

## **A REPORT BY HM INSPECTORATE OF CONSTABULARY**

3<sup>rd</sup> YEAR REVIEWS OF PRIMARY INSPECTIONS: 22 May 2003

THE SCRO FINGERPRINT BUREAU

THE SCOTTISH CRIMINAL RECORD OFFICE

**See: <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Justice/Police/15403/7440> for full report**

### **1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

1.1 This Review Inspection by HMIC focuses on the actions taken by the Scottish Criminal Records Office (SCRO) in response to the HMIC Primary Inspection conducted in May 2000 of its Fingerprint Bureau and the Primary Inspection of SCRO conducted in December 2000.

### **FINGERPRINTS BUREAU**

1.2 The Scottish Criminal Record Office Fingerprint Bureau, now part of the newly established Scottish Fingerprint Service, was at the time of the Primary Inspection the subject of intense scrutiny following the disputed fingerprint examination in the case of HMA V Shirley McKie. While positive change was already underway in light of the review conducted by the Scottish Fingerprint Service Working Group and independent management consultants, HMIC was not of the view that SCRO could be categorised as effective and efficient at that point.

1.3 The 25 recommendations and 20 suggestions contained within the SCRO Fingerprint Bureau Primary Inspection report of 2000 ranged across a number of areas including, structure, processes and resources; leadership and people management; training standards and responsibility. It was recognised that not all were the direct responsibility of SCRO management but would involve the SCRO Executive Committee, all forces the Scottish Executive and other areas of the criminal justice system. The recommendations and suggestions contained in the Primary Inspection report were accompanied by those of the ACPOS Presidential Review Group and the Change Management Review Team, totalling in excess of 130 recommendations, suggestions and findings to be addressed.

1.4 Progress in addressing all these issues was assisted by the formation of a project management team. Indeed such was that progress that they were able to hand over responsibility to SCRO's management for final implementation of a remaining 20 issues in May 2001. It is to the credit of all parties involved and in particular to the management and staff of SCRO and the Scottish Fingerprint Service that these have

all been addressed or are well on the road to completion. See Appendix ( i ) to Annex A.

1.5 Of the 25 recommendations and 20 suggestions contained within the Primary Inspection report, HMIC is able to discharge 17 of the recommendations and 15 of the suggestions. It is clear that much effort has been put into and progress made addressing these.

1.6 From the 8 recommendations and 5 suggestions outstanding, three key issues emerge. They can be summarised as:

- Resourcing
- Benchmarking
- Openness

1.7 In terms of resourcing HMIC was disappointed to find that the lack of skilled fingerprint experts in the employment market, time required to train new experts and delay in funding provision have conspired to prevent prompt implementation of optimum staffing levels as recommended by the Change Management Review Team (CMRT) scoping study. There is clear evidence that additional staffing resources allied to more efficient working can have measurable positive outcomes in terms of additional fingerprint identifications that will benefit all police forces, and ultimately the public as a whole, in the fight against crime.

1.8 While new technology will assist internal benchmarking between bureaux and over time, it is important that comparison is made with other similar sized bureaux in other parts of the United Kingdom. HMIC has recommended that such benchmarking take place and the Head of Scottish Fingerprint Service will pursue this to allow not only performance to be compared but also processes.

1.9 Benchmarking with another bureau will also contribute to a more open and transparent culture within the organisation. Addressing the recommendations and suggestions has contributed much to this process. HMIC welcomes the progress that has been made to establish the Scottish Fingerprint Service from the separate bureaux that existed within SCRO and some of the Scottish forces at the time of the last Primary Inspection. This development has provided a vehicle to develop and share good practice amongst the professionals working in this arena. It is important however that the impact of progress is gauged. HMIC has recommended that appropriate internal and external surveying be carried out to help assess progress. The Head of the Scottish Fingerprint Service will pursue this.

1.10 HMIC is satisfied that all the outstanding recommendations are being addressed and that considerable progress has been made. However HMIC would wish to see the impact of ongoing developments before finally discharging. They will be revisited at the next Primary inspection in 2004.

