



Inspecting policing
in the public interest

**Revisiting police
relationships:
progress report**

**Suffolk Constabulary
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 Suffolk.

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 Suffolk

Since 2011 Suffolk Constabulary has conducted an integrity 'healthcheck', using the Self-Assessment Checklist provided in HMIC's 2011 report, *Without Fear or Favour*. The constabulary has subsequently changed some of the ways it manages integrity issues; several policies have been updated as a result (including those on relationships with the media, acceptance of gifts and hospitality, use of social media and second jobs). Officers and staff now have a better understanding of the rules, and more information on gifts and second jobs is now declared and recorded.

Working in collaboration with Norfolk Constabulary, the constabulary has created and circulated a document called *Integrity: What you need to know*, which highlights changes to policy as well as identifying where staff can find more information.

How are press relations handled, and information leaks investigated?

Suffolk Constabulary has introduced a new media policy which outlines how relationships with the press should work. It also includes information on how staff should record contact with journalists. The policy has taken into account the national guidance on relationships with the media produced by the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO). We found that staff knew about these new rules and were clear about the guidance within the policy.

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

The constabulary has updated its policy on how staff should behave when using 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 new policy has been reinforced by a poster and intranet campaign to highlight what is and is not acceptable. The constabulary monitors how social media sites are being used by staff. When staff are disciplined for inappropriate use of social networking sites, the cases are publicised inside the organisation to help reinforce the message that the constabulary takes integrity seriously. HMIC's independently commissioned research did not identify any cases of potentially inappropriate behaviour on Facebook or Twitter by members of staff in Suffolk Constabulary.

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

The constabulary has recently updated its policy on the acceptance of **gifts and hospitality**. Local commanders are responsible for authorising or declining offers, with the details recorded on local registers. The Professional Standards Department (PSD) monitors these local registers and collates the details centrally. The head of the PSD reviews the register every two months to ensure the policy is being applied consistently. We found that staff were clear as to what should be recorded and more entries are now being made on the register.

The **procurement** departments for Norfolk and Suffolk have recently been brought together, and the head of department is reviewing their policies. There is currently no process 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).

Suffolk Constabulary has a clear policy for **second jobs** and business interests, which applies to police officers and police staff. The register is maintained by PSD, and the head of PSD reviews all applications. The deputy chief constable (DCC) also scrutinises the register as part of regular meetings with the head of PSD and all applications are subject to an annual review. Since September 2011 there have been 66 applications for second jobs, all 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. Force-level oversight of integrity issues is provided by the Without Fear or Favour Group, which is chaired by the Suffolk DCC. This group is developing policy in line with national guidance and included representation from the police authority, as well as Norfolk and Suffolk constabularies. The recently elected PCC will need to be satisfied with the continued governance and reporting mechanisms for these issues.

The Norfolk and Suffolk anti corruption units have been brought together to work collaboratively as one. While this has led to an overall reduction in staffing levels, this has been offset by the benefits of working in collaboration and having a joint department, with sharing of good practice and better opportunities to allocate resources across the two counties. The force instigated seven 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 constabulary has been proactive in communicating the key messages and policies on integrity to all staff. It has followed this up by carrying out survey work to ensure that staff understand what is required of them.

Next steps

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

