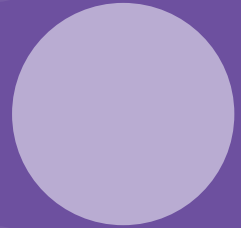




Police Investigations &  
Review Commissioner



# Strategic Plan 2019–22

Independent & Effective Investigations & Reviews



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# Our purpose & vision

To increase public confidence in policing through independent scrutiny of police actions and promoting continuous improvement

## Our priorities

Carry out thorough and timely investigations of incidents involving the police

Carry out thorough and timely reviews of the way police handle complaints made about them and improve the quality of police complaint handling

Carry out our functions with a high level of efficiency, governance and accountability

## Our outcomes

Improvement in policing in Scotland

Increased public confidence in the police

## Our values

### INTEGRITY

We are honest, open and accountable

### IMPARTIALITY

We carry out our work fairly and independently, ensuring all evidence is considered objectively and that decisions are based on sound professional judgement

### RESPECT

We treat everyone with courtesy and dignity, irrespective of their background and needs



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# Who is the Commissioner & what is her role?

The role of the Police Investigations & Review Commissioner (PIRC) was established in 2013 at the same time as the single Police Service of Scotland.

The Commissioner, who is appointed by Scottish Ministers, is independent of the police and delivers a free and impartial service. Her role is to independently investigate incidents involving the police and independently review the way the police handle complaints from the public.

The PIRC ensures that the SPA and the Chief Constable maintain a suitable system for handling complaints and issues statutory guidance where appropriate.

## The Police Investigations & Review Commissioner can investigate:

Incidents involving the police, referred by the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service (COPFS). These may include deaths in custody and allegations of criminality made about police officers.

Serious incidents involving the police, at the request of the Chief Constable or the Scottish Police Authority (SPA). Reasons for requests for investigations from the Chief Constable may include the serious injury of a person in police custody, the death or serious injury of a person following contact with the police or the use of firearms by police officers.

Relevant police matters which she considers would be in the public interest.

Allegations of misconduct by senior police officers of the rank of Assistant Chief Constable (ACC) and above, if requested by the SPA.

## The Police Investigations & Review Commissioner can review:


How the police in Scotland handle complaints made to them by the public.

The purpose of the Complaint Handling Review (CHR) process is to determine whether or not the complaint was handled to a reasonable standard by the police.

### **The PIRC cannot carry out CHRs into:**

Complaints of criminality.

Complaints made by individuals currently serving, or who formerly served, with the police about the terms and conditions of their service.



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At the conclusion of an investigation, the Commissioner can recommend improvements to the way the police operate and deliver services to the public in Scotland.

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At the conclusion of a CHR, the Commissioner can make recommendations, identify learning points, and direct the policing body to reconsider their response.



# 3 Foreword

As my five year term as Commissioner draws to a close, I recognise that I have been privileged to lead the organisation through a period of profound change in policing and unprecedented demand for independent scrutiny of police actions. I am hopeful that as the organisation moves forward into the next phase, there will be further necessary refinement to the independent police oversight framework and I am pleased to present our priorities for 2019–2022 in this Strategic Plan.



**Kate Frame**  
**Police Investigations  
& Review Commissioner**

These next three years will provide the opportunity to transform the way in which police actions are independently scrutinised in Scotland.

Our current operating model was established with some degree of haste in the wake of the decision to form a single Police Service of Scotland. Experience over the five years since then, has convinced me that further refinement of our remit and powers would be beneficial – a view we shared with the Scottish Government and other stakeholders during our 2016–2019 strategic cycle.

We therefore have welcomed the Justice Committee’s post-legislative scrutiny of the Police and Fire Reform (Scotland) Act 2012 – which established our duty to investigate serious incidents involving the police – as we do Dame Elish Angiolini’s review of the police complaints system in Scotland. Both present opportunities to remedy inherent weaknesses in the current system and shape any future model. Last May we submitted our recommendations to the Committee, flagging areas that we believe would benefit from reform and thereby strengthen our ability to perform our role. This year, we are furnishing Rt. Hon. Dame Elish Angiolini DBE, QC with additional evidence for her review. Some of the topics we have raised, and anticipate that she will consider, include:

- The level of discretion granted to Police Scotland in handling complaints against its officers
- The powers afforded PIRC investigators in Crown-directed investigations
- The powers afforded PIRC investigators in investigations against retired officers
- Increased engagement by PIRC investigators with victims and the families of those whose Article 2 or 3 human rights may have been breached
- Increased compliance in policing and police oversight bodies with all human rights principles.



Clearly, each of these factors has the potential to affect the nature and volume of our work. However, at this time it is impossible to predict with any certainty when and to what extent that might be.

The outcomes of both these pieces of work will shape the future powers and remit of the Scottish model of independent police scrutiny. Parliament and public appetite will, of course, determine the pace of any recommended change. Nonetheless, I hope that the change process will begin within the period of this Plan and evolve to meet future public expectation.

In the meantime, with the public and media becoming ever more aware – and policing bodies more accepting – of our role, I expect the number of investigations and reviews referred to the organisation to rise yet further. While the team will always seek ways to work more efficiently, it is essential that adequate resources are made available to keep pace with this demand. To this end, the PIRC will continue to run its highly successful trainee programme, which allows continued growth of our talent pool of investigators by recruiting people with no previous policing background. The management team is also committed to developing the skills of all staff, through various training initiatives.

