



Inspecting policing
in the public interest

**Revisiting police
relationships:
progress report**

**Metropolitan Police Service
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 the Metropolitan Police Service.

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 the Metropolitan Police Service

Since 2011 the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) has either created or updated a number of policies and procedural guidance relating to integrity. These include documents on the use of the internet and social media, acceptance of gifts and hospitality, declaration of business interests, and relationships with the media.

The Deputy Commissioner chairs a professional standards strategic committee (PSSC) to oversee integrity issues, with representation from the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC), which replaced the Metropolitan Police Authority in January 2012. MOPAC continues to develop integrity governance structures and reporting processes.

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

The MPS has introduced a new force communications strategy in order to establish a corporate standard across the organisation. In March 2012, guidance on relationships with representatives from the media was added to an existing media policy, and provides direction and good practice about the sharing of information and the conduct of meetings. These guidelines have been circulated throughout the MPS, but not all staff interviewed were aware of them. The media policy was due to be completely revised at the end of the year after the Leveson Inquiry (which is investigating the role of the press and police in the phone-hacking affair) reported.

In June 2012 the force introduced a central media contact register to ensure a record is kept of meetings between senior officers/staff and the media. This is not used for other staff within the organisation. The Directorate of Professional Standards (DPS) monitors press coverage every day, and works with the Media Department to identify possible leaks of information from the force. Any concerns are followed up in an attempt to identify the source of unauthorised disclosure of information.

Between September 2011 and May 2012, the force investigated 23 instances of inappropriate disclosures to the media, 14 of which were ongoing at the time of the inspection.

The force encourages engagement with the public through social media and has opened Twitter accounts on each policing borough. A new social media board, chaired by a senior officer, has been introduced to manage issues around social media and to develop good practice. The force has reviewed its approach and issued a new policy document which covers the standards of behaviour expected when staff are both at work and off duty. Staff are required to complete training before operating force social media accounts, and the MPS monitors these sites. However, some staff remain uncertain regarding what information, including photographs, they can put on their personal social media sites. HMIC's independently commissioned research identified 13 cases of potentially inappropriate behaviour on Facebook or Twitter by members of staff at the MPS. These have been referred back to the force.

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

In 2011 HMIC found that there was an inconsistent approach to the acceptance and recording of gifts and hospitality received by police officers and staff in the MPS. The force issued new guidance on this in February 2012, and made it available to all employees via the intranet. The force maintains a number of registers showing what gifts and hospitality have been accepted, and what was offered but declined. Most of the registers are held electronically and made available to the public through the force website. However, staff reported that some are not IT-based, and that declined gifts are not always recorded.

Many police and MOPAC staff reported a belief that offers of gifts and hospitality are decreasing while the number of declined offers is increasing. Force statistics for the months of February, March and April 2012 support this position, but some staff suggested there may be a rise in under-reporting due to increased organisational scrutiny.

Both the force and Mayor's Office have reviewed the use of corporate credit cards, and in February 2012 the MPS introduced tighter controls around their issue and auditing through a central finance unit. The Mayor's Office has also initiated new meetings to review spending within the MPS. 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).

All applications for second jobs by police officers are now processed centrally by the Professionalism Directorate. This has brought improved checking and more consistent decision-making about what employment is appropriate for officers when they are not doing their main job. The new procedures include checks against complaints and discipline records. A reminder system has been introduced to ensure officers comply with a requirement to submit an annual review of their application for a second job and to highlight any change in their circumstances. However, some staff and supervisors interviewed were still unclear about which second jobs are appropriate. Since September 2011 there have been 699 applications for second jobs, 680 of which have been approved.

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

A joint audit panel has been established by the MPS and MOPAC. The group meets quarterly and is attended by members of the MPS management board and the MOPAC executive. This panel monitors the MPS's progress in implementing the detailed action plan which it has created in response to recommendations made in several internal and external integrity-related reviews (including HMIC's *Without Fear or Favour*).

Within the force, progress against this action plan is managed by a 'Total Professionalism' board, which is chaired by a Deputy Assistant Commissioner (a new position created in May 2012). This is a long-term initiative to influence the culture of the organisation and improve standards of behaviour throughout the MPS.

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 149 investigations into the conduct of its officers and staff in relation to the areas covered by this report. HMIC continues to monitor the progress of the widely reported investigations under Operation Elveden, which are included in these figures.

The Deputy Commissioner is improving integrity standards through the professional standards strategic committee (PSSC) which meets quarterly to enhance standards across the MPS. A new Deputy Assistant Commissioner post has been created to develop and introduce greater professionalism within the force over the coming few years. This work has started by raising the awareness of boundaries of acceptable behaviour and ensuring a consistent approach within the organisation.

The training of officers and staff on integrity and professional standards has not been delivered consistently across the force: for example, HMIC saw no evidence of training being provided in relation to dealing with gifts and hospitality. However, there are plans in place for supervisors to be provided with some training later in 2012 and in 2013.

Next steps

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

