

Finance and Public Administration Committee
20th Meeting, Session 6
Tuesday 10 June 2025

Inquiry into the cost-effectiveness of Scottish public inquiries

Purpose

1. The Committee is invited to take evidence from the following witnesses in relation to the Committee's inquiry into the cost-effectiveness of Scottish public inquiries—
 - Stephen McGowan, Deputy Crown Agent, Litigation, Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service; and
 - David Kennedy, General Secretary, Scottish Police Federation.

Inquiry remit and approach

2. The Committee agreed on 1 April 2025 to carry out an [inquiry into the cost-effectiveness of Scottish public inquiries](#), with the following remit—
 - to foster greater understanding of the current position with public inquiries in Scotland, including their number, timescales, extensions to remit, costs, categories of spend and outstanding recommendations
 - to enhance clarity around the purpose, framework and decision-making process for establishing public inquiries and their terms of reference, and whether any improvements are required
 - to establish if public inquiries in Scotland deliver value for money, the extent to which spending controls are necessary, and how they might be implemented while maintaining the independence and effectiveness of inquiries
 - to identify examples of good practice (in Scotland or elsewhere) which ensure cost-effectiveness
 - to identify alternatives to the Scottish inquiry model, including how such alternatives may work, deliver outcomes and value for money.
3. The inquiry will not make recommendations on the merits or otherwise of individual Scottish Government decisions on whether to hold a specific public inquiry, or recommendations made by individual public inquiries.
4. The Committee ran a [call for views](#) from 4 April to 9 May 2025. Fifteen submissions have been received, as well as four written submissions from witnesses in support of their oral evidence, which are available under [correspondence to the inquiry](#). [Published responses](#) are available on the Committee's webpage and a summary of those responses has also been [published](#).

5. The Committee has also written to the Scottish Government and current public inquiries seeking additional information. Responses to these letters have been received and are linked below:

- [Scottish Government](#)
- [Eljamel Inquiry](#)
- [Scottish Covid Inquiry](#)
- [Sheku Bayoh Inquiry](#)
- [Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry](#)
- [Scottish Hospitals Inquiry](#)

6. A [SPICe briefing](#) providing background information on the area has also been published along with an [updated cost table](#), to inform the evidence sessions for this inquiry.

Previous evidence session

7. The Committee has taken evidence:

- [20 May 2025](#), from Professor Sandy Cameron CBE;
- [27 May 2025](#), from Rt. Hon. Lord Hardie, Former Chair, Edinburgh Tram Inquiry; Dr Emma Ireton, Nottingham Trent University; Law Society of Scotland; Faculty of Advocates; and Compass Chambers;
- 3 June 2025, from the Institute for Government and NHS National Services Scotland.

8. The following key issues were discussed at the evidence session on 3 June—

Institute for Government (IfG)

- IfG will be publishing a report in the coming months proposing a package of reforms to public inquiries to address cost, time and effectiveness issues.
- There needs to be better guidance around the suite of options available for inquiries. New Zealand's guidance is a good example that supports looking at the topic with a view to identifying the appropriate option for inquiry or review. In New Zealand a timeline and a budget are set for the inquiry at the start.
- IfG's research has not considered the effectiveness of different types of chairs e.g. judge-led but understands there is a perception that the judge-led, forensic inquiry is seen as the 'gold standard'. It was suggested Ministers need to consider when establishing an inquiry whether it should be led by a policy specialist, a multi-disciplinary expert panel, or by a judge.
- Further consideration should also be given to who drafts recommendations, e.g. a policy specialist, so they are more effective.

