

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary



Inspection of Humberside Police

Professional Standards

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INSPECTION OF PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS 2005

A - INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGY

1. Introduction

'Professional standards' within the policing context has evolved significantly in recent years, following the HMIC thematic 'Police Integrity' (1999), the establishment of an ACPO Presidential Taskforce to tackle corruption and the introduction of the ACPO Professional Standards Committee. Since 2000, virtually every force in England and Wales has significantly expanded the activities of pre-existing Complaints and Discipline Departments to include an element addressing anti-corruption, including covert investigation. These larger units are generically known as Professional Standards Departments (PSDs).

The issue of complaints holds a unique importance for HMIC in that legislation¹ creates a responsibility on Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMIs) to 'keep themselves informed' as to the handling of complaints in forces. Traditionally this has involved inspection of individual forces on a rolling programme. The advent of HMIC's annual Baseline Assessment (from 2003/04), the establishment of the Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC) in 2004, and a series of public inquiries have changed the professional standards landscape significantly. In view of this, HMIC decided to carry out a simultaneous programme of inspection of professional standards in all 43 English and Welsh forces to provide a comprehensive picture of current performance and identify any issues of national importance.

2. Inspection scope

While this national programme of inspection of 'Professional Standards' has focused primarily on the operation of the PSDs, and their sub-sections, it has also examined issues of professional standards in the wider policing context, and therefore touched on other departments and areas of responsibility, for example Human Resources (HR). The core elements identified nationally for examination were:

Professional Standards Department

- The umbrella department within which all 'professional standards' activities are delivered, including the investigation of complaints and misconduct and proactive anti-corruption work.

Complaints and misconduct unit

- Responsible for reactive investigations into public complaints as well as internal conduct matters.

Proactive unit

- Responsible for the intelligence-led investigation of vulnerability to or allegations of corruption.

¹ Section 15(1) of the Police Reform Act 2002

Intelligence cell

- Responsible for:
 - Overall intelligence management
 - Analysis
 - Field Intelligence
 - Financial Investigation
 - Managing risks and grading threats

Handling of civil claims, security management and personnel vetting

- Individuals or units responsible for identifying risks to the integrity of the police service manifested within civil actions, civil claims, employment tribunals, breaches of security and infiltration of the service by inappropriate personnel.

Handling 'Direction and Control' Complaints

- Processes for handling complaints relating to:
 - operational policing policies (where there is no issue of conduct)
 - organisational decisions
 - general policing standards in the force
 - operational management decisions (where there is no issue of conduct)

Impact of unsatisfactory performance and grievance

- Relevant personnel within HR and operational departments, to establish that processes exist to identify any conduct issues or organisational lessons.

NB: The above list is not exhaustive nor does every force have each of these units or responsibilities as separate functions. The inspection sought to examine as many of the identified activities as are relevant to each force.

3. Methodology

Since 2003/04, HMIC's core methodology for assessing force performance has been Baseline Assessment (BA), which consists of a self-assessment process supported by visits to forces for validation and quality assurance. BA assesses performance annually across 27² areas of policing via a framework of questions for each area. The mainstream BA process for 2004/05 was completed during spring 2005 and the results published in October 2005.

Professional Standards is one of the BA frameworks and would normally have been included in the mainstream BA activity. With the full programme of professional standards inspections scheduled for October and November 2005, however, the assessment of this framework was deferred to await their outcome.

The programme of inspections has been designed to:

- Provide a full inspection of professional standards in all England & Wales³ forces;
- Gather evidence for Baseline Assessment reports and grading of professional standards in all forces; and
- Identify key issues, trends and good practice that may have implications for professional standards on a national basis.

² Number of frameworks in the 2004/05 assessment

³ Also including British Transport Police and Ministry of Defence Police

The standard format for each inspection has included:

- The completion of self assessment questionnaires by all forces;
- Examination of documents;
- Visits to forces with group and individual interviews;
- Consultation with key stakeholders; and
- Final reports with grade.

4. Baseline Assessment grading

HMIC applies a qualitative grading to the inspection of Professional Standards. These grades are:

- Excellent
- Good
- Fair
- Poor

In allocating individual force grades, HMIC assesses all the available evidence and identifies how well the force matches an agreed set of Specific Grading Criteria. To ensure fairness and transparency in the grading process, HMIC worked with key partners in the APA, IPCC, the Home Office and ACPO to develop and agree these Specific Grading Criteria for Professional Standards.

