



Inspecting policing
in the public interest

**Revisiting police
relationships:
progress report**

**Staffordshire 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 Staffordshire.

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 Staffordshire

Since 2011, Staffordshire Police has conducted a self-assessment of its position on integrity against the recommendations in HMIC's 2011 report, *Without Fear or Favour*, and agreed on actions to address potential risk areas. These actions have concentrated on policy and procedure review and update in each of the key integrity areas. They are managed and taken forward through an integrity review group and integrity working group, with progress overseen by the Professional Standards Board (which is chaired by the Deputy Chief Constable). This work serves to further strengthen the established force position on integrity and relationship issues.

The Chief Constable of Staffordshire is the national Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) lead for professional standards, and author of the ACPO response to the HMIC report.

How are press relations handled, and information leaks investigated?

The force media policy has been reviewed and updated since 2011 in order to provide increased structure and professionalism around dealings with the media. This is in line with the national guidance on relationships with the media produced by the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO). An integrity review communications plan has been developed to let staff know about the policies and procedures in place. However, we found that operational staff demonstrated limited knowledge and confidence with respect to dealing with the media.

Between September 2011 and May 2012, the force did not investigate any instances of inappropriate disclosures to the media.

On 24 August 2012 Staffordshire Police published a 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. Force channels are developed and supervised by the web communications team. There is guidance in place on staff identifying themselves as police officers and on avoiding usage which might undermine public confidence or bring the force into disrepute. HMIC's independently commissioned research did not identify any cases of potentially inappropriate behaviour on Facebook or Twitter by members of staff at Staffordshire Police.

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

There is a clear **gifts and hospitality** policy, providing unequivocal guidance to staff. The policy is owned by the Professional Standards Department (PSD) and has been reviewed and updated since 2011. Staffordshire Police has a single electronic gifts and hospitality register for the whole force, on which all offers can be recorded, whether they were accepted or declined. This allows for effective monitoring and identification of any problems.

The **procurement** department provides a degree of scrutiny and sends a monthly list of current contracts to PSD, which is cross-referenced with the gifts and hospitality register to identify any potential integrity compromises (e.g. to look out for instances where a company provides hospitality, and then is awarded a contract).

Staffordshire Police's policy for **second jobs** and business interests has been revised to ensure compliance with ACPO guidance and other relevant legislation and guidance, including HMIC's report, *Without Fear or Favour*. In particular, changes have been made to the policy around property lettings, increased scrutiny of applications, annual review of applications and processes for appeal. Since September 2011 there have been 84 applications for second jobs, 79 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 and govern 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 48 investigations into the conduct of its officers and staff in relation to the areas covered by this report.

The Deputy Chief Constable has commissioned management briefing sessions covering integrity issues. These are presented on development days to supervisors, with a focus on early intervention if questions of integrity are raised and an emphasis on force values. The PSD conducts spot checks and focus groups with local policing teams to raise staff awareness around integrity issues and to check understanding of policies. The PSD bulletin focuses on both national and local integrity issues, and includes lessons learned from other forces.

Next steps

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

