



OFFICIAL REPORT
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Justice Sub-Committee on Policing

Thursday 11 May 2017

Session 5



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Thursday 11 May 2017

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JUSTICE SUB-COMMITTEE ON POLICING
8th Meeting 2017, Session 5

CONVENER

Mary Fee (West Scotland) (Lab)

DEPUTY CONVENER

*Margaret Mitchell (Central Scotland) (Con)

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

*John Finnie (Highlands and Islands) (Green)

*Rona Mackay (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)

*Ben Macpherson (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP)

*Liam McArthur (Orkney Islands) (LD)

*Stewart Stevenson (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)

*attended

THE FOLLOWING ALSO ATTENDED:

Derek Crichton (Dumfries and Galloway Council)

Jane Fowler (Argyll and Bute Council)

Chief Superintendent Roddy Irvine (Police Scotland)

Chief Inspector David McIntosh (Police Scotland)

Chief Inspector Gavin Russell (Police Scotland)

CLERK TO THE COMMITTEE

Diane Barr

Gael Scott

LOCATION

The David Livingstone Room (CR6)

Scottish Parliament

Justice Sub-Committee on Policing

Thursday 11 May 2017

[The Deputy Convener opened the meeting at 13:00]

Decision on Taking Business in Private

The Deputy Convener (Margaret Mitchell): Good afternoon and welcome to the eighth meeting in 2017 of the Justice Sub-Committee on Policing. Apologies have been received from Mary Fee.

Under agenda item 1, do we agree to take in private item 3, which is consideration of the evidence that we will hear at today's round-table evidence session?

Members *indicated agreement.*

The Deputy Convener: Thank you.

Local Police Commanders

13:01

The Deputy Convener: Item 2 is a round-table evidence session on the role of local police commanders. I welcome all our witnesses. It would be useful if, before we move to questions, we went round the table and introduced ourselves. I am the deputy convener of the committee.

Diane Barr (Clerk): I am one of the clerks to the committee.

Gael Scott (Clerk): I am one of the clerks to the committee.

Chief Superintendent Roddy Irvine (Police Scotland): I am the divisional commander for Lanarkshire division.

Ben Macpherson (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP): I am the MSP for Edinburgh Northern and Leith.

Chief Inspector David McIntosh (Police Scotland): Good afternoon, folks. I am the local area commander for Angus and Tayside. I am also chair of the violence against women partnership in Angus and vice-chair of the integrated children's services group in Angus.

Chief Inspector Gavin Russell (Police Scotland): Good afternoon, everyone. I am chief inspector in Q division. Until March, I was the local area commander for Coatbridge, Airdrie, Cumbernauld and Kilsyth. I recently moved to a service delivery job, still within Q division.

Liam McArthur (Orkney Islands) (LD): I am the MSP for Orkney.

Stewart Stevenson (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP): I am the MSP for Banffshire and Buchan Coast.

Derek Crichton (Dumfries and Galloway Council): Good afternoon. I am director of communities at Dumfries and Galloway Council.

Rona Mackay (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP): I am the MSP for Strathkelvin and Bearsden.

Jane Fowler (Argyll and Bute Council): I am head of improvement and human resources at Argyll and Bute Council and I have a role in the performance review and scrutiny committee, which hears the police performance information.

The Deputy Convener: We seem to have missed out John Finnie. Would you like to introduce yourself, John?

John Finnie (Highlands and Islands) (Green): Feasgar math. Good afternoon. I am an MSP for the Highlands and Islands.

The Deputy Convener: We would not like to leave you as a wee orphan.

I thank everyone who provided written submissions. They were very helpful. We will start with a relatively straightforward question. Will you expand on the different roles and responsibilities of local police commanders and local area commanders? Who would like to set the ball rolling?

Chief Superintendent Irvine: I will start. As I said, I am divisional commander of Lanarkshire division. To give you an idea of what that involves, I note that Lanarkshire division has roughly 1,450 police officers and about 50 police staff. We cover the local authority areas of North and South Lanarkshire and a population of roughly 700,000 people.

Within the division, there is me as the divisional commander, one chief superintendent and three superintendents. Our operations superintendent is responsible for operational policing. We have a partnerships superintendent who is responsible for maintaining and maximising the contact with partners, groups and local authorities—I sit on many of the groups, but we have a superintendent to drive the partnership relationship. We have a support superintendent, who looks after our more internal business, and we have a detective superintendent, who is responsible for reactive crime investigation and public protection.

On the split of the division, we have four area commands, each of which has an area commander. Gavin Russell was formerly one of the area commanders within Lanarkshire division. He now works in the headquarters area. Each area commander covers a geographical area.

The Deputy Convener: Would anyone else like to answer? There will be variations.

Chief Inspector McIntosh: My divisional structure is very much the same. I refer you to my submission for more detail on that.

Paul Anderson is our chief superintendent, so he is the local policing commander. He covers three local authority areas in Tayside: Perth and Kinross, Dundee City and Angus. The set-up for the superintendents and the chief inspectors is very similar. My role is local area commander in Angus. Day-to-day policing responsibility is given to me. The chief superintendent sets the parameters within which I work and, thereafter, I am very much left to get on with it. A lot of my work is with partners, the local community and staff. Partnership work probably takes up about 50 per cent of my time. I have a vested interest in that I stay in Angus and my kids go to school there. Such relationships certainly help.

In the earlier part of this year, we changed our policing model. We have locality inspectors in charge of areas, whose role is linked to the local authority. As well as dedicated locality inspectors, there are dedicated community sergeants and community officers, who build those relationships. I very much look for their input. Our local policing plan was developed through consultation. The change in our deployment model allowed us to take account of community views and what officers were saying. I manage operations on a day-to-day basis, as well as staffing and partnership issues, which keeps me very busy.

The Deputy Convener: So it is fair to say that the policing commander operates at a strategic level but it is at area level that work gets down to the nitty-gritty.

Liam McArthur: I would like to follow up on that. You pointed to the importance of relationships, which is self-evidently the case. We have heard that there is a rate of churn in personnel in particular roles. Is that something that you are conscious of, or is it more of a regional issue than a problem across the piece? Is it a reflection of the creation of Police Scotland and the fact that things have taken time to settle down?

If such relationships are to be formed, there needs to be some level of continuity. Is that a priority in Police Scotland?

The Deputy Convener: I am tempted to ask Gavin Russell to answer that, as he has just been moved. One of the reasons for having this session is that I never see the same person twice when I go to Coatbridge police station.

Chief Inspector Russell: I am happy to answer that.

From a Q division perspective, Mr Irvine has been in post for 18 months. During my time as the area commander in Coatbridge, from June 2014 until March of this year, there were three divisional commanders. I was the only area commander during that three-year period. I moved on for a simple reason: personal development. Having spent three years in the post, I was probably one of the longest-serving area commanders in Q division. Personal development was the sole reason for my moving on; there was no other reason behind it.