- There are examples where repeated tragedies or disasters could have been avoided had recommendations been acted upon, such as the Thirlwall Inquiry. If recommendations from the Bristol Royal Infirmary Inquiry had been acted on, the Mid Staffordshire NHS Foundation Trust Inquiry might have been avoided.
- There are different options for monitoring implementation of recommendations. The Telford Inquiry carried out a review two years later, while the UK Infected Blood Inquiry has been kept open. IfG considers there should be a requirement for the inquiry report to set out an agreed approach to monitoring recommendations.
- Because inquiries are ad hoc, each new inquiry has to establish new methodologies and relationships to undertake its work. This could be better supported through lessons learning, knowledge sharing and training at the start of the inquiry.
- Some delays to inquiries have been caused by the Government or bodies engaging with an inquiry not being ready with their documentation. This can add several months to timescales.
- If all inquiries were statutory, the question would then be about which type of statutory inquiry is suitable. Not every statutory inquiry would need to use its statutory powers. New Zealand has statutory Government Inquiries (average 10 months and cost on average of £3.5 million), Public Inquiries (average 18 months and cost on average of £3.9 million) and then Royal Commissions for the most severe issues (average 20 months and cost an average of £16 million).
- In response to a question about people calling for a public inquiry to access relevant information/documentation, it was explained that there may be information that cannot be disclosed, such as during policing inquiries. It was suggested that a duty of candour may be a way of addressing this.
- Newer, innovative processes could be deployed to reduce costs, such as artificial intelligence (AI). IfG said legal teams when carrying out other legal work were using AI i.e. for disclosure but not when working for an inquiry. Cabinet Office are currently underfunded and under resourced to help support innovative work practices.
- The culture is already set with inquiries being more legalistic. Legal firms are involved with multiple inquiries close together and, over time, there has been developed learning of how an inquiry should be run, leading to a more adversarial process.

NHS National Services Scotland (NSS)

- Public Health Scotland and NSS were separate core participants in the UK Covid Inquiry with separate legal teams and separate costs associated. With recent modules of evidence, NSS asked to share a legal team and legal counsel, though they remained separate

core participants. This made it more cost effective but underlined this is a decision for individual chairs.

- Inquiries are lengthy, for example with the Scottish and UK Covid inquiries core participants are expected to talk about events that happened five years ago.
- There are benefits to taking a modular approach to inquiries for core participants. Having a well-defined area of evidence means part of the team could be released to carry out other work. It was emphasised that broad areas of evidence make it more difficult for core participants to assist the inquiry.
- Reimbursement of core participants' costs is a decision for the chair, though public bodies are expected to subsume the costs of participating in a public inquiry.
- There is difficulty in ascertaining costs incurred by public bodies in relation to public inquiries. NSS said this topic is frequently the subject of Freedom of Information Requests.
- NSS highlighted three sets of costs: the visible costs of inquiry, costs incurred by organisations and core participants, and 'difficult to quantify' cost for departmental budgets e.g. the release of staff to attend an inquiry or preparing written statements. Costs do not include the opportunity costs of prioritising public inquiries over day-to-day activities, e.g. not measuring the impact on service delivery.
- NSS confirmed its costs are closely monitored and where it provides legal services, such as litigation services (which includes public inquiries work) it recovers costs from territorial health boards. Health boards would pay for their own solicitors, but the Central Legal Office would source Counsel.
- The Antimicrobial Resistance Healthcare Associated team are involved with four current inquiries. NSS wrote to the judges about the timescales for questions and witness requirements, due to the impact these inquiries was having on this team, which still had to deliver services.
- Having a specific public inquiries team maintains strong administration and takes away some of that work from frontline workers. Many senior staff involved with inquiries have to work their evenings and weekends to maintain their service.
- The report on the UK Infected Blood Inquiry contained a recommendation to the Government about the follow-up of recommendations and what action it had taken. This was considered to "close the loop".
- Interim reports mean that although the inquiry is ongoing, mechanisms to effect the change can be put in place while the inquiry continues. Recommendations should take account of current practice, so they are more relevant.
- In response to a question about the reasons for the increase in the number of inquiries and the suggestion this could be due to the service complaints not being addressed, it was explained that

those affected may still be dissatisfied even after investigation of their complaint and the actions taken.

- It was noted that often there is a negative narrative around public inquiries but also that there is an opportunity to highlight best practice and for organisations to tell their story and derive points of learning from inquiries.

