling duplication due to differences in 'back office' business processes.

4.1.2 Key findings from case studies

Summary

There was clear evidence in each of the 4 case study areas that firefighters, councillors, community groups, council staff and the general public perceived that the level of local service had been maintained since reform. However, firefighters did report feeling stretched as a result of declining numbers of administrative staff and had concerns regarding the centralisation of support services, poor IT and their ability to access some equipment.

There was a strong consensus across all 4 areas and between firefighters, councillors, council staff, community groups and the public that there had been relatively little perception of change in the level of service provided in local areas since reform. The public in particular continued to view the fire service as an organisation, and the individuals working within it, in very positive terms. Firefighters also mentioned positively the less visible but important activity that had gone to standardise equipment and protocols across Scotland, and the additional work they now do to attend ambulance related calls. However, there were some concerns expressed in those areas that were relatively well-resourced under legacy arrangements that they had seen a diminution in resourcing as a result of attempts to better align resource deployment to local needs and that changes in crewing practices to achieve consistency across the country had reduced the number of firefighters allocated to some appliances.

In all 4 areas some national level decisions were perceived as creating local challenges. Reductions in the number of administrative staff, for example, were viewed as increasing workloads and middle managers reported having less time for partnership working, managing their crew and delivering training. Decisions regarding the centralisation of support functions were also seen as increasing levels of bureaucracy in accessing support *or* equipment compared with legacy arrangements[17].

The poor provision of IT in local areas was of particular concern, especially for retained firefighters in rural areas, who made reference to 'dated' systems, poor network performance and a lack of computers[18]:

'I do quite a bit of my work from home. I have no access to the intranet from home. Retained staff, we just don't… Therefore I can't access our standard operating procedures. I can't access probably half the information that I need to from home' (Area C - firefighter)

There were more mixed views about IT support. Having access to a single national number to access support was seen positively but the amount of time spent waiting for help was a source of frustration. There were also mixed views about access to and standard of equipment in each of the 4 areas. In one of the rural areas there was a very positive assessment about the standard of new equipment:

'…there's standardisation of things which is going to be very positive. So we have new Breathing Apparatus sets, you know?, and they're a higher standard than we had before, and I think the fact that it is being delivered as a national project makes a lot of sense, but I think it will make us safer within our working environment' (Area C - firefighter)

In the other urban and rural areas, by contrast, concerns were raised about a reduction in the number of appliances since reform, ageing and unreliable equipment and the length of time it takes for equipment to be repaired.

4.2 Aim 2: To create more equal access to specialist support and national capacity

4.2.1 Context

The Year 1 report indicated that there was relatively detailed documentary evidence regarding the establishment and functioning of arrangements to access specialist

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[17] SFRS (2016) *Fire Safety and Organisational Statistics Scotland 2015-16* can be found here http://www.firescotland.gov.uk/media/977781/fire_safety_and_org_statistics_2015_16_v1.1.pdf. It should be noted that no compulsory redundancy policy has always been in effect within the SFRS.
[18] For a review of ICT see HMFSI (2015) *Performance Management Information Systems in the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service: A review of the systems the SFRS uses to collect and report data relating to its performance* http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0047/00476788.pdf

expertise and national capacity. SFRS and HMFSI[1] had both developed a detailed picture of variation in equipment, skills and capacity across Scotland and have made progress in better aligning resources with need. The examples of the Clutha Bar helicopter tragedy and the widespread flooding of 2015 were both cited as strong examples of faster and more effective deployment of specialist expertise than would have been possible under legacy arrangements. There had also been progress with the standardisation of procedures and equipment and the creation of national databases.   Moving forward there were on-going challenges for SFRS about the most equitable and appropriate geographical location of assets due to the variable risk profiles of different areas and the changing demands on the service as a whole.

4.2.2   Key findings from the case studies

Summary

Across the 4 case study areas, firefighters generally had positive experiences of being able to access specialist support and national capacity. However, some concerns were expressed regarding the logistics of engaging specialist teams and the risks of de-skilling local firefighters because of a reliance on specialists from out with their areas.

