



Inspecting policing  
in the public interest

**Revisiting police  
relationships:  
progress report**

**Cheshire Constabulary  
December 2012**

## About this review

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*, published in December 2011, found no evidence of endemic corruption in the Police Service. However, we did not issue a clean bill of health:

- Few forces provided any policy or guidance around appropriate relationships between the police and the media and others;
- There was a general lack of clarity around acceptance of gifts and hospitality; use of corporate credit cards; and second jobs for officers and staff, which could leave forces vulnerable to (at least the perception of) corruption; and
- Few forces and authorities had proactive and effective systems in place to identify, monitor and manage these issues.

We made several recommendations to help the service address these issues, and committed to revisiting forces in 2012 to track progress.

The revisit found that while forces have made some progress, particularly around putting in place processes and policies to manage threats to integrity, more needs to be done. The pace of change also needs to increase, not least to demonstrate to the public that the service is serious about managing integrity issues, which have retained a high media profile over the last year.

A thematic report, *Revisiting Police Relationships: A progress report* is available from [www.hmic.gov.uk](http://www.hmic.gov.uk), and gives more information about what we found across England and Wales. The rest of this report focuses on what we found in Cheshire.

This time HMIC is publishing force-level reports. This is so the public and the new Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) can see how their force has progressed since 2011.

A note on the scope of our review: Since our 2011 inspection, questions around police integrity and corruption have continued to be asked. For instance, the Leveson Inquiry has looked at relationships between officers and journalists (among other things), while investigations into senior officers and into the handling of historic investigations (such as the Hillsborough disaster) have received widespread media coverage. The findings in this report relate only to police relationships with the media and others, rather than broader issues of police integrity.

## Findings for Cheshire

Since 2011 Cheshire Constabulary has conducted its own integrity 'healthcheck' and developed a counter-corruption plan. It 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.

### ■ How are press relations handled, and information leaks investigated?

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. Requests from journalists and broadcasters are generally referred to and dealt with by trained staff in the media unit, who record all the details electronically.

The media unit monitors national and local media coverage of the constabulary. Any potential information leaks are investigated by the Professional Standards Department (PSD). 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. Staff generally understood the standards expected of them. However, there is no guidance on how they should use social media when they are not at work. 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.

### ■ Is there more clarity around acceptance of gifts and hospitality, procurement, and second jobs?

The **gifts and hospitality** policy has been reviewed and is now in line with national guidance, with a presumption that, generally, anything other than light refreshments will be declined. A single register is kept of the gifts and hospitality accepted and declined. This is checked regularly to make sure that the relationship between the police and the provider of any gift or hospitality accepted is appropriate. The staff HMIC spoke to understood the rules around receiving gifts and hospitality.

There is no monitoring in place to cross-reference contract and **procurement** registers with the gifts and hospitality register to ensure the integrity of the procurement process (e.g. to look out for instances where a company provides hospitality, and then is awarded a contract).

PSD manages all requests for **second jobs**. The constabulary is in the process of introducing a revised business interests policy which is in line with national guidance and is clearer about what is and is not acceptable. All second jobs are subject to an annual review. Since September 2011 there have been 40 applications for second jobs, all of which were approved.

## How does the force identify, monitor and manage potential integrity issues?

The police authority has continued to exercise oversight and governance over integrity issues. For example, it commissioned an independent review focused on procurement processes and chief officer relationships and hospitality. This made a number of recommendations, which were acted upon and completed in March 2012. The recently elected PCC will need to be satisfied with the governance and reporting mechanisms for these issues.

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. There are no plans to change current resourcing levels. Between September 2011 and May 2012 the force instigated 12 investigations into the conduct of its officers and staff in relation to the areas covered by this report.

The constabulary has provided media training to neighbourhood officers and police community support officers (PCSOs), as well as to people in some other roles, so that they have more awareness of the key issues. However, there has been no constabulary-wide training on integrity issues since our last inspection, although an integrity aspect has been incorporated into some other courses. The 'Quality Matters' programme (to re-affirm values and standards) is being introduced to reinforce standards of quality and professionalism across the organisation.

Changes to policy are communicated via email and through the constabulary's intranet. However, there is no mechanism to check that officers and staff have read and understood them.

## Next steps

HMIC will continue to inspect on integrity issues as part of our existing programme of force inspections.

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ISBN: 978-1-78246-041-1

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