

Cheshire Constabulary has made improvements to how it identifies, monitors and manages integrity issues

In 2011, the Home Secretary asked Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) to look at "instances of undue influence, inappropriate contractual arrangements and other abuses of power in police relationships with the media and other parties".

While the resulting report, *Without Fear or Favour*, found no evidence that corruption was endemic in police service relationships, it did not issue a clean bill of health. In particular, HMIC was concerned that few forces provided any policy or guidance in relation to social media, and what second jobs are suitable for officers and staff. The report made several recommendations to help the service address these issues.

In 2012 HMIC revisited all forces to track progress against these recommendations.

In Cheshire Constabulary, HMIC found:

- Since 2011 Cheshire Constabulary has conducted its own integrity 'health check' and developed a counter-corruption plan.
- The constabulary has reviewed all its policies that relate to the integrity areas covered by this inspection, and has either updated them, or is in the process of doing so – although more needs to be done to let staff know about this.
- The constabulary has updated its media policy; as a result it is now in line with national guidance and is much clearer about how police relationships with the media should work.
- The constabulary also has checking mechanisms in place around information security. It is introducing new software which will enable more checks to ensure that both information and computer systems are kept secure.
- Between September 2011 and May 2012, the force did not investigate any instances of inappropriate disclosures to the media.
- The constabulary encourages staff to use social networking sites (such as Twitter and Facebook) to engage with communities, and has recently produced guidance on how police officers and staff should behave when doing so.
- HMIC's independently commissioned research identified seven cases of what could be considered potentially inappropriate behaviour on Facebook or Twitter by members of staff in Cheshire Constabulary. These have been referred back to the force
- Between September 2011 and May 2012 there have been 40 applications for second jobs, all of which were approved.
- Data provided by the force to HMIC shows that there has been no change in the number of staff working in the anti-corruption unit since our 2011 inspection.

HM Inspector of Constabulary for the Northern Region, Roger Baker QPM, said:

“Cheshire Constabulary has made some improvements to how it identifies, monitors and manages integrity issues since HMIC last reviewed this in 2011. However, more needs to be done to let staff know about the changes it has made.

This reflects our findings across the whole of England and Wales. We found that the police service is making progress in how it monitors and safeguards relationships with the media, contractors and others; but we are concerned that changes have not been implemented at a quicker pace.

HMIC will therefore continue to monitor and inspect progress in order to provide the public with assurance that all forces are gripping these vital issues.”

The full report for Cheshire Constabulary, along with the national thematic review, *Revisiting Police Relationships*, can be found at www.hmic.gov.uk

Notes to editors

1. A copy of the national report, *Revisiting Police Relationships*, and individual force reports can be found on the HMIC website www.hmic.gov.uk
2. In 2011, the Home Secretary asked Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) to look at “instances of undue influence, inappropriate contractual arrangements and other abuses of power in police relationships with the media and other parties”. The resulting report, *Without Fear or Favour*, was based on an inspection of all 43 forces in England and Wales, as well as the British Transport Police (BTP), the National Policing Improvement Agency (NPIA) and, at its request, the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI). We also ran telephone surveys to find out if the public thought corruption was a problem for the Service, and looked at police use of social media. The 2011 report can be found on the HMIC website www.hmic.gov.uk
3. The revisit used the 2011 criteria and was based on self assessments by 44 forces (including the British Transport Police), supported by inspection work in July and August 2012. HMIC also repeated and extended the surveys of public opinion on the range and type of corruption issues in the police service, and of police use of social media.
4. Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) is an independent inspectorate, inspecting policing in the public interest, and rigorously examines the efficiency and effectiveness of police forces and authorities to tackle crime and terrorism, improve criminal justice and raise confidence. HMIC inspects and regulates all 43 police forces in England and Wales together with other major policing bodies such as the Serious Organised Crime Agency, the Police Service of Northern Ireland and the British Transport Police.
5. For further information, HMIC’s press office can be contacted during office hours from 8:30am – 5:30pm Monday – Friday on 0203 513 0600.
6. HMIC’s out-of-hours press office line for urgent media enquiries is 07836 217 729.