The criteria set out expectations for a “Good” force. Grades of Fair, Good and Excellent all represent acceptable performance levels but indicate the degree to which the force has met the grading criteria. An Excellent grade indicates ‘benchmark’ performance including significant implementation of good practice.

The full grading criteria are set out in HMIC’s website at: www.inspectorates.homeoffice.gov.uk.

The key elements appear under four headings, namely:

- **Intelligence** - *what a force knows about the health of professional standards*
- **Prevention** - *how the force tries to improve and prevent the abuse of standards*
- **Enforcement** - *its effectiveness in dealing with emerging problems*
- **Capacity and Capability** – *having the resources and skills to address reactive and proactive challenges (including timely and proportionate response to lapses in professional standards)*
- The remainder of this report is set out under these headings, for ease of reference to the evidence presented.

B - Force Report

Force Overview and Context

Humberside Police covers the counties of North East Lincolnshire, North Lincolnshire, East Riding of Yorkshire along with the urban area of Kingston-upon-Hull. This total area of 1,356 square miles centres around the Humber estuary, serving a population of almost 900,000 residents. The number of people served by Humberside Police increases significantly when considering those visiting the area through tourism and travel. It is estimated one million people a year travel to and from Europe by ferry via Kingston upon Hull, and a further quarter of a million people on domestic and international flights from Humberside Airport. The area maintains its strong maritime heritage with the Humber ports of Immingham, Grimsby, Goole and Hull, accounting for over 15% of the UK overseas trade, and handling more trade with the rest of Europe than any other British port.

The principal conurbations are Kingston-upon-Hull, Grimsby, and Scunthorpe. The area's minority ethnic communities are concentrated mainly in Kingston-upon-Hull and Scunthorpe with Chinese, Bangladeshi and Indian being the most populated. The region has a higher than average number of asylum seekers compared to other non-metropolitan forces.

The Force headquarters is located in the suburbs of Hull. There are four basic command units (known locally as divisions), which are coterminous with the district councils and CDRPs. The ACPO team is based at headquarters and comprises the Chief Constable, DCC, two ACC (operations) and ACO (support). The Chief Constable, Tim Hollis, was appointed in April 2005.

Humberside Police employs 2,263 police officers, 1,258 police staff and 328 special constables and has recently recruited 19 PCSOs.

The Police Authority has nine elected members, three magistrate members and five independent members.

The total budget for Humberside Police for 2004/05 was £150.4 million. Humberside has seen sustained investment in the last few years with the development of local policing teams (LPTs).

Humberside Police has embodied a 'Quality of Life' policing, which is a style developed from public consultation based around local accountability and local responsibility, as well as the resultant reassurance and visibility gained from being locally based. To this end 39 LPTs have been created, backed by a comprehensive estate development strategy to put their bases central to communities. They are working within their local communities in a highly visible, engaged and accessible way.

The Force has been working with the Home Office police standards unit since autumn 2003. Operating under the auspices of Operation Vanguard, a comprehensive action plan to focus upon crime reduction and crime investigation within Humberside has been devised and implemented. This work is ongoing and is having a positive impact within both areas.

Professional Standards

The deputy chief constable holds the portfolio for professional standards. The professional standards branch (PSB) is headed by a chief superintendent, supported by a deputy at chief inspector level.

The branch has five investigators in total, comprising of three inspectors, one sergeant and one member of police (support) staff. They are supported by two constable caseworkers.

Professional standards/corruption type issues are dealt with as and when they arise. The PSB does not at present possess a proactive capability. A basic 'stand alone' intelligence database is maintained by the chief inspector. This software does not include the ability to analyse the data held.

Administration support is given by the office co-ordinator who is a member of the branch management team, one (full-time equivalent) administration supervisor (job share) and four full-time equivalent (five staff) police staff who are multi-functional dealing with all clerical and administration type functions.

GRADING : POOR

Findings

Intelligence - *what a force knows about the health of professional standards.*

Strengths

- The Force has completed a strategic assessment to its vulnerability to corruption. This has been submitted to NCIS and a control strategy, which is subject to regular review, is in place.
- The inspection confirmed that there are comprehensive systems in place to assess and analyse all incoming public complaints and civil claims. Public complaints are examined by an experienced office manager who, in consultation with the chief inspector, directs the most appropriate method and level of investigation. Civil claims are handled within the legal services branch by the Force solicitor. Evidence was provided that a systematic approach to identifying any conduct issues arising from a civil claim is in existence.