Written submissions of 10 June 2025 witnesses

9. Written submissions were received from both witnesses appearing at the Committee's meeting on 10 June. These are attached at Annexe A. Some key issues raised in this submission are summarised below.

Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Office (COPFS)

- COPFS is often called upon to assist and to be scrutinised by public inquiries. It is currently a party to, or liaising with, six Scottish inquiries and two UK inquiries.
- One Deputy Crown Agent coordinates COPFS' response to ensure there is an overview of the way in which inquiries are dealt with and to provide consistency in responses. This allows for staff to be deployed flexibly and enables COPFS to retain and develop corporate knowledge and expertise in the law and practice relating to public inquiries.
- Work on the Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry is dealt with separately by specialist sexual offences prosecutors to allow historical matters to be reconsidered in line with modern investigative and prosecutorial standards.
- Regular liaison with public inquiries is a key aspect of COPFS role, either as a core participant or in assisting the work of an inquiry. This is particularly important where there are any ongoing criminal inquiries and prosecutions at the same time as an inquiry.
- The last time recommendations were made by an inquiry for COPFS was the Fingerprint Inquiry which reported in 2011. The then Deputy Crown Agent set up a structure to implement those recommendations. It is anticipated that the COPFS Audit and Risk Committee, which is externally chaired, could provide oversight and scrutiny of the implementation of any future recommendations arising from an inquiry.
- Most costs relate to staff. The largest other cost is fees to Counsel. Not all costs associated with inquiries can be separately accounted for. For example, support services or senior management time is work done within the course of staff duties and cannot be disaggregated.
- Costs to COPFS of the Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry from 2017 to 30 April 2025 amounted to approx. £4.8 million. For the Sheku Bayoh Inquiry from November 2019 to 30 April 2025 the total cost was approx. £1 million. All inquiries from 2017 – 2025 amount to almost £6 million in costs to the COPFS.

- COPFS may express views in respect of the matters to be considered by an inquiry. For example, COPFS and the then Lord Advocate were of the view that there were matters in relation to the circumstances of Mr Bayoh's death that would be outwith the scope of a Fatal Accident Inquiry. Otherwise, COPFS role is limited to providing background advice to Scottish Government officials in relation to the nature and quantity of material that a public inquiry may have to consider, and any other context that can be provided such as whether there are any ongoing or further criminal inquiries.
- An example was provided of two non-statutory inquiries set up following the death of Surjit Singh Chhokar. One inquiry to report on the liaison arrangements between the police, the COPFS and the relatives and partner of Mr Chhokar, and on racism and the police investigation of any racist motive for the crime. The other inquiry investigated the Crown's decision-making following Mr Chhokar's murder. These inquiries were set up in 2000 and reported in 2001.

Scottish Police Federation (SPF)

- Inquiries demand significant input from the police service in terms of legal support, evidential preparation, officer time, and administrative resources.
- There are six current inquiries that will involve significant input from the police service. Taken together, "they represent a crippling financial and operational burden on a service already facing the most acute resourcing crisis in over a decade."
- The Sheku Bayoh Inquiry has cost over £20 million in direct costs to Police Scotland, with more than £25 million spent overall.
- No additional funding has been made available to cover the costs incurred of being involved in public inquiries. As cost pressures have to be absorbed, this increases the burden on overstretched colleagues, affecting their wellbeing, with some choosing to leave the police service.
- Although supportive of the principle of public inquiries, SPF "cannot support a system that expects those inquiries to be delivered at the expense of core policing services, with no financial safeguards, no formal consultation, and no regard for the cumulative impact".
- SPF has four recommendations:
 - 1) Legislate for ring-fenced funding for all police-related inquiry costs.
 - 2) Create a statutory pre-inquiry assessment process, including resource impact and operational feasibility.
 - 3) Reform the structure and governance of inquiries, placing enforceable controls on scope, duration, and financial oversight.
 - 4) Require early and formal consultation with the Police Service and other key stakeholders before inquiries are established.

