Evaluation of Police and Fire Reform: Year 4 - Summary of Key Findings and Learning Points from the Evaluation

CRIME AND JUSTICE

social research

Evaluation of Police and Fire Reform: Year 4 Summary of Key Findings and Learning Points from the Evaluation

The Scottish Institute for Policing Research (SIPR), What Works Scotland and ScotCen Social Research

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1. Introduction to the evaluation

In 2014, the Scottish Government commissioned an independent four year evaluation of police and fire reform in Scotland to:

i.   Assess the extent to which the three aims of police and fire reform appear to have been met (reduced duplication, greater access to specialist expertise, and strengthening connections with communities)

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

iii. Evaluate the impacts of the reforms on the justice system and the wider public sector.

The evaluation began in February 2015 and was undertaken by a consortium of researchers from the Scottish Institute for Policing Research (SIPR), ScotCen Social Research and What Works Scotland. A series of research activities were undertaken to deliver the evaluation's aims, and these are summarised in Annex A.

As part of the evaluation, an international network of researchers and practitioners involved with police and fire reform was developed creating significant and valued opportunities for international learning and knowledge exchange. This included the delivery of two international workshops which were hosted in Scotland in 2016 and 2018, where international colleagues from police and fire, as well as partner organisations and stakeholders from within Scotland (including for example representatives of Scottish Government, HM Inspectorates for Police and Fire in Scotland, governance bodies and members of the Scottish Parliament's Justice Committee) came together to share and discuss experiences of reform and provide a platform for future comparative work.

2. Purpose of this summary

This report provides a summary of the key findings from the evaluation in relation to the three main aims of the evaluation noted above, as well as identifying opportunities and challenges for the police and fire services undertaking major structural reform.

Learning points from the key findings are also presented to help inform other police and fire services, as well as wider public services undertaking or planning structural reform of their services.

3.   Background to police and fire reform in Scotland

Prior to the 2013 reforms in Scotland, policing and fire and rescue services were delivered by sixteen (eight police and eight fire and rescue) separate and relatively autonomous regional organisations. These arrangements had existed since the mid-1970s and both police and fire organisations had strong connections with local government in terms of governance, funding and decisions regarding the appointment of local chief officers. Although both police and fire services had seen some gradual movement towards greater centralisation of some functions (for example, a Scottish Crime and Drug Enforcement Agency had been established in the early 2000s), the process to establish a national police and a national fire and rescue service in 2013 occurred relatively quickly as the seriousness of the economic crisis of 2007-8 for public spending in Scotland became apparent (as for example highlighted in the interviews with national key informants in the first year of the evaluation).

The Scottish Government initiated work to explore different options for reform in 2011 and within 18 months legislation to create a national police force and a national fire and rescue service was introduced and passed in the Scottish Parliament in 2012 (Police and Fire Reform (Scotland) Act 2012)[1]. The strategic benefits of these national organisations (Police Scotland and the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service) were articulated in terms of reducing the duplication of the regionalised arrangements, improving equity of access to specialised expertise and equipment, and enhancing opportunities to strengthen connections with local communities.

When looking at the international context, Scotland is not alone in undertaking major structural reform of its police service. Over the last 10 years, Denmark, Finland, Norway, the Netherlands and Sweden have all embarked on significant re-organisation of their police forces, typically involving the merging of police

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[1] Police and Fire Reform (Scotland) Act 2012
http://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2012/8/contents/enacted

districts to create more centralised structures in order to enhance efficiency and effectiveness[2].

In relation to fire services, there is less evidence of major structural change internationally as has happened in Scotland, however there are many examples of fire services having to re-think their role as demand in relation to firefighting activity declines partly due to fewer domestic fires[3].

As part of this evaluation, these international perspectives and experiences on police and fire reform were explored further in the international case studies in Year 4.

4. Police and fire and rescue services in Scotland

This section focuses on Aim 1 of the evaluation and assesses the extent to which the three aims of police and fire reform in Scotland appear to have been met (reduced duplication, greater access to specialist expertise, and strengthening connections with communities) for both the police service and the fire and rescue service.

