

# Formatting Standards for the Police Scotland Service Delivery Record Set

National Guidance

**Notice:**

This document has been made available through the Police Service of Scotland Freedom of Information Publication Scheme. It should not be utilised as guidance or instruction by any police officer or employee as it may have been redacted due to legal exemptions.

Owning Department: Governance, Audit and Assurance – Policy Support

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## **Scope / Purpose / Responsibility**

This guidance document supports the Equality, Diversity and Dignity Policy and should be read in conjunction with the Governance of the Police Scotland Record Set Guidance.

This document provides police officers and authority / police staff with instruction on the structure and formatting requirements to be adhered to during the creation and review of all documents that form part of the Service Delivery Record Set for Police Scotland.

The Police Scotland Service Delivery Record Set consists of documents that generally fall under one of the following:

* Policy.
* Standard Operating Procedure (SOP).
* National Guidance (may also be referred to as Manuals, Toolkits, Aide Memoire etc.).
* Divisional / Departmental Guidance.
* Forms.
* Memoranda.

Definitions of the above can be found in the Governance of the Police Scotland Record Set Guidance.

Policy Support are responsible for ensuring all service delivery Policies, SOPs and National Guidance meet the standards outlined in this guidance. Policy Support also ensure all Police Scotland memos are published to the required standard. Policy Support Forms Team manages all Police Scotland Forms. Police Scotland Forms are currently being updated to ensure full compliance with new formatting standards. While this is being progressed, the Forms Team will provide advice, guidance, and direction on a case-by-case basis.

All Divisional or Departmental Guidance must meet the standards outlined in this guidance. Owning departments are responsible for ensuring compliance.

HR Policy manages all People and Development Policy and Procedure documents. They are responsible for ensuring compliance with accessibility and corporate identity standards.

Information Assurance are responsible for the management of all Partnership Working Agreements and related documents.

## **Equality and Diversity Considerations**

All new or revised Policies, SOPs, National Guidance and Divisional Guidance must undergo an Equality and Human Rights Impact Assessment (EqHRIA).

The EqHRIA should consider the accessibility of the guidance itself as well as any procedures outlined. Authors / reviewers must take care to consider the potential impact of unconscious bias in the development and content of their document.

The author / reviewer must always write in plain English, text that is simple, clear and jargon free. Plain English is writing that makes sense the first time you read it. Keep sentences short, use words that are appropriate for the reader and explain any specialist words, abbreviations, or acronyms.

Free Guides and examples of Plain English can be found on the Plain English website. Additionally, Microsoft Word has enhanced proofing capability which can check grammar, style, and readability. It must be enabled:

* From the top left menu, click ‘File’, then ‘Options’.
* Click on the ‘Proofing’ tab.
* Under the heading ‘When correcting spelling and grammar in Word’, the relevant settings can be adjusted.
* Check the heading ‘Show readability statistics’.
* Carry out a spell check of the document and relevant information will be provided.

Consider the potential for an unequal effect on end users, for example, those whose primary language is not English or who may be neurodivergent, dyslexic, or have a disability.

The Accessibility Checker in Microsoft Word can be used to check for accessibility issues. Detailed guidance on its use is found in the Making an Accessible Word Document Divisional Guidance produced by Corporate Communications.

To have a document read out loud, it must be in PDF format. Once opened using the Adobe application, carry out the following steps:

* Navigate to the page you want to have read out.
* From the top left menu, click ‘View’, then ‘Read Out Loud’.
* Click ‘Activate Read Out Loud’.

Click on chosen sentences or, re-navigate to the same menu and choose ‘Read This Page Only’ or ‘Read to End of Document’.

More information and guidance about EqHRIAs can be found in the Equality and Human Rights Impact Assessment National Guidance.

## Use of Corporate Templates

Authors / reviewers must always use the most current templates when creating and reviewing documents.

The following templates will be provided by Policy Support as required:

* Policy
* SOP
* National Guidance.

The template for Divisional Guidance is published on the Police Scotland intranet and must be used by departments and divisions when producing this type of document.

These templates use the corporate font and styles (outlined in section 4 below) which should not be altered. Authors should avoid pasting text in from other documents as this can disrupt document formatting.

It is essential that formatting conventions are strictly followed. This will provide a logical structure to the document and activate the bookmarking functionality. This also ensures assistive technology can read the document correctly. The formatting conventions are contained in the templates but must continue to be followed by owning departments during the drafting process.

## Headings / Styles

To format Headings and Subheadings use the functions on the document toolbar. In the Home tab – Styles section – you can change the pre-set styles. If unsure, contact Policy Support for advice.

The following conventions will be followed:

* Heading 1 is Arial 18, bold in black used for document titles. Under spacing select 30pt in Before and 10pt in After.
* Heading 2 is Arial 16, bold in black used for sections headings. Under spacing select 30pt in Before and 10pt in After.
* Heading 3 is Arial 14, bold in black used for sub-section heading. Under spacing select 30pt in Before and 10pt in After.
* Heading 4 is Arial 12, bold in black and only used when needed for sub-subheadings. Under spacing select 30pt in Before and 10pt in After.
* Normal body text is Arial 12 in black. Bold is not used in normal text. Line spacing is at 1.4. Under spacing select 12pt in Before and 0pt in After.