The Deputy Convener: Is there a downside to that? We are looking at continuity. An in-depth knowledge of an area helps. I imagine that it takes a while to get up to speed.

Chief Inspector Russell: David McIntosh mentioned his links to the area that he works in. I was born and bred in Airdrie. My appointment in June 2014 as the local area commander for the

town that I grew up in, where my family still live, was a very proud moment for me, and I had the advantage of knowing the geography, which is always helpful.

You are right that it takes time to get to know the local elected members and to build up relationships with partners. It is very difficult to specify what the right length of time is. I would say that it is necessary to spend a minimum of six months in an area in order to get to know the relevant partners and to build relationships. Those relationships are built up over time, and they probably become less formal as mutual trust and confidence are built up.

Is two years too long? What should the period of tenure be? If you put tenure of post on a local area commander's position, there will always be variable factors to take into account, such as welfare reasons why that person might have to move on from the post, or personal development reasons. We cannot tell someone that becoming an area commander means that they must stay in post for two years, but that if they go to the Scottish crime campus they have to remain in post for only 18 months and then they may get a promotion. We need to take account of those variable factors.

The Deputy Convener: Clearly, there is a balance to be struck, but there have been three different divisional commanders in three years. Before I bring Roddy Irvine in, I would like to hear Derek Crichton's council perspective.

Derek Crichton: The local authority recognises that, if we are to establish joint working and truly deliver services that are responsive to local needs, key relationships and continuity will be vital. There is clearly a balance between continuity and people's professional development—that applies to all public servants—and we need to strike that balance. However, Dumfries and Galloway Council is pleased to have stability, which is bringing continuity. There is no doubt that, when we did not have that, it was detrimental to joint working and, ultimately, to the public services that we were trying to provide.

Chief Superintendent Irvine: I had to strike a balance when it came to Gavin Russell's position, because he proactively approached me seeking the move. I had to give consideration to the balance, because I knew that the change would have an impact. I had to ensure that his replacement was the right one, and the chief inspector who has replaced him is someone who had been a response inspector in Cumbernauld and had the local knowledge and, to a degree, some of the relationships. Had Gavin Russell approached me after being in post for only a year or six months, saying, "I'd like career development," I might have responded differently

but, in fairness to him, he had worked his socks off for three years and I had to balance his career development against the stability that had been created.

In my role as divisional commander, I have been on an interesting journey. If there is one thing that Police Scotland is, in my experience, it is a learning organisation. There was a period of significant change at the beginning. When we became Police Scotland, I was an area commander in East Dunbartonshire. There was a strong desire to share best practice, and I was asked to go up and be operations superintendent in Tayside. I like to think that I took some of my knowledge from greater Glasgow up there, and that, when I came back down from Tayside to Lanarkshire, I brought some of my Tayside knowledge with me.

The Deputy Convener: How long did you spend in each post?

Chief Superintendent Irvine: I was an area commander for just over a year, I was the operations superintendent in Tayside for two years, and I have been in my current role for more than a year. The move to Police Scotland involved a massive change in culture. When I had the conversation about taking up the job in Lanarkshire, I was briefed along the lines of, "You will measure your time at Lanarkshire in years, not months. Do you understand that?" I understand that.

The Deputy Convener: That is nothing against Lanarkshire, obviously.

Chief Superintendent Irvine: Of course not. Lanarkshire is a great place. It is a great division and I am proud to be there. What I am saying is that the culture has changed. We have been through a period of rapid change and we are now in a period of greater stability. We have learned and we have taken account of feedback. We have gone through the pain of a lot of the feedback about rapid change. Gavin Russell alluded to the fact that there will always be variable factors, such as illness, promotion, retirement, personal circumstances and career development. It would be impossible to say, "You're signing up to this for X number of years," but in my own head I know that my role in Lanarkshire will end up being measured in years, not months.

The Deputy Convener: I would like to bring in Jane Fowler. How do partner organisations react to the position that has just been outlined? Your role in human resources for Argyll and Bute Council will allow you to give us a useful insight.

Jane Fowler: There has been quite a bit of churn and change in a lot of public services recently, and we have also had some change in policing in Argyll and Bute. However, given the

public services that we have to deliver in the type of area that we have—we have 23 inhabited islands as well as people across six different towns and various remote rural communities—we all have to work together to ensure that those services are delivered, so the partnerships are already strong.

Whenever there is a degree of churn in any of the partner agencies, as long as the partnership surrounding it is strong, that change can be accommodated and supported, because the ground rules for partnership working are set and there is an expectation that whoever moves into the post will be supported into that partnership working.

13:15

The priorities are clear and, as you would expect, we have all our plans aligned through our local outcome improvement plans. However, it is not just about the plans; it is about the behaviours, the strength of the interrelationships and the joint commitment across services to be a bit flexible in order to do jointly what we need to do for the people of Argyll and Bute. Therefore, although people retire or are promoted—we are not able to control that—we can establish an environment that sets clear standards for people who come into the partnership in a new role and that supports them.

The Deputy Convener: I suppose that a problem would occur only if a lot of partners changed.

Jane Fowler: Yes.

The Deputy Convener: If one or two change, you can cope with that but, if there is a huge change, there is too much of a learning curve.

Chief Inspector McIntosh: I agree with both those points. It is key that we have the right people in the right place and establish those relationships, as those things help us to move forward through all the change in Police Scotland, locally and nationally, and in the partner agencies. Just now, everybody across Scotland will be looking at local outcome improvement plans and locality plans to see how they fit in with them and what they mean. If the relationships are strong, they can deliver on those plans.

In Angus, like elsewhere in the country, the child protection committee, the adult protection committee, the violence against women partnership and suicide prevention come under one banner. Our approach is about future-proofing the work a bit, looking forward to how our aims can be better achieved and considering how we can support the vulnerable in our community. We could not have tied all that work together without strong relationships. Also, I would not be able to

influence the work on tackling violence against women from a policing point of view or a local point of view if I was not involved in that. I think that you would get agreement on that. There has to be a timescale for the work and consistency, so the way forward is for folk to start sharing the objectives and priorities, as Jane Fowler said is happening in Argyll and Bute.

The Deputy Convener: That is especially necessary in Argyll and Bute, because it is a vast area with many different communities.

John Finnie: I represent a very large area, and the police start from a strong position, because they—quite rightly—enjoy a lot of public support.

I want to move on to local policing issues. People understand that the benefit of Police Scotland is more strategic co-ordination on organised crime and terrorism, but they are still concerned about litter, dog fouling and graffiti. Police Scotland needs to strike a balance and be able to respond to all those issues. I know that there are arrangements with local authorities. Can you comment on where the priorities lie? Very few people get in touch with me about organised crime or terrorism, although those things affect all communities, but a lot of people get in touch about litter, graffiti and so on.