## **SCRO**

1.11 The period since the Primary Inspection of SCRO in 2000 has seen enormous changes in the organisation generated by a number of pressures:

- the recommendations arising from the HMIC inspection of the Fingerprint Bureau and the work of the ACPOS Change Management Review Team;
- the continuing development of the Integration of the Scottish Criminal Justice Information Systems;
- the development of Disclosure Scotland; and
- the move to new premises.

1.12 It is clear that enormous progress has been made to address the pressures listed at paragraph 1.11 above (the detailed issues raised in relation the Fingerprint Service are considered separately within this report). This progress has been achieved through significant effort on the part of the management and staff within SCRO supported by ACPOS and the Scottish Executive.

1.13 The 17 recommendations and 5 suggestions, contained within the SCRO Primary Inspection report of 2000, focused mainly on corporate issues associated with financial processes, performance and human resource management. Each of these areas has been addressed and SCRO continues to operate effectively and efficiently, having established systems, recruited expertise and developed collaborative working to service the organisation's needs. In relation to SCRO's budget and financial systems, the continued support of the Scottish Executive is required to achieve full functionality and maximum value from the accounting system. Similarly, the assumption of full budgetary control for the personnel supporting the delivery of fingerprint services within forces requires the sustained collaboration of ACPOS.

1.14 In this vein, it is encouraging to be able to report that the 17 recommendations and 5 suggestions have all been discharged. This assessment is made recognising that some of the matters comprised within the recommendations are not yet fully implemented. However HMIC is satisfied that all outstanding matters will be achieved through the processes that have been put in place to date. These issues will be a feature of the next Primary Inspection of SCRO in 2004.

1.15 It is anticipated that further development of the structures within which SCRO operates will emerge from the ongoing review of Common Police Services. HMIC welcomes the progress made within SCRO as this will facilitate the ready establishment of the organisation within a framework that will seek to balance the use of collaboratively acquired and delivered services with independently managed and controlled provision.

## **2. THE INSPECTION PROCESS**

2.1 This 3rd Year "Review" Inspection by HMIC focuses on the action taken by SCRO in response to the HMIC Primary Inspection of the Fingerprint Bureau, (now the Scottish Fingerprint Service), of SCRO in May 2000 and the Primary Inspection of SCRO conducted in December 2000.

2.2 Every force and Common Police Service is subject to a cycle of HMIC inspections consisting of Primary and Review Inspections. A Primary Inspection deals with a broad range of activity and makes recommendations, which are usually quite substantial. A number of suggestions for improvement are made in a supporting context.

2.3 HMIC recognises that the recommendations and suggestions need to be carefully considered by the Force/Common Police Service, often have resource implications and may need to be approached in a phased and prioritised way.

2.4 The force or service under inspection may choose not to follow or adopt an HMIC recommendation or suggestion, but in such cases should set out an argued case for not doing so. In turn, HMIC may comment on this but the debate is a public one for the SCRO Executive Committee, Ministers and wider public to take a view.

2.5 The Review process involves the service under review providing comment on progress made towards, or other response to, the recommendations and suggestions made in the Primary Inspection Report. This response is then subject to HMIC review, follow up inspection activity and comments are prepared and published to reflect findings.

2.6 The Review Inspections reported in this document comprised scrutiny of the SCRO and Fingerprint Service written updates, followed by requests for, and examination of, supporting material. Thereafter Staff Officers visited SCRO to interview a range of staff from SCRO and the Scottish Fingerprint Service and conducted a benchmarking visit to the Fingerprint Unit of Greater Manchester Police for comparative purposes. The inspection concluded with a visit by HMCIC, which included a discussion with senior staff on progress in several strategic business areas.

2.7 The findings of the Inspection are documented in the annexes that follow this explanatory introduction. Annex A relates to the Fingerprint Service and Annex B to SCRO. Concluding remarks by HMIC are at the end of each annex.

2.8 This Review, which is referred to the SCRO Executive Committee and made public on the HMIC website ([www.scotland.gov.uk/hmic](http://www.scotland.gov.uk/hmic)), is a part of the transparency and accountability process.