Areas for Improvement

- The inspection confirmed there is only very limited capacity within the PSB for the collation and analysis of intelligence. The role is conducted by the chief inspector who has a 'stand alone' computer system upon which PSB intelligence reports are collated. Feedback confirms that very low numbers of such reports are received. The same officer conducts a very basic analytical role, but he has not received any training as an analyst. It is clear that current arrangements are unsophisticated. HMI recommends they be made subject of urgent review.
- Partnership arrangements with other forces where covert activity is required are limited in scope, though some evidence was provided of operations with a neighbouring force. Given that the PSB does not have a proactive unit, its capacity to reciprocate directly in circumstances where other forces seek assistance therefore does not exist, however such provision, were it to be sought, could potentially be provided via the Force's Major Crime Unit.

Recommendation 1

The inspection confirmed there is only very limited capacity within the PSB for the collation and analysis of intelligence. It is clear that current arrangements are unsophisticated. HMI recommends they be made subject of urgent review.

Prevention - *how the force tries to improve and prevent the abuse of standards.*

Strengths

- HMIC acknowledges that the Force has an overarching professional standards strategy (also see areas for improvement).

- The Force has an open and accessible system for making complaints, these can be accepted in person, at a police station, at the complaints home, by telephone, fax or by e-mail. The Force internet site contains comprehensive information and guidance for members of the public wishing to make a complaint.
- Some evidence was provided that the Force has adopted a 'learning organisation' approach to lessons learnt from completed investigations and converting these into action to improve systems, processes and procedures. The chair of the Police Authority's audit and strategy committee confirmed this to be the case (also see areas for improvement).
- Confirmation was received that practice directions are in existence covering the key areas of information security, data protection and personal vetting. All of this currently sits within the corporate development branch (CDB). Working linkages and relationships between PSB and CDB were reported as being in place and operating effectively.
- The information security officer confirmed that there is auditing of Force systems and that access can be suspended where inappropriate use is confirmed. The auditing arrangements extend to emails and attachments where key word searches can be conducted.
- The Force has a well established 'grievance' procedure, which is subject to regular review. The procedure is publicised through a variety of mediums and is reported to be well understood by staff, although limited feedback from front line staff suggests that better marketing may be required.
- Though there are no formal links between the professional standards branch and the support staff member within the central HR department with direct responsibility for oversight of the Force grievance procedure, HMI is satisfied the linkages between the procedure and conduct issues are sound.

Areas for Improvement

- Although the overarching PSB strategy alludes to the importance placed upon prevention and the use of covert methods, the Force currently does not comply with ACPO policy in that it has no proactive capability within the PSB (this has been rejected on grounds of competing priorities and cost). HMI considers this to be a fundamental weakness within the Force's approach towards the prevention of corruption and the promotion of professional standards. He recommends that such a unit, with full analytical capability, be introduced within the PSB as a matter of urgency.
- The inspection confirmed that there are no systems such as the 'Kent' model for 'at risk' officers and staff to 'self nominate' and seek support from the organisation within the context of the promotion of professional standards. There is no proactive scanning policy in existence to identify issues such as alcohol abuse and domestic violence that may be affecting some personnel across the Force.
- The Force operates a reporting line into the PSB however, feedback confirmed that it is used little (one issue being staff lack of confidence in its confidentiality). It has considered the option of introducing a wholly independent confidential

reporting mechanism but this was rejected on the grounds of cost. HMI contends that this is an option the Force may care to re-examine.

- There are limitations in the 'Centurion' IT system used for recording and monitoring complaints in measuring the six strands of diversity. There are also issues in terms of monitoring ethnicity and the diversity of complainants (this is a national issue and therefore NOT Humberside specific).
- At present, in 31% of recorded complaints the complainant's ethnicity is shown as 'unknown'. This is perceived to be partly a development issue for front line officers charged with the responsibility of recording the complaint. The Force reports that it has recognised this issue and is introducing more stringent monitoring and awareness training to address it.
- It is clear that the vetting checks being made on initial applications for appointment to the Force are at basic level, i.e. CRB and SB checks. There are no mechanisms to conduct in-depth investigation in to all potential appointees to the regular force, Special Constabulary and PCSOs. The Force may therefore be vulnerable with the possibility of employing people who pose a risk to the integrity of the organisation. (This links directly to the current lack of proactive capability within the PSB).
- The head of PSB reports effective working relationships existing between the Force and staff associations, trade unions and representative groups. It is clear that there are no regular consultation mechanisms in place, such as 'pulse meetings' chaired by the DCC for these representative bodies to air the concerns of their members in an informal discussion forum.
- In terms of lessons learnt from complaint and misconduct investigations, feedback from front line officers suggests that the mechanisms for communicating this type of information may not be sufficiently effective. This raises the question whether such learning is actually being translated into practice. Staff state they are 'bombarded' with information, normally via electronic means, that they do not have time to read or assimilate with the potential that important messages are being lost as a result.
- Whilst the Force indicates, and shows, that there are no disproportionality issues in terms of investigations involving staff from minority groups, the perception from those groups is that when such investigations arise the proportionality of the investigation is inequitable.
- The Force has undertaken a 'gap analysis' in terms of its implementation of the ACPO vetting policy, whilst some progress is reported it is acknowledged that a considerable amount of development is required before the Force will be fully compliant. The incumbent head of PSB is designated as the project executive leader for this work and the DCC its sponsor.
- In relation to the Force grievance procedure it is suggested that there may be training issues for some managers charged with the responsibility of applying the procedure.