The process of creating equal access to specialist support and national capacity was generally viewed very positively in all the case study areas. Knowledge of what specialist equipment exists across Scotland had been enhanced and access had improved because there were now groups of trained specialists who can be deployed locally, whereas pre-reform, a local area might not have had the necessary expertise to deal with a complex incident. The only critical observations were about the logistics of moving specialists around the country and the time it might take to reach rural locations; and, as in policing, a concern about the de-skilling of some local officers as they become more reliant on specialists from out with their area.

Due to this concern about the logistics as well as the perceived stretching of resources within specialised teams, there were some anxieties about accessing support if multiple incidents were to occur across Scotland. There was also a view in one of the rural areas that specialist equipment was not always located in the most accessible places and the length of time taken to resolve where some equipment will be based in future was a source of concern.

The Year 1 report highlighted areas of good practice where major incidents had occurred and the specialist support response had been viewed positively nationally. On a local level however, the redistribution of resources had led to some areas that previously had access to specialist equipment locally now experiencing delays to obtain specialist resources during major incidents. This was raised as a particular concern in an urban area where the perception was that the response to a major

incident involved delays in receiving assistance from specialist teams which under legacy arrangements would have been available to them locally.

The availability of specialist training for local firefighters raised an issue in each of the case study areas. A lack of training was viewed as leading to local firefighters feeling de-skilled:

> 'If it's a fire call it's your normal job and that's fine! You're on an even keel but if its water rescue you're just kind of there for the ride. It seems a waste because you've got an extra pair of hands and you certainly get put to work, you have something to do, either to carry stuff, or help as best you can but you've got no idea what you're doing! It's not a great feeling that because you kind of think sorry! You feel apologetic and as if you're in the way.' (Area B - firefighter)

In the rural areas, accessing specialist training was seen as a barrier to developing skills, due to a perceived lack of trainers in the area. However, in the retained fire station although accessing training was viewed as a challenge, being able to draw on expertise from outside their area was seen positively. There was also a recognition that it was not necessary for all retained firefighters to receive specialist training and it should be on a 'need to know basis'. For the urban areas however, the firefighters stated that being trained in some basic skills to help support specialist teams would ensure they are usefully deployed at incidents. Despite these concerns, there was also a degree of understanding that the service is still going through a 'harmonisation' period and that having a fully developed national training programme would take time.

4.3 Aim 3: To strengthen the connection between services and the communities they serve

4.3.1 Context

In the Year 1 report there was positive evidence presented about the formation of new structures for local engagement, particularly with Community Planning Partnerships and local scrutiny committees. The appointment of Local Senior Officers had provided a focus for engagement with CPPs, formulation of Local Outcome Agreements, engagement with local stakeholders. The report also highlighted the clear shift towards a prevention agenda in terms of local engagement and partnership working. In terms of on-going challenges, there were concerns that budgetary pressures on all services might impede greater collaborative working and lead to organisations focusing on what they see as their core business.

4.3.2 Key findings from the case studies

Summary

In all the case study areas firefighters, councillors, council staff, community organisations and the general public identify the contribution that fire and rescue make to community well-being and how prevention was now a key part of the firefighter's role. Partnership working was also viewed very positively by all groups in each case study area but with scope for improvement around data sharing, communication and retaining informal networks in rural areas.

Across all 4 case study areas there was a very positive picture of community engagement activities undertaken by SFRS via visits, talks and presence at community events. In both urban and rural areas the general public viewed SFRS positively:

'They don't just do their job they go beyond that with care within the community' (Area D – public focus group)

The general public in each of the areas described having respect for the job firefighters do and had confidence that they would respond quickly in an emergency. Despite now being a national service, it was generally felt that they had not lost their localism and firefighters, the general public, council staff, councillors and community organisations could all give numerous examples of the service engaging with the community, including home safety visits, community events, and visits to schools. Central to much of this activity was advice about prevention and this was recognised and accepted as a core part of their role. Firefighters, councillors, council workers, community groups and the general public all recognised the preventative role SFRS are playing in the community and viewed this positively.

In some of the areas, however, it was recognised that there remained hard to reach groups, such as those from BME communities and those with drug and alcohol

dependency where more work needed to be done. There were also some suggestions for improving community engagement activities by appointing Community Safety Advocates and provide skills training in effective communication.