Police Scotland

Police organisations internationally are facing similar sets of challenges around changing forms of criminality (particularly in relation to cybercrime and terrorism), the management of public expectations in relation to maintaining a locally visible police presence, and the increasing role policing plays in dealing with issues of vulnerability and public health (particularly in the context of mental health and distress, drugs and different forms of violence).

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[2] Fyfe, N.R., Terpstra, J., and Tops, P. (eds.) Centralizing Forces? Comparative Perspectives on Contemporary Police Reform in Northern and Western Europe (The Hague: Eleven International Publishing).

[3] Evaluation of Police and Fire Reform: Year 4 – International Perspectives on Police and Fire Reform, Biggs, H., Shields, J., Reid, S., & Scholes, A. from ScotCen Social Research & Calder, A., & Fyfe, N. from the Scottish Institute for Policing Research (SIPR), published by Scottish Government on 23 May 2019

A further challenge relevant to Scotland concerns the need for Police Scotland to make significant efficiency savings if it is achieve financial balance by 2021, as highlighted in the Policing[4] 2026 document and by Audit Scotland[5].

It is against this backdrop that many police organisations internationally are undergoing reform and in this section we assess the extent to which the reforms in Scotland have met their strategic aims.

Progress is being made

There is plausible and credible evidence from this evaluation (and other sources including HM Inspectorate of Constabulary in Scotland (HMICS) and Audit Scotland) that progress is being made towards achieving the policy intentions of the 2012 Act, although this is uneven across the three aims of the Act.

Of the 3 strategic aims of reform, that relating to more equal access to national capacity and specialist expertise has the strongest evidence of progress being made to achieve this. This is exemplified in interviews with national key informants in Year 1 of this evaluation who highlighted how responses to major incidents are perceived by stakeholders as having significantly improved. Arguably this is the area where most rapid progress could be made given that it typically involves the consolidation of existing regional resources into national units.

Progress has also been achieved in terms of reduced duplication. However, while local service delivery has been maintained there was a strong sense among local officers of diminishing local resources which are increasingly stretched relative to demand. This view was expressed by local officers, members of the public, local councillors, community groups and third sector organisations during the Year 2 geographical case studies in this evaluation, where it was felt that local resources to deal with routine responses and community engagement were thinly spread due to the cumulative effects of the re-deployment and non-replacement of local officers to specialist units, reductions in civilian staff positions that then require backfilling by officers, and the reconfiguration of 'beat' boundaries to create larger geographical units.

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[4] 2026 Serving a Changing Scotland: Our 10 Year Strategy for Policing in Scotland: Police Scotland & Scottish Police Authority
https://www.scotland.police.uk/assets/pdf/138327/386688/policing-2026-strategy.pdf

[5] Audit Scotland (2018), The 2017/18 Audit of the Scottish Police Authority http://www.audit-scotland.gov.uk/uploads/docs/report/2018/s22_181120_spa.pdf

Progress still required for strengthening local connections

The third policy intention regarding strengthening connections with local communities remains an area where progress is still ongoing.

Academic research carried out by Murray (2018) examined 'Police reform and public confidence in Scottish policing: 2012 - 2015. An analysis of Scottish Social Attitudes survey data'. The analysis of these data suggests that public confidence fell significantly between 2014 and 2015. Based on the survey data, Murray suggests this may be due to the perceived changes to on the ground police practice, including a perceived reduction in local police presence[6].

Recent findings published in the Scottish Crime and Justice Survey[7] found that the majority of adults (57%) said that the police in their local area were doing a good or excellent job in 2017/18, unchanged since 2016/17 but down from 61% in 2012/13. The Survey has also observed that since 2008/09, there has been increases in confidence across the six measures of public confidence in the ability of the police covered by the Survey. Confidence in the ability of the police decreased marginally between 2012/13 and 2014/15 on some measures, but has broadly stabilised since and in 2017/18 remained above the 2008/09 baseline across all six indicators.

