**Research Project**

Evaluation of the Priority Crime Unit in Central Scotland Police

**Researchers: Dr Kenneth Scott & Dr Peter Sproat** University of the West of Scotland

            [**Ken Scott's website...**](https://web.archive.org/web/20180107094711/http%3A/www.uws.ac.uk/schoolsdepts/socialsciences/cjpolcentre/ken_scott.asp)

            [**Peter Sproat's website...**](https://web.archive.org/web/20180107094711/http%3A/www.uws.ac.uk/schoolsdepts/socialsciences/cjpolcentre/peter_sproat.asp)

**Summary:**

In April 2008 Central Scotland Police introduced a Priority Crime Unit within its Falkirk Area Command. The Unit was based on a model first developed as part of the workforce modernisation agenda in Surry and Hertfordshire. However, this was the first example of a mixed economy policing unit, involving both police officers and police staff, to be set up in Scotland. Over 2008/09 Kenneth Scott and Peter Sproat of University of the West of Scotland undertook an evaluation of the Unit on behalf of SIPR.

The Unit consisted of four inquiry teams, each with two police officers and two investigative assistants. There were also two team co-ordinators working between the teams. The IAs and co-ordinators were civilians specifically recruited and trained for these jobs. The PCU was designed to assist Central Scotland Police in delivering on issues such as increasing performance and quality of service to the public in the investigation of volume crime, and freeing up additional front-line police officer time for high profile and intelligence-led policing activity to tackle antisocial behaviour and crime reduction in local communities.

**Key findings from the research:**

The findings from the evaluation focused on four main areas:

1. Improved Investigation - There was clear evidence that the PCU had contributed to a significant redistribution of time spent on investigations between police officers and police staff and in helping to reduce the amount of time spent on each investigation.
2. Better Quality of Service - Feedback from the public was almost unanimously positive, and the use of police staff in relation to Group 3 and Group 4 crime investigation was delivering a level of service which was thorough, comprehensive and effective.
3. Increased Frontline Capacity - The Priority Crime Unit released time spent by police officers on investigation of volume crime by almost 20,000 hours annually and the workload of response officers was reduced by a monthly average of 52% as a result of redistribution of investigation of low-level crimes to the PCU.
4. Best Value - The introduction of the PCU produced efficiency savings which represented a significant improvement in the efficient use of the Force's resources.

**Impact:**

The SIPR evaluation generally confirmed Central Scotland's innovative approach to investigating volume crime, while identifying a number of ways in which the mixed economy model could be taken forward, especially in relation to effective use of released time by frontline officers. The Area Commander reported that "the PCU made a significant contribution to the success in my area command during 2009/2010" and the evaluation's findings contributed to the project receiving a COSLA Excellence Award for modernising its workforce . Articles in both The Herald and The Scotsman about the PCU referred to the findings of the evaluation as supportive of the wider use of such a model and from May 2010 Central Scotland Police rolled out the model to encompass all three of its Area Commands with an increased number of investigative assistants and team co-ordinators.

**Publications:**

[**SIPR Briefings No. 9: Evaluation of the Priority Crime Unit in Central Scotland Police**](https://web.archive.org/web/20180107094711/http%3A/www.sipr.ac.uk/downloads/Briefing9.pdf)