In terms of partnership working, there was also a positive assessment of relationships and activities both from those in SFRS and those in the community. In each of the case study areas good working relationships with the fire and rescue service were identified by councillors, council workers and community organisations as well as the existence of good lines of communication to more senior firefighters. On the whole, firefighters, councillors and council staff viewed Community Planning Partnerships as important facilitators of joint working as was the co-location of agencies which existed in one of the case study sites. Although in one of the urban areas there was little reported contact between firefighters and councillors, the councillors' still viewed the fire service positively and did not feel their relationship had changed since reform.

There were examples in all the case study areas of strong partnership working. One of the areas was a pilot for responding to out-of-hospital cardiac arrests and although there was some concern about attending incidents they had not been fully trained for, on the whole, involvement in the pilot and the joint working with the ambulance service was viewed positively by the firefighters.

In all areas there was also recognition of the scope for improvement in partnership working. In both urban and rural areas data sharing between agencies was identified as a challenge and there was a perception among some firefighters that other agencies were sometimes unwilling to share information with SFRS. There was also a view that incompatible IT systems were making data sharing challenging.

There was a consistent view among firefighters that internal communication within SFRS of the outcomes of partnership working could be improved, given that it is typically more senior officers that participated in meetings so that local firefighters were less aware of what was decided. There was also a frustration expressed by firefighters that they were not always informed about the outcome of joint working, which they felt would be important for learning about what worked well and what did not work well. Indeed, in one of the urban areas there was a view that scaling up local examples of positive partnership working and disseminating them across the national service would benefit future partnership working across the country. A further impact of reform in rural areas was that firefighters felt there had been in a reduction in informal networking due to cuts in staffing. Before reform, the station manager in particular would have informally met with community representatives, rather than using formal structures such as meetings, which were felt to be more appropriate for urban settings. However, due to more demands on their time, they felt unable to have frequent informal interactions with community representatives. However, this view was not shared by councillors or council staff in rural areas who were satisfied with their interactions with the SFRS.

4.4 A changing working environment: The wider impacts and implications of reform for local firefighters

In addition to providing insights into the progress towards achieving the three aims of reform, the local case studies have also provided important information on the wider impacts and implications of reform for the working environment of firefighters. This is important because having insights into the nature of the local organisational context in which new initiatives will land should help SFRS as it moves from the 'integration' to 'transformation' phases of reform.

4.4.1   Internal communication

In all case study areas it was identified that there had been challenges in relation to communication since becoming a single service. In both urban and rural areas, firefighters described pre-reform lines of communication as short and quick but now perceived it took longer to find out information and it was not always clear who should be contacted. As a result, firefighters often described being passed between several people over the phone until they reached the appropriate person. One suggestion for improvement was for a designated person in each of the centralised departments, such as finance or IT, to be responsible for a particular area. This could ensure that firefighters from local areas would have a specific contact person rather than having to speak to a new person every time they tried to resolve an issue:

> 'So there are is an issue...again it's just because of the size, I think because of the size and the lack of communication people don't know who to speak to. And I think that the communication is probably one of the bigger issues within a big service' (Area A - firefighter)

The volume of communication was also identified as having changed in all areas since reform. Firefighters experienced a lot of information being 'pushed out' to local areas instead of allowing them to 'pull it down' and access specific information when they needed it. Firefighters also complained about the volume of emails they were receiving regarding training and new policies, leading them to spend a lot of time at their computers. Asked about what type of information they would like to receive, firefighters highlighted examples of successful local initiatives and best practice which could help them decide whether to implement these locally. There was also feeling that they were not working as a single service yet but were still operating regionally to some extent.

In addition, firefighters would appreciate more authentic communication from senior management. There was a perception that communication from senior management always focused on the positives but they would like to know about the impact reform is having on their colleagues and what management was doing to improve areas where problems have been identified.