Next steps

- 10. The Committee will continue taking evidence in relation to this inquiry at future meetings.**

Committee Clerking Team
June 2025

Alexandra Gherghiniş
Assistant Clerk
Finance and Public Administration Committee

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Your ref:
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Date: 3 June 2025

Dear Ms Gherghiniş

Cost Effectiveness of Scottish Public Inquiries

1. Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to the Committee's Inquiry.

Introduction

2. Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service (COPFS) is Scotland's prosecution service and death investigation authority. The Lord Advocate is the ministerial head of the system of criminal prosecutions and the investigation of deaths and COPFS fulfils this responsibility on her behalf. The work of COPFS is such that as a department it is often called upon to assist and to be scrutinised by Public Inquiries.

3. I note that the Committee does not intend to make recommendations on the merits or otherwise of individual Scottish Government decisions on whether to hold a specific public inquiry, or recommendations made by individual public inquiries. The Lord Advocate and Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service fully support the Inquiries which are currently underway. As a core participant and as a party to a number of Public Inquiries, I hope that the Committee will understand that I am constrained by the ongoing proceedings in those Inquiries as to what I may say. Public Inquiries must act fairly. They regulate fairness by the procedures and rules by which they operate and as a party to an Inquiry any commentary in relation to the Inquiry itself or its processes could be seen as a criticism of the Inquiry. Whilst the Inquiries are ongoing their processes, procedures and working practices are matters for the Inquiries themselves and it would not be appropriate to comment upon them before the Committee. I do hope that the Committee understands our position on that matter, and that the other information that I am providing in this submission is of assistance to the Committee.

Current Inquiries

4. Currently, COPFS is a party to, or liaising with the following Scottish Inquiries:
 - Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry (Core Participant)
 - The Scottish Hospitals Inquiry
 - The Sheku Bayoh Inquiry (Core Participant)
 - The Scottish COVID Inquiry
 - The Eljamel Inquiry
 - The Emma Caldwell
5. A further Scottish Inquiry is to be established into the events surrounding what has become known as the “Rangers case”. The form and nature of this Inquiry has yet to be confirmed.
6. COPFS is also currently involved in two Inquiries established by the Government of the United Kingdom, namely:
 - The United Kingdom COVID Inquiry
 - The Post Office Inquiry
7. Each of these Inquiries has its own remit and terms of reference. The establishment of a Public Inquiry is one for Ministers and not one for COPFS.
8. The COPFS approach to Public Inquiries is that one Deputy Crown Agent coordinates our response to ensure that there is an overview of the way in which we deal with the Inquiries and to provide consistency in our response. This also allows for staff to be deployed flexibly in meeting the requirements of the various Inquiries and enables us to retain and develop corporate knowledge and expertise in the law and practice relating to Public Inquiries. Furthermore, it ensures that all costs incurred by COPFS in relation to Public Inquiries come together into one budget line to enable the better control of costs.
9. The exception to this is the Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry. The Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry work sits separately. That is for good reason. When the Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry began its work, the then Lord Advocate James Wolffe KC, made a commitment that where the Inquiry was considering a particular historical matter, any case in relation to that matter would be reconsidered in line with modern investigative and prosecutorial standards. Consideration by the Inquiry of historical events and our own reviews have led to further victims coming forward and additional investigations and prosecutions. In consequence liaison and engagement with the Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry is maintained by specialist Sexual Offences prosecutors who sit in the High Court function. There is, of course, regular liaison between all parts of COPFS dealing with public Inquiries to ensure that the efficiencies described above about all inquiries are maintained.

Ongoing Liaison

10. COPFS maintains regular liaison with the ongoing Public Inquiries. In relation to the Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry and the Sheku Bayoh Inquiry, COPFS through the Law Officers is a Core Participant. In relation to other Inquiries, there remains a need to maintain regular liaison both to ensure that we are doing all that we can to

assist the work of the Inquiry, for example through provision of evidence, and where necessary to ensure appropriate liaison and deconfliction of the work of the Inquiry and any ongoing criminal inquiries and prosecutions. This liaison ensures that where it is possible to do so, the important work of the relevant Inquiry and of the criminal justice system can go on in parallel without prejudicing the work of the other. This will not always be possible. An example of where this parallel approach has been facilitated is that the Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry has on several occasions published a report with initial redactions of detail where that detail might have prejudiced criminal proceedings.