When considering people's interactions and engagement with the police in their local area, the qualitative case study evidence from the analysis of 4 communities across Scotland in Year 2 of this evaluation found that in all 4 local areas, the public and local councillors were generally very positive about their interactions with local policing teams, particularly in rural areas. However, local officers, councillors, third sector organisations and the public were aware that community engagement and locally based joint initiatives were under pressures from other demands on policing. Some members of the public participating in the community case studies in this evaluation expressed dissatisfaction with the use of the 101 number, as well as about the closure and limited opening times of some police stations. With respect to partnership working, there was clear evidence in this evaluation that this was viewed positively by police, councillors, local authority staff and third sector organisations, and that it was of strategic

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[6] Murray, K. (2018). Police reform and public confidence in Scottish policing: 2012 to 2015. An analysis of Scottish Social Attitudes survey data. http://sipr.ac.uk/Plugin/Publications/assets/files/SSA%20_2012_2015_Public_confidence_and%20police%20reform.pdf

[7] Scottish Crime and Justice Survey 2017/18 published by Scottish Government, March 2019 https://www2.gov.scot/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Crime-Justice/crime-and-justice-survey

importance and well supported by the attendance of senior officers at partnership meetings.

Progress on wider transformation

In terms of a wider transformation of policing in Scotland, the realisation of the 'Principles of Policing[8]' set out in the 2012 Act (which include a focus on prevention, partnership and harm reduction) continues. As Year 1 of the evaluation showed, in the initial stages of reform, there was little evidence that the Principles strongly informed the policy and practice of policing but with the publication of Policing 2026 a more visible and strategic commitment to these Principles has emerged. Police Scotland is developing a discourse around the transformation of service delivery focused around key pillars of prevention, protection, localism, innovation and knowledge.

Scottish Fire and Rescue Service

Fire and rescue organisations internationally have not witnessed the same level of structural reform as police organisations. Nevertheless, against a background of reducing demand for their firefighting services, many fire organisations are having to re-think their role and strategic priorities, particularly in relation to the balance between reactive (responding to fires) and proactive, preventative activities with organisations, neighbourhoods and vulnerable individuals. Within this context, this section assesses the extent to which the reforms in Scotland have achieved their strategic aims.

Progress is being made

There is plausible and credible evidence (from this evaluation and work by HM Fire Service Inspectorate (HMFSI) and Audit Scotland) of progress being made

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[8] Police and Fire Reform (Scotland) Act 2012, http://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2012/8/contents/enacted
Section 32 (Chapter 4) - Policing principles - The policing principles are (a) that the main purpose of policing is to improve the safety and well-being of persons, localities and communities in Scotland, and (b) that the Police Service, working in collaboration with others where appropriate, should seek to achieve that main purpose by policing in a way which (i) is accessible to, and engaged with, local communities, and (ii) promotes measures to prevent crime, harm and disorder.

by the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) towards achieving the three long-term aims of reform as set out in the 2012 Act.

There has been reduced duplication and rationalisation of service provision and the removal of legacy boundaries has made it easier to access specialist expertise and national capacity.

Progress has also been made in determining the most equitable and appropriate geographical location of assets in the context of variable risk profiles of different areas and the changing demands on the service as a whole. For example, SFRS and HMFSI have established a detailed picture of variation in equipment, skills and capacity across Scotland and national key informants in Year 1 of this evaluation believed progress was being made in addressing regional variations.

Contribution to strengthening local connections

Firefighters, partners and the general public in the Year 2 geographical case study areas in Scotland discussed the positive contribution that the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) makes 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 local groups in each case study area with scope for further ongoing improvement around data sharing, communication and retaining informal networks in rural areas.

