



Inspecting policing
in the public interest

**Revisiting police
relationships:
progress report**

**Gwent 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 Gwent.

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 Gwent

Since 2011, Gwent Police has conducted an integrity 'healthcheck', using the Self-Assessment Checklist provided in HMIC's 2011 report, *Without Fear or Favour*, and the recommendations of the Filkin¹ report. 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. Plans are in place to ensure staff know about these changes.

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

A comprehensive media policy is in place, which outlines how relationships with the press should work is in place, and stipulates that staff and officers must notify the Press Office of all contact or proposed 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 knew about these rules.

Between September 2011 and May 2012, no instances of inappropriate disclosures to the media were identified in the force.

The force has recently introduced a new policy on how police officers and staff should behave on social networking sites (such as Twitter and Facebook). This covers the standards of behaviour expected when staff are both at work and off duty. Electronic systems monitor external sites to assess whether these rules are being adhered to, or if information is being leaked online. The force has produced a DVD for staff which highlights the risks of inappropriate disclosure of information on social media sites. HMIC's independently commissioned research identified one case of potentially inappropriate behaviour on Facebook or Twitter by officers and staff in Gwent Police, which has 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 Gwent was keeping a record of the **gifts and hospitality** received by officers and staff, but this was on multiple electronic registers, which made it more difficult to monitor and identify any problems. This is still the case, but the force is working to merge these into a single electronic register, overseen by the head of the Professional Standards Department (PSD).

1 Elizabeth Filkin (2012) *The Ethical Issues Arising from the Relationship Between Police and Media*. Advice to the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis and his Management Board. Available from www.met.police.uk

Monitoring now takes 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).

Gwent Police's policy for **second jobs** now routes all police officer and staff requests through the PSD. Since September 2011 there have been 80 applications for second jobs, 67 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 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. Between September 2011 and May 2012 the force instigated 73 investigations into the conduct of its officers and staff in relation to the areas covered by this report.

There has been training on integrity issues since our last inspection, with more planned for autumn 2012. Changes to policy are communicated via email and intranet systems, but there is no mechanism in place to check that officers and staff have read and understood them. Leadership seminars held by the Deputy Chief Constable provide frontline supervisors with clear information about integrity issues.

Next steps

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