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Dear Convenor

Written submissions for Criminal Justice Committee 16th and 23rd September 2026

In relation to the two requests for further submissions, following Police Scotland attendance at the Criminal Justice Committee on 16th and 23rd September 2026 please find attached submissions for both committee meetings.

If you require any further information please contact the Parliament and Government Liaison team at the email address above.

Yours sincerely,

Parliament and Government Liaision

Police Scotland Submission – Criminal Justice Committee 16th September 2026

1. Introduction

Following the Criminal Justice Committee evidence session on frontline policing and non-criminal demand attended by Police Scotland on 16th September 2026, a request was received from the committee for Police Scotland to provide some further information on the matters discussed.

The request from the committee asked for information on the following:

- Police officer numbers –
  - the number of police officers who are available for front-line policing work in communities across Scotland, after adjusted duties and other work such as mental health crisis response and court attendance are removed from the figures
  - details of any occasions in the past year when policing shifts operated below adequate or safe frontline staffing levels, including:
    - the number of times this occurred
    - for each occasion, the extent to which officer numbers fell below the required staffing level.
- DBI referrals – the number of DBI referrals made through contact with the police to Level 2 providers in the past year
- Right Care Right Person – update on Police Scotland's progress on considering the approach on improving handovers at hospital A&E departments, reviewing missing person protocols in the NHS and dealing with concern for person calls

Police Scotland welcome the opportunity to provide this clarification and assist the Committee's consideration of the issues raised and it is important to set out the broader operational context, without which the nature of mental health-related demand and the realities of policing capacity and resource deployment cannot be fully understood.

It is important to convey from the outset that police resources remain finite and are increasingly challenged by growing volumes and complexity of demand. There is no doubt that policing would benefit from additional resources to improve our ability to meet this demand in the way both we and the public would want. The Chief Constable has laid out in her budget submission the evidence of our need for additional investment to maximise our effectiveness in priority areas of work, not least in support of VAWG.

Whilst additional resources have been sought, we, like other public services need to support the broader whole system change that is needed to move from a reactive to preventative approach, which not only reduces demand but provides better service provision. It is also important to note at this juncture that the issue is not simply the number of officers available to Police Scotland, but the extent to which available policing capacity is required to respond to demand that is not primarily police-led in nature.

It is, therefore, important that the comments made during the evidence session on resourcing are understood within the broader context of how policing capacity is currently utilised and what is, in practice, a highly complex and dynamic resource management framework.

2. Mental Health

Before answering the specific points detailed above as raised by the committee, it may be helpful to re-iterate as outlined during the evidence session, a significant proportion of officer and staff time continues to be devoted to responding to individuals experiencing mental health distress and wider welfare concerns, and / or remaining with individuals when there is no longer a policing purpose.

Both types of scenarios reduce the capacity available to undertake core policing functions. As articulated during the evidence session, policing is often the service called upon by public and partners due to availability rather than being the appropriate service to respond to the need presented.

Police Scotland recorded over 230,000 mental health related incidents during the year 2025-26, around 18 per cent of all incidents recorded by police. Approximately 85 per cent of mental health incidents do not involve a crime.

There were 173,377 mental health-related deployments, this totals 775,326 policing hours with the average time taken to deal with a mental health-related concern for a person incident being 5.34 hours which equates to 481 FT officers per year costing over £34 million.

Mental health-related deployments represent 22.5% of all policing deployments. Of these, 146,863 were non-crime deployments, accounting for 25.1% of all non-crime deployments. Police Scotland continues to have a role in addressing vulnerability whether associated with criminality, or where there is an immediate threat to life or risk of serious harm, or involvement of a person under 18 years of age where safeguarding concerns exist. However, in the absence of other factors, such as those described above mental ill health or distress is not a policing matter. In such cases police attendance is an inappropriate response and risks stigmatising or criminalising those who need other professional care and diverts police staff from responding to matters uniquely requiring the skills and expertise of policing.

