



Inspecting policing  
in the public interest

**Revisiting police  
relationships:  
progress report**

**West Midlands 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](http://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 West Midlands.

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 West Midlands

Since 2011 West Midlands Police has carried out an integrity 'healthcheck', using the Self-Assessment Checklist provided in HMIC's 2011 report, *Without Fear or Favour*. Several policies (covering relationships with the media, acceptance of gifts and hospitality, social media use and police officers having second jobs) have either been updated or are in the process of being reviewed. As each policy is formally signed off and adopted, the force runs a communications campaign to raise staff awareness of the new requirements.

### ■ 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 stipulates that any engagement between staff and a representative of the media must be recorded by the individual, and flagged up to the Corporate Communications Department. Similarly, if a meeting is scheduled between a member of staff and the media, the Corporate Communication Department must be notified in advance so they can assess any risks to the organisation. 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 staff were aware of these new rules.

Between September 2011 and May 2012, the force investigated two instances of inappropriate disclosure to the media, one of which was continuing at the time of our inspection.

The force has produced a policy on how police officers and staff should behave on social networking sites (such as Twitter and Facebook). This covers the behaviour expected when staff are both at work and off duty, and the force monitors sites to make sure standards are being met. The Corporate Communications Department uses IT software which provides live monitoring of media reports on the force, including on social networking sites, to proactively identify inappropriate disclosure of information. HMIC's independently commissioned research identified ten cases of potentially inappropriate behaviour on Facebook or Twitter by members of staff at West Midlands Police. These have been referred to the force.

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

In 2011 we found that West Midlands Police was keeping a record of the **gifts and hospitality** received by officers and staff: but this was on multiple registers, which made it more difficult to monitor and identify any problems. These have now been consolidated into a single register and staff are required to submit a register entry of all accepted and declined gifts and hospitalities. The register is owned by Corporate Services and overseen by the head of the Professional Standards Department (PSD).

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).

West Midlands Police's policy on **second jobs** and business interests has been revised to ensure compliance with ACPO guidance and in light of the findings of HMIC's report, *Without Fear or Favour*. There is a clear application and appeals process and PSD is responsible for decision-making and auditing. Since September 2011 there have been 100 applications for second jobs, 96 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, and continued to hold a Professional Standards and Quality Committee (to oversee integrity issues) on a regular basis. 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 an increase in the number of staff working in the anti-corruption unit since our 2011 inspection. The force instigated 111 investigations between September 2011 and May 2012 into the conduct of its officers and staff in relation to the areas covered by this report. HMIC has monitored the progress of the widely reported investigation into a chief officer in West Midlands Police (although this case is not included in these figures, as the issues being investigated do not fall within the scope of the inspection).

Staff are made aware of integrity and anti-corruption issues through internal communications such as email briefings and newsletters, which outline outcomes of cases and highlight the lessons learned. The force has also provided both training and communications to raise awareness of revised policy and developments around integrity issues. As each policy has been formally signed off and adopted, the force has run a communications campaign to raise staff awareness of the new requirements.

## Next steps

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

© HMIC 2012  
ISBN: 978-1-78246-082-4  
[www.hmic.gov.uk](http://www.hmic.gov.uk)