Always use sentence case in headings, sections headings and sub-headings, do not use caps, lowercase, toggle case or capitalise each word.

Only section headings require to be numbered. Subheadings and paragraphs should not be numbered (other than for ordered lists).

### Bullet Points

Unordered lists, also known as bullet points, should be used to provide clear and succinct instruction or information such as lists of actions or options to consider.

* List Paragraph is used for ordered and unordered lists. Arial 12 in black. Line spacing is at 1.4. Under spacing select 12pt in Before and 12pt in After. 0.63cm indent. Solid bullet point as demonstrated here should be used for unordered lists.
	+ Sub bullet should be further indented and use the outline bullet point demonstrated here.

Ordered lists are used to provide sequential information such as a series of instructions which must be followed in a particular order.

1. Numbers should be used for ordered list using the same settings as unordered lists.
	1. Every list can be nested into another list. If a nested list is used within an already numbered list, it should be indented and ‘lettered’ numbering should be used.
* If the nested list does not need to be ordered, an unordered list can be used.
1. Care should be taken to use ordered lists only where they are required to assist the user or ensure every step of a process is considered. If unsure, contact Policy Support for advice.

## Structure / Use of Styles

For the main body of text, the style shown in this document and outlined within corporate templates must be used. Documents should not feature multiple fonts or use any other styles to emphasise text. Certain types of text should be highlighted using the following rules:

### Title Page

* The title of the document should be Heading 1.
* The type of document (For example Standard Operating Procedure) must be included directly below the title and be Arial 16 text.

### Contents Page / Glossary of Terms

A table of contents gives users an overview of the document’s contents and structure and allows a reader to go directly to a specific section when viewed on a computer.

These must be included at the beginning of the document using the Automatic Table 1 style available in the References tab. The table of contents heading should match Heading 2 (Arial 16, bold in black. Spacing 30pt Before, 10pt After).

You must use correct document heading styles throughout your document for this to automatically populate.

Glossary of Terms is a repeat of information that is already contained within the document and should not be included.

### Header / Footer

The header should only contain the Government Security Classification (GSC) marking and any handling instruction in Arial Bold 12pt centred. Microsoft Word may add additional protective marking to your document. This should be removed before publication – Policy Support can assist with this.

The first line of the footer should repeat the GSC marking in the same format.

The second line of the footer should have the version number in the bottom left corner and the page number in the bottom right (other than the front page which should not include a page number).

### Compliance Record / Version Control Table / Feedback

The compliance record, version control table, and feedback information must be included at the end of the document.

Heading 2 should be used for the headings of these sections. These sections should not be numbered.

### Appendices

Appendices should only be used to reflect essential geographical / divisional variation in guidance or instruction. These will be placed at the end of the documents prior to compliance and version control table page.

* The appendix title should be Heading 2.
* The appendix subject should be Heading 3.
* Any headings and subheadings within the appendices should be Heading 4.

Any additional instruction included in geographical appendices must be considered carefully and only include information that is materially different from the main content of the document.

### Hyperlinks

Hyperlinks can be added to a document to cross refer to other documents hosted on the Police Scotland Intranet, SPA Intranet or other websites.

There is no list of ‘approved’ websites. Authors should carefully assess whether a link to an external website is suitable. Is the site published by a ‘reputable’ organisation? Is there a risk that the link could lead on to inappropriate content? (Explicit material, promotion of alcohol, gambling, drug use, etc.)

The suitability of external hyperlinks will be checked during the Information Assurance compliance process (as outlined in the Governance of the Police Scotland Record Set Guidance).

Links should be provided, with context, in the body of the document and not in a ‘useful links’ or ‘further reading’ section.

Any link included in the document should give clear and accurate information about where the reader is being linked to. Use meaningful link text, never use words like ‘Click Here’ or ‘Here’ for links.

It is the author’s responsibility to add and check all hyperlinks.

It is not necessary to hyperlink a document every time it is mentioned in a document – these should only be repeated if it would be beneficial for the end user to click on it whilst reading a particular section.

### Style / Structure / Content Considerations

* All text must be aligned to the left. Never centre or justify text as this makes spaces between words uneven which can make it difficult to read.
* Always use black for the text colour in your documents. If you must add colour into your document, ensure the contrast is acceptable.
* Acronyms or initials should be written out in full the first time used with their abbreviated version in brackets, for example ‘Scottish Police Authority (SPA)’.
* All caps text should not be used within the body of text other than for acronyms or initials.
* Avoid unnecessary use of capital letters, including in headings. Police Scotland or departments such as Policy Support are capitalised but no capital P for police, for example ‘when calling the police’.
* Underline should only be used for hyperlinks. If a link does not automatically underline, add an underline.
* Italics must not be used.
* Bold should only be used in headings.
* There should be only one space after full stops or similar punctuation marks.
* Documents should be written in Plain English. Where possible short sentences of 15-20 words should be used. Avoid complex sentence structures.
* Avoid repetition unless necessary to assist the end user. Hyperlinks can be used to cross-refer within a document instead.
* Do not use unusual or technical terms; if used they must be explained.
* Avoid jargon or buzzwords. Jargon is a type of language that is only understood by a particular group of people. Jargon is difficult to understand and meaningless to a lot of people.
* Avoid using non-standard symbols (for example mathematical symbols or asterisks) around or as substitutes for words.
* Footnotes must not be used. If references are required use hyperlinks or short quotes; and
* Information contained in another Police Scotland document must not be repeated in full as this creates an amendment trap. Hyperlinks or references to other documents should be used when required.