3. Police Officer numbers

As of 28th October 2026, Police Scotland has a current establishment of 16,498 Police officers.

Policing capacity cannot be accurately represented through a single static figure, nor can apparent shortfalls in staffing levels be understood without significant operational context.

Police Scotland manages operational resourcing through a combination of central oversight, local command decision-making, and continual risk assessment, ensuring resources are deployed to meet fluctuating demands across all our communities.

Resource levels are monitored through Operational Base Levels (OBLs) which are an assessment of the level of resource required to meet demand at any given time throughout a day in a specifically defined area. OBLs vary across the day as demand does and are generally, but not exclusively, applied to response policing teams across the country.

Whilst Police Scotland holds detailed OBL information, producing the figures requested by the committee at point one regarding officer numbers would require a substantial manual exercise. OBL data is recorded for every hour of the week, generating 168 data points per

station or sub-divisional area each week. Assessing a 5-year period would require analysis of 260 weekly reports, equating to 43,680 data points for each individual location. If the 13-territorial divisional-level reports were considered in isolation, this would necessitate the generation of more than 3,380 reports and the examination of approximately 567,840 individual data points. In essence, a comprehensive assessment across all stations and sub-divisions would require the review of many millions of data points.

In relation to the second point, this data is not readily available as resource levels are constantly reviewed and monitored, allowing divisions to implement mitigating measures such as redeployment, overtime and mutual support arrangements. Resource availability is influenced by a wide range of factors, including but not limited to, major incidents, court commitments, events, protests, and sickness.

Local Policing Supervisors have the autonomy to re-allocate finite resources across stations, sub-divisions and divisional boundaries to respond to spontaneous increase in localised demand however this reallocation does not increase the total number of on duty resources.

OBL data does not always reflect the full operational picture and shortfalls require operational context. Officers assigned to events or other planned activity may sit outside response resourcing figures while remaining in the area and able to assist with urgent incidents. Resources elsewhere in a division may also provide support. A shortfall therefore does not, by itself, establish that a shift was inadequately or unsafely staffed; equally, the presence of other resources does not demonstrate that the risk was fully mitigated. A meaningful assessment must consider actual availability, concurrent demand and the support deployed.

The Force Mobilisation Model (FMM) strengthens weekend and event capacity by moving designated officers in national and specialist areas onto seven-day deployment patterns. Around 1,450 officers are already operating in this model, with approximately 1,800 anticipated over the next six months. The proportion undertaking some weekend working has increased from 54.2% to 84.6%. Where event demand is lower, these officers can reinforce frontline response. During phased implementation in June 2025–May 2026, FMM provided 7,647 additional weekend officer deployments, including 2,016 directly to events. For June 2026–May 2027, approximately 14,500 additional weekend deployments are forecast, including more than 4,500 to events. These are deployments, not additional officer headcount. Direct event support reduces reliance on local policing officers and the cancellation of rest days, supporting community policing capacity and officer welfare. The weekend cadre also provides resilience for mass mobilisation.

Through the ‘Policing for Our Communities’ (PFoC) project, work is underway to replace OBLs with a Resource Tolerance Index (RTI). This is intended to provide a clearer assessment of available resources and the ability to meet demand.

The Committee can therefore take assurance that Police Scotland is actively managing frontline pressures through continuous resource review, flexible deployment and additional national support. FMM has delivered additional weekend deployments, helping protect community policing capacity and reduce rest-day cancellations; further deployments are forecast, and RTI is intended to strengthen resource assessment. Together, these measures provide a clear basis for assurance about the management response and practical support for officers—not a guarantee that every shift was adequately staffed. Demand remains considerable and the challenge in meeting this, remains material; nevertheless, active oversight, flexible deployment and national reinforcement provide a clear basis for assurance that these pressures are being managed, with support for officers and staff remaining central to serving communities and keeping them safe.

4. DBI Referrals

In 2025/26, Police Scotland made 2,063 Distress Brief Intervention (DBI) referrals to Level 2 providers, with a further 819 referrals recorded in the first quarter of 2026/27 (April to June 2026).

