



Inspecting policing  
in the **public interest**

**Revisiting police  
relationships:  
progress report**

**Merseyside 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 Merseyside.

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 Merseyside

Since HMIC's last inspection, Merseyside Police has conducted a force-wide integrity 'healthcheck', using the Self-Assessment Checklist provided in HMIC's 2011 report, *Without Fear or Favour*.

Policies on relationships with the media, acceptance of gifts and hospitality, social media use and police officers and police staff having second jobs have all been updated.

## 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, discourages staff from unsupervised contact with the media, and has introduced tighter control of all interactions. 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 knew about these changes.

Between September 2011 and May 2012, the force investigated five instances of inappropriate disclosures to the media. At the time of the inspection two were continuing.

The force has produced guidance 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. HMIC's independently commissioned research identified one case of potentially inappropriate behaviour on Facebook or Twitter by a staff member in Merseyside Police, which has been referred back to the force.

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

The Professional Standards Department (PSD) has oversight of all **gift and hospitality** on one central electronic register, and conducts an annual audit of every entry.

Merseyside Police has introduced monitoring 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).

Merseyside Police's policy for **second jobs** routes both officer and staff requests through the PSD. Since September 2011 there have been 25 applications for second jobs, 23 of which have been approved.

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

The police authority has continued to exercise oversight and governance over integrity issues. The recently elected PCC will need to be satisfied with the governance and reporting mechanisms for these issues.

The force has an anti corruption unit, which educates staff on integrity issues and carries out investigations. This unit uses software to audit and investigate inappropriate use of force systems.

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 35 investigations into the conduct of its officers and staff in relation to the areas covered by this report.

Since our last inspection in 2011, Merseyside Police has invested significantly in training supervisors on how the force standards and values should be delivered. These courses highlight the value of intrusive supervision (i.e. proactively checking that things are being done correctly) and leadership.

## Next steps

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