

External review of Modern Apprenticeship delivery by Police Scotland

A report by HM Inspectors

14/11/2023

CEO/Principal	Chief Constable Jo Farrell
External review date	26 September 2023
Provider type	Employer
Lead HMI	Peter Connelly
Apprentice numbers (in each year of training)	1706

1. Background

External reviews of Modern Apprenticeship providers are planned collaboratively between the provider and HM Inspectors. Skills Development Scotland (SDS) provide information regarding provider performance including key data to support this process.

During the review, a team of HM Inspectors evaluated the quality of training provision and the experiences of apprentices and key stakeholders such as employers. During the visit, the team met with staff, learners and other stakeholders and explored the quality of training delivery, how well the needs of apprentices are met, and approaches to improving quality of provision.

This report summarises the findings from the visit, awards grades for the three elements and highlights areas of positive practice, areas for development, and any associated main points for action. The report will be shared with the provider, Scottish Government, and SDS. For colleges, the report will be shared with the College Principals and Board or Regional Strategic Body, and SFC. An accompanying short report will be published on Education Scotland’s website.

2. The provider and its context

Police Scotland was formally established on 1 April 2013 and is responsible for policing across Scotland, covering 28,168 square miles. Police Scotland is the second largest police force in the United Kingdom after the Metropolitan Police. Police Scotland delivers the Modern Apprenticeship (MA) in Policing at Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) level 7. Currently, there are approximately 1700 police probationers undertaking the MA in Policing. The corporate headquarters of Police Scotland is based at Tulliallan in Fife, where the Scottish Police College is based. Police Officers currently undertake a two-year Probationer Constable training programme. Probationers attend one of four Training Hubs in Scotland, during this time, to complete their award. Each year, Police Scotland recruits approximately 800 new Probationer Constables.

3. Outcome of external review

The grades for each of the three elements are:

Leadership and Quality Culture	Very Good
Service Delivery	Very Good
Safeguarding and meeting the needs of apprentices	Very Good

4. Summary of review findings

A summary of the findings of HM Inspectors are set out below.

4.1 Leadership and Quality Culture

4.1.1 Securing improvement of quality and impact of training

Areas of positive progress

- The training received by police probationers undertaking the MA in Policing reflects well the mission of Police Scotland to be more community focused, and the increase in societal or mental health incidents as opposed to crime-related responses.
- The training structure for probationers is effective and works very well. It consists of an initial twelve-week training programme, delivered at the Scottish Police College in Fife. Probationers then benefit from on-the-job training, delivered by an experienced senior colleague acting as a mentor for each probationer.
- Police Scotland are making good progress in achieving their organisational priorities through delivery of their SDS contract targets for the MA in Policing.
- Police Scotland has responded well to the increase in the proportion of probationers indicating they have an additional support need, and in probationers for whom English is not their first language. Around 17% of probationers indicate neurodiversity issues and Police Scotland make appropriate adjustments to meet their needs.
- Probationers benefit from attendance at scheduled wellbeing meetings where they discuss queries or concerns. Issues raised are dealt with quickly and effectively. All probationers are aware of these arrangements and speak highly of the care and attention they receive from their more experienced or senior colleagues.
- Probationers provide their views on their training experience through the use of questionnaires. This supports training staff to receive helpful evaluative comments which they make use of to improve the training programme.
- During monthly meetings, managers discuss the progress of probationers undertaking the MA programme. The training team meet regularly with other staff from departments within the Police College, such as in the Curriculum Maintenance and Examinations Unit, to evaluate and plan to improve approaches to training delivery.

- Staff make good use of a number of effective approaches to quality assurance and improvement to enhance the quality of delivery. These include, SCQF credit rated 'training of trainers' qualifications and a systematic learning and teaching observation process.
- The recently introduced Probationer Governance Team, led by an Inspector, captures the views of Divisional Commanders on the effectiveness of actions required to improve operational competence for the purposes of individual performance action plans. The Inspector meets regularly with Commanders in their local offices and suggests relevant adjustments to training activities to reflect the current issues faced by probationers in their local police offices.
- The Police College has created a number of Short Life Working Groups (SLWG) to help ensure training approaches reflect the needs of police officers undertaking training. For example, an SLWG on Culture and Probationer Training has identified nine recommendations for an Ethics Advisory Panel to incorporate into future training activities.
- In a few Divisions, senior staff have introduced more regular meetings between probationers and experienced staff to ensure effective monitoring of probationer progress. For example, during their first probationer year, senior staff in one Division monitor probationers' progress on a monthly basis. They review and evaluate probationers' development and offer effective and relevant support where required.

Areas for development

- A few probationers highlight that they had not received from training hubs when submitting skills development reports. They comment that the template for recording progress also changes without formal notice, which results in confusion and progression delays.