11. The current Inquiries have not yet concluded and there are no recommendations for COPFS. The last occasion in which recommendations were made by a Public Inquiry for COPFS was the Fingerprint Inquiry which reported in 2011. The then Deputy Crown Agent up a structure for the purpose of implementing those recommendations.

12. In relation to the ongoing Inquiries, if recommendations are made for COPFS, those recommendations would be given full consideration by Law Officers and COPFS.

13. COPFS has an established structure for the oversight and implementation of recommendations from external reports such as Inspectorate reports. The COPFS Audit and Risk Committee which is externally chaired by a non-executive Director provides oversight and scrutiny of the implementation of recommendations from inspections. I anticipate that this structure would be adapted for any recommendations that were accepted arising from a Public Inquiry.

Costs

14. As I set out at paragraph 8, one team is responsible for most of the work that goes into preparing for the ongoing Inquiries. If possible, a separate cost code is used to keep track of the work in relation to Inquiries. Most of the costs relate to staff. The largest other cost is fees to Counsel.

15. Not all costs associated with Public Inquiries can be separately accounted for. Some of the input from specialist parts of COPFS, support services or senior management time is work done within the ordinary course of staff duties and cannot be disaggregated. Other work such as the cost of prosecutions arising from the work of the Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry is accounted for within the ordinary costs of sexual offences prosecutions.

16. Given that the Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry and Sheku Bayoh Inquiry have been ongoing the longest and given the stage that they are at, certain costs for those Inquiries are available. The costs to COPFS of the Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry can be disaggregated. From 2017 to 30 April 2025 the total cost to COPFS of work associated with the Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry amounted to £4,850,130. Costs can also be broken down for the Sheku Bayoh Inquiry. From November 2019 to 30 April 2025 the total cost to COPFS that can be attributed to that inquiry was £1,060,559.

17. The total expenditure that can be attributed to Public Inquiries between 2017 and 2025 is £5,910,689. A further breakdown of the costs is available at tables A and B.

18. As noted, not all costs of dealing with the Inquiries can be disaggregated as additional time is spent on the Inquiries by staff who deal with Inquiry matters as part of their ordinary work, and some staff work between Inquiries.

Other Comments

19. The establishment of a Public Inquiry, the Inquiry's Terms of Reference and the administration and costs of any Inquiry are solely matters for Scottish Ministers. Exceptionally, COPFS may express views in respect of the matters to be considered by an Inquiry. For example, prior to the setting up of the Sheku Bayoh Inquiry, COPFS and the then Lord Advocate were of the view that there were matters in relation to the circumstances of Mr Bayoh's death that would be outwith the scope of a Fatal Accident Inquiry and therefore there would be benefit in a Public Inquiry being held. Those views were communicated to Scottish Ministers by the Lord Advocate and informed the final terms of reference of the Inquiry.

20. Other than the exceptional circumstances of the Sheku Bayoh Inquiry, COPFS role is limited to providing background advice to Scottish Government officials in relation to the nature and quantity of material that a public inquiry may have to consider, and any other context that can be provided such as whether there is any ongoing or further criminal inquiries. These discussions will provide useful information to Government when they are considering the establishment of a Public Inquiry.

21. The Committee is interested in whether other types of Inquiry are available. Non-statutory inquiries may be set up. The Committee will note that following the death of Surjit Singh Chhokar, two enquiries were set up. Dr Raj Jandoo was asked to report on the liaison arrangements between the police, the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service and the relatives and partner of Mr Chhokar. Dr Jandoo was also asked to consider and comment on racism and the police investigation of any racist motive for the crime. Sir Anthony Campbell was asked carry out an independent examination of the Crown's decision-making following Mr Chhokar's murder. These inquiries were set up in 2000 and reported in 2001.