However, there was a view that prior to reform firefighters felt that they could communicate with any rank; this was no longer perceived to be the case and the

organisation was viewed as more hierarchical and that firefighters would only communicate with their line managers:

'It feels a lot more distant than it did and it already felt quite distant from the upper echelons of the management to now it feels like a different stratosphere that we're in now. So you just...very very disconnected I suppose' (Area B - firefighter)

In relation to targets, there was a view that the single fire and rescue service was more target-driven than its regional predecessors:

'…with the introduction of the new service… it certainly seems to be more target driven, we need bigger numbers, we've got to get... it seems to have driven very much more towards a corporate working process' (Area B - firefighter)

There were mixed views on the use of targets in the service. One view was that there was a sense of frustration expressed with this approach, with a view that a targets-based method of performance management may not provide the most appropriate measure to review how effectively the fire and rescue service was carrying out its role. However, for other firefighters the targets-based approach in relation to performance management represented an improvement on the system in place prior to reform, enabling senior members of staff to provide firefighters with a clear structure of what was expected and to hold firefighters to account. One criticism of targets was that they underestimated the complexity of the work carried out by the service, particularly as it adapts to include new areas of activity around prevention.

4.4.2   Training and career development

There were different views about the level of training available. Some firefighters felt that there was less training available since reform, that the training was less thorough and they were critical of the standardised approach and the use of online modules. Specifically firefighters mentioned that there were currently less training opportunities to become qualified in using specific pieces of equipment and some of the training was not available locally. This means that those firefighters who were qualified in using the equipment needed to use it all the time, and could become de-skilled in the use of other equipment. However, others reported that the level of training available since reform was good, that the standardised nature of training had improved in some rural areas and that it was positive that the online courses were completed by both whole time and retained firefighters:

'… So you know every single station is doing the same training right at the same time, and that's very good. Very good. So…yeah. So training is superb.' (Area C - firefighter)

In the former Strathclyde region there were particularly negative views expressed about first aid training. Firefighters in this area were now expected to assist the ambulance service and sometimes were the first on the scene ahead of the ambulance service. There was a feeling that first aid training had been less

thorough since reform and the course was not to the same standard as previously. This had a negative impact on firefighters' confidence in dealing with medical emergencies. However, in another area, firefighters were positive about the cardiac arrest training they were receiving where it was being delivered by the fire and rescue service in partnership with the ambulance service:

'If we do turn up to something and we are having to wait for an ambulance to come I think there will be a lot of guys who will be a bit nervous and a bit right...I can kind of remember some of this stuff as opposed to being constantly trained on it and refreshed and qualified, and being more confident with it.' (Area B – fire fighter)

In rural areas it was felt that the current weekly 2.5 hour training for retained firefighters was too short to cover everything which was expected of firefighters. There was also concern that retained firefighters mostly benefited from the training delivered at the local station and did not have opportunities to go to the national training centre, at which a lot of the courses were offered to whole time staff.

Positive views were expressed by the whole time staff about having a national centre for training as this was felt to have helped standardise the training for everyone across Scotland. The fact that firefighters from across the country can now attend courses in the same location was seen to facilitate learning from others and drew on the skills from across different regions. Although many courses were delivered nationally, there was a view that there was still scope to deliver courses at a local level. There was also a view that training facilities had improved since the reform.

In regards to delivering training locally, firefighters at one rural station with retained firefighters felt that the number of trainers in the area had not increased sufficiently since the reform. This had an impact on middle managers who were in charge of delivering the training to retained staff, which has also had an impact on their workloads. Middle managers expressed a view that there should be a trained department member of staff delivering the training:

'So if an accident happens, the expectation is exactly the same, then the support should be the same if not better for those in more remote rural areas with less exposure to training and resources' (Area C - firefighter)

There were mixed views expressed regarding prospects for career progression within the national service. Whilst some firefighters felt that there were increased opportunities for career advancement, others pointed to a perceived reduction in opportunities for promotion and progression since reform. One reason given for why there were more career opportunities was the ability to take up opportunities across Scotland:

'…now that we're one service its opened up the whole of the country where you can travel about and take up opportunities that arise elsewhere… since reform the barriers between fire services has lifted, so we're one!' (Area C - firefighter)

However, a number of barriers to career progression were also identified which had resulted from the creation of the national service. There was a perception that at the same time as firefighters from across Scotland were being enabled to apply for roles nationally, fewer roles were being created, meaning 'more people going for less jobs'. In addition, the perceived reduction in the number of different ranks and roles within the fire service were seen as contributing to fewer promotion opportunities being available.

As a result, career progression opportunities for firefighters with family ties were viewed as particularly limited within the single service. There was a perception that opportunities within the local area were often filled by people coming from other areas. One view was that despite the limited nature of local opportunities for career progression, firefighters were not offered any incentive or financial assistance to move elsewhere to fulfil a new role or develop their careers.