Chief Superintendent Irvine: As a divisional commander, I like to think that I have created an environment in which my area commanders have the local flexibility to address local issues. I also hold a weekly surgery with councillors from North and South Lanarkshire, although I am not doing that at the moment because of the electoral situation. The aim of the surgery is partly to gauge the health of the relationship and make sure that the councillors are able to speak to me about how things are going. I am a big believer in having relationships rather than transactions. We should not execute transactions over and over again; we should build relationships and trust—we should pick up the phone rather than write a letter.

Policing is at its best when we do a mixture of what people want and what they need. Traditionally, when we consult people, we are told about issues such as public disorder, noise nuisance, dog fouling, vandalism and other quality-of-life issues that have a major impact on people's lives. I remember living on a housing estate in the middle of which was a play park that local youths were using as a place to drink and be sick in. The kids would go out the next day and find that all those wonderful facilities were covered in sick. That has an impact and we take such things very seriously.

When we consult the public, people seldom tell us that domestic abuse, for example, is a priority, because that is not the kind of thing that people

discuss openly. As a result, that is where we have to put a layer of professional knowledge on top.

Again, I go back to the point that we are not the same Police Scotland that we were a few years ago; we are different. I feel that in a variety of ways, but particularly in relation to our local flexibility. Just this week, we changed our operating model in Lanarkshire. We based the changes on demand analysis, speaking to our cops to work out what was impacting on their morale and so on, and local consultation. By local consultation, I do not mean formal consultation; I mean the stuff that comes to me through area commanders and inspectors and from constant conversations with the public, partners and local elected members, and what I hear in the surgery.

We did an awful lot of technical work and had many conversations with our own people and others. I built up a strong case for why our current operating model was not optimal and why I wanted to take up the new proposal. I found it a very easy sell. I went to the executive and said that I wanted to propose a change in our operating model that would meet our geographical and temporal demands as well as what the public were telling us that they wanted. In summary, I was told, "You know what goes on in your division, you are speaking to your people and it's your division, so you should do that."

Another example involves the local police plans—the three-year plans—which were due to be refreshed early in the year, and the local outcome improvement plans, which were due to be published in October, in consultation with local partners. It did not make any sense to us to publish our local police plan early in the year and then to try to cram it into the overall picture. We asked Police Scotland whether we could delay our local outcome improvement plan and we were told, "Yes, if it makes sense locally, you should do that."

The local area commander reacts to the public's concerns and is open about the fact that there are national constraints and pieces of work that we know from our professional police knowledge that we have to tackle, even if those issues are not bubbling to the surface at community meetings.

The Deputy Convener: I want to pick up on your point that you are a different organisation that has flexibility and that the change in operating model was an easy sell to the executive. Why was that not the case before? What has changed?

Chief Superintendent Irvine: In the early days of Police Scotland a lot of change had to happen quickly, so there had to be a certain amount of command and control leadership. The last thing that we could afford was for Police Scotland not to

work—the priority was to make it work. We are now through that period.

We were unaware of some of the unintended consequences of the way in which we were operating in the early days, plus we had no experience. We could not, halfway through 2013, go back to look over years and years of a national policing service in Scotland. Now we can—we have the evidence and we have learned from it. We have all grown a little bit in our understanding.

The Deputy Convener: People would probably say the same thing about the Scottish Parliament.

Derek Crichton: I want to build on John Finnie's point. We have just elected 1,200 councillors in Scotland and they will tell us first hand that the strategic issues that came up in the past few weeks while they were canvassing are terrorism, violence and public protection, but that the issues that came up on the doorstep—the important local priorities—are probably litter, dog fouling and parking. Quite clearly, the local priorities have to be balanced with the strategic longer-term concerns.

In recent discussions with Police Scotland, we have certainly been clear that we need a joint response that is speedy and of a quality that demonstrates to the public that those local issues are being taken seriously, because they matter to people and all our surveys demonstrate that they come up quite high in the ranking of public concerns.

We are embarking on a kind of ward model. Our elected members at ward level are engaging with the public and with Police Scotland colleagues with a view to ensuring that, in relation to council resources, we take a far more joined-up approach to community safety. We need to balance the need for enforcement—which must be used when appropriate—with the need for education. For example, the litter that we see across Scotland is wholly unacceptable. That litter is not being put there by public agencies; it is being put there, unfortunately, by the public. Therefore, enforcement has its place, but education is vital.

The more that we can engage with communities and provide that educational approach as well as a strong response, the more public confidence there will be that we are balancing the strategic long-term concerns that matter to people with the very local issues such as dog fouling, litter and parking—issues that certainly rank very highly in towns and cities across Scotland.

The Deputy Convener: I will bring in Jane Fowler and then David McIntosh. I will bring in the witnesses before members whenever I can because the priority is to hear from the witnesses.

Jane Fowler: To come back to the unique circumstances that we have in Argyll and Bute, our local policing plan—which is a draft plan at the moment—sets out really clearly how to take those national priorities right the way down to local issues and local needs. The plan covers education and enforcement but it also covers the 80 per cent of the activities that Police Scotland carries out in Argyll and Bute that are not about crime. Those activities are about responding to community needs, mental health issues and people in crisis. Our police vehicles in Argyll and Bute carry defibrillators, for example.

Being part of the community is important. For example, when the local commander went out to Mull the other week, he expected the local police officer to meet him off the ferry, but the local officer could not do that because he was away helping somebody with a crisis to do with the lambing.

There is also the educational aspect—the work that is done in schools in all our remote communities to let young people know what the priority issues are. We take national priorities such as drug enforcement or links to serious and organised crime to young people in schools and make them relevant. Dog fouling, litter and parking are issues, but we can help to tackle the bigger, national issues by taking a local view on them, through good communication and good, joined-up planning.

The Deputy Convener: I suppose that that is the demand policing—and how much time it takes up—that we have heard about.

Chief Inspector McIntosh: It is probably useful for the committee to know about Angus, which is also a rural area—it is very much a place of places. Getting information about what the local issues are is an on-going process; it is not about having a consultation once every six months. Our deployed model supports that process. There are as many people who do not stay in any of the seven main towns as stay in Forfar, for example, so how can we get that visibility of message, officers and the partnership out there? That is why we have dedicated inspectors, sergeants and cops who are also involved in partnership arenas.

I have an officer in my community safety hub who chairs a financial harm group that covers all of Angus. Banks, post offices and building societies will phone us up every week to say, “We have a vulnerable person here trying to withdraw money from their account.” I can maybe share some of that information later.

Local issues are important. If you ask somebody from Forfar where they are from, they say that they stay in Forfar; they do not say that they stay in Angus. Therefore, I can relate to some of the

stuff from Argyll and Bute. Geography becomes an issue. I have worked in a city environment, but how are things done in Angus? We speak to our communities daily. Our officers also attend community surgeries, and we issue reports in advance. We will get some of the best evidence on how that is going when we hear from councillors and MSPs on how they feel that that engagement is working in relation to what are real issues.