Since the introduction of DBI in 2017, more than 7,200 referrals have been made by Police Scotland, supported by approximately 2,800 officers trained as Level 1 DBI referrers. While Police Scotland has the capacity to train additional officers, the number of Level 1 referrers is restricted to the availability of Level 2 providers, which are delivered by third sector partners and funded locally through Health and Social Care Partnerships. This approach ensures referral volumes remain manageable and that the established service standard of contact within 24 hours and up to 14 days of support, can be maintained.

Expanding the number of officers trained as Level 1 referrers would, therefore, be dependent on additional investment in Level 2 provision.

Work is also underway with the DBI central team and partner agencies to better understand the outcomes for vulnerable individuals who access support through the DBI pathway, including the potential impact on demand for Police Scotland services and any effect on repeat callers or referrals.

5. Right Care Right Person

Police Scotland continues to monitor the implementation and impact of the Right Care Right Person (RCRP) approach in England and Wales, using available evidence, data and reviews to inform consideration of how the principles may be applied within a Scottish context.

In response to recommendations arising from the HMICS review of policing mental health in Scotland, work is currently focused on developing a new Transfer of Care process, which is undergoing formal consultation with key partners and is being progressed through the Police Scotland and NHS Joint Commission. The proposed approach is designed to support more effective and consistent handovers within places of safety, helping to clarify responsibilities and ensure individuals receive the right care from the right service at the right time. Subject to completion of consultation and partner agreement, it is anticipated that the new process, supported by accompanying training, will be implemented from January 2027.

Additionally, the introduction of the National Missing Person Framework and the National Missing Person Co-ordinator role profile, alongside a number of initiatives such as the Philomena and Herbert protocols has recorded an 11.7% reduction in this YTD compared with 2025/26 in respect of the number of persons missing from NHS locations and 27.7% reduction in the 5-year average.

Police Scotland Submission – Criminal Justice Committee 23rd September 2026

1. Introduction

Following the Criminal Justice Committee evidence session on Domestic Abuse attended by Police Scotland on 23rd September 2026, a request was received from the committee for Police Scotland to provide some further information on the matters discussed.

The request from the committee asked for information on the following:

- Figures showing the proportion of domestic abuse complainers who are visited by the police within 24 hours of an accused person being released on bail;
- Information on the duration of outstanding arrest warrants;
- Information on the number of officers who have received domestic abuse training; and
- Information on internal domestic homicide reviews carried out prior to the establishment of the statutory system of domestic homicide and suicide reviews.
- Information setting out which recommendations made by HMICS have, and have not, been addressed;

2. Figures relating to domestic abuse complainers visited by the police within 24 hours of the accused person being released on bail

Police Scotland recognises that the period immediately following a perpetrator's release on bail from court can be one of enhanced risk and that a breach of bail conditions prohibiting perpetrators contacting or approaching victims represents a significant risk to a victim's safety.

Following a perpetrator's release from court on bail the Police Scotland will be notified by the court of the perpetrator's status, along with any conditions applied to the bail. Typically, these will include conditions preventing a perpetrator from approaching or contacting or attempting to approach or contact victims. Other conditions may be applied such as a curfew or restricting perpetrators from entering certain streets or areas.

On receipt of notification from the court at the police control room (C3 Division), an incident is created on the command-and-control system (STORM) for officers to attend the victim's home, ensure they are aware of the conditions and to report any breaches. These checks also provide an opportunity to establish if perpetrators have already breached conditions and discuss any further safety-planning with victims. The checks should be completed within 24 hours or the notification from court and the incident being logged. A suite of closure/update codes on STORM allow Police Scotland to monitor compliance with the 24-hour requirement.

