



Inspecting policing
in the public interest

**Revisiting police
relationships:
progress report**

**Dorset 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 Dorset.

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 Dorset

Since 2011 Dorset 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 either been updated and communicated to staff, or are in the process of being reviewed, even in areas where existing policy had previously been assessed as strong.

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

The force has updated its media guidelines. These outline how relationships with the press should work, and staff and officers are to notify the Press Office of all contact with journalists. This is in line with the national guidance on relationships with the media produced by the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO). We found that staff were aware of these new rules, and that training to raise awareness further was scheduled for October 2012.

The Media and Corporate Communications Department (MCCD) scan the media every day as part of their role and, where appropriate, have referred possible examples of information leaks to PSD for investigation. Between September 2011 and May 2012, the force investigated one instance of inappropriate disclosure to the media.

The force has reviewed its guidance on how police officers and staff should behave on social networking sites (such as Twitter and Facebook). This covers the behaviour expected both at work and off duty, and has been publicised to staff through Professional Standard Department (PSD) briefings, intranet messages, and at the Deputy Chief Constable's launch of the force's Policing Plan. The force monitors whether these guidelines are followed, although there is a reliance on staff reporting any concerns. HMIC's independently commissioned research identified two cases of potentially inappropriate behaviour on Facebook or Twitter by officers and staff in Dorset Police, both of which 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 Dorset Police was keeping a record of the **gifts and hospitality** which had been accepted, but not declined, by officers and staff. A new 'Gifts, Hospitality and Benefits' policy has recently been introduced. This requires staff to submit details of both accepted and declined gifts and hospitalities on a central electronic force register, which is monitored by PSD.

There is currently 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).

Dorset Police's procedure for approving business interests and **second jobs** requires the member of staff to submit an application, which is checked by a supervisor and then forwarded to the head of PSD for approval. Since September 2011 there have been 49 applications for second jobs, 47 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 PCC will need to ensure they are 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 instigated 39 investigations into the conduct of its officers and staff in relation to the areas covered by this report.

In April 2012 the Deputy Chief Constable used the launch of the Policing Plan as an opportunity to restate the values of the organisation. The launch included a presentation on social networking, incivility, information disclosure and financial vulnerability. Since our last inspection, PSD has issued newsletters and briefings on integrity issues. Further training to raise staff awareness around new guidance and policies, coupled with an input on the force's values and standards of behaviour, was due to be implemented in October 2012.

Next steps

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

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ISBN: 978-1-78246-047-3
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