You will have seen from the papers that, earlier this year, five individuals from Liverpool got the best part of 80 to 100 years for stealing a cash machine in Carnoustie. That was a local crime and a local issue for Arbroath and Carnoustie, but those individuals travelled to the area. National resources dealt with that incident in a way that we could not have dealt with it previously.

It is about getting the balance right, being part of the partnership and taking part in the conversation about locality plans. Underneath that lies the LOIP when it comes through. It is also about being able to support that. It is good stuff.

13:30

The Deputy Convener: You have covered a really important point about communication. Getting information in, however that is done—through the banks or whatever—is intelligence gathering, too.

Chief Superintendent Irvine: I repeat that Police Scotland is a learning organisation. We have already started to learn from our policing 2026 consultation. We used to talk about our approach to local policing; now we talk about our approaches to it. We used to talk about urban and rural, but I think that we have recognised that there is more to it than that—we now talk about urban, rural and remote.

That issue came up when I was speaking to the Argyll and Bute commander about remote island communities. We were talking about a vehicle that would have a ladder, a hose, a stretcher, a defibrillator and a set of handcuffs—I was left with the vision of a Thunderbirds-type vehicle. That was good learning for me, because although Lanarkshire is typically thought of as an urban division, the south of South Lanarkshire in particular is very rural. Rural crime came out as one of our big priorities, and we won an excellence award for our approach to rural crime. However, I would not say that we are remote in the same way as, for example, Argyll and Bute and some areas in the north are, or that we face the same challenges. It is about recognising that fact. I think that we are learning all the time.

Chief Inspector Russell: I want to give my view, as a commander, of my relationship with

Roddy Irvine as my commander and how that links up with national priorities. As an area commander, I never felt in any way hamstrung by national priorities. I certainly had to make sure that I was enforcing and driving the national priorities and linking them in with local priorities, but in no way did I feel hamstrung by national priorities or by my commander.

I absolutely had a responsibility to drive local priorities. For me, it is important to drive the really local priorities that Mr Finnie talked about. In Airdrie, for example, the priority is parking, which is not an issue anywhere else to the great degree that it is in Airdrie. We continually get complaints from members of the community about Airdrie town centre and the area around Monklands hospital. Solving that is an on-going process that is in no way finished. We have done a lot of work with the roads department and with the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service to show people that we cannot get a fire truck down the street. We have done a lot of engagement with the local media and so on.

I just want reinforce that I felt that I had total autonomy to run my area as I saw fit. If my priority on a particular day was parking, that was my priority.

Stewart Stevenson: The divisional commander on the panel has talked about local flexibility and the two area commanders have talked about the need to do things in a way locally that responds to local needs. That is all self-evident. What I am interested in probing is how, with that diversity of response—which is appropriate to local needs—we deliver consistency of outcomes. Thinking of area rather than divisional commanders, I wonder whether you are all doing equally well in the different areas. In particular, given that there are quite a lot of area commanders, how are you learning from one another? Is there a formal structure for doing so, and how does it work? Is there further development to take place based on what you can learn from one another? I ask because we have heard of “a learning organisation”.

The Deputy Convener: I suppose that it depends quite a lot on how you measure outcomes—

Stewart Stevenson: I am not trying to do that.

Chief Inspector Russell: Without specifically addressing outcomes, so to speak, Mr Irvine spoke about a learning organisation, and certainly we are improving in that regard. From a local perspective, we have four sub-divisions with four area commanders in Q division, and we certainly learn from one another. We sit round a table formally once a month, at our tasking and senior management team, and that is an opportunity to

share best practice on what we are doing in our areas.

Stewart Stevenson: I understand that—do forgive me. My question was about how you in Lanarkshire learn from someone in Orkney, for the sake of argument.

Chief Inspector Russell: I would link into that learning not directly from Orkney but through Roddy Irvine, who attends meetings for west commanders and force commanders that are opportunities for sharing best practice. David McIntosh and I, as area commanders, have no link.

Stewart Stevenson: I turn to a divisional commander, as the formal or informal learning and exchange of information at senior levels is at divisional commander level. It is often around the water cooler that we hear the most interesting stories.

Chief Superintendent Irvine: It is probably worth bringing in the rank of superintendent, which is not represented here. The flip side of the rapid change that we talked about was that one of the benefits was rapid learning.

Before Police Scotland, the three of us would never have been in a situation to work together. When I left Glasgow and went to Tayside, I worked with David McIntosh. Dundee was experiencing a chronic problem; I had seen exactly the same chronic problem in Glasgow. We had put together an action plan there that tackled the problem, and an action plan that we built for Dundee had similar success. We always talk about that when we meet up, because we are quite proud of what we did. There is an informal network of learning.

At superintendent level, one area of learning is tackling domestic abuse effectively. Our operations superintendent is our representative on the national domestic abuse forum, where operations superintendents with that responsibility within divisions come together with third sector partners, such as the ASSIST service and Scottish Women's Aid, to share the learning. The operations superintendents hold a divisional forum and gather their issues and learning to take to the national forum, and there have been significant benefits from that.

Another area of learning for domestic abuse is MATAAC, which stands for multi-agency tasking and co-ordinating. I was the chair of MATAAC when I was the operations super in Tayside. We used to come together at the multi-agency risk assessment conference—MARAC—with partners to focus on the risks posed to the highest-risk domestic abuse victims and how we were going to make them safe. We realised that we were potentially missing a trick, because a good way to

keep victims safe is to get in and about the perpetrators. MATAC focuses on the most profound offenders. When we identify a potential victim of domestic abuse, we go into our vulnerable persons database and look at their previous relationships. We proactively approach those partners and uncover domestic abuse that we would not have known about. We find that some of those prolific offenders are offending in areas around the country.

The national domestic abuse task force comes to our MATAC meeting, which is chaired by our operations superintendent, and it can be tasked by us. For example, when an offender has offended in various divisional areas or there are victims in various divisional areas, the national domestic abuse task force will take that on as a package of work, because it is best equipped for that work. We have taken learning from that task force because it comes back to MATAC with feedback about the work that it has done. What we do with these offenders is to say, "We will destroy your ability to behave in that way." We do not look at them just for domestic abuse but look at them also for disqualified driving, drugs and financial offending. We say, "You are hurting people. We will try to lock you up for whatever we can."

I took learning from my time chairing MATAC Tayside into Lanarkshire division, and we continue to learn from the national domestic abuse task force. That is just one example, but there are examples from roads policing and other areas.

The Deputy Convener: Can I give you a specific example? A lot of us saw the television programme on trafficking that was shown last night. How has that slipped through? It is rife in Scotland. People are being trafficked two, three or four times, yet that documentary seemed to have unearthed things that nobody was aware of. What went wrong?