Recommendation 2

HMI considers the total lack of proactive capability, within the PSB structure, to be a fundamental weakness in the Force's approach towards the prevention of corruption and the promotion of professional standards. He recommends that such a unit, with full analytical capability, be introduced as an integral part of the PSB structure, as a matter of urgency.

Enforcement - *its effectiveness in dealing with emerging problems.*

Strengths

- Strong evidence exists of effective management of complaints under the auspices of robust procedures within the PSB. The chief inspector enjoys open access to the head of department and can discuss problems and issues readily.
- The Force has introduced an investigation contract, which is drawn up between the complainant and investigating officer at the outset of a complaint investigation. This contract sets out the actions that are agreed the IO will pursue, as well as providing an indicative timeframe for the provision and the medium of updates and the conclusion of enquiries. This minimises adverse comment by the complainant about timeliness and the extent of the investigation (proportionality). Subject to evaluation, this approach could amount to national good practice.
- Regular meetings are held between senior officers within the branch and reactive team leaders to monitor the progress of investigations. Case files contain action logs and timeliness is checked to ensure proportionality and the application of the 'Lancet' principles. Ample evidence was provided to confirm that PSB investigations are proportionate in their scope.
- The reactive arm of the PSB is reported as being fully NIM compliant.
- The Force acknowledges that it does face corruption issues and when these are identified they are pursued robustly using major crime team resources. Evidence of this approach was provided during the inspection. (Though satisfied that the Force does react appropriately in such circumstances, HMI contends that this approach is not a substitute for a properly constituted proactive unit within the PSB (per Recommendation 2 above).
- A shift in emphasis has resulted in the majority of local resolutions (55%) now being handled within the operational divisions and branches. This exceeds the current IPCC target figure of 50%.
- The Force has a suspension policy that has been consulted upon and has been communicated across the organisation. It views suspension as the final option and the number of personnel subject to suspension is low (also see areas for improvement).

- The Force has an integrated set of practice directions which, when taken collectively, amount to a security strategy.
- The IPCC reports excellent working relationships with the Force. It acknowledges the efforts made by the Force such as the development of Gateway organisations and the gap analysis undertaken on its statutory guidance (also see areas for improvement).

Areas for Improvement

- Staff feedback suggests there is a general lack of confidence in management processes within the Force and the willingness of the organisation corporately to confront difficult issues of concern, robustly. The view held is that the culture of the Force remains as one that does not listen to unwelcome messages but which tries to maintain the 'status quo' instead of endeavouring to improve service delivery (this being inclusive of lessons learned from complaint investigations).
- The inspection confirmed there are no mechanisms in place in terms of 'quality' questionnaires to consult with complainants and Humberside personnel, at the conclusion of an investigation, to obtain their views on how the matter has been handled.
- The view expressed by the staff associations and other representative bodies, in terms of the application of the suspension policy, is that chief officers may wish to consider seeking their perspective prior to the decision to suspend being taken. Their contention being that they may be able to provide pertinent information about an individual, which could assist in terms of informing the decision as to whether to suspend or not.
- The inspection confirmed that the prescriptive nature of the national UPP is so bureaucratic as to render it unworkable in practice. It is recommended that the UPP should be reviewed and simplified, thereby making its application in appropriate circumstances workable. (This appears to be a national issue and therefore is NOT Humberside specific).
- Though its working relationships with the force are strong, the IPCC reports difficulty in forming a relationship with the Humberside Police Authority in terms of this critical aspect of the Authority's scrutiny role and the IPCC oversight of public complaints. Joint development is clearly required to address this issue.

