



Inspecting policing
in the public interest

**Revisiting police
relationships:
progress report**

**Northamptonshire 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 Northamptonshire.

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 Northamptonshire

Since 2011 Northamptonshire Police has conducted an integrity “healthcheck”, using the Self-Assessment Checklist provided in HMIC’s 2011 report, *Without Fear or Favour*. The Professional Standards and Security Board, which is chaired by the deputy chief constable (DCC), is regularly informed of the progress that has been made on actions agreed as a result. Several policies covering relationships with the media, gifts and hospitality, social media use, and police staff and officers second jobs have been reviewed and updated. Staff generally have a good understanding of these policies and what they need to do to comply with them.

How are press relations handled, and information leaks investigated?

The force has updated its media policy. This outlines how relationships with the press should work and where contact with journalists should be recorded. This is in line with the national guidance on relationships with the media put together by the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO). We found that staff were aware of these new rules.

Between September 2011 and May 2012, the force has not investigated any instances of inappropriate disclosure to the media.

The force has recently updated its policy on how police officers and staff should behave on social networking sites (such as Facebook and Twitter). This covers the standards of behaviour expected when staff are both at work and off duty. The force monitors whether these rules are being followed by staff using Northamptonshire Police accounts. It does not routinely monitor private accounts but instead has a risk-based approach, dealing with individual cases when they arise. HMIC’s independently commissioned research identified ten cases of potentially inappropriate behaviour on Facebook or Twitter by officers and staff in Northamptonshire, 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 Northamptonshire Police was keeping a record of the **gifts and hospitality** received by officers and staff. The force has reviewed and updated its policy on this issue, and taken the opportunity to publicise this to staff. Since this happened more staff have notified the force of gifts they have received or declined. This suggests that staff understand the new policy.

Previously, the awarding of contracts over £250,000 was scrutinised by the former police authority, with smaller sums approved by the head of finance, head of procurement or head of department or budget holder. Currently there is 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. by looking out for any instances of a company providing hospitality, and then receiving a contract). A new procurement contract database is being implemented, and should go some way to addressing this.

Northamptonshire Police's policy for **second jobs** states that staff and officers need to make their requests through their line managers. The head of the Professional Standards Department (PSD) makes the final decision as to whether the application should be approved. The force has reviewed and updated its policy and taken the opportunity to publicise this to staff; this has resulted in more staff seeking permission for second jobs. Since September 2011 there have been 129 applications for second jobs, 123 of which have been approved.

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

We found that the police authority had arrangements in place to monitor integrity issues. The recently elected PCC will need to be satisfied with the continued 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. The force instigated 68 investigations between September 2011 and May 2012 into the conduct of its officers and staff in relation to the areas covered by this report. (The widely reported investigation into two chief officers is not included in these figures since the issues being investigated do not fall within the scope of this inspection.)

There has been training on integrity in parts of the organisation since our last inspection in 2011. Changes of policy are explained at meetings with supervisors and managers, who are then responsible for making sure their staff are also aware. There is also a great deal of intranet publicity using examples and scenarios to help staff and officers understand any changes in policy and practice. However, there is no mechanism to check that officers and staff have understood the changes.

Next steps

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

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