Chief Superintendent Irvine: I am aware of the documentary and of the fact that a lot of the cases that were covered were from the Glasgow area. I am probably more informed about the situation in Lanarkshire.

The Deputy Convener: But MATAC should be working, according to you, if it is for—

Chief Superintendent Irvine: MATAC is for domestic abuse.

The Deputy Convener: Is it just for domestic abuse? Is a similar approach not taken to other big issues, such as money laundering and trafficking?

Chief Superintendent Irvine: Not necessarily. I would say that Police Scotland has a far better approach to money laundering than existed under the previous arrangements in the legacy forces. We tended to find that serious organised criminals

might commit their crime in one force area but launder the money in a different one and live on it and spend it in yet another. To tackle such crime, those different organisations had to come together, but now we have one organisation that can deal with it.

People trafficking is at the front and centre of our thinking. I can speak with most authority on Lanarkshire, where we recently had a major large-scale operation to tackle a specific situation. We had been receiving intelligence that there might be human trafficking or exploitation, so we did a major operation, as a result of which people were remanded. Carrying out the operation on the day was the small part; we followed up on the intelligence picture after that, and we continue to do so. From that operation, we identified that 15 Romanian people had potentially been trafficked. We went out to see them; we sat down with them and spoke to them. We are very conscious of the fact that, if we ask a person, "Have you been trafficked?" they probably will not say so, but there might be certain indications—such as their letting us speak to them, sit down with them and build their trust—whose presence or absence will indicate that that is the case. For example, we said, "Will you do us a favour? Will you go and get your passports for us?" If people are being exploited, it is highly unlikely that they will be able to lay their hands on their passports. However, those people were able to do so. On that occasion, we were of the opinion that they had not been trafficked.

The Deputy Convener: I suppose that what I am saying is that there is a whole lot of intelligence there that you think should have been spread to other parts of Scotland. That TV programme did not reveal all such cases in Glasgow and in other parts of Scotland. Would anyone else like to come in on that?

Chief Inspector Russell: To expand on Roddy Irvine's point, I will give a local example of where human trafficking has been a priority in our area. It is something that we are aware of, and I have no doubt that my colleagues in David McIntosh's area and elsewhere in the country have been carrying out similar operations. Without giving too much away, I can say that we will have other such operations in Lanarkshire in the future. I know from my own experience that we have targeted several premises in Airdrie and Coatbridge. I can think of at least three operations in the past six months or so that have specifically targeted human trafficking in my area, so it is a priority for us.

The Deputy Convener: Have those cases come to court? Have people been charged or sentenced?

Chief Inspector Russell: Not to my knowledge, convener.

The Deputy Convener: What is the hold-up, then?

Chief Inspector Russell: The driver for us is to safeguard people and then to see whether there is criminality in the background of such cases, which there clearly is—I saw part of that programme last night and it clearly showed that there is organised crime sitting behind such cases both in Scotland and elsewhere in Europe. I have no doubt that my colleagues at the Scottish crime campus are linking with their colleagues across Europe about that.

13:45

The Deputy Convener: I suppose the problem is that we are not aware of any convictions, so public awareness has increased only because of the documentary and not due to national or local policing. Surely that must be a concern.

John Finnie: The police officers are being very open with us, but I am sure that it would be inappropriate for them to comment on certain areas.

I want to pick up on the point about interagency working. I think that the convener and I are the only members present who were on the previous Justice Committee, and she will recall that it did some work on the subject. I remember hearing from a local authority worker in Edinburgh about the importance of getting everyone to understand the potential signs. I wonder whether our witnesses can comment on how that filters down and whether there is education about the signs and symptoms that there may have been trafficking. I would have thought that that would be evidence of local co-operation on the issue.

The Deputy Convener: Can Jane Fowler or Derek Crichton add anything on that? Has it crossed your radar at all? Have you had local information on signs such as multi-occupancy, strange goings-on or people not being where they are supposed to be?

Derek Crichton: I am not in a position to give a lot of detail, but I can certainly reassure the committee that there is joint working on the issue in Dumfries and Galloway. You will appreciate that it is an important issue for us given our location and the two borders—the border between Scotland and England and the Northern Ireland border. I assure the committee that joint working is in place on the issue, which is controversial and an issue of concern. I can provide more details in writing if that would be helpful.

Stewart Stevenson: Can I ask Derek Crichton a tiny wee question? Is this just about convictions

or is it also about protecting people where it may not be possible to get convictions?

Derek Crichton: It is absolutely about protection.

Chief Superintendent Irvine: I add that, where it is about conviction, it is also about protecting people, using conviction as a device.

Jane Fowler: Again, I cannot give particular details but, as a local authority, we are involved in multi-agency work, including through the serious organised crime and counter-terrorism groups, and where there is intelligence about activity, that raises awareness. Our work with the police is also relevant.

It comes down to having good relationships so that people are aware of issues such as domestic abuse and serious organised crime and they can make the connections, raise awareness in communities and schools and so on. Where we have officers out in the community, whether they are working in health and social care, trading standards or community action and protection, if they know the signs to look out for, they can raise awareness, and the strong relationships that we have across the partnerships mean that they can pick up the phone. It is not about memos or reporting to a committee; it is about someone picking up a phone and saying that they are a bit concerned about a person who has just moved into the area, someone who has just registered for antenatal care or someone who has come on to their radar because a teacher is a little concerned about their children.

We do not have specific evidence of people trafficking in Argyll and Bute, or I am not aware of any, but we can raise awareness in that way and ensure that people have their radar switched on and know the appropriate avenues to talk to their partners.

The Deputy Convener: I understand that point about protection, but there must be prevention too if people are being trafficked two, three or four times. Arguably, you may be getting on top of it once—you are being tipped off and those who are responsible are moving on—but it is still happening. Surely trafficking has to be brought to the forefront somewhere and an example made that deters others. Deterrence is important as well. Obviously, prevention is the best solution, rather than protection, which happens after the event.

Chief Superintendent Irvine: National work is planned, but I cannot go into too much detail on that.

Building on Jane Fowler's point, I add that the multi-agency approach is very important. Community planning partnerships are involved and there are conversations with our fire

colleagues, who do home visits and who, traditionally, going back a number of years—

The Deputy Convener: We understand all that, and you have emphasised that. I wanted to know how we can move on to getting a concrete plan that will deter people. However, let us move on to Ben Macpherson's question.

Ben Macpherson: My question touches on some of the points that were raised earlier. I can speak only from an urban perspective, because that is the kind of area that I represent, but in north Edinburgh and Leith there are strong and stable relationships with local commanders and inspectors. Part of the strength of Edinburgh's locality model is that we have allocated community police officers who can go in and build relationships, and that has been strengthened in the area that I represent and across the city. Do you want to say more about the importance of community representation and the ability to go out into the community—as well as building relationships with elected members such as me—so that information can be fed in not only from organised entities such as community councils and local communications but from face-to-face conversations with individuals in the community?

