



Inspecting policing
in the public interest

**Revisiting police
relationships:
progress report**

**Devon and Cornwall Police
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, and gives more information about what we found across England and Wales. The rest of this report focuses on what we found in Devon and Cornwall.

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 Devon and Cornwall

Since 2011 Devon and Cornwall Police has conducted an integrity 'healthcheck', using the Self-Assessment Checklist provided in HMIC's 2011 report, *Without Fear or Favour*. Several policies (covering relationships with the media, acceptance of gifts and hospitality, social media use and police officers having second jobs) have been updated or are in the process of being reviewed – although more needs to be done to let staff know about this.

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

The force is currently updating its media policy. In the interim, it has circulated clear guidance and advice to staff: this outlines how relationships with the press should work, and stipulates that staff and officers must record contact with the media on a database which the Press Office can review and monitor. This is in line with the national guidance on relationships with the media produced by the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO).

The force Press Office monitors national and local press and refers any suspected information leaks to the Professional Standards Department (PSD) for investigation.

Between September 2011 and May 2012, the force reports that there has been one investigation recorded concerning inappropriate disclosures to the media. This investigation was still continuing at the time of inspection.

The force has reviewed its policy and associated guidance on how police officers and staff should behave on social networking sites (such as Twitter and Facebook). This covers use at work, and is being updated to include expected behaviour when staff are off duty. The force monitors whether guidance is being adhered to and if information is being leaked online, but acknowledges that this is not comprehensive. HMIC's independently commissioned research identified six cases of potentially inappropriate behaviour on Facebook or Twitter by officers and staff in Devon and Cornwall. These have been referred back to the force.

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

In 2011, we found that Devon and Cornwall Police was keeping a record of the **gifts and hospitality** received by officers and staff, but this was on a number of gift and hospitality registers held by different departments, which made it more difficult to monitor and identify any problems. The force is in the process of introducing a single electronic register, overseen by the head of PSD.

The force Fraud Risk Assessment Group meets quarterly and is chaired by the head of PSD. The group reviews emerging and ongoing integrity risks, and addresses them through an action plan and a focus on areas of vulnerability (such as credit card spend). However, there is no independent monitoring in place to cross-reference contracts and **procurement** 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).

Devon and Cornwall Police's policy for **second jobs** and business interests is being updated. The new process requires a member of staff to submit an application, which is checked by a supervisor and then forwarded to PSD for vetting and review before the Deputy Chief Constable (DCC) makes a final decision on whether it should be approved. Since September 2011 there have been 178 applications for second jobs, 173 of which have been 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. The recently elected Police and Crime Commissioner 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 an increase in the number of staff working in the anti-corruption unit since our 2011 inspection. Between September 2011 and May 2012, the force has instigated 69 investigations into the conduct of its officers and staff in relation to the areas covered by this report.

Since 2011 the Chief Constable and the DCC have led on a range of communications to reinforce force expectations around integrity issues such as disclosure of information; factors that might make staff financially vulnerable to compromising their integrity; and the drug-testing policy. PSD produces internal force briefings which highlight lessons learnt from PSD investigations, in order to remind staff of the standards of professional behaviour and values expected by the force. Since 2011 PSD has conducted an audit of training needs for its staff, and put in place courses to address any weaknesses.

Next steps

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

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