The following table provides information on the compliance rates between 2021-2026:

Year	Overall Count	Overall Compliant	% Compliant	Overall Non-Compliant	% Non-compliant
2021/22	13,249	11,679	88.2	1, 570	11.8
2022/23	12,065	10,344	85.7	1,721	14.3
2023/24	11,106	9,073	81.7	2,033	18.3
2024/25	10,758	9,040	84.0	1,718	16.0
2025/26	14,879	12,240	82.3	2,639	17.7

Reasons for delay/non-compliance can include the following;

- Officers attending a victim's address (including multiple attendances within the 24-hour period) at which time the victim is not home.
- Victims responding to officers' efforts to contact them and stating that they are unavailable until a later time.
- Officers deployed to other priority incidents.

Of note, it is not uncommon for officers to attend at a victim's address within 24 hours and find the perpetrator present, already in breach of their bail conditions, on which the perpetrator is arrested.

3. Information on the duration of outstanding arrest warrants

VAWG/Domestic Abuse Related Warrants

There is no single search functionality to identify if a warrant has been issued specifically in respect of a VAWG or Domestic Abuse related crime. To establish this information a prohibitively resource intensive manual review of all outstanding warrants would be required. The following data relates to all warrants.

Warrants Demand

By its very nature the number of warrants and their status is a constantly moving picture. As of 05/10/26 there are 216,141 warrants recorded on Police Scotland National Unifi Warrants dashboard. Of this number their current status are as follows:

160,591 Arrested	36,209 Withdrawn	11,138 Live	8203 Paid	216,141 Total Recorded

In respect of outstanding warrants over the last full financial year Police Scotland can confirm that for 2025/2026, there was a total of;

38,198 warrants issued	2787 of these warrants are currently live	37,098 warrants disposed	97.12% disposal rate

The types of warrant included in this data are:

Extract conviction
Home detection curfew
Initiating warrant
Means Enquiry
Non-appearance
Revocation of licence
Petition warrant
Other

4. Information on the number of officers who have received domestic abuse training;

In 2018, the Scottish Government awarded funding to Police Scotland to prepare officers and staff for the implementation of the Domestic Abuse Scotland Act 2018 (DASA). The Domestic Abuse Matters Scotland (DAMS) Change Programme was delivered by SafeLives in partnership with Police Scotland, commencing in December 2018.

The bespoke training involved completion of one eLearning package prior to undertaking the one-day in person Core Training.

The Covid-19 pandemic significantly impacted on training with all face-to-face training being halted in March 2020. Post pandemic options to deliver DAMS have been explored including the option to deliver a hybrid version of DAMS with an online functionality.

As of the June 2026 the total number of officers within Police Scotland from the rank of Police Constable to Chief Constable stands at 16,402.

- 9,208 officers across all ranks have completed DAMS training.
- 7,194 officers across all ranks have not completed DAMS training.

Within the lifetime of the Equally Safe strategy, and building on already solid work, our target is to achieve 75% of officers being trained.

Additional Context

It is important to note that DAMS was not a replacement for existing domestic abuse training. It was an additional comprehensive package designed to upskill all officers in recognising coercive control, identifying and managing risk and to prepare them for the implementation of DASA. Consequently, if officers have not yet received DAMS training, it does not mean that they have had no training in domestic abuse. Some detail on other training for officers is relevant here for context.