Chief Superintendent Irvine: We have moved to the new operating model that I mentioned, and one of its key components is feedback. Although our community model was correct when it was implemented, things moved on, and one of the pieces of feedback that we got was that our community police officers were regularly changing and being taken away to deal with response, so we have moved to a model where there will be a dedicated, ring-fenced group of community police officers. We have been putting their names out using traditional media and social media. It is psychologically important that they are there. I am being open in saying that we used to find that, if one officer attended a community meeting and got feedback and took those issues away, it might be a different officer who attended the next time, and that officer might not have been as sighted as they could have been on the issues that had been raised.

If it is the same person over and over, personal pride will kick in. Once you build up relationships with the local community and they tell you that they are having problems, that becomes important to you because of those relationships, and your professional pride means that saying, "I'll do something about that for you," will make you personally motivated to come back with a positive solution, because you have to look those people in the eye. In Lanarkshire, we have moved to a model that will be far more geared towards that than the model that we had previously was.

Chief Inspector Russell: A big frustration for me as a local area commander is about my ability to deliver effective community policing. There is no doubt that the old model that we had did not allow my community police officers—many of whom, in truth, were community police officers in name only, because of the call demand and the way in which resources were deployed—to do that community-focused work. As Roddy Irvine said, the new model that we have moved to has given local area commanders truly dedicated community police officers. A big part of their work, which was launched on Tuesday and a big part of which will be done over the next couple of weeks, is to get out there and get themselves known in the community. They will tell people, "I am your community police officer," when they go into schools, youth groups or health centres—wherever they need to be. I have seen stuff on our Twitter feed in the past couple of days from officers on our local problem solving team, and that is what they are there to do; they are there to solve local problems. There are now 10 sergeants and 80 constables fulfilling that role across the division, and they will be left alone to do that. That is what the senior management team has signed up to allowing them to do.

Chief Inspector McIntosh: I stay in the community that I police and my kids go to school there, so I feel very much part of it. People recognise me as my kids' dad, as well as the area commander. That gives reassurance to the community and to partners, but also to officers and families, because we know what the issues are. Community officers are one aspect of that, but it is also a question of how you go about your daily business, how you engage with people at meetings and how you deliver on that when you get information from the people involved. You have to be able to tell folk what you have done and what the benefit has been. The policing 2026 consultation that has recently gone out, as well as looking at the 10-year plan, is also about differences that we can make now for our communities in Scotland. It is vital to have a mechanism that allows people to say, "That is the person in my area." All my community officers stay in the area where they work. It is the same model that the boss has got in Q division.

However, it is moving on from that to knowing what is the next important issue for us to deal with, whether that is parking or whatever. Again, if we do not have folk who can make relationships, we will not have the whole picture and all the information.

Earlier, people asked how we learn as area commanders. I learn every day from my staff and members of the public, from the scrutiny and audit committees that we go to, and from the continuous professional development days for area

commanders at the police college—we have a lot of them. I also go to days with the Scottish Institute for Business Leaders where we learn from folk from industry. Being out and engaging with people is important. However, it is important to do something with that information when I have it—that is key.

Derek Crichton: If you had asked us that question three years ago, the perspective from Dumfries and Galloway would certainly have been one of serious concern. Coupled with the removal of the local control room, the accessibility and visibility of Police Scotland was seen to have deteriorated quite badly and was of concern to the people of Dumfries and Galloway.

The good news is that there has been a change of emphasis for the better over the past six months. There is clear feedback from the public and from our elected members that we now have a community policing model that ensures that we have—as one of the officers has said—dedicated resources. “Community policing” is not a token title that is not followed through. There are dedicated resources and our commander is rightly proud of that change.

I reaffirm that the concerns are well made, but—thankfully—the learning organisation has come through on those, and the public, who matter most, are starting to see a difference being made.

Jane Fowler: With regard to community policing, since the advent of Police Scotland and because we are now responsible for the scrutiny of police activity, we can clearly see that activity at local community council level and elected members can interact directly with the police who are on the ground there.

We have our local area committees that community planning partners are involved in, which are another structure with particular targets and outputs, and which mean that community groups and elected members can have an impact on the direction of policing in that particular part of Argyll and Bute.

Next, we come up to the performance review and scrutiny committee, which the commander comes to once a quarter to answer on the overall performance of policing in Argyll and Bute. That is where some of the more strategic issues for the local area can be raised and addressed. The commander has local flexibility to address those issues with actions that are built on evidence, on measuring outcomes and on feedback from and interaction with communities right through the structure. That brings a visibility to police activities and it visibly aligns them with the priorities of the communities. It also enables elected members to input in a democratic way, and that input can be communicated back out again to the communities.

We had a real issue with the closure of police stations, because the visibility of those buildings meant safety to some of our communities. That was a challenge when dealing with reduced resources, as many of the police buildings in our area are not fit for purpose. The change in priority, in resource and in the balancing of resources that the local commander was able to put in place meant that police officers were still visible in the communities, just not in buildings. That really worked; it was a good response to a democratic concern.

Liam McArthur: Although we have heard some encouraging reassurances, the recent decisions about police counters, police stations and—in relation to parking—the withdrawal of traffic warden services were poorly handled, and I hope that lessons have been learned from that.

I want to ask about resources, as little secret is made of Police Scotland’s financial position. In Orkney, for example, a very small force has been carrying a high number of vacancies for some time. If you look at the crime and clear-up rates and so on, it is easy to see how—from a distance—that would not be a priority. However, without a critical mass, policing the area and providing a community presence around an archipelago of 20 inhabited islands is exceptionally difficult. How is the case arrived at for the resources that the area commander is able to deploy in the way that he and the partners see fit?

14:00

As far as I am concerned, there is a bit of a risk that there has not been much of a shift in resources since the creation of Police Scotland. Ben Macpherson might have a view on that in terms of the resources for policing in Edinburgh compared with the resources for policing in the greater Glasgow area. However, from an Orkney perspective, I have concerns about where the resource deployment is and what area commanders have at their disposal to meet the needs through the mechanisms that we all agree are working better now than they were a year ago—and certainly better than they were three or four years ago.

Chief Inspector McIntosh: I cannot speak about Orkney, unfortunately, but I can speak with some assurance about Angus. Without wanting to go into the previous deployment model in Angus, the real difference is in inspector numbers. Previously, we had an inspector based solely in the team who would respond to calls, so there was no ownership of local issues. Although I now have fewer inspectors, I am more comfortable with where we are.