## Provision of Contact Details

It is important to include relevant contact details within a document. This provides a clear source of further information or assistance if required.

Personal contact names or emails must not be included - shared business email addresses or team phone numbers should be used instead. If this is not possible, consideration should be given to providing a hyperlink to a relevant intranet page where contact details can be provided and updated as required.

Addresses and telephone numbers of external partners should not be used in the document unless these are available externally to the public.

The use of a key contacts section is good practice as this makes the redactions process easier for Freedom of Information requests or model publication scheme requirements.

## Visual Elements

The inclusion of images, screenshots, charts and other visual elements can help convey complex information and can assist readers with dyslexia and other learning differences to follow meaning.

It is important to remember that not everyone reading your document will be able to see it. Images and other visual elements should never be used as a replacement of words to explain what is being shown.

The placement of any visual elements on the page should be carefully considered so as not to disrupt the flow of text and make it hard to follow. They should be aligned ‘in line’ with text with sufficient space between the text and the image as this allows assistive technology to read the alternative text (alt text) in the intended context.

Equality and Human Rights Impact Assessment considerations should be paramount when including any imagery.

### Alternative Text

All visual content must have alternative text, also known as alt text. This ensures assistive technology can understand the information being communicated visually.

This can be added to any visual elements you include in your document. To add alternative text, right click on the graphic element and select format picture / object / shape / etc. Add a clear description of the item in the Alt Text description box. Alt text is not what you expect the image to represent, or a name for the image, it should be a description of what is in the image or graphic.

### Photographs / Images / Screenshots

Photographs should be relevant to the subject matter and inoffensive in nature.

Any copyright restrictions and / or other factors relating to the usability of any images must be confirmed by the author. If an image is not owned by Police Scotland, confirmation must be obtained from the owner that it can be used by Police Scotland for the specific purpose required. It is not sufficient to assume that an image openly published on the internet is freely available for use by Police Scotland. Information Assurance and Corporate Communications can provide further advice if necessary.

### Tables

Tables should only be used to display data. Use the prescribed styles for tables; do not design your own. Tables should be labelled properly and carry a heading title and alternative text. You can find more detailed guidance on creating accessible tables in the Making an Accessible Word Document Divisional Guidance.

### Process Maps / Flowcharts

Ordered and nested lists are helpful in describing processes and structures and should be the first option for this.

However, if required, all process maps and flow charts should be designed using Microsoft Visio. If Visio is not available to the author, these can be ‘drafted’ on a word document but will be transferred onto Visio by Policy Support staff.

All process maps and flowcharts should be completed on a white background with black text – colour fill must never be used.

Never use colour alone to indicate meaning, especially on graphs or charts. For example, if you have a department structure, do not use colour alone to indicate what team each person works in, for example ‘those in the green section’. You must add correct labels in text.

Avoid using any unnecessary decorative parts such as lines, arrows, stars, callouts etc. These are not accessible and can be confusing for the reader.

As a visual element, the content of process maps / flowcharts must also be included in different format such as ordered and nested lists. Alt text is unlikely to be sufficient to describe these, but must be added to explain what they describe, and to direct users to the location within the document of the alternate format.

## Document Formats

Policies, SOPs, and National Guidance should be routinely published as Word documents. This will not always be possible in order to meet certain document security requirements. If documents must be converted to PDF, this will be facilitated by Policy Support to ensure compliance with accessibility standards.

Alternate formats such as Microsoft PowerPoint are not suitable.

## Key Contacts

Further advice and assistance can be obtained by emailing:

Information has been removed due to its content being exempt in terms of the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002. Exempted Section 30 (c) - Prejudice to the Effective Conduct of Public Affairs.

## Compliance Record

EqHRIA completion / review date: 03/10/2023

Information Management Compliant: Yes

Health and Safety Compliant: Yes

## Version Control Table

| Version | History of amendments | Approval date |
| --- | --- | --- |
| 1.00 | Initial Approved Version | 08/01/2015 |
| 2.00 | Updated to reflect changes required in relation to the SOP review. | 09/03/2020 |
| 3.00 | Cyclical review conducted. Content reviewed and fully revised. | 03/10/2023 |

## Feedback

All Police Scotland service delivery Policies, Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) and National Guidance are subject to regular reviews. It is important that user feedback is considered when documents are reviewed.

If any officer / staff member wishes to provide comment, or make suggestions for improvements to this or any associated document, a Service Delivery Policy and Procedure Feedback Form (Form 066-014) should be used.