Focus on transformation

From data gathered for this evaluation in the key informant interviews in Year 3, SFRS see themselves as having largely completed the integration and consolidation phase of the reform journey and perceive that the organisation now 'looks and feels like a national service'. The focus is now on transformation, which is partly being articulated through the Fire and Rescue Framework for Scotland 2016[9], and through addressing the need to consider the future roles and expectations of firefighters in a context where an emphasis on reactive

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[9] Fire and Rescue Framework for Scotland 2016, Scottish Government https://www.gov.scot/binaries/content/documents/govscot/publications/strategy-plan/2016/09/fire-rescue-framework-scotland-2016/documents/00505071-pdf/00505071-pdf/govscot%3Adocument

activity is increasingly being displaced by a focus on prevention and a broader concern with health, safety and the well-being of vulnerable populations.

5. Key challenges encountered during reform

For both Police Scotland and SFRS, this evaluation has shown that the key challenges encountered during reform in Scotland typically reflect the types of challenges experienced both internationally and also more generally by organisations experiencing major organisational change. These include communication (both internal and external), re-shaping organisational cultures, and maintaining levels of performance when established structures and processes are being re-configured. It is within this context that this section sets out some of the specific challenges encountered by both the police service and the fire and rescue service in Scotland during their reform journeys.

Police Scotland

Centralism and localism

Since the outset of reform, a range of stakeholders including local councillors, MSPs (Members of Scottish Parliament) and members of the Scottish Police Authority have articulated concerns about the relationship between centralism and localism - documented in the summaries of evidence produced in Years 1 to 4 of this evaluation[10] and exemplified by the Scottish Police Authority (SPA) Review of Governance in Policing 2016[11].

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[10] Evaluation of Police and Fire Reform: Year 1: Annex 1: Evidence Review, https://www.gov.scot/publications/evaluation-police-fire-reform-year-1-annex-1-evidence-review/ For Police and Fire Reform Evidence Review: Year 2 – see Annex 1 https://www.gov.scot/publications/evaluation-police-fire-reform-year-2-report-annexes/ For Police and Fire Reform Summary of Evidence in 2017 – see Annex 2 https://www.gov.scot/publications/evaluation-police-fire-reform-year-3-national-key-informants-report/pages/11/ Evaluation of Police and Fire Reform Year 4: Summary of Evidence Published in 2018, Scottish Government May 2019
[11] Scottish Police Authority (SPA) (March 2016), Review of Governance in Policing 2016 http://www.spa.police.uk/news/437866/337373/

In particular, evidence from each year of this evaluation has highlighted a concern at the limited opportunities for local communities and local scrutiny committees to discuss and challenge decisions taken nationally by Police Scotland that impact locally (as exemplified by debates around the arming of officers and the increased use of stop and search). Furthermore, the speed at which decisions were taken by Police Scotland in the early stages of reform were perceived to have led to a poor assessment of Police Scotland's approach to engagement with local stakeholders, including councillors and partner organisations as discussed in Year 2 of this evaluation.

Unintended consequences

Year 2 of the evaluation highlighted how the cumulative consequences of decisions taken at a national level to restructure and re-focus Police Scotland has impacted on local policing and resulted in unintended consequences at local level. In particular the redeployment of officers to specialist teams, reductions in civilian staff and restructuring of resource provision and geographical responsibilities have resulted in concerns among local officers, shared by the public and local councillors, that resources are increasingly stretched relative to demand. This evaluation found there was also a strong perception among those involved in the routine delivery of local services that they were operating with diminishing resources, and that work to strengthen connections with communities was often hampered by other organisational pressures.

Organisational culture

A key finding from Years 1 and 2 of the evaluation was that while much of the focus during the reform had been on structural changes to 'back office' functions and service delivery, the process of reform had also involved significant cultural adaptations. The vision, values, ideas and practices which are the basis of organisational culture take much longer to establish than administrative structures and processes. A key conclusion emerging from the evaluation was that insufficient attention had been given to the cultural aspects of reform and the 'Policing Principles' set out in the 2012 Reform Act. Although aspects of the vision and values of Police Scotland are now being addressed, particularly through the Policing 2026 strategy, in the early phases of reform there was

evidence that a dominant approach to policing, centred around enforcement and rigid performance management practices, was rolled out across Police Scotland. In addition the 'Policing Principles' set out in the 2012 Reform Act, which focus on issues of well-being, collaboration, harm reduction, and local engagement, were found to have been given less priority in the early phases of reform.