Over the past few years, I have been given more resources in Angus—I have more police constables than I had before and I can honestly say that I have never had greater access to national resources, which would not have been available to me in Tayside. I can give you the examples of the armed arrest of individuals in Arbroath and the flooding at Forfar—I only realised that I had the Airwave service for the whole of the north of Scotland in my basement when it flooded, which was interesting. Those examples showed that the ability to be able to call on resources—not just police but fire service resources—from all round the country is vital.

I have had officers from national groups, such as the violence reduction task force, up at Bonfest in Kirriemuir, and there are folk coming up to support me at MoFest in Montrose at the end of the month. As well as comparing the level of local resources with what we had previously, we have to acknowledge that the situation is not the same as it was, because I now have more access to national departments and the resources that bolster them. We have the flexibility to move folk, but you have to pick your priorities and what you want to deal with.

Liam McArthur: I think that we all understand that there is deployment of specialist national resources. What are the vacancy levels that you are carrying at any particular time?

Chief Inspector McIntosh: There are always vacancies, because people move on or go back. It is my job to ensure that, if there is a vacancy, I look for someone to fill it. There is a support superintendent who oversees that and there is a constant churn of young officers coming out of the Scottish Police College.

In relation to the officers that I have, if I am given the operational autonomy to deal with my area, it is important that I can consider what our priorities are going to be and what our communities are telling us. I can confidently say that crime in Angus—across all groups—has gone down. That is a good thing and prevention is key. We have perhaps been chasing the response for a while and that is important.

How do you change a young person's life? It could be education and so on, but we are very good at detecting crime. If somebody gets a conviction, they might not get such a good job opportunity or get to go and see Mickey Mouse on holiday, so we target some of our resources on prevention. If someone said to me, "Do you want to have more, David?", I would say, "Absolutely," but the key issue is what we do with those resources.

It is possible to have policing models that are effective now but ineffective moving forward. For

example, I had a really good conversation with one of my elected members recently and they said, "David, you say that violent crime is going down, but if you look at that bit there, it looks as though it is one over." It is not one over; what has happened is that we have had an increase in online extortions involving young people and adults. We need to look forward to where the demand will be.

Our critical demand moving forward might not be for police officers on the beat—although they will always be needed. We need to consider what the demand might be in relation to the risk that is posed to our young people. In 2026, it looks as though it might be a bit like that. The demand for police officers is constantly changing. Although we might be happy with what we have got now, we need to think about what we need going forward.

Did that answer your question, Mr McArthur?

Liam McArthur: There are probably specific issues around recruitment and retention in certain areas. I appreciate that the islands probably present more challenges. Argyll and Bute might have a similar experience, whereas Angus probably has less of a challenge in that respect. However, the success in keeping crime rates down and detection levels high and in having the engagement with communities at a level that we would expect for a small force can be achieved only when there is a certain number of bodies to carry out the different roles that are involved in that.

Chief Inspector McIntosh: I would like to clarify for the benefit of the committee that although detection rates are one aspect, in my view, they are not the key one. If somebody asks me about performance, I say that it is first and foremost about the quality and standard of what my officers do. I am not process driven at all, but I like having things in place so that people know where they are and how well they are engaging with the community—the issue is the standard of that.

As Roddy Irvine said earlier, the detection rate might allow us to get some bail conditions and so on in place; it is an indication of what is going on. However, the key aspect is the work that is done in between our priorities and the standard and quality of what is delivered—that is certainly my driver.

Jane Fowler: Recruitment is tricky in remote areas. The council, the NHS and many of our partners—particularly the police—have trouble in recruiting. Carrying a vacancy in a remote area has a significant impact. However, those who want to work in a remote area in the police or social work, or who want to be a general practitioner or a community nurse, will be living and working in the

same community. That brings its own challenges and someone has to be a particular kind of person to deal with them.

Our local commander is leading a group in our community planning partnership that is working with Argyll and Bute's developing the young workforce programme, Skills Development Scotland, schools and headteachers to look across public sector recruitment. It is trying to share more widely the reality of what it is like to live in an area such as ours. Living in a remote area is a lifestyle choice. Young people might want to go away and come back again, but we have to be able to create professional routes into jobs in the public sector that are challenging but hugely rewarding. That is a real challenge but, to return to my theme of partnership, if we work together, we can crack it.

There is a lot for us to sell about living and working in a remote area, but we have to be real about it. It is good to be able to have people who live and work in the area to talk to young people about it. It is also useful to have a bit of audiovisual content, as has happened in Orkney, that sells the place as somewhere absolutely fantastic. For example, it is a place where a police officer gets to drive around in a van with a defibrillator, a ladder and whatever else.

Chief Inspector Russell: To go back to Mr McArthur's point, I clearly cannot comment on Orkney, but during my three years as area commander of the Monklands area, there were certainly times when we had resource challenges. That was not because of vacancies; it was simply because of the challenges that any workforce has with long-term absences, secondments and so on. There were challenges in specific areas that meant that one shift was particularly challenged over a two or three-week period.

With regard to vacancies, part of my role now involves an HR function and I know that, across the division, we have very small numbers of vacancies. We have about 1,440 staff and a very limited number of vacancies. We have a constant backfill—something that David McIntosh referred to—of young officers and some who are maybe not so young. Certainly, officers who are young in terms of length of service come to us from the Scottish Police College, and they will always be welcomed.

It is acknowledged that we all get the benefit of the national resources and that we all play our part in that. I will play my part locally and will give officers to South Lanarkshire for a high-risk missing persons inquiry, for example. I would expect that to be reciprocated if and when I had a similar challenge in my area. The national resources come through in a similar manner. For example, we had a murder not that long ago the

investigation of which was managed by the major investigation team from the east, which came through because the west's major investigation team was engaged elsewhere. That reinforces the point that we have all benefited from the national resource, but we clearly have to play our part in that at times.

The Deputy Convener: Is there never an instance when there are several major murder investigations and you are just spread too thinly?

Chief Inspector Russell: In the situation that I described, the MIT east came through to work in our area, because the MIT west was already working in our area. We were unfortunate in that we had two major investigations going on in the division at the same time, but—thankfully for everyone, and no less for the communities—that is very rare.

The Deputy Convener: Before I bring in David McIntosh, does Rona Mackay want to come in with a question?

Rona Mackay: My question has been answered many times over. I will just say to Roddy Irvine that I am very encouraged by the model that his division is using to deal with domestic abuse—it sounds very forward thinking.

Chief Inspector McIntosh: Locally, there is a real drive at the moment to recruit extra special constables. There are some very hard-to-reach communities in Angus; you can travel 40 or 45 minutes north of Kirriemuir and you are still in Angus. We have a large migrant workforce, too. We are giving some responsibility to our local community sergeants, on the same model that we have for inspectors. There are recruitment events going on, and we are looking at increasing those efforts considerably.