Indeed, it is precisely because of the support and dedication of our skilled staff that I am confident that the PIRC will embrace any programme of change that strengthens its ability to scrutinise police actions and improve police procedures. That in turn will give the public, increased confidence in policing in Scotland.

**Kate Frame**  
**Police Investigations & Review Commissioner**

**The PIRC will continue to run its highly successful trainee programme, which allows continued growth of our talent pool of investigators by recruiting people with no previous policing background.**



# 4 Delivering our strategic priorities

We have set out our three priorities detailing how we plan to achieve our purpose and vision of increasing public confidence in policing through independent scrutiny of police actions and promoting continuous improvement.

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1 | Carry out thorough & timely investigations of incidents involving the police

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2 | Carry out thorough & timely reviews of the way police handle complaints made about them & improve the quality of police complaint handling

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3 | Carry out our functions with a high level of efficiency, governance & accountability



## To achieve our priorities we will undertake the following actions:

### THIS WILL BE ACHIEVED BY:

Undertaking thorough and impartial investigations in a timely manner into incidents involving policing bodies operating in Scotland.

Issuing recommendations, where appropriate, to policing bodies in order to support improved service delivery, thereby increasing public confidence in policing in Scotland.

Publishing investigation findings and recommendations, where legislation permits, on the PIRC website and in the media.

Providing regular bulletins to policing bodies, identifying potential learning to allow improved service delivery.

Ensuring that the Investigation Team is adequately skilled through a process of continuous professional development and training.

Maintaining the PIRC's trainee investigator programme, to recruit and develop new staff with no previous investigatory experience.

Engaging positively with stakeholders, policing bodies and other relevant agencies operating in Scotland.

### THIS WILL BE ACHIEVED BY:

Undertaking thorough complaint handling reviews and promoting best practice to policing bodies operating in Scotland, through recommendations and reconsideration directions.

Monitoring the implementation of these recommendations and directions by policing bodies.

Engaging with policing bodies through meetings, presentations and workshops to achieve improvement in their handling of complaints about the police.

Undertaking effective audits of the police complaint handling process to ensure continual improvements to the system.

Issuing regular bulletins to policing bodies, summarising issues and themes identified in complaint handling reviews, to improve their police complaint handling.

Publishing CHR reports, where appropriate, and information on police implementation of recommendations on the PIRC website, to increase transparency and drive up policing standards.

Reviewing feedback from stakeholders to introduce improvements where necessary.

### THIS WILL BE ACHIEVED BY:

Demonstrating sound governance of the PIRC's financial resources through transparent and independent audit and compliance with the Scottish Public Finance Manual and the PIRC Finance Manual.

Using the staff appraisal system to ensure all staff contribute towards the achievement of the PIRC's objectives.

Identifying training plans for each member of staff using the appraisal process to highlight both developmental and required training in order to enhance the development and skills of staff.

Increasing transparency by publishing, where appropriate, regular updates of the work carried out by the Investigation and Review teams on the PIRC website and in the media.

Ensuring that the PIRC's policies are fit for purpose.

Developing and maintaining the 'PIRC People Plan'.

Maintaining a pragmatic approach to fiscal management, to ensure maximum capability in all areas of business, providing the necessary flexibility where required.

Reviewing our governance arrangements to introduce appropriate scrutiny where required.

Demonstrating value for money by continuing to make efficiency savings and meet targets set by the Scottish Government.



# 5 Accountability

## Justice in Scotland: vision & priorities

The PIRC is accountable to the Scottish Government and our accounts are audited by Audit Scotland. Through the delivery of our Priorities, we will contribute towards the Government's national outcomes, primarily the commitment to working towards communities that are 'inclusive, empowered, resilient and safe'.

The work of the PIRC will directly contribute to the undernoted Scottish Government justice outcomes:

- We live in safe, cohesive and resilient communities.
- Our system and interventions are proportionate, fair and effective.
- We deliver person-centred, modern and affordable public services.

## Monitoring delivery of our strategic plan

The Commissioner and Management Team will monitor the delivery of the three Priorities quarterly and review the PIRC's strategic direction. Further detail about the specific actions and performance measures of how we will achieve this is contained in our annual Business Plan. Our 2020-21 and 2021-22 Business Plans will include updates on our progress towards achieving our objectives/priorities.

Regular communication and engagement with staff will continue to ensure delivery of their personal objectives, which contribute to the delivery of our strategic priorities.

The Management Team will continue to review the Risk Register monthly to address any potential risks to the organisation. Additionally, the PIRC's Audit and Accountability Committee will continue to meet quarterly to provide independent oversight of the PIRC finances, risk management and corporate governance. The Committee also approves the appointment of the PIRC's internal auditors and reviews the annual accounts and internal audit reports.

Each Autumn, the Commissioner will publish her Annual Report and Accounts, which are laid before the Scottish Parliament.





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Police Investigations &  
Review Commissioner

Hamilton House  
Hamilton Business Park  
Caird Park  
Hamilton  
ML3 0QA

  @PIRCNews | pirc.scot

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