Communication

As the Year 2 report illustrates, there was a strong perception among frontline officers who participated in the research of poor internal communication. This was discussed in a number of different ways, including confusion about status of targets, the desire among local officers to understand not just the 'what' and 'how' of organisational change but also the 'why', whilst a lack of clarity around career development and training opportunities for local officers in the new national organisation was seen to be contributing to low morale. There was also a wish for more open and honest communication around the challenges of implementing reform.

Scottish Fire and Rescue Service

Feeling stretched

Evidence presented in the Year 2 report of this evaluation showed how local firefighters have reported feeling stretched as a result of declining numbers of administrative staff, which was viewed as resulting in increasing workloads. Middle managers also 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. There were also concerns regarding the centralisation of support services, IT and their ability to access some equipment. For example, in some of the urban and rural geographical case study areas, concerns were raised about a reduction in the number of appliances since reform (although this has now risen)[12], ageing and unreliable equipment and the length of time it takes for equipment to be repaired.

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[12] Note: Latest statistics on the number of SFRS operational vehicles was published by SFRS on 31 August 2018 – Table 14.2 of Fire Safety and Organisational Statistics (Scotland) 2017-18. This showed, for example, 632 operational vehicles in 2017/18. https://www.firescotland.gov.uk/about-us/fire-and-rescue-statistics.aspx

De-skilling

Some views were expressed by local firefighters participating in this evaluation regarding the logistics of engaging specialist teams and the risks of de-skilling local firefighters because of a reliance on specialists from outwith local areas. The availability of specialist training for local firefighters was raised in the geographical case study areas. In the rural areas in particular, accessing specialist training was seen by some local firefighters as a barrier to developing skills, due to a perceived lack of trainers in the area[13].

Cultural change

In Years 1 and 3 of the evaluation there was a recognition by the national key informants that there is a need to transform the mindsets and culture in the service to ensure the workforce embraces the new challenges they face. In relation to prevention, the partners as part of the thematic case study in Year 3 viewed SFRS as providing leadership in the prevention agenda and moving away from crisis to prevention. A clear shift towards a prevention orientated culture was identified, and it was acknowledged amongst SFRS senior staff that cultural change may take a generation particularly for firefighters to see themselves as part of the national service rather than the legacy arrangements.

Communication

As the Year 2 report of the evaluation showed, internal communication has been perceived by local firefighters as a matter requiring attention. There are concerns that in the national organisation it takes longer to find out information and to know who to contact, that the volume of information 'pushed out' to local areas is too high, and the new organisation post reform (SFRS) is more hierarchical than the legacy services. This was exemplified in firefighters' view expressed in the Year 2 report of the need to improve internal communication in SFRS of the outcome of partnership working 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

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[13] Note: More recently, recommendations in the Justice Committee's report on post legislative scrutiny of the Police and Fire Reform (Scotland) Act 2012 have highlighted the importance of the availability of, and capacity for, training. For further information, see https://www.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/CurrentCommittees/108179.aspx

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.

6. Key messages and learning points

This final section brings together a set of key messages regarding the experiences of police and fire reform which have been highlighted over the four years of this evaluation and which would be relevant to other public services undertaking organisational change in the future.

Each of the key messages is presented with an associated learning point in order to help inform future discussions about reform.

Managing expectations

A key finding of this evaluation is that the reform of police and fire services in Scotland, like in other countries, is best viewed as a journey (rather than a one-off event) involving phases of 'integration', 'consolidation' and 'transformation'. In Scotland, the first two phases are now nearing completion, and the transformational stage is just beginning, which illustrates the importance of fully understanding and carefully managing public and workforce expectations about the time needed to bring about transformational change in public services.

Learning point

It is important not to underestimate the complexity of the task of integrating legacy services or organisations into a new, transformed service, and ensure that the timescales for realising the benefits of reform are realistic so that expectations of reform can be appropriately managed and clearly communicated.