- Probationer training - on entering the service, all new police officers training on domestic abuse. This includes elements of training that are also covered in DAMS, such as DASA, coercive control, risk factors/assessments in domestic abuse and multi-agency processes such as the Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) and the Disclosure Scheme for Domestic Abuse Scotland (DSDAS). These lessons can also be supplemented by Skill Development Exercises where students will be involved / observe an immersive learning situation where they are expected to apply the learning from the classroom environment. This material was reviewed and updated in April 2026 by the Domestic Abuse Coordination Unit.
- Domestic Abuse Investigators Course (DAIC) – officers entering specialist roles in either our local Domestic Abuse Investigation Units (Tier 2) or regional Domestic Abuse Taskforce (Tier 3) undergo an application and interview process. Police Scotland deliver a Domestic Abuse Investigation Course to these specialist officers. This course is designed to equip them with the requisite skills and knowledge to effectively conduct these types of enquiries, which are often complex and multi-faceted. The course is underpinned by the support of partner agencies such as Women's Aid, Shakti, Hemat Gryffe, AMIS, and features a number of case studies feature lived experience which shapes the learning.
- Senior Investigating Officer (SIO) Training – the Domestic Abuse Coordination Unit are involved in the delivery of training to senior investigating officers as part of their wider development curriculum. This covers their role in investigating and safeguarding in respect of significant domestic enquires including suicides where there are initial indications that domestic abuse was a causal factor in the death. The training also covers DSDAS, risk assessment, perpetrator management and the new process for reviewing domestic abuse related deaths.
- CPD Modules – six online CPD modules have been created for officers and were co-designed by Safe Lives. They have been available for some time and are in the process of conversion into mandatory, quality assured training. The modules cover the following subjects:
    - Domestic Abuse and the Effects of Trauma
    - Diverse Experiences of Domestic Abuse – South Asian Communities
    - DASA – Understanding and Applying the Legislation
    - Multi-agency Tools for Keeping People Safe

- The Use of Technology and Social Media in Domestic Abuse
- Domestic Abuse and Children

- Economic Abuse Training – through October and November 2026, Tier 2 and 3 officers are being afforded six CPD training events on economic abuse, co-designed with Financially Included. On conclusion of these sessions the material will be converted into a further online CPD module to expand its reach across the organisation.

5. Information on internal domestic homicide reviews carried out prior to the establishment of the statutory system of domestic homicide and suicide reviews.

Following a domestic homicide, Police Scotland has an established Domestic Homicide Review (DHR) process of examining prior police contact with the victim and perpetrator. This seeks to establish the following:

- Establish whether there are lessons to be learned as to how Police Scotland safeguard victims of domestic abuse in order to prevent domestic homicide.
- Establish whether all appropriate steps were taken in relation to the perpetrator.
- Identify any areas for improvement in inter-agency working and information sharing.
- Identify examples of good practice and disseminate to Police Scotland colleagues where appropriate.
- Make recommendations for action to improve the police response to victims of domestic abuse.
- Inform development of existing policy and;
- Identify staff development, training and awareness raising needs.

When required, DHR reports can be shared with agencies such as COPFS and PIRC. There is provision within the process, where we are aware of the involvement of other agencies, for a summary of the findings to be disseminated via local Chief Officer Groups for consideration of additional multi-agency reviews (for example child protection learning reviews).

<u>Domestic Homicide Reviews Since 2021</u>
The below figures provide details of domestic homicide reviews completed over the preceding five years:

Years	
21/22	11 Domestic Homicides 11 Initial Domestic Homicides Reviews (IDHR), 4 progressed to a Full Management Review
22/23	7 Domestic Homicides 7 Initial Domestic Homicides Reviews (IDHR), 2 progressed to a Full Management Review
23/24	10 Domestic Homicides 10 Initial Domestic Homicides Reviews (IDHR), 0 progressed to a Full Management Review
24/25	8 Domestic Homicides 8 Initial Domestic Homicides Reviews (IDHR), 1 progressed to a Full Management Review
25/26	12 Domestic Homicides 14 Initial Domestic Homicides Reviews (IDHR), 5 progressed to a Full Management Review.
Note: The discrepancy in the number of homicides in 25/26 versus the number of IDHR's relates to two additional incidents that were subject to assessment. One did not relate to murder, however related to the victim having completed suicide following a domestic	

incident. The other related to a victim who succumbed to an injury in the years after sustaining it during a prior domestic incident. The assessment of these additional two deaths represents Police Scotland's evolving lens in respect of scrutinising our response to domestic abuse in advance of the implementation of the 2025 act on 1st April 2026.

6. Information setting out which recommendations made by HMICS have, and have not been addressed

The 2023 thematic inspection by HMICS examined how effectively Police Scotland responds to domestic abuse, including the quality of its investigations, the protection offered to victims and the consistency of policing practice. The subsequent report made fourteen recommendations, seven of which are now discharged and seven of which remain open.