22. Non-statutory Inquiries have been set up elsewhere in the United Kingdom. An example is The Angiolini Inquiry, a three-part Inquiry established to investigate how an off-duty police officer was able to abduct, rape and murder a member of the public in England and Wales, and thereafter to examine vetting, recruitment, police conduct and culture more generally. Whilst it is often correctly said that a non-statutory Inquiry does not have powers of compulsion, not all Inquiries would need these powers. Further, an Inquiry could be established as a non-statutory Inquiry but converted into a statutory Inquiry if powers of compulsion were thought to be required. The Chair of the Angiolini Inquiry confirmed in her Part 1 report that:

"The Inquiry has been able to fulfil the Terms of Reference for Part 1 successfully while operating on a non-statutory basis. This was outlined in a letter to the Home Secretary in June 2022, highlighting that the Inquiry had to date "benefited from positive cooperation from many individuals and organisations, which [...] greatly facilitated our task" [para B6 of Methodology at page 335]"

23. I hope that this is of assistance to the Committee.

Yours sincerely

Stephen McGowan
Deputy Crown Agent, Litigation

TABLE A**Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry Costs**

	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	Grand Total
Staffing	392,405	145,637	133,326	508,194	633,454	935,251	949,694	963,457	83,394	£ 4,661,709
Case Related	8,250	4,260	13,983	16,316	106,058	16,957	20,630	4,500	5,400	£ 187,834
Office			25		27	38	157	320	22	£ 589
Total	400,655	149,897	147,333	524,510	739,539	869,142	970,481	968,277	88,816	£ 4,850,130

Case Related Costs

- Inquiry Costs including Fees to Ad Hoc ADs, Fees to Counsel,
- Ordinary Witness Costs relating to Inquiry, not prosecution case related

Office Costs

- Travel and Subsistence costs

TABLE B

Sheku Bayoh Inquiry Costs

	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	Grand Total
Staffing	8,489	62,250	83,103	168,248	96,071	7,304	£ 425,465
Case Related	4,875	46,850	128,805	131,863	284,451	38,250	£ 635,094
Total	13,364	109,100	211,908	300,111	380,522	45,554	£ 1,060,559

Case Related Costs Narrative

- Costs relate to Fees to Counsel and other professional services.



SCOTTISH POLICE FEDERATION
Established by Act of Parliament

Ref: DK/DK

The Clerk
Finance and Public Administration Committee
The Scottish Parliament
EDINBURGH
EH99 1SP

By email to fpa.committee@parliament.scot

Dear Convenor

The Financing of Public Enquires

On behalf of the Scottish Police Federation, I write to raise concerns regarding the escalating and unsustainable burden that public inquiries are placing on policing in Scotland. The current situation is critical.

At present, **six major public inquiries** are ongoing in Scotland:

1. **The Sheku Bayoh Inquiry**
2. **The Emma Caldwell Inquiry**
3. **The Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry**
4. **The Scottish Hospitals Inquiry**
5. **The Scottish COVID-19 Inquiry**
6. **The Eljamel and NHS Tayside Inquiry**

Each of these inquiries demands significant input from the Police Service in terms of legal support, evidential preparation, officer time, and administrative resources. Taken collectively, they represent a crippling financial and operational burden on a service already facing the most acute resourcing crisis in over a decade.

Police Scotland operates with its lowest officer numbers since its creation, with front-line services under relentless pressure and no capacity to absorb additional workload. Yet, time and again, officers are abstracted from their core duties to meet the requirements of public inquiries often for months or years at a time with no dedicated budget, no additional staffing, and no structured

engagement in the planning of those inquiries other than in which the police have to do so.

This is not sustainable. It is not fair on our members, and it is not in the public interest.