Capacity and Capability – *(Having the resources and skills available to address the reactive and proactive challenge and providing a timely and proportionate response to lapses in professional standards).*

Strengths

- The PA enjoys a positive working relationship with the PSB and adopts a proactive, 'critical friend' role in terms of the monitoring of complaint issues.
- The Force is committed to ensuring that PA members have the appropriate skills and knowledge to carry out their scrutiny responsibility within this area of

business. The incumbent head of PSB invests his time to train and equip 'new' members to carry out their scrutiny role.

- The current skills mix within the reactive investigation teams is reported to be varied thereby enabling public complaints to be allocated to an investigator who has operational experience within a particular functional area of expertise.
- The head of the PSB, and his staff, regularly provide 'out of hours' cover to the Force in terms of professional standards issues. The head of PSB is not a member of operational superintendent cover because of the potential conflict of interest which may occur were he to become involved in contentious issues.
- The current head of the PSB is regarded as open, accessible and to have been responsible for removing some of 'the myths' around the purpose and role of the Branch. Some concerns were expressed about what is likely to happen when he retires (reported to be mid 2006). Clear and timely succession planning for this important management role is viewed as being critical. The DCC is however aware and assurance was provided that this matter is receiving attention.

Areas for Improvement

- The inspection confirmed that the PA is currently not sighted in terms of civil claims made against the Force. No reporting mechanisms exist to inform the PA of the levels of settlement and the identification of trends emerging from civil actions. This has direct bearing on the PA scrutiny role. HMI recommends such a mechanism should be introduced.
- The Force currently operates with two reactive investigation teams, each carrying a caseload of approximately 45 cases. HMI considers this workload to be very high, although the reactive investigators interviewed consider this manageable.
- The inspection confirmed that other than 'on the job' training there is no specific input to new members of staff before they join the PSB. Feedback confirmed this to be a major weakness with a view being expressed that the 'Initial management of serious crime' (IMSC) course currently being run by the Force would equip PSB investigators with the basic skills required for them to undertake the role more competently. That said, the strong view of staff is that a national course should be formulated and delivered to staff before they join the department (this is a national issue and therefore NOT Humberside specific)
- A professional standards input is provided to all new staff joining the organisation and details of confidential reporting mechanisms are available via the Force Intranet. Feedback from front line staff suggests that the timing of these inputs need to be reassessed and that additional publicity may be required to heighten awareness of confidential reporting mechanisms. Strong feedback confirms that were these mechanisms to be wholly independent staff would be more likely to use them.

Recommendation 3

The inspection confirmed that no mechanism exists to inform the PA in terms of civil claims made against the Force. This has direct bearing upon the PA scrutiny role. HMI recommends that such a mechanism should be introduced.

GLOSSARY

ACC	assistant chief constable
ACCAG	ACPO Counter-Corruption Advisory Group
ACPO	Association of Chief Police Officers
ACPO PSC	ACPO Professional Standards Committee
BA	baseline assessment
BCU	basic command unit
BME	black and minority ethnic
CHIS	covert human intelligence source
CID	criminal investigation department
CPS	Crown Prosecution Service
DCC	deputy chief constable
DSU	dedicated source unit
ESU	ethical standards unit
FTE	full-time equivalent
HMI	Her Majesty's Inspector
HMIC	Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary
HoD	head of department
HQ	Headquarters
HR	human resources
IAG	independent advisory group – a body advising a force or BCU on race and diversity issues
IiP	Investors in People
IPCC	Independent Police Complaints Commission
LR	local resolution
MMR	monthly management review
MSF	most similar forces – a way of grouping forces to which each police force can be compared that has similar social and demographic characteristics
NCDG	National Complaints and Discipline Group
NCIS	National Criminal Intelligence Service
NIM	National Intelligence Model
PA	police authority
PCSO	police community support officer
PDR	performance development review
PNC	Police National Computer
PPAF	Police Performance Assessment Framework
PS	professional standards
PSD	professional standards department
RDS	Research, Development and Statistics
RES	race equality scheme
RIPA	Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act, 2000
QA	quality assurance
SGC	specific grading criteria
SLA	service level agreement

SPI(s)	statutory performance indicators (SPIs) are used to monitor key aspects of police performance and form a critical component of performance assessments. SPIs are set each year following consultation with partners in line with powers under the Local Government Act 1999. SPIs are also known as 'best value performance indicators'
SPOC	single point of contact
TCG	tasking and co-ordination group
UPP	unsatisfactory performance procedure