4.2 Service Delivery

4.2.1 Delivery of training

Areas of positive progress

- Role play is used very well by staff throughout the training period to help probationers become aware of, and reflect upon, the skills and responses they should develop in realistic policing environments. These opportunities enhance and extend the learning available to probationers.
- Staff at the Police College and in training hubs ensure that training sessions are well planned, clearly structured, and are supported by useful and appropriate resources. Instructors undertake advanced training to identify personal issues and needs, particularly in relation to care, welfare and cultural support.
- Staff have responded well to an increase in the number of probationers requiring additional support, particularly with neurodivergence, which have risen by 13% in the last five years. There are now more open discussions and appropriate forums to support probationers to disclose personal issues or concerns to senior colleagues.
- Probationers at the Police College have flexibility out with timetabled classes to catch up on or revise previous work completed with instructors. Instructors also encourage the development of personal learning and personal responsibility to ensure probationers are on target to succeed.

- After their initial training, probationers are paired with Tutor Constables. In almost all cases this works well, and probationers receive high-quality mentoring to support them to develop appropriate and relevant skills to perform effectively as front-line police officers.
- Training staff and Tutor Constables are very helpful in developing and supporting probationers and this approach is greatly appreciated by candidates. They often help probationers in their personal time, to work on issues such as fitness development or to aid understanding to help with exam preparation.
- Police Scotland encourages strong team working within its workforce and this ensures positive relationships develop between probationers and college instructors and also when probationers take up their duties with Tutor Constables.
- Online software provides useful academic support for new entrants. Probationers are able to use published packs and virtual learning environments for example Moodle, to access resources effectively when they are not at college or training at local offices.
- All probationers undertake Divisional professional learning which is effective in extending and supplementing the activities they undertake at the Training Hubs or Police College.
- Professional learning is delivered flexibly to suit shift patterns, and, in many cases, attendance is mandatory for probationers and Tutor Constables. The content of professional learning is also based on what officers would like to see covered to ensure training remains relevant and current.
- The Curriculum Maintenance and Examinations Unit (CMEU) plays an important role in supporting curriculum delivery. The team research new and changing legislation and incorporate amendments into the twelve-week initial training programme to ensure what probationers are taught is current.
- The CMEU neurodiversity lead provides helpful advice to teaching staff about the context for learning, the disclosed conditions of probationers, and the support available for probationer adjustments and workplace needs assessments.

Areas for development

- Training and development arrangements for Tutor Constables are not sufficiently systematic and do not yet ensure consistent experiences for all probationers.

4.2.2 Staff reflection on provision to improve training

Areas of positive progress

- In the last few years an increasing number of Divisions have introduced regular qualitative monthly reviews. These are based upon reflection by senior police staff. They provide insights into how they would like probationers to improve and develop skills within new and growing areas of police response activity.
- Staff at the Police College use trainer and probationer feedback well to reflect on and improve training delivery. Probationer feedback is captured informally at the end of classes in the college, and formally through the use of surveys and internal audit reviews.

- Knowledge and understanding checks are used effectively to evaluate the level of probationers' preparedness prior to final examinations. Managers and trainers use this feedback alongside surveys and peer discussions well to feed into the improvement cycle for learning, teaching and assessment.

Areas for development

- None identified.

4.3 Safeguarding and Meeting the needs of apprentices

4.3.1 Achieving and maintaining high levels of service delivery

Areas of positive progress

- All probationers are very satisfied with their training and confirm it has enabled them to grow in confidence within their job role. Almost all probationers acknowledge that their training has equipped them well with the underpinning knowledge and skills required to perform as front-line police officers.
- Probationers are supported very well during their programme by staff at the college and in the local stations. They know who to contact should they have any safeguarding issues or concerns.

Areas for development

- None identified.

4.3.2 Adherence to statutory principles and guidance

Areas of positive progress

- Police Scotland actively engages in equality and diversity initiatives to attract a diverse range of applicants from all sectors of society to become police officers.
- Staff ensure probationers receive relevant health and safety information, including medical and wellbeing practices. This is supplemented by contextualised training to support the use of specific community-based equipment, such as defibrillators.
- All probationers are trained effectively in, and understand well, the legislation and the limitations behind using containment force and the equipment they utilise on operations, such as batons and sprays.
- All staff effectively ensure statutory and regulatory knowledge is developed within the framework and through probationers' experiences. Probationers' understanding is evaluated well by staff through appropriate use of formative and summative questioning.
- Probationers are trained well to use risk assessment procedures. They are supported very well by experienced Tutor Constables to develop their understanding of where hazards in their duties might lie. These arrangements are highly effective in helping probationers think clearly about arrangements and procedures to keep themselves and their colleagues safe.

