



Inspecting policing
in the public interest

**Revisiting police
relationships:
progress report**

**Greater Manchester 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 Greater Manchester.

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 Greater Manchester

Since 2011 Greater Manchester Police has conducted a force-wide integrity 'healthcheck', using the Self-Assessment Checklist provided in HMIC's 2011 report, *Without Fear or Favour*. The resulting action plan focuses on areas this exercise suggested were in need of improvement. Progress against the plan is monitored by the Professional Standards Committee, which is chaired by an assistant chief constable and includes representatives from various departments, staff associations and, until November 2012, the police authority.

The force has reviewed its policies that relate to integrity issues, and either has or is currently updating them all – although more needs to be done to let staff know about the changes.

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

The force has updated its media policy, which is now in line with national guidance and is much clearer about relationships with the media. Media requests are generally referred to and dealt with by trained staff in the press office, and are all recorded electronically.

The press office monitors national and local media coverage of the force, and any potential information leaks to the media are investigated by the Professional Standards Branch. The force intends to provide updated training to those staff who have regular contact with the media, as well as to raise awareness of the key issues with all the workforce.

Between September 2011 and May 2012, the force investigated 15 instances of inappropriate disclosure to the media, three of which were continuing at the time of inspection.

Greater Manchester Police has recently reviewed and communicated its plans and procedures in relation to information security and is introducing more checks to make sure that force information, and the computer systems it is on, are kept secure.

The force recently produced a policy on how police officers and staff should behave on social networking sites (such as Twitter and Facebook), both while at work and when they are off duty. The force encourages staff to use these channels to engage with communities. Staff showed clear understanding of the standards expected from them in relation to social media. HMIC's independently commissioned research identified five cases of potentially inappropriate behaviour on Facebook or Twitter by members of staff in Greater Manchester, which 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. Registers are kept of gifts and hospitality, and include information on both accepted and declined items. The registers are regularly checked to make sure that the relationship between the police and the provider of any gift or hospitality accepted is appropriate.

The force provides training to credit and **procurement** cardholders and has checks in place to make sure cards are used appropriately. There is monitoring in place to cross-reference the contractors and suppliers' register with the gifts and hospitality register to ensure the integrity of the procurement process (e.g. by looking out for cases where a company provides hospitality, and then is awarded a contract).

The Professional Standards Branch manages all requests for **second jobs** from police officers, and intends to take responsibility for police staff applications in the near future. The revised policy in this area is in line with national guidance, and is now clearer about what is and is not acceptable. All second jobs are subject to an annual review. Since September 2011 there have been 76 applications, 72 of which have been approved.

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

The police authority continued to exercise oversight and governance over integrity issues. 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 resourcing levels. Between September 2011 and May 2012 the force instigated 117 investigations into the conduct of its officers and staff in relation to the areas covered by this report.

While there has been no force-wide training on integrity issues since our last inspection, the force is providing integrity training to specific groups of officers and staff, including new recruits. Changes to policy are communicated via email, the intranet and DVDs, but there is no mechanism to check that officers and staff have read and understood them (although a full communications plan is being developed).

Next steps

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

