



Inspecting policing
in the public interest

**Revisiting police
relationships:
progress report**

**Cleveland 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 Cleveland.

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 Cleveland

Cleveland Police has conducted a force-wide integrity 'healthcheck', using the Self-Assessment Checklist provided in HMIC's 2011 report, *Without Fear or Favour*. The force reported regularly to the police authority on the actions it had taken as a result of this exercise. Several policies (on relationships with the media, acceptance of gifts and hospitality, social media use and police officers having second jobs) have been updated or are in the process of being reviewed. However, more needs to be done to check staff have read and understood these changes to policies.

How are press relations handled, and information leaks investigated?

The force has updated its media policy, which outlines how relationships with the press should work, and stipulates that staff and officers must notify the Corporate Communications Department of all contact with journalists. 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 investigated one instance of inappropriate disclosure to the media. This was continuing at the time of the inspection.

Since the last inspection the force has produced a policy and provided guidance on how police officers and staff should behave on social networking sites (such as Twitter and Facebook). This guidance covers the behaviour expected when staff are both at work and off duty, and the force monitors sites to check these standards are being met. HMIC's independently commissioned research identified one case of potentially inappropriate behaviour on Facebook or Twitter by a member of staff at Cleveland Police, which has 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 Cleveland Police was keeping a record of **gifts and hospitality** received by officers and staff – but this was on multiple registers, held in different locations, which made it more difficult to monitor and identify any problems. The force has now merged these into a single electronic register, overseen by the Professional Standards Department (PSD).

The use of corporate credit cards is controlled through internal audit procedures which are scrutinised by the PSD. However, there is currently no monitoring in place to cross-reference contract and **procurement** registers with the gifts and hospitality register in order 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).

Cleveland Police's policy on **second jobs** ensures all staff requests are scrutinised and managed by the Professional Standards Department. Since September 2011 there have been 25 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, and planned to maintain these up to November 2012. The recently elected PCC will need to ensure they are 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 three investigations 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 investigations into chief officers in Cleveland, although as they began before September 2011 they are not included in these figures.

There has been little training for staff on integrity issues since our last inspection in 2011. Changes to policy and procedures are mainly communicated via email and the force intranet, but there is no mechanism to check that officers and staff have understood them.

Next steps

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