There was also criticism of the lack of a single system for promotion across the organisation, the continued use of interim promotion systems three years after reform and the level of temporary positions, leading to a degree of uncertainty amongst staff in relation to their career development:

> '… [The national service] inherited 8 different recruitment and promotion systems. They're running interim promotion systems at the moment, we're 3 years in and they haven't got a set promotion system' (Area C - firefighter)

4.4.3 Firefighter morale, retention and well-being

It was felt that the aims of reform had not been communicated to the local stations effectively by senior managers. This was viewed as impacting on morale, as there were a number of changes taking place, including staffing and shift patterns, but firefighters had little understanding of why the changes were happening. This was also viewed as creating uncertainty and concern about whether there will be any station closures. Firefighters also felt that senior managers do not always appreciate the impact of wider decisions on firefighters, for example, the change in the pension scheme[19].

There was a perception that due to increased pressure in the firefighter roles, sickness levels had increased. In areas with retained firefighters there was a suggestion that the pressure in the fire service, such as receiving calls when not on shift, was affecting mental health.

Morale was viewed as being low in all the areas, and in some areas it was identified that firefighters were starting to leave after only a few years in the service, something which would have been unusual previously. There was a perception that firefighters are leaving the service due to increased stress in the job. This was seen as having an increased financial burden as the service has to recruit and train new firefighters more frequently.

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[19] Pension arrangements are not determined by SFRS senior management

5 Conclusions, areas for improvement and wider lessons

5.1 Conclusions

In the Year 1 Report it was noted that senior representatives of Police Scotland and SFRS frequently invoked the notion of a reform journey that begins with 'preparing', moves on to 'consolidating' and 'integrating', and concludes with 'transforming'. At that time both services saw themselves in the consolidation and integration phase of the journey. This report provides insights into the local experiences of consolidation and integration. By interviewing local police officers, firefighters, councillors, community organisations and members of the public, it provides a unique set of perspectives on, and perceptions of, experiencing the reform journey in different parts of the country.

Although drawn from four very different areas of Scotland, the local case study evidence presents a remarkably consistent picture of both the progress towards, and perceived challenges remaining with regard to, achieving the long term aims of reform. From the perspective of local police officers and firefighters there were positive achievements in relation to improvements in accessing national capacity and specialist expertise. There were also strong commitments to partnership working which was of strategic importance and was well supported by the attendance of senior officers at partnership meetings. But the perceptions of those involved in the routine delivery of local services was that they are operating with diminishing resources, that work to strengthen connections with communities was often hampered by other organisational pressures, and the reductions in the budgets of other public services sometimes frustrated attempts to work more collaboratively. For many local police officers and firefighters therefore their experience and perceptions of the reform journey were mixed and while they saw benefits they also had anxieties, particularly around what reform means to them in terms of their day-to-day working environment and longer term career development.

There were, of course, some important differences between policing and fire and rescue. Within Police Scotland, many of the challenges around local resourcing appeared to reflect the cumulative consequences of a series of separate decisions related to the staffing of specialist units, reductions in civilian support, increased areas of geographical responsibility and the consolidation of some functions in a limited number of locations. Community officers in particular felt they didn't have as much time to commit to engagement work as they would like and that their primary role in some areas was to support response officers. Local officers were, however, generally, more positive about accessing specialist expertise but had concerns about equity of access and some of the potential longer term consequences around de-skilling and career development. Improvements to internal communication between different functions and levels within Police Scotland and investment in the working environment of local officers in areas such as the IT infrastructure and vehicles would both be strongly welcomed by local officers.

For local consumers and partners of policing services the picture was complex. The public recognised and appreciated the difficult and challenging job the police do but were aware of a declining visible presence and felt frustrated by what they saw as barriers to communicating with their local officers as a result of the closure of local stations and use of the national 101 non-emergency number. The unintended consequences of these developments included concerns that this impeded the flow of local intelligence and led to the under-reporting of some local crime and disorder. This suggests that it will be important for Police Scotland to articulate clearly what local communities can expect in terms of future 'engagement'. If a model based around a visible presence delivered through general patrols, routine attendance at community meetings and a network of police offices is no longer sustainable and is not well suited to changing demands on the police service, then the contours of an alternative more transformational approach to delivering local policing need to be defined. This might include a greater emphasis on more targeted forms of engagement, greater use of technology in ensuring a two-way flow of information between police and communities, and the co-delivery of services with other local agencies to tackle areas of high demand, such as at the interface between policing and mental health.