- **The Sheku Bayoh Inquiry** has already resulted in **over £20 million in direct costs to Police Scotland**, with more than £25 million spent overall. This includes legal representation, document retrieval, officer abstractions, and dedicated staffing—funded entirely from core policing budgets.
- **The Emma Caldwell Inquiry** is expected to cost millions requiring extensive review of historic evidence and major disclosure operations. It will demand years of officer time, much of which will be abstracted from active investigation units.
- **The Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry** continues to draw in extensive support from Police Scotland, particularly from legacy records, witness management, and safeguarding coordination.
- **The Scottish Hospitals Inquiry**, though healthcare-focused, has involved police in issues of public safety, documentation, and security procedures adding to cumulative workload pressures.
- **The COVID-19 Inquiry** has required Police Scotland to account for its emergency response during the pandemic, enforcement decisions, and operational policy-making across a vast timeline.
- **The Eljamel Inquiry**, while focused on NHS practices, still calls on police resources for records management and historic investigative review as the Lord Advocate has stated that the actions of the surgeon, met the criminal test.

In each case, no additional funding has been made available to cover the costs incurred. These pressures are absorbed by reallocating staff, reducing local presence, delaying investigations, and increasing the burden on already overstretched colleagues. To believe that public safety hasn't been compromised would be foolhardy. Officer wellbeing is being totally neglected, and we are seeing more and more officers wanting to leave the service.

The Scottish Police Federation supports transparency, accountability, and institutional learning. We support the principle of public inquiries. But we cannot support a system that expects those inquiries to be delivered at the expense of core policing services, with no financial safeguards, no formal consultation, and no regard for the cumulative impact.

1. Effectiveness and Value for Money

The current inquiry model is not effective. Many inquiries become protracted and unfocused. Without statutory timelines or budget oversight, costs spiral, and impact is delayed. Policing resources are used heavily at the cost of local policing.

2. Transparency

Transparency is inconsistent. The public, and contributing participants, are rarely informed about inquiry costs, remits, or extensions. Scope creep is common. We urge mandatory publication of budgets, timescales, and planned deliverables at the outset.

3. Legislative Framework

The legislative process for establishing inquiries is heavily centralised and lacks adequate consultation with operational agencies like Police Scotland. We call for a statutory duty to consult impacted public bodies, including police staff representatives, before an inquiry is established.

4. Cost Monitoring

There are no enforceable mechanisms for monitoring costs. This leads to unchecked overruns. We advocate for:

- Independent financial oversight
- Maximum inquiry durations unless formally extended by Parliament
- Annual public reporting on progress and spend

5. Cost Effectiveness and Independence

Independence is essential—but it must be balanced with accountability. Inquiry chairs can remain independent while working within a framework that ensures value for public money. We suggest a model similar to Australia's Royal Commissions, which mandate financial planning and delivery milestones.

6. Implementing Recommendations

Recommendations from inquiries are too often shelved. We propose:

- Statutory deadlines for publication of implementation plans
- Annual reporting to Parliament on progress
- Independent post-implementation review

7. Alternatives to Full Public Inquiries

In many cases, alternatives such as independent commissioned reviews, judicial audits, or parliamentary select-style investigations may achieve the same objectives with less cost, quicker timelines, and reduced resource pressure. Scotland should look internationally at models in Canada, New Zealand, and Ireland where inquiry frameworks are more proportionate and cost managed.

We would ask the Committee to consider

1. Legislate for ring-fenced funding for all police-related inquiry costs.
2. Create a statutory pre-inquiry assessment process, including resource impact and operational feasibility.
3. Reform the structure and governance of inquiries, placing enforceable controls on scope, duration, and financial oversight.
4. Require early and formal consultation with the Police Service and other key stakeholders before inquiries are established.

The Scottish Police Federation cannot support a model that delivers accountability at the cost of capability. The Police Service cannot continue to fund public inquiries by hollowing out its ability to police. Reform is not optional, it is essential.

We would welcome the opportunity to give evidence in person and to work constructively with the Committee on this issue.

Yours sincerely

DAVID KENNEDY
General Secretary