Articulating a clear long term strategy supported by strong, strategic leadership and the skills needed for large-scale organisational change

The pressures to deliver short term financial savings and a focus on the immediate aims of reform have made it challenging for the police and fire and rescue services in Scotland to develop clear, long term strategies during the

early phases of reform. As the services moved further into their reform journey, more long term thinking has emerged (exemplified by the Policing 2026 strategy).

The issues of strategy are also closely linked to questions of leadership and different views were articulated during the evaluation regarding the leadership qualities required to deliver reform. In Scotland some thought that a very directive approach was needed initially to achieve change particularly in the timescales required, with a different style orientated towards collaboration and engagement required at later stages of the process. Others believed that communication and relationship building were key qualities required for effective leadership from the outset of reform.

Another key finding from the evaluation is that both the police service and the fire and rescue service drew heavily on the expertise and experience of their workforce when designing and implementing their programmes of reform. The scale and complexity of the changes required, however, meant that while professional experience from within the services was both necessary and valuable, on its own it was often not enough to achieve the changes required efficiently and effectively, and may have been complemented further by external expertise and insight from specialists, partners and other organisations.

Learning point

Developing a clear long term strategy in terms of desired outcomes and reflecting on the type of leadership required to deliver these are of key importance to achieving the broader goals of reform. In addition, and to complement the professional experience and insight of practitioners, specialist knowledge, skills and expertise can bring added value and insight with regard to generating the scale of organisational changes needed by reform particularly in areas of strategic importance, including financial planning, ICT, communications, and project management.

Focusing on communication and engagement

This evaluation has found that periods of organisational change benefit from effective internal and external communication and engagement. This includes clear communication with the workforce around not just the 'what' and 'how' of organisational change but also the 'why'. At a local level the evaluation found a strong appetite to understand why practices and procedures were changing and for greater authenticity around the challenges of reform from the leadership. Clarity and good communication about career development and training

opportunities within the new organisations, particularly with those working in frontline roles, also emerged as an important finding of the evaluation. This would make an important contribution to how the workforce view the organisation in terms of their sense of commitment and wellbeing, as well as confidence in the development of new skills required for transformational change.

Improved communication and engagement also applies to relationships with local service users, partner organisations and communities. During a period of rapid and radical organisational change of the kind experienced by the police and fire and rescue services internationally, there is a strong focus on re-configuring internal relationships and processes, which can leave limited capacity for sustaining external relations. If not considered, this can bring a risk that partner organisations learn of changes that affect them later on in the decision-making process and that relationships that may have developed over longer periods of time may be put under strain.

Learning point

When considering internal communication, the key learning point is that it is important to ensure space for open dialogue with staff at all levels of the organisation to ensure they feel actively engaged in the decision making process, and to minimise the liklihood that influence on decision making is limited to a few senior staff.

In term of external communication, collaboration and co-production are vital to the future delivery of sustainable public services and as such it is valuable to prioritise local consultation, engagement and communication with service users, communities and partners to achieve the long-term aims of transformational change.

Finding an agreed balance between centralism and localism

Given the nature of the reforms to the police service and the fire and rescue service which has transformed a set of local organisations into single, national services, the nature of the relationship between centralism and localism is of key importance. The evaluation found that the increased level of centralisation in the early phases of reform was often a source of tension with both those working in the organisation at a more local level and local partners collaborating with the services. While there are clear benefits associated with some aspects of centralism, including economies of scale and consistency of standards around

service delivery, these need to be also balanced with the benefits of localism, such as flexibility and responsiveness to local needs.

Furthermore, findings from the evaluation have illustrated how careful modelling can help to understand the upstream and downstream effects of changes introduced at one level of an organisation as a result of reform in order to appropriately assess the level of the interdependence with other activities within the organisation and the impact on external partners.

Learning point

Regularly reviewing the balance between centralism and localism can help to ensure that an agreed context specific balance is struck between the centralisation of decision-making and the need for local flexibility and discretion, and provides an opportunity to assess, through a process of careful modelling, the cumulative impacts of decisions taken centrally in terms of their impacts locally.