That ties in with the locality issue. Young folks might see policing as a career, or they might want to be involved in local community issues. We are looking to encourage that and to support them with proper training. In the hard-to-reach areas, they will have to be advanced drivers, and they will need to be aware of how to deal with many different types of inquiries. We are looking to harvest that resource.

The Deputy Convener: Jane Fowler mentioned outcomes. How do you measure a successful outcome? That would surely depend on the issue. I highlight the topic of human trafficking again, because it raises important issues about prevention and protection and how we get the balance right. Can I have some views on that?

Chief Inspector Russell: David McIntosh mentioned performance targets and figures. We have been through that over the past few years, but in simple terms it is about getting community

feedback. What is the community telling us? Is the community pleased with the job that we are doing? Getting that kind of positive feedback would be the most important outcome.

Whether it is when my officers go to meetings of tenants and residents associations or community councils, or when my area inspectors go to local area team meetings and so on as we go up the strategic community planning ladder, getting positive feedback from the community tells me that we are doing the right thing.

The Deputy Convener: Would that be the case even if there was something major going on in the background that was not being tackled? You say that you talk to representatives on community councils and in surgeries, but to an extent those people are self-selecting.

Chief Inspector Russell: To go back to the specific issue of human trafficking, last night's television programme was probably an eye-opener for a lot of people in Scotland in highlighting what is going on under our noses, as members of the public. Human trafficking has been going on for several years, and a lot of work has been undertaken to educate officers in how to identify the signs. I am quite confident in saying that Police Scotland treats the issue as a priority; there has been a lot of work on it, and a lot of work will be done on it in the future.

Roddy Irvine gave the example of the major operation in Lanarkshire division. You expressed some concern about convictions; there will, we hope, be convictions at the end of the process. They will be publicised, which will reassure communities across Scotland that Police Scotland is taking the problem seriously and tackling it.

The Deputy Convener: Before I bring in Roddy Irvine, I go back to Derek Crichton. If you are looking at communities, you are obviously looking at housing. That was a big factor in the television programme yesterday, and it is a big key to the whole issue of trafficking. Is that anywhere on your radar?

Derek Crichton: Yes, it certainly is. The situation is particularly challenging in Dumfries and Galloway, which is a remote and rural area like the ones that David McIntosh described, with a low concentration of people. That presents a challenge in terms of housing.

An additional challenge for us is that, as a council, we are not a landlord. We have registered social landlords, which brings us back to the point about joint working. I reassure members that, while we need to learn lessons in that respect, we have a lot of joint working in place to deal with those issues. We need to make sure that our procedures are tested, challenged and rigorously

scrutinised, and that is a key role that must be carried out nationally as well as locally.

14:15

The Deputy Convener: I will give Roddy Irvine and Jane Fowler the last word on outcomes. Will you also say a little about your interaction with the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service, which is something that has been of particular interest to the committee? It must take up a lot of time, nationally and locally.

Chief Superintendent Irvine: Briefly on outcomes, I think that the local outcome improvement plans will contribute significantly to the new analysis-driven, targeted approach. The question about outcomes is a good one; it is a key issue, because the numbers do not tell the whole story. In Lanarkshire, we are very fortunate in that the detective chief inspector in the public protection unit is a former member of the national rape task force. I will have to repeat myself briefly in making this point, but she introduced an important concept. When we saw a domestic abuser who was exhibiting concerning behaviour that was not indicative of first-time offending—

The Deputy Convener: We have dealt with domestic abuse. The issue is how we transfer that work to trafficking.

Chief Superintendent Irvine: I am sorry—I did not realise that you were asking about trafficking.

The Deputy Convener: I asked how you would measure a successful outcome on trafficking. We seem to be on top of domestic abuse. As Rona Mackay has said, you have outlined an excellent way of tackling that. You have cracked that but, meanwhile, trafficking is going on and we are not addressing it.

Chief Superintendent Irvine: How we measure the outcomes is a challenging question. In the first instance, we must identify the scale of the problem. On domestic abuse, for example, we reckon that only a quarter of cases are reported, and a good outcome in that area is that more and more cases are identified. The same applies to trafficking—the first outcome is to develop the true picture.

The Deputy Convener: Do we need more awareness of the signs of trafficking? I am thinking of a multi-occupancy property where there is coming and going. Could the public be made aware of such signs?

Chief Superintendent Irvine: Yes, I think so. A multi-agency approach is definitely required, because the footfall in a property will involve not just the police, but colleagues from the fire service, the local authority, schools and social work. It is a case of knowing the signs. The first outcome is to

identify, understand and communicate the scale of the problem.

If you would like, I can talk about the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service.

The Deputy Convener: Yes, please.

Chief Superintendent Irvine: From a Lanarkshire perspective, we have two officers embedded in the COPFS to build up relationships and a detailed understanding. Our detective superintendent has regular meetings to identify and iron out any potential problems. I now have a regular meeting with the most senior procurator fiscal for our area, and we have an agenda that we go through, some of which is about business efficiency, which is an important issue. It is not about saving money, but about maximising our resources so that our energy is spent on achieving the end product—the outcome.

Sometimes we also discuss the priorities in the area. We recently carried out a major operation on human exploitation and human trafficking, in which the COPFS was front and centre. We had loads of meetings, because we wanted the COPFS to be sighted on the operation so that it had the resources to deal with the issue and we could all respond in the most effective way. We also wanted the COPFS to know what the background was when it received the case reporting. We do that quite regularly.

The Deputy Convener: What was the outcome of that process, the work of the two officers involved, the meetings and so on?

Chief Superintendent Irvine: The outcome is that, on the back of that operation, there are people who have been remanded in custody. In the immediate term, they are off the street, and I would like to think that, in the longer term, they will get sentences that are commensurate with what they were doing. Much of the process is about relationship building and proactive interaction with the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service.

Jane Fowler: The partnership approach is absolutely vital. I think that we can use the domestic abuse model, but a lot of this is about getting the issue on to the radar of the elected members and the senior officers who are responsible for driving forward a particular agenda. As soon as tackling people trafficking appears on the agenda as an outcome that is related to our local policing plan, the elected members will say, “What are you doing about that, Mr Commander?” or “What are you doing about that, Mrs Commander?”

Perhaps the statistics will show an increase, so it might well be the case that one of the initial targets is to increase the number of people who feel comfortable with reporting concerns about

somebody who might have been trafficked or reporting that they themselves have been trafficked. We need to make sure that we have the information and advice ready for people to share among the different partner agencies so that we all know when to act and what to do.

The Deputy Convener: The session has been useful in highlighting the need for much more awareness of the issue of trafficking and its signs. We have had an extremely worthwhile round-table discussion, and I thank everyone very much for taking the time to give evidence to the committee. There are many positives, but we have also identified challenges in what has been a constructive meeting.

As the next item will be taken in private, I ask those in the gallery to leave.

14:20

Meeting continued in private until 14:27.

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