Open Recommendations (Rec)	
Rec 1	Police Scotland should take action to ensure it is meeting its standard of service statutory obligations in offering the gender of interviewing officers to victims of domestic abuse.
Rec 8	Domestic Abuse Police Scotland should: (i) Ensure that all domestic abuse training incorporates an element of lived experience of victims. (ii) As a matter of priority, introduce a programme of mandatory CPD on key topics for all operational officers, supervisors and managers. Key topics for the first year should include: DASA offences, to improve officers' understanding and use of the legislation; trauma informed practices, to improve engagement with victims; and lived experience of victims, to address problematic attitudes and behaviours
Rec 10	Police Scotland must, as a priority, introduce a robust system for allocation and monitoring progression of domestic abuse investigation packages at local, regional, and national level to ensure there are clear channels of ownership and to improve service to victims. With the introduction of the new national crime recording system, Police Scotland should introduce a consistent national standard for domestic abuse packages, to include storage in an accessible and auditable format
Rec 11	Police Scotland should develop and implement effective processes for communication with victims of domestic abuse that are victim focused and include acceptable timeframes for providing updated information. Such processes should include clear recording of preferred methods of contact, which can be accessed by relevant personnel.
Rec 12	Police Scotland should ensure that the cadre of trained SOLOs (Sexual Offences Liaison Officers) across the organisation is sufficient to meet demand and to ensure the wellbeing of these officers.
Rec 13	Public Protection Development Programme Police Scotland should incorporate the findings and recommendations from our Strategic Workforce Planning Assurance Review in its approach to the Public Protection Development Programme. It should review its structures holistically and for its response to domestic abuse: ■ Establish an in-depth and accurate picture of current and forecasted demand levels ■ Set out clearly defined service level standards to meet victims' needs ■ Establish the resource level needed to meet demand ■ Implement the best model nationally and locally to effect the change needed to support the concept of investigative ownership and continuity of contact/engagement with victims ■ Ensure the resources within that model are empowered and have the requisite skills and training to equip them in the complex area of domestic abuse.
Rec 14	13 Areas for Development were identified by HMICS during their inspection. Specific work is yet to commence on evidencing these and all thirteen currently

	remain open. However, many will be addressed by the conclusion of other recommendations or evidence can be offered in terms of areas for improvement that are already BAU, for example establishing closer links with partner agencies and establishing a formal feedback process for victims of domestic abuse.

Closed Recommendations	
Rec 2	Police Scotland should expand the availability and use of third-party sites within community settings and work collaboratively with them to ensure they are properly equipped to support and assist victims to report.
Rec 3	Police Scotland should implement changes to enhance the response at the first point of contact for more complex areas of work such as public protection
Rec 4	Police Scotland should implement an ongoing support and training programme for all C3 staff incorporating input from specialists within public protection, to ensure C3 staff are properly equipped to conduct and record thorough THRIVE assessments for domestic abuse incidents that include all six components
Rec 5	Police Scotland should implement an ongoing support and training programme for all C3 staff incorporating input from specialists within public protection, to ensure C3 staff are properly equipped to conduct and record thorough THRIVE assessments for domestic abuse incidents that include all six components
Rec 6	Police Scotland should urgently take steps to ensure there is a clear and consistent process for recording victim safety plans, supported by additional training in risk assessment and safety planning for all relevant officers, staff and supervisors. This should be accompanied by guidance and pro-forma documentation to ensure all aspects are considered and to achieve consistency across the organisation
Rec 7	Police Scotland should review the role of officers involved in risk assessment and safety planning for domestic abuse incidents to provide national consistency, based on the optimum model, and ensure that they are given the appropriate training and support.
Rec 9	Police Scotland and the SPA need to ensure that investigative opportunities for digital evidence capture are improved and maximised for domestic abuse offences.