



Inspecting policing
in the public interest

**Revisiting police
relationships:
progress report**

**Sussex 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 Sussex.

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 Sussex

Since 2011 Sussex Police has conducted an integrity “healthcheck”, using the Self-Assessment Checklist provided in HMIC’s 2011 report, *Without Fear or Favour*. Progress against the resulting actions is overseen by the deputy chief constable (DCC). The policies covering relationships with the media, acceptance of gifts and hospitality, social media use, and police staff and officers’ second jobs have been reviewed and updated. Staff have been made aware of these changes to ensure they understand their responsibilities.

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 states that staff and officers must record and justify all contact with journalists and media. This is in line with the national guidance on relationships with the media produced by the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO). We found that generally staff knew about these rules.

Between September 2011 and May 2012, the force has investigated one instance of inappropriate disclosure to the media.

The force has very recently produced a 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 encourages social media engagement and has more than one hundred local accounts. HMIC’s independently commissioned research identified four cases of potentially inappropriate behaviour on Facebook or Twitter by officers and staff in Sussex Police, 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 Sussex Police was keeping a record of the **gifts and hospitality** received by officers and staff. The policy has since been rewritten and is easier to understand. This has led to a greater number of staff declaring offers of gifts and hospitality, including those they have declined. The register is reviewed regularly by the head of the Professional Standards Department (PSD) to ensure there is consistency in the way the policy is used.

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 is then awarded a contract).

Sussex Police's policy for **second jobs** has changed since our last inspection, when applications were held on an individual's personnel file. Both the updated policy and the new, centrally-managed register are now owned by the head of PSD. This central ownership means that the register and applications are easier to review and control. Since September 2011 there have been 61 applications for second jobs, 59 of which have been approved.

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

We found that the police authority had arrangements to monitor and govern integrity issues. The recently elected PCC will need to ensure they are satisfied with the future 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. The force instigated 62 investigations between September 2011 and May 2012 into the conduct of its officers and staff in relation to the areas covered by this report.

There has been some media training since our last inspection. This has been targeted at staff who are most likely to come into contact with the press. Changes to policy are communicated by email, intranet and through training days. This has helped raise understanding of integrity issues but 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.