- Training staff and Tutor Constables use real-life examples effectively to reinforce the importance of statutory regulations and legislation. There are many examples where legislation taught in the classroom is discussed with probationers to develop understanding of its importance when policing in the community.

Areas for development

- None identified.

4.3.3 Apprentice progress and achievement of individual outcomes

Areas of positive progress

- All probationers who complete their programme successfully progress to employment, having secured permanent roles with Police Scotland.
- The levels of achievement for the last two cohorts who completed the programme are just above the SDS national benchmark for MA provision.
- Levels of probationer retention have improved significantly in the last two years and are now at approximately 96%.
- All probationers are very satisfied with their training and confirm the programme has enabled them to grow in confidence within their job role. All apprentices acknowledge that their training has equipped them well with the underpinning knowledge and skills required to succeed in their roles.

Areas for development

- There have been delays in achievement of the award within the recommended timeframe for those probationers who do not have the prescribed level of numeracy stated within the SVQ, and those who require additional support.

5. Main points for action

The following main points for action are required:

- Police Scotland should further develop training opportunities for Tutor Constables to ensure a consistent experience for all probationers.
- Police Scotland should ensure probationers achieve the prescribed level of numeracy as a core skill within the SVQ award.

6. Examples of highly effective practice

In the Lanarkshire Division, senior staff have devised an effective approach to monitoring probationer progress. In addition to regular progress meetings throughout their probation period, Officers meet with their Sergeants to discuss their progress. They make use of a qualitative framework which focusses on how well the probationers is progressing and where there are gaps in their understanding which may require further training or support. This evaluation is then signed

by the Divisional Commander and works very well in providing effective support and ensuring officers have the required skills to work as a front-line police constable.

7. What happens next?

HM Inspectors are confident that the provider has the capacity to continue to improve and will make no further visits to the provider during this cycle as a result of this review.

Peter Connelly
HM Inspector

Appendix 1 Grades used in reporting

A common grading scale is used in making judgements for provider reviews:

- Grade 1 EXCELLENT – Outstanding and sector leading
- Grade 2 VERY GOOD – Major strengths
- Grade 3 GOOD – Important strengths with some areas for improvement
- Grade 4 SATISFACTORY - Strengths just outweigh weaknesses
- Grade 5 WEAK – Important weaknesses
- Grade 6 UNSATISFACTORY – Major weaknesses

Summary

- An evaluation of **excellent** applies to training which is of a very high quality. An evaluation of *excellent* represents an outstanding standard of training which exemplifies very best practice and is worth disseminating beyond the current provision. It implies that very high levels of performance are sustainable and will be maintained.
- An evaluation of **very good** applies to training characterised by major strengths. There are very few areas for improvement and any that do exist do not significantly diminish apprentices' experiences. While an evaluation of *very good* represents a high standard of training, it is a standard that should be achievable by all. It implies that it is fully appropriate to continue to provide training without significant adjustment. However, there is an expectation that the provider will take opportunities to improve and strive to raise performance to excellent.
- An evaluation of **good** applies to training characterised by important strengths which, taken together, clearly outweigh any areas for improvement. An evaluation of *good* represents a standard of training in which the strengths have a significant positive impact. However, the quality of apprentices' experiences is diminished in some way by aspects in which improvement is required. It implies that the provider should seek to improve further the areas of important strength but take action to address the areas for improvement.
- An evaluation of **satisfactory** applies to training characterised by strengths which just outweigh weaknesses. An evaluation of *satisfactory* indicates that apprentices' have access to a basic level of training. It represents a standard where the strengths have a positive impact on apprentices' experiences. However, while the weaknesses will not be important enough to have a substantially adverse impact, they do constrain the overall quality of apprentices' experiences. It implies that the provider should take action to address areas of weakness while building on its strengths.
- An evaluation of **weak** applies to training which has some strengths, but where there are important weaknesses. In general, an evaluation of *weak* may be arrived at in a number of circumstances. While there may be some strengths, the important weaknesses will, either individually or collectively, be sufficient to diminish apprentices' experiences in substantial ways. It implies the need for prompt, structured and planned action on the part of the provider.
- An evaluation of **unsatisfactory** applies when there are major weaknesses in training, requiring immediate remedial action. The training experience for apprentices is at risk in significant respects. In almost all cases, staff responsible for training evaluated as unsatisfactory will require support from senior managers in planning and carrying out the necessary actions to effect improvement. This may involve working alongside other staff or agencies in or beyond the immediate support given by the provider.

Appendix 2 Evaluative Terms

The following standard Education Scotland terms of quantity are used in this report:

All	100%
Almost all	91%-99%
Most	75%-90%
Majority	50%-74%
Minority/less than half	15%-49%
A few	less than 15%

Other quantitative terms used in this report are to be understood as in common English usage.