Developing as 'learning organisations'

A strong theme during this research has been the need for organisations to understand and monitor effectively the impact of the changes they are introducing as part of a more strategic approach to innovation. At present such a culture of evaluation is only weakly embedded in police and fire and rescue services in Scotland and internationally, but there are signs that this is changing both in terms of 'in-house' analysis of change and partnering with external bodies to carry out independent assessments of new initiatives.

A related point is the benefit of engaging with international experience. The reform journey in Scotland, including the learning and challenges encountered, are very similar to those of other places that are undertaking major structural changes to the way police and fire services are organised. This evaluation has highlighted there is a lot to be gained from learning from the experiences of other countries that have experienced organisational change and Scotland now benefits from being at the centre of an international hub of knowledge exchange, information sharing and collaborative activity around practice and evidence in which it is learning from and contributing to international debates in this area.

Learning point

Change of this complexity and scale requires a strong commitment to evaluation, and this opens up opportunities for services to develop as 'learning organisations', where critical reflection on 'what works' (and what doesn't work) is encouraged along with a theory of change which sets out the causal connections between pre-conditions needed to achieve long-term outcomes. As part of this approach, it is important to engage in routine environmental scanning to consider what types of organisational change might have been tried elsewhere and could be adapted in a local or national context, in regards to prevention, partnership working and innovation.

Embedding a culture of evaluation based on a robust evidence base would provide insights into successful and unsuccessful local initiatives and encourage experimentation to develop new and improve existing approaches. New initiatives need to be targeted, tested and tracked to ensure that information is gathered around intended (and unintended) impacts on communities as well as broader outcomes. This information on 'what works' and 'what doesn't work' can then inform decision-making around scaling up and spreading successful pilots. The process of innovation will also create important and valuable opportunities for collaborative reflection and learning across the public sector in Scotland and internationally.

7. Closing remarks

The establishment of Police Scotland and the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service in 2013 were some of the most ambitious public sector reforms in Scotland for a generation. While the strategic aims of these reforms were clearly articulated by the Scottish Government at the outset, the process of implementing the vision of both a single police service and a fire and rescue service has been more challenging and complex than anticipated by those in both policy and practitioner communities. However, significant progress has been made towards achieving the intended outcomes of reform as set out in the 2012 Police and Fire Reform (Scotland) Act, and the transformational opportunities in service design and delivery created by reform are now being explored. Having achieved the integration and consolidation of the legacy police and fire and rescue services during the first phases of reform, the learning from these experiences will be important in informing the approach to the next stages of organisational change.

Annex A: Summary of research activity undertaken as part of the evaluation of police and fire reform, 2015 - 2019

Year of the evaluation	Research activity	Method
1 (2015)	National key informants report	33 interviews with senior representatives across policing, fire and partners
	Evidence review	Scoping, mapping and presenting key themes and findings from publically available reports relating to police and fire reform
2 (2016)	Local geographical case studies	81 interviews with police, fire and partners in 4 case study areas across Scotland. 8 focus groups with community members (2 per case study area)
	Evidence review and perspectives from four case study areas	Summary of publically available evidence on police and fire reform from end of 2015 and 2016, and local experience of police and fire reform in each of the geographical case study areas.
3 (2017)	Thematic case study – partnership, innovation and prevention	40 interviews with police, fire and partners with a remit for partnership and prevention work in 4 case study areas. 4 focus groups in each case study area with identified good practice examples.
	National key informants report and summary of evidence	Revisit 17 national key informant interviews from police, fire and partners. Summary of publically available evidence on police and fire reform in 2017.
4 (2018)	International perspectives report	29 interviews with practitioners and representatives from policy and academia from 8 international case study areas (4 for police, 4 for fire).
	Summary of evidence	Summary of publically available evidence on police and fire reform published in 2018.
	Summary of key findings and learning points from 4 years of evaluation	A summary of the key findings and learning points from the 4 years of the evaluation programme.
	Infographic summaries	Infographics summarising the key findings and learning from years 2, 3 and 4 of the evaluation.

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