In relation to partnership working, however, there were clearly good relationships between the police and other statutory and non-statutory agencies, particularly at a strategic level and in relation to dealing with vulnerable populations. But all organisations locally were experiencing pressure on their resources which sometimes lead to tensions around who needs to take responsibility in particular situations.

With regard to fire and rescue, the picture in relation to local delivery was generally positive but there were some concerns regarding the negative impacts of declining numbers of civilian staff, the centralisation of support functions and poor provision of IT. There were positive assessments of the ability to access specialist support and national capacity, although (like in policing) there were concerns about the longer term consequences in terms of potentially de-skilling some local firefighters, particularly in rural areas where training was seen as harder to access.

For local consumers and partners of fire and rescue services, there was strong support for SFRS and a sense that they had not 'lost' their localism despite being a national service because they continued to engage regularly with the community through participating in local events to home safety visits. Partnership working was also viewed positively but (as in policing) there were areas where there could be improvement in relation to data sharing and internal communication of the outcomes of partnership activity between senior officers and local firefighters.

5.2 Areas for improvement and wider lessons

The findings and conclusions presented in this report are consistent with what wider research identifies as the major challenges of organisational change. Research in this field highlights how complex and challenging any organisational change is and identifies a number of crucial and overlapping elements that can either help or hinder the implementation of change at a local level. These include issues of

communication within an organisation, the degree of openness to the local external environment, and the extent of change to organisational cultures. The findings and conclusions in this report are also not dissimilar to the issues identified in other jurisdictions undergoing radical reform to their police services. In the Netherlands, Sweden and Norway, as well as in Scotland, organisational change has been viewed as a necessary response to a changing economic and social environment in which retaining the status quo was not an option. All these countries are experiencing challenges around achieving an appropriate balance between centralism and localism in how policing is delivered, and in how to communicate and engage with the whole workforce during periods of rapid and radical organisational change.

It is also important to recognise that some of the areas of improvement that are identified in this report have already been highlighted in recent policy statements. The Scottish Government's (2016) 'Strategic Police Priorities for Scotland'[20], for example, identifies localism as a key issue and refers to being able to 'Ensure that the needs of local communities are understood and reflected in the planning and delivery of policing at a local and national level'. Localism also means communities having a strong voice in policing decisions that affect them locally and the police being responsive to community concerns, issues addressed in the Scottish Police Authority's (2016) 'Review of Governance in Policing'[21]. These commitments dovetail with the Strategic Objectives set out in 'Our 10 Year Strategy for Policing in Scotland'[22] produced jointly by Police Scotland and the Scottish Police Authority. These include 'Improving public contact, engagement and service', strengthening 'effective partnerships' and investing in the 'use of information and technology'. The SFRS (2016) Strategic Plan 2016-19[23] also sets out a number of objectives to create better outcomes for communities including making better use of digital technology, deploying assets to meet the different needs of communities, and maximising efficiency and productivity within the organisation and partnerships.

Against this background, three strategic areas for improvement flow from the analysis presented in this report. First, there is a need for improved **internal communication**. Both Police Scotland and SFRS have new internal organisational boundaries that local staff have to navigate, with new divisions of labour between functional areas, and changing patterns of responsibilities between civilian staff and officers. While these may have a degree of clarity and coherence when viewed centrally through flow charts and diagrams, when seen and experienced locally, the picture may be more opaque and the ability to 'get things done' often relies on more informal communication and inter-personal relationships. There is also a

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[20] Scottish Government (2016) *Strategic Police Priorities for Scotland* http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0050/00506835.pdf
[21] SPA (2016) Review of Governance in Policing http://www.spa.police.uk/assets/128635/337350/337362

[22] Police Scotland (2017) *Our 10 year strategy for policing in Scotland* http://www.scotland.police.uk/assets/pdf/138327/386688/policing-2026-strategy.pdf?link=landing1

[23] SFRS (2016) *Strategic Plan 2016-19* http://www.firescotland.gov.uk/media/1005163/scottish_fire_and_rescue_service_strategic_plan_2016_19.pdf

need to communicate better around not just the 'what' and 'how' of organisational change but also the 'why'.   Locally there is an interest and appetite to know why practices and procedures are changing and for there to be a meaningful space for dialogue which sometimes doesn't fit comfortably with the centrally driven pace of change and the hierarchical character of the organisations.   Allied to this is a locally articulated desire for greater authenticity around the challenges of reform from those in leadership positions. Painting what is seen locally as an over-optimistic picture of progress and achievement contributes to a sense of division and segregation between those in 'frontline' positions and those in management.

A second area for improvement is around offering greater clarity to local personnel about **career development and training opportunities within the new national organisations**. Although much work appears to have been done centrally to reconfigure the delivery of training and articulate new career pathways, there is still significant uncertainty and, anxiety locally about what this means for individuals. Improved communication about the opportunities that exist locally and nationally for the whole workforce in terms of career development would make an important contribution to how people view the organisations in terms of their sense of commitment and well-being.

A third area for improvement and one recognised by Scottish Government, Police Scotland and the Scottish Police Authority, is **a renewed and refreshed commitment to localism**. The evidence gathered in this report shows that ensuring adequate resources to meet local demand is only part of the issue here. In addition, there needs to be a focus on understanding better how communities want to communicate with their local officers and also giving officers greater clarity about their roles and priorities within the community. The strategic priorities and objectives set out by Scottish Government, Police Scotland and the Scottish Police Authority clearly recognise the importance of this area which is vital to building long term trust and confidence in policing.   Nevertheless, the evidence presented in this report indicates the scale of the challenge (all the case study areas regardless of area type wanted to see improvements in local policing) and its complexity (given the need to balance the expectations of different local stakeholders against available resources).   In taking work forward to address this issue, it is vital that a clear narrative is articulated explaining changes in policing demand locally and nationally and the need to prioritise protection and prevention in order to make best use of limited resources. The 10 year strategy provides an excellent starting point at a national level and signals a clear commitment to the kind of locally-oriented approach which the evidence in this report suggests is needed. The key messages in the strategy are being communicated to local audiences through a consultation exercise and this will be followed by an implementation phase which will be closely monitored by the police and fire reform evaluation project.

Standing back from the specifics of policing and fire and rescue and thinking about the wider lessons for public sector reform the evidence gathered in this phase of the evaluation, three issues deserve to be highlighted:

First, there needs to be **careful modelling of the inter-dependencies and cumulative consequences of decisions taken centrally for local service**

delivery.   Many of the more challenging issues faced locally by policing and fire and rescue are rarely the result of a single change in policy or practice. Rather they are the unintended consequences of a whole series of individual decisions which may make sense organisationally for one area of business but which come together in specific ways in local environments. This means there also needs to be significant organisational awareness of the tensions between the representations of reform in policy and strategy documents, and the experience of reform in the day-to-day local working environments of those in 'frontline' roles.   This means recognising that locally staff will have a range of anxieties about reform, from its immediate consequences for 'getting the job done' through to its longer term impacts on their careers, which need to be addressed. In particular, high priority should be given to explaining to staff how training and career development will be managed within a newly merged organisation.

This feeds into a second lesson: the need for, **meaningful, authentic and open communication within an organisation throughout the reform process**.   There has to be a commitment at a senior level to explaining not just the 'what' and 'how' of organisational change but also the 'why'. This should also open up a space for dialogue so that staff at all levels of an organisation feel engaged with the decision-making process and that the scope to influence change is dispersed through the organisation and not just concentrated in the hands of a few senior staff. There also needs to be an honesty and openness that reform is difficult and that those working in 'frontline' roles may experience changes that might not deliver any immediate benefits and that require navigating new organisational boundaries, but are part of a longer term process to improve service delivery. In other words, locally, staff need to be shown the 'bigger picture' and have the opportunity to feedback on how this is likely to impact on their roles and responsibilities.

Third, these issues of improved communication apply equally to **relationships with local service users, partner organisations and communities**. Against a background that recognises that collaboration and co-production are vital to the future delivery of sustainable public services, prioritising local consultation, engagement, and communication with service users and partners at a time of rapid and radical reform will all contribute to attempts at